



ORGANIC CERTIFICATION for Beginning Farmers



What is this guide?

This guide was developed by the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition (CFAC) through support from the Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) to offer beginning farmers answers to questions about Organic Certification. Do you wonder if becoming Certified Organic is right for your operation? Do you have questions about the process, recordkeeping, or what materials you can use? Read through this guide to find Montana-specific answers to these questions and more!



**Community Food &
Agriculture Coalition**

FARM LINK
MONTANA



NORTHWEST
TRANSITION TO ORGANIC
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Have Addition Questions?
Reach out to a CFAC staff member
for a FREE one-on-one technical
assistance session.

[Get Support](#)



Is Organic Right for your Operation?

Being USDA Certified Organic is a well-recognized way to show your customers that you value environmental stewardship and ecological balance. There are significant economic benefits too--organic agriculture is a fast-growing part of the agriculture in the United States, with over 28,000 certified farms and \$55 billion in sales of organic products in 2019.

Pursuing Organic Certification may be right for you if you want to:

- Receive premium prices for your products through direct to consumer sales
- Access fast-growing local and regional markets, including wholesalers, food hubs, and organic seed growing contracts
- Attain additional funding and technical assistance exclusively available to organic producers
- Achieve environmental stewardship through organic production plans that emphasize ecological balance, protect water quality, and enhance biodiversity
- Market your product to consumers with a seal of quality that your farm doesn't use GMOs and follows organic practices, verified by a third party

Strengthening Organic Practices New Rule: How does it affect you?

If **you are a new grower seeking certification for the first time**, you probably don't need to worry about Strengthening Organic Enforcement or "SOE", a regulation from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Organic Program (NOP). This new regulation seeks to strengthen organic oversight and enforcement in production, handling, and sales of certified products. This regulation aims to make the organic label stronger by ensuring that products can be traced and organic regulations are being enforced.

If **you are new to organic certification**, you can expect more stringent recordkeeping requirements and documentation than previously required, so information that other certified growers have given you about what records you need to keep may be outdated. Check with your certifier to make sure your recordkeeping systems are in compliance with this new regulation.

Farmers with current certification will need to meet new standards for recordkeeping and update their SOPs. Their certifier should communicate these changes to them.

THE BASICS OF ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

Remember...

- All crops or products that are sold, labeled, or represented as "organic" must be certified unless the operation is exempt.
- If your gross sales of organic products are less than \$5,000 annually, you are **exempt**. However, You must still keep records of inputs and record your farm's sales. More information on exemption can be found [here](#).
- You can certify a specific section of your farm and leave personal gardens or livestock out. **Your entire operation does not need to be certified, but you must document cleaning equipment and vehicles if you have non-certified products being grown.**

What Choices do you have in a Certifier?

Many entities offer Organic Certification, including private companies, non-profits, and state-run programs. For a list of who can certify you in Montana, click [here](#) or visit <https://organic.ams.usda.gov/integrity/Certifiers/CertifiersLocationsSearchPage>.

What are the Certification Steps?

1. Read the most recent version of the [National Organic Practices \(NOP\) Standards](#), found at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-I/subchapter-M/part-205>.

2. Submit your application forms and fees to your certifier. Your certifier will provide you with an application to fill out, which should be comprised of the following documents and forms:

- Application
- Organic System Plan (OSP)
- Farm map
- Field histories for new fields
- Operator agreement or affirmation
- Report of organic yields and sales

3. Your certifier will review your application to determine your compliance with NOP standards and give you an estimate on your costs for certification.

4. Your certifier will schedule an inspection of your operation. See the section Preparing for your Inspection to learn more about what your inspection day will look like.

5. Your certifier will complete a review of your application and materials from your inspection and complete the process, issuing you your certification.

What's the Timeline of Certification?

To allow time for the entire certification process, submit your application at least 3 to 4 months before the harvest of your first organic crop. If you need a certificate more quickly, some certifiers will expedite your application for an additional fee.

Some certifiers may have a deadline for submitting your application.



Can you be denied Certification?

After your inspection, you may receive a '**Certificate with Conditions**' requesting further information needed for your application or asking you to correct minor practices.

A '**Notice of Noncompliance**' is issued if a practice is putting the organic integrity of your product into jeopardy, and you may be able to correct this issue and still become certified.

A '**Notice of Denial of Certification**' would be issued to new applicants if there are major noncompliance issues that can't be addressed. A '**Notice of Proposed Suspension**' would be issued to a renewing producer if there is a major issue in the renewal of a certification (you can make an appeal should this occur).

THE BASICS OF ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

How Much Does it Cost?

Cost will vary depending on which certifier you choose, what your gross organic sales are projected to be for this year (or were last year), and whether you're new to certification or renewing your application. Each certifier is unique.

Types of Fees:

- **Application or Renewal Fee:** A fee that is paid when your application is submitted. This will vary depending on your certifier, but can start at \$350 and go up from there. Some certifiers offer a discount or reduction for new producers, while others charge extra fees for first time certification.
- **Certification/Assessment Fee:** A fee based on the Organic Production Value (OPV) of your operation, which varies depending on your certifier. For a crop producer grossing less than \$40,000, their certification fee can vary from \$150-\$750.
- **Annual Inspection Fee:** A fee charged to you after your on-site inspection, which includes travel, airfare, meals, and hours billed by your inspector. Certifiers should have an outline of their hourly inspection fees on their website. Inspection fees can range from \$250-\$1000 per inspection.

Example from the Field

For a renewing crop producer grossing less than \$20,000 annually, certified through the Montana Department of Agriculture, the Application Fee and Certification Fee totaled \$750 and the Inspection Fee was \$310, totaling \$1,040. This producer applied for the Cost-Share Program through the state office, which could reduce their total costs to \$290.

