

Organic Certification for Slaughterhouses

MOFGA Certification Services certifies over 110 livestock operations in the State of Maine. We think this number could easily double if there were more certified organic slaughterhouse facilities in Maine. We love meat at MOFGA and we'd like to see more Maine meat available with organic labels everywhere Mainers shop for food. Thanks to State and USDA regulations, slaughterhouse operations already excel at following standard procedures, staying organized and keeping good records. This makes you an *excellent* fit for compliance with organic standards. We look forward to working with you!

Frequently Asked Questions

"But I process conventional livestock...doesn't that disqualify me from handling organic livestock?" Not at all. Many processors and handlers are parallel producers, which mean that they process both conventional and organic products. You simply need systems in place that keep the organic product separate and free from contamination with substances that are not permitted in organic production, like pesticides and certain sanitizers. A common solution to having an organic production run is to do it first thing in the morning on clean equipment. This saves you the effort of cleaning or purging equipment twice in one day. Another approach is to dedicate one or two days each month just for organic livestock clients.

"I heard I would have to change all of my cleaning and sanitizing products." This depends on your procedures. We are concerned largely with food contact surfaces. If your SSOP includes a final, high temperature water rinse of all equipment after sanitizing, chances are you can continue to use your current products. Chlorine bleach is allowed, with a few restrictions. Peroxyacetic acid is a sanitizer that is easy to use and normally requires no rinsing (see list).

What can I use as a carcass wash for bacterial reduction? Certified organic vinegar is a popular choice, which can be purchased at a grocery store or bought in bulk. Another option is lactic acid (see list).

"Organic certification is too expensive." Annual fees are based on the income you receive from organic clients and typically range from \$375 to \$1000. Organic processors are once again eligible for federal cost share money, which means that once you get certified **you will receive a 75% reimbursement** of your certification fees (up to \$750). A slaughterhouse with a couple of organic clients that bring in \$9000 in fees per year will pay MOFGA Certification Services \$600 for organic certification. After the rebate, the slaughterhouse's out of pocket expense for certification is just \$150 for the year.

"Organic certification has too much paperwork." Not so. The combined paperwork is less than 15 pages, with sections that most slaughterhouses will not need to complete. Once we receive your information, we store it in a database, and you simply tell us what has changed, if anything, each year. Record keeping is required for traceability for each farmer's animal through to finished product. The HACCP systems you already have in place to comply with state or federal licensing contains much of the information we need to see.

"Why should I bother to comply with an optional regulation?" MOFGA Certification Services certifies more farms each year and some of these farmers are ones that have not been organic in the past or are trying out organic practices for part of their production. You probably know some of these farmers. In order for organically produced livestock products to be labeled organic, they must be processed in a facility that is certified organic. By getting certified, you are helping the agricultural community in Maine grow, giving Maine farmers and processors like yourself more options in the marketplace.

"There are too many inspectors in my facility already!" An organic inspector does a complete annual inspection ONCE per year and it typically takes no more than two to three hours.

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Organic Certification Simplified

What information is needed when you apply for certification?

An organic handling plan, also known as the application form, which includes the following...

1. List of cleaning, sanitizing, and carcass wash materials
2. Single and/or multi-ingredient product profile forms (for plants making seasoned sausage or smoked meats for organic customers)
3. Provide a list of all equipment used in processing.
4. Provide a diagram illustrating product flow through the facility.
5. Description of cleaning procedures. This may be in the form of your Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP).
6. Describe pest control procedures and products in use.
7. Describe storage, cooler, and freezer spaces.
8. Describe how organic and non-organic carcasses are separated to prevent commingling. For example multiple tracks, carcass dividers, or separate racks.

What is meant by required record keeping?

1. Traceability of each producer's animal from the kill floor to cutting/wrapping a finished product. Dates and lot numbers help with audit trails.
2. Documentation of equipment cleaning before organic animals are processed. Your current cleaning logs can be used.
3. Approved cleaners, sanitizers, and carcass washes are used for organic animals.
4. Appropriate state or federal licensing.
5. Up-to-date organic certificates for each organic producer.

You already keep records for the state, USDA, or your business. Record keeping for the processing of certified organic animals can easily fit into your current systems.

Lot Number Examples

1. Julian date for kill, Julian date for cut/wrap
2. Combined Julian date code with abbreviation for farmer

Approved cleaning and sanitizing products (some restrictions apply):

1. Peroxyacetic Acid Sanitizers
 - a. SaniDate 5.0 & 12.0 (BioSafe Systems)
 - b. StorOx (BioSafe Systems)
 - c. Tsunami 100 (EcoLab)
 - d. Vigor Ox (FMC Corporation)
 - e. Spectrum (FMC Corporation)
2. Chlorine Sanitizers
 - a. XY-12 (EcoLab)
 - b. Ultra Clorox Germicidal Bleach (EPA Reg. No. 67619-8)

Approved carcass washes:

1. Certified organic vinegar, including apple ciders (e.g., Sewall Orchard, Ricker Hill, Spectrum brand vinegar)
2. Birko Lactic Acid 88% F.C. (Purac)