

## What is Organic?

October 2019

## History

- Many standards and certifiers
- Organic Foods Production Act of 1990
- Implemented in 2002
- *Only 1 standard; "organic" = USDA*



## USDA National Organic Program

- Regulations
- Enforcement
- Audit Accredited Certifying Agents (ACA)



### Leader of Largest US Organic Food Fraud Gets 10-Year Term

A judge has sentenced the mastermind of the largest organic food fraud scheme in U.S. history to 10 years in prison, saying for almost 10 years of business she kept products they didn't want.

## National Organic Standards Board

- 15 member
- Material review
- Development of standards Public



## Steps to certification



## Step 1: Application

Pick a certifier: 17 options in IA, many with Iowa Department of Ag and Land Stewardship.

Others with:

- Midwest Organic Services Assoc (MOSA)
- Organic Crop Improvement Assoc (OCIA)
- Global Organic Alliance (GOA)



## Step 1: Organic System Plan

- Land history
- Buffer zones
- Seeds, planting stock
- Fertility
- Pest management
- Harvest, storage, transportation
- Labeling
- Materials
- Recordkeeping

**Organic System Plan**

Produce name: \_\_\_\_\_ Organic System Plan - Crops - Page 2

**Section 2: Land & Water**

OSP (2012/2013): The producer must select and implement tillage and cultivation practices that maintain or improve the physical, chemical, and biological conditions of soil and minimize soil erosion. (b) The producer must manage crop nutrients and soil fertility through rotation, cover crops, and the application of plant and animal materials. (c) The producer must not use: (1) any fertilizer or compound plant and animal material that contains a synthetic substance not included on the National List of synthetic substances allowed for use in organic crop production; (2) sewage sludge (biosolids as defined in 40 CFR part 101); and (3) burning as a means of disposal for crop residues produced on the operation. Except that, burning may be used to destroy the remains of disease or its vectors and pests.

10. Have you managed all fields for which you are requesting organic certification for three or more years? ☐ Yes ☒ No

a. If no, submit a signed Prior Land Use Statement from the previous owner(s) (operator(s)) for fields which are not this year.

11. What steps have you taken to minimize the risk of accidental contamination of prohibited substances on your farm?

<input type="checkbox"/> Buffers	<input type="checkbox"/> Notify local co-ops	<input type="checkbox"/> Notify residential neighbors
<input type="checkbox"/> Notify highway dept.	<input type="checkbox"/> Notify Farm Service Office	<input type="checkbox"/> Notify Crop Directory
<input type="checkbox"/> Notify electric co.	<input type="checkbox"/> Notify County Engineer's Office	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> "No spray" signs	<input type="checkbox"/> Notify aerial spray companies	

12. Source of water:

<input type="checkbox"/> Municipal water	<input type="checkbox"/> NA (skip to question 13)
<input type="checkbox"/> On-site well	<input type="checkbox"/> River/stock pond
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

**Organic System Plan**

**Section 5: Pest/Insect/Weed/Disease Management**

OSP (2012/2013): The producer must use management practices to prevent crop pests, weeds, and diseases including but not limited to: (1) Crop rotation and soil and crop residue management practices, as provided for in (2)(D)(1) and (2)(D)(2); (2) Limitation measures to reduce disease vectors, weed seeds, and habitat for pest organisms; and (3) Cultural practices that enhance crop health including selection of plant genetic and varieties well suited to site-specific conditions and resistance to prevalent pests, weeds, and diseases. (b) Pest problems may be controlled through mechanical or physical methods including but not limited to: (1) suppression or introduction of predators or parasites of the pest species; (2) Development of barriers for natural enemies of pests; (3) Temperature control such as heat, shade, and ventilation; (4) Wind protection may be controlled through: (1) interaction with built landscape features; (2) sheltering; (3) Low-wind growing; (4) Windbreaks and mechanical cultivation; (5) Fences, hedges or electrical fences; or (6) Glass or other plastic enclosures. Enclosed, that may be removed from the field at the end of the growing or harvest season; (b) Disease problems may be controlled through: (1) Management practices which suppress the growth of disease organisms; or (2) Application of nonchemical biological, botanical, or mineral inputs.

