

## Organic Certification Basics

On agricultural products, the word "organic" is regulated by the gov't



Organic labeling law was part of the 1990 Farm Bill

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### Successful organic transition

#### Attend

- field days
- conferences
- webinars
- find a local mentor



*to help you discover and decide on soil inputs, planting and weed management equipment, seed varieties, markets for your organic crops and more!*

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Any farmer or processor who sells less than \$5000 annually of organic production, is exempt from certification and can use the organic label.



*"Exempt" (non-certified) operations cannot sell crops that are further "processed", this includes livestock feed.*

There is no "Transition to Organic" label recognized in the marketplace; there is no organic premium for "transitional".

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Organic certification can be on a field by field basis, or only fields and not the livestock- the whole farm's production need not be organic.



Apply for organic certification the year you will have an organic compliant crop to sell.

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### Definitions

➤ Organic production- A production system that is managed in accordance with the Act and regulations to respond to site-specific



conditions by *integrating cultural, biological and mechanical practices*

that *foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance and conserve biodiversity.*

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**Yes, there is paperwork to manage, but....**

Record keeping is an important aspect of certified organic production.

**Management decisions are based on historical reference and knowledge.**

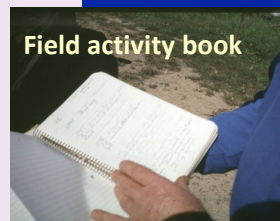


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### Organic Production and Handling Requirements

Components of the Organic System Plan-written in the organic certification application.

- Practices
- Materials used
- Monitoring
- Recordkeeping
- Planting of organic seed
- Management and buffer zones

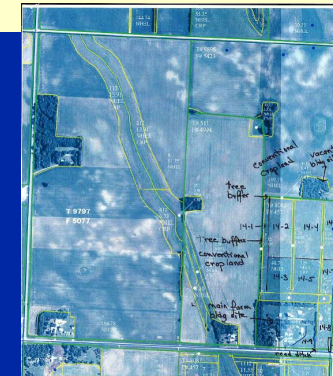


Field activity book

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Records needed to illustrate activities on the farm that demonstrate operator complies with organic rules.

Each field must have distinct, and verifiable borders and boundaries.




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**The USDA organic program does not address GMO drift.**

Most organic food grade soybeans and corn are tested extensively for the presence of GMO DNA. If found, the buyer may choose not to pay the organic premium for this "tainted" product, but it is still considered "organic" if produced according to the rule. Most organic livestock feed is not tested for GMOs.

<http://www.osgata.org/resources/>




**Ex. Corn 660 feet or 16 feet isolation distance**

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**Buffer Zones Required**


25 to 30 foot buffer area is typical ---roads, grass, hay or trees where prohibited sprays from the neighbor may present a risk to the organic integrity of their crop.

Size of buffer relates to risk- aerial spray, ground driven equipment, or windbreaks all affect size of buffer required by certifier



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**Transition period to organic**



**Land Requirements**

- No prohibited substances applied to it for a period of 36 months immediately preceding harvest of the crop.

*Previously fallow land can grow an organic crop immediately: no waiting time.*

Proof of wait time is your signature on the organic application.

**All crops and livestock managed by farmer are not mandated to be organic.**

*This includes no use of nonapproved seed treatments for the transitional years.*

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**MOSA Completed the first year 3 YEAR FIELD HISTORY**

Use a separate line for each field and list fields in order. Do not group fields on the same line unless the fields are always farmed as one field.

Office Use Only	Field #	Acres	Rent or Own	Organic	Transitional	Conventional	Crop	Seed variety and company (List any inoculants or seed treatments)	Name	Input (such as fertilizer, lime, weed or pest control products and manure)	Amount / Rates of Input used	Input application dates	Year: 2015

**MOSA Completed subsequent years CROP SUMMARY / CURRENT YEAR FIELD PLAN**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Land eligible for certification requires management without the use of prohibited substances for 36 months prior to the harvest of a crop to be sold, labeled or represented as organic. MOSA requires 3 Year Field Histories for all land you are managing organically. Submit a Prior Land Use Declaration (PLUD) form if land was under someone else's management during the past 36 months. All land under your management is to be described on this form.

