Are We Organic Yet!?

A Quick Overview of Certification and What It Means to be Organic

Presented by George Kuepper
Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture

What Does It Mean to Be Organic?...Today?

- **Marketing Organic**
  - Certified
  - Not Certified (i.e. Exempt)
- **Organic in Spirit**
  - Sustainable Farming?

Small Scale Organics:

A Guidebook for the Non-certified Organic Grower

(Includes Guidelines and an Organic System Plan)

What It Means to Be Organic:

- Organic Practices
- Prohibited Substances
  - Fertilizers
  - Pesticides
  - Land Requirement
- Food Safety
- Integrity
  - Contamination
  - Commingling
- Seeds & Planting Stock
- Marketing

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There are Two Fundamental Strategies for Crop Nutrition:

- **Feeding the Plant, Directly, with Soluble Nutrients—the *Conventional* Approach**

- **Feeding the Soil Food Web, and Allowing it To Feed The Plant—the *Organic* Approach**

Practices that Feed the Soil

- Diverse crop rotations including sod crops, cover crops, green manures, and inoculated legumes
- Crop residue management
- Application of livestock manures & composts
- Liming and use of other natural rock minerals
- Mulching with organic materials

Organic Cultural Practices

- Timed planting
- Pest barriers and traps
- Tillage and cultivation
- Release of beneficial insect
- Sanitation protocols
- Allowed pest control agents

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3-Year Transition for Conventionally-Farmed Land

Rule of Thumb #1

- If it is natural (nonsynthetic), assume that it is **ALLOWED** in organic crop production **UNLESS** it is specifically prohibited and placed on the National List under §205.602

Rule of Thumb #2

- All synthetic products (fertilizers, amendments, pesticides, growth regulators, etc.) are **PROHIBITED**, **UNLESS** specifically allowed and placed on the National List under §205.601

HOW TO EVALUATE A FERTILIZER LABEL

Review Logos (Optional)

Indicate these organizations reviewed this product and consider it acceptable for organic use.

Fertilizer Analysis

These numbers indicate the minimum percentage of nitrogen, phosphate, and potash, respectively. Most organic fertilizers have analyses much lower than conventional fertilizers. However, this information does not indicate whether the product is acceptable for organic use.

Source Statement

Tells you what ingredients were used to formulate the fertilizer. READ THIS TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE PRODUCT CONTAINS ANY PROHIBITED MATERIALS.

Fertilizers & Soil Amendments: See p. 6

HOW TO EVALUATE THE FRONT PANEL OF A PESTICIDE LABEL

Active Ingredient Statement

Tells you what ingredients were used to formulate the product. READ THIS TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE PRODUCT CONTAINS PROHIBITED INGREDIENTS.

EPA Organic Label Optional

Indicates EPA approves this product for organic use

Review Logos (Optional)

Indicate these organizations reviewed this product and consider it acceptable for organic use.

Pesticides: See p. 9

OMRI™

Listed

Organic Materials Review Institute

ORGANIC

Approved under
Washington State
Department of Agriculture
Organic Food Program

FOR ORGANIC PRODUCTION

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Food Safety & Manure Management

- **Livestock Manure Must either be composted*, applied according to the 90- and 120-day rules, or used on non-food crops.**

- **Biosolids (Sewage Sludge) is a prohibited substance.**

- **Regulations regarding composting are specific for C/N ratios, temperatures, turning, etc.**

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Seed And Planting Stock

- Organic seed and planting stock must be used
- If not commercially available, untreated seed or planting stock may be used; no GMOs
- Conventional seed treatments are prohibited, unless required by Federal or State regulations
- Organic transplants must be used

