

Viewpoint: ‘Going organic isn’t cheap’ — What does it cost farmers to switch from conventional farming to organic?

Going organic isn’t cheap. [Farmland](#) has to stop using industrial-strength pesticides and fertilizers on land for three years before it can meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s standard for organic farming. Typically during that period the land is used as pasture. Even after the transition, costs are high: It’s expensive to pull weeds or to bring in sheep and goats to munch on them instead of relying on pesticides.

The upside is that consumers are willing to pay more for organically grown food. [Farmland](#) can rent out its fields for \$750 an acre on average, up from \$300 an acre before conversion, when they were used for commodity crops, [Farmland founder Craig] Wichner said. The company leases about two-thirds of its land and farms the other third itself.

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For organic farming to catch on, young people will have to embrace it. But most can’t afford to because of the sky-high cost of agricultural land, as The Times [reported](#) in November, and the three-year wait before land can be certified as organic. It’s as if tech start-ups had to buy their own office buildings before they could go into business, Wichner told me. Investors in companies such as Farmland are essentially supplying farmers with the “office buildings” they need to work their food-producing magic.

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here](#)