



FAQ -ORGANIC CERTIFICATION FOR INDUSTRIAL HEMP PRODUCERS

Can hemp be certified organic in the United States?

Yes, it has been certified in the US since the 2014 Farm Bill. However, organic certification comes with certain restrictions. The 2018 Farm Bill broadly allows for hemp cultivation, but does require licensing through a state program (or a federal program if in a state that does not develop a system for licensing hemp production). As hemp is recognized as legal to grow under these restrictions, this production can be certified under the USDA National Organic Program (NOP).

Is there any additional documentation that must be submitted to have hemp certified organic?

Although the USDA organic regulations do not contain any mention of hemp, the NOP requires certifiers to only certify farmers who are registered to grow hemp in states with an industrial hemp agricultural pilot research program. To satisfy that requirement, OneCert requires Hemp Producers to submit a copy of their state registration and an [Industrial Hemp Affirmation](#) form that must be submitted with the Organic System Plan (OSP).

I have a license for hemp production in my state and I contract with several growers to produce the hemp. How should I submit my application?

Each grower must be individually certified. Organic certificates may only be issued to a single legal entity. Certification of subcontracted entities is not allowed. This is especially important to keep in mind if you are considering contracting with another grower to produce annual seedlings for transplanting on your land. That grower must be certified.

The USDA National Organic Program requires that products sold or labeled as organic must be produced ONLY on certified farms. This means that while there may be a contractual agreement between a hemp license holder and a grower, the organic certification must be held by the legal entity that is growing the hemp and responsible for day-to-day operations and decisions on the farm. The grower will need to submit a copy of the license and any additional documentation that may be necessary to link the hemp license to the production area/farm.

[NOP Handbook Instruction 4009](#) states:

For crops operations, the applicant for certification cannot contract with the landowner to produce crops on the landowner's land. The landowner would need their own certification.

An applicant may lease land and then hire custom operators to do the work on that land. (As noted above, the custom operator cannot be the landowner.) The applicant would be required to comply with all parts of the USDA organic regulations related to crops production.

Please note that certification at the farm level only certifies the plant/plant material (flower, grain, stalk, etc.). In order for any processed product to make "organic" label claims, the processing facilities would also need to be certified organic.

I grow hemp from clones; are there any restrictions on the planting stock I use?

The National Organic Program requires the use of organic seed, annual seedlings, and planting stock except that non-organic seed and planting stock may be used when organic is not available in an appropriate quantity, quality, or form. Documentation must be maintained that demonstrates a search was conducted for organic seed or planting stock prior to using non-organic.

Clones are considered planting stock, and non-organic clones would be allowed if organic is not commercially available. If the clone is received in plugs or other growing media, all materials in the plug or growing media must be disclosed and compliant with the National Organic Program. You must get those materials approved before using with clones to assure you will be able to plant them into organic fields. Planting clones with materials not compliant with the National Organic Program will jeopardize the organic status of the field.

I'm a hemp grower, the license-holder provides me with transplants to grow in my field. I'm pretty sure they're grown from seed. What do I need to submit?

Transplants grown from seed are annual seedlings and must be grown on a certified organic operation. If you are not growing the transplants, documentation demonstrating the transplants are certified organic must be provided. If you are able to grow your own transplants from seed, you will need to complete the Specialty Production OSP Addendum.

I have only one field that I'm planning on having certified organic; that field will be used for hemp production. The rest of my farm is not going to be managed organically. Is that a problem?

It would likely be a problem, but not for the reason you may think. There is nothing in the National Organic Program that requires an entire farm to be managed organically. You must have procedures in place that clearly show segregation between organic and non-organic production: you will need to keep meticulous records for input usage, for both organic and non-organic crops and be prepared to show all records (including but not limited to purchase records, application records, documentation of applications made by third parties) pertaining to input use for both organic and non-organic production. Any equipment used in

both organic and non-organic production will need to be thoroughly cleaned prior to entering an organic field, and that cleaning will need to be documented.

The potential issue is that there is *only one field* for organic production, and the National Organic Program requires a crop rotation that maintains or improves soil organic matter, provides for pest management, manages deficient or excess plant nutrients and provides erosion control. The OneCert Crop Rotation policy generally requires multiple crops, including the use of cover crops. Hemp-winter fallow would not comply with the minimum rotation, and hemp-fallow is very strictly limited. Please see the [ONECERT Crop ROTATION DECISION TREE](#) and [ONECERT CROP ROTATION POLICY](#) for more information on crop rotation requirements.

We are growing hemp hydroponically, using only materials on the OMRI list. Can that be certified?

OneCert does not certify hydroponic operations because they do not comply with §6513(b)(1) of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA): "An organic plan shall contain provisions designed to foster soil fertility, primarily through the management of the organic content of the soil through proper tillage, crop rotation, and manuring."

We will be growing hemp in a greenhouse/hoop house/warehouse setting. What will we need to do?

If the operation is growing in-ground, then OneCert can certify the operation as organic. Crops grown to maturity entirely within containers do not comply with §6513(b)(1) of the OFPA cited above. If you are growing transplants you wish to have certified, that will be used in organic production, that is eligible for certification, and you will need to complete a [Specialty Production OSP Addendum](#) in addition to the Organic System Plan.

We are shipping hemp from the field to be dried off-farm. Does this need to be included in the Organic System Plan?

In order to understand this question fully, we would need to know at what point the hemp is transferred in ownership or management. Some hemp operations work with processing operations who dry and/or process hemp and return the processed product to the grower for sale. In this case, if the processed product is sold as organic, the facility you work with will need to be certified organic, and you will need to provide documentation showing they are certified to conduct the processes they are doing for you.

If you are growing for a vertically integrated company, where once the hemp leaves the farm, you will no longer have any control over the hemp as it moves through next steps, then the OSP would not need to address the next steps. If the final hemp product is to be sold as organic, these steps would need to be certified as well, and the drying would be addressed in the OSP of the facility where the handling takes place.

We are in the process of building plastic hoop houses (or any other structure) where hemp will be hung to dry. What do we need to look out for?

Organic product cannot come into direct contact with treated wood; please ensure your drying method and structure ensures no such contact happens. The site of the drying hoop house will need to be identified on your map(s). If any materials for weed, pest, or disease control are used in the hoop house, these will need to be disclosed in the OSP as well.

What kind of documentation needs to be kept for organic hemp production?

The National Organic Program regulations require that records be maintained that demonstrate compliance with the regulations, and fully disclose all activities and transactions in enough detail so as to be readily understood and audited. When inspected, there are two types of audits that are done; a traceability audit and a mass balance.

A traceability audit tracks a product sold as organic back through any post-harvest handling and storage, back to harvest and the field of production; this includes all activities conducted that affect that crop. These activities would include any materials applications for fertility or pest control, all field prep work and planting, the source of the seed or planting stock used, any equipment used in the field and verification the equipment was cleaned prior to use in the organic field/on organic crop (if the equipment is also used for non-organic production). If buffers are harvested, documentation of the separate harvest, storage, and use/sale as non-organic would be reviewed.

The mass balance compares the amount of a crop sold with amounts harvested, and compared against acres planted and amount of seed planted/clones or transplants used, and typical yields for hemp in your region. We do understand that if crop is sold by dried weight, this will differ significantly from harvest weight, which is why it is important to record both amounts.