



NORTHEAST/ MID-ATLANTIC TRANSITION TO ORGANIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
National Organic Program
Transition to Organic Partnership Program



Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE)

The most recent and largest amendment to the National organic regulations is referred to as SOE.



On March 19, 2024, the Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) rule will be implemented by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). The published final rule is an amendment to the USDA organic regulations to strengthen oversight and enforcement of the production, handling and sales of organic agricultural products. Review a side-by-side text of the old & regulatory text.

This means all operations in the organic supply chain must be in compliance with SOE by March 19, 2024, at the latest. Without organic certification of these handling and processing operations, organic foods that currently travel through these operations will lose their organic status when that organic foods are moved through non-certified operations.

If labelling is not removed from those products, a non-compliance will be issued to those operations.

Why?

There have been several high-profile cases in the last several years of fraudulent organic products being sold in the US. SOE is meant to keep the integrity of organic foods that we all work so hard to produce and want to consume.

If you are an operation that handles or processes organic foods, you can find out more below.

If you are a certified organic farmer that sells your bulk product to an operation, find out more information below.

What you need to know & do.

Farmers

- Farmers will need to maintain an audit trail for organic products they produce, receive or handle.
- All records need to clearly identify that the products listed are “organic”, (invoices, BOL, sales receipts, etc.).
- Farmers need to verify the certified organic status of purchased products they use or sell. Verification can be made via the [NOP Organic Integrity Database](#).
- If you wholesale bulk produce/products, AND you want your products to maintain its organic integrity, the wholesale organization needs to be certified to maintain the organic labelling.

Processors/Handlers/Wholesalers

[USDA-AMS SOE Fact Sheet](#)

- Distributors/Wholesalers/Food Hubs, any organization or business that handles or processes bulk organic foods, need to become certified organic for that food to maintain its organic certification. Labeling needs to be maintained when repacking bulk product.
- An audit trail needs to be maintained for all organic products received, handled, and sold with the ability to track the certified organic product from point of sell back to incoming ingredients. The amounts of purchased certified organic ingredients must “balance” with certified organic products produced or sold.
- Organizations and businesses that handle sealed, tamper resistance organic product, do not need certification.
- Organizations and businesses need to verify the certified organic status of purchased products they use or sell. Verification can be made via the [NOP Organic Integrity Database](#).

Not sure what you need to do? Contact NOFA-NH: teresa@nofanh.org