

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

WHO HAS TO BE CERTIFIED?

The National Organic Standards require that any grower, producer, processor or handler that markets their products as organic must be certified by an accredited certifying agent. You may apply for certification to any accredited certifying agent that certifies in their state. Certification fees and certification procedures vary between certifying agents, so you may want to check out several certifying agents before deciding which agent to apply to.

THE \$5000 EXEMPTION:

Per section 205.101 of the National Organic Standards, an operation whose gross agricultural income from organic sales totals \$5000 or less annually are exempt from the requirement to be certified. However, exempt operations must comply with all of the applicable organic production and handling requirements of the Organic Standards and the products from exempt operations shall not be used as organic in processed products produced by a certified organic handling operation.

HOW DO I GET CERTIFIED BY BAYSTATE?

First, familiarize yourself with the certification procedures of **Baystate Organic Certifiers (BOC)** and the standards of the **National Organic Program (NOP)**, both contained in the Baystate Organic Certifiers Program Manual which may be downloaded from www.baystateorganic.org, or ordered from our office. Then submit the packet of application forms which describes your operation in significant detail, and pay the certification fee for the year. Application forms may be downloaded, or ordered from our office.

A received application is checked to make sure all of the required information is present, then reviewed to check if it meets the requirements of the NOP. If it doesn't, the applicant is contacted for additional information.

Once the review is complete, an onsite inspection is scheduled at a time mutually convenient for the applicant and the inspector. The inspector usually spends 2-4 hours at an operation, verifying that all of the information in the application is correct, and that the operation is in compliance with the NOP Standards. At the end of the inspection, the inspector reviews any potential noncompliances with the applicant, then submits his/her report to BOC.

BOC reviews the inspector's report and any additional information from the application packet, or the technical review, and makes a certification decision. Certification is either granted, granted with conditions, postponed or denied. For many operations, BOC will either grant certification with conditions or postpone certification until minor noncompliances with the NOP Standards are corrected. In extreme cases, BOC will deny organic certification to an applicant if there are major noncompliances with the NOP Standards.

The entire certification process can take as little as 4 weeks to complete for an operation that is prepared for certification, and is applying for certification during their production season. **On average, the process takes 8-10 weeks** from receipt of a complete application until a certification decision is made. If you need rush organic certification, contact our office and we will work with you to see if meeting your deadline is feasible.

APPLICATION DEADLINES:

You may submit an application for certification at any time throughout the year. However, the inspection must take place at a time when the crop, livestock or product may be observed. Therefore, certification may be delayed in some cases until an appropriate inspection may take place. We encourage growers and livestock producers to submit applications for one of our 3 deadline dates: **February 15th, March 15th, and June 15th**. Growers and livestock producers who submit applications for these deadlines will receive a certification decision by May 1st, June 1st, and September 1st respectively.

In addition, growers and livestock producers who submit applications for these deadlines may split their certification fee into two payments. 50% or more must be paid at the time of the application. The other remaining percentage must be paid on August 1st for operations that apply for the February 15th deadline, or on September 1st for operations that apply for the March 15th deadline, or on October 1st for operations that apply for the June 15th deadline.

(Over)

RENEWING CERTIFICATION:

Certification must be renewed annually and all application information updated. Renewal application packets are mailed at least one (1) month before an operation's renewal certification date.

FEE REIMBURSEMENT

Funds are available from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service to partially refund the cost of organic certification fees. Certified growers and livestock producers can get 75% of their certification fees refunded up to a maximum of \$750.

CRANBERRY GROWERS:

Must submit the Organic Cranberry Plan instead of the Organic Farm Plan.

MAPLE SYRUP PRODUCERS:

Maple Syrup is one of the easiest crops to produce organically. Download the Guidance Document from the website or request it from us at the contact info below. Please make sure you submit your application for certification for maple syrup in late fall or early winter, so BOC can certify your operation before the year's sap run.

CONTACT US:

For more information about certification, or to order hardcopies of the application forms, contact us at:

Certification Administrator, New Applicants - Eric Hanson

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Phone: (401) 835-2210

Certification Administrator, Duncan Cox

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Certification Administrator, Don Persons

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CONSULTANTS

The National Organic Standards prohibit **Baystate Organic Certifiers** from doing organic consulting work for its clients. If you are looking for a consultant to assist you in complying with the organic standards, you can contact the Organic Trade Association for a list of consultants that are members of the trade association.

ABOUT US

Baystate Organic Certifiers is a USDA National Organic Program accredited certifying agent that certifies farm and processing operations in the Continental United States.