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NASAP
Cultivating Community

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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USDA

ORGANIC

United States Department of Agriculture

USDA

What does the USDA do?

The USDA consists of ten different branches.

1. Agriculture
2. Education and Outreach
3. Food and Nutrition
4. Laws and Regulations
5. Marketing and Trade
6. Natural Resources and Environment
7. Research and Science
8. Rural and Community Development
9. Travel and Recreation
10. USDA Employee Services

In 1990, the US government decided that they wanted to regulate "organic". Before 2000, there were many certifiers with many standards.

In 2000, the USDA presented their National Organic Plan. Organic Farmers all over America did not like it!!

So, the USDA made a new National Organic Plan

- The NOP regulates ALL organic farmers
  - vegetable, fruit, flowers, meat, eggs, grain, dairy, coffee, tea, honey, maple syrup, medicinal herbs, compost, potting soil, seeds and more

- The NOP also regulates food processors
  - For example: a company that makes organic tomato sauce or the slaughterhouse that chops up and packages an organic cow

What does it mean to be a USDA certified organic vegetable farmer?

- No human sewage sludge
- No irradiated food
- No genetically modified organisms
- No chemical fertilizers
- No chemical pesticides
- No hormones
- No antibiotics

What does it mean to be a USDA certified organic vegetable farmer?

- Farmland has to be organically managed for 3 years before it can be called organic
- A LOT of VERY detailed records about MANY things
- Certified organic seeds and compost and potting soil
- Separation of certified organic fields from non-certified organic fields
- Inspections to make sure you are following the rules

What does it mean to be a USDA certified organic vegetable farmer?

It means a lot more than those 12 items. The rule book is about 1000 pages long!

3rd party certification agents

MAINE ORGANIC FARMERS AND GARDENERS ASSOCIATION
MOFGA CERTIFIED ORGANIC

USDA ORGANIC

You cannot call yourself organic in the United States unless you are USDA Certified Organic

One very small exception to this rule: If you sell less than $5000/year and follow ALL of the rules,

you can call yourself “organic”

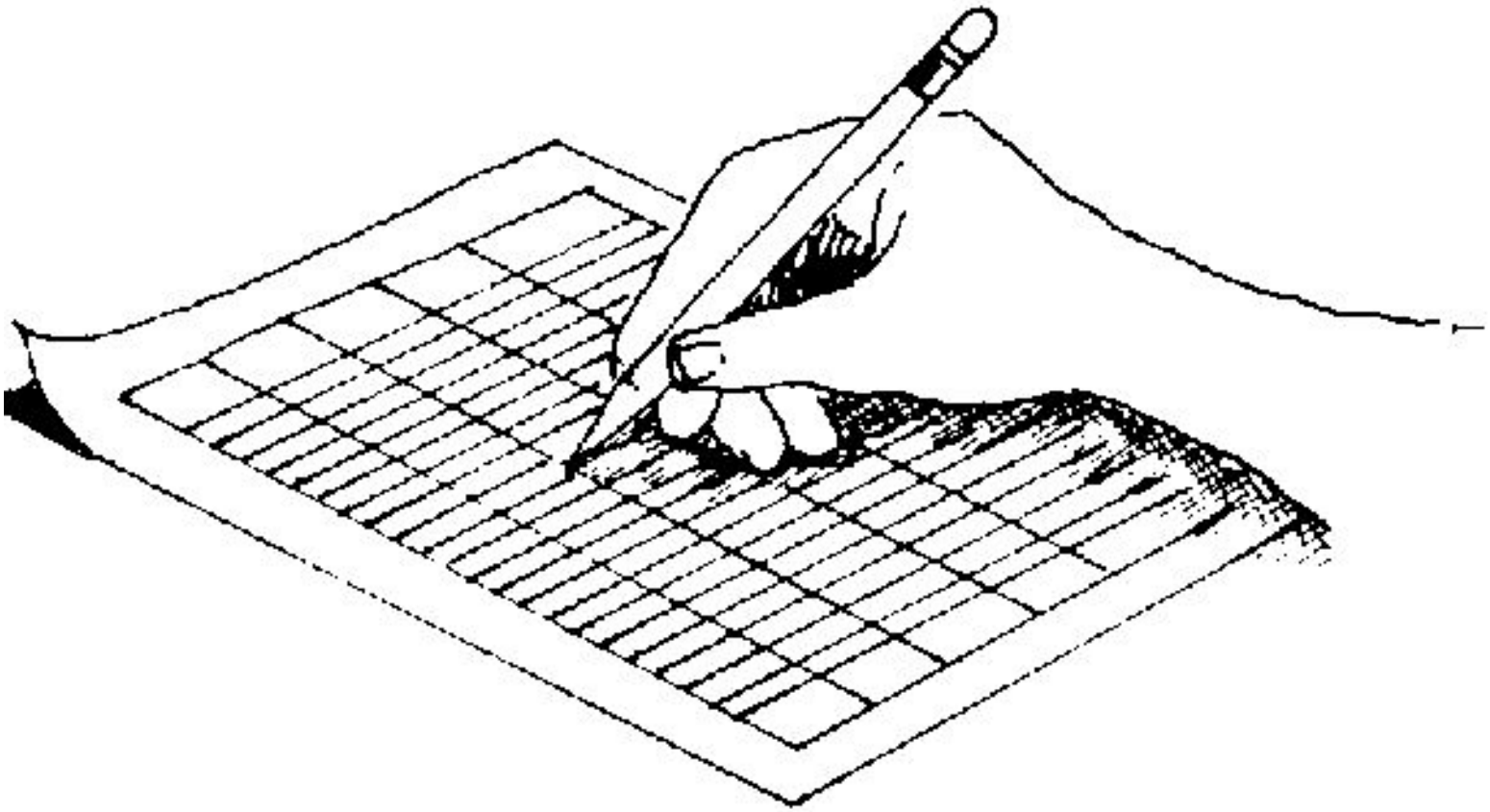
but not “certified organic”