What is the Cost Share Program?

The Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) provides cost share assistance to farmers who are new to certification or renewing their certification. Farmers can receive up to **75% of their certification costs paid during the program year, not to exceed \$750 per scope of certification** (the amount can change year to year). The Cost Share Program is applied for through your local FSA office or the Montana Department of Agriculture if certified through them. **It's easy to apply: submit a one-page application form, a W-9 tax form, proof of certification and an itemized invoice of certification expenses.**

Preparing for your Inspection:

Each year, organic operations are inspected by an organic inspector from their certifier. An inspection will verify that the organic system plan reflects the farm's operations and look for any violations. All information provided about yields, sales, and farm practices shared with your inspector are confidential.

Remember...If records are organized and well prepared, this can decrease the amount of time an inspector needs to complete an inspection, thus reducing your inspection costs.

An organic certification inspection may include:

- An examination of records that document your farming practices including (see page 4 for more information about the records you need to keep):
 - Invoices
 - Records of material applications
 - Planting records
 - Organic sales
 - Harvest and yield numbers
- Additional documentation for livestock producers
- A field walk to inspect your operation, including production facilities and offices
- Possibly require samples for residue testing
- An exit interview before departing summarizing the inspection findings and addressing any areas of concern

Every inspection will include a "traceback audit," when an inspector chooses a product from the farm and looks at records to trace the product from seed to sale.

Remember...your inspector can talk with you about organic regulations, but they cannot provide advice on how to farm or how to address issues with your certification.



Recordkeeping



Livestock Producer Records

1. Origin of Livestock Records: L1

- Breeding, birthing, and weaning records (e.g. calendar, chart, notebook, veterinary documents)
- Invoices, receiving records, organic origin or slaughter eligibility status, and transportation and receiving records for all purchased animals
- Animal Identification records

2. Feed Records: L2, L3

- Organic verification for all purchased feed, including grain, hay or silage (e.g. copy of supplier's organic certificates)
- Grain invoices with weights from your grain company, Records of purchased feed supplements, and animal health care products, purchase receipts, BOL or transportation record, scale tickets
- Feed supplements and additive ingredient labels and purchase records
- Feed as fed records and/or ration sheets
- Harvest and storage records for feed grown on farm, feed labels, and organic supplier certificates

3. Animal Health Care Records: L11- L13

- Loss/cull records
- Feed as fed records and/or ration sheets
- Vaccinations
- Somatic cell counts and physical alterations

4. Livestock Living Conditions and Pasture Records: L4 - L10, L14, L15

- Grazing records and DMI/DMD calculations
- Records of inclement weather
- Records of when animals were temporarily confined with description of what allowable condition existed
- Pasture rotation records

5. Production Records

- Date and weight at slaughter
- Transportation and animal sales
- Milk production records
- Egg production records

Below are two lists: records necessary for organic **livestock producers** and records necessary for **crop producers**. Every producer keeps their records in different ways, whether that's in a notebook, on a printed template, or digitally. The records below are linked to templates at the end of this guide provided by the USDA and distributed by NCAT as examples of the information you need to capture. Your certifier may have templates you can use.

Organic Crop Producer Records

1. Seeds and Transplants –

including cover crop and pasture seeds: C10-C13

- Invoices of seeds and planting stock purchased
- Phone logs or search records of attempts to obtain organic seeds transplants
- Letters from seed suppliers concerning the availability of organic seeds
- For seed savers - Harvest records showing production of organic seed
- Verification of compliant seed coating materials
- Verification from supplier that non-organic seed is not genetically modified. This is only necessary for seeds that have commercially available GMO seeds (e.g. corn, soybeans, sugar beets)

2. Material Application Records: C7, C9

- Fertilizer and soil amendments - application records for fertilizers, manure, compost, soil amendments, and synthetic micronutrients
- Pest control products – application records for pesticides, acidifiers, spreader/stickers and other spray adjuvants
- Crop production aids – application records for foliar sprays, kelp or other approved products
- Invoices or receipts for all materials purchased including custom applicator invoices

3. Production Records: C3 - C6

- Farm activity log
- Invoices for contracted services (e.g. seeding, mowing, spreading manure, etc.)
- Recommendations from pest consultants or other field persons
- Soil, water and tissue analysis reports
- Records of cultivation practices, weeding and planting dates
- Compost production records

4. Field History Records: C1 - C2

- Cropping history or land use for the previous three years
- Material application records for the previous three years
- A copy of the organic certificate if the land was previously certified under another producer's certificate

d. Lease Agreements

e. Detailed maps of all fields, identifying buffers and neighboring land use

5. Harvest and Storage Records: C14, C16, C18, C20 - C22

- Yield records (e.g. pounds harvested, weigh tickets, boxes harvested) by date and field
- Receipts from processor or warehouse for delivery of organic product
- Custom harvest records
- Clean truck affidavits

6. Sales Records: C15 - C17, C19

- Deposit records, ledgers, receipts
- Purchase orders
- Invoices
- Sales summaries from wholesalers or processors

Scan to see Crop Records Templates



Materials and Inputs

What materials need to be organic?

The National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances outlines which non-organic substances and materials are allowed, and which agricultural substances are prohibited for use in organic crop and livestock production. All materials should be approved for use by your certifier before using them on your operation. Your certifier should do this for free as part of your application or renewal.

What about OMRI?

The Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) lists inputs and materials like fertilizers, livestock care materials, and pest control products that are compliant with NOP standards. Look for the OMRI Listed® logo when looking for an approved input. You should verify that the input you've purchased is listed on the OMRI database, found here or at <https://www.omri.org/omri-search>.



Remember... just because an input says it's "organic" doesn't mean it's been listed by OMRI. Look for the logo and check the OMRI database to make sure your product is approved for use in organic agriculture.

