

## **Information Regarding Producing and Selling of Organic Products**

The United States Department of Agriculture accredits state, private and foreign organizations or persons to become “certifying agents.” Certifying agents certify that organic production and handling practices meet the national standards.

### **Who needs to be certified?**

Operations or portions of operations that produce or handle agricultural products that are intended to be sold, labeled, or represented as “100% organic”, “certified organic,” or “made with organic ingredients” or food group(s).

### **Who does not need to be certified?**

Producers and handling (processing) operations that sell less than \$5,000 (gross sales) a year in organic agricultural products do not need to go through the certification process. Although exempt from certification, these producers and handlers must abide by the national standards and provide documented proof that they are following the NOP standards. When doing this, they may offer organic products and may label their products as organic. **Without proper documentation of the growing methods used, the term organic cannot be used.**

### **How do farmers and handlers become certified?**

An applicant must submit specific information to an accredited certifying agent.

Information must include:

- The type of operation to be certified;
- A history of substances applied to the land for the previous 3 years;
- The organic products being grown, raised, or processed;

The organic system plan (OSP) – a plan describing practices and substances used in production. The OSP also must describe monitoring practices to be performed to verify that the plan is effectively implemented, a record-keeping system, and practices to prevent commingling of organic and non-organic products and to prevent contact of products with prohibited substances.

Applicants for certification must keep accurate post-certification records for 5 years concerning the production, harvesting, and handling of agricultural products that are to be sold as organic.

These records must document that the operation is in compliance with the regulations and verify that information provided to the certifying agent. Access to these records must be provided to authorized representatives of USDA, including the certifying agent.

### **USDA Accredited certifier list (USDA/NOP)**

The list of accredited certifiers is available at [www.ams.usda.gov/nop](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop)

## Ch. 24: Information Regarding Organic Products

Many of Connecticut's organic farmers use Bay State Organic Certifier, located in North Dighton, MA.

Phone: (774)872-5544

Email: baystateorganic@earthlink.net

### **Inspection and certification process**

Certifying agents review applications for certification eligibility. A qualified inspector conducts an on-site inspection of the applicant's operation. Inspections are scheduled when the inspector can observe the practices used to produce or handle organic products and talk to someone knowledgeable about the operation.

The certifying agents reviews the information submitted by the applicant and the inspectors report. If the is information demonstrates that the applicant is complying with the relevant standards and requirements, the certifying agent grants certification and issues a certificate. Certification remains in effect until terminated, either voluntarily or through the enforcement process.

Annual inspections are conducted of each certified operation, and updates of information are provided annually to the certifying agent in advance of conducting these inspections. Certifying agents must be notified by a producer or handler immediately of any changes affecting an operation's compliance with the regulations, such as application of a prohibited pesticide to a field.

### **Compliance review and enforcement measures**

The regulation permits USDA or the certifying agent to conduct unannounced inspections at any time to adequately enforce the regulations. Certifying agents and USDA may also conduct pre- or post harvest testing if there is reason to believe that an agricultural input or product has come into contact with a prohibited substance or been produced using an excluded method. Complaints received by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture shall be forwarded to the USDA.

### **Cost-Share Grant Program**

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture offers a cost share grant from USDA. This grant allows certified organic growers to receive reimbursement of 75% or up to \$750 for the cost of certifying their farm.

For further information contact the Connecticut Department of Agriculture:  
Richard Macsuga at 860-713-2544 or richard.macsuga@ct.gov