Many customers are confused about organic

For a small vegetable farm, certification costs about $500 every year. That fee goes up every few years.

You have to do the application every year

You have to take a LOT of records every year



An inspector comes to your farm at least one time every year

We would only need to change a few things at the farm to be eligible for certification

Only buy certified organic seeds

Only buy certified organic seed potatoes

Only buy certified organic onion sets

Only buy certified organic potting soil

Only buy certified organic seedlings

What if Certification feels like too much work!

No chemicals

Sustainably grown

Naturally grown

No chemical fertilizers or pesticides

Ecologically grown

Only 0.5% of all the farmland in America is certified organic

Only 0.9% of the farmland in the world is certified organic

No one knows how much of the world's farmland is non-certified organic

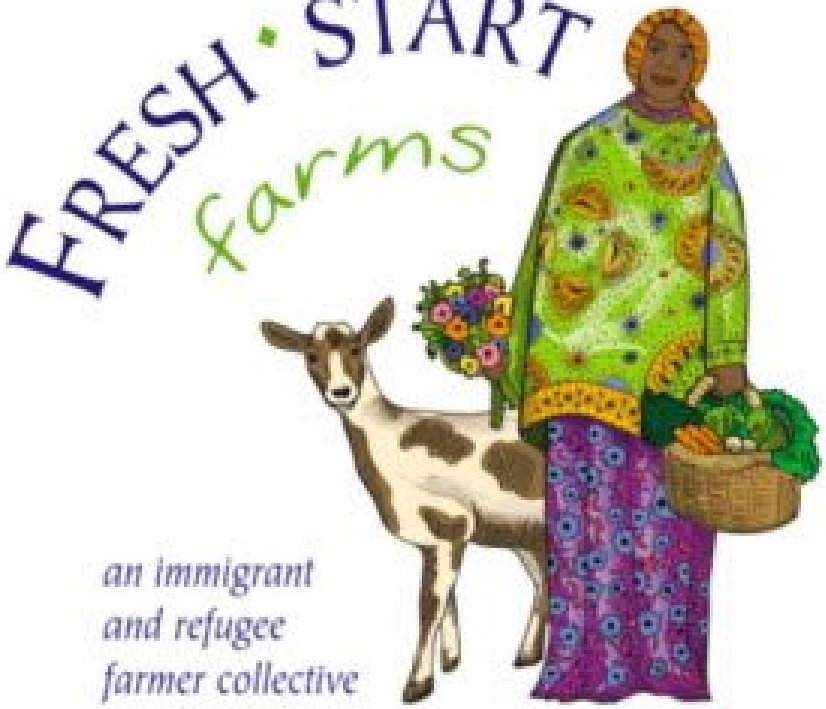
About 4% of food and drinks purchased in America are certified organic

- 54% of that organic food and drink is purchased at big grocery stores
- 39% is purchased at natural food stores like Axis in Lewiston
- The rest, 7%, is purchased at farmers markets, CSAs, on the internet, at other special stores, or farm stands.

Why is that important information for you?

1. We know all of our customers!
2. We can tell our customers how we grow our food
3. We can invite our customers to come see our farm
4. Our customers can ask us questions about our farm

All Natural, Sustainably Grown



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We can also make a sign for your table

FRESH · START farms

an immigrant and refugee farmer collective

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If anyone is interested in becoming certified organic….

It will be at least one year before we could get all of the paperwork in line and make all of the changes at the farm.

So, let’s practice telling our customers how we grow our vegetables!

Farm level details and
enrollment information on specific crop ins.
programs are available
from crop insurance agents

(www.rma.usda.gov/tools/agent.htm).