Notes

Can I use mulch on my operation that isn't OMRI listed or Certified Organic?

Yes! The following materials can be used for mulching on Certified Organic operations:

- Non-synthetic, untreated materials such as wood chips, leaves, or straw
- Newspapers or other recycled paper (including cardboard), without gloss, glossy inks, or color inks, waxes or other additives (in the case of cardboard)
- Plastic mulches and covers provided they are removed from the field at the end of the growing season, and they are petroleum-based, but not polyvinyl chloride (PVC)

Can I use compost or manure on my operation that isn't OMRI listed or Certified Organic?

Yes! If you cannot source compost that is made complying with USDA NOP regulations, you must treat it like raw manure and comply with the 90/120 day rule (the compost or manure must be applied 90 days before harvest for below-ground crops and 120 days before harvest for above-ground crops)

Remember... it is best practice to get a written statement from your supplier stating that they have not sprayed their product and listing its ingredients

What's the deal with seeds?

- You must use Certified Organic seeds unless they are not commercially available
- All seeds must be non-GMO

What does this really mean?

You can use non-organic seeds if the **variety, quality, or quantity** you want to grow can't be found organically. You need to document your search for an equivalent seed from three (3) seed companies, verify that your chosen seed is not genetically engineered, and that your chosen seed is not treated with prohibited materials. See examples of the seed search documentation [here](#)

Can I use pelleted seed?

Yes! As long as your seed company documents that the coating is 'NOP Compliant'

How to Market Yourself as Organic

How to talk to your customers about organic agriculture

- Remind them that the use of GMOs (genetically modified organisms) are banned in organic growing
- Explain that organic certification for livestock means that all livestock must have access to the outdoors and grazing animals must be raised on pasture
- Share about your practices that go above and beyond organic, including how you prevent pesticide drift



Pricing

Pricing your organic product should ultimately be based on calculating your production costs and selling above those costs to make a profit.

production costs + desired profit = price

Other things to consider when setting your prices:

- Harvesting equipment costs
- Quality of your product
- Location and sales channel
- Customer demographics
- Seasonal demand in your market
- Existing market price

Mentorship Program

The TOPP mentorship program builds connections between experienced organic producers and producers transitioning to organic, it supports the transition process, and creates a stronger network of organic producers across the country.

For mentorship, experienced organic producers will be matched with producers transitioning to organic (mentees), and mentors will support the transitioning producer through the transition and certification process. Northwest TOPP will provide guidance and support for the mentorship, and mentors and mentees will meet regularly on their own time either virtually or in person.

Mentors and transitioning producers will work together to set goals for the mentorship year and build a communication system tailored for their individual needs and preferences. Neither the mentor or transitioning producer are expected to work on each other's operations.

If you have questions about the TOPP Mentorship Program (which is unique from CFAC's Farmer Mentor Program) please reach out to britta@cfacmontana.org or fill out our [Interest Form](#) to schedule a one-on-one conversation!

[Learn More](#)



Mentee Benefits:

- This is a certifier-neutral program, you may seek certification with any certifier to participate.
- Partner with an experienced organic producer to set goals and navigate the transition and certification process
- Get **free**, expert advice and guidance on organic best practices and certification through individualized communication systems
- Receive support to write the organic system plan
- Access in-person and virtual learning opportunities such as field days, workshops, webinars, and conferences

Works Cited

- “Allowed Mulches on Organic Farms and the Future of Biodegradable Mulch.” Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, 2024, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/5%20Mulches%20incl%20biodegradable%20FINAL%20RGK%20V2.pdf>
- “Benefits of Organic Certification.” Benefits of Organic Certification | Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/benefits.
- “Calculate and Pay Fees.” Oregon Tilth, Oregon Tilth, 11 Mar. 2024, www.tilth.org/certification/fees/.
- Coffey, Linda, and Ann Baier. Guide for Organic Crop Producers, National Center for Appropriate Technology, 2012, www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/benefits.
- Coffey, Linda, and Ann Baier. Guide for Organic Livestock Producers, National Center for Appropriate Technology, 2012, www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/GuideForOrganicLivestockProducers.pdf.
- “Fee Schedule.” Oregon Tilth, Oregon Tilth, www.tilth.org/app/uploads/2021/09/SP-OTCOFeeSchedule2022.pdf.
- “Is Certified Organic Right for Your Farm?” Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/NOFA-VTBrochure.pdf.
- “Organic Certification Cost Share Program.” Farm Service Agency, USDA, www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/organic-certification-cost-share-program/pdf/2023/occsp_fact_sheet_2023.pdf.
- “Organic Certification Fees.” CCOF, CCOF Certification Services, www.ccof.org/page/organic-certification-fees.
- “Organic Certification Guidelines Q&A.” Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/Organic%20Certification%20Guidelines%20-%20Q%26A.pdf>
- “Organic Certification.” Rodale Institute, Rodale Institute, 20 Jan. 2021, <http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/why-organic/organic-basics/organic-certification/>.
- “Organic Mentorship Program.” Farm Link Montana, Community Food and Agriculture Coalition, 4 Dec. 2023, <https://www.farmlinkmontana.org/events/transition-to-organic-partnership-program/>.
- “Organic Program Fees.” Montana Department of Agriculture, Montana.gov, <http://www.agr.mt.gov/Topics/N-P/Organic-Pages/Organic-Program/Organic-Program-Fees>.
- Schahczenski, Jeff, and Emily Post. “Understanding Organic Pricing and Costs of Production.” NCAT ATTRA, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Sept. 2012, http://www.attradev.ncat.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/organic_pricing_110619.pdf.
- “Sourcing and Using Ingredients.” Oregon Tilth, Oregon Tilth, www.tilth.org/knowledgebase_category/product-ingredients/.
- “Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE).” Oregon Tilth, Oregon Tilth, 25 Mar. 2024, www.tilth.org/soe/.
- “USDA Organic Consumer Outreach Toolkit.” Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, 21 Feb. 2024, www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/NOPRetailerToolkit.pdf.
- “What Is Organic Certification?” Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, June 2012, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/What%20is%20Organic%20Certification.pdf>



Documentation Forms for Organic Crop Producers

Field History / Previous Land Use Record

Use this form to document land requirements per NOP § 205.202, including date, location, and identity of all materials applied to the land during the past 36 months in order to establish a date of last application of prohibited materials and determine eligibility for organic certification. Complete one form for each location for which you have completed a Land Requirements Form. Include all fertilizer and pest-management materials applied. Attach additional pages if needed.

