



RURAL CONNECTIONS

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What Does "ORGANIC" Mean?

Organic Agriculture and Production

Organic refers to the way agricultural products are grown and processed. It includes a system of production, processing, distribution and sales that assures consumers that the products maintain the organic integrity that begins on the farm.

Setting the stage for U.S. National organic standards, the U.S. Congress adopted the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) in 1990 as part of the 1990 Farm Bill. This action was followed by over a decade of public input and discussion, which resulted in a National Organic Program final rule published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in December 2000 and implemented in October 2002.

These stringent standards put in place a system to certify that specific practices are used to produce and process organic agricultural ingredients used for food and non-food purposes.

National organic standards set out the methods, practices and substances used in producing and handling crops, livestock and processed agricultural products. The standards include a national list of approved synthetic and prohibited non-synthetic substances for organic production.

Organic production is based on a system of farming that maintains and replenishes soil fertility without the use of toxic and persistent pesticides and fertilizers. Organically produced foods also must be produced **without the use** of antibiotics, synthetic hormones, genetic engineering and other excluded practices, sewage sludge, or irradiation. Cloning animals or using their products would be considered inconsistent with organic practices. Organic foods are minimally processed without artificial ingredients, preservatives, or irradiation to maintain the integrity of the food.

National organic standards require that organic growers and handlers be certified by third-party state or private agencies or other organizations that are accredited by USDA. Although farmers and handlers who sell less than \$5,000 a year in organic agricultural products and retailers that do not process these products are exempt from certification, they must meet all certified organic grower and handler requirements to maintain the organic integrity of the organic products they sell. Anyone who knowingly sells or mislabels as organic a product that was not produced and handled in accordance with the regulations can be subject to a civil penalty of up to \$10,000 per violation.

Consumers can look for the "USDA Organic" seal or other approved labeling, and for the name of the certifier on the label of the products they consider for purchase. Products labeled "100% Organic" and carrying the "USDA Organic" seal are just that – they contain all organically produced ingredients. Products that are made from at least 95% organic ingredients, and have remaining ingredients that are approved for use in organic products may also carry the "USDA Organic" seal. In addition, products that contain at least 70% organic ingredients may label those on the ingredient listing. Producers and processors voluntarily use these labels, and may use organic ingredients without being required to label them.



For more information from USDA on labeling and other issues go to <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/Consumers/brochure.html>.

Letter From The President

On August 1, 2011, after 18 years of certifying organic growers, handlers, processors and retailers, HOFA surrendered its accreditation as a nationally recognized certification agency, under the USDA's National Organic Program. During the last decade, a Hawaii-based certification agency was essential to grow the local organic market, observing an overall growth of 20-30%. During these times, HOFA not only certified hundreds of local businesses, but also trained inspectors, held numerous workshops, educated retailers and consumers about the advantages of organic products, and helped increase awareness. Over the years, HOFA became a reputable organization, respected by many.

Unfortunately, even with a 20% increase in certified producers, HOFA faced many financial challenges. The rising cost of maintaining accreditation, coupled with our geographical isolation, limited the amount of clients HOFA would ever be able to certify. It became evident over the past several years that we would have to double or triple our certification fees to stay in business. On top of that, many of HOFA's clientele were interested in international recognition, something HOFA would never be capable of offering.

The decision to surrender accreditation with the NOP was taken with a very heavy heart but with the best intentions for Hawaii's certified producers. Without tripling the cost of certification we hoped to be able to smoothly transition producers to another certification agency. Yes, the cost will inevitably increase, but perhaps not so much as if we tried to keep HOFA financially stable. It has taken one year for this transition process to take place and most producers have transferred to another agency at this point. HOFA's dedicated staff continued to be available during this transition phase, many hours voluntarily.

Another concern many HOFA members had was the lack of lobbyism that HOFA provided. Without the accreditation, HOFA is able to be a stronger voice, to make political statements, to act in the interest of the organic community, without being restricted as an agent of the NOP. With the new website (still under development), it will be easier for retailers and consumers to find organic products and services. In addition, HOFA is working on a series of workshops for retailers and food service institutions, which should help the organic producers and farmers.

