

USDA Organic is Regenerative, and so much more!

Organic* is a regenerative, whole system approach to farming and food production that ensures certified products are always grown, processed, and handled according to rigorous environmental, health, and animal welfare standards. USDA Organic is the only environmental label claim in the United States that legally requires 3rd party certification from farm to finished product and is backed by federal oversight and enforcement.

REGENERATIVE (NON-ORGANIC)



ORGANIC

No. The term “regenerative agriculture” has been used for some time, but there is no standardized definition to date.

Federally Defined & Guaranteed



Yes. The USDA Organic label is backed by third party certification and federal oversight, which provides traceability from farm to consumer. Cheating in organic can mean losing certification and significant financial penalties.

It depends.
Not federally required or enforced.

Protects Natural Resources



Required. Organic farmers are required to build soil health, support biodiversity, protect water quality, and reduce soil erosion through activities such as crop rotation, cover cropping and composting.

It depends.
Not federally required or enforced.

Cover Crops & Crop Rotation



Required. Cover crops are key to regenerative soil ecosystems and a required practice for managing crop nutrients and soil fertility. Organic crop producers are also required to practice crop rotation to interrupt insect life cycles, suppress soil borne plant diseases, prevent soil erosion, build organic matter, fix nitrogen, and increase farm biodiversity.

It depends.
Chemical no-till is typically allowed.

Tillage



Restricted. Organic farmers are required to use approved organic tillage and cultivation practices that maintain or improve the condition of the soil and minimize erosion.

It depends.
Not federally addressed or enforced.

Chemical Fertilization



Prohibited. Synthetic nitrogen fertilizers, soil fumigants and sewage sludge (“biosolids”) are strictly prohibited.

It depends.
Not federally required or enforced.

Synthetic Pesticides



Prohibited. Pest management on organic farms relies first upon prevention, monitoring, and natural/biological controls. As a last resort, producers may select from a limited toolbox of non-toxic pest control options approved by the National Organic Standards Board and USDA.

It depends.
Not federally required or enforced.

Animal Welfare



Required. Organic farmers and ranchers must support the health and accommodate the natural behavior of their animals year-round. Animals must be raised on certified organic land, fed 100% certified organic feed, and managed without antibiotics, growth hormones or slaughter byproducts.

It depends.
Not federally required or enforced.

GMO



Prohibited at all stages of organic farming and processing. Organic farmers and handlers must also have practices in place that prevent GMO drift and cross-contamination.

*Organic data sourced from: 7 CFR Part 205 National Organic Program, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/programs-offices/national-organic-program>