

## USDA Agricultural Marketing Service | National Organic Program Electronic Organic Import Certificates – Overview

The National Organic Program (NOP) has initiated a project to develop and launch an electronic organic import certificate for all organic shipments entering the United States. Required by the 2018 Farm Bill, this project involves close collaboration with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), organic certifiers, organic importers and exporters, and organic programs in other countries.

Electronic organic import certificates are a new tool that will provide critical organic import data, improving global oversight of organic supply chains.

### Quick Facts About Import Certificates

Electronic organic import certificates will provide critical organic import data, improving oversight of organic imports. The certificates:

- Introduce a new electronic oversight tool and process for USDA National Organic Program
- Respond to increasing complexity and length of organic supply chains
- Support organic integrity by combatting fraud and increasing the traceability of organic products
- Support organic enforcement to protect the USDA organic seal

Here are core principles driving the launch of the import certificates. The process and tool will:

- Use the public-private organic certification structure
- Maximize use of existing import filing processes
- Protect confidential and proprietary supply chain information
- We will NOT impede legitimate flow of trade

### Current Status and Actions to Date

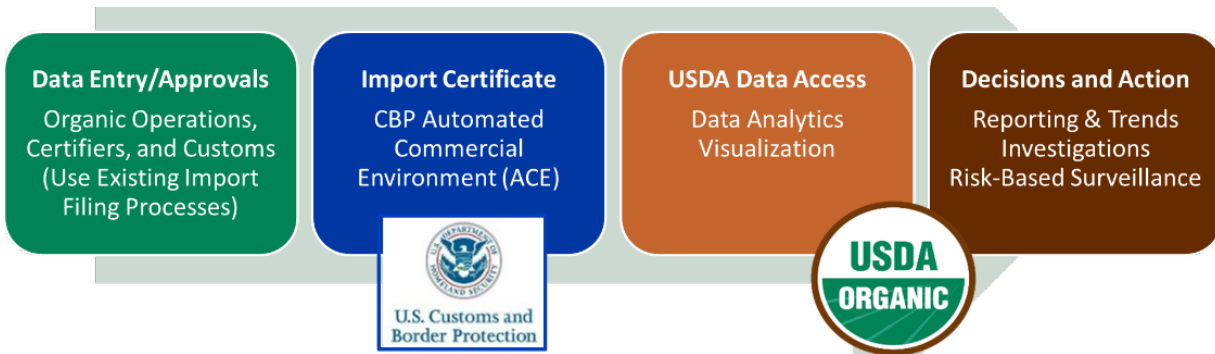
The [Organic Import Certificate](#) is an Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approved form. It is required under some existing organic trade arrangements with other governments. It is currently exchanged by paper or email. The boxes in the current certificate are also fields in the electronic import certificate, so this provides a preview of what is needed for the electronic version.

At the end of April 2020, the NOP and CBP announced the deployment of the electronic organic import certificate in CBP's primary import system, known as the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE). This organic certificate was launched as an optional filing step, not as required. Automated Broker Interface (ABI) software vendors are actively engaging with NOP to ensure that updates to their applications are compliant and available well in advance of full implementation.

While the NOP electronic organic import certificate is not currently mandatory, U.S. importers who wish to request the NOP Import Certificate from exporters and include in their import filings may do so at any time. Trade filers who want to begin using and piloting this new feature should work with their software vendor on its availability.

## Future State: High-Level Overview

Electronic organic import certificates will provide critical organic import data. The data will support global oversight of organic control systems, and NOP investigations and surveillance activities. The launch of the electronic organic import certificate is closely connected with the Strengthening Organic Enforcement rule, which will enhance the USDA organic regulations to require import certificates.



## Key Participant Audiences

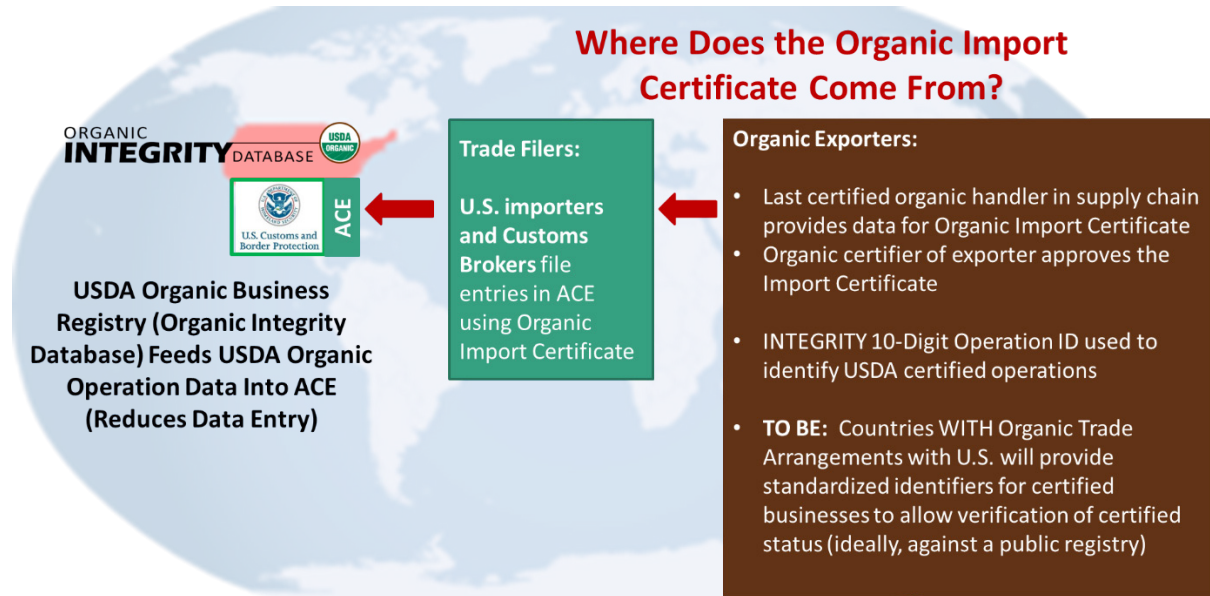
The following stakeholders in the organic industry will be critical to the launch and success of the Electronic Organic Import Certificate Project:

- U.S. Importers:** Primary customer of the organic import certificate; receive organic import certificate to verify organic status. This audience will be the primary driver of demand for the new electronic certificate.
- USDA Accredited Certifiers (U.S. and International):** Will approve certified organic exports from other countries and will confirm that shipments have an electronic import certificate.
- USDA Certified Organic Operations Exporting to U.S.:** Provide the USDA certified organic products that will be listed on organic import certificates. These USDA certified organic businesses are in countries that do not have an organic trade arrangement with the U.S. These businesses are all listed in the Organic Integrity Database; these data will support certificate creation and validation.
- Exporting Countries: Other Government Organic Programs.** There are several governments around the world who are responsible for the organic certification and oversight of organic businesses governed under organic trade arrangements with the U.S. These governments and ultimately, their certifiers, will help define and provide Organic Entity Numbers for organic operations certified under their schemes.



## How Will This Work?

Here's an overview of how the electronic organic import certificate will be generated and transmitted.



## Next Steps: Summer 2020

- Proposed requirements related to the electronic organic import certificate are described in the [Strengthening Organic Enforcement proposed rule](#).
- The NOP is conducting outreach to certifiers, other government organic programs, and the import and export communities about the new import certificate to encourage its adoption and use.
- The NOP will initiate a pilot of the new electronic certificate in Fall 2020. If you are a U.S. organic importer, export to the U.S., or are a certifier and want to engage in the pilot process, contact:

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