

Organic Certification

Reviewed by Ashley Adair – Apr 2022

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. The federal Organic Foods Production Act regulates the use of the term “organic” to describe an agricultural product in the marketplace. 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 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.

This guide includes recommendations for some inputs that are permitted in certified organic production, but also for many that are not. The note ‘OMRI-listed’ indicates pesticides that have been listed by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) as approved for use in organic production in the U.S. 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:

eOrganic, the Organic Agriculture Community of the Extension Foundation eorganic.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 northeast.sare.org/resources/resource-guide-for-organic-insect-and-disease-management/).

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

If you desire organic certification, you should contact a certification agent during the period of transition to organic production. The organizations listed below have been accredited by the USDA as of April 2022.

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 if it is limited.

CCOF Certification Services, LLC

2155 Delaware Ave., Ste. 150
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Phone: (831) 423-2263
Fax: (831) 423-4528
Email: ccof@ccof.org
ccof.org

Ecocert USA

2498 Perry Crossing Way, Ste. 210
Plainfield, IN 46168

Phone: (888) 337-8246 (toll free)
 Email: info.ecocertico@ecocert.com
ecocert.com

Global Organic Alliance, Inc.

P.O. Box 530
 3185 Township Rd. 179
 Bellefontaine, OH 43311
 Phone: (937) 593-1232
 Fax: (937) 593-9507
 Email: goaorg@centurylink.net
goa-online.org

International Certification Services (ICS)

PO Box 517
 301 5th Ave. S.E.
 Medina, ND 58467
 Phone: (701) 486-3578
 Fax: (701) 486-3580
 Email: info@ics-intl.com
ics-intl.com

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Organic Certification

502 E. 9th St.
 Des Moines, IA 50319
 Phone: (515) 281-5783
 Email: katie.hyde@iowaagriculture.gov
iowaagriculture.gov/agricultural-diversification-market-development-bureau/organic-certification-program

Midwest Organic Services Association, Inc. (MOSA)

P.O. Box 821
 122 W. Jefferson St.
 Viroqua, WI 54665
 Phone: (608) 637-2526
 Fax: (608) 492-0470
 Email: mosa@mosaorganic.org
mosaorganic.org

Minnesota Crop Improvement Association

1900 Hendon Ave.
 St. Paul, MN 55108
 Phone: (612) 625-7766
 Phone: (855) 213-4461 (toll free)
 Fax: (612) 625-3748
 Email: mncia@mncia.org
mnciaorganic.org

Nature's International Certification Services (NICS)

224 E. State Highway 56
 Viroqua, WI 54665
 Phone: (608) 637-7080
 Fax: (608) 637-7460
 Email: nics@naturesinternational.com
naturesinternational.com

Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association

41 Croswell Rd.
 Columbus, OH 43214
 Phone: (614) 262-2022
 Email: organic@oeffa.org
oeffa.org

Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Organic Certification

2800 N. Lincoln Blvd.
 Oklahoma City, OK 73152
 Phone: (405) 522-5924
 Email: jeff.stearns@ag.ok.gov
ag.ok.gov/divisions/food-safety

OneCert, Inc.

1021 D St.
 Lincoln, NE 68502
 Phone: 402-420-6080
 Email: info@onecert.com
onecert.com

OnMark Certification Services LLC

60324 Missouri Ave.
 Goshen, IN 46528
 Phone: 574-971-8479
 Fax: 574-971-5424
 E-mail: office@onmarkcertification.com
onmarkcertification.com

Oregon Tilth Certified Organic

PO Box 368
 301 S.W. 4th St., Ste. 110
 Corvallis, OR 97333
 Phone: (503) 378-0690
 Phone: (877) 378-0690 (toll free)
 Email: organic@tilth.org
tilth.org

Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA)

1340 North Cotner Blvd.
Lincoln, NE 68505
Phone: (402) 477-2323
Fax: (402) 477-4325
Email: info@ocia.org
ocia.org

Pro-Cert Organic Systems, Ltd.

2311 Elm Tree Rd.
Cambray, ON K0M 1E0
Phone: (705) 374-5602
Fax: (705) 374-5604
Email: ifoebo@pro-cert.org
pro-cert.org

Quality Assurance International

4370 La Jolla Village Dr., Ste. 300
San Diego, CA 92122
Phone: (858) 791-3531
Email: info@qai-inc.com
qai-inc.com

Quality Certification Services (QCS)

5700 S.W. 34th St., Ste. 349
Gainesville, FL 32608
Phone: (352) 377-0133
Email: qcs@qcsinfo.org
qcsinfo.org

SCS Global Services, Inc.

2000 Powell St., Ste 600
Emeryville, CA 94608
Phone: (510) 452-8000
Email: bnauman@scsglobalservices.com
scsglobalservices.com/services/organic-certification

Where Food Comes From Organic (formerly A Bee Organic)

202 6th St., Ste. 400
Castle Rock, CO 80104
Phone: (303) 895-3002
Email: info@wfcfororganic.com
wfcfororganic.com