The Sustainable Food Trade Association (SFTA) said Monday that 75 percent of its members’ sales in 2015 were certified-organic.

That’s from the New Castle, Va.-based trade group’s just-released, fourth Member Sustainability Progress Report, which contains aggregated data from reports submitted by 22 SFTA members in 2015 about their prior fiscal year activities, including 82 percent of them sourced products that are certified through fair trade organizations.

The 2016 report also shows that the volume of organic products purchased by the 22 members reporting data was more than 2 billion pounds.

Last year’s report showed that 77 percent of sales of the 22 members reporting for 2014 were certified-organic. The 2015 report also said the volume of organic products purchased by the 22 members reporting data last year was about 1.9 billion pounds.

It is important to note that the group of 22 SFTA members reporting data in the 2016 report is not the same group of 22 SFTA members reporting data for the 2015 report, making any comparison of percentages of organic sales or volumes of organic products purchased from year to year irrelevant, SFTA Executive Director Katherine DiMatteo told Sustainable Food News on Monday.

The 22 SFTA members providing data for the 2016 sustainability progress report include: Amy’s Kitchen; Annie’s, Inc.; Ashland Food Co-op; Bridge’s Organic Produce; Ciranda; Clif Bar; Community Food Co-op; GloryBee Foods; Guayaki; Hummingbird Wholesale; LifeSource Natural Foods; MOM’s Organic Market; Nutiva; Organic Valley; Organically Grown Company; Outpost Natural Foods; PCC Natural Markets; Port Townsend Coop; So Delicious Dairy Free; Straus Family Creamery; Traditional Medicinals; and Viva Tierra.

The companies that reported in the 2015 report but not this year’s report include: Earl's Organic Produce; Nature’s Path Foods; Pacific Foods of Oregon; and United Natural Foods, Inc. The companies reporting data in this year's report but not last year's report include Clif Bar, Guayaki, Hummingbird Wholesale, and Nutiva.

SFTA was formed in 2008 by several U.S. organic food companies in an effort to transition the organic food industry into a sustainable food system by measuring, analyzing, and reporting their sustainability activities.

Members of SFTA sign a Declaration of Sustainability committing to working toward improvement in 11 action areas including organics, climate change, energy, distribution, labor, packaging, water, waste, animal care, education, and governance/employee relations.

A year ago, SFTA teamed up with nonprofit B Lab to launch the Quick Impact Assessment (QIA) tool, which asks 30 questions that address a company’s organic purchases, community involvement, emissions, governance, humane animal management, stakeholder engagement, worker standards, and water quality/use.

Points are assigned to answers given then tallied, reports are then generated to assess where, and how, companies can improve their social and environmental performance.

SFTA said many of its members have taken the QIA since its launch in September 2015. Initial results show that SFTA companies as a whole achieve the 80+ points needed to be eligible for B Corp certification, scoring an average of 88 points.

However, further analysis shows SFTA members could do much better as stewards of the environment. Only 40 percent of the total points that can be earned in that area were achieved. Members also have a lot of room to improve in regard to their interactions with communities.

B Corp’s QIA also asked SFTA customized questions about their sustainability priorities, which resulted in these top five priorities:

1. Organic practices
2. Labor
3. Solid waste
4. Energy
5. Development of sustainability strategy, administration, and management

Meanwhile, other aggregated data from the 22 member companies highlighted in the 2016 progress report include:

- 76 percent of the electricity used was generated by renewable energy sources such as wind, water and solar. And, 32 percent of that renewable energy was generated on-site, 10 percent more than last year
- 82 percent buy or offer certified-fair trade ingredients and products
- 43 percent reduced the amount of water used in the prior year, while increasing production and sales
- 77 percent of waste was diverted from landfill, up 5 percent from last year; an average of 39 percent was recycled, 17 percent composted and 21 percent repurposed
- 95 percent have integrated a paid position to lead sustainability efforts and training

Read the previous annual sustainability progress reports here.
75% of U.S. sustainable food group's 2015 sales were organic