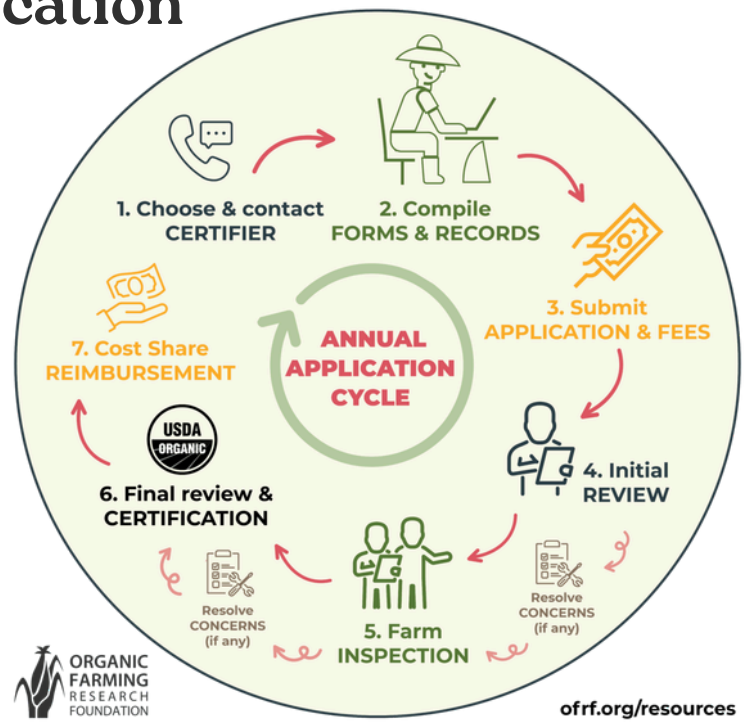
Transitioning to Organic: Perspectives & Tips

Advice from farmers in the TOPP Plains region

The Path to Organic Certification

Farmers choose to transition to organic agriculture for various reasons, including improving soil health, reducing reliance on synthetic inputs, enhancing biodiversity, contributing to a more sustainable food system, and taking advantage of the economic opportunities it presents, such as accessing new organic markets and higher price premiums.



START WITH YOUR WHY

Remember why organic is important to you.

Demetria Stephens of Stephens Land & Cattle (Kansas)

"I think of organic as a guide for me to be a better farmer, more than the rules that restrict me from doing things; this is a way for me to be a more professional farmer and also to raise good food for the next generation."


Stephens Land & Cattle (Kansas)


Hiddendale Farm (North Dakota)

Glen Philbrick of Hiddendale Farm (North Dakota)

"I recognize the dangers of herbicides over and over again...It is the health of me, of people, of my livestock, and of the whole ecosystem. That's why organic is important to me."

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Integrate Knowledge, Peer Support, AND Capacity

Jack Geiger of Geiger Farm (Kansas): "Peer-to-peer learning is the most important...So much of organic is knowledge-based, but it's also learning how to fine-tune that knowledge base to your particular climate and your particular skill set. There are basic rules and principles that all organic farmers are bound to in the National Organic Standard, but you have to tune them to your abilities and to your environment."



Geiger Farm (Kansas)

Access Support & Prepare to Advocate and Educate

Angela Jackson-Pulse of PrairieSun Organics (South Dakota): "I have utilized the Cost Share Program every year that it's been available. I've also participated in the NRCS-EQIP program. And we received an FSA micro-loan for our processing plant. And currently we have an NRCS Organic Management System 823 contract. [Some reps] are not knowledgeable about organic practices or the National Organic Program rules, so I'm constantly educating stakeholders, bankers, everybody. It's a lot of work."

Face Challenges & Keep Growing

Mike Appel of Three Springs Farm (Oklahoma): "There are times I've wanted to throw in the towel. But in the end, things work out. You talk to people, figure out the problems... Each year you build on your experience."

LEARN MORE

- Lessons from the Plains on the Transition to Organic: bit.ly/plainsorganiclessons
- Three Springs Farm: Rooted in Organic Principles: bit.ly/threespringsfarmblog
- Organic Farming as Stewardship: bit.ly/organicfarmingasstewardship
- Seeds of Success: Transitioning to Organic (NW): bit.ly/organictransitionnorthwest

Explore OFRF resources on the TOPP program and other organic resources, available here: ofrf.org/resources/topp/

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