



Organic Labeling at Farmer's Markets

Farmer's markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations are great places for customers interested in locally sourced products to find and purchase organic products. Many of these customers appreciate knowing how and where the products that they purchase were grown, and the organic certification status of the farmers.

Farmers and vendors who use the word "organic" to describe their products or practices in the marketplace must comply with the USDA organic regulations. The Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) states that no person may affix a label to, or provide other marketing information concerning, an agricultural product if that label or information implies, directly or indirectly, that such product is produced and handled using organic methods, except in accordance with the OFPA.

Most farms and businesses that grow, handle, or process organic products must be certified, with only a few exceptions. Producers and handlers that sell less than \$5,000 per year of organic products are exempt from certification. These operations may choose to obtain certification but they are not required to be certified.

Requirements for Exempt Organic Producers

Farms exempt from certification that want to sell organic products must comply with organic requirements, including:

- Not using genetically engineered organisms (GMOs) and ensuring that preventative practices are used to protect

organic products from GMOs.

- Not planting any seeds that had synthetic treatments, such as fungicides or insecticides.
- Using organic seeds unless organic seeds were not commercially available.
- Only using seedlings and transplants that have been grown organically using approved organic potting mixes and inputs.
- Applying only fertilizer, pest, disease and weed management inputs that have either been approved by EPA, the Organic Materials Review Institute, or by a USDA accredited certification agency, and are allowed under the USDA organic regulations.
- Implementing a soil building crop rotation on the farm, where annual crops of the same type are not grown in succession in the same field.
- Not applying manure to fields growing crops for human consumption any sooner than 90 days before harvest for crops that are not in contact with soil (e.g. sweet corn), or 120 days before harvest for crops that are in contact with soil (e.g. root crops, tomatoes, peppers, etc.).
- Ensuring that compost containing manure meets the requirement of having a carbon to nitrogen ratio of between 25 to 1 and 40 to 1, has had a temperature maintained of 130 to 170 ° F for 15 days and has been turned 5 times, or, if in a static vessel, had this temperature maintained for 3 days.

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- Managing all mammalian livestock organically from the last third of their mother's gestation to the day of slaughter. All poultry has been managed organically from the second day of life. Organic management includes providing certified organic feed.
- Providing all livestock with access to the outdoors, with ruminants receiving 30% of their nutrition from pasture during a minimum 120 day grazing season. All animal health products and feed supplements have either been approved by the Organic Materials Review Institute or by a USDA accredited certification agency and are allowed under the USDA organic regulations.

How much does certification cost?

Fees charged for certification vary among certifying agents due to the size and complexity of the farm operation, the costs of inspection, and other factors. Certifiers provide information on their fee structures upon request.

USDA Organic Certification Cost Share Programs reimburse certified organic operations for as much as 75 percent—up to a maximum of \$750 a year—of certification costs. Certified organic operations should contact their State Departments of Agriculture for more information and an application.

Want to file a complaint?

If you are concerned that an organic product isn't meeting the USDA standards, or that an operation is making an organic claim without certification, submit a complaint to the USDA. We investigate every complaint we receive, and if we find any problems, we take action.

If a farm or business violates the USDA organic regulations, penalties may include civil penalties up to \$11,000 per violation and/or suspension or revocation of an operation's organic certificate. Suspected violations of the organic regulations may be reported to the USDA. Send an email to NOPCompliance@ams.usda.gov or call the National Organic Program at 202-720-3252.

Not sure if you need to be certified?

See NOP's "Do I Need to Be Certified Organic?" fact sheet at <http://1.usa.gov/1m2Syj4>.

Want to Learn About Organic Certification?

USDA's Organic Literacy Initiative is a package of training and outreach materials that provides an overview of organic agriculture and USDA programs and services for organic farmers, ranchers, and processors.

Learn about what organic means, how certification works, and how to access helpful resources. The online training modules and accompanying handouts provide a quick, easy overview of the USDA organic seal.

Access the Organic Literacy Initiative at:
www.ams.usda.gov/organicinfo

