



Organic Certification Guide to Farming in New York State

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Becoming Certified

Organic production offers many advantages for small farmers including ecologically friendly production methods, strong consumer demand for organic products, and higher prices. Regardless of if you use organic practices, if you have farm sales of more than \$5,000/year you cannot legally sell your products as *organic* unless your farm has been officially certified.

You can find the list of all certifying agencies by going to the USDA's National Organic Program website: www.ams.usda.gov/NOP/CertifyingAgents/Accredited.html **You can use any agency listed.** The two located in New York are:

NOFA -- New York, LLC

840 Upper Front St.
Binghamton, NY 13905
607-724-9851
E-mail: certifiedorganic@nofany.org
www.nofany.org
Scope: crop, livestock, handling
Accredited: 4/29/02

Natural Food Certifiers

648 Central Park Ave., Ste. 136
Scarsdale, NY 10583
845-426-5098
E-mail: info@nfccertification.com
www.nfccertification.com
Scope: crop, livestock, wild crop, handling
Accredited: 10/08/02

Fees and Costs

Certifying agencies generally charge a fixed fee to cover the initial certification costs and then an annual fee to cover the continued documentation and verification costs. Costs vary so you may want to investigate your certification options.

The NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets offers grants to new farmers to help cover the initial certification costs. They set aside a certain amount of money each year to cover 75% of the initial cost up to \$500. This money is allocated on a first come first served basis.

For a grant application: Ag & Markets - 800-554-4501 or 518-457-2195; www.ams.usda.gov/nop - National Organic Program information; Forms can be downloaded from: www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/agsservices/OrganicApp.pdf

General Overview of Regulations

Organic regulations are complex and ever-changing, which is why it is important to work with your certifying agency on everything that you do to assure compliance.

In general, you cannot use synthetic pesticides, antibiotics, or petroleum-based fertilizers. To certify a field as organic it must not have had pesticides or petroleum fertilizers applied for the past three years. To certify animals as organic, there are various transition requirements depending upon the animal species: dairy, beef, pork, poultry, etc.

Great attention is paid to nurturing the soil by the use of composts, cover crops, rock minerals and natural fertilizers. Plant disease and pests are controlled through the use of crop rotations, resistant varieties, cultivation, biological and botanical pest control. Animal health is maintained with wholesome food, adequate shelter, access to the outdoors, and preventive health plans.

Documentation of field maps, adjoining fields, complaints, crop inputs used, yields, sales, feeds purchased, medications used, and equipment-cleaning logs must be kept to maintain your certification.



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension