



**OCIA International, Inc.**  
**Organic Crop Improvement Association**

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## **STEPS TO CERTIFICATION**

1. Work with your chapter or certification coordinator to determine the certification opportunity offered by OCIA that best fits your needs. There may be more than one of the following categories that is applicable to your operation(s).
  - **Broker/Trader:** An agent for others in negotiating a sales contract; a selling broker generally represents a shipper; a buying broker generally acts as a purchasing agent for a buyer.
  - **Community Grower Group:** Groups constituted of producers with similar farming systems and production in developing nations. Growers and/or harvesters must be located in the same geographical area and in close proximity to each other. Management of the community grower group must be centralized, i.e., formally organized as a crop improvement group, or market their product through the same handler. The group must have established and implemented a system to monitor their members with regards to organic agricultural practices (self-control or peer evaluation). Oversight must be provided by a local resource person, crop consultant or agronomist who must, in the course of a year, physically visit all farms in the area or in the group. These activities must be managed by the governing body.
  - **Maple Syrup Producer:** A person or company who collects maple sap and does the processing of turning the sap into syrup or other value added maple products prior to sale.
  - **Processor/Manufacturer:** A person or company who performs any type of processing operation, including cooking, baking, heating, drying, mixing, grinding, churning, cleaning, separating, extracting, cutting, fermenting, slaughtering, eviscerating, preserving, dehydrating, freezing, or otherwise manufacturing, including packaging, canning, jarring, or otherwise enclosing in a container, other than normal post harvest packing of crops performed by a producer.
  - **Producer:** A person or company who engages in the business of growing or producing food, feed, fiber crops, or livestock.
  - **Warehouse:** An operator who receives and stores products, does not take legal title to the products, and does not open product containers, or mix, combine, or otherwise handle the products while in custody.
  - **Wild harvester:** An entity which collects or harvests plants or portions of plants from defined sites which are maintained in a natural state and are not cultivated or otherwise managed.
  - **Apiary Producer:** An entity that produces apiculture products (Bees).

2. Determine where your markets will be located and where your product may end up in its final consumer package. This will tell you what certifications and/or verification programs you will need to sell your product as organic. Review the *Descriptions of Certifications and Verifications Offered by OCIA* and select the certifications and verifications that best suit your markets.
3. Comply with OCIA Standards and Bylaws, applicable Governmental Regulations to which OCIA is accredited, and/or certification requirements.
4. Maintain documentation to support compliance to programs applied for. This is called an audit trail. Records must be kept for at least 5 years once you are certified. Farmers must keep audit trail documents during their 3-year transition.
5. Complete applicable questionnaires and required supplemental documentation provided to you by your chapter or certification coordinator.
6. Complete, sign and date *Associate Licensing Agreement (ALA)*.
7. Pay appropriate non-refundable certification fees.
8. If you have been previously certified, or have applied for certification with another certification agency, please include the following with your application materials:
  - Name of certifying agent
  - Date (year) of previous application
  - Outcome of application (certification decision)
  - Copies of certificate, Notice(s) of Noncompliance, and/or Denial, Proposed Suspension, Proposed Revocation, Suspension or Revocation of certification
  - Description of actions taken to correct any noncompliances noted, including evidence of correction of noncompliances.
9. Questionnaires and other documentation are reviewed. If your operation appears to be certifiable, your chapter or certification coordinator will assign an inspector for your operation. Inspection fees are non-refundable and must be paid before the inspection is authorized.
10. An annual on-site inspection is required of each production unit, facility, and site that is included in the operation for which certification is requested. An authorized representative of the operation who is knowledgeable about the operation must be present. The initial inspection may be delayed for up to 6 months, if necessary, to conduct the inspection at a time when compliance can be verified.
11. A copy of the inspection report (and test results, if samples are taken for testing) is provided to you.
12. The complete file, consisting of the operation's organic system plan (questionnaire), required supplemental documents/information, and inspection documentation, is reviewed to

verify compliance to the standards and/or regulations of the certification or verifications that were applied for.

13. If you are found to be in compliance, a certificate will be issued along with a letter stating requirements that must be complied with prior to the next annual inspection.
14. Any Notice of Noncompliance received must be corrected and responded to within the time specified as a condition for certification.
15. Certification is based on an annual application, inspection and review of your operation. Failure to submit an update to the organic system plan along with certification fees annually will result in a change of certification status.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Additional inspections may be required to determine compliance. The cost of follow-up inspections to verify that noncompliances have been corrected within the timeframe specified will be charged to the applicant. The cost of unannounced inspections will be borne by OCIA if the operator is found to be in substantial compliance with all requirements of the *ALA*.