



Organic Farming – Not as Risky as You'd Think

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Because commodity prices are low, plenty of growers are reconsidering transition to organic production so they might reap the still excellent prices in that farming sector. Yet, few make the transition, and the reasons why they don't can be summed up neatly by saying they're unwilling to take on that level of risk.

It is a business axiom that higher rewards justify higher levels of risk, and yes, farming without synthetic pesticides is more risky. But unless you've followed recent developments you'll find that organic farming is not as risky as you thought.

Let's look at three main factors, which for many considering transition are problematic, and which represent the bulk of the risk they're unwilling to take.

1. Weed Control: It used to be you could spot an organic field a mile away because of the weeds. Today many organic fields are as clean as conventional fields. This is due to improvements in equipment like tine weeders and flammers, coupled with increased knowledge on timings, suppressive cover crops and the like. And we're not talking twelve foot equipment. One can get forty-foot tine weeders, hook them onto GPS steered tractors and take maximum advantage of sub inches technology.

2. Nitrogen: It remains a top priority in organic row crop production to grow as much of your N as possible, but supplemental N is plentiful and the cost/benefit to using nitrogen supplements is heavily weighted toward using it. Examples are Chilean nitrate, feather meal, chicken manure products - and each of these is pelleted, prilled, or granulated so that they handle like conventional fertilizer.

There are many other ways that contribute to N sufficiency such as biological N fixation and organic liquid nitrogen for targeted banding, use of foliars, fish, and so on.

3. Crop Protection: No question that there is nothing in the organic arsenal that compares to most conventional insecticides, but you might be very surprised to learn just how many organic products are available for pest control. And, when used in conjunction with sound agronomic and IPM practices, provide a very acceptable level of effectiveness.

Modern, professional organic farming is not as risky as you might think, and not just because of the advances in equipment and products. It's also not as risky because the modern organic farmer incorporates the best of the conventional world. Familiarity with the new technologies, the application of sound enterprise management principles, and the desire to have a farm that is profitable enough and nice enough to keep your heirs on your land.

Are you wanting to make the transition, but don't know where to start? *Start by calling us today.* We can guide you through the process! *815.872.1190.*