

Producer Inquiry Packet



MOFGA Certification Services, LLC

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Email: certification@mofga.org Web: www.mofgacertification.org

1. Introduction

Thank you for your interest in certifying with MOFGA Certification Services. MOFGA Certification Services (MCS) is a Limited Liability Corporation established in 2002 by the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA). In 2011, MCS certified over 390 operations. MCS strives to uphold the Principles of Organic Production and Handling, developed by the USDA National Organic Standards Board. We are accredited by USDA-NOP.

This booklet was developed to provide answers to many of the basic questions that farmers have who are interested in getting certified by MOFGA Certification Services. As an accredited certification agency, we cannot advise you about marketing or management practices, but we do try to make the process of certification as clear, open and transparent as we can. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

MCS Board

- Ned Daly, President
- Tina Wilcoxson
- Mark Davis
- Izzy McKay
- Rick Kersbergen



MCS Staff

- Mary Yurlina, Director
- Kate Newkirk, Associate Director
Processing/Handling; IT Manager
- Jacomijn Schraevesande-Gardei, Associate Director of Crops
- Joan Cheetham, Certification Specialist
- Katie Webb, Dairy Certification Specialist
- Grace Keown, Certification Assistant
- Jake Galle, Inspector

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2. What are the basic steps to Organic Certification?

Step 1. Contact MOFGA Certification Services to request an application package, or find and download the package at the website www.mofgacertification.org

Step 2. Read the MOFGA Certification Practice Manual. This contains information on organic standards, the organic certification process, and requirements specific to your operation.

Step 3. Complete the application packet and submit fees. Please refer to the instructions in the application package. If you have questions regarding the forms or the fees associated with organic certification, please contact the MOFGA Certification staff at certification@mofga.org, or call 207-568-4142.

Step 4. Application review. When we receive your application and fees, we will review your plan for completeness, and will notify you if forms are missing. If no forms are missing we will send you a confirmation that we received your application. Next your organic system plan will be reviewed for compliance with the USDA National Organic Standards. We will notify you if additional information is necessary to complete the review of your application packet.

Step 5. Organic Inspection. After the initial review is complete, we assign your file to one of our inspectors, who will contact you to schedule an inspection of your business. The role of the inspector is to make observations on how your operation and records conform to your organic system plan. The inspector will write a report that is returned to MOFGA Certification Services.

Step 6. Inspection Report Review. The inspection report will be reviewed. If additional information is needed before a certification decision can be made, you will be given a time period in which to provide it.

Step 7. Certification Status Notification. The MCS Board Director makes the final decision. When a certification decision is made, it may include conditions for changes that will need to be made. Once certification is granted and you receive your certificate, you may sell your crop/livestock or processed products as certified organic by MOFGA Certification Services to the National Organic Standards.

Step 8. Continuing certification. Certification continues to be maintained with the annual update of your organic system plan, annual inspection and fee payment. If major compliance issues are not corrected, your certificate can be either suspended or revoked.

At any time you may withdraw your application for certification or surrender your organic certificate. This must be done in writing.

3. How much will certification cost?

The annual certification fee is based on gross annual income for all organic products. The table below shows fees for the first 6 income categories of farm operations for 2011. In 2012 fees might change. *Please note: Producers in Maine are eligible for a federal reimbursement of 75% of certification expenses up to \$750. Farms making less than \$10,000 gross income can choose to receive an additional MOFGA Rebate.* The last column of the table below shows your actual out of pocket expenses after these rebates. If you would like to see the fee schedule for higher income farms, for farms with on-farm processing or for just processors/handlers please refer to the practice manual or contact our office by calling 568-4142.

In addition to the annual certification fee, a new applicant-filing fee of \$25.00 is required for operations that were not certified in the previous year.

2012 FEES FOR FARMS

Income at Least (\$)	But less than (\$)	Annual Fee	Actual Expense after State Rebate	Actual Expense after State and MOFGA Rebate
0	2,500	\$325.00	\$81.25	\$43.75
2,500	5,000	\$375.00	\$93.75	\$55.00
5,000	10,000	\$550.00	\$137.50	\$75.00
10,000	25,000	\$675.00	\$168.75	
25,000	40,000	\$800.00	\$200.00	
40,000	100,000	\$1000.00	\$250.00	

