

Organic Vegetable Production

Organic vegetable farming is a production system that relies on biological processes and natural materials to manage soil fertility and pest populations, and to promote healthy crop growth. With the federal Organic Foods Production Act, use of the term “organic” to describe an agricultural product in the marketplace is regulated. Vegetables sold as “organic” must be grown and handled according to the National Organic Rule and any applicable state regulations. The National Organic Rule prohibits the use of most synthetic chemicals (fertilizers, pesticides, etc.), and requires farmers to write and follow organic production plans, as well as keep farm and field records. Fields used to grow organic crops may not have had any prohibited material applied to them in the previous three years. In addition, USDA-accredited organic certification agents must inspect and certify all operations with more than \$5,000 in gross annual income from sales of products labeled “organic.”

Growers interested in transitioning to organic production should educate themselves about practices used in their area and plan carefully. Experience suggests that it can take a number of years for pest populations and soil nutrient cycles to adjust enough for successful organic production. Portions of this guide related to soil sampling, nutrient availability, and crop nutrient requirements include information relevant to organic production, as do the overviews of Insect Management Strategies, Disease Management Strategies, and Weed Management Strategies.

Growers should always check with their organic certification agents before using any product to make sure it meets their certifier’s criteria.

Other organic production resources include:

eXtension, the national extension website, offers resources on organic agriculture at www.extension.org.

Organic Vegetable Gardening Techniques (University of Missouri Extension Guide G6220) provides an introduction to organic production techniques (available from University of Missouri Extension Publications, extension.missouri.edu/publications).

Resource Guide for Organic Insect and Disease Management (Cornell University) provides specific recommendations for pests and diseases of major vegetable crops (available at web.pppmb.cals.cornell.edu/resourceguide).

Appropriate Technology for Rural Areas (ATTRA) offers a number of publications on their website: www.attra.org.

The National Organic Program (NOP) offers a program handbook that provides a list of materials allowed for use in organic production, plus a complete list of accredited certification agents on their website: www.ams.usda.gov/nop.

The Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) publishes a list of products they have found to meet certified organic production criteria. For details, visit www.omri.org.

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program offers a number of research-based publications about pest management, including organic options. A complete catalog is available at www.sare.org/Learning-Center.

If you desire organic certification, you should contact a certification agent during the period of transition to organic production. The organizations on pages 40-41 have been accredited by the USDA as of September 2018. Contact them directly for information about fees and the certification procedure. The USDA lists all accredited organizations at www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/certifying-agents.

Consult your local extension office for other resources available in your area.

Organic Certifiers Servicing the Midwest

Some states do not have a National Organic Program certification agency headquartered in state. However, multiple certifying agencies service the Midwest region with traveling inspectors. Many take clients on a case-by-case basis, depending on the availability of inspectors and other factors. Here is a list of certifiers that are utilized in the Midwest, with notes on their service range.

California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)

Services entire United States, Canada, and Mexico.

2155 Delaware Avenue, Suite 150

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

831-423-2263

Fax: 831-423-4528

Email: ccof@ccof.org

www.ccof.org

Ecocert ICO

Services entire United States and Canada.

P.O. Box 158

Plainfield, IN 46168

888-337-8246 (toll free)

Fax: 317-708-0628

Email: info.ecocertico@ecocert.com

www.ecocertico.com

Global Organic Alliance

Services entire United States.

P.O. Box 530

3185 Township Road 179

Bellefontaine, OH 43311

937-593-1232

Fax: 937-593-9507

Email: goaorg@centurylink.net

www.goa-online.org

International Certification Services (ICS)

Services worldwide.

PO Box 517

301 5th Avenue SE

Medina, ND 58467

701-486-3578

Fax: 701-486-3580

Email: info@ics-intl.com

www.ics-intl.com

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Services Iowa only.

Organic Certification Program

Maury Wills

502 East 9th Street

Des Moines, IA 50319

515-281-5783

Email: OrganicProgram@iowaagriculture.gov

www.iowaagriculture.gov/AgDiversification/organicCertification.asp

MOSA Certified Organic

Services producers and processor/handlers throughout the United States with current clients in California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, and Wisconsin.

P.O. Box 821

122 West Jefferson Street

Viroqua, WI 54665

608-637-2526

Fax: 608-637-7032

Email: mosa@mosaorganic.org

www.mosaorganic.org

Minnesota Crop Improvement Association

Services Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

1900 Hendon Avenue

St. Paul, MN 55108

612-626-6305

855-213-4461 (toll free)

Fax: 612-625-3748

Email: mncia@mncia.org

www.mncia.org

Nature's International Certification Services (NICS)

Services Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin.

224 East State Highway 56

Viroqua, WI 54665

608-637-7080

Fax: 608-637-7460

Email: nics@naturesinternational.com

www.naturesinternational.com

Oregon Tilth Certified Organic

Services entire United States, Canada, and Mexico.
 2525 SE 3rd Street
 Corvallis, OR 97333
 503-378-0690
 877-378-0690 (toll free)
 Fax: 541-753-4924
 Email: organic@tilth.org
 www.tilth.org

Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) International

Services entire United States with additional regional offices in Canada, Mexico and Japan.
 1340 North Cotner Boulevard
 Lincoln, NE 68505
 402-477-2323
 Fax: 402-477-4325
 Email: info@ocia.org
 www.ocia.org

Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association

Services Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Virginia.
 41 Croswell Road
 Columbus, OH 43214
 614-262-2022
 Fax: 614-421-2011
 Email: organic@oeffa.org
 www.oeffa.org

Pro-Cert Organic Systems Ltd.

Services entire United States and Canada.
 2311 Elm Tree Road
 Cambray, ON K0M 1E0
 705-374-5602
 Fax: 705-374-5604
 Email: infoebo@pro-cert.org
 www.pro-cert.org

Quality Assurance International

Services entire United States and Canada.
 4370 La Jolla Village Drive, Suite 300
 San Diego, CA 92122
 858-200-9704
 Email: info@qai-inc.com
 www.qai-inc.com

Yield of Vegetable Crops

Crop	Expected Yields in Tons per Acre		
	Average	Good	Excellent
Asparagus	1	1.5	2
Bean, snap	2	3	4
Cabbage	13	15	20
Cantaloupe	10	15	19
Cucumber (slicing)	9	12	15
Cucumber (pickling, hand harvest)	6	10	12
Onion	13	18	23
Pepper, green	14	17	20
Potato (fall)	10	15	20
Pumpkin	10	15	25
Spinach	6	8	10
Summer squash	10	13	16
Sweet corn	4.5	8	10
Sweet potato	7	12	15
Tomato (fresh market)	11	13	15
Tomato (processing)	25	29	33
Watermelon	15	20	25

This table only provides general yield estimates for new or prospective growers. The USDA-National Agricultural Statistics Service Vegetable Survey provides more accurate information.