



*If you would like a paper copy of our application forms and Practice Manual, please complete the reverse of this fold, tear off and return to MOFGA Certification Services; you may also email your request to: certification@mofga.org or call us at 207-568-6030
Thank you!*

Photo credit: A Mueller

How long does it take to get certified?

The process may take several weeks to several months, depending on the complexity of your operation and initial completeness of your application. Because the inspection must take place during production, there are times of the year when an inspection of a seasonal operation is not possible. The process may also take longer if questions or compliance issues have to be addressed. An application (including fees) must be complete before certification can be granted. Because every operation is different, it is not possible to guarantee certification within a certain time frame. We advise submitting a complete application several months before you want to be certified.

What kind of records do I have to keep?

A list of records relevant to crop clients includes:

- Seed/seedling/perennial purchase records
- Field activity records (amendments, pesticides, planting dates, manure applications, crop rotation, field histories, etc.)
- Compost production records
- Clean out log for equipment used on non-certified land
- Receipts and labels for purchased inputs
- Harvest and sales records (depending on scale and complexity of farm)



Photo credit: J English

MCS has detailed information and recordkeeping templates for crops, livestock, and processing operations available on our website. All records must be available at the time of inspection and saved for five years.

How does the inspection process work?

Once an application has been reviewed, an inspector will be assigned. This person will contact you to set up a date and time for the visit. The inspector will observe your organic farming practices and check all records. The inspector will then send a report to MCS.

How do I prepare for an inspection?

1. Review the MCS Practice Manual sections relevant to your operation
2. Review your certification paperwork
3. Gather records that will be needed at the inspection
4. Make arrangements for an authorized person with knowledge of the operation to be present at the time of the inspection

Where can I find more information about organic production and certification?

- The National Organic Program (NOP) website (www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop) has the full NOP Rule and the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances.
- The MCS website (www.mofgacertification.org) has lots of information and downloadable forms. The Resources tab is especially helpful for those considering organic certification.
- The Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) (www.omri.org) lists products approved for use in certified organic production, handling, and processing.
- The MOFGA websites (www.mofga.org and www.mofga.net) are informative and provide access to an online community.
- The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) (www.attra.ncat.org/organic.html) resources offer guidance in preparing for certification, as well as production and marketing methods for a range of organic crops and livestock.



Producer Toolkit
Becoming MOFGA Certified Organic



Photo credit: J English

MOFGA Certification Services, LLC

PO Box 170, Unity, ME 04988
(207) 568-6030 Fax: (866) 344-0991
certification@mofga.org
mofgacertification.org

Thank you for your interest in organic certification! MOFGA Certification Services (MCS) is an accredited certification agency established in 2002 by the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA).

We currently certify over 500 clients throughout Maine and New England. Our staff is always available to answer questions or address concerns. Please don't hesitate to call, write, e-mail, or stop by our office for a visit (M-Th / 9 am - 4 pm) or Fridays by appointment.



Photo credit: A Mueller

The 5 Steps to Organic Certification

1 Contact MCS to request an application packet, or download it from our website:

www.mofgacertification.org. Read the Practice Manual for information on organic standards, the certification process, and requirements specific to your operation.

2 Complete the application packet and submit fees. We will review your application and contact you if any information is missing or if we have questions. You will receive a confirmation letter when the review is complete.

3 Organic inspection - An inspector will contact you to schedule an on-site visit. The inspector will observe your operation and examine your records, and send a written report back to MCS (you will get a copy, as well). If additional information is needed before a certification decision can be made, you will be given time to provide it.

4 Certification - The MCS Director makes the certification decision. The decision letter may include conditions for changes that you need to implement. If the decision is favorable we will issue you a copy of your organic certificate, and you are officially certified!

5 Continuing certification - Though your certificate does not expire, you must submit fees, update your organic system plan documents, and be inspected annually. You can surrender your certificate (in writing) at any time.

How much will certification cost?

The annual certification fee is based on your gross annual income from all organic products.

The fee schedule can be found on the MCS website:

mofgacertification.org. *Producers in Maine are eligible for a federal reimbursement of 75% of certification expenses, up to \$750 per certification scope. In addition, operations making less than \$10,000 gross income can choose to receive a second Small Producer Rebate from MOFGA.*

Applicants must also pay a one-time fee of \$75.

What are the application deadlines?

For most crop farms, the application deadline is June 30th. We accept processor applications year round, and applications for maple syrup are due mid- February. For livestock and other types of operations, please contact us.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the \$5,000 exemption?

Producers whose gross annual income from organic sales is \$5,000 or less are not required to be certified (exempt). However, exempt producers must still comply with all applicable organic production and handling requirements. Products from exempt operations may not be used in certified processed products.

What is the USDA's role?

The USDA oversees the National Organic Program (NOP) and the National Organic Program Standards. The NOP accredits certifying agencies, such as MCS, thereby ensuring that certifiers are following the National Organic Standard.

What is the role of MOFGA Certification Services?

MCS guides producers through the certification process, keeps documentation of each client's organic system plan, and conducts annual reviews of each client's operation. We support our clients throughout the year, answering questions about the organic standards and referring them to resources for further assistance.

Photo credit: G Keown



How is MOFGA Certification Services different from MOFGA?

MCS is a subsidiary of MOFGA. MOFGA works to promote local, organic and sustainable food systems.

What are the benefits of being certified with MOFGA Certification Services?

- The MOFGA Certification logo is recognized and trusted by consumers, and can provide access to more markets.
- Discounted booth fees for the Common Ground Country Fair farmers markets.
- Listing and updates in the MCS searchable marketing database.
- Free technical and marketing advice from MOFGA specialists.

Are there resources available to help me transition to organic?

Yes - MOFGA's Agricultural Services team is available to help answer any questions about organic certification. In many cases, a site visit can be arranged and you can receive help to complete your application paperwork. Contact Ag Services at 207-568-6000 or visit them at <http://mofga.org/Programs/Agricultural-Services>. There is also an organic transition planning program through NRCS; please contact your local NRCS office for more information.

Is MCS the only certification option in Maine?

No - you can use another USDA accredited certifier. A list of accredited certifiers can be found at: www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop.

What if my farm or processing facility is not in Maine; can I still be certified by MCS?

Though MCS primarily certifies Maine producers, we do accept applications from operations in other New England states. Additional fees may apply, to cover the cost of inspector travel.

(continued on reverse)

Request for Organic Certification Application

Forms are available at www.mofgacertification.org. If you would like a paper copy of application forms and our Practice Manual, please complete the following:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please send me the appropriate paper work for the following categories of organic production:

- Crops (vegetables, fruits, herbs, grains, etc.)
- Blueberries
- Livestock
- Dairy (Dairy Intent Form should be completed first)
- Maple Syrup
- Processing and Handling
- On-Farm Processing and Handling
- Mushrooms
- Sea Vegetables
- Other _____

Please return this form to:

MOFGA Certifications Services

PO Box 170

Unity, ME 04988

Questions? Call us! 207-568-6030

Thank you for your interest in Organic Certification!