44. What are your problem pests, insects, weeds, and diseases?

45. What is your PLANT to prevent or control these pests, insects, weeds, and diseases?

<input type="checkbox"/> Dominant varieties	<input type="checkbox"/> Percent weed seed rate	<input type="checkbox"/> Tame wooding
<input type="checkbox"/> Traps	<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical cultivation	<input type="checkbox"/> Mulches
<input type="checkbox"/> Lowes	<input type="checkbox"/> Hand weeding	<input type="checkbox"/> Plant density
<input type="checkbox"/> Repellents	<input type="checkbox"/> Mowing	<input type="checkbox"/> Disease spores
<input type="checkbox"/> Insecticide sprays	<input type="checkbox"/> Grounding	<input type="checkbox"/> Remove damaged plants
<input type="checkbox"/> Natural enemy habitat	<input type="checkbox"/> Mulch traps	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Crop rotation	<input type="checkbox"/> Natural mulch	
<input type="checkbox"/> Field preparation	<input type="checkbox"/> Synthetic mulch	

Make sure to list all products in your Materials Used List

46. If you use a pheromone or other synthetic weed barrier, is it removed at the end of the growing or harvest season? ☐ Yes ☒ No


a. If no, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**Fees**

• Vary by certifier!

• IDALS example:

- Base: \$125
- Inspection: \$300 (crop)
- Certification fee: \$125+ (varies, ex: \$6/ac corn; \$27/ac vegetables)



**USDA Organic Certification Cost Share Programs**  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
Making Organic Certification Affordable  
You're Certified...Now Get Reimbursed!

**1 Contact Your FSA Office**   **2 Submit Information**   **3 Get Reimbursed**

Learn more about the Organic Certified Cost Share Programs at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/organic>

**Step 2: Review OSP**

**USDA ORGANIC**

**PART 205—NATIONAL ORGANIC PROGRAM**

**Comments**

**Subject 4:—Off-farm:**

§ 205.101 Inspection cycle

§ 205.102 Terms of use

**Subject 5:—Applicability**

§ 205.103 First-time inspection

§ 205.104 Inspection and record-keeping requirements

§ 205.105 Inspection cycle

§ 205.106 Inspection cycle

§ 205.107 Inspection cycle

§ 205.108 Inspection cycle

§ 205.109 Inspection cycle

§ 205.110 Inspection cycle

§ 205.111 Inspection cycle

§ 205.112 Inspection cycle

§ 205.113 Inspection cycle

§ 205.114 Inspection cycle

§ 205.115 Inspection cycle

§ 205.116 Inspection cycle

§ 205.117 Inspection cycle

§ 205.118 Inspection cycle

§ 205.119 Inspection cycle

§ 205.120 Inspection cycle



## Step 3: Inspection

## Step 3: Inspection

- Inspection cost often hourly = be prepared:
  - Field maps
  - Crop rotation plan
  - Field records (planting, inputs, pest control)
  - Harvest records
  - Input documentation (purchase of seeds, fertilizers, etc)
  - Sales documentation (products, quantities, etc)



## Step 4: Review Report

## Step 5: Decision



## Certification

- Annual update & inspection
- Ongoing updates
- Unannounced inspections
- Residue testing



## Record Keeping

- Maintain records concerning the production, harvesting, and handling of organic agricultural products
- Flexible, just sufficient to show compliance
  - be maintained for 5 years
- Lots of templates (ATTRA, certifiers)



