

Frequently Asked Questions about the OREI and ORG Programs

1. I would like USDA-NIFA to provide the funds I need to buy a farm. Can a grant through the OREI or ORG programs be used for this?

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture is a branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that administers grants to support agricultural research, education and outreach. As such, we do a lot to benefit producers, but we do not offer direct support to farmers. Our Funding Restrictions are legislatively defined and can be found in each Request for Applications. There it states, "NIFA has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities." This would prohibit farm purchases even if they are related to organic research, extension or education.

2. I would like to conduct organic agricultural research in a foreign country. Is this allowable within the OREI or ORG programs?

International partnerships, linkages, and exchanges that contribute to solving or solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems *in the United States* are encouraged. Work outside the U.S., with limited applicability to U.S. agriculture will not be funded.

3. I would like to conduct a study that solely serves to compare conventional agricultural practices to organic agricultural practices. Is this type of research funded through the OREI or ORG programs?

The goal of our programs is to solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems through the integration of research, education, and extension activities. This work should enhance the ability of producers and processors to grow and market high quality organic agricultural products. In most cases, a study that solely serves to compare conventional agricultural practices to organic agricultural practices will fall short of this standard. In special cases, the use of conventional production technologies (including the use of GMOs) for comparative purposes or proof of concept is permissible, if cross-contamination with the organic and transitional treatments is prevented, and this comparison is required by the much broader over-arching goal of the project.

4. I would like to conduct my research on a conventional farm. Is this allowable in the OREI or ORG programs?

For OREI - organic systems fieldwork must be done on certified organic land and/or facilities. In special cases, studies can be conducted on land/facilities in transition to organic certification as is appropriate to project goals and objectives. For this program, a land/facility is not considered organic unless it has received USDA certification. It is expected that land/facilities in transition to organic certification will be certified by the end of the project. In addition, trials investigating animal health issues should be conducted in a certified organic setting if animal management could play a pivotal role in the response of the animal to the proposed intervention. For example, animals that have been raised under organic standards should be used to compare pasture-raised animals to those from a confined animal feeding operation. Otherwise, a certified organic setting is not required for clinical trials involving animal health.

For ORG - Fieldwork to set up treatments or collect data on organic practices must be done on certified organic land. However, as appropriate to project objectives, comparisons can include land in transition to organic certification and land not managed using organic practices. If land in transition is to be used, documentation should be provided from the certifying agent confirming a transition plan has been developed and is in progress.