Is all land under organic management?  Yes  No. Do you plan to transition more land into organic production?  Yes  No

If yes, describe transition plans: \_\_\_\_\_

- Complete the Current Year Field Plan (see next pages) for all organic, transitional and conventional land under your management.
- Using the completed Current Year Field Plan, calculate total number of acres of each type of crop and list in the table below. Vegetable producers, for your certificate we will need a complete list of crops grown, including perennials. If your list does not fit on this crop summary, submit it separately. In the Amount column, list the projected yield for each crop.

CROP SUMMARY	CROP	FORM OF HARVEST (FRUIT, VEGETABLE, BULB, SEED, ETC.)	ORGANIC ACRES	TRANSITIONAL ACRES	CONVENTIONAL ACRES	AMOUNT PRODUCTION YIELD	FOR SALE? (YES, NO, SOME, MISC.)

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Organic production **mandates** a soil building rotation, promoting improved soil fertility, soil structure and increased organic matter.



**Consider hay during the transition years, so your first organic crop will be of higher value (corn, beans)**

Organic soil fertility inputs are natural and slow releasing, **take soil tests and start planning your long term soil nutrient needs**- consider your crop rotations- the nutrients you gain from a crop and the needs of the subsequent crop.

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## Crop rotation.

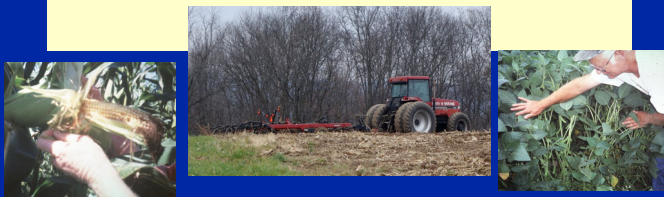


The practice of alternating the annual crops grown on a specific field in a *planned pattern or sequence in successive crop years so that crops of the same species or family are not grown repeatedly without interruption on the same field.*

Consider transitioning your whole farm over 3-5 years, to learn the organic system that works on your land and your crops.

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*Fdg#Erqwqrrxv#urz #fursv#kdw#htx.lh#  
h{ whqvlyh#Exoilydwirg#ndfk# hdu  
+xxfk#lv#Eruq2hdqv2Eruq#nw1,#  
eh#Erqvgjhuhg#l#urwdwirg#kdw#p suryhv#  
vr.l#rujdgIf#p dwhuB*



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**MANURE---MUST be composted UNLESS it is**

- Applied for a crop **NOT** for human consumption
- Soil incorporated not less than **120 days** prior to the harvest whose **edible portion is in contact with soil particles.**
- Soil incorporated not less than **90 days** prior to the harvest whose **edible portion does not have direct contact with soil particles**

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### Organic issues to be tracked with manure

Under the "prevent contamination or application of prohibited substances to organic land"....

- No synthetic substances added to manure pits to control odor
- No synthetic fly sprays on piles of solid manure
- No use of "factory farm" manure if crop is to be sold into the European Union.
- Documentation from supplier of manure should be present verifying compliance.
- Nonorganic carbon sources of bedding such as lawn clippings, hay, straw, and even GMO corn or soybean stalks are allowed under the USDA rule.

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### Compost defined as:

Processed from plant and animal materials

- Initial Carbon:Nitrogen ratio between 25:1 to 40:1
- Temperature maintained between 131 and 170 degrees F for 15 days using a windrow that has been turned at least 5 times
- Temperature maintained between 131 and 170 degrees F for 3 days using an in-vessel or static aerated pile.