Field, Pasture, or Location ID:

Year	Crop or Land Use	Material / Product Brand Name	Manufacturer	Application Date(s)
This year: 20__				
Last year: 20__				
Two years ago: 20__				
Three years ago: 20__				

The information provided above is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge:

Signature

Date





Documentation Forms for Organic Crop Producers

Activity Calendar

Use this form to record all types of farm or ranch activities and make notes about observations. Include details about crops and/or livestock at a given location: planting, input applications, mowing, irrigation, pest monitoring, weather, etc. Records may be kept in any type of notebook or format.

Month/Year:

Farm/Location:

	1	2	3 Example: <i>Planted 200 lb/ acre org. soil builder cover crop, Field A</i>	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



Documentation Forms for Organic Crop Producers

Seed Records Part C: Documentation of Allowability of Seed Treatments, Coatings, or Inoculants

Use this form to record seed treatments and coatings or inoculants, or adapt form B to include these materials and practices.

Date	Location	Crop / Variety	Inoculant or Seed Coating	Documentation of Allowed Status





Documentation Forms for Organic Crop Producers

Farmers Market Load List or Farm Stand Sales Record

Farm Name: _____

Location: _____

Date(s): _____

Crop or Product	Unit of Measure (bunches, baskets, boxes, lb., etc.)	Quantity		Sold		
		To Market:	Remaining:	Quantity	Price*	Revenue

* Prices may change through the market for a variety of reasons.

Expenses

Farmers market stall fee: _____

Mileage: (Number of miles round trip x \$.50/mile (current government rate) = _____

Wages of employees to staff market (number of hours x \$_____/hour = _____

Miscellaneous expenses (specify) _____

Total Expenses: _____





Documentation Forms for Organic Crop Producers

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Weekly Harvest And Cost Summary

Use this form to record weekly harvest and sales to CSA members. In addition to NOP compliance, this form provides a farm-management and financial tool.

Week of:

Weekly Share Price for Full Share:

Produce	Crop / Variety	Source (farm or purchased product ⁷)	Quantity of Product	Value of Product ⁸	Quantity (number of shares)	Total Value or Revenue ⁹
LABOR	Worker	Rate		Hours		Total
DELIVERY	Route	Miles	Rate			Total
Other CSA-Related Travel or Expenses						

⁷Purchased product should be indicated on this list as well as in any written communication (such as a weekly newsletter) that shareholders receive, so that anyone can tell where each product comes from and whether it is certified organic.

⁸Value. This column is included to help the farmer align future share price with the box contents (generally established by the price of that item if it were to be sold at a farmers' market).

⁹This column may be used to record either total value of produce sold or total revenue. These are two different pieces of information, both of which may be useful to the farmer to help determine the profitability of current practices and future pricing. CSA shares are generally purchased by the season or month. If used to record revenue, the column merely provides a reference to compare costs with revenues on a weekly basis.





Documentation Forms for Organic Crop Producers

Clean Transport Affidavit

Use this form to record how transport vehicles used for nonorganic materials are verified as being inspected and/or cleaned adequately to ensure that nonorganic products and/or prohibited materials do not contaminate the organic crops or product.

Producer/Business Name: _____

Date Transport Unit Loaded: _____

1. Type of transport: farm wagons farm truck bulk semi trailer
 common carrier tanker other (specify) _____

2. The transportation was arranged by: grower buyer other (specify) _____

3. Is the form of transportation only used for organic products? yes no

If no, state products transported prior to organic: _____

4. Transport unit was inspected and found to be free of:

foreign odors residues conventional products other substances which may compromise organic integrity (describe as needed) _____

5. List transport unit ID # with the following information:

Transport Unit / Vehicle Identification	Organic Crop and Lot #	Check (✓) if vehicle was inspected prior to loading organic product	Cleaning method: Check (✓) all that apply. If Other, describe method.					
			Swept	Vacuum	Air blown	Washed	Other	

I hereby certify that the above transport units were inspected and cleaned thoroughly using the method indicated to protect the integrity of the organic products being transported.

Signature

Date





Documentation Forms for Organic Crop Producers

Buffer Crop Disposition Records

Use this form to document what happens to crops that are grown on buffer land that is organically managed but may be exposed to some risk of contamination from neighboring land such that the crop should not be sold as organic. Documentation should be appropriate to the nature of the buffer zone and the quantity of crop produced there. Buffer crop disposition options may include harvest and sale as nonorganic, harvest for home use, donation to workers or gleaners, or disking under. Commercial quantities of crops require more formal documentation (delivery tags and nonorganic sales records) to show that the buffer crop has not been represented as organic. If the amount of product is small and the product is not sold, less formal documentation—such as this form—may suffice. Always check with your certifier to agree on what constitutes sufficient documentation—before harvest season arrives.

