

## Organic Crops Certification

### Did you know?

- **Organic production** is a system that is managed in accordance with the NOP regulations to respond “to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity.” (7 CFR §205.2 Terms Defined. *Organic Production.*)
- The **organic transition period** is the time before certification during which crop land must be *managed organically* in accordance with the USDA NOP federal regulations. For crop land, this time is 36 months. Organic management during transition must be documented and verifiable. (See checklist on back!)
- Inputs and materials used in organic production must comply with the regulations outlined in the “National List.” In general, unless noted in the National List, most synthetic inputs (e.g. synthetic fertilizers and pesticides) are prohibited and most natural inputs are allowed.
- Organic crops include produce, grain, hay, pasture, livestock feed, plants, or any plant part sold as an agricultural product.
- Land eligibility requirements state that you must have a documented 36-month field history free of *prohibited* inputs for all growing areas you seek to certify.
- Record keeping for organic practices will be verified by a third-party certifier to determine certification eligibility and compliance with regulations.
- Organic crops must be produced without the use of GMOs, sewage sludge, and ionizing radiation.
- Only certified crops carry the USDA Organic Seal. Organic crops are produced on certified land/growing areas.
- Organic is: protected by law, inspected by experts, traceable from farm to sale and shaped by public input.



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# Crops Certification Checklist

- Field History** for all growing areas requested for certification will need to be submitted at the time of application to your certifier. You'll be required to show fields have 36 months free from prohibited inputs.
- Crop list** by field
- Input and materials list**, including product names and manufacturer/source information. Records on natural inputs such as composts, manure, rock dust and leaf mulch must be kept. Be sure to note inputs such as soil inoculants, seed treatments, seed pelleting and potting mix that may be overlooked. (Save your labels and receipts!)
- Input use records** (application dates, rates and locations.)
- Seed documentation (tags) or planting stock information** for crops requested for organic certification and used during the 36-month transition period. Organic seed/planting stock must be used unless commercially unavailable. A seed/planting stock search must record 3 sources searched, documenting that organic options were commercially unavailable. If organic annual transplants are used, keep receipts and organic certificates from vendors listing organic crops. *Note: Organic seeds must be used for organic sprouts—no exceptions.*
- Maps** including fields, growing areas, storage locations and all other areas involved in organic production (e.g. grain bins, packing sheds, barns, etc.) and adjoining land use. Include buffer areas, if adjoining land is not managed free from prohibited inputs, or if management practices are unknown.
- Biodiversity Plan**
- Crop Rotation Plan**
- Commingling and Contamination Prevention Plan**
- Production records during the transition period**, including planting/seeding records, field activity logs, harvest records, equipment clean out, transport, storage and sales records.
- Non-retail and retail labels** planned for use with organic crops. (Labels used will need to be approved by your certifier before use.)
- Organic certificates** from organic seed sources, seedlings, or other plant material.
- Knowledge of the regulations.** Be sure you understand how regulations apply to your operation!