It has been a great ride, and HOFA is ready to support the Hawaii organic community for many more years to come. We still need your membership support, now more than ever, to make this possible. Hope to see you all at the next annual meeting,

Franz Weber

U.S. Organic Sales

The U.S. organic industry grew 21 percent overall to reach \$17.7 billion in consumer sales in 2006, according to *The Organic Trade Association's 2007 Manufacturer Survey*. Organic foods grew 16.2 percent in 2005 and accounted for \$13.8 billion in sales. Nonfood organic products (personal care products, nutritional supplements, household cleaners, flowers, pet food, and clothing, bedding and other products from organic fibers such as flax, wool, and cotton) grew 26 percent, to total \$938 million in U.S. sales in 2006.

Organic foods and beverages continue to be one of the fastest growing segments in the overall \$598 billion food market. According to the OTA survey, the \$16.7 billion in consumer sales of organic foods and beverages in 2006 represents an increase in market penetration from 2.5 percent of total U.S. food sales in 2005 to 2.8 percent in 2006. This represents a two percentage point increase from 0.8 percent in 1997 when organic food sales tracking began. The fastest growing food categories and their rates of growth over the previous year are organic meat (29 percent), organic dairy products (25 percent), and organic fruits and vegetables (24 percent). The fastest-growing non-food categories are organic pet food (36.7 percent), household products/cleaners (31.6 percent), and fiber linens and clothing (26.9 percent).

Organic foods are increasingly sold in mass market grocery stores, which represent the largest single distribution channel, accounting for 38 percent of organic food sales in 2006. Large natural food chains, along with small natural food chains or independent natural groceries and health food stores, represented about 44 percent of organic food sales. About 2 percent of organic food is sold through farmer's markets.

Source: The Organic Trade Association (OTA) and *Organic Trade Association's 2007 Manufacturer Survey* (Because USDA does not yet do comprehensive market studies of organic sales, as it does for conventional U.S. agriculture, OTA performs this research on the industry for its members and the public.)

CERTIFICATION NEWS!

Organic Cost Share Program

The NOP administers a cost-share program for producers and handlers who, once certified by an accredited certifying agent, may be reimbursed up to 75% of costs related to organic certification, not to exceed \$750 annually.

The National Organic Cost Share Program and Agricultural Management Assistance Program originated as early as 2001, when Congress designated funds to alleviate the financial burden of organic certification. Recognizing the increased costs for those participating in the organic market, the program was intended to make certification more affordable.

Almost a decade later, operations throughout the country, recently certified or renewing a long-term operation, are still invited to apply for funds. Moreover, smaller operators have equal opportunity to receive cost share funds as do their larger counterparts. Financing is not competitive: funds are distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis until exhausted.

Most recent legislation

For the coming year, federal funds totaling \$6 million will be available to those who obtain or renew organic certification from Oct. 1, 2010 through Sept. 30, 2011.

In 2008, the Farm Bill authorized \$22 million in federal funds towards the National Organic Cost Share Program to be distributed over five years. Along with the authorization provided by the Federal Crop Insurance Act in 2001 for the management of the Agricultural Management Assistance Program, the NOP recognizes the costs that organic certification poses and provides a rebate to alleviate this burden.

Transitioning from HOFA to ICS: what you need to know

Regulation: As you know, the NOP law requires annual on-site inspection and update of your Organic Systems Production Plan. You will receive a renewal reminder from HOFA which contains the documents you need to apply with ICS. The reminder package should arrive a minimum of 6 weeks prior to your renewal date, to give you time to complete and return the documents.

When to apply: You must apply to your new ACA by your renewal date to remain in compliance. If your certificate is coming up for renewal soon, you will be best served by applying to ICS immediately upon receiving your renewal reminder package. Additionally, ICS is offering higher discounts for earlier application. However, if you recently received your updated certificate, you will likely wish to wait to apply with ICS until closer to your renewal date.