Location: *Example: North side of Parcel 1, one row of apple trees (25 trees).*

Buffer Crop: *Example: Fuji Apples*

Map: *Example: Map shows neighboring conventional apple orchard to the south of parcel. Note indicates that the land is flat; no slope. Arrows indicate cardinal direction, north, and prevailing winds from the east.*

Marking: *Red ribbon is tied around the trunks of all buffer trees before harvest crews arrive. Dated photograph in file matches day before harvest.*

Date	Crop / Variety	Location	Disposition (sold, donated, home use, disked, etc.)	Quantity (in case of a harvest)	Sales (gross revenue in dollars)	Documentation (type and location)
10/1	Fuji apples	Parcel 1 North side, Single row	Sold as conventional	1 4x4 bin		Delivery tag and sales record, Apple Bob's, In filing cabinet, buffer crop folder



Documentation Forms for Organic Crop Producers

Sample Neighbor Notification Letter

(Date)

(Name and address)

Dear (Name):

I am currently a certified organic farmer with _____ (name of your certifying agent), managing my fields in a manner consistent with the USDA National Organic Program regulations.

Since you are an adjoining property owner, I need to inform you of my plans and ask for your help. If you plan to use synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and/or genetically engineered crops on land that adjoins my fields, please take precautions when transporting or spraying to prevent over spray, chemical or genetic drift, or run-off onto my farm. If chemical drift is found on my organic crops or fields, I may be required to wait up to three years before using these fields for organic production. This could also cause loss of my organic certification and/or loss of the organic premium for crops grown on affected fields.

(Optional Paragraph) I understand that you are currently not using any synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and/or genetically engineered crops on the (field or pasture) that borders my farm to the _____ (east, west, north or south) and adjoins my field # (_____). If you are willing to sign the enclosed Verification of Adjoining Land Use form, I will not be required to maintain a buffer zone between your field and mine. Also indicate the location of your adjoining fields on the map enclosed. Please return the signed statement as soon as possible.

If you would like to know more about my organic certification or have any other questions, please call. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely

(Signature of organic farmer)

Enc.:

Verification of Adjoining Land Use letter

Farm map



Documentation Forms for Organic Crop Producers

Adjoining Land Use Verification

I verify that I am the farmer of Location _____.

I am aware that my neighbor, _____ (name) whose land borders my farm(s) the (N,E,S, and/or W) side(s) is certified organic. I also understand that it is important to his or her business that organic crops and land be protected from contact with certain substances—such as synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, other pesticides and genetically modified organisms—that are not allowed in organic farming. Buffer zones are required to be sufficient to prevent contamination.

The following statements in this affidavit will help the organic certifier determine what type of buffer the organic farmer named above needs to maintain. Please check all that are true.

I am an organic farmer, with current certification by _____(name of certifier) (or exempt from certification due to sales).

OR

The materials I routinely use on my farm include the following:

synthetic fertilizers

herbicides

insecticides

fungicides

treated wood

other (specify)

I do not use any of the above materials on my farm

I use the materials checked above, but not on the fields adjoining my neighbor's property.

The distance between where I use the materials checked above and my organic neighbor's property is ____feet.

I agree to notify my organic neighbor when I plan to use these materials on adjacent land.

Signature of neighbor

Date

Farm Name

Address

Phone number





Documentation Forms for Organic Livestock Producers

Ruminant Dry Matter Intake (DMI)

Calculation Methods Description and Summary of DMI Calculations from Feed and Grazing for All Ruminant Livestock in the Operation

Use this form to describe your methods for estimating Dry Matter Demand (DMD) and to summarize your calculations of Dry Matter Intake (DMI) percentages during the grazing season for each class of livestock.

Source of information used for DMD estimates (table or body-weight-percentage calculation): _____

Source of dry matter content of feeds (actual feed test results or specify chart of average dry matter content): _____

Use this table to summarize your calculations of DMI from pasture or forage grazed during the grazing season for each class of livestock you manage.

Class of Ruminants (Please specify the breed if you raise multiple breeds.)	Number of Days in the Grazing Season (from grazing and feeding records) Must be >120 to be in compliance.	Grazing Season Average Percentage of DMI from Pasture/ Grazing (Calculations must be available for inspection.) Percentage of DMI from grazing must be > 30% to be in compliance.			
		Average Weight lbs. per animal	DMD lbs./day	DM from feed fed	% DMI from Grazing
Young Stock over 6 Months of Age (calves, lambs, kids)					
Slaughter Stock					
Young Stock / Heifers					
Bred Heifers					
Lactating Animals					
Dry Animals					
Other (specify):					

Dry Matter Grazed = Dry Matter Demand - Dry Matter Fed (non-pasture feedstuffs)

% DM Fed + % DM Grazed = 100



Documentation Forms for Organic Livestock Producers

Dry Matter Intake (DMI) Calculation Worksheet for Ruminants

Use Worksheets A and B to estimate the Dry Matter Demand and calculate the Dry Matter Intake of ruminants. If there is just one type of feed ration during the grazing season, one Worksheet A will suffice. If rations change during the grazing season, use Worksheets A and B in sequence to calculate average DMI from pasture during the grazing season for each type and class of animal.

Grazing Season/Ration Period Dry Matter Intake Calculation Worksheet A (Example): DMI from Nonpasture Feed Sources and from Grazing During Each Ration Period

Use this form to document Dry Matter Intake (DMI) during the grazing season. Use separate worksheets for each type and class of livestock. Complete one Worksheet A for each distinct grazing/ration period (each time the feed ration changes during the grazing season). Then use Worksheet B to calculate the average DMI from pasture over the entire grazing season.

Please note: While these worksheets provide one way to document your compliance with organic standards, they are not required forms; you may provide another method for calculating DMD and DMI.

A blank Worksheet A is available on the next page.

