

Navigating Organic Certification



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www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca



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Going organic?



I have decided to go organic as a growing number of consumers are looking for organic food, but I'm confused by the rules, the acronyms, and jargon.



Talk to colleagues



I can talk to Bernice. She's been organic for years. Carl too. He just went organic a couple of years back.

Bernice says giving up agri-chemicals is not enough to turn a farm into an organic farm. Nor is doing nothing. Organic farming is an active, hands on process.

It's all about soil



Organic farming is really all about soil.

It's about feeding the soil, not the plant.

Plants do better in soil rich in nutrients derived from quality compost, and cover crops (such as nitrogen-rich alfalfa) that nourish soil naturally. Well planned crop rotations help to preserve and regenerate soil health.



It's all about air and water, too

Healthy plants are better able to feed and protect themselves from pests and disease, which means they won't require heavy applications of fertilizers and pesticides to grow and thrive.

Careful application of organic methods reduces soil erosion, conserves energy, and helps protect local streambanks, watersheds and local wildlife.

Organic farmers are also careful about how they store and compost animal wastes, in order to safeguard air and water systems.

Biodiversity is important



Organic farmers also promote biodiversity, by growing a variety of crops, rather than one single crop. They also use cover crops, green manures and companion planting.

By their very nature, organic farming methods reduce greenhouse gases, reducing the farming community's contribution to global warming.

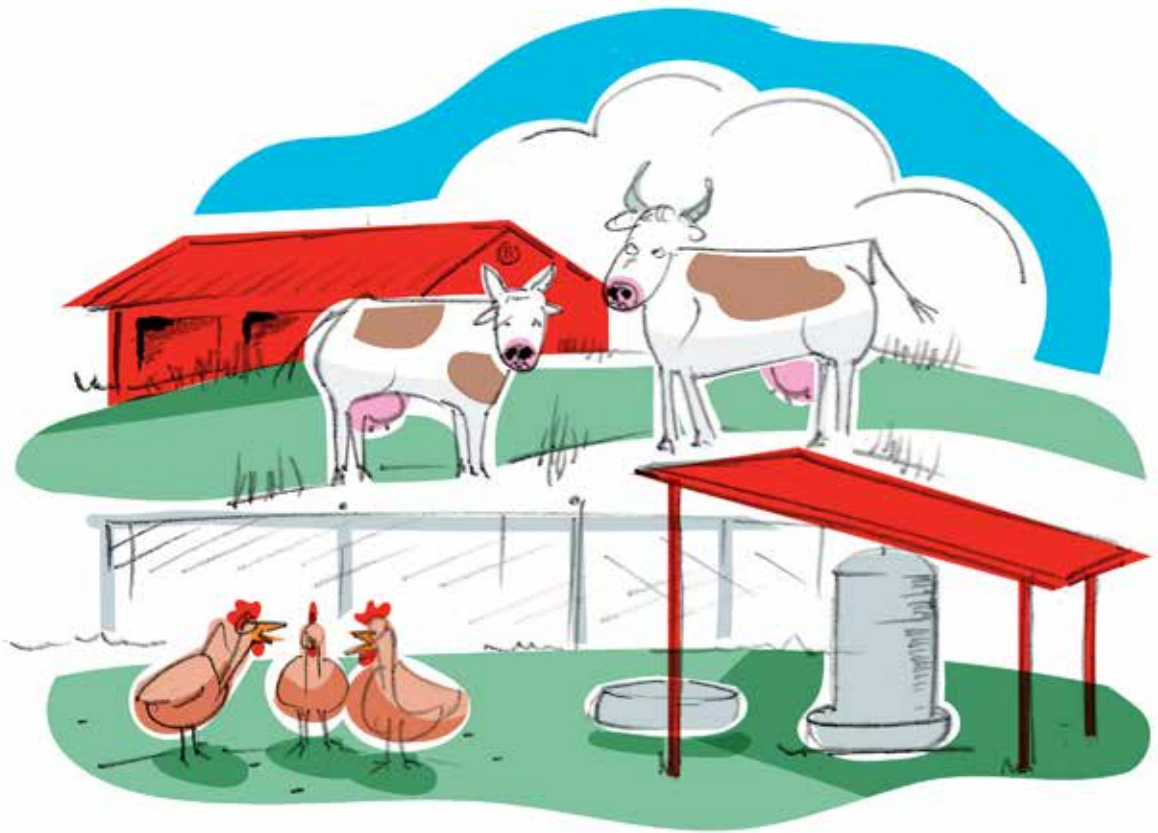


It promotes a more humane treatment of animals

Organic farming promotes animal health and the humane treatment of animals.

