

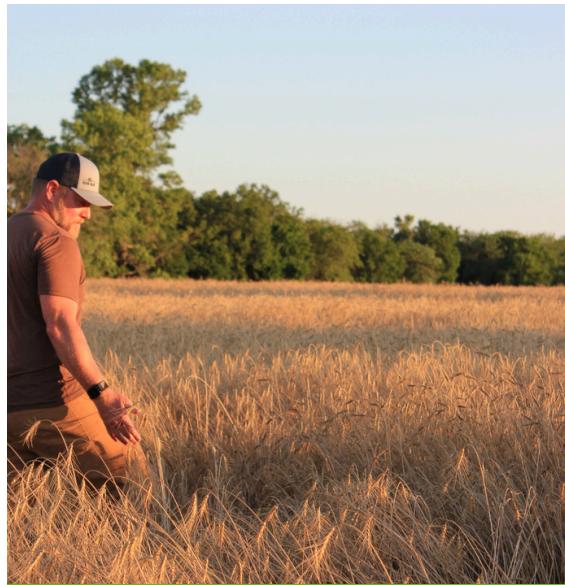


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2026

A Value-Added Endeavor



Chris Barnett, Christopher Organic Farm, examines a wheat field near Scott City, KS

For Chris Barnett, a second-generation rancher and first-generation farmer from southeast Kansas, the Plains TOPP mentorship program has helped him harness the additional value organic certification offers.

When Barnett first began considering transitioning parts of his 1600-acre family ranch in Bourbon County, KS, to organic row crops, he already knew there was additional value to be gained.

“In another life, I handled exports for a global purveyor of gourmet and artisan products from the U.S. While working for these manufacturers and growers, I learned of the increasing demand and marketability of the certified organic label,” said Barnett.

The trend Barnett saw years ago holds steady today. The U.S. organic market is expected to exceed \$85 billion by 2029, according to the Organic Trade Association’s 2025 Organic Market Report.

With so much market potential, Barnett began researching programs that offered organic certification support. He needed regional expertise that could help him transition some of his grazing fields into productive, certified organic row-crop fields. As a first-generation farmer, he also needed practical guidance on how to grow a successful crop.

In this newsletter:

- Mentee Highlight: Chris Barnett
- Organic Market Update
- Resource Highlight
- Upcoming Events



A pasture on Barnett's family ranch in Bourbon County, KS

Through Plains TOPP, he was connected with Jack Geiger of Geiger Farm, a certified organic operation in northeast Kansas. Geiger's 30+ years of organic production experience helped Barnett balance the requirements of organic transition and the daily management of his farm.

"By having Jack on speed dial to answer questions and assist me through any challenge I came across, I was able to achieve a successful wheat crop within my first year of farming," said Barnett.

Barnett's success didn't stop there. By 2025, he had successfully transitioned 175 acres of grassland into certified organic row-crop land under the name Christpohher Organic Farm.

Barnett's mentorship with Geiger also opened doors for networking with other like-minded producers. These connections helped Barnett source machinery and non-GMO seed, find organic markets, and learn more about organic practices like cover cropping and pressure management.

"Once I made the commitment to obtain organic certification, my partnership with Plains TOPP was the single most important and effective decision I made," said Barnett. "The mentorship program is an all-in-one for us 'new' organic farmers. Mentors become a one-on-one instructor, trainer, coach, and friend in a trade that can become very secluded and isolated at times."

[Become a Mentee](#)

[Become a Mentor](#)

Resource Highlight – Advancing Regional Organic Markets

Learn about national and regional organic demand trends, supply gaps, and tips for working with buyers.

[Watch it and more](#)



Organic Market Update

Buyers for organic grain have begun posting 2026 bids, and producers are showing interest in the offered prices.

In January, organic feed corn traded noticeably higher - a trend anticipated to continue until harvest. Organic soybean trade activity remains positive and steady, with organic feed wheat not far behind.

[Read the report](#)



Upcoming Events

FEB-
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Organic Connections, Virtual

Learn new ways to navigate challenges and change on your farm through this multi-session interactive workshop series with Odyssey Collaborations.

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Organic Office Hours, Virtual

Thinking about organic certification but not sure where to start? Join us for our free, twice-monthly webinar, where we simplify the process with an organic certification specialist.

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26

Marbleseed Organic Farming Conference, La Crosse, WI

For over thirty years, this annual gathering has been a cornerstone of the Midwest's organic movement—uniting farmers, educators, and advocates for hands-on learning, shared wisdom, and community rooted in farmer-led, organic principles.

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Organic Certification 101, Virtual

Join our Organic Certification 101 webinar and learn the fundamentals of the organic certification process, including requirements, timelines, and practical next steps.

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Natural Products Expo West, Anaheim, CA

Explore events, education, and exhibitors from the natural and organic product industry.

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Organic Office Hours, Virtual

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28

Transition to Organic Farming Workshop, Bismarck, ND

Join us for a full-day, in-depth workshop designed for farmers and ag professionals interested in transitioning to organic production. This interactive event features presentations and open discussion with seasoned experts who bring real-world experience in organic farming systems, NRCS programs, organic certification, transition planning, and marketing organic crops.

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United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
National Organic Program
Transition to Organic Partnership Program

