A Brief Look at Ohio and US Organic Agriculture, *2017 Census of Agriculture*  
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Organic production is one of the most discussed forms of differentiated production within US agriculture. Differentiated production is a product with an attribute(s) demanded by a market segment that is willing to pay for the attribute(s). This brief article highlights some features of Ohio and US operations that produce organic farm products as tabulated by the *2017 Census of Agriculture*.

**Census Questions and Instructions:** Census respondents were asked if they produced organic farm products according to USDA NOP (US Department of Agriculture National Organic Program) or had acres transitioning into NOP. One or more of these boxes could be checked: (1) USDA NOP certified organic production, (2) USDA NOP organic production exempt from certification (exempt normally is sales less than $5,000), (3) acres transitioning to USDA NOP, and (4) production according to USDA NOP standards but NOT certified or exempt. Respondent were asked to report the value of USDA NOP certified or exempt organically produced commodities sold from their operation in 2017. They were instructed to (1) include the gross value of agricultural sales before expenses or taxes, (2) exclude crop and livestock sales from transitioning land, and (3) exclude processing and handling.

**Number of Operations with Organic Sales:** The *2017 Census of Agriculture* reported 773 Ohio farm operations sold organic farm products during 2017 (see Figure 1). They make up 1.0% of all Ohio operations with farm sales in 2017 (see Figure 1). The Ohio share is similar to the US share of 0.9%. Both shares exceed their 0.7% share in the *2012 Census of Agriculture*.

Out of Ohio’s 88 counties, 79 (90%) fall within one standard deviation of the average signifying that distribution of Organic operations in Ohio is evenly wide spread outside of Holmes (94), Wayne (94), Ashland (56), Coshocton (27), Knox (27), Richland (18) and Tuscarawas (18) Counties (see Figure 2). Presence of Amish and Mennonite producers in this area with markets of Artisan products are a likely explanation. Holmes, Wayne and Ashland Counties together account for 35% of all Ohio farm operations with organic sales in 2017. Two counties are above the standard deviation but do not touch the previous grouping: Madison (25) and Geauga (19). Ohio’s 3 largest urban counties of Hamilton, Franklin, and Cuyahoga - where operations of less than 50 acres are more prevalent and higher populations of organic consumers reside - had 3, 9, and 4 organic farm producers, respectively.
Organic Sales: The 2017 Census reported that Ohio farms sold $100 million in organic farm products during 2017 (see Figure 3). These sales were 1.1% of all 2017 sales by Ohio farms, which is smaller than the US share of 1.9% (see Figure 3). The 2017 shares for Ohio and the US were more than doubled their 2012 Census shares of 0.5% and 0.8%, respectively.

The distribution of organic sales within Ohio generally follows the distribution of number of producers in Figure 2. Holmes and Wayne County accounted for 17% and 14%, respectively, of all sales of organic farm products in Ohio (see Figure 4). Taken together, these 2 counties accounted for about one-third of all Ohio sales of organic farm products.
Figure 4. Distribution of organic farm sales across counties, Ohio, 2017 Census of Agriculture

Share of organic farm sales varied widely by county (see Figure 5). Holmes County not only had the largest number of operations with organic sales, but the highest percentage of organic sales to total agriculture sales at 51%. Wayne was next at 17%. For the majority of Ohio’s counties, organic sales represented 0.01% of total agricultural sales in the county for 2017. Counties in black have organic farm sales but have too few organic operations to report and maintain privacy.
Average Sales per Operation: Sales of organic farm products averaged $120,059 per Ohio farm operation with organic sales, substantially below the US average of $400,693 (see Figure 6). The Ohio average is similar to average farm sales of all Ohio farm operations (see Figure 6). The US average is more than double the average farm sales of all US farm operations. Average sales of organic farm products per operation increased by +40% for Ohio and +84% for the US from the 2012 Census of Agriculture. In contrast, average farm sales of all farm operations declined -10% for Ohio and increased only +2% for the US from the 2012 Census.
Selected Producer Characteristics: Organic farm producers are younger on average than all farm producers (see Figure 7). Slightly more than one-third of both Ohio and US producers are female, whether or not they sell organic farm products. Nearly two-thirds of organic producers listed farming as their primary occupation, compared with around 40% for all Ohio and US farm producers.

Summary:
► Both number of farm operations producing organic farm products and share of all farm sales that are organic products increased between the 2017 and 2012 Censuses of Agriculture.
► The most dramatic change was the near doubling of average sale of farm organic products per US operation that sells organic products.
► For the US, average organic products sold per operation is now more than double average sales of all farm products per operation.
► Average sales of organic farm products are much smaller for Ohio than for the US (less than one-third the US average).
► Producers of organic farm products are younger than all farm producers, which is consistent with the common story that preference for organic products is stronger among younger consumers.