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<http://organictransition.umn.edu/>

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# Organic Certification

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# Why Get Certified?

- Use of organic seal
- Access to organic markets
- Improve profitability potential
- Increase environmental sustainability
- Protect from contamination



# Organic Certification

- I. Overview
- II. Choosing a Certification Agency
- III. Applying for Certification
- IV. Inspection
- V. Decision Process



# Certification

Process that verifies organic regulations have been followed



# Certification Overview

## Organic Producer Certificate

The Midwest Organic Services Association, Inc. MOSA, has verified through a third-party inspection and review that this Producer's operation has met the organic standards of MOSA.

2001 Certified Organic Crops/Products: CORN, HAY, PASTURE, EGGS

**Producer Number:** WIG0304-01  
**Associate Number:** 421

This certificate serves to establish the current MOSA certification of the member named above and is not valid for trade. Transaction certificates are issued for requested trade purposes.

Diane Colie  
Authorized Signature - Certification Coordinator

4/2/2001  
Date

12-1

State Number

4/2/01 - 9/30/01

Certificate Validation Dates

MOSA-I-012-99

MOSA Inspector Number



- Farmer works with certifying agency
- Organic certificate issued annually
- Allows crops, livestock and processed products to be sold as organic

# Who Needs to be Certified?



- Crop producers, livestock producers, and processors
- Operations with more than \$5,000 in annual organic sales
- Not required in transition

# Who Certifies Organic Farmers?

- The USDA does not certify farmers
- Accredits certifiers as agents to conduct organic certification





# Who Are Certifying Agents?

- U.S. or International
- Private or State-sponsored
- For-profit or non-profit



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# Finding a Certifier

- The USDA-AMS lists certifiers by each state
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture lists certifiers that operate in MN
- Other states will have their lists as well
- (Check Resources at end of this modules for links)



# Choosing a Certifier – First Considerations



- Does the certifier operate in your state?
- Are they approved to certify your type of operation?
- Can they certify your operation in time for you to sell your first organic crop?
- Do your potential buyers have any preference regarding which certifier you choose?

# Learning about Certifying Agencies

- Get recommendations
- Visit agency websites
- Visit certifier booths at organic conferences or other events





# How Much Will Certification Cost?

- Costs vary by agency
- Fees are public
- Can be based on production volume and/or sales
- Crops, livestock and handling require separate certifications



# Typical Costs



- In 2012, median in MN = \$1000
- Nationally
  - \$700 for small operation
  - \$1000-2000 for medium operation
  - \$6000 for a large operation
- Cost share is available

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# When to Apply



3-6 months **BEFORE** you are ready to sell an organic crop

# What You Will Need to Start

- Records from transition years
- Field maps
- Organic System Plan (OSP) of your certifying agency



# Organic System Plan (OSP)

- A management plan
- Includes written strategies for all aspects of production
- Assists certifier in determining organic compliance

USDA ATTRA <b>Organic System Plan Template for Crop and/or Livestock Production</b>			
Last Name(s)	First Name(s)	Farm / Ranch / Business Name	Date
<b>Land Requirements</b>		<b>NOP § 205.103, § 205.202</b>	
<p>This form describes a farm or production location for organic crop and/or livestock production and allows for accompanying documentation to establish its eligibility for organic certification. Submit one copy of this Land Requirements form for each farm location (not for individual fields) that is non-adjacent to your other farmland or production locations, and/or has distinct land use history (different date of last prohibited materials use or different prior land manager, etc.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> This Land Requirements form describes all the land in my organic operation.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Additional copies of this form are attached and describe other land within my operation.</p>			
<b>2.1 Land Description</b>			
Farm Name or Number		Area (acres) to be certified organic	
Parcel Location		Field Numbers (ALL fields on this farm)	
City / Town	State	County	
Legal Description: Section / Township / Range or Assessor's Parcel Number			

# OSP Details



- Equipment and maintenance
- Inputs to be used
- How to address potential problems
- Monitoring practices

# Tips for Completing OSP



- Allow adequate time
- Answer as completely and clearly as possible
- Be realistic

# OSP Resources

- Certifiers' websites
- ATTRA – template with detailed instructions
- MOSES – organic certification fact sheets
- (Check Resources at end of this module for links)



# OSP – Making Changes



- Some flexibility
- Contact your certifier before making changes
- Keep track of changes and be able to explain why
- Always follow organic regulations
- Always verify new materials are acceptable before purchase and use

# After Submitting Application

- The certifier does an initial review of your OSP for compliance
- May contact you if there are questions
- Next step is setting up the inspection







# One Final Note

Your OSP should be  
less work in  
subsequent years

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# Purpose of Inspection

- Compliance with NOP rules
- Accuracy of OSP
- Assess records and audit trail





# Certifier vs. Inspector

Not the same person!

## Certifier

- Does not visit your farm
- Verifies NOP rules are being followed based on OSP and inspector report details
- Decides fate of certification

## Inspector

- Visits your farm
- Verifies OSP matches up with site
- Does not make certification decision
- Staff of agency or independent contractor

# Certifiers and Inspectors $\neq$ Crop Consultants

They can tell what is allowed and prohibited



# Scheduling Your Inspection

- Occurs when crops still in field
- Someone knowledgeable of the operation needs to be there
- Can take 2-6 hours depending on operation



# Inspection Overview



- Beginning meeting
- Farm tour
- Records review
- Exit interview

# What Will Be Inspected

- Anything relating to production
- With split operations, conventional side will be inspected, too
- All records





# Tips for Your Inspection



- Be ready on time
- Have all documents available
- If your OSP is complete and correct, things will go fine
- Share any changes in the OSP with the inspector

You have to pay if they need to come back!



# Non-Compliance

Uh-oh!



# Common Non-Compliance Issues

- Lack of records
- Use of non-organic or synthetically-treated seed
- Use of prohibited materials
- Lack of labels for inputs, seed or feed
- Missing application deadlines



How the agency will treat each issue will depend on the nature of the infraction

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# Post-Inspection

- Inspector writes report
- Certifier reviews report and application
- Certifier makes decision





# Certifier Decision – Possible Outcomes

1. Certification
2. Certification with conditions
3. Notice of Noncompliance for issues that are correctable
4. Notice of Noncompliance and Denial of Certification for non-correctable violations

# Overview of Certification



Recertify on a yearly basis

# Resources

- [USDA-AMS – Organic Certification and Accreditation](#)
- [USDA-AMS – Organic Certifying Agents](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Agriculture – USDA-Accredited Organic Certifiers Active in Minnesota](#)
- [Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture – Minnesota Guide to Organic Certification](#)
- [ATTRA – Organic System Plan Template for Crop and/or Livestock Production](#)
- [Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service – Guidebook for Organic Certification](#)



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United States Department of Agriculture  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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