

# 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

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**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**

- $\sim \$28.6\text{B/year} \div \$1,500\text{B} = \sim 1.9\%$

### **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**, DoW 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.