

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## 1. What is the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), State Organic Program (SOP)?

The SOP protects the integrity of the organic label through enforcement, education, and outreach, and is responsible for enforcing and administering the provisions of state and federal organic laws that govern the standards under which fresh agricultural products/foods may be labeled and/or sold as organic.

## 2. WHO IS REQUIRED TO REGISTER WITH THE SOP?

- Every person engaged in this state in the production or handling of raw agricultural products sold as organic must register with CDFA before the first sale of the product.
- Processors and handlers of processed meat, fowl, dairy products, and retailers engaged in processing or handling of products sold as organic register with CDFA.
- All processors or handlers of processed organic agricultural products must register with CDFA or the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) before the first sale of product.

Processors and handlers of processed products for human consumption, including dietary supplements, alcoholic beverages, fish or seafood, and processors or handlers of animal (pet) food and cosmetics sold as organic, register with CDPH.

Organic Cottage Food Operations with gross sales up to \$50,000 must obtain additional registration with CDFA.

Organic Cottage Food Operations with gross sales of \$50,000 or more must obtain additional registration with CDPH.

CDFA Organic Registration Guide  
[https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/docs/Organic\\_Registration\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/docs/Organic_Registration_Guide.pdf)

## 3. HOW DO I REGISTER AND WHAT ARE THE FEES?

- You can register online with CDFA at <https://organic.cdfa.ca.gov/OrganicReg/>
- Register with CDPH at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DFDCS/Pages/FDBPrograms/FoodSafetyProgram/OrganicFoodProcessors.aspx>
- Registration fees are based on operation type or activity and gross sales. Fees can be viewed by going to the CDFA and CDPH websites.

## 4. HOW ARE REGISTRATION FEES USED?

Registration fees are used to perform enforcement and education activities that ensure products being sold and products consumed by the public meet state and federal organic standards.

## 5. WHAT ARE THE ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE SOP?

Enforcement activities include registration of organic operations, spot inspections, complaint investigations, pesticide residue testing, and processing appeals.



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## 6. WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DO NOT COMPLY WITH ORGANIC REGULATIONS?

Failure to comply with organic laws can result in adverse actions and/or fines.

## 7. WHAT ADDITIONAL VALUE DOES THE SOP PROVIDE?

- Helps facilitate the sale of organic products by supporting the organic industry through outreach and education activities.
- Provides organic reports and statistics to local counties.
- Provides information to vector control agencies to assist with pest management.
- Provides resources on organics in California.

## 8. AM I REQUIRED TO OBTAIN ORGANIC CERTIFICATION? HOW DO I DO THAT?

The USDA National Organic Program (NOP) provides requirements for certification and information on how to become certified. In general, most farms and businesses that grow, handle, or process organic products and have gross sales of more than \$5,000 must be certified.

- Additional information on certification can be found on the NOP's website <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/need-be-certified>
- CDFA has a list of Accredited Certifying Agents (ACA) who are registered with the SOP <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/docs/CertifiersList.pdf>

## 9. DOES THE SOP WORK WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES?

The SOP works with various government and third-party agencies, including but not limited to

- The California Department of Public Health
- The California Department of Pesticide Regulation
- The California Department of Justice
- The USDA National Organic Program
- Local County Agricultural Commissioners' Offices
- USDA Accredited Certifying Agents

## 10. WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ON THE SOP?

Additional information can be found by going to the CDFA website

[https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/i\\_&\\_c/organic.html](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/i_&_c/organic.html).

