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Organic Resource Guide

What is organic farming?

The National Organic Program (NOP) defines organic production as a “*production system that is managed in accordance with the Act and regulations in this part to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity.*” The regulatory text of the NOP standards is available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/NOP/standards/FullRegTextOnly.html>.

I do not know much about organic farming, are there any resources that explain the transition process?

USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) "[Opportunities in Agriculture: Transitioning to Organic Production](#)" lays out many promising conversion strategies, covering typical organic farming production practices, innovative marketing ideas and federal standards for certified organic crop production. The publication also includes special sections on livestock production and profiles of organic producers.

How do I find a certifier?

The NOP maintains a comprehensive list of the USDA Accredited Certifying Agents (ACAs) organized alphabetically by state for domestic ACAs and by country for foreign ACAs. The list is available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/CertifyingAgents/Accredited.html>.

Indiana Certified Organic (ICO) is the only Indiana based USDA accredited certifier of crops livestock and processed foods. ICO's web address and phone number are <http://members.iquest.net/~cvof/ico/> and (317) 539-4317.

Are there any technical assistance resources to assist me in transitioning to an organic farm operation?

Your USDA Accredited Certifying Agent will be the best resource to answer questions about the NOP standards.

Purdue Extension offers educational programs, workshops, and tours relating to production, marketing, and business planning. They also have access to research-based information from Land Grant Universities throughout the U.S. Contact information for the county extension offices is available at <http://www.ces.purdue.edu/counties.htm>.

Are there any financial resources to assist me in transitioning to an organic farm operation?

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture administers a cost-share program for organic certification which reimburses 75% of the cost of the organic certification up to \$500. These grants are awarded on a first come, first serve basis. The application forms for this program are available at <http://www.in.gov/isda/pubs/organic/index.html>.

Indiana's USDA—Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) administers the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). One of the eligible EQIP practices is conservation Cropping Rotations, with an incentive payment of \$50/acre per year for cropland that is being converted to organic farming. Organic farming must meet the established USDA definition of organic farming. The incentive is capped at \$5,000.00 per applicant per year. Organic producers may also be eligible for other EQIP incentives, such as Nutrient Management, Pest Management, No-Till, Cover Crops, etc. More information on EQIP in Indiana is available at <http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/2006eqip/eqip2006.html>. Interested parties can contact their NRCS district conservationist. A county listing of contact information is available at <http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory/dclist.html>.

Are there any resources to assist in marketing my organic crops?

Midwest Organic Farmers Cooperative (MOFC): <http://www.midwestorganic.com> or (618) 783-4601
MOFC is a farmer-owned cooperative designed to assist producers in getting the best prices available for their organic products. The purpose of MOFC is to serve their members through promoting organic systems in agriculture, education, public policy, and the favorable marketing of organic products.

Organic Farmer's Agency for Relationship Marketing, Inc. (OFARM): www.ofarm.org
OFARM is a cooperative organization of producer groups whose mission is to coordinate the efforts of producer marketing groups to benefit and sustain organic producers. OFARM aims to strengthen marketing returns for members, tracks production inventories and exchanges pricing and marketing information.

Cooperative Regions of Organic Producer Pools (CROPP) Cooperative: <http://www.farmers.coop>
CROPP is the nation's largest organic farmer cooperative. The mission of CROPP and its brand Organic Valley is to create a marketing cooperative which promotes regional farm diversity and economic stability by means of organic agricultural methods and the sale of certified organic products. CROPP's farmer hotline is (888) 809-9297.

Hoosier Organic Marketing and Education (HOME):
HOME is a non-for-profit 501(c)3 dedicated to providing education on organic food and farming to members of the public. HOME also coordinates the organic sessions at the Indiana Horticultural Congress. For information on HOME or organic workshops, contact (317) 539-4317 or cvof@iquest.net.

Important Organic links:

ATTRA–National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service: www.attra.org/organic.html
ATTRA provides information on organic certification and organic production options. Their resources offer guidance in preparing for certification, and in production methods for a range of organic crops and livestock. ATTRA's phone number is (800) 346-9140.

The New Agriculture Network: <http://www.new-ag.msu.edu/>
The New Agriculture Network is a joint effort of Michigan State University, Purdue University, and the University of Illinois to combine resources to bring seasonal advice to field crop and vegetable growers interested in organic agriculture. They provide on-line newsletter features crop updates from organic growers and articles from university specialists about a variety of practices and new findings useful for organic growers.

National Organic Program (NOP): <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/indexIE.htm>
The NOP oversees the national organic rule (7 CFR Part 205). The NOP website provides contact information for certifying agents, answers to frequently asked questions, and consumer information.

Organic Trade Association (OTA): <http://www.ota.com/index.html>
OTA is a membership-based business association that focuses on the organic business community in North America. OTA's website provides information on upcoming organic agricultural events and directories of businesses involved in organic agriculture.

USDA-Economic Research Service (ERS): <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Organic/>
ERS is a primary source of economic information and research in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The ERS Organic Agriculture Briefing Room provides features on organic market data, recommended reading, and recent research developments.

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