



Quality Certification Services is accredited by the USDA for certifying to the National Organic Program and by CAEQ in accordance to ISO/IEC 17065 for certifying to COR and EU organic programs. QCS certifies more than 850 organic farms and processors in 38 states and 9 countries, assisting clients regardless of operation type, size, or location. We look forward to helping you with all your certification needs!

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION IN 5 STEPS

Obtaining and maintaining organic certification is an ongoing process. It starts when an operation creates and implements an organic system plan, which is reviewed and inspected by an accredited organic certifier on an annual basis. The certification cycle can be broken down into the five stages described below.

Step One: Create and submit the Organic System Plan

The USDA Organic Regulations require applicants to complete an organic system plan describing their production practices that demonstrates the ability to comply with the regulations. The QCS application packet includes everything you will need to create your Organic System Plan and apply for certification. To obtain an application packet from QCS, you can:

- Download a free copy from our website at www.qcsinfo.org; or
- Contact QCS and order a printed or electronic copy.

Once approved, the organic system plan functions as an agreement with QCS about how the operation will comply with the regulation. Return your completed application with applicable fees to QCS to begin the review process.

Step Two: Initial Review

A QCS certification coordinator will review your Organic System Plan application for completeness and to determine if it demonstrates the ability to comply with USDA Organic Regulations. QCS will contact you if further information is needed to clarify, complete, or modify the plan. Prompt responses to QCS' information requests will ensure timely consideration of the application. If QCS determines that the plan demonstrates the ability to comply, the application moves next stage of the certification process—the inspection.

Step Three: Inspection

A QCS inspector will contact you to schedule an on-site inspection of your operation at a time that is mutually agreed to. The inspector assesses the accuracy and implementation of the organic system plan by observing the physical operation and related records, and evaluating risks to organic integrity. The inspector will summarize their observations with the applicant at the end of the inspection, and submit a standard written report to QCS for final review.



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Step Four: Final Review

A QCS certification coordinator will conduct the final review of the Organic System Plan application and inspection report before making the certification decision. If additional information is needed to demonstrate compliance, a reviewer will contact you with a reasonable deadline for submission. Operations having minor issues of noncompliance are given the opportunity to address them. Organic certification is granted when the final reviewer determines a compliant organic system plan is in place on paper and in practice.

Step 5: Continuing Certification

Organic certification is based on the implementation of the organic system plan agreed to and approved by QCS. Maintaining certification is an ongoing process and not a single event: Certified operations must update the organic system plan when there are changes in policies, procedures, products, or inputs; and must inform QCS of any incidents that impact the organic integrity of the operation or the products it produces. Annually, certified operations must provide an updated organic system plan, undergo on-site inspection and pay applicable fees.

How much will it cost? The cost of certification depends on the size and complexity of your operation. Please contact QCS for an explanation of our fee structure and an estimate of the cost of certifying your facility. The Federal cost share program can help offset the cost of certification.

How long will it take? The certification process generally takes 90 to 120 days from the date we receive your *complete* application with fees. QCS provides expedited services for an additional fee.

RESOURCES

The USDA National Organic Program

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/programs-offices/national-organic-program>

USDA Organic Regulations – Electronic Code of Federal Regulations

[7 CFR Part 205](#)

The National Center for Appropriate Technology –
Appropriate Technology Transfers for Rural Areas (ATTRA)

www.attra.org

The Organic Materials Review Institute

www.omri.org

Questions? Please contact QCS @ 352-377-0133 or email qcs@qcsinfo.org