Reading an Organic Seed Packet

USDA Organic Seal

Name Of Certifier

Directions for Growing

USDA ORGANIC

Certified by Sooner State Organics

Sell by 12/31/2011
Lot # OMG 16-09 Packed for 2011

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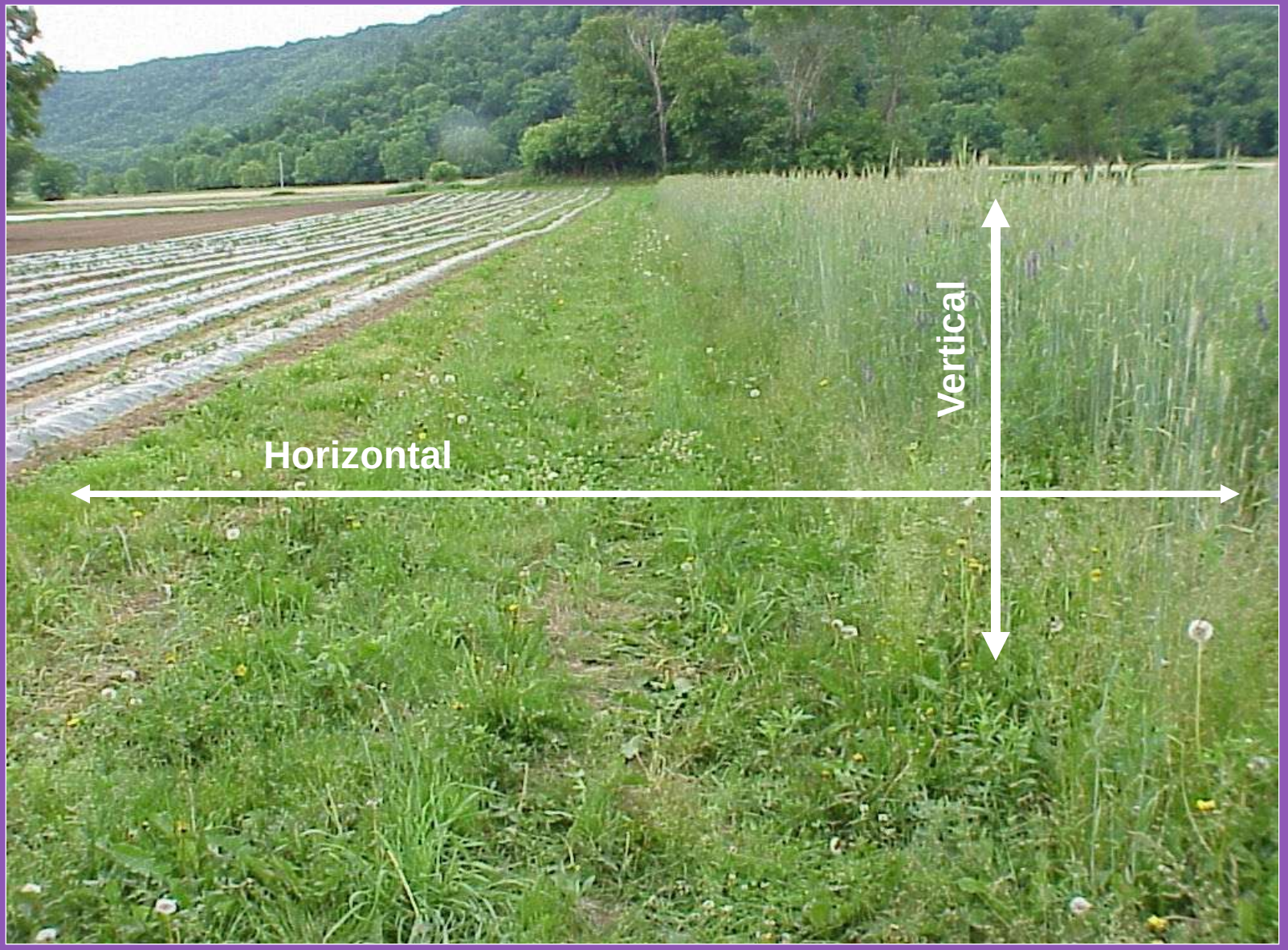
Ensuring Organic Integrity

Graphic from Four Winds Farm, River Falls, Wisconsin

An Ideal Field Buffer



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Marketing

- Do not sell anything as organic if it's not…
- Do not say it's certified if it's not…
- You may display the USDA Organic Seal only if you're certified.

Steps to Certification

Who Must Be Certified?

- Any producer or handler who markets more than $5000 of organic product annually

- Main Exemptions & Exclusions:
  - Operations that market <$5000 of organic products annually
  - Retail food establishments that do not process
  - Handlers that do not process or re-package

Farmer's Steps to Certification

#1 Self-Assessment

- Market Need?
- Interest?
- Commitment?
- Are you "certifiable?"

