Organic Claims at the Market

~ Labeling and Verifying Organic Status ~

Katherine Withey, ***WSDA Organics Program***

Sarah Wiley, ***WSDA Organics Program***

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WSDA Organic Program

Your local certifier

WSDA is the only organic certifier based in Washington.

Organic resource center

We maintain a library of resources to help you achieve certification – in English and Español!

Technical assistance provider

Our team is available to assist you with organic standards and label requirements.

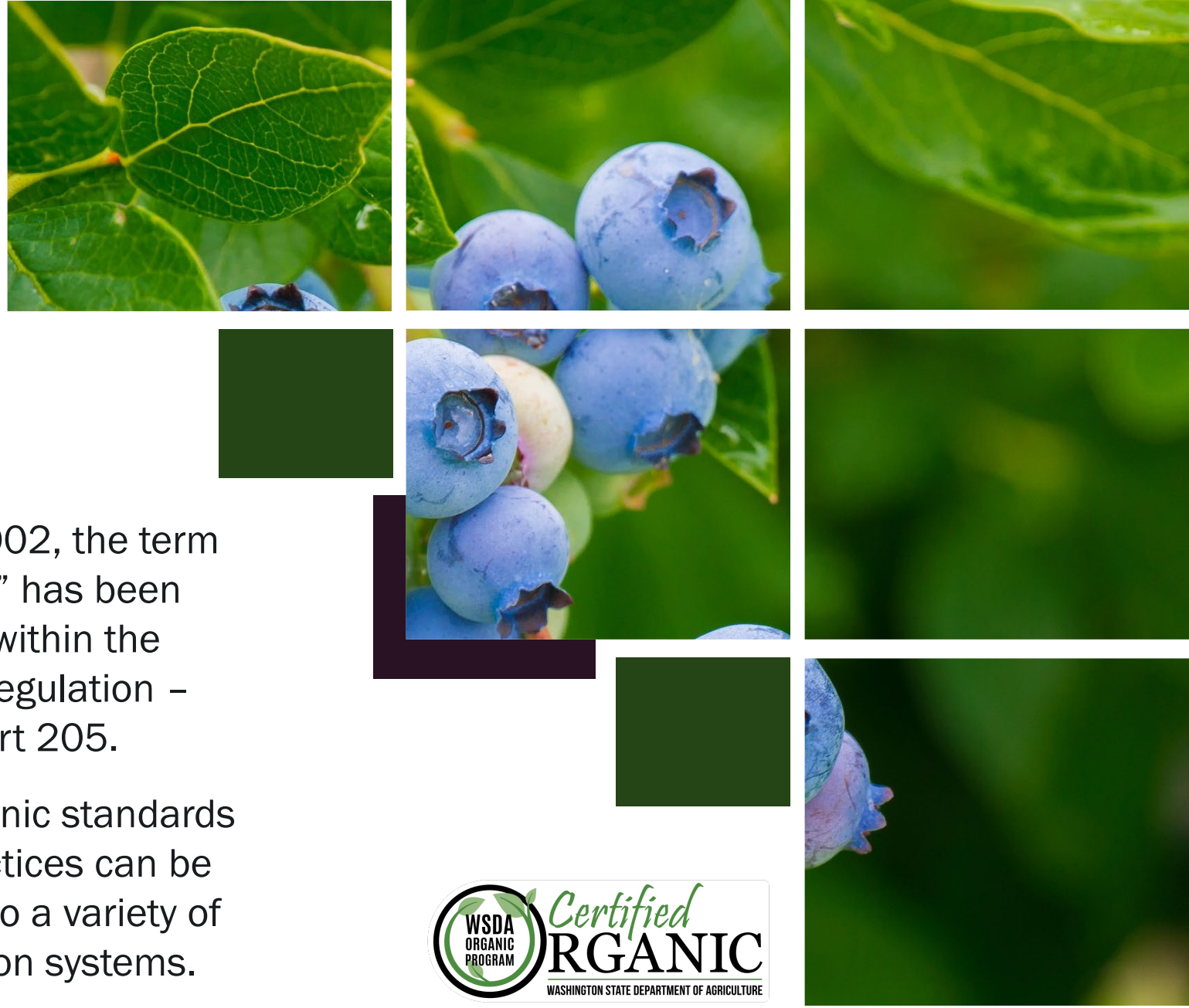
Protectors of organic integrity

We conduct onsite inspections and audits of farms and handlers – verifying organic claims from field to table.