Operation Name <i>Example</i>				Date and Year <i>January 1, 2011</i>								
Ration Name/Type <i>Early lactation corn, hay, pasture</i>				Livestock Type (species, breed, average weight) <i>Early-lactating Holstein cows, 1200 lbs.</i>								
Time Period This Ration Is Fed (during grazing season ONLY) Season: <input type="checkbox"/> Winter <input type="checkbox"/> Spring <input type="checkbox"/> Summer <input type="checkbox"/> Fall Number of Days: <i>30</i>				Class of Animal <input type="checkbox"/> Calf/Lamb/Kid <input type="checkbox"/> Heifer/Young Stock <input type="checkbox"/> Lactating <input type="checkbox"/> Dry <input type="checkbox"/> Breeding <input type="checkbox"/> Slaughter <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify):								
Number of Animals: <i>30</i>		Dry Matter Demand (in lbs.): <i>34 lbs/day</i>		Source of DMD Values: <i>NOP Dairy tables for large-breed milk cows</i>								
				Source of Feed Dry Matter Values: <i>NRC Nutrient Required for Dairy Cattle</i>								
Feed Type (list all other than pasture)	Average Weight Fed (per animal per day in lbs.)	×	Dry Matter Content of Feed Source as %	=	DMI Fed (in lbs.)							
<i>Corn</i>	<i>18</i>	×	<i>.89</i>	=	<i>16.02</i>							
<i>Hay</i>	<i>15</i>	×	<i>.90</i>	=	<i>13.50</i>							
		×		=								
Total DMI Fed from Non-pasture (sum of DMI lbs. of each type)						29.52						
Dry Matter Demand (lbs.)	-	Total DM fed	=	DMI from pasture	÷	Dry Matter Demand	=	DMI ratio	×	100	=	% DMI from pasture
<i>34</i>	-	<i>29.52</i>	=	<i>4.48</i>	÷	<i>34</i>	=	<i>.13</i>	×	<i>100</i>	=	<i>13%</i>

Dry Matter Demand: The DMD for a given type and class of animals will likely change during the course of the grazing season because animals grow, and milk production changes over time. Each calculation should use a DMD value based on your best estimate of average weight/productivity during each ration period.

Dry Matter Content: Feed sources may vary in moisture contents, especially fresh and ensiled feeds. Please provide the source and accuracy of each material's dry matter content and explain any significant variation from reference values.



Documentation Forms for Organic Livestock Producers

Dry Matter Intake (DMI) Calculation Worksheet for Ruminants

Grazing Season/Ration Period Dry Matter Intake Calculation Worksheet A DMI from Nonpasture Feed Sources and from Grazing During Each Ration Period

Use this form to document Dry Matter Intake (DMI) during the grazing season. Use separate worksheets for each type and class of livestock. Complete one Worksheet A for each distinct grazing/ration period (each time the feed ration changes during the grazing season). Then use Worksheet B to calculate the average DMI from pasture over the entire grazing season.

Please note: While these worksheets provide one way to document your compliance with organic standards, they are not required forms; you may provide another method for calculating DMD and DMI.

Operation Name			Date and Year								
Ration Name/Type			Livestock Type (species, breed, average weight)								
Time Period This Ration Is Fed (during grazing season ONLY) Season: <input type="checkbox"/> Winter <input type="checkbox"/> Spring <input type="checkbox"/> Summer <input type="checkbox"/> Fall Number of Days:			Class of Animal <input type="checkbox"/> Calf/Lamb/Kid <input type="checkbox"/> Heifer/Young Stock <input type="checkbox"/> Lactating <input type="checkbox"/> Dry <input type="checkbox"/> Breeding <input type="checkbox"/> Slaughter <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify):								
Number of Animals:		Dry Matter Demand (in lbs.):	Source of DMD Values:								
			Source of Feed Dry Matter Values:								
Feed Type (list all other than pasture)	Average Weight Fed (per animal per day in lbs.)	×	Dry Matter Content of Feed Source as %	=	DMI Fed (in lbs.)						
		×		=							
		×		=							
		×		=							
Total DMI Fed from Non-pasture (sum of DMI lbs. of each type)											
Dry Matter Demand (lbs.)	-	Total DM fed	=	DMI from pasture	÷	Dry Matter Demand	=	DMI ratio	× 100	=	% DMI from pasture
	-		=		÷		=		× 100	=	

Dry Matter Demand: The DMD for a given type and class of animals will likely change during the course of the grazing season because animals grow, and milk production changes over time. Each calculation should use a DMD value based on your best estimate of average weight/productivity during each ration period.

Dry Matter Content: Feed sources may vary in moisture contents, especially fresh and ensiled feeds. Please provide the source and accuracy of each material's dry matter content and explain any significant variation from reference values.



Documentation Forms for Organic Livestock Producers

Dry Matter Intake (DMI) Calculation Worksheet for Ruminants

Grazing Season Dry Matter Intake (DMI) Calculation for Ruminant Livestock Worksheet B (Example): Calculating the Average DMI from Pasture for the Grazing Season

Use this form to calculate the average DMI from grazing for each type and class of animal over the entire grazing season. Use all completed copies of Grazing Season/Ration Period DMI Calculation Worksheet A for a type and class of animal to provide input into this worksheet. Please note: While these worksheets provide one way to document your compliance with organic standards, they are not required forms; you may provide another method for calculating DMD and DMI.

A blank Worksheet B is available on the next page.

Operation Name/Year <i>Example</i>	Class of Animal <input type="checkbox"/> Calf/Lamb/Kid <input type="checkbox"/> Heifer/Young Stock <input type="checkbox"/> Lactating <input type="checkbox"/> Dry <input type="checkbox"/> Breeding <input type="checkbox"/> Slaughter <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify):
Total # Days in Grazing Season (from table below = total # of days fed during the grazing season) 170	# Animals in Group 30

Using your completed copies of Worksheet A, enter the ration dates, number of days fed, and % DMI from pasture for each distinct feed ration period during the grazing season in the table below. To calculate the weighted average DMI from pasture for the entire grazing season, multiply the % DMI for each grazing/ration period by the number of days in that period, then divide the sum of those numbers by the total number of days in the grazing season (all grazing/ration periods), and multiply by 100 to convert this number to a percentage.

