

LEARN MORE

Learn about the organic regulations, how to apply for certification, and the support available for organic farms, including a list of accredited certifying agencies at:

www.usda.gov/organic



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Is certified organic right for your farm?



WHY BECOME CERTIFIED?

Being certified organic is the fullest way to demonstrate the best practices and careful stewardship you have put into your product. Farmers cite many reasons to be certified organic, among them clear economic, social, environmental and family wellbeing benefits that come with organic methods and the organic seal.

With its third-party verification of quality and purity, certified organic holds value in the marketplace and may command great prices as a result.

Beyond profits, organic methods also provide clear benefits for farm families, their land, and their communities.

1 Seal of Quality

The certified organic seal guarantees certain safeguards to your customer, verified by a third-party: no GMOs, ionizing radiation, or sewage sludge.



The regulations also require annual compliance inspections, have a strict list of approved materials, require documentation of organic practices, and provide guidelines for protecting the soil ecology and water quality. For consumers concerned about this level of traceability in their food, certified organic provides that important assurance.

2 Access to Markets

As a certified organic grower you have many choices about where to sell your product. Many buyers, including many supermarkets and distributors and most cooperatives, seek out and promote organic products because of the increasing demand for organic foods.

Whatever your marketing goals, there are many opportunities when you sell as certified organic.

3 Premium Price in Marketplace

Food labeling can be confusing and misleading, which is why certified organic is an important choice for consumers.

Consumers are willing to pay a premium for food that carries the USDA organic seal, or that contains organic ingredients.

4 Environmental Stewardship

As every organic farmer knows, organic production is more than just the avoidance of synthetic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. It is a whole system of soil management and nutrient cycling to maintain ecological balance, protect water quality, and enhance biodiversity.

Organic practices have the power to increase productivity of the land over time, building fertility and biodiversity for the next generation.

5 A Growing Movement

Join the growing number of people who address erosion, pollution and reduced soil health through holistic practices of soil, stock, and crop management. Through this choice you will join a supportive network of innovators who continue to advance organic methods and grow the success of the movement through their shared purpose.



Addressing your concerns about certification

“It costs too much.”

Although there is a fee to be part of the program, a significant portion of your certification fee can be reimbursed through a federal program.

“There’s too much paperwork.”

“Keeping good records required by my certification makes me a better farmer,” is something we hear regularly as we ask organic growers about their experience with paperwork.

Efficient, regular note taking can help refine decision-making, improve management, track profitability by crop, and be an important part of food safety.

“The Organic brand doesn’t represent me.”

Certification is not for everyone. However, organic pioneers demanded and defined the core practices we follow today, and the USDA is committed to making sure farmers’ voices continue to be heard at the national level on all aspects of certification.