

Organic Certification Checklist

40 things a certifier and an inspector check on an organic farm, in the order they come up. Each line gives the rule, what it asks for, a question to ask yourself, and the record that proves it. Tick the box when your record is in the binder.

#	Topic	Rule (7 CFR)	What the rule asks for	Ask yourself	Record to keep	Done
1	Your business	Application	Your certifier needs the legal name and structure of the business that will hold the certificate.	Is there one legal business, or more than one?	Business registration or formation papers	☐
2	Selling in other countries	Trade arrangements	Each export market has its own papers and label terms.	Which countries will you sell to?	Export papers for each market	☐
3	Sites and storage	205.201	List every field, building, and storage place you use, even ones you rent or share.	Is every place where you grow, pack, or store on the list?	Site list with addresses and acres	☐
4	Crop list	205.201	List every crop and product you want certified.	Is anything you plan to sell as organic missing?	Crop and product list	☐
5	Land history	205.202	No prohibited substances on the land for 36 months before the harvest of an organic crop.	Can you prove the last 36 months for every field?	Signed land history statement, spray records, receipts	☐
6	Maps	205.202(c)	Each field needs clear borders. Your map shows borders, buffers, neighbors, buildings, and north.	Could a stranger find each field with your map?	A map for every site	☐
7	Prohibited materials on site	205.201(a)(5)	Describe how you keep prohibited materials away from organic crops and products.	Is anything prohibited stored on the farm? Is it kept apart and marked?	Storage list, labels	☐
8	Organic and non organic together	205.201(a)(5)	If you grow or handle both, show how you keep them apart at every step.	Do you grow the same crop both ways?	Split operation plan, separate records	☐
9	Buffers	205.202(c)	Buffer zones must stop drift and runoff from land next door. The rule sets no distance. Your certifier judges the risk.	What is next to each border, and is the buffer enough?	Map, neighbor notices, buffer notes	☐
10	Crops from the buffer	205.202(c)	A crop harvested from the buffer cannot be sold as organic.	Do you harvest the buffer? Where does that crop go?	Buffer harvest and sales records	☐
11	Soil, water, and wildlife	205.200	You must maintain or improve the natural resources of the operation.	What are you doing for soil, water, and habitat?	Biodiversity log, photos	☐
12	Building soil	205.203(a) and (b)	Build soil with rotations, cover crops, and plant and animal materials.	What do you do each year to build your soil?	Fertility log, soil tests	☐
13	Input list	205.201(a)(2)	List every substance you use: what is in it, where it comes from, and where you use it.	Is every product on the list and approved before you use it?	Input list, labels, receipts, application log	☐

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14	Compost	205.203(c)(2)	Compost made with manure must start at 25 to 1 up to 40 to 1 carbon to nitrogen and hold 131 to 170 F: 3 days in a vessel or static pile, or 15 days in a windrow turned at least five times.	Do you log the heat and the turns for every batch?	Compost temperature log	☐
15	Raw manure	205.203(c)(1)	Work raw manure into the soil 120 days before harvest if the part you eat touches soil, 90 days if it does not.	When was manure last on each field?	Manure and grazing log	☐
16	Micronutrients	205.601(j)	Synthetic micronutrients are allowed only when a soil or tissue test shows the need.	Do you have a test that shows the need?	Soil or tissue test	☐
17	Pests, weeds, and disease: prevention	205.206(a) to (d)	Use rotation, clean practices, and cultural, mechanical, and biological controls first.	What do you do before you reach for a spray?	Pest, disease, and weed logs	☐
18	Pest control products	205.206(e)	When prevention is not enough, you may use an allowed product. Your plan must say when and how.	Is each product allowed, and used within its limits?	Spray log, labels	☐
19	Treated wood	205.206(f)	No lumber treated with arsenate or other prohibited materials for new or replacement posts and beds that touch soil or animals.	Any new posts, trellises, or beds since last year?	Receipts, map of treated wood	☐
20	Burning	205.203(e)(3)	Do not burn crop residue to get rid of it. Burning is allowed only to stop disease or help seeds sprout.	Do you burn? Why?	Field notes	☐
21	Water	205.201(a)(5)	Show that the water you use to irrigate and wash does not put prohibited substances on the crop.	Where does your water come from? Has it been tested?	Water test	☐
22	Seeds	205.204(a)	Use organic seed. Untreated seed that is not organic is allowed only when an organic variety cannot be bought.	Did you look for organic seed first and write it down?	Seed search record, tags, invoices	☐
23	Transplants and planting stock	205.204(a)	Annual transplants must be organic. Planting stock that is not organic must be managed organically for one year before its crop is sold as organic.	Where did your starts and trees come from?	Receipts, supplier certificates, planting log	☐
24	Crop rotation	205.205	Rotate crops to build soil, manage pests, and prevent erosion.	What is your rotation for annual crops?	Planting log, field history	☐
25	Contractors	205.201(a)(5)	Anyone who sprays, harvests, hauls, or stores for you must protect your organic crop.	Who else works on your crop? Do they know it is organic?	Written notices or agreements	☐
26	Equipment	205.272	List your equipment and say which is used only for organic and which is shared.	Is any equipment also used on land or crops that are not organic?	Equipment list	☐
27	Cleaning shared equipment	205.272	Shared equipment must be cleaned before organic use, and the cleaning written down.	Is there a cleaning record for every switch?	Equipment cleaning log	☐

