



NORTHWEST
TRANSITION TO ORGANIC
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

What is Organic Certification?

Organic certification verifies that farms and processing facilities located anywhere in the world comply with the USDA organic regulations and allows products to be sold, labeled, and represented as organic. These regulations describe the specific standards required to use the word “organic” or the USDA organic seal on food, feed, or fiber products.

Why Certify a Farm, Ranch, or Business?

Organic certification ensures a farm, ranch, or business is compliant to the USDA organic regulations, leading to increased consumer confidence and possible premium pricing for the products to be sold as certified organic.

What Products Can Be Certified Organic?

The USDA organic regulations recognize four categories of organic products:

- **Crops:** plants to be harvested as food, livestock feed, fiber, or used to add nutrients to the field.
- **Livestock:** Animals that can be used for food or in the production of food, fiber, or feed.
- **Processed products:** Items that have been handled and packaged (i.e. chopped carrots) or combined, processed, and packaged (i.e. soup).
- **Wild crops:** Plants from a growing site that is not cultivated.

Who Certifies Farms, Ranches, and Businesses?

Farms, ranches, and processing facilities may be certified by an accredited certifying agent, commonly known as a certifier. Certifiers are responsible for ensuring that USDA organic products meet all organic standards. All certifiers are listed in the [Organic Integrity Database](#), and easily find a certifier that services your area using the [“certifier locator” search function](#).

How Much Does Organic Certification Cost?

Actual certification costs or fees vary depending on the certifier and the size, type, and complexity of the operation. Before applying, it is important to understand the certifier’s fee structure and billing cycle. Typically, there is an application fee, annual renewal fee, assessment on annual production or sales, and inspection fees.

Once you are certified, the [USDA Organic Certification Cost-Share Program](#) can reimburse you 75 percent or up to \$750 of your certification costs.



Organic Certification Process

How do I Get Certified?

To become certified, you must apply to a **USDA-accredited certifying agent**. They will ask you for information, including:

- A detailed description of the operation to be certified.
- A history of substances applied to land during the previous three years.
- The organic products grown, raised, or processed.
- A written Organic System Plan describing the practices and substances to be used.

Is There a Transition Period?

Yes. Any land used to produce raw organic commodities must not have had prohibited substances applied to it for the past three years. **Until the full 36-month transition period is met, producers may not:**

- Sell, label, or represent the product as “organic”
- Use the USDA organic or certifying agent’s seal

