



What does “Organic” really mean?

Organic is a federally regulated term with specific requirements. In order to make organic claims such as “organic” and “certified organic,” farms, processors, and handlers must adopt organic practices, apply for organic certification, pay fees, and be inspected each year for compliance with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) organic regulations. Small farms (grossing under \$5,000 annually) who comply with all organic regulations may use the term ‘organic,’ but are exempt from certification. Exempt farms must still keep records and follow organic practices and regulations.

Organic farms are required by USDA regulations to:

- * Source organic seeds and planting stock when available
- * Improve or enhance soil quality through crop rotation and fertility management
- * Promote biodiversity and natural resource conservation
- * Use practices to prevent pests, weeds, and diseases, and manage them using physical or mechanical methods before applying approved input materials to fields
- * Use materials that minimize impact to wildlife and the environment

Organic farms may NOT use GMOs (genetically modified organisms), sewage sludge, or irradiation.

Learn more!

USDA Organic Regulations

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic>

National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/national-list>

Have additional questions about organic certification? WSDA Organic Program is happy to provide answers, resources, and technical assistance.



WSDA Organic Program
1111 Washington St. SE | PO Box 42560
Olympia, WA 98504-2560
(360) 902-1805 | organic@agr.wa.gov
<https://agr.wa.gov/organic>



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