



Perry Johnson Registrars Food Safety, Inc.

Organic Certification – Do You Qualify?

Being certified as Organic under the USDA is (alongside gluten-free certification) one of the most sought-after achievements for food manufacturers in today's market. More and more consumers are shopping organic, especially as awareness of pesticide impacts and other risks that may come with non-organic practices come to light. With the advent of today's advanced technology, every shopper has a veritable wealth of information at their fingertips in the shape of a phone with an internet browser. More informed and discerning than ever, organic certification can be a huge draw for these savvy shoppers.

But how, exactly, does one know whether their operation is able – let alone ready – to tackle organic certification?

Do you handle agricultural products?

If yes, congratulations! You've taken the first step toward eligibility for organic certification.

Have you adopted organic practices and been free of prohibited substances for at least 36 months?

Making the change to organic practices can be a big step. Organic certification requires that a candidate be completely free from the use of prohibited substances for three years before applying for consideration. The USDA provides technical and financial assistance during this transition period through its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Have you created an Organic System Plan (OSP)?

An Organic System Plan (or OSP) outlines how your farming, handling, and/or processing practices meet the USDA's organic standards. Including crops, harvests, animals, sales, record-keeping, soil-building and pest management practices, health care, and pasture, the OSP should clearly explain the operating plan from every angle of organic operations.

Are you keeping records?

Records should be kept for your OSP, including: a materials list of substances used, a map of farmlands and production areas to show how products are protected from non-organic contact, a complete field history for growing areas and pastures used in production, and a biodiversity plan that shows natural resource conservation efforts.

Whether you're just getting started with organic practices and looking toward certification or you've been managing your operations in adherence with the requirements for years, PJRFSI is here to help! Our knowledgeable experts are just a phone-call away to help point you in the direction of useful resources or to kick-start the certification process. To learn more about USDA organic certification through PJRFSI, visit our website at www.pjrfsi.com or call **(248) 519-2523** today.