

Seven Steps to Organic Certification

1. **Contact the WSDA Organic Food Program.** We will send you an application packet and Organic Certification Guide. Or you can download the application and guide from our Web site:
<http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic>
2. **Read the WSDA Certification Guide.** The guide will provide answers to commonly asked questions about organic certification.
3. **Complete and submit the application forms with the appropriate fee.**
4. **Application review and approval.** We will review your application to ensure it complies with National Organic Standards.
5. **Organic food inspection.** An inspection of your business will occur.
6. **Inspection report review.** We will review your inspection report to ensure that your business complies with National Organic Standards.
7. **Certification status notification.** You will be notified of the organic status of your business.



"An organic farm, properly speaking, is not one that uses certain substances and avoids others; it is a farm whose structure is formed in imitation of the structure of a natural system; it has the integrity, the independence, and the benign dependence of an organism."

- Wendell Berry -

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Do you need this publication in an alternate format?
Contact the WSDA Receptionist at (360) 902-1976.

Organic Certification



Organic Food Program

What is organic certification?

Organic certification means that an independent, third party has verified that the requirements of organic production and handling have been met. Under the National Organic Program (NOP), all products sold as organic in the United States must be certified by an NOP accredited certification agency.



How long is the organic certification process?

New Applicants

If all of the necessary information is received in a timely manner, the inspection and certification process takes 90-120 days. Incomplete applications will delay the certification process. Due to the large volume of inspections needing to be conducted, it may take an organic food inspector several weeks to fit a new inspection into their schedule.

Renewal Applicants

Organic certification is an annual procedure. Renewal applications are mailed at the beginning of each year. An application, organic system plan, and fee needs to be submitted to WSDA every year and the renewal application must be postmarked by the specified date. If the renewal application is not postmarked by the due date, a late fee will be charged.



Do I have to be certified?

Except for businesses indicated as exempt or excluded from certification under National Organic Standards (NOS 205.101), all producers and handlers of organic food must be certified.

Exemptions

- Businesses that sell less than \$5,000 of organic products annually.
- Retail food stores.
- Processors whose products contain less than 70% organic ingredients.
- Processors who limit their organic claims to the information panel.

Exclusions

- Handlers that handle only packaged products.
- Retailers with in-store bakeries, delis, salad bars or ready to eat foods.

Exempt or excluded producers and handlers may choose to obtain certification due to market demands, or to increase consumer confidence in their products.

What is the National Organic Program?

The National Organic Program oversees the United States Department of Agriculture's standard to which all food intended to be sold in the United States as "organic" must be produced.

