



## Farmers Market Vendors: Guide to Using “Organic” at Markets

Many shoppers look for organically grown goodness when they shop at farmers markets. To appeal to these shoppers, some farmers are labeling their fare “organic” without knowing the rules attached to that label. This fact sheet explains who may use “organic” when at markets.

### National Standards

There is a federal law that regulates the organic label. The law sets national standards for everything from the seeds organic farmers may use to the way they handle produce after harvest. These exacting standards ensure the integrity of the organic label so shoppers know what they’re buying when they choose organic.

To label produce at your farmers market stand as “ORGANIC,” you must be certified by a USDA-accredited certifier. This certifier helps you adhere to the standards, and notifies you about changes to the rules. Your certification opens the door to the in-demand organic marketplace. It gives you the right to label your produce as organic.

If you are not certified, you cannot label or describe your produce as “organic” —even if you use organic growing practices. If you post signs or tell shoppers that your produce is organic, you can be reported and fined. The only exception is for “exempt” organic farmers.

### Exempt Organic Farmers

While only certified farmers can use the USDA Organic Seal (shown at the top of this page), farmers who sell less than \$5,000 per year of organically grown products directly to consumers may use the word “organic” on signs.

If you fit this exemption, you must learn and follow all the standards for the products you will label organic. To help you,



we’ve provided a checklist on the back of this sheet to remind you of the practices you must follow as you plant, grow, harvest, and sell your produce. If market managers or shoppers ask about your organic status, you can show this signed checklist. We recommend downloading this list each year, since organic standards can change. We’ll update it online at:

[mosesorganic.org/  
farmers-market](https://mosesorganic.org/farmers-market)

### Benefits of Certification

Many consumers care about what’s in their food, and buy organic because it’s grown without GMOs and toxic chemicals. When you display your ORGANIC sign, your stall becomes a magnet for these savvy shoppers. Organic certification also can help you get wholesale accounts with stores and restaurants that cater to organic consumers.

Certification can improve the way you manage your farm, too. The recordkeeping you do for certification makes it easy to track details that can help you farm more effectively and efficiently from year to year. Following organic standards also has a positive impact on your health and the environment since neither you nor your land will be exposed to toxic pesticides.

### Rebate for Cost of Certification

The USDA offers rebates for up to 75% of the cost of certification. You can get up to \$750 for each category: crops, livestock, processed products, and wild crops. This rebate program is handled by the Department of Agriculture in each state. Find out more at: [mosesorganic.org/organic-certification](https://mosesorganic.org/organic-certification).

### Help with Organic Certification

MOSES Organic Specialists can answer your questions about certification or organic growing practices.