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**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
FIRST IN THE UNITED STATES TO OFFER  
TAX INCENTIVES FOR ORGANIC FARMING PRACTICES**

Tax Rebates Are Provided For Converting From Conventional To Organic Farming Practices  
As One Means To Revive Rural Communities, Encourage Entrepreneurship, And Promote Health

**SIoux CITY, IA** – June 28, 2005 – The Woodbury County Board of Supervisors today took a bold step to revitalize the county’s rural communities by adopting the ‘Organics Conversion Policy’; a resolution to provide real property tax rebates for those who convert from conventional to organic farming practices. The Supervisors have committed to granting a total of \$50,000 in annual tax rebates, each year for 5 years, to those Woodbury County farmers who convert and become certified organic farmers. “The policy will promote the return to smaller acreage farms, requiring additional labor, while providing a greater return for their agricultural production,” said Rob Marqusee, Director of Rural Economic Development for Woodbury County.

U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D – Iowa) said, “Organic agriculture can increase farm income while diversifying our crop production and improving our environment. I applaud these efforts that support sustainable agricultural practices.”

As the first county in the nation to offer tax incentives to promote organic farm production, the Woodbury County Board of Supervisors intends to help reverse decades of rural population decline due to the growth of large farms typically employed for commodity farming. “We want to make it economically possible for young families to enter farming – our next generation of farmers,” said George Boykin, Chairman of the Woodbury County Board of Supervisors. “We invite those of our sons and daughters who have left Iowa to return and continue a noble and economically viable profession – farming,” said Boykin.

There is nationwide support for this policy. “We have the support of one of the most reputable organic food brands in the country, Organic Valley Family of Farms, the nation’s leading cooperative of organic farmers with nearly 700 farmer-owners in 20 states, said Marqusee.

“There is a tremendous opportunity right now for farmers to transition their farms to organic, particularly in organic dairy where demand is far exceeding supply,” said George Siemon, Organic Valley CEO. “This innovative program in Woodbury County could serve as a model for counties nationwide that are looking for ways to revitalize their rural communities. Organic farming is a proven lifeline for farmers in Iowa and across the United States,” said Siemon.

(more)

“This is a policy that will support our farmers both in the production and the marketing of their products. It will also provide encouragement for new entrepreneurial ventures such as local food processing facilities, product and brand development, and other value-add businesses. We will support new ventures that promote rural economic development; be it organic farming, biotech industries, ethanol refining, wind energy, or any viable proposal. The policy adopted today is one of many activities that Woodbury County will support in order to facilitate the economic revival of our rural communities,” said Marqusee.

Over half of all farmland is owned by individuals over the age of 55; with more than half presently being “tenant farmed”. It is expected that over half of all Iowa farmland will change ownership within the next 10 years due to the present average age of Iowa farmers – all of which could mean further expansion of commodity farms and further population decline.

The organic food market is growing at an annual rate of 20%, while domestic supplies of organic dairy, soybeans, and grain fall far short of current demand. “Rural communities will face further erosion of population and economic base unless we promote agribusiness that will attract our youth. The market demand is there, Woodbury County has the richest farmland in the world, and it would be a shame to lose out on this opportunity. We need to see our quality farmland as an economic and social asset that needs to be preserved. This policy addresses this need and opportunity,” said Marqusee.

Farmers who take advantage of the tax rebates will receive substantial support from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, the Leopold Center located in Ames, Iowa, local educational institutions, and from existing regional organic growers.

Organic Valley offers intensive support to farmers who want to convert to organic. The co-op offers the “Transition to Organic Fund,” a financial assistance program to help offset the costs for dairy farmers who are transitioning to organic. Farmers who are interested in the fund or joining the co-op should call Organic Valley’s Producer Hotline, (800) 809-9297 or visit [www.organicvalley.coop/our\\_story/join\\_our\\_coop/index.html](http://www.organicvalley.coop/our_story/join_our_coop/index.html).

The text of the policy may be found at: [www.woodburyiowa.com/departments/economic development](http://www.woodburyiowa.com/departments/economic_development).

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