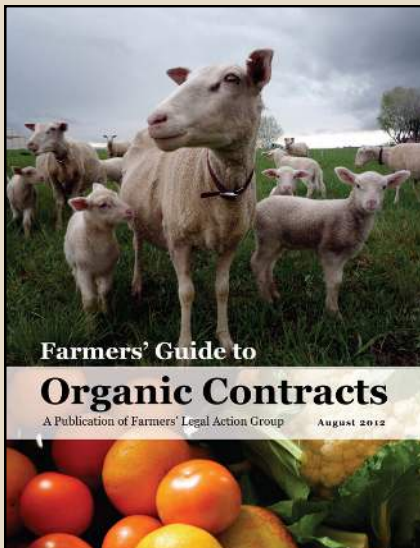


TIPS FOR ORGANIC CONTRACTS

Thinking of reading another farm contract may make your eyes-glaze-over with anticipated boredom. Or, maybe you're someone who's excited to go line by line and make notes on every contract nuance. Either way, it's a job that has to be done for many organic farmers. Knowing your rights and negotiating fair contracts is important as the organic market grows and new buyers enter the scene.

While there are more specific guides farmers can reference for contract tips, the following is a quick resource to help farmers considering contracts for the first time, and also a refresher for those wanting to reinforce or strengthen their contracts.



If you're looking for more information on contracts, take a look at [Farm Commons' legal negotiations resources](#), as well as contract resources. This content was summarized from the [FLAG's Farmers' Guide to Organic Contracts \(August 2012\)](#).

Note: None of this guidance is intended as legal advice. Please consult a legal professional for support with your specific situation.

ORGANIC CONTRACT TIPS

1. Oral or handshake agreements are generally unenforceable in court. Contracts worth \$500 or more, and any changes to those contracts, must be in writing or they are not enforceable in court.
2. **If the buyer sends a contract and you don't like all of the terms, you can delete, adjust, or add terms to send back for review.** (Even "as-is" contracts can be marked up.) Make sure the timing of buyer payments align with your state's legal protections for farmers being paid upon product delivery.
3. Dig deeper into standard or filler contract language that may look straightforward just as carefully as you review pricing terms to find restrictive language that may cause trouble down the road.
4. Before signing, read every word of a contract and ask questions if you are confused. A contract should be clear to understand. Remember, you can always back out of a contract negotiation if something isn't right.
5. Be sure you know the financial stability of the buyer. If resources aren't shared providing this information, ask other farmers for references based on their relationship with the buyer.

YOU DESERVE FAIR CONTRACTS

All this being said, organic contracts don't need to feel intimidating. If in doubt, it's always best to talk to other farmers about their experiences with buyers and to seek legal advice before signing a contract—the up-front costs may just buy peace of mind in the long run. 🌱