Organic is…

- *A production system, managed in accordance with the USDA Regulation, to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve bio-diversity.*

- Since 2002, the term “organic” has been defined within the federal regulation – 7CFR Part 205.
- The organic standards and practices can be applied to a variety of production systems.



Activities that MUST be certified to make an organic claim

Physically producing, processing or handling crops or livestock

Buying, selling, or otherwise facilitating the trade of crops or livestock

Transportation-adjacent activities such as storage of crops, loading or unloading bulk product

Certification is NOT required to make organic claims if…

- Selling less than $5,000 per year
- Retail establishments
- Organic claims are limited to the ingredient statement
- Storing of tamper-evident packages
- Customs or logistics broker activities only

Who Needs to be Certified

Certified ORGANIC
WSDA ORGANIC PROGRAM
WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

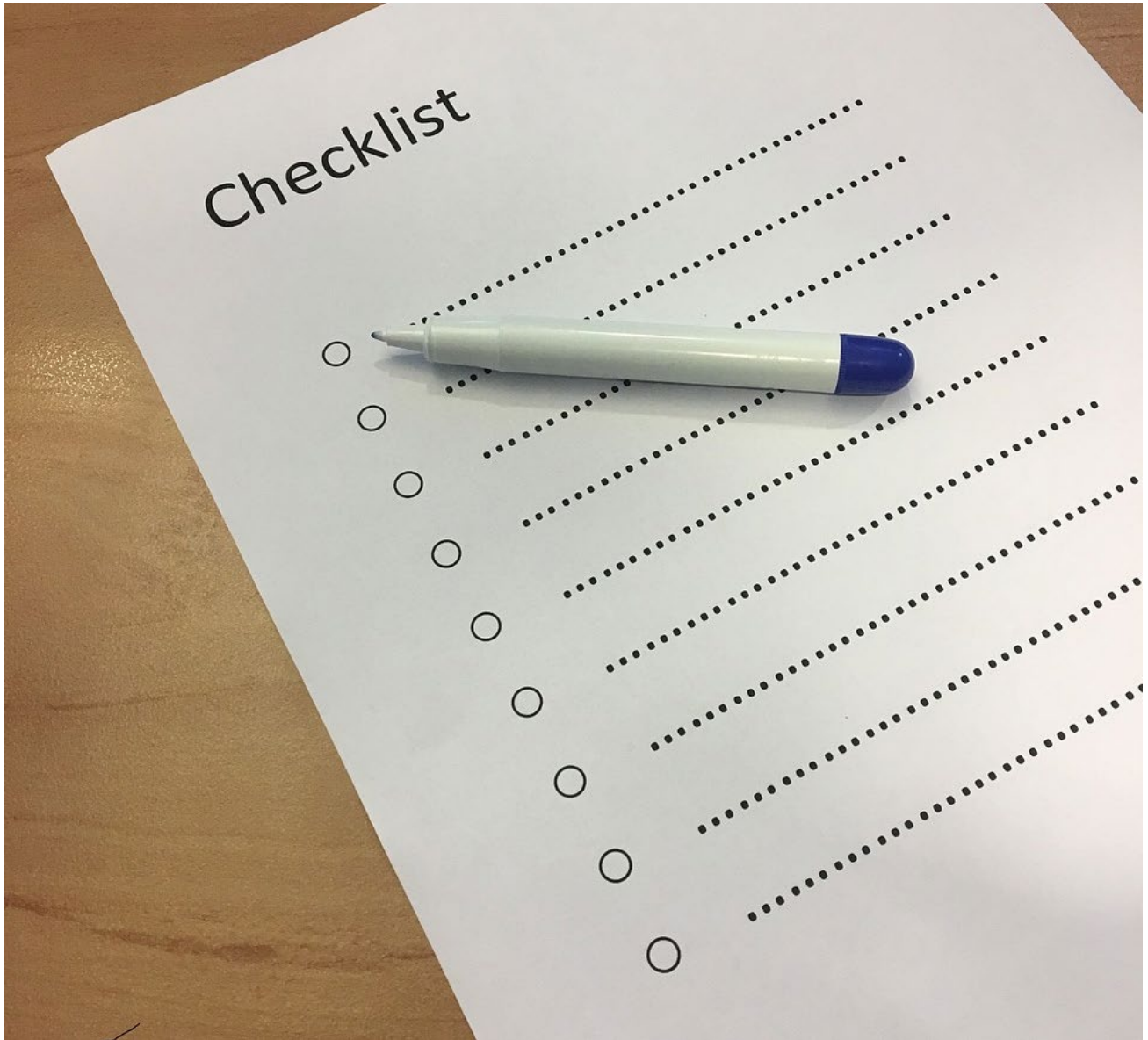
Who Needs to be C

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION FACT SHEE

The USDA organic regulations (7CFR §205.100) requires every business that produ agricultural products intended to be sold, labeled or represented with organic cla unless their activities are covered by an exemption outlined in §205.101.

In March 2023, the regulation was updated to expand the definition of handling a number of uncertified entities in the organic supply chain.

Online Resources



Short videos, library of factsheets, recordkeeping templates

Application forms and the Organic System Plan

Learn about organic labeling requirements

Labeling Crops at Farmers Markets

Labeling Crops at Farmers Markets

Farmers markets bring local products directly to consumers from a variety of farms and producers. Many consumers want to know how and where the products were grown. Market booth and product signs are used to help get the farmer's message out, but not all claims have a clear definition. Market managers play a key role in ensuring vendors understand labeling requirements so that consumers are not mislead. This handout gives common examples of produce signs that may be used at farmers markets and briefly outlines the requirements for each claim.