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28	Harvest	205.103	Records must show what you did in enough detail to be understood and audited.	Can you trace each harvest to a field and a date?	Harvest log with lot numbers	☐
29	Washing, packing, and drying	205.270 and 205.272	Describe each step after harvest and how you protect the product during it.	Does every step have a record tied to a lot number?	Handling and processing records	☐
30	Pests in packing and storage	205.271	Prevent pests first. Use an allowed material only when needed, and keep it off the product.	What is your pest program in the packing shed?	Pest control log, service reports	☐
31	Sanitizers and wash water	205.605 and 205.272	Use only allowed cleaners and sanitizers on surfaces and in water that touch the product, and follow the limits.	Is every sanitizer on your input list?	Input list, labels	☐
32	Suppliers and outside processors	205.100	A mill, roaster, or processor that handles your product must be certified, with few exceptions.	Who handles your product after it leaves you?	Current organic certificate for each one	☐
33	Storage	205.272	Keep organic product from mixing with other product and from touching prohibited substances.	Are bins, shelves, and rooms clearly marked organic?	Storage map, labels, inventory	☐
34	Storage away from the farm	205.201(a)(5)	Your plan covers every place your product is stored, even one you do not own.	Does the storage owner know your product is organic?	Notice or agreement with the storage site	☐
35	Packaging	205.272(b)	No packaging or bins that contain synthetic fungicides, preservatives, or fumigants. No reused bags that held prohibited substances unless they are cleaned.	What did your bags and bins hold before?	Packaging specs, cleaning records	☐
36	Labels	205.300 to 205.311	The label must fit your product category, name the handler, and say Certified Organic by your certifier below that name.	Did your certifier approve the label before you printed it?	Labels, approval letters, private label agreements	☐
37	Transport	205.272	Protect the product from mixing and contamination while it moves.	Who hauls it, and how is the truck or container checked?	Bills of lading, clean truck checks	☐
38	Handlers that are not certified	205.101	A few handlers are exempt, such as some that only store or move sealed product. They must still prevent mixing and contamination.	Do you work with anyone who is not certified? Are they truly exempt?	Written statement from each exempt handler	☐
39	Fraud prevention	205.201(a)(3)	Your plan must describe how you check your suppliers and guard against organic fraud.	How do you know what you buy is really organic?	Fraud prevention plan, supplier checks	☐
40	Records	205.103	Keep organic records for at least five years and have them ready at inspection.	Could you find any record from the last five years in ten minutes?	All of the logs above, in one place	☐

This checklist is a plain words summary for crop farms and farms that pack their own crops. The USDA organic regulations at 7 CFR Part 205 and your certifier's own forms are the final word. Rules change, so check the current text before you rely on a number.

Want a second set of eyes on your plan? Book a free 15 minute call at konaorganic.com.