Processed manures that reach 165 degrees or 150 degrees for one hour or can be proven to contain less than 1000 most probable number (MPN) fecal coliform and 3 MPN Salmonella per 4 gram can be used with no restriction, the same as compost.

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### NOT ALLOWED

- Genetically engineered products
- Grown with sewage sludge
- Irradiated

*Synthetic substances unless specifically approved.....*

**MOSA**  
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mosa@mosaorganic.org • 800.637.2226 (phone) • 800.637.7032 (fax)

#### PRIOR LAND USE DECLARATION (PLUD)

MOSA producer seeking certification for this land

If you are requesting certification for crops grown on land that has not been under your management for the past 36 months, list the previous manager of the land complete and sign this form. Attach a map for new land showing adjoining land use.

The land listed below was under my management from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Field #	Acres	Location of previous address	How land was used during this period

Check boxes below as applicable to your situation. Fill in the blanks and submit information as directed.

This land was certified organic by \_\_\_\_\_ (name of certifier) from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, if not certified by MOSA, submit a copy of the most current organic certificate.

This land was woods, fallow or was in hay or pasture, and no seeds or inputs were used from \_\_\_\_\_.

This land was farmed conventionally. The last planting of treated or GMO seed was on \_\_\_\_\_ and the last application of fertilizer or herbicide was on \_\_\_\_\_.

The land was managed organically and to the best of my knowledge, acceptable inputs for organic production were used. Provide a 3 year field history for the land, listing all crops and inputs, and provide organic receipts for seeds and inputs used.

Aflatoxin was present on this land after January of 2011 and is still in production. Submit a non-GMO statement for the aflatoxin level.

Manure\* was either not applied or, if applied, contained no bedding or additives.

Manure\* was applied and contained the following bedding\* or additives: \_\_\_\_\_

\*If the manure applied did not come from your farm or wood-based bedding was used, submit an OCP Form Manure/Bedding Verification form to verify the source and information about this manure and/or bedding.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Materials and the National List

- All naturals approved
- All synthetics prohibited
- If a natural is on list, then prohibited
- If synthetic on list, then approved
- List is broken into crops, livestock and ingredients in processed products.

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The producer must not use lumber treated with arsenate or other prohibited materials for new installations or replacement purposes in contact with soil, crops or livestock.



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## Organic Crop Fertilizers

- Fish Emulsion
- Kelp Meal
- Soybean Meal
- Feather Meal
- Blood Meal
- Bone Meal
- Humic Acid
- Compost
- Raw Manure
- Soil Bacteria – AgRestore type products
- Dehydrated pelletized manures/composts



### Soil Amendments –mined

*Quarry lime okay, hydrated lime not okay for soil amend*

*Gypsum – calcium sulfate okay  
Recycled wall board – not okay*

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## Pest, weed and disease control hierarchy

1st: Cultural (crop rotation, sanitation, seed variety)

Mechanical or physical (exclusion, beneficial insect habitat, lures, traps, repellants, mulches, flame)

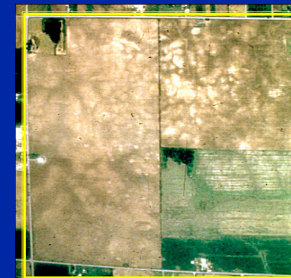
2nd: Natural biological, botanical or mineral inputs

3rd: Approved synthetics on the national list- provided the CONDITIONS for use are DOCUMENTED and the previous 2 were ineffective

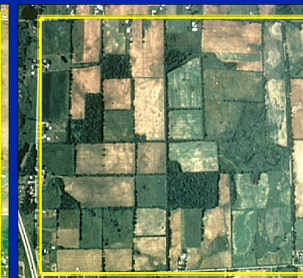
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## Agricultural Landscapes