Surrender of HOFA certificate: You must maintain your current certification until you have been granted certification by the new ACA if you intend to continue to produce or sell products as organic. Those of you choosing ICS will have the advantage of the cooperation and communication between ICS and HOFA, and so will not have to notify HOFA of your ongoing compliance while you are in-process with ICS. Official surrender of your HOFA certificate will be required once you have been granted certification by ICS.

Labels: NOP allows no more than 90 days for use-up of your existing labels (with HOFA identified as your certifier), though your new certifier has final approval of the labels and timing requirements.

**This information is intended as guidance to continue to make this transition as smooth as possible.
Please contact either HOFA or ICS if you have any further questions.**

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10 Reasons to Avoid GMOs

Jeffrey Smith

The leading consumer advocate promoting healthier, non-GMO choices Posted on 3:39 pm August 25, 2011

1. GMOs are unhealthy.

The American Academy of Environmental Medicine (AAEM) urges doctors to prescribe non-GMO diets for all patients. They cite animal studies showing organ damage, gastrointestinal and immune system disorders, accelerated aging, and infertility. Human studies show how genetically modified (GM) food can leave material behind inside us, possibly causing long-term problems. Genes inserted into GM soy, for example, can transfer into the DNA of bacteria living inside us, and that the toxic insecticide produced by GM corn was found in the blood of pregnant women and their unborn fetuses.

Numerous health problems increased after GMOs were introduced in 1996. The percentage of Americans with three or more chronic illnesses jumped from 7% to 13% in just 9 years; food allergies skyrocketed, and disorders such as autism, reproductive disorders, digestive problems, and others are on the rise. Although there is not sufficient research to confirm that GMOs are a contributing factor, doctors groups such as the AAEM tell us not to wait before we start protecting ourselves, and especially our children who are most at risk.

The American Public Health Association and American Nurses Association are among many medical groups that condemn the use of GM bovine growth hormone, because the milk from treated cows has more of the hormone IGF-1 (insulin-like growth factor 1)—which is linked to cancer.

2. GMOs contaminate—forever.

GMOs cross pollinate and their seeds can travel. It is impossible to fully clean up our contaminated gene pool. Self-propagating GMO pollution will outlast the effects of global warming and nuclear waste. The potential impact is huge, threatening the health of future generations. GMO contamination has also caused economic losses for organic and non-GMO farmers who often struggle to keep their crops pure.

3. GMOs increase herbicide use.

Most GM crops are engineered to be “herbicide tolerant”—the deadly weed killer. Monsanto, for example, sells Roundup Ready crops, designed to survive applications of their Roundup herbicide.

Between 1996 and 2008, US farmers sprayed an extra 383 million pounds of herbicide on GMOs. Overuse of Roundup results in “superweeds,” resistant to the herbicide. This is causing farmers to use even more toxic herbicides every year. Not only does this create environmental harm, GM foods contain higher residues of toxic herbicides. Roundup, for example, is linked with sterility, hormone disruption, birth defects, and cancer.

4. Genetic engineering creates dangerous side effects.

By mixing genes from totally unrelated species, genetic engineering unleashes a host of unpredictable side effects. Moreover, irrespective of the type of genes that are inserted, the very process of creating a GM plant can result in massive collateral damage that produces new toxins, allergens, carcinogens, and nutritional deficiencies.

5. Government oversight is dangerously lax.

Most of the health and environmental risks of GMOs are ignored by governments’ superficial regulations and safety assessments. The reason for this tragedy is largely political. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), for example, doesn’t require a single safety study, does not mandate labeling of GMOs, and allows companies to put their GM foods onto the market without even notifying the agency. Their justification was the claim that they had no information showing that GM foods were substantially different. But this was a lie. Secret agency memos made public by a lawsuit show that the overwhelming consensus even among the FDA’s own scientists was that GMOs can create unpredictable, hard-to-detect side effects. They urged long-term safety studies. But the White House had instructed the FDA to promote biotechnology, and the agency official in charge of policy was Michael Taylor, Monsanto’s former attorney, later their vice president. He’s now the US Food Safety Czar.

