

What is Organic Agriculture?



MIDWEST ORGANIC
& Sustainable Education Service
MOSES

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Organic
Sustainable
Pastured
Healthy
Natural
Local



What 'Organic' is in the US:



- The term is protected by the USDA
- Compliance with the National Organic Program (NOP)
 - *Including production, handling, processing, and labeling requirements*
- Verified through third-party inspection
 - *Exemption for operations selling under \$5,000 annually*
- Noncompliance can lead to enforcement consequences

UDSA | United States Department of Agriculture

AMS | Agriculture Marketing Service

NOP | National Organic Program

NOSB | National Organic Standards Board

IFOAM | International Federation of Organic
Agricultural Movements

- **Farmers**
Produce the organic food or fiber
- **Processors/Handlers**
Transport, store, package, process, or handle the organic goods
- **Inspectors**
Conduct audit of records and inspection of farm and facilities
- **Certification Agencies**
Review inspector's reports, determine eligibility, grant certificates, report to USDA
- **USDA – AMS – NOP**
Compliance enforcement, database of certified operations, approves Certification Agencies
- **NOSB**
Citizen board that makes recommendations, clarifies interpretations



Scopes

- **Crops** | *All cultivated plant products including seed and forage production*
- **Livestock** | *All livestock products including meat, fiber, eggs, and dairy*
- **Wild Crops** | *Foraged/harvested from natural areas*
- **Handling/Processing** | *Transporting, packaging, processing, processing, storing, or preparing*



What does the NOP require?



Speaking Generally...

- Eliminates synthetic chemicals
 - *Except for a short list of “allowed synthetics”*
 - *Most of the allowed synthetics have defined restrictions about how and when they may be used in organic production*
- Allows natural ingredients
 - *Except for a short list of “prohibited naturals”*
 - *Human sewage products are prohibited along with dangerous natural items*
- ‘Excluded Methods’ include GMO/GE organisms
 - *There are efforts underway to further define ‘excluded methods’ within the NOP rule to add clarity around new technologies*

- Mandate for building soil health
 - *Recent allowance of aquaponic and hydroponic agriculture still in debate*
 - *Cover crops, composts, natural fertilizers, perennial systems, rotations*
 - *Time between manure application and harvest is monitored for food safety*
- Organic integrity must be maintained
 - *Including certified transportation, storage, processing, and handling*
 - *Proper recordkeeping and labeling to follow the history*
- Products must be labeled in accordance with NOP
- Seeds, rootstock, field inputs, livestock, healthcare records, and additional product ingredients are all monitored

But how?

- Focus on prevention
- Rotations
- Leveraging natural systems
- Proper recordkeeping
- Annual Inspections

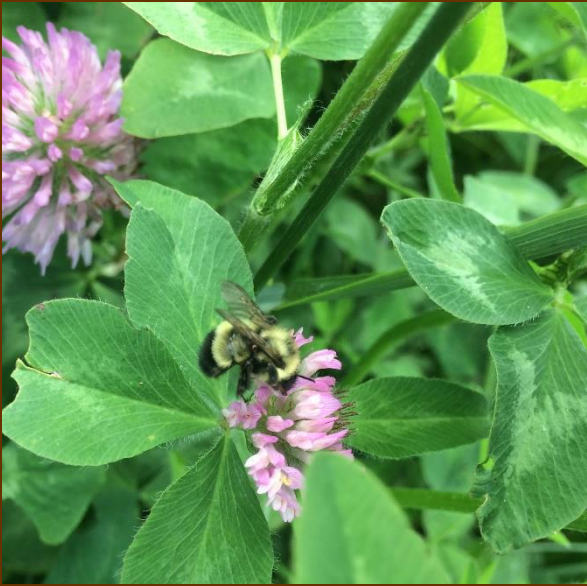


How will I manage pests and disease?

- Cultural Management
creating conditions that encourage health and discourage pests and diseases
- Mechanical Management
using physical means
- Biological Management
using another organism to assist
- Approved Inputs
OMRI list, naturals (except prohibited), and approved synthetics



Ecosystem Support



Bees offer pollination services



Frogs manage insect populations



Grazing offers grassland habitat



Biodiversity supports monarch life cycle



Ladybugs devour aphid pests



Bobolink returns to Wisconsin farm

The Path To Organic

- Learn production techniques
- Identify marketplaces
- Identify certification agency
- Create and maintain recordkeeping system
- Develop farmer network
- Develop footholds for new organic system
- Transition land
- Transition livestock
- Sell organic products
- Annual inspections/audits



Why 'go organic'?

- Access to a growing marketplace with high and stable prices
- Good records help farmers make better decisions about their production and business
- Label is verified by third-party inspectors throughout supply chain to assure compliance



Reduced reliance on (synthetic) inputs

- Allows farmer to take control of and reduce input costs
- Can have a direct impact on profitability (after establishment)
- Encourages biological activity that supports farm resilience

Emphasis on soil health, rotations, cultural methods, and preventative management

- Reduces risk
- Creates stronger biodiversity
- Builds more resiliency in farm life and farm systems

Additional Resources

- **Guidebook to Organic Certification – MOSES**
<https://mosesorganic.org/guidebook>
- **Organic Farming Handbook – USDA**
<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=39107.wba>
- **MOSES Organic Farming Conference**
Feb 21-23, 2019 | La Crosse, WI, USA | mosesorganic.org
Largest organic farming conference in the world



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