Ration Name/Type/ID	Dates Fed	# of Days Fed	×	Daily DMI from Pasture (from DMI worksheet)	=	DMI from Pasture during period
<i>Spring transition</i>	<i>April 10 – May 10</i>	<i>30</i>	×	<i>.13</i>	=	<i>3.9</i>
<i>Summer grazing</i>	<i>May 11 – Sept 30</i>	<i>110</i>	×	<i>.70</i>	=	<i>77</i>
<i>Fall grazing</i>	<i>Oct 1 – Nov</i>	<i>30</i>	×	<i>.25</i>	=	<i>7.5</i>
			×		=	
Totals		<i>170</i>				<i>88.4</i>
Total DMI from Pasture	÷	Total Days in Grazing Season (× 100 to convert to percent)			=	Grazing Season Average % DMI
<i>88.4</i>	÷	<i>170 (×100)</i>			=	<i>52%</i>

Note: The spring transition number above is from the example Worksheet A. The summer and fall grazing/ration period examples above are assumed. These calculations would be documented on two additional copies of Worksheet A. Producers need to complete a separate Worksheet A for each distinct ration period (each time rations change) during the grazing season in order to calculate the DMI from pasture to input into this worksheet. These are only examples. Individual farms will likely have different grazing season /ration periods depending on feeds fed and pasture availability.



Documentation Forms for Organic Livestock Producers

Dry Matter Intake (DMI) Calculation Worksheet for Ruminants

Grazing Season Dry Matter Intake (DMI) Calculation for Ruminant Livestock Worksheet B Calculating the Average DMI from Pasture for the Grazing Season

Use this form to calculate the average DMI from grazing for each type and class of animal over the entire grazing season. Use all completed copies of Grazing Season/Ration Period DMI Calculation Worksheet A for a type and class of animal to provide input into this worksheet. Please note: While these worksheets provide one way to document your compliance with organic standards, they are not required forms; you may provide another method for calculating DMD and DMI.

Operation Name/Year	Class of Animal <input type="checkbox"/> Calf/Lamb/Kid <input type="checkbox"/> Heifer/Young Stock <input type="checkbox"/> Lactating <input type="checkbox"/> Dry <input type="checkbox"/> Breeding <input type="checkbox"/> Slaughter <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify):
Total # Days in Grazing Season (from table below = total # of days fed during the grazing season)	# Animals in Group

Using your completed copies of Worksheet A, enter the ration dates, number of days fed, and % DMI from pasture for each distinct feed ration period during the grazing season in the table below. To calculate the weighted average DMI from pasture for the entire grazing season, multiply the % DMI for each grazing/ration period by the number of days in that period, then divide the sum of those numbers by the total number of days in the grazing season (all grazing/ration periods), and multiply by 100 to convert this number to a percentage.

Ration Name/Type/ID	Dates Fed	# of Days Fed	×	Daily DMI from Pasture (from DMI worksheet)	=	DMI from Pasture during period
			×		=	
			×		=	
			×		=	
			×		=	
			×		=	
Totals						
Total DMI from Pasture	÷	Total Days in Grazing Season (× 100 to convert to percent)			=	Grazing Season Average % DMI
	÷				=	



Documentation Forms for Organic Livestock Producers

Livestock Health Record—Individual Animal

Use this form to record individual animal management, as applicable: preventative health care practices, administration of vaccinations, medications and parasiticides, physical alterations, location, breeding, reproduction, medications, parasiticides, sale, and culling/mortality.

Animal/Herd/Flock ID				
Date of Birth	Maternity (Dam)		Paternity (Sire)	
Date of Purchase	Source, Age, and Other Information			
Date of Sale	Buyer		Sold as Organic? Y/N	
Date of Death	Cause of Death			
Vaccinations and Veterinary Biologics				
Date(s)	Material(s)			
Physical Alterations (castration, branding, ear notching, etc.)				
Date(s)	Procedure(s)			
Medications/Remedies/Supplements				
Date(s) Administered	Product(s) (including parasiticides)		Reason for Use	
Breeding and Reproduction				
Date(s)	Breeding Info. (natural/AI)	Pregnancy Checks	Birthing (freshening)	Offspring ID



Documentation Forms for Organic Livestock Producers

Livestock Health Record—Poultry Flock

Use this form to record poultry flock management (for animals that are managed consistently and uniformly as a group): preventative health care practices, administration of vaccinations and medications, physical alterations, location, reproduction, medications, sales, and culling/mortality.

Flock ID/Location		
Hatch Date	Number Purchased	Date of Purchase/Delivery
Source		
Layers		
Date Egg Laying Began		
Meat Birds		
Date of Harvest of Meat Birds		
Date of Sale	Buyer	Sold as Organic? Y/N
Vaccinations and Veterinary Biologics		
Date/By Whom? (hatchery or farm)	Material(s) Administered	
Physical Alterations (castration, beak trimming, spur removal, etc.)		
Date(s)	Procedure(s)	
Medications/Remedies/Supplements		
Date(s)	Product(s)	Reason for Use
Culling/Mortality Incidents		
Date(s)	Explanation	



Documentation Forms for Organic Livestock Producers

Appendix A: Dry Matter Intake Calculation Resources for Ruminant Livestock Producers

Contents of this Appendix:

Pasture Practice Standard and Ruminant Feed and Grazing Synopsis

Terms Defined

Dry Matter Percentages of Common Feeds

Dry Matter Demand Summary Tables

Percentage of Body Weight for Ruminants

Estimated Values for Dairy Cows

Pasture Practice Standard and Ruminant Feed and Grazing Synopsis

NOP Sections 205.237, 239, and 240 require producers of ruminant livestock to provide daily grazing during the grazing season. Producers must provide enough quality pasture for organic ruminant livestock to graze throughout the grazing season and to consume at least 30% of their Dry Matter Intake, on average, from grazing over the course of the grazing season, which must be at least 120 days per year. They must manage pasture resources to support livestock health and to protect soil and water quality.

