

HOW TO BECOME AN ORGANIC PRODUCER

What Is Organic?

- Organic is a strictly regulated term (unlike “natural” and “sustainable”)
- National Organic Program standards overseen by USDA
- Producers must be certified by Third Party Certifiers (CCOF, OTCO, QAI, etc.)
- Organic rules are about a management system, not just the end product
- Very limited use of synthetic substances
- No GMOs, no irradiation, no sewage sludge

Who Can Be (and Must Be) Certified Organic?

- Farmers
- Livestock producers
- Wildcraft food collectors
- Food processors
- Retailers (optional)
- Restaurants (optional)
- Operations with gross income from organic sales below \$5,000 (optional)

How Can I Label My Organic Products?

There are three labeling categories for certified organic products:

100% Organic	Organic	Made with Organic...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only ingredients certified “100% Organic”• Organic processing aids• May use USDA organic seal• May use certifier’s logo	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 95% organic ingredients• Limited approved nonorganic ingredients and processing aids• May use USDA organic seal• May use certifier’s logo	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 70% organic ingredients• Limited approved nonorganic ingredients and processing aids• Must NOT use USDA seal• May use certifier’s logo

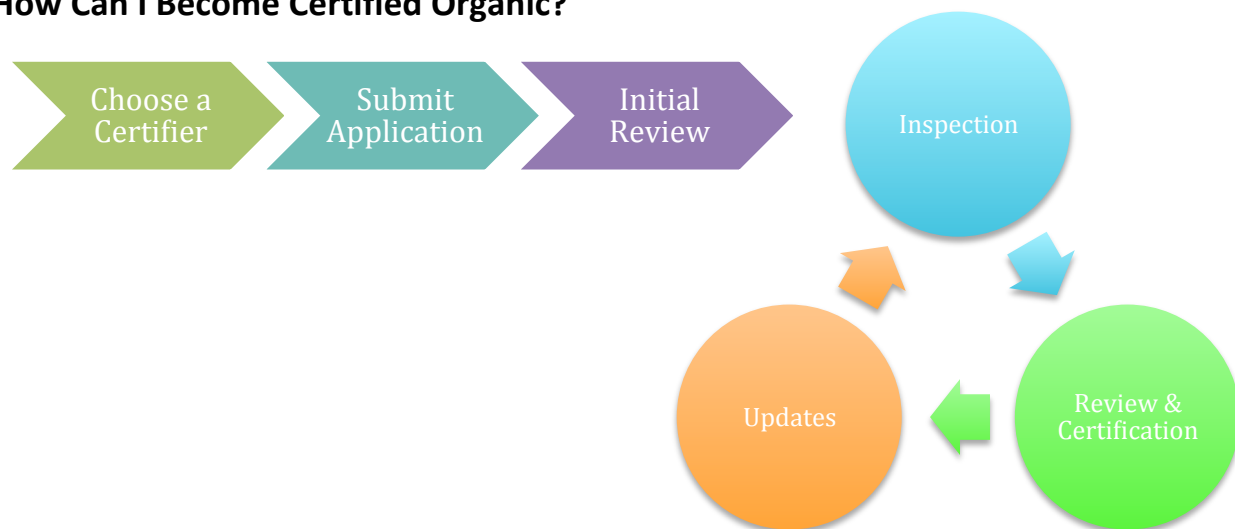
If you are not a certified organic operation, you may only list organic ingredients within the ingredient statement (ex: “Ingredients: organic flour, sugar, organic apples). These products must NOT display the USDA seal or a certifier’s logo.



What's Different About Organic?

- **Ingredients:** Organic certifiers review each organic formula and label to make sure it meets the labeling requirements. Suppliers provide their organic certificate to confirm that ingredients are organic. The “National List” is a limited list of nonagricultural ingredients and processing aids that may be used.
- **Contamination & Commingling:** Organic processors make sure that organic products aren't mixed with nonorganic products and that organic products are protected from contact with cleaning materials or packaging that may have prohibited residues.
- **Record-keeping:** Organic producers have their records inspected every year and must document sales, production, and purchases to show that they maintained organic integrity.

How Can I Become Certified Organic?



Additional Resources

The organic regulations can be confusing – **beware** of misinformation about organic on the internet, in the media, and in the food industry! The National Organic Program website is the most reliable source for information: www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop. It includes:

- Fact Sheets
- Lists of certifiers
- Information about allowed and prohibited materials
- FAQs

Certifiers' websites can provide additional background about organic as well as details about fees and the application process. CCOF, Oregon Tilth, and QAI are several of the largest and oldest organic certifiers in the U.S.

- www.ccof.org
- www.tilth.org
- www.qai-inc.com

Trade associations and publications from food producers and retailers can provide more information relevant to your specific business – **but don't forget to fact check!**