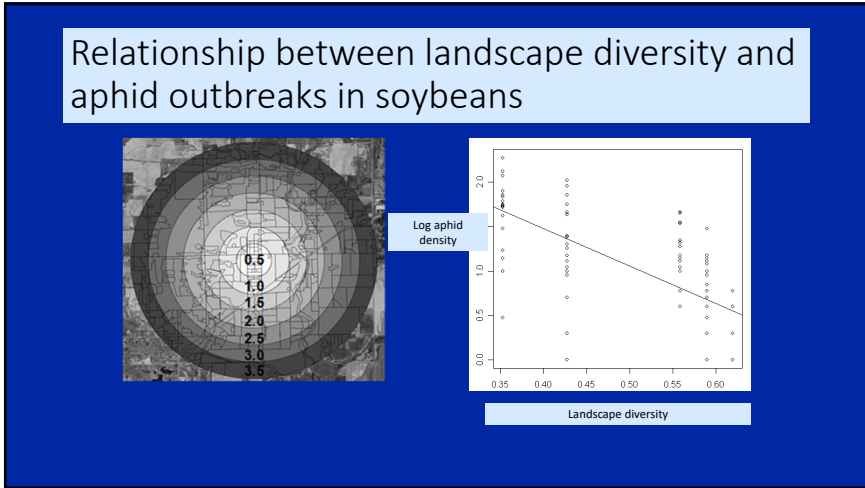


Simple landscape



Complex landscape

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## SEEDS

- \*Certified organic seeds must be used, unless producer proves the seed they wish to use is not “commercially available”.*
- \*Proof that the producer tried to obtain organic seed of an equivalent variety to desired type.*
- \*Phone logs, seed catalogs and letters from seed suppliers illustrating non-availability of organic seed are used.*

**Farmers can also trial small amounts of organic seed to show they are researching equivalent varieties.**

#### ORGANIC SEED SEARCH

Use this form to document your attempts (at least three sources that carry organic seed or planting stock) to source organic seed or planting stock and have it available at your annual inspection. Alternatively, if you source your seed or planting stock from catalogs, you may have the catalogs (at least three companies that carry organic seed or planting stock) available for your inspector to view.

Variety & Crop Type	Company	Date Contacted	Name	Year	Describe why nonorganic seed or planting stock was purchased.

Organic unavailable in the appropriate form, quality, or quantity suitable for your operation.  
 Variety preference (specific varietal characteristics)  
 Explain:

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## High price is not an acceptable reason to **not** buy organic seed.

*No captan, apron or other nonapproved seed treatments for three years before organic certification.*

*No GMO nitrogen fixing bacteria allowed, nonGMO inoculants are allowed.*

*Cover crop seeds **MUST** be organic as well.*

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## Seed Trialing Worksheet -Organic Seed Alliance Workbook

Organic seed/trial name	Days to harvest	Moisture	Planting method	Days to emergence	Days to maturity	Planting date	Harvest date	Planting depth	Harvest yield	Planting date	Harvest date	Planting depth	Harvest yield	Planting date	Harvest date	Planting depth	Harvest yield	Planting date	Harvest date	Planting depth	Harvest yield		
Non-organic seed variety name																							
Organic seed trialed name																							
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### Organic weed management

**MINDSET:** Think management not annihilation.  
Weeds are not the enemy! They also provide benefits.

**STRATEGIES:**

- Do not let weeds go to seed.
- Reduce weed bank.
- Delay planting - take a few weed crops first.
- Plan ahead - before you plant know how you will manage weeds.
- Space for quick canopy or longer access

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### Lilliston Cultivator



### Rotary hoe



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### Flame weeder



### Tine Weeder

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The goal of early mechanical weed control is to eliminate the bulk of the weed population before it competes with the crop and to create as large a crop-to-weed size differential as early as possible.