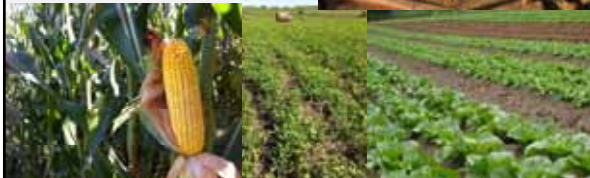




## Iowa Organic

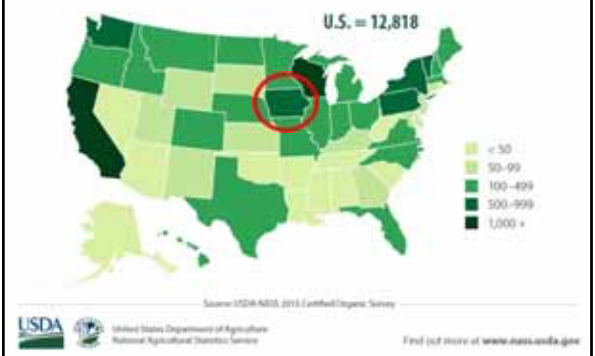
~1,015 certified operations

- ~865 in crop
- ~255 in livestock
- ~150 handling



## Number of Certified Organic Farms, by State, 2015

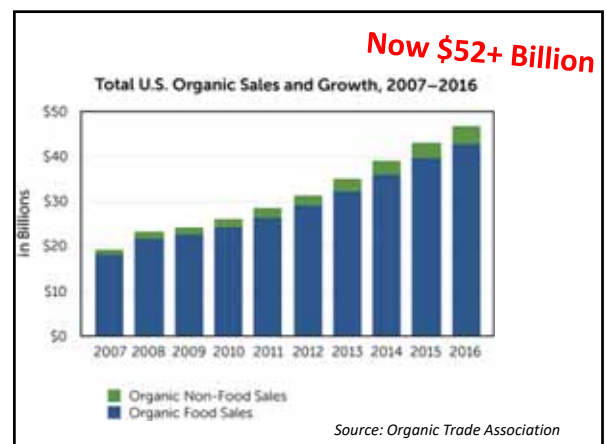
California and Wisconsin had more than 1,000; South had few



## What are the benefits of certification?

## Organic Trivia

Which percentage of US households purchase *some* organic food?



## Value of Certification

- Profitability – ~30% premium despite lower yields (WSU analysis 45 studies)
- *Some* market data available
  - USDA AMS "Organic Grain and Feedstuffs Report" (farm gate: \$10.29/bu organic corn & \$18.28/bu organic soybeans in recent report)
  - Mercaris



## Why Transition to Organic?

2016 *NATIONAL* survey to 1,829 farms, 615 replies (34%)



## Transition

MOTIVATION		% YES
VALUES-BASED	Fits my and/or my family's values	71.3
	Concerns about environment	66.7
	Potential enhancement of farm sustainability	66.5
	Concerns about human health	66.3
MARKET/PROFIT	Access the expanding market for organics	83.6
	Potential increase in profit	60.8
	Specific market opportunity or contract from a buyer	32.7

## Value of Certification

- Communication
- Universal & regulated standard
- Counted
- Records ready



## Barriers to Certification



## Barriers

- Cost
- Paper work
- Support, resources?
- Local market, know farmer
- *more on production barriers/challenges later*



## Transition

TABLE II. OBSTACLES: TRANSITIONING V. 100% CERTIFIED ORGANIC

OBSTACLES	TRANSITIONING (%)			100% CERTIFIED (%)		
	MAJOR	MODERATE	NOT AN OBSTACLE	MAJOR	MODERATE	NOT AN OBSTACLE
<b>MAJOR OBSTACLE</b>						
Worst outcome	45.8	35.6	18.5	34.7	28.4	17.3
Cost of organic certification <sup>a</sup>	47.5	35.5	16.8	19.5	43.8	37.2
Revolving requirements of organic certification <sup>a</sup>	44.4	41.2	14.1	30.8	48.1	21.2

## Imports

- 2008-2016 organic livestock industry tripled, but only 20% increase in US organic grain acres
- Imports increase to meet demand (\$42m in 2011-\$401m in 2016)
- Organic grain premiums decreased (~25%)



## Imports

- 2018 – organic corn imports half of 2017 volume; soybeans down ~25%
- Turkey previously top supplier, big drop as leading supplier lost organic certification



## Barriers

Erosion of federal standards?

