



Organic Practices and NRCS Resources – Crosswalk

Prepared by the USDA Agricultural Marketing (AMS)
National Organic Program



The National Organic Program (NOP) has put together this document to help producers connect organic practices with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation practices, which are eligible for financial assistance support through NRCS Conservation Programs, such as [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#), [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#), [Regional Conservation Partnership Program \(RCPP\)](#), [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#), and [Agricultural Management Assistance Program \(AMA\)](#). Additional opportunities may also be available via partners through the [Organic Transition Initiative](#). Check with your local NRCS office for more information, as practice availability may vary by state.

Topic	USDA Organic Regulations (7 CFR 205)	NRCS Conservation Practices
Soil Health	<p>Organic operations use practices that maintain or improve soil quality, including the physical, chemical, and biological condition of soil. (§205.200; §205.203(a)-(e))</p> <p>Organic operations use management practices and natural soil amendments such as manure and compost to increase soil health and manage crop nutrients. (§205.200, §205.203(b)-(c))</p> <p>Organic operations do not use synthetic nitrogen fertilizer or most synthetic pesticides and organic livestock cannot consume feed grown with these prohibited inputs. Organic operations use natural fertilizers and compost that does not contain prohibited synthetic substances. (§205.203(e)(1); §205.206(e))</p>	<p>Nutrient Management (590) helps organic producers consider the planned nutrient source, rate and timing to improve nutrient use efficiency and reduce the risk of nutrient loss to water quality. Animal manures, composts, and other organic materials as nutrient sources can play a critical role in improving nitrogen efficiency, when applicable.</p> <p>Soil Carbon Amendment (336) supports the application of carbon (C)-based amendments to improve soil health and enhance soil C stocks.</p>
	<p>Organic operations use tillage and cultivation practices that maintain or improve the physical, chemical, and biological condition of soil and minimize soil erosion. This includes implementing crop rotations (including cover crops, green manure crops, and catch crops) and tillage practices to manage crop nutrients and soil fertility, maintain or improve soil organic matter content, and manage deficient or excess nutrients. (§205.203(a)-(b), §205.205, §205.206(a))</p>	<p>Conservation Crop Rotation (328) and Cover Crop (340) practices are applied for purposes such as maintaining or increasing soil health and organic matter content.</p> <p>Reduced Till (345) practices (includes conservation tillage) and No Till (329) practices (including in-row strip tillage) manage crop and weed residue with limited soil-disturbing activities to reduce soil C release.</p> <p>Pest Management Conservation System (595) and Mulching (484) can also support organic producers' insect pest, weed, and disease management goals.</p>
	<p>Organic livestock operations provide outdoor access and manage pasture in a manner that reduces contamination of soil and controls erosion. Operations ensure sufficient quality and quantity for ruminants to graze at least 120 days and receive at least 30% dry matter intake from pasture throughout the grazing season. (§205.237; §205.240(a)-(c)); (§205.239(e)) (§205.203(a)-(b), §205.205, §205.206(a))</p>	<p>Pasture and Hay Planting (512) and Range Planting (550) practices can improve livestock pasture and forage quality while increasing perennial biomass and reducing erosion. Prescribed Grazing (528) can be used to develop a plan to manage vegetation with grazing animals to address plant, animal and soil health. Feed Management (592) can be used to develop a plan to address livestock feed ration, formulas, and feed additives or supplements.</p>



Topic	USDA Organic Regulations (7 CFR 205)	NRCS Conservation Practices
Water Quality	<p>Organic operations use practices that maintain or improve water quality, which includes managing nutrients in a way that does not contaminate water and using tillage practices that minimize erosion. (§205.200; §205.203(a),(c))</p> <p>Organic livestock operations manage outdoor access areas, pasture, and manure to minimize runoff from animal waste into streams, lakes, and waterways, prevents water contamination, protects natural wetlands and riparian areas, and controls erosion. (§205.237, §205.239(e), §205.240)</p>	<p>Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crops (331), Cover Crop (340), Fence (382), Field Border (386), Filter Strip (393), Grassed Waterway (412), Prescribed Grazing (528), Riparian Forest Buffer (391), and Vegetative Treatment Area (635) practices help protect surface and ground water from contamination, nutrient runoff, and improve riparian and watershed function.</p> <p>Livestock operations can use Access Control (472), Stream Crossing (578), and Heavy Use Area Protection (642) to reduce runoff and direct impacts to water quality.</p>
Biodiversity	<p>Organic operations use practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, conserve biodiversity, and maintain or improve natural resources of the operation including wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife. (§205.2; §205.200)</p> <p>Organic operations establish buffer zones to protect organic production areas from unintended contamination from adjoining land. Buffer zones may also provide habitat for wildlife and beneficial pest predators. (§205.202)</p> <p><i>Note: NOP 5020 includes an appendix of activities that may be used by certified operations to comply with natural resources conservation requirements.</i></p>	<p>Numerous conservation practices are identified generally for the purpose of increasing perennial biomass, promoting biodiversity, protecting natural resources, providing wildlife and pollinator habitat, protecting vulnerable soils, and preventing contamination of environmentally sensitive areas.</p> <p>Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition (Conservation Planning Activity 138) and Transition to Organic Design (Design and Implementation Activity 140) support the planning and implementation of conservation activities for resource concerns from the transition of conventional to organic production systems.</p> <p>Buffer zone practices include Permanent/perennial conservation plantings: Conservation Cover (327); Contour Buffer Strips (332); Field Border (386); Filter Strips (393); Vegetative Barriers (601); Herbaceous Wind Barriers (603); Alley Cropping (311); Windbreaks (380); Riparian Cover (390); Wildlife Habitat Planting (420); Hedgerows (422); and Tree/Shrub Establishment (612). Vegetative structures: Grassed Waterways (412); Herbaceous Wind Barriers (603); and Critical Area Planting (342) with Grassed Waterways (412); Riparian Cover (390); Riparian Forest Buffer (391). Management practices: Forest Farming (379); Silvopasture (381); Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities (643); and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)</p>