*****Note: The State of Maine Department of Agriculture administers a federal cost-sharing program that reimburses certified organic growers and handlers within Maine 75% of their certification expenses. The cap on the reimbursement is \$750. Processors and handlers are also included this program. Payments are issued at the end of the year by the State based on data provided to them by MCS. In addition, MOFGA will further offset the cost of certification for producers grossing under \$10K per year by refunding a part of the out-of-pocket expense. Eligible producers may want MOFGA to keep these funds for agricultural programming and they should not the MOFGA Reimbursement box on the fee form.*****

4. What are the application deadlines?

If you are not currently certified by MOFGA Certification Services or did not file an update in 2011, you are considered an applicant. *The following deadlines apply to applicants:*

TYPE OF PRODUCTION	DEADLINES
Dairy	<p>If you are transitioning a herd, you must file the “INTENT TO TRANSITION” form during the first month of the transition year. Please call MCS for more information.</p> <p>If you are buying already certified animals and using on-farm forage and feeds, application must be received at the start of the growing season and in time for an inspector to see fields and crops. Call MCS for more information.</p>
Farms: Any size with CROPS	<p>24 April 2012</p> <p>Applications received after 18 April must include a late fee. Applications will not be accepted after 30 June 2012.</p>
Farms: Any size, LIVESTOCK ONLY	<p>If livestock species consume primarily purchased feeds, then application can be accepted year-round. If livestock species consume primarily on-farm pasture or crops, then application must be submitted at the start of the growing season and in time for an inspector to see fields and crops. Call MCS for more information.</p>
Processors/Handlers	Applications are accepted year-round.
Maple Syrup Operations	14 February 2012
Winter Greenhouse Production	5 November 2012

5. Other frequently asked questions

What is the \$ 5,000 exemption?

Per section 205.101 of the National Organic Standards, growers and livestock producers whose gross agricultural income from organic sales totals \$5000 or less annually are exempt from the requirement to be certified. However, exempt growers and livestock producers must comply with all of the applicable organic production and handling requirements of the Organic Standards and the products from exempt operations shall not be used as organic in processed products produced by an organic handling operation.

What is the USDA's role?

The USDA regulates the National Organic Program (NOP) and the National Organic Program Standards. The NOP accredits certifying agencies, such as MOFGA Certification Services, LLC. Through accreditation, the NOP assures that the certifier understands and is using the National Standards; accreditation also confirms that the certifier can conduct the business of certification properly.

What is the role of MOFGA Certification Services LLC?

MOFGA Certification Services, LLC is a USDA-accredited organic certifier, operating principally in the state of Maine. MOFGA Certification Services evaluates producers, processors, and handlers to determine whether they conform to an established set of operating guidelines called organic standards. Those who conform are certified by the agent and allowed to use a logo, product statement, or certificate to document their product as certified organic.

How is MOFGA Certification Services different from MOFGA?

MOFGA Certification Services (MCS) was established in 2002 by the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association and is a subsidiary of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association. MOFGA Certification Services, LLC, annually reviews the practices of farms and food processors to help assure the public that food labeled as "certified organic" (indicated either by the USDA organic logo, a MOFGA certified logo, or both) has been grown according to the nationally accepted organic standards. The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association is a farming assistance organization that is involved in educational programming and social/political action.

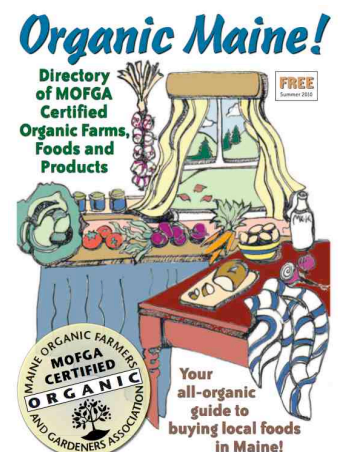
What are the benefits of getting certified with MOFGA Certification Services?

The MOFGA Certification logo is trusted by consumers and will benefit the marketing of your products. In addition we offer further benefits:

- 25% discount on print advertisements in the MOF&G
- 25% discount on print ads in the "Organic Maine! Directory"
- \$ 30 discount on booth fees for the Common Ground Country Fair's Farmers Market (which means that a certified farm pays just \$40 a day for a space in the farmers market)
- Free listing and automatic updates in MOFGA on-line and printed directories
- Complimentary copy of the MOF&G, MOFGA's quarterly newspaper
- Discounts on some of MOFGA's educational events
- Free technical advice from MOFGA's agricultural staff
- Free marketing advice from MOFGA's marketing specialists
- Special events and workshops for certified growers which provide networking opportunities with other certified farmers.

