



Strategies *for the* Future  
2015-2019



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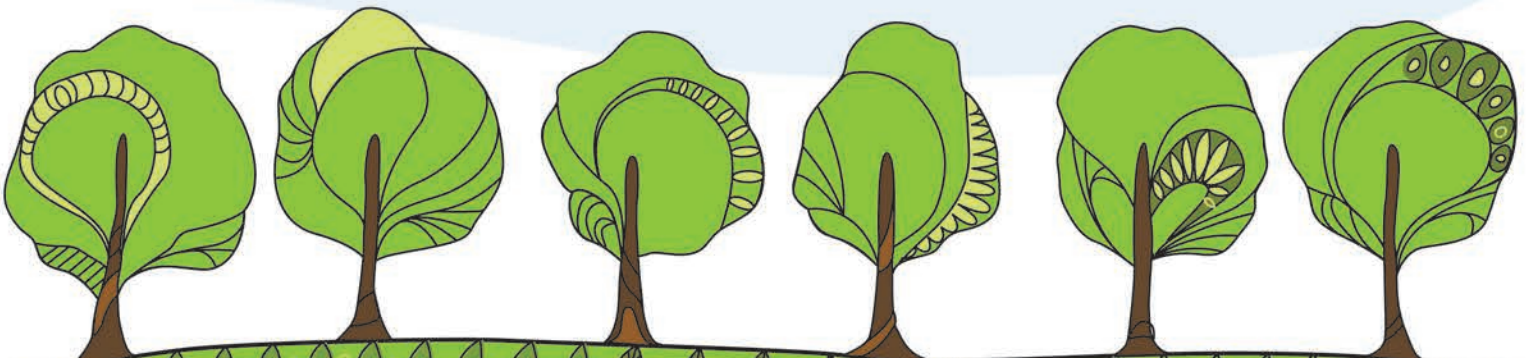
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## Our Mission



Oregon Tilth, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports and promotes biologically sound and socially equitable agriculture through education, research, advocacy, and certification.





## Part 1

### Who We Are

Our strategic plan is rooted in ideas of who we are and what we are. These are the beliefs that guide us, the intent that shapes our vision, and the ways we engage our work and our communities. We believe our identity is unique. We believe our identity is powerful.



## Who We Are

### Our commitment to ourselves and others

- We will be optimistic and believe positive change is possible.
- We will act with integrity and stay true to our mission's principles.
- We will set high standards for practices and outcomes, informed by an ethic of continuous improvement.
- We will engage others with respect, patience and a desire to understand diverse needs & perspectives.
- We will encourage learning to build knowledge and skills that seek solutions.
- We will nurture shared commitment, passion and determination.

### The ideas to which we are dedicated

- We believe nature provides models for sustainability.
- We believe education bridges the gap between problems and solutions.
- We believe knowledge leads to positive choices, better practices and transformational change.
- We believe healthy food comes from healthy soil.
- We believe protecting nature and public health is everyone's responsibility.
- We believe increased cultural and genetic diversity ensures greater resiliency for people and the planet.
- We believe organic practices are a proven path towards sustaining our lives and communities.
- We believe our food choices affect our land.



**Our  
intended  
impact****Nurturing Healthy Land**

building soil health, improving natural resources, leaving natural resources in better condition than found, promoting biodiversity, supporting resilient agriculture

**Developing a Deeper Relationship Between People and Food**

helping people to know, care about, and connect with the source of their food, improving public health, ensuring that people believe in the benefits of organic food and agriculture

**Growing the Organic Sector**

encouraging the organic practices of farmers, transitioning farms and acres to organic, ensuring processors and handlers find regionally-produced, organic products, helping all people to have access to quality, healthy, and affordable organic products

**Ensuring Integrity of Organic Products**

upholding the highest organic standards, leading and shaping a balanced conversation to improve organic standards, maintaining product integrity and transparency, ensuring trust in the organic label

**Driving Public Investment in Sustainable Agriculture**

promoting policies to support healthy, sustainable agriculture, empowering organic farmers, helping communities take responsibility for sustainable practices and equitable food access, encouraging people to advocate for organic values and principles



the ways we work

- Intentionally engaging people’s hearts and minds.
- Cultivating community connections through meaningful relationships.
- Providing personalized service that responds to needs with expertise & excellence.
- Developing collaborative partnerships that increase access to resources and expertise.
- Embracing courageous conversations and avoiding isolation.
- Setting realistic goals that stretch and help people grow, but are still within reach.
- Connecting staff’s and board’s personal values with our mission and aligning their strengths with organizational needs.
- Communicating in a shared voice with simple, positive and unified messages.





## Part 2

## Our Direction

Over the next few years, our focus will be directed toward achieving an impact in and through the sustainable and organic food movement, and among those the movement serves. This is our strategic direction. This direction will shape our energy, our priorities, and our action going forward.





## Our Next Steps

Our strategic plan orients us to pursue these four primary strategies

1. Retain and transition more farmers and ranchers into organic
2. Increase value and provide multiple benefits to certified clients
3. Engage and educate consumers
4. Increase collaboration, innovation, and investment in sustainable food systems

We will be building our capability and capacity over the next 3-5 years to achieve an increasingly greater impact via these four strategies. This is our **strategic direction**.

As we build on our successes of the past and orient ourselves to the future, we will use three lenses to see the way forward. (1) We will seek to leverage our **strategic advantages**. (2) We will evaluate potential strategies, tactics, and experiments by our **strategy screen**. (3) We will apply ourselves to the work ahead using four **guiding principles**.