In addition, producers must maintain records to show that the above requirements have been met. The information that must be captured in records includes a description of the total feed ration for each type and class of animal; the percentage of each feed type in the total ration—purchased or farm-raised (including pasture) and all feed supplements and additives; the amount of each type of feed actually fed to each type and class of animal; any adjustments made to all rations throughout the year in response to seasonal grazing changes; and the method for calculating Dry Matter Demand and Dry Matter Intake.

Terms Defined

Dry matter. The amount of a feedstuff remaining after all the free moisture is evaporated out—the moisture-free content of a feedstuff.

Dry Matter Demand (DMD). The expected Dry Matter Intake for a class of animal.

Dry Matter Intake (DMI). Total pounds of all feed (expressed as dry matter), devoid of all moisture, consumed over a given period of time.

Grazing season. The period of time when pasture is available for grazing because of natural precipitation or irrigation. Grazing-season dates may vary because of mid-summer heat/humidity, significant precipitation events such as floods, hurricanes, droughts, or winter weather events. The grazing season may be extended by the grazing of residual forage as agreed in the operation's Organic System Plan. The grazing season may or may not be continuous because of weather, season, or climate. The grazing season may range from 120 days to 365 days, but not less than 120 days, per year.

Dry Matter Content of Common Feedstuffs	
Feedstuff	% dry matter
Hay (sun-cured grass, legume, and mixed)	90%
Grain (corn, small grains, roasted soybeans)	89%
Soybean Meal	88%
High-Moisture Corn	76%
Haylage/Baleage	35–60%
Corn Silage	30–40%
Small Grain Silage	25–35%



Documentation Forms for Organic Livestock Producers

Appendix A: Dry Matter Intake Calculation Resources for Ruminant Livestock Producers

Dry Matter Demand

The NOP website provides resources for calculating Dry Matter Demand (DMD) and Dry Matter Intake (DMI), including DMD tables for beef, dairy cows, and dairy goats. Organic certifiers and educational organizations also provide explanations and examples of ways to estimate DMD and calculate DMI for different types of ruminant livestock. The table below provides a summary of averages and ranges of DMD values published in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Dry Matter Demand Tables and the sources referenced below. Producers may choose DMD references that best fit the characteristics of each type and class of ruminant livestock they manage and describe their methods for calculating DMI.

All estimates are just that. Many factors influence actual DMD in real livestock, including forage quality, weather, animal condition, genetics, health, and activity.

Dry Matter Demand by Percentage of Body Weight for Ruminant Groups	
Ruminant group	% body weight (DMD = % x animal body weight)
Beef cattle, lactating (demand increases with animal size and milk production; see DMD Tables for Dairy Cattle)	2.0 – 2.5 **
Beef cattle, growing and finishing slaughter stock (demand decreases with increasing age / size / weight gain and slower growth; see also DMD Tables for Beef Cattle)	2.75 – 3.35 *
Dairy heifers (see DMD Tables for Dairy Cattle)	2.5 *
Dairy cows, dry (small and large breed)	1.8 *
Dairy steers	See beef slaughter stock
Goats, weaned, slaughter or replacement stock	2.25 *
Goats, brood or lactating (see DMD Tables for Dairy Goats)	4.0 *
Sheep, weaned, slaughter or replacement stock	3.3 *
Sheep, brood or lactating stock	3.65 *
Sources: (**) NOP tables; (*) Pennsylvania Certified Organic, 2010	

References

National Organic Program Dry Matter Demand Tables For Classes of Dairy Cattle. USDA. March 29, 2010. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5087124>. 202-720-3252

National Organic Program Dry Matter Demand Tables For Classes of Dairy Goats. USDA. December 1, 2010. www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5087914&acct=noprulemaking. 202-720-3252

National Organic Program Dry Matter Demand Tables For Classes of Beef Cattle. USDA. February 12, 2010. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5087125>. 202-720-3252.

Access to Pasture: Guidance for Organic Ruminant Operations. Access to Pasture Rule Guidance Document. Pennsylvania Certified Organic. August 1, 2010. [www.paorganic.org/pdf/2010/Access%20to%20Pasture%20Rule%20Guidance%20Document\(New\).pdf](http://www.paorganic.org/pdf/2010/Access%20to%20Pasture%20Rule%20Guidance%20Document(New).pdf). 814-422-0251

How to Comply with the Pasture Rule on Your Organic Dairy Farm: A 10 Step Summary. Last updated October 20, 2010. www.extension.org/article/30340. The summary's eOrganic authors include the following: Harriet Behar, Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES); Cindy Daley, California State University, Chico; Heather Darby, University of Vermont Extension; Sarah Flack, Sarah Flack Consulting; Ed Maltby, Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance; Lisa McCrory, Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

Pasture for Organic Ruminant Livestock: Understanding and Implementing the National Organic Program (NOP) Pasture Rule. 800-346-9140



For more information, please contact the USDA National Organic Program:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
National Organic Program
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Stop 0268, Room 2640-S
Washington, DC 20250-0268
Tel. 202-720-3252
Fax 202-205-7808
www.ams.usda.gov/NOP