SUBSTANCES FOR ORGANIC CROP + LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

Organic certification verifies that products meet all requirements in the USDA organic regulations from farm to market. **www.ams.usda.gov/organicinfo**

The USDA organic regulations specify production and processing requirements (such as conserving natural resources and preventing commingling with non-organic products). They also specify which substances (such as animal drugs) are allowed and prohibited.

For example, the use of most synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, growth hormones, sewage sludge, irradiation, and genetic engineering (genetically modified organisms or GMOs) are prohibited.

Certifying agents use a variety of tools to verify that organic farmers and processors aren't using prohibited substances. These tools include annual on-site inspections and periodic residue testing.

CROPS + LIVESTOCK

The USDA organic regulations allow most natural substances in organic farming while prohibiting most synthetic substances. The National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances—part of these regulations—lists the exceptions to this basic rule:

Crops

Synthetic substances are prohibited unless specifically allowed. **http://bit.ly/crops601**. Allowed examples: boric acid, newspaper

Natural substances are allowed unless specifically prohibited. **http://bit.ly/crops602**. Prohibited examples: arsenic, strychnine

Livestock

Synthetic substances are prohibited unless specifically allowed at **http://bit.ly/livestock603**. Allowed examples: vaccines, iodine, electrolytes

Natural substances are allowed unless specifically prohibited. **http://bit.ly/livestock604**. Prohibited example: strychnine

SUBSTANCES + CERTIFICATION

Land requirements. For 3 years immediately prior to harvest, organic farmers can't apply prohibited substances to the land. During this transition, farmers can't sell, label, or represent their products as organic.

Applying prohibited substances to the land. An organic farmer's certifying agent must approve all substances used on the farm. Any use of unapproved substances—intentionally or by mistake—will trigger the suspension process. Suspension means products from that treated land couldn't be sold, labeled, or represented as organic for 3 years.

Livestock. If approved interventions fail, the animal must still be given all appropriate treatment(s). However, once an animal is treated with a prohibited substance (such as antibiotics), the animal and its products must not be sold as organic.

How do I know if a substance is natural or synthetic?

If you are unsure whether a substance is allowed, check with a certifying agent or call us at 202-720-3252.

SUBSTANCES IN PROCESSED ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Processed organic products must contain organic ingredients. Some minor non-organic ingredients are allowed depending on the labeling category. For each category's requirements and allowed organic claims, visit **www.ams.usda.gov/NOPOrganicLabeling**.

100 PERCENT ORGANIC*

All ingredients and processing aids must be certified organic.

ORGANIC*

All ingredients must be certified organic unless specifically allowed per the National List. Products can't exceed a combined total of 5 percent of allowed non-organic content (excluding salt and water):

Non-agricultural ingredients are prohibited unless specifically allowed. **http://bit.ly/ingred605**.
Allowed examples: baking soda, citric acid, enzymes

If an organic ingredient isn't commercially available in the appropriate form, quality, or quantity to replace its use and is listed at **http://bit.ly/ingred606**, the non-organic form may be used.
Allowed examples: carrot juice color, fish oil

"MADE WITH ORGANIC ___"*

At least 70 percent of the product must be certified organic ingredients (excluding salt and water).

Non-agricultural ingredients are prohibited unless specifically allowed.
http://bit.ly/ingred605.
Allowed examples: baking soda, citric acid, enzymes

*Products must be overseen by a certifying agent.

Can ingredients be produced with genetic engineering?

No. Products in above labeling categories must be produced without prohibited methods: genetic engineering, sewage sludge, and ionizing radiation.

SPECIFIC ORGANIC INGREDIENTS

Any product that isn't overseen by a certifying agent may only list certified organic ingredients as organic in the ingredient list and the percentage of organic ingredients. These products can be any combination of organic and non-organic ingredients.

Who decides which substances I can use?

The National Organic Standards Board, a 15-member group of citizen volunteers, advises USDA on allowed and prohibited substances in organic production and handling. USDA reviews these recommendations and updates the National List in a transparent manner.

Learn how to submit comments or request a change to the National List. **www.ams.usda.gov/NOPNationalList**