



USDA National Organic Program (NOP) - A brief introduction -

1. Legal Basis of NOP

NOP is a federal regulatory program that develops and enforces [consistent national standards](#) for organically produced agricultural products sold in the United States.

NOP also accredits third-party organizations to certify that farms and businesses meet the national organic standards. These certifiers and USDA work together to enforce the standards, ensuring a level playing field for producers and protecting consumer confidence in the integrity of the [USDA Organic Seal](#).

2. Regulatory references

[USDA organic regulations. \(Reglamentos orgánicos del Departamento de Agricultura de los Estados Unidos en español \(pdf\)\)](#). 7 CFR Part 205 includes all USDA organic standards, including prohibited practices, requirements, and the [National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances](#).

[Program Handbook](#). This compilation of guidance documents, policy memos, and instructions is intended to clarify policies and assist those who own, manage, or certify organic operations with complying with NOP regulations. It is important to note that the National Organic Program (NOP) Handbook is non-binding and any citation issued needs to reference the USDA organic regulations.

[Organic Foods Production Act of 1990. \(Ley de Producción de Alimentos Orgánicos en español \(pdf\)\)](#). The Act that established the NOP and its authority to enforce agricultural products sold, labeled, or represented as “organic” within the U.S.

[Preamble](#). If you are interested in the history of the NOP standards, you may want to review the preamble to the final rule, which established the National Organic Program.

3. Standard related fact sheets

[Introduction to Organic Practices](#)

[Organic Production + Handling Standards](#)

[Labeling Organic Products](#)

[Allowed + Prohibited Substances in Organic Production + Handling](#)

[Can GMOs be Used in Organic Products?](#)

4. How to file a complaint or violation to the NOP

[How to report an alleged violation of the NOP rule to the NOP.](#)

For example:

While verifying supplier certificates, you find out that a certificate is forged. This has to be notified to the NOP.

5. Certification and Accreditation

Certification status of organic farms and businesses ([Organic Integrity Database](#))

[How to get certified](#)

[Locate a certifier](#)

6. Trade arrangements

[International Trade Partners | Agricultural Marketing Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

The National Organic Program (NOP) works with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) and Office of the United States Trade Representative to establish international trade arrangements for organic products. The most common type of organic trade arrangement is an organic equivalence arrangement. Equivalence arrangements eliminate the need for organic operations to have separate organic certification to the USDA standards and the other country's standards. This avoids a double set of fees, inspections, and paperwork.

The USDA currently has organic equivalence arrangements with several governments which can be found on the NOP's website.