

SOUTHEAST

TRANSITION TO ORGANIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

BUILDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ORGANIC INSPECTORS IN THE SOUTHEAST

From June 1–5, 2026, a partnership between Florida Organic Growers and the International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA) brought together a highly motivated group of future organic inspectors at the UF John D. Campbell Horticultural Center in Homestead, Florida. This in-person training offered an immersive, hands-on learning experience that will strengthen the organic workforce and fostered meaningful connections within the community.

Led by IOIA instructor Garth Kahl, the training blended engaging classroom instruction with real-world application. Participants explored the fundamentals of organic inspection as part of the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) organic certification process. Participants gained practical skills in verifying Organic System Plans (OSPs) in practice and completing an on-site farm inspection, as well as writing detailed inspection reports. Garth's use of real-world examples and pragmatic insights helped demystify the inspection process and emphasized fairness, consistency, and professionalism.



Participants of the Organic Inspection training in Homestead, FL.



Participants visited Empower Farms.



Participants engaged in a mock inspection.

Putting Knowledge into Practice at Empower Farms

A highlight of the week was the visit to Empower Farms, a certified organic operation known for its unique character and innovative approach to farming. There, participants conducted a mock inspection, putting their newly acquired knowledge into practice. This learning opportunity allowed trainees to build confidence, ask questions, and refine their observational and documentation skills in a supportive environment.



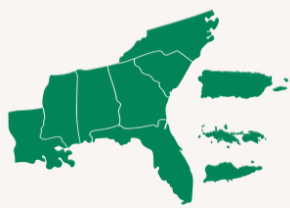
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FOG's Commitment to Professional Development

FOG demonstrated its commitment to workforce development and community building through both participation and sponsorship. FOG staff attended the training to strengthen their technical expertise. FOG continues to show leadership by investing in workforce development and investing in supporting the next generation of organic professionals.

A Diverse and Dedicated Cohort

The cohort of 10 participants included technical assistance providers, non-profit staff, and university-affiliated staff, all united by a shared passion for organic agriculture. Several of the participants were certified organic farmers themselves, interested in learning more about the system by which their own operations are evaluated for organic integrity. Throughout the week, participants inspired one another with their diverse backgrounds and ambitions.

Building the Future of Organic Inspection

The training not only built technical capacity but also identified clear next steps to strengthen the organic inspection network. Opportunities include connecting participants with certifiers better suited to their needs, recruiting promising trainees into inspection roles, and developing mentorship pathways for leaders.

Ultimately, this training exemplified the power of targeted, high-quality education to advance USDA organic certification capacity. By equipping participants with practical skills, fostering peer-to-peer learning, and identifying future leaders, FOG and IOIA are helping ensure the integrity and growth of organic agriculture, one inspector at a time.



Participants assessed farm infrastructure as part of the mock organic inspection.



Trainees gathered inside the greenhouse to discuss inspection findings and observations.



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