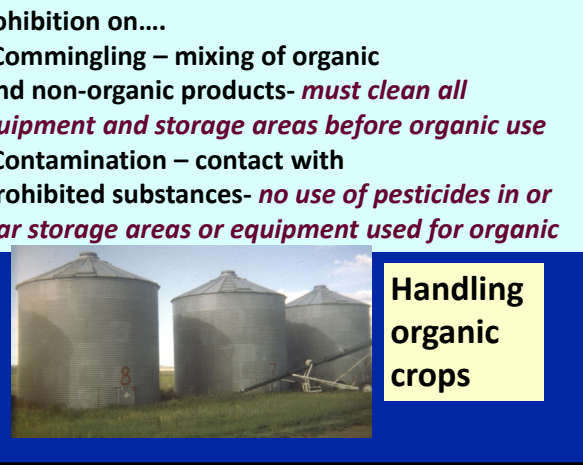
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**No till soybeans**  
**Planted into standing rye,**  
**June 18**

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**Field after planting**

**Drilled organic bean field in late August**

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**Prohibition on....**

- Commingling – mixing of organic and non-organic products- *must clean all equipment and storage areas before organic use*
- Contamination – contact with prohibited substances- *no use of pesticides in or near storage areas or equipment used for organic*



**Handling organic crops**

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**Origin of Livestock**



**Slaughter animals must be managed organically from last third of gestation.**

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**MEAT-** Breeder or dairy stock that *has not been* under continuous organic management since the last third of gestation **MAY NOT** be sold, labeled, or represented as **organic slaughter stock**.



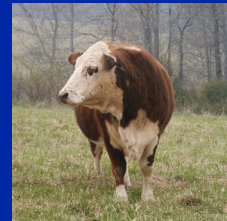
*Crop and pasture land may need to be **certified** the previous crop year, so brood cows are eating certified organic feeds in late winter before spring calving (or buy organic hay) and on organic spring pasture.*

*No retroactive certification to previous year's crop at your first year of certification.*

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**Artificial insemination is allowed.**

**Breeding hormones are not allowed.**



***Bulls do not need to be managed organically, unless they are to be sold as organic slaughter animals.***

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**All agricultural products in feed must be organic**



**Livestock feed label:**

**100% organic-** Contains only agriculturally based feeds that are all certified organic.

**Organic-** Contains certified organic feeds and approved feed additives or supplements, such as salt, minerals or vitamins.

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**Silage or bale inoculants must be approved –**

**Natural bacteria okay, synthetics, not allowed.**



**Sources of fiber and edible bedding- all must be organic**



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## Pasture mandated for ruminants

**Pasture.** Ruminants must receive 30% of their dry matter intake during the grazing season from pasture, minimum 120 days.

Good pasture management mandated under organic regulations.

Organic animals cannot graze in nonorganic buffer areas. Secondary fencing may be necessary.



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## Organic Certification Process

- ✓Farmer chooses certification agency and receives application
- ✓Application received by agency
- ✓Agency reviews application and may ask for more information
- ✓Agency assigns inspector, crops must be seen during growing season
- ✓Inspector writes report and sends to agency
- ✓Agency reviews all documentation, and either approves or denies certification, with comments.

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**Annual** three to five hour on-site inspection verifies all information provided on the application,

including crops, crop production methods, buffer zones, projected harvest yields, storage and sales.

Animal health, housing and feed.



*Talk to other organic farmers about the service they receive from their certifier, call the certifier and see if they are helpful.*

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## Issues discussed at your inspection

- Are your fields close to your home?
- Do you use custom planting or harvest equipment? Cleaned and documented?
- What are your current crop rotations, changes in the future?
- Dates and rates of manure/soil inputs, pest/disease management inputs
- Planter boxes clean (no synthetic seed treatment residues) and documented
- Sprayers cleaned, if using approved organic products and documented
- Review organic system plan, the inspector will ask you questions about it
- No commingling of organic and nonorganic in harvest, storage and sale



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Organic Certification Cost Share

***Apply to your state's Department of  
Agriculture or the county FSA office***

**\$750 per year or  
3/4 the cost of certification  
(includes certification fee, all inspection fees  
and user fees) whichever is LOWER.  
Payment is per scope, crops, livestock, wild  
harvest and/or handling**