

# Organic Certification Cost Share Program Guidebook

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## Overview

The National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) offers annual financial support to help organic farmers with the cost of obtaining organic certification. The program is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. All certified organic operations can apply through the OCCSP on a yearly basis to be reimbursed up to 75 percent of their certification costs (up to \$750 per certification scope). This guide offers a description of the program and step-by-step advice for applying to the Organic Certification Cost Share program.

## Why should you apply for organic certification?

The demand for organic products is rapidly growing in the U.S. and providing new economic opportunity in both urban and rural communities. Results from the 2016 Certified Organic Survey conducted by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), show that sales were up 23 percent from \$6.2B in 2015 to \$7.6B in 2016.

**Organic Certification** allows a farm or processing facility to sell, label, and represent their products as organic. The organic label informs consumers that an operation meets the clear standards set by the USDA for acceptable products, as well as the implementation of practices that build soil health and protect the environment.

According to the USDA AMS (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/becoming-certified>), the organic certification process is as follows:

1. The organic operation selects a USDA-accredited certifying agent, and submits an application and fees to the certifying agent.
2. The certifying agent reviews the application to verify that practices comply with USDA organic regulations.
3. An inspector conducts an on-site inspection of the applicant's operation.
4. The certifying agent reviews the application and the inspector's report to determine if the applicant complies with the USDA organic regulations.
5. The certifying agent issues an organic certificate.

The costs for obtaining certification vary depending on the size and type of the operation, and the complexity of the review process.

## What determines eligibility for OCCSP?

The National Organic Program (NOP) currently recognizes four scopes of certification: crops, wild crops, livestock, and processing/handling. All certified organic producers and handlers who have paid certification fees may apply for reimbursement of the incurred costs. Operations with more than one certification scope may be eligible for more than one refund. Transitioning growers are not eligible at this time.

Certified operations may receive up to 75 percent of their certification costs paid per year, not to exceed \$750 per certification scope.

## How to apply for OCCP

To apply for reimbursement, you must complete the OCCSP application and submit it to your FSA county office. In some states you may apply through a participating state department of agriculture (see page 4 for participating state agencies).

## Application dates

The application period is October 1, 2017 - October 31, 2018 (program year 2018 for expenses from October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2018).

## Applying through an FSA office

Your local FSA office can help you fill out the OCCSP form, or you can download and start it here: [https://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eForms/searchAction.do?pageAction=BrowseForms&\\_MenuAction=Yes](https://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eForms/searchAction.do?pageAction=BrowseForms&_MenuAction=Yes)

In addition to the completed form, you may need:

- An invoice itemizing the certification expenses you have paid and an invoice for any state organic program fees.
- USDA Organic Certification Form

## Applying through a State Department of Agriculture

Several states also accept OCCSP applications through their state departments of agriculture or other state agencies. Please note that state agencies may have a different application process than FSA; applicants should refer to their state agency's requirements and ensure they are using the correct application form before submitting their applications. Applicants cannot receive duplicate benefits from both FSA and a state agency. For a list of state agencies accepting OCCSP applications, see page 4.

## Applying in California

In California, organic producers are able to apply through both FSA offices and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). To apply through the CDFA, you must submit the application form, a copy of your certification, and a copy of the expenses required to obtain and/or maintain certification. The OCCSP forms and due dates are available on the CDFA webpage <https://organic.cdfa.ca.gov/costshare/>.

In order to receive certification reimbursement, applicants must submit a completed Federal Organic Certification Cost Share Application (ORG-106), a copy of your certification, copies of associated paid expense invoices required to obtain and/or maintain certification, and a completed Payee Data Record Form (STD 204).

In order to receive State Organic Registration/Department of Health Services Registration reimbursement, applicants must submit a completed State Organic Program/Department of Health Services Cost Share Application (ORG-106a), a copy of your current registration certificate.

Completed applications can be mailed to California address in state list below.

## National Application Information by State

### Alabama

#### **Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries**

1445 Federal Drive, Richard Beard Building  
Montgomery, AL 36107  
P: (334) 240-3877  
F: (334) 240-7190

### Alaska

#### **Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture**

1800 Glenn Highway, Suite 12  
Palmer, AK 99645  
P: (907) 761-3853  
F: (907) 745-7242

### Arizona

#### **Arizona Department of Agriculture**

1688 W. Adams Street  
Phoenix, AZ 85007  
P: (602) 542-0947

### Arkansas

#### **Arkansas Agriculture Department**

1 Natural Resources Drive  
Little Rock, AR 72205  
P: (501) 219-6324  
F: (501) 219-1697

### California

#### **California Department of Food and Agriculture**

1220 N Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
P: (916) 900-5202  
F: (916) 900-5347

### Connecticut

#### **Connecticut Department of Agriculture**

165 Capitol Street, Room G8-A  
Hartford, CT 06106  
P: (860)713-2559  
F: (860)713-2516

### Florida

#### **Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**

407 South Calhoun Street  
Mayo Building, Room 412  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0800  
P: (850) 617-7340  
F: (850) 617-7331

