

Exploring Organic Production

The process to become certified organic usually takes three years. During this time, a producer will work with a certifying agency to meet all the requirements to become certified under the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP).

During the transition time period, the land that is being certified will be operated as organic, including following all the USDA rules for organic production. The certifying agency will audit and verify that accepted production methods are being followed.

After meeting all criteria for production practices, the land can be certified as organic. The producer will continue to work with a certifying agency to maintain their certified status through annual audits.

The certifying agency that you choose to work with is up to you, and they do not have to be headquartered in Nebraska. For a full list of certifying agencies go to the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) web page: www.ams.usda.gov and search for "national organic program." Then click on the "certifiers" link.

There are two certifying agencies located in Nebraska:

Organic Crop Improvement Association

1340 North Cotner Blvd.
Lincoln, NE 68505
Phone: (402) 477-2323

OneCert

2601 B Street, #1
Lincoln, NE 68502
Phone: (402) 420-6080

Nebraska Department of Agriculture is not a certifying agency.

Programs to Assist Organic Producers/Handlers

There are two USDA programs available to assist producers either making the transition to organic or currently certified organic. They are as follows:

- **EQIP** – USDA program administered through NRCS. EQIP helps pay for production practices that improve water and soil quality. Funds available to offset costs of transitioning to organic production methods. Contact local NRCS office for more information.
- **Organic Cost-Share Program** – USDA program for producers and handlers who are currently certified organic or transitioning to organic. Producers and handlers may be reimbursed for up to 75% of their certification expenses (limited to \$750 maximum) on an annual basis. This program is administered through local county Nebraska Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices.