

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION FACT SHEET

When land is converted to organic production, it must undergo a 36-month transition before an organic crop is harvested. During transition, crops must not be labeled, sold, or represented as organic. WSDA Organic Program is a resource for your farm during the transition period, offering technical assistance to help you understand the requirements, in addition to offering a certification program for transitional crops. Transitional certification verifies the land has not had prohibited materials applied for at least 12 months and verifies the adoption of organic practices by the farmer.

Washington Administrative Code 16-157-030 defines "transitional product" as any agricultural product that (a) is marketed using the term transitional in its labeling and advertising and (b) satisfies all of the requirements of organic except that it has had no applications of prohibited substances within one year prior to the harvest of the crop.

What are the Benefits of Transitional Certification?

Get Answers Early in the Process

By certifying transitional, you develop a complete understanding of the recordkeeping, auditing, and inspection processes required for organic certification. Certified transitional operations are able to establish systems that pave the way for compliant organic management.

Minimize Your Risk

Certified transitional producers submit their list of input materials for review each year as part of the annual certification process. The review and approval of the input material list, coupled with the annual on-site inspection, help avoid the potentially costly mistake of applying a prohibited material and resetting the transition clock back to day one.

Realize Marketing Benefits

Transitional certification enables growers to market their products at a premium by demonstrating a commitment to organic standards.

Easily Transition to Organic

If already certified as a transitional site, an organic certificate is automatically issued once the land completes the 36-month transition.

Access to Financial and Technical Assistance

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers financial and technical assistance to producers in transition to organic. More information can be found at:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/landuse/crops/organic/>

Application and Fees for Transitional Certification

The application process and initial fees are the same for both transitional and organic certification. Annual renewal fees will depend upon your farm's organic sales, acreage in production, and number of sites. You can find more details online on our "Apply for Certification" webpage:

<https://agr.wa.gov/departments/organic/apply-for-certification>

Farms may be certified for both organic and transitional land. If already certified and want to add a new transitional field or site to your certification, visit the "Updating Your Certification" webpage to download a new site application form.

<https://agr.wa.gov/departments/organic/certified-operations/providing-updates>

Transitional Labeling Requirements

Crops labeled or marketed as WSDA certified transitional must meet the following label and market requirements.

Retail and Wholesale Labels *Must*:

- Include the statement "Certified transitional by Washington State Department of Agriculture" The statement must be located below the final handler or distributor information on a label. The WSDA Certified Transitional Logo may be used in addition to the statement, or instead of the statement *if* placed on the label below the final handler or distributor information.
- Be submitted and approved by WSDA Organic Program prior to use.

Retail and Wholesale Labels *Must Not*:

- Use the term "organic" to describe the crop or product.
- Use the term "organic" in the brand name on the principle display of an organic crop label.
- Use the USDA organic seal.

Since the Organic Program's beginning in 1985, WSDA has offered certification to crop producers transitioning to organic production. Prior to the passage of the USDA organic regulations into law, transitional certification was required in Washington State. Since the 2002 adoption of the federal standards, WSDA has offered transitional certification as an additional, voluntary service.



WSDA Organic Program
 PO Box 42560 | Olympia WA 98504-2560
 (360) 902-1805 | organic@agr.wa.gov
<https://agr.wa.gov/organic>