

DoW Policy Brief

Organic Meals for the U.S. Military and 30 Million School Children A 5-Year Supply Chain Mobilization Plan to Improve Readiness, Resilience, and Domestic Food Security

DATE: January 13, 2026

PREPARED FOR: U.S. Department of War (DoW) leadership and partners

Executive Summary

This brief outlines a feasible, phased plan to provide **certified organic food across the full menu** (produce, meat, dairy, eggs) for **U.S. service members** and **federally supported school meals** (~30 million children/day). The plan includes **food procurement** and a **5-year domestic farm transition and supply-chain buildout** to ensure a reliable supply at scale.

Even using conservative assumptions, the combined program—including farm transition support—would cost roughly **~\$28.6B per year** during the 5-year ramp-up, which is approximately **~1.9% of a \$1.5T defense budget**. After the transition period, ongoing costs are primarily **food purchasing**, not transition subsidies.

Why This Matters for DoW

Mission readiness and performance

- Nutrition is a readiness multiplier: better food quality supports training performance, recovery, and overall force health.

Supply chain resilience

- A domestic organic mobilization improves supply reliability through diversified sourcing, regional aggregation, and stronger cold-chain capacity.

Risk management and continuity

- Building scalable, traceable food supply systems reduces vulnerability to disruptions, contamination events, and single-source dependence.

Current Annual Food Spending (Baseline)

- **Military food procurement (DLA Troop Support – Subsistence):** ~\$2.9B/year
- **Federal school meals (NSLP + SBP):** ~\$23.5B/year

- Combined baseline food spending: ~\$26.4B/year

Estimated Cost of Fully Organic Meals (High-End Planning Case)

Assumes a conservative **+40% organic premium** at institutional scale.

- Additional cost (schools): ~\$9.4B/year
- Additional cost (military): ~\$1.16B/year
- Total additional food cost: ~\$10.56B/year
- Total organic food spending: ~\$36.96B/year

Acres Needed to Supply the Full Organic Menu

Because meat, dairy, and eggs require substantial **organic feed + pasture**, acreage is the primary constraint.

- Estimated acreage required: ~8–18 million acres
- Planning midpoint: ~14 million acres

The 5-Year Mobilization Program (Farm Transition + Supply Chain)

A complete program must include more than certification—it must build capacity for **organic feed, slaughter/processing, dairy handling, egg packing, aggregation, and cold chain** while ensuring organic integrity and traceability.

5-year total transition and supply-chain support (midpoint): ~\$90B

- Annualized: ~\$18B/year for 5 years

Key components:

1. **Transition payments (3-year ramp for cropland + pasture)**
2. **Technical assistance and training** (transition planning, herd/feed conversion, pest/weed management, grazing systems)
3. **Certification cost-share**
4. **Processing and cold-chain expansion** (meat, dairy, eggs, storage, regional hubs)

5. **Contracting modernization** (multi-year offtake, regional sourcing pathways, demand guarantees)
6. **Traceability and integrity systems** (chain-of-custody, audits, fraud prevention)

Total Annual Cost During the 5-Year Build Phase

- **Organic food premium:** ~\$10.6B/year
- **Transition + infrastructure support:** ~\$18.0B/year
- **Total:** ~\$28.6B/year

Budget Context

- ~\$28.6B/year ÷ \$1,500B = ~1.9%

DoD Implementation Path (Phased)

Year 1–2 (Pilot + capacity build):

- Prioritize highest-volume items and “easy wins”: grains, produce contracts, select dairy and eggs, and regionally concentrated procurement.
- Stand up regional organic aggregation and cold-chain nodes near major installations.

Year 3 (Transition graduation):

- First major wave of transitioning acres becomes eligible for certified organic supply.
- Expand animal-product supply via organic feed + processing readiness.

Year 4–5 (Scale to full offering):

- Expand to global logistics pathways, shipboard supply, and broader operational rations where feasible.

Key Takeaway

For **~2% of a \$1.5T defense budget**, DoD can help catalyze a domestic organic food system capable of feeding the force and supporting children—while strengthening supply resilience and long-term national food security.