



NOFA-NH Why Organic FAQ's

WHAT is Certified Organic?

- Certified Organic is a well-defined agricultural practice that follows the certified food through the growing, processing, and handling of the food to the consumer.
- Certification is renewed yearly by the farmer, producer or handler of organic products.
- All aspects of the regulations must be met by the farmer/producer/handlers to carry the USDA certified organic seal.
- Products will carry the USDA Organic seal or the seal of the Accredited Certification Agency. (NHDAMF, MOFGA, Oregon Tilth, etc.)
- This seal identifies that the food has met organic regulations from seed to the hands of the consumer.
- Organic certification does NOT allow synthetic herbicides, synthetic pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, GMOs of any type, sewage sludge, bioengineered or radiated foods.
- Products are produced with organic, sustainable, regenerative practices for the environment, wildlife, soil and water.
- Produce, meats, eggs, dairy, processed food and natural materials like cotton and wool, can be certified organic.

WHAT Certified Organic is NOT!

- Organic certification does NOT allow:
 - synthetic herbicides,
 - synthetic pesticides,
 - synthetic fertilizers,
 - GMO's of any type,
 - sewage sludge,
 - bioengineered or
 - radiated foods.

WHO can be Certified Organic?

- Any Farm, Producer or Handler that follows the National Organic Program regulations and completes an Organic System Plan (OSP) and passes inspection.
- Farms, Producers or Handlers that sell, produce over \$5K in sales.
- Those under \$5K/year in sales must keep all records and meet all regulations of NOP, they do not need an OSP.
- To make an "organic" claim about your product it must be certified.
- Certification can take up to 3 years.

WHERE is Certified Organic?

- The USDA is a federal agency under the executive branch of the US Government. The Secretary of Agriculture oversees the Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs where the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is housed. The National Organic Program (NOP) is under the AMS.
- The NOP Database houses all the farms, producers, handlers and importers that are Certified Organic to the USDA organic standards. This is known as the Organic Integrity Database.
- NOFA-NH keeps an interactive farm map of Certified Farms in NH.
- Organic Products are available in most locations and will carry an organic seal, either from the USDA or an accredited certifying agency that certified that product.

WHY Certified Organic?

- In the 1980's many organizations had different organic standards which were confusing to consumers as to what practices were followed. Creating national organic standards allowed for consistent standards and created uniform regulations.
- To communicate with the consumer about how your product was produced, when you can't be there to tell them.
- Verified by a third party, that has annual compliance inspections.
- Food that is produced with careful stewardship of the environment, soil ecology and water quality.
- Increases biodiversity.
- Traceability and transparency of the food because of required documentation.
- Guarantees safeguards that researched and approved materials are used.
- Clear economic, social, environmental, family and community well-being benefits come with organic methods and the organic seal.
- Be part of a movement and mindset about stewarding our world for the benefit of the planet and people.
- The more certified organic farms there are the more advocacy, integrity, and impact there will be at the legislative level for a cleaner, living world for people to exist.
- Consumers should be aware of the extra effort and integrity it takes to be a certified producer.

History of the Certified Organic Program in NH

- NOFA developed its first organic standards and certification program in 1977, serving as a model for other programs throughout the country. NOFA was a founding member of the Organic Trade Association and helped develop its Guidelines for the Organic Industry, on which the National Organic Program regulations were based. Currently, NOFA chapters operate three USDA accredited certifying agencies that certify hundreds of organic farms and processors. MA & CT collaborate on an organic land care certification program, and VT now has the highest per capita number of organically farmed acres of any state.
- NOFA-NH started the organic certification program in NH and turned it over to the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food (NHDAMF) when NHDAMF requested to

take on the program, offering to build the program. The program grew to nearly 175 certified organic farmers at one point.

- New Hampshire's organic farmers have worked with and supported the NHDAMF in various ways such as serving on organic certification advisory committees and teaching at workshops and panels put on by NHDAMF over the years.
- In 2021, NHDAMF reduced the program to certify only crops. At that point, the number of farms certified by NHDAMF dropped to around 66 farms.
- In 2023, NHDAMF alerted NOFA-NH of their concerns with their ability to continue serving New Hampshire's organic farming community as an Accredited Certifying Agency for the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP). NHDAMF and NOFA-NH have been collaborating to bring this issue to the organic community, with the goal of working together to develop solutions and ensure continued, uninterrupted certification services for New Hampshire's organic farmers.

Additional Resources:

- NOFA-NH's ["Why Choose Local Organic?" Brochures](#)
- NOFA-NH's ["The Future of Organic Certification in New Hampshire" Webpage](#)
- [Briefing on Organic Certification Services in New Hampshire](#)