

Strengthening Organic Enforcement

How the new rule will affect transitioning & organic farmers

The Strengthening Organic Enforcement rule, is a significant improvement to the USDA organic regulations. Spurred by a few high-profile cases of fraudulent organic sales, this new regulation closes many loopholes and seeks to enhance the quality of organic audits and oversight. Organic farmers will see these changes in the certification process and the organic supply chain, as well as being required to do their part in the prevention of fraud.

A NEW REQUIREMENT FOR FARMERS

Organic farmers are required under the new regulation to do their part to deter and detect fraud in the supply chain. All organic operations, including farmers, must have a fraud prevention plan in their Organic System Plan (OSP). Certifiers are now reviewing the OSPs they provide their farmer clients and will be adding a new section where the farmer will describe what systems they have in place to verify and prove the organic status of all purchased organic labeled feedstuffs, seeds, livestock or other items used to produce their own organically labeled products.

Records must be maintained and kept that verify the organic status throughout the growing season, the life of the animal, or any movement of crops or animals (off-farm storage or custom heifer pasturing for instance). Proof of organic certification of the last entity in the supply chain before the farmer received that product, must be kept, as well as the farmer providing their organic status when the product is sold. The point of this requirement is to keep every link in the supply chain transparent and traceable. For bulk products, the name of the most recent certified organic operation that owned/and or handled that product, must be present on the documentation that goes with that bulk item.

All on-farm inspections will now include a traceability audit which shows the organic status from purchase or growing through sale and a balance audit which tracks that enough organic product was present or produced to justify the volumes of final organic product sold. This would include enough approved seed to grow a crop, enough organic feed purchased for the number of animals on the farm, or enough acreage with reasonable yields for the number of bushels or boxes sold.

New Recordkeeping for Farmers

Strengthening Organic Enforcement Act

NEW OSP SECTION: Proof of Organic Status of all Purchased Organic Inputs

Description of systems in place to verify and prove the organic status of all purchased organic labeled feedstuffs, seeds, livestock or other items used to produce your own organically labeled products.

NEW RECORDS: Organic Status through Growing Season/ Animal Life

Records must verify the organic status throughout the growing season, the life of the animal, or any movement of crops or animals.

NEW RECORDS: Organic Status of Last Entity in Supply Chain

Proof of organic certification of the last entity in the supply chain before the farmer received that product. The farmer must also provide their organic status when the product is sold.

NEW RECORDS: Bulk Products

The name of the most recent certified organic operation that owned/and or handled that product, must be present on the documentation that goes with that bulk item.

NEW INSPECTION AUDITS: Traceability of Products & Balancing

Annual inspections will include a traceability audit where farms must demonstrate the organic status from purchase or growing through sale.

Inspectors will also conduct a balance audit to prove that enough organic product was present or produced to justify the volumes of final organic product sold. This would include enough seed to grow a crop, enough organic feed purchased for the number of animals on the farm, or enough acreage & yields for the number of bushels or boxes sold.