



Organic Certification for Slaughterhouses

MOFGA Certification Services certifies over 100 livestock operations in the State of Maine. We believe this number could increase if there were more certified organic slaughterhouse options available in Maine. Thanks to State and USDA regulations, slaughterhouse operations excel in following standard procedures, organization and record keeping. This makes slaughter houses a good fit for meeting the requirements of organic certification.

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, meaning that both conventional and organic products are processed. Parallel producers are required to implement systems that keep the organic product separate and free from contamination with substances that are not permitted in organic production. 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 below).

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 below). Materials used for pest management or sanitation must be preapproved by MCS to ensure they are allowed in organic production.

“Organic certification is too expensive.” Annual fees are based on the income you receive from gross organic sales from organic clients for processing certified livestock. Organic processors are eligible for federal cost share money, which means that once you get certified **you will receive a partial reimbursement** of your certification fees, significantly lowering the out of pocket expense for organic certification.

“Organic certification has too much paperwork.” 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 update changes, if any. Record keeping is required for traceability of each farmer’s animal through to the 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 every year. In order for organically produced livestock products to be labeled organic, they must be processed in a facility that is certified organic. In becoming certified, you are helping the agricultural community in Maine grow, giving Maine farmers and processors like yourself diversification in the marketplace.

“There are too many inspectors in my facility already!” An organic inspection takes place once a year and takes approximately 2-3 hours, depending on the operations size.

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 operations 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. Clorox Germicidal Bleach EPA Numbers 5813-102, 5813-100-67619

Approved carcass washes:

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