Certified Organic Farm

- Farm can provide current organic certificate that has been issued by a USDA accredited agency.
- Farm and crops are listed on the USDA's list of certified organic operations. The Organic Integrity Database

Certified Organic Farm

- Use of the term “certified” is optional.
- Use of either the USDA seal or certifier logo is optional.

Certified Organic Farm

- The term organic may be used in farm name.
- However, if displayed above crops, all crops must be produced organically.

Exempt Farm

- Farm's total gross annual income from the sale of organic crops or products is less than $5,000.
- Farm is exempt from applying for certification but must fully comply with all regulations including keeping at least 3 years of records to verify the use of organic practices & inputs.

- No use of the term "certified" & no use of USDA seal or a certifier logo.

Exempt Farm

- The term organic may only be used in farm name, provided the farm's total gross annual income is less than $5,000.
- If displayed above crops, all crops must be produced organically.

Other Labeling Claims – No Standards

- Non-regulated terms without common definitions.
- Not verified by a third-party inspection.

Other Labeling Claims – Private Standards

NON GMO Project VERIFIED nongmoproject.org

CERTIFIED REGENERATIVE BY AGW

CERTIFIED NATURALLY GROWN

FOOD ALLIANCE CERTIFIED

CERTIFIED HUMANE RAISED & HANDLED

Regenerative Organic Certified

BIOFARMING PACIFIC NORTHWEST

REAL ORGANIC PROJECT

Verifying Organic Claims

How do you know if a vendor is certified organic?

Verifying Organic Claims

Start with the vendor application.

Include questions in vendor applications:

1. How will your crops or products be labeled?
2. What types of production claims do your labels make?
3. Is your business certified organic?
4. What types of certification does your business maintain?