Organically-raised poultry, cattle and other animals are fed a certified organic diet, free of hormones, GMOs (genetically modified organisms) or animal by-products.

It reduces disease



Organic farmers prevent disease by ensuring that animals have a healthy lifestyle in a low stress environment which includes lots of pasture, comfortable and spacious shelter, and opportunity for natural socialization.



Be a part of it

By becoming a certified organic farm, you are joining other committed farmers who are working hard to meet rigorous standards that consumers trust.

Great! How do I join up?



Contact the certification bodies



Contact a few different certifying bodies to compare programs. Certifying bodies differ in the services they provide, their delivery styles, and in their pricing structures.

Ask other farmers about their experiences with the different certifiers.



Consider your market areas



Consider where your products will be marketed: within British Columbia, within Canada, to the USA, the European Union, Japan or elsewhere.



Find the right certification bodies

Then identify which certifying bodies have the ability to assure access to those markets.

For products sold exclusively within BC, consider any number of COABC regionally accredited certifiers.

www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/cb

To access markets outside of BC, a CFIA-ISO accredited certification body is required:

For operations in BC, consider a COABC based certifier who is CFIA-ISO accredited.

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For certification bodies based outside BC, refer to the CFIA-ISO accredited certification body list.

Search for ‘Organic certifiers CFIA’ online.



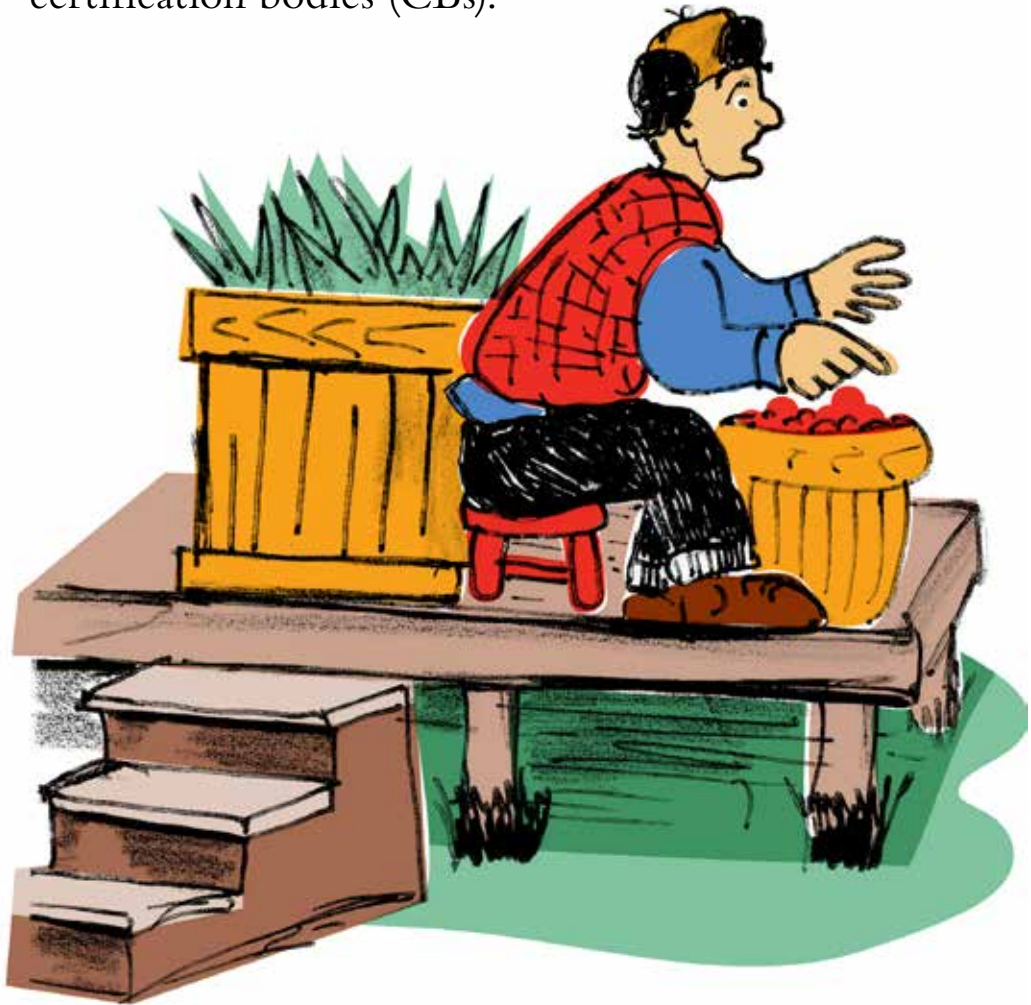
The ‘Checkmark’ logo is the symbol of the BRITISH COLUMBIA CERTIFIED ORGANIC program (BCCOP). It, along with the phrase ‘British Columbia Certified Organic’, can be used to identify products with >95% organic content that are produced in BC and certified by COABC accredited Certification Bodies.