## Strategic Advantages

Our strategic advantages are those unique things of value that we bring to the community. We will seek to leverage these to advance our mission and increase our impact:

- Quality staff and board
- Balance and diversity among OTCO clients
- Reputation and Credibility at diverse levels
- Combination of certification and education
- Access and influence

## Strategy Screens

We will evaluate all emerging ideas using these questions as a screen. This will help us create strategies which will fit our next steps best:

- Does it engage the membership?
- Does it leverage our strategic advantages?
- Does it improve the organization's efficiency and effectiveness?
- Does it improve the value of certification to clients?
- Is the result of the strategy consistent with our intended impacts?

## Principles to apply to our future

We will seek to maximize these four principles in everything we do.

### Provide high-value services to clients and public

#### What we mean

- Communicate changes and developments
- Listen and respond to clients' needs
- Stay current in the marketplace
- Uphold integrity of organics
- Provide services that support our mission

#### What we don't mean

- Diluting certification
- Serving for the sake of service
- Doing services in silos

### Intentionally and strategically broaden our audience

#### What we mean

- Analyze our audience
- Partner with other like-minded organizations
- Be intentional and take the time
- Reach more people
- Be inclusive and respectful

#### What we don't mean

- Engaging everyone
- Doing it alone
- Doing it randomly
- Avoiding anything that might offend

### Create the space *(organizational space for new and improved initiatives)*

#### What we mean

- Stay within the budget (or raise the money)
- Keep within skills and resources (or adding those)
- Prioritize existing programs with new efforts
- Respect and honor the skills and opinions of staff and the board

#### What we don't mean

- Making people take on tasks without getting rid of something
- Letting important things fall through the cracks

### Amplify our voice with consistent messaging

#### What we mean

- Communicate in a shared voice with simple, positive, unified messages
- Engage people's hearts and minds
- Tackle difficult issues and help people better evaluate them
- Reach more people with our messages
- Tailor message to the specific audience
- Garner more "earned" or "free" media coverage

#### What we don't mean

- Shouting more and louder
- Attacking others
- Telling people what they should think
- Building messages on fear
- Manufacturing crises

## Strategic Areas of Focus

These four areas of focus define our primary strategies and direction for the next 3-5 years.

### Focus #1

#### **Retain and transition more farmers into organic.**

##### Our Intent

We envision attracting and retaining more farmers and ranchers to transition into organic. This means building an “on ramp” to bring farmers and ranchers more easily into and through the transition. This also means that we will work with buyers to understand market needs and opportunities for growers. We will signal opportunity to growers and provide education to help the transition, and once in transition, to supporting farmers (financially through contracts, incentives, etc. and otherwise) through transition. Our intent is also to develop an increased awareness among manufacturers and processors of the steps and timeline necessary to successfully procure sufficient supplies of needed product and crops. It may also include the development of market and price premium for transitional crops and products to support growers through the period of increased costs and reduced yield.

##### What this looks like

- Increase in new producers
- Increased production by existing producers
- Fewer supply shortages
- More domestic supply
- Increased technical and educational support
- Better documentation of organic farm performance
- More knowledge support, public program support, including ability for sound economic analysis
- Less “turnover” – fewer farms exiting organic (in particular, those certified by OT)
- More mid-sized farms selling to wholesale
- Increase access to resource and expertise
- Conventional growers see participating in organic as a sound diversification strategy

**Focus #2****Increase value and provide multiple benefits to certified clients****Our Intent**

We intend to develop among certified clients a deeper appreciation for the value of certification and to make certification more meaningful and less transactional. We envision clients receiving multiple types of certification that are important to them, from Oregon Tilth. Clients will come to see the full and robust value of certification and embrace the wide array of ways certification will help their operations.

**What this looks like**

- Clients using a larger suite of options in and through certification
- Increased technology usage for certification (online, OSP, materials, etc.)
- Higher client retention
- High client engagement in education programs and advocacy efforts
- Fewer clients surrendering with OTCO

**Focus #3****Engage and educate consumers****Our Intent**

We intend for people to know, care about, and connect with the source of their food. We aim for people to believe in the benefits of organic food and agriculture for themselves, their family, and their broader community. Our vision is that consumers would come to understand that their purchases impact the land

**What this looks like**

- Oregon Tilth is a preferred source of accurate information for consumers
- OT Certified clients have increased sales
- Parents and families want and have access to organic outside of their homes
- Organic is the standard for consumers
- Consumers are reached through existing clientele
- There is catchy and punchy messaging and marketing throughout the community
- Organic research is promoted widely to consumers
- Measurable increase in the number of consumers who purchase organic
- Increase in people who can identify specific organic producers and processors

- Increase in the number of consumer (i.e. non-certified) members of Oregon Tilth
- Increase procurement of Oregon Tilth certified organic products and any certified organic products by institutional entities (e.g., schools, health care facilities, corporate campuses, etc.)

## Focus #4

### **Increase collaboration, innovation, and investment in sustainable food systems**

#### Our Intent

Building on our strategic advantage of access and influence and our engagement with clients, our intention is to increase collaboration across the sustainable and organic movements so that industry trade and consumer advocacy / govt. watchdog sectors are pulling in the same direction instead of 'fighting among ourselves' on issues of common interest. Oregon Tilth can be a bridge builder in this arena. We intend to play a role in creating a strong, united, and trusted voice for sustainable food systems at the national and regional level.

#### What this looks like

- Increased support for organic among policy makers
- Greater visibility and participation at the national and regional level by OT
- Organic has political clout at the state and national level
- Increased investment from national and state/local government and private equity in sustainable food systems
- More evidence of consensus and united action between organic trade and consumer advocacy / govt. watchdog sectors on key issues affecting organic businesses
- More people advocate for sustainable, organic values & principles and are willing to be active on important legislative issues
- Increase in the number and diversity of meaningful partners
- OT is the 'go to' resource for accurate information for policy-makers and aligned advocacy organizations, especially healthy land (conservation organizations need this information)

