



ORGANIC AGRICULTURE REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

Overview



The **Organic Agriculture Revitalization Strategy (OARS)** is an initiative that seeks to take advantage of growing consumer and investor interest in organic food and agriculture – now a nearly \$50 billion mainstream market* – and use it as a strategy for revitalizing rural communities and supporting regional economic development.

Developed by Croatan Institute and Earthwise Organics with initial support from Organic Valley's Farmers Advocating for Organics program, OARS aims to identify business and investment opportunities in regional value chains and to mobilize capital to help build community health and wealth.

OARS is currently seeking partners and sponsors to collaborate on the implementation of findings from the first regional pilot project and to apply the OARS methodology to other regions interested in expanding organic food and agriculture systems based on more holistic value-chain approaches.

The first OARS pilot project was focused on Northeastern North Carolina – a region with strong potential to capitalize on the growing demand for organic products thanks to a rapidly expanding, highly productive organic farming sector and strong support partners eager to collaborate and seize opportunities to expand the value chain together.

Pilot Project Activities 2016-18

- Intensive period of desk and field research on certified organic operations and the agricultural value chain supporting them within the targeted geography.
- Mapping and gap analysis of the regional organic agricultural value chain – from inputs and seeds to production, processing, distribution, and to ultimate consumers.
- Identification of economic diversification and investment opportunities where gaps exist.
- Community convenings, regional summits, special briefings, and outreach to diverse value-chain stakeholders.
- Publication of a regional economic development prospectus outlining the opportunities identified for accelerating organic production and marketing opportunities across the region, designed particularly for farmers, entrepreneurs, economic development officials, and investors.
- Leveraging findings into investment frameworks for a new USDA-funded national multi-year partnership on financing regenerative agriculture.



“Organic Valley is excited to support OARS to demonstrate the opportunities that organic agriculture can provide for family farms and rural communities. A cooperative approach and the organic marketplace create great potential for economic development in Eastern North Carolina.”

— **Gerry Cohn**, Organic Valley

Advisory Council

- Uli Bennewitz**, Weeping Radish Brewery
- Gerry Cohn**, Organic Valley
- Henry Crews**, Green Rural Redevelopment Organization (GRRO)
- Rebecca Dunning**, NC State, Center for Environmental Farming Systems
- Ben Haines**, Looking Back Farm
- Joshua Humphreys**, Croatan Institute
- Tony Kleese**, Earthwise Organics
- Rick Larson**, Natural Capital Investment Fund
- David Nicola**, Blackdirt Capital
- Carla Norwood**, Working Landscapes
- Chris Reberg-Horton**, NC State, Dept. of Crop Science
- Mikki Sager**, Conservation Fund
- Ron Townley**, Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments



To learn more about partnering with OARS, please contact Josh Humphreys at Croatan Institute:

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Sponsors and Partners



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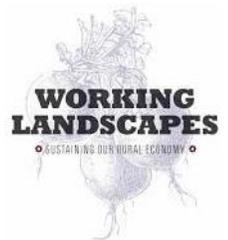
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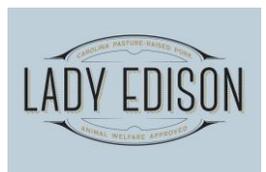
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* SOURCE: Organic Trade Association (2017)