6. The biotech industry uses “tobacco science” to claim product safety.

Biotech companies like Monsanto told us that Agent Orange, PCBs, and DDT were safe. They are now using the same type of superficial, rigged research to try and convince us that GMOs are safe. Independent scientists, however, have caught the spin-masters red-handed, demonstrating without doubt how industry-funded research is designed to avoid finding problems, and how adverse findings are distorted or denied.

7. Independent research and reporting is attacked and suppressed.

Scientists who discover problems with GMOs have been attacked, gagged, fired, threatened, and denied funding. The journal Nature acknowledged that a “large block of scientists . . . denigrate research by other legitimate scientists in a knee-jerk, partisan, emotional way that is not helpful in advancing knowledge.” Attempts by media to expose problems are also often censored.

8. GMOs harm the environment.

GM crops and their associated herbicides can harm birds, insects, amphibians, marine ecosystems, and soil organisms. They reduce bio-diversity, pollute water resources, and are unsustainable. For example, GM crops are eliminating habitat for monarch butterflies, whose populations are down 50% in the US. Roundup herbicide has been shown to cause birth defects in amphibians, embryonic deaths and endocrine disruptions, and organ damage in animals even at very low doses. GM canola has been found growing wild in North Dakota and California, threatening to pass on its herbicide tolerant genes on to weeds.

9. GMOs do not increase yields, and work against feeding a hungry world.

Whereas sustainable non-GMO agricultural methods used in developing countries have conclusively resulted in yield increases of 79% and higher, GMOs do not, on average, increase yields at all. This was evident in the Union of Concerned Scientists’ 2009 report Failure to Yield—the definitive study to date on GM crops and yield.

The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) report, authored by more than 400 scientists and backed by 58 governments, stated that GM crop yields were “highly variable” and in some cases, “yields declined.” The report noted, “Assessment of the technology lags behind its development, information is anecdotal and contradictory, and uncertainty about possible benefits and damage is unavoidable.” They determined that the current GMOs have nothing to offer the goals of reducing hunger and poverty, improving nutrition, health and rural livelihoods, and facilitating social and environmental sustainability.

On the contrary, GMOs divert money and resources that would otherwise be spent on more safe, reliable, and appropriate technologies.

10. By avoiding GMOs, you contribute to the coming tipping point of consumer rejection, forcing them out of our food supply.

Because GMOs give no consumer benefits, if even a small percentage of us start rejecting brands that contain them, GM ingredients will become a marketing liability. Food companies will kick them out. In Europe, for example, the tipping point was achieved in 1999, just after a high profile GMO safety scandal hit the papers and alerted citizens to the potential dangers. In the US, a consumer rebellion against GM bovine growth hormone has also reached a tipping point, kicked the cow drug out of dairy products by Wal-Mart, Starbucks, Dannon, Yoplait, and most of America’s dairies.

The Campaign for Healthier Eating in America is designed to achieve a tipping point against GMOs in the US. The number of non-GMO shoppers needed is probably just 5% of the population. The key is to educate consumers about the documented health dangers and provide a Non-GMO Shopping Guide to make avoiding GMOs much easier.

Please choose healthier non-GMO brands, tell others about GMOs so they can do the same, and join the Non-GMO Tipping Point Network. Together we can quickly reclaim a non-GMO food supply.

10 More Reasons to Support Organic Farmers!



HAWAII ORGANIC MARKETPLACE LISTING

Complete the information below to create your online listing at HOFA's Hawaii Organic Marketplace

- Please check boxes for information you would like published.
- NAME _____ DATE _____
- BUSINESS/FARM NAME _____ Island _____
- FARM ADDRESS (Optional) _____
- MAILING ADDRESS _____
- CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
- PHONE _____ FAX _____ CELL: _____
- E-MAIL _____
- WEBSITE _____

Certified Farm/Business:
 Certification Agent: _____

Certificate anniversary date: _____ Number of acres (farms): _____

Certification Category (check the category of certification)

- Crop
- Livestock
- Apiary
- Processing
- Handling
- Retail

Products certified: list or attach list: _____

Non-certified Farm/Business:

- Small Farm Exemption—please attach your SFE affidavit

Small Farm product list (or attach) _____

Agricultural Services:

- Freight services
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- Other listing requested _____
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