

Organic 101

WHAT IS ORGANIC?

Organic refers to the way agricultural products are grown and processed. U.S. organic agriculture requires that products bearing the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Organic seal are produced according to strict guidelines. A federal advisory committee, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), approves the use of non-organic minor ingredients and farm and livestock inputs that can be used in organic production and handling.

WHAT IS ORGANIC CERTIFICATION?

A voluntary process, organic certification is defined by the USDA and is monitored by the National Organic Program (NOP). **Organic Certification is designed to certify every step of the organic supply chain in strict accordance with federal regulations.** Organic operators must develop an organic system plan, which is overseen by a certification agent with annual third-party inspections. Guided by these and other standards, organic is the most comprehensively regulated and closely monitored food production system in the U.S.

HOW ARE CROPS GROWN?

Crops are grown without the use of toxic pesticides and without synthetic nitrogen fertilizers, genetic engineering, sewage sludge, or irradiation. To control pests, diseases, and weeds, organic farmers rely on hand weeding, mulches, cover crops, crop rotation, and dense planting. Additionally, the land must be managed without prohibited materials for at least three years to qualify for organic certification.

HOW ARE ANIMALS RAISED?

By law, organic farmers are required to raise animals without the use of antibiotics or synthetic growth hormones. Organic farmers must provide animals with 100% organic feed and safe, clean, cage-free living conditions. In addition, organic farmers must provide their animals with access to the outdoors and pasture.

HOW IS FOOD MADE?

Organic foods have minimal processing and are made without artificial ingredients, colors, or synthetic preservatives. The use of GMOs is expressly prohibited in certified organic products. Organic food must be processed in an operation that has been certified to organic standards, which has taken special steps to ensure that organic ingredients are not commingled with non-organic or other prohibited materials.

WHAT ABOUT NON-FOOD AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS?

There is a wide diversity of other organic products available, including organic apparel and beds/bedding, cleaning and household products, nutritional supplements, organic flowers, and even pet food. All certified organic non-food products are produced and handled in accordance with the same strict requirements that apply to crops, livestock, and food products.

ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION
Bold Steps to
PROMOTE and PROTECT
ORGANIC

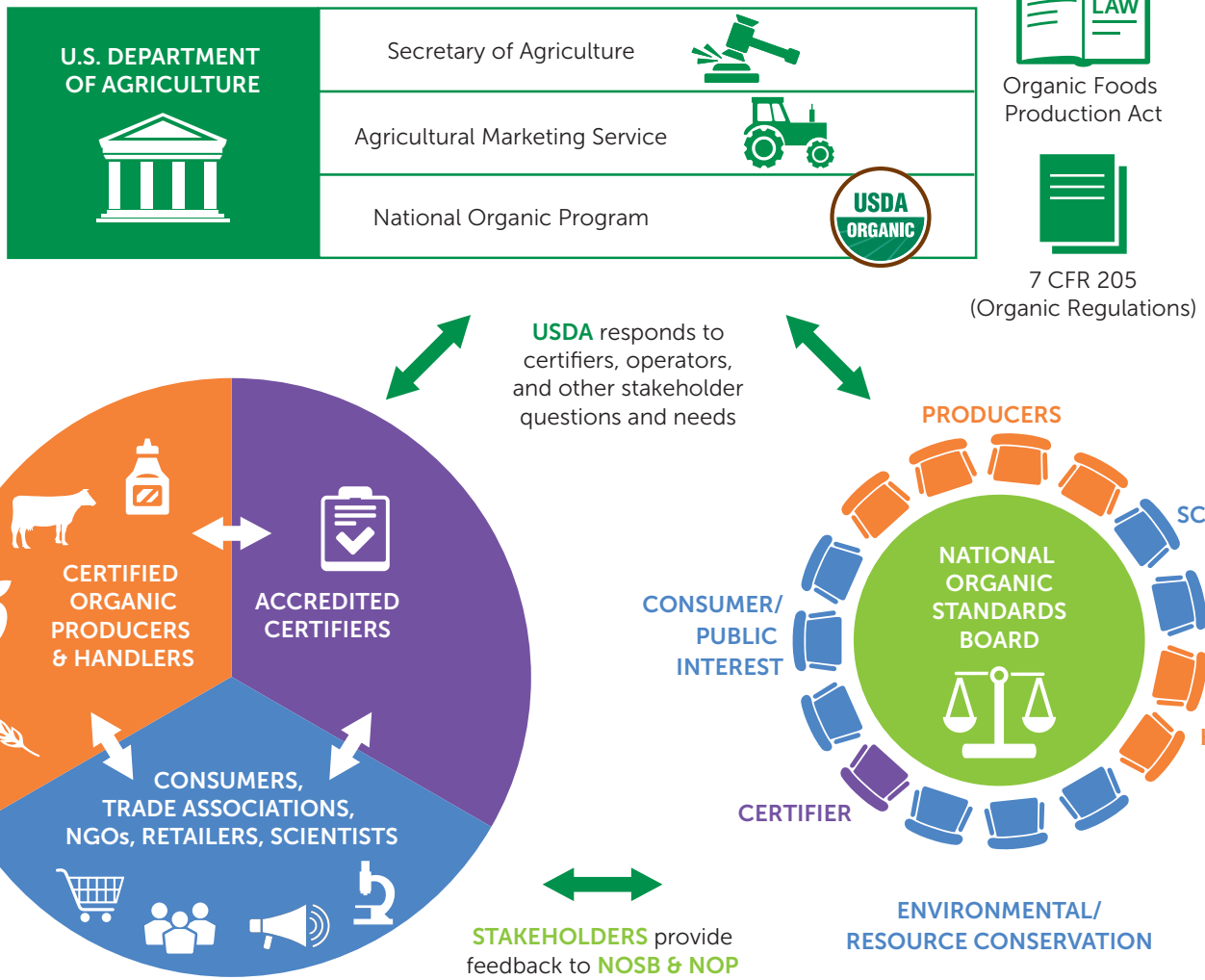
FOCUS
ON SOLUTIONS

CONTINUOUS
IMPROVEMENT

EMBRACE
INNOVATION

PLAN FOR
THE FUTURE

The Organic Stakeholder Landscape



KEY



The Organic Foods Production Act passed in 1990. It takes an act of Congress to change the law.



7 CFR 205 are the organic standards that describe the requirements that must be verified before a product can be labeled as USDA organic.



U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is responsible for administering federal regulations related to farming, agriculture, forestry and food.



The Secretary of Agriculture appoints and consults with NOSB in the formation of organic standards, policy and guidance.



USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) administers and enforces NOP's regulatory framework.



USDA (AMS) National Organic Program (NOP) establishes and enforces organic standards, oversees certifiers and supports transitioning and current organic producers and handlers.



National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is a 15-member board of volunteer citizens that assists in the on-going development of the organic standards.



Accredited Certifiers are third party organizations that certify organic operations to protect the integrity of the USDA organic seal.



Certified Organic Producers and Handlers are farmers, ranchers, processors, retailers, traders, distributors and others that are able to sell, label and represent products as organic.



Consumers, trade associations, NGOs, retailers, scientists and other stakeholders with an interest in organic agriculture and products provide feedback to USDA and NOSB.