Request copies of certifications:

1. Include a current copy of your organic certificate with your vendor application.

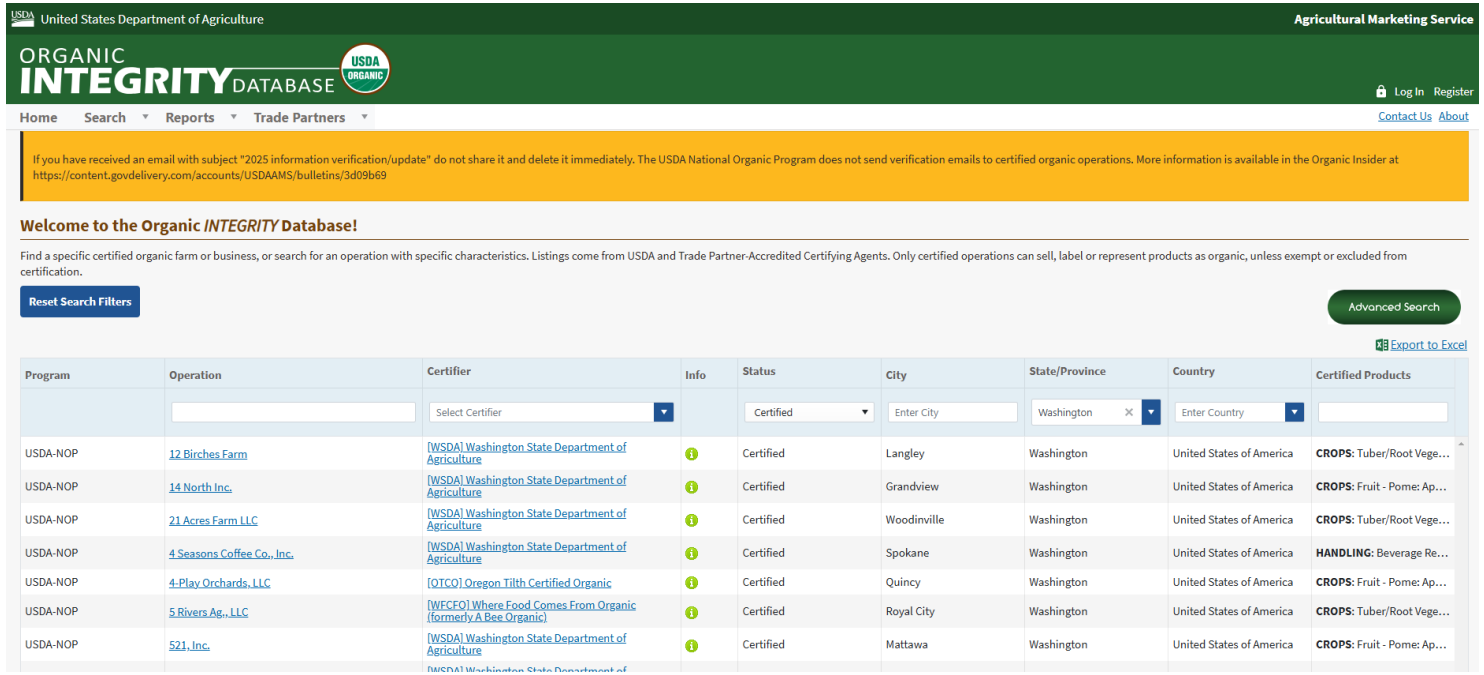
Verifying Organic Claims

Verify the organic certification status online.

- The **USDA Organic Integrity Database** is a list of all certified organic operations.
- A public tool to verify organic claims.
- Updated by all certifiers within three business days of changes to certificates or eligibility.

Verifying Organic Claims

Visit the Organic Program table for a demonstration of the online tool.



Forwarding Questions or Concerns

What do you do when organic status or claims can't be verified?

Our team of experts is available to assist!

1. Direct vendors to contact us with questions about certification or exempt claims.
2. Contact our team directly to report concerns or ask questions about businesses and their claims.

Forwarding Questions or Concerns

What type of information should you provide?

Photos!

1. Close up image of label, banner, or other marketing information.
2. Image of full booth with business sign for context.

Forwarding Questions or Concerns

What type of information should you provide?

Contact Information

1. Business name, owner name, address
2. Website or social media links
3. Other markets if known

Our Team Will…

Direct you to resources for your market and/or vendors.

Work with WSDA certified businesses to correct any errors or violations.

Reach out to businesses to provide technical assistance.

File a complaint with USDA if business is not certified but needs to be for their activities and claims.

organic@agr.wa.gov

360-902-1805

agr.wa.gov/organic

Organic experts ready to assist!