Operators who are ISO certified may use the Canadian Organic Regime logo on products with >95% organic content.

	BCCOP	COABC CFIA-ISO	NON COABC CFIA-ISO
	✓	✓	
		✓	✓

Okay. How does it work?

It's a process, repeated annually. It's pretty straight forward and the same for all certification bodies (CBs).



Go through the verification process

You complete and submit the application form with the necessary fees to your chosen CB.

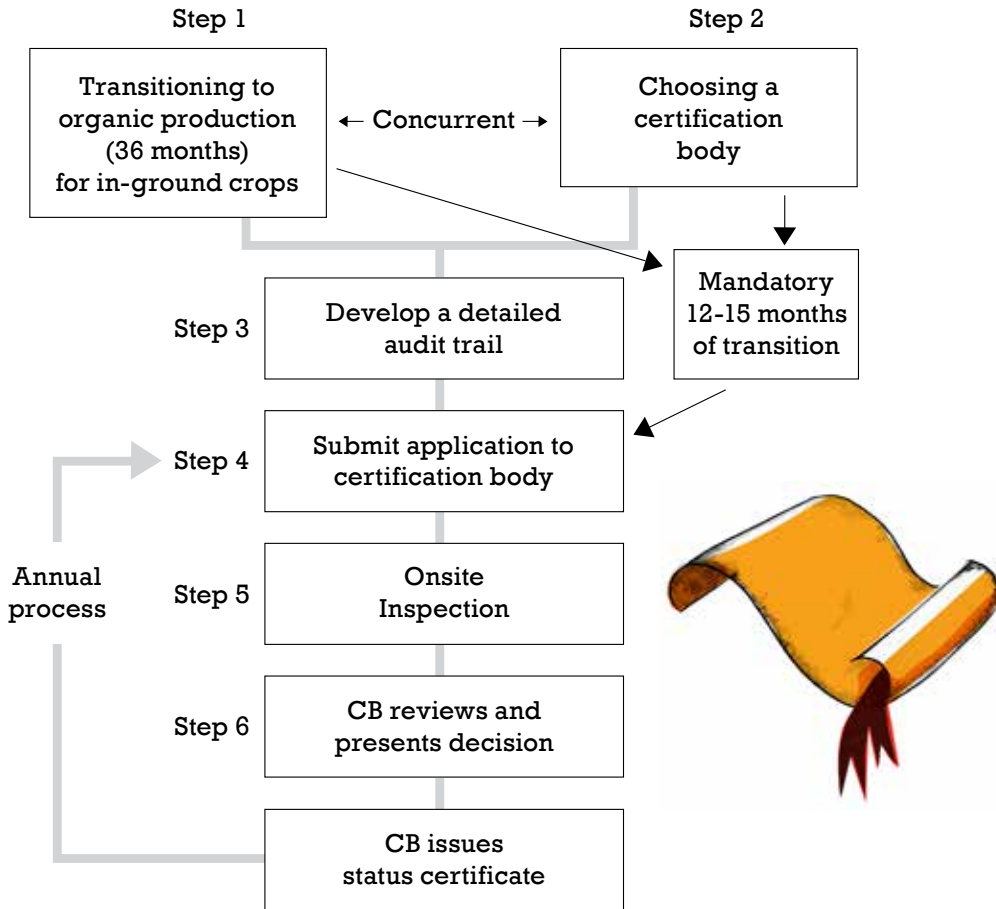
The CB's Certification Committee (CC) reviews the application and supplies feedback to you.