Is MOFGA certification the only certification option in Maine?

No. MOFGA has no monopoly on certification in Maine. You must use a certifier who is USDA accredited, and a list of accredited certifiers can be found on the USDA NOP website www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/nop.



What if my farm or processing facility is not in Maine, can I still be certified by MOFGA Certification Services?

MOFGA Certification Services works exclusively in Maine, however there are rare situations where we will provide certification services outside of Maine. An additional fee may apply. Please contact the office for more information.

How long does it take to get certified?

The process for making a certification decision may take several weeks to several months. A lot depends on the complexity of the operation and the completeness of the application. An inspection must take place during production, which means that for some producers (e.g., farmers producing crops in fields) there are times of the year when an inspection is not feasible. If questions or compliance issues are identified at any point in the process, these must be addressed in writing. An incomplete application (fees are considered part of the application) must be made complete before certification can be granted. Because of these factors, it is not possible to guarantee certification within a certain time frame, but our advice to potential applicants is to plan ahead and submit a complete application several months before you anticipate needing certification.

What kind of records do I have to keep?

Developing and maintaining records is an important part of being certified. In our Practice Manual you can read all the specifics about what records you will need to keep. In short, all crop producers should keep the following records:

- Seed/seedling/perennials purchase records
- Field activity records (including application of soil amendments, planting dates, pesticides/herbicide products, manure application records, crop rotation records etc).
- Compost production records
- If equipment is used on non-certified farms, an equipment clean out log needs to be kept
- Receipts and labels for purchased inputs
- Sales records and harvest yields (what kind of sales records will depend on the scale and complexity of the farm).

Please contact MCS if you would like more information on the kind of records that must be kept with regards to livestock and processing.

All records must be available at the time of inspection. Records should be saved for five years. Certified producers are required to keep the MOFGA Certification office up to date about changes to their organic system plan when they occur during the year.

What about inspections conducted by MOFGA Certification Services?

MOFGA Certification Services employs inspectors on a part-time and a seasonal basis. Once an updated Organic System Plan or new certification application has been reviewed by MOFGA Certification Services an inspector will be assigned. Each farm is inspected during the growing season and processors and handlers will be inspected at least once annually. The inspector is responsible for contacting the producer/processor to set up a mutually agreeable time for the inspection. Inspections are performed to verify organic

farming practices and information reported in the farm plan. After the inspection the inspector will write an inspection report on which certification decisions are based.

How do I prepare for an inspection?

- * Review the sections of the 2012 practice manual relevant for your operation, this way the inspection will make more sense.
- * Review your certification paperwork
- * Gather your records that will be needed for the inspection
- * On the inspection day make sure that the applicant or an authorized person with knowledge of the farming or processing operation is present at the time of inspection.

Are there resources available to help me transition to organic?

Yes, through the USDA NRCS you can sign up for a Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition. The planner will help you with the certification paperwork and help you to better understand the NOP rule. Visit your local NRCS office for more information.

Where can I find more information about organics and organic certification?

- The National Organic Program (NOP) www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/nop

On this website the NOP rule and the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances for organic production and handling operations can be found.

- MOFGA Certification Services www.mofgacertification.org

This website has all the MCS paperwork and news with regards to MOFGA Certification Services

- The Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) www.omri.org

The Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) reviews products intended for use in certified organic production, handling, and processing. It lists products that comply with the NOP rule.

- MOFGA www.mofga.org and www.mofga.net

Information about MOFGA and the online community of MOFGA can be found on these websites.



Request for Organic Certification Application Packet

2012 forms will be ready around the second week of January 2012.

MOFGA Certification Services Forms are available free of charge at www.mofgacertificationservices.org. If however you would like a paper copy please complete the following:

Name _____
Address _____
Town _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Fax _____
Email: _____

Please send me the Application Packet for the following categories of organic production. Multiple categories can be checked.

- Crops
- Blueberries
- Livestock
- Dairy (a dairy intent form should first be completed)
- Maple Syrup
- Processor
- On Farm processor
- Other, namely _____

- Enclosed is the \$15 Application Packet Fee.

→If you are unsure about which categories you will need forms for please contact the MOFGA Certification Office. We can help you determine which forms you will need.

*Please return this form and your \$15 Application Packet Fee payment to
MOFGA Certification Services, P.O. Box 170, Unity, ME 04988.*

Thanks for your interest in Organic Certification!