

METRICS

HANNAH FAIRFIELD

The Hot Spots For Organic Food

The map of organic farms in the United States is clustered into a few geographic centers, a strikingly different pattern than the map of all farms, which spreads densely over many regions, breaking only for the Rockies and Western deserts.

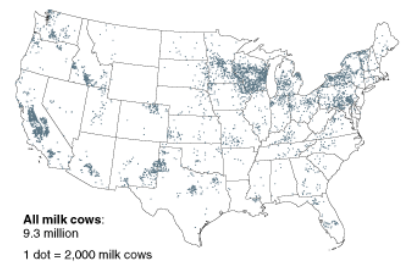
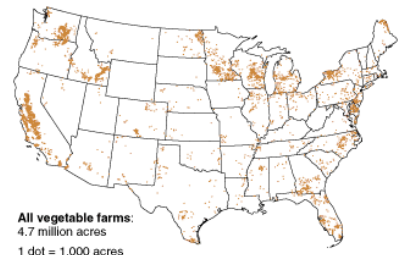
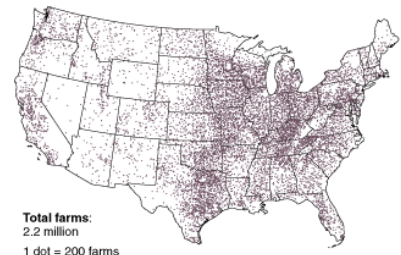
Areas in the Northeast and Northwest have many small organic farms that sell produce directly to consumers. Large organic farms, which some critics call organic agribusiness, have flourished in California.

The largest organic markets by far are for vegetables, fruit and dairy products, according to Catherine Greene, an economist at the Agriculture Department.

Organic vegetables now account for 5 percent of all vegetable sales; organic dairies, which are the fastest-growing sector, now produce 1 percent of the nation's milk.

And what of the wide swaths of the country with a dearth of organic farms?

They'll be waiting a few more years for local organic produce. Even if demand, which has lagged in the South and other Sun Belt states, picks up, the Agriculture Department requires a three-year waiting period for farms to win organic certification.



Sources: Agriculture Department; Organic Trade Association