### Can Hydroponic Farming Be Organic? The Battle Over The Future Of Organic Is Getting Heated

David Rosenthal  
"This is like Soylent Green in the shape of a vegetable." Is it though?





## Barriers

Crop insurance available?

- ~80 crops have an organic price election, but not all available in every county.
- Multi-Peril Crop Insurance includes yield and sometimes revenue-based coverage.
- Whole-Farm Revenue Protection available



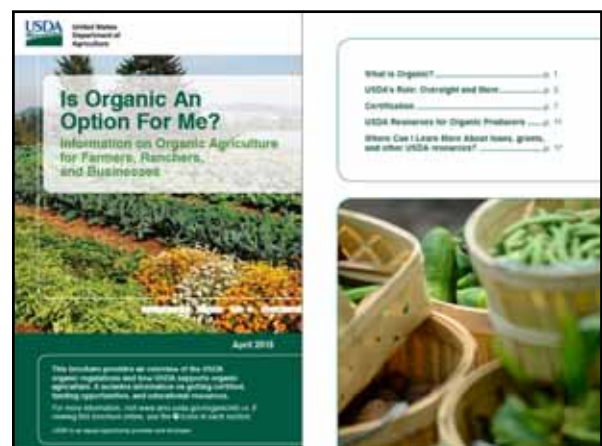
<https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/Topics/Organic-Crops>

Other barriers?  
(aside from production ones)

Questions?  
Comments?



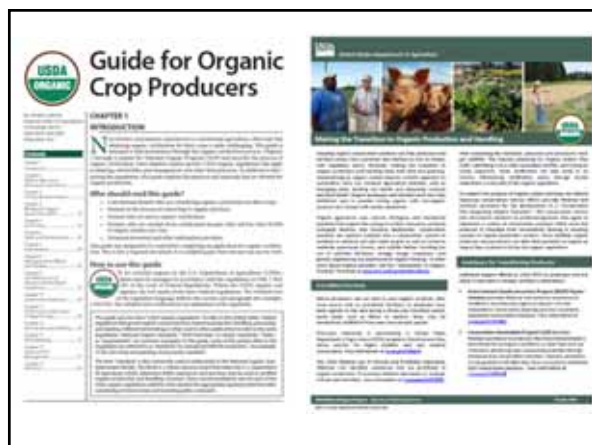
Resources

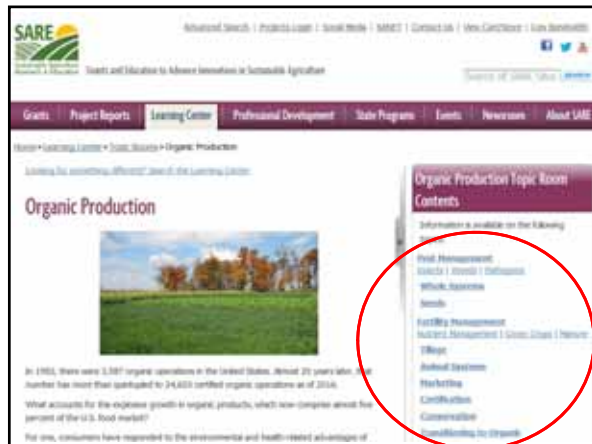




## NOP Sound & Sensible

- Videos, how to guides, self assessments, etc.
- Developed with partners like WSDA, Tilth, and many more





## NRCS Support for Organic

- The transition to organic plan/CAP 138
- Practices can help comply with organic regulations
- EQIP (inc Organic Initiative)
- CSP (inc organic bundles)