### Hawaii

#### **Hawaii Department of Agriculture**

1428 South King Street  
Honolulu, HI 96814-2512  
P: (808) 973-9593\...9576\...9465  
F: (808) 973-9590

## Kansas

### **Kansas Department of Agriculture**

109 Southwest 9th Street, 4th Floor

Topeka, KS 66612

P: (785) 368-6463

C: (785) 410-0958

## Kentucky

### **Kentucky Department of Agriculture**

111 Corporate Drive

Frankfort, KY 40601

P: (502) 782-4121\ (502) 782-4112

F: (502) 573-2543

## Louisiana

### **Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry**

5825 Florida Boulevard, Suite 1023

Baton Rouge, LA 70806

P: (225) 952-8155

F: (225) 925-3760

## Maryland

### **Maryland Department of Agriculture**

50 Harry S. Truman Parkway

Annapolis, MD 21401

P: (410) 841-5769

F: (410) 841-2750

## Massachusetts

### **Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources**

251 Causeway Street, Suite 500

Boston, MA 02114

P: (617) 626-1700

F: (617) 626-1850

## Minnesota

### **Minnesota Department of Agriculture**

625 Robert Street North

St. Paul, MN 55155-2538

P: (651) 201-6134

F: (651) 201-6120

## Mississippi

### **Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce**

121 North Jefferson Street

Jackson, MS 39201

P: (601) 359-1120

F: (601) 354-6001

## Missouri

### **Missouri Department of Agriculture**

1616 Missouri Boulevard

P.O. Box 630

Jefferson City, MO 65102

P: (573) 522-1955

F: (573) 751-2868

## New Hampshire

### **NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food**

25 Capitol Street

P.O. Box 2042

Concord, NH 03302-2042

P: (603) 271-7761

F: (603) 271-1109

## New Jersey

### **New Jersey Department of Agriculture**

369 South Warren Street

Trenton, NJ 08608

P: (609) 984-2224 & (609) 292-5647

F: (609) 984-2508

## New York

### **NY State Department of Agriculture & Markets**

10B Airline Drive

Albany, NY 12235

P: (518) 485-9974

F: (518) 457-2716

## North Carolina

### **North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services**

1020 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1020  
P: (919) 707-3127  
F: (919) 715-0155

## North Dakota

### **North Dakota Department of Agriculture**

600 E Boulevard Ave - Room#604  
Bismarck, ND 58505  
P: (701) 328-2191  
F: (701) 328-4567

## Ohio

### **Ohio Department of Agriculture**

8995 East Main Street  
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068  
P: (614) 466-8798  
F: (614) 466-7754

## Oregon

### **Agricultural Development & Marketing Program**

Oregon Department of Agriculture  
1207 Northwest Naito Parkway, Suite 104  
Portland, OR 97209  
P: (503) 872-6600  
F: (503) 872-6601

## Pennsylvania

### **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture**

2301 North Cameron Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408  
P: (717) 836-3973  
F: (717) 787-5643

## Rhode Island

### **RI Department of Environmental Management, Division of Agriculture**

235 Promenade Street, Room 370  
Providence, RI 02908-5767  
P: (401) 222-2781 Ext.4516  
F: (401) 222-6047

## Texas

### **Texas Department of Agriculture**

1700 North Congress Avenue  
Austin, TX 78711  
P: (512) 463-6695

## Vermont

### **Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets**

116 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
P: (802) 828-3567  
F: (802) 828-3831

## Virginia

### **Virginia Department of Agriculture and Conservation Services**

102 Governor Street, Room 241  
Richmond, VA 23219  
P: (804) 371-6098  
F: (804) 371-7786

## Washington

### **Washington State Department of Agriculture**

1111 Washington Street Southeast  
2nd Floor  
Olympia, WA 98504  
P: (360) 902-1805  
F: (360) 902-2087

## Wisconsin

### **Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection**

2811 Agriculture Drive  
P.O. Box 8911  
Madison, WI 53708  
P: (608) 224-5095  
F: (608) 224-5107

## Wyoming

### **Wyoming Department of Agriculture**

2219 Carey Avenue  
Cheyenne, WY 82002  
P: (307) 777-6651  
F: (307) 777-6593

## To Find any local FSA office in order to apply for OCCSP:

<https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>

## FSA Cost Share Program Resources

- Organics Fact Sheet. April 2017. [https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2017/organics\\_fact\\_sheet\\_april2017.pdf](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2017/organics_fact_sheet_april2017.pdf)
- FSA Organic portal
  - <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/outreach-and-education/help-for-organic-farming/index>
  - USDA Forms website. [https://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eForms/searchAction.do?pageAction=BrowseForms&\\_MenuAction=Yes](https://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eForms/searchAction.do?pageAction=BrowseForms&_MenuAction=Yes)
- AMS cost share website: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/occsp>
- NSAC information on cost share
  - <http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/organic-production/organic-certification-cost-share/>
  - Information on background, eligibility, and the history of the program
  - State by state points of contact: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/OCCSP%20State%20POC.pdf>
- California specific information on the cost share program
  - <https://organic.cdfa.ca.gov/costshare/>
  - There is an additional form for filing through the state of CA
  - More information is available through CCOF: <https://www.ccof.org/certification/fees/organic-certification-cost-share-program>

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