A qualified Verification Officer is assigned to your file.

The verification officer inspects your operation and submits their report to the CB.

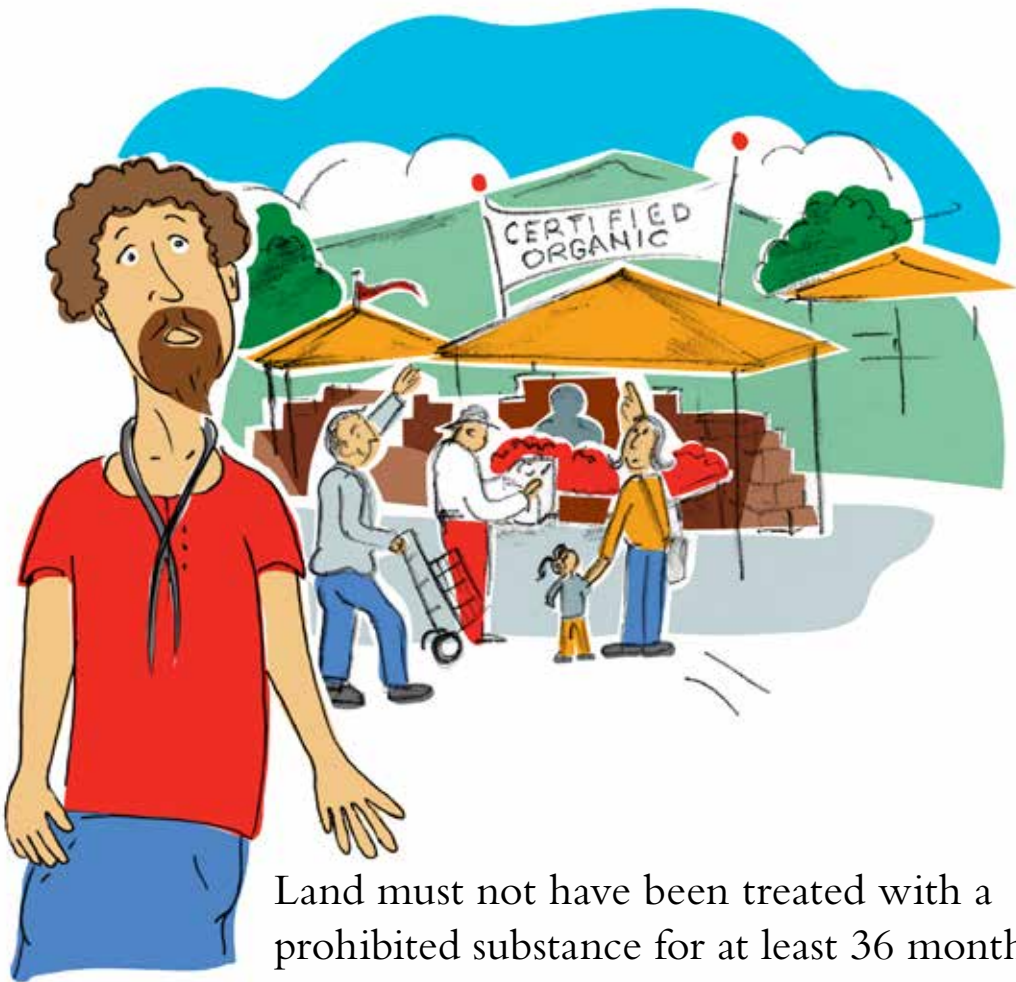
The CB reviews your file to determine your certification status.

Certification Process



The Certification Body provides you with the certification decision.

Once the outstanding issues are deemed resolved, the Certification Body presents the Status Certificate.



Land must not have been treated with a prohibited substance for at least 36 months before a product from it can be sold as “organic”. New applicants seeking ISO status for their crops must apply at least 15 months before the product can be sold as organic, while BCCOP applicants may be able to label their crops as organic within the same calendar year of application.



www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca



Be sure to use the logos so your customers know your product is certified organic.

For more information and other toolkits and resources, please visit us online at www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca