


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.”

In this guide, products that may be allowed in organic production are denoted by the symbol: . 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:

Organic Vegetable Production (Purdue Extension publication ID-316) is an introductory guide covering the basics of soil fertility and pest management (available online at www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/ID/ID_316.pdf).

Organic Vegetable Production Techniques (University of Missouri Extension Guide G6220) provides an introduction to organic production techniques (available online at <http://muextension.missouri.edu/xplor/agguides/hort/g06220.htm>).

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

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

The New Ag Network Web site offers a newsletter on organic and sustainable agriculture solutions at www.new-ag.msu.edu.

The National Organic Program (NOP) has a list of materials allowed for use in organic production, plus a complete list of accredited certification agents on their Web site: www.ams.usda.gov/nop.

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

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.

If you desire organic certification, you should contact a certification agent during the period of transition to organic production. The organizations on page 51 have been accredited by the USDA as of October 2007. Contact them directly for information about fees and the certification procedure. Additional accredited organizations are listed at www.ams.usda.gov/nop/CertifyingAgents/Accredited.html.



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Organic Certification Agents

Indiana

Indiana Certified Organic

8364 SSR 39
Clayton, IN 46118
(317) 539-4317
indianacertifiedorganic.com
icoinfo@earthlink.net

Iowa

Certified Organic, Inc.

Nanette Rambo
500 First St.
Keosauqua, IA 52565
(866) 581-6428
www.certifiedorginc.org
certifiedorg@netins.net

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Organic Program
Maury Wills
502 East 9th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319
(515) 281-5783
www.agriculture.state.ia.us/agdiv/organic.htm
maury.wills@idals.state.ia.us

Kansas

There is no agency in Kansas, however some growers use the Indiana agency or the Nebraska agency listed below.

OCIA International, INC

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

Minnesota

Minnesota Crop Improvement Association

Brenda Rogers
1900 Hendon Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55108
(612) 625-7766
(218) 342-2747
www.mncia.org
brenda.rogers@mncia.org

Missouri

OneCert Missouri

Sue Baird, Program Manager
PO Box 53
McGirk, MO 65055
(660) 427-5555
sue@onecert.net
www.onecert.net

Ohio

Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association

Certification Program
41 Croswell Road
Columbus, OH 43214
(614) 262-2022
www.oeffa.org
organic@oeffa.org