Farmer's Steps to Certification

2) Identify a suitable certifier

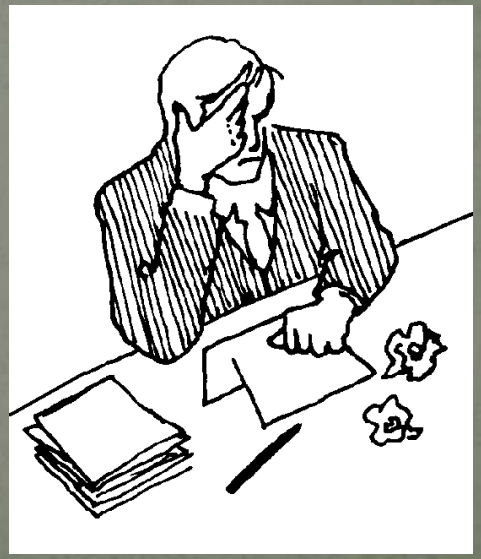
- Accredited by the USDA-NOP
- Price
- Customer service
- Experience
- Additional certification services

Farmer's Steps to Certification

3) Submit an Application/System Plan

- The Organic System Plan (OSP) is a detailed outline that explains how the farm will be operated in compliance with the National Organic Standard. It is a contract between farmer and certifier, and is required by law.

4) Completeness Review



Farmer's Steps to Certification

5) On-farm inspection.

The inspector:

- Is an agent of the certifier
- Looks for consistency between OSP and what the farmer actually does
- Looks for violations of the Standard
- Provides a report to the certifier
- Can provide the farmer with information, not consultation services

Farmer's Steps to Certification

6) **Final review.**

Possible outcomes:

- **Approval for certification**
- **Request for additional information**
- **Notification of noncompliance (conditional certification)**
- **Denial of certification**

Farmer's Steps to Certification

Annually

- Update OSP
- Inspection
- Pay Fees

Costs of Certification

EXAMPLES:

ODAFF:	**< 25 acres**	**$200**
	26 –250 acres	**$250**
	251-500 acres	**$350**
	> 500 acres	**$500**

MOSA: About $635 for small crop operations

FEDERAL COST SHARE PROGRAMS

Typically: 75% of certification fees up to $750

Organic Certification is *Process* Certification

Certification does not guarantee that any product will have improved taste, higher quality, more nutrients, or less pesticide residue than conventional products.

Certification does ensure that products are grown and handled in accordance with an organic standard that makes such benefits likely, while supporting an agriculture that provides other benefits, such as environmental safety.

National Organic Program

☆☆☆☆☆

National Organic Program
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Room 2646-South, STOP 0268
Washington, DC 20250
Tel: (202) 720-3252
Fax: (202) 205-7808
www.ams.usda.gov/nop/

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Resources for Certification

Oklahoma Department of Agriculture
2800 N. Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73152
Contact: Bryan Buchwald
Phone: 405-522-5924
E-mail: bryan.buchwald@oda.state.ok.us
http://www.oda.state.ok.us/food/organic.htm

Resources

Available on the ATTRA Web site*
www.attra.ncat.org

- ***Organic Farm Certification and the NOP***
- ***The Organic Certification Process***
- ***Organic Materials Compliance***
- **Documentation Forms**
- ***Preparing for an Organic Inspection***

*** Note that ATTRA publications are no longer free-of-charge. There is a small charge for PDF downloads and for print publications.**

Resources for Certification

The Organic Certification Process (MOSES)
http://www.mosesorganic.org/attachments/productioninfo/fscertification.pdf

How to Choose An Organic Certification Agency (MOSES)
http://www.mosesorganic.org/attachments/productioninfo/fsagency.pdf

MOSES
PO Box 339
Spring Valley, WI 54767
715-778-5775
info@mosesorganic.org
www.mosesorganic.org

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(Version 1.0) **ORGANIC SYSTEM PLAN (OSP) & DECLARATION**

FOR NON-CERTIFIED SMALL FARMS

Year to Which this Plan Applies_____

Identification

Name_____ Farm/Garden Name_____

Mailing Address_____

Physical Address (if different than mailing address)

_____

Phone_____ Cell_____

Email_____ Fax_____

General Information

□ All my organic production will be done at the physical address shown above.

□ I will grow my organic crops at the following location(s).

□ I will sell less than $5,000 of organic products in this calendar year.

IF YOUR SALES WILL EXCEED $5,000, YOU MUST APPLY FOR CERTIFICATION.

□ The land from which I will harvest my for-sale organic products has had no applications of prohibited fertilizers, pesticides, or other materials in the 36 months prior to harvest.

The products I expect to sell as organic within the calendar year include:

□ Produce, herbs and/or cut flowers

□ Plants and/or transplants

□ Edible sprouts

□ Processed products (flour, jams, jellies, syrups, breads, cakes, etc.)

□ Other If "other," please describe:

Organic Practices

I use or will use the following organic practices to build soil fertility, control insect pests and diseases, suppress weeds, prevent erosion, and support biodiversity in and around my organic field(s).

□ Rotate crops

□ Companion plant

□ Plant cover crops

□ Plow in green manure crops

□ Mulch

□ Sticky traps/mechanical traps

□ Barriers/screens/plant collars/row covers

□ Prune/remove diseased or infested plants

□ Till/cultivate/hoe/hand-weed

□ Mow/scythe/weed trim

□ Bat/bird houses

□ Beneficial insect habitats

□ Release beneficial insects

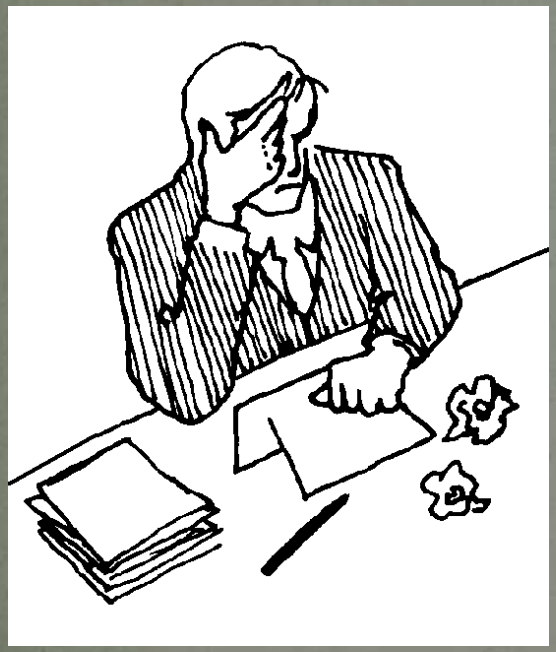
□ Bee hives/orchard bees

□ Moon signs

Fertilizers and Soil Amendments

□ I will NOT be using, nor have I used in the past 3 years, any of these or other prohibited fertilizers or amendments in my organic production:

- Conventional fertilizers including urea (45-0-0), ammonium nitrate (33.5-0-0), ammonium sulfate (21-0-0), calcium nitrate (15-0-0), superphosphate (0-20-0), triple superphosphate (0-44-0), diammonium phosphate (18-46-0), phosphoric acid (52-0-0), potassium nitrate (13-0-46), potassium chloride (0-0-60). These are commonly formulated as granular materials.
- Dry blends of these materials such as 10-10-10, 13-13-13, 18-24-6, 29-2-5, or 10-20-10, or liquid formulations of these fertilizers (e.g., 3-18-18, 9-40-9)
- Dry soluble chemical fertilizers.
- Synthetic slow-release fertilizers.
- Fertilizers made from biosolids, sewage sludge, or other human waste products.
- Prohibited liquid soil conditioners.



(Version 1.0) **EXEMPT ORGANIC FARM RECORD FORMS**

Farmer or Farm Name_____ **Year**_____

Fertilizers, Soil Amendments, and Pest Control Products Used:

Date:	Product or Material Used:	Area or Plants Treated:

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KERR CENTER

THE KERR CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Serving Oklahoma's Farmers and Ranchers since 1965

Small Scale Organics **is a guide for exempt organic farms (<$5000 annual sales) and those in the marketplace that interact with these small growers, such as farmers market managers and produce buyers.**

This 34-page guide includes details for assessing compliance with the National Organic Standard, templates for abbreviated Organic System Plans (OSPs), and simplified record forms.

Copies can be downloaded free-of-charge at: http://www.kerrcenter.com/publications/small-scale-organics.pdf

Print copies can be requested from:

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P.O. Box 588
Poteau, OK 74953
Tel: 918-647-9123

Thanks for your attention!

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