

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION FACT SHEET

USDA organic regulations require certified handlers to prevent commingling of organic and non-organic products. Handlers must also prevent organic products from being contaminated by any prohibited material. Organic certification requires maintaining organic integrity from the sourcing of ingredients through the final packaging and distribution of the product.

§205.271 and .272 - USDA organic regulations require that organic handling operations implement measures necessary to prevent the commingling of organic and non-organic products and to protect organic products from contact with prohibited substances.

Organic Ingredients

When sourcing ingredients or products, an operation must ensure they are certified according to USDA organic regulations. Ingredients may be verified through the supplier's organic certificate or through certifier and USDA websites. Facilities should have clear steps to designate how an organic product is identified upon arrival, and where the organic product is stored.

Storage

Organic ingredients must be stored in a manner that prevents commingling with nonorganic ingredients. Clear labeling of organic ingredients and careful handling procedures can decrease the risk of accidental commingling.

Process

Handlers should utilize processes that minimize risk of commingling with nonorganic products. This may be accomplished through the use of dedicated equipment, the handling of organic products before non-organic, or other methods suited to the operation.

Cleaning

Proper cleaning of shared equipment is important to ensure organic integrity is maintained. Documentation of cleaning or purge steps allows the organic inspector to confirm you have implemented steps to prevent commingling of organic and nonorganic versions of a product.

Pest Management

Proper pest management is essential to prevent products from becoming exposed to prohibited pesticides. Handlers follow a multi-level approach when dealing with pests in facilities. The first level is prevention of the problem, followed by the use of mechanical and physical controls.

If preventative methods are insufficient, handlers may use materials on the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances, located within the USDA organic regulations. All pest-control materials must be added to your Organic System Plan and be approved by your certifier prior to use. If other methods are insufficient, use of synthetic inputs is acceptable provided there is no risk of contaminating organic products, packaging, or equipment.

Recordkeeping

At each step of the process, recordkeeping helps an operation demonstrate compliance, track flow of organic product, and provide evidence that a product’s organic integrity has been maintained. Organic handlers must keep adequate records of all activities involving organic handling. This audit trail of records provides traceability of your organic product back to the source of ingredients and forward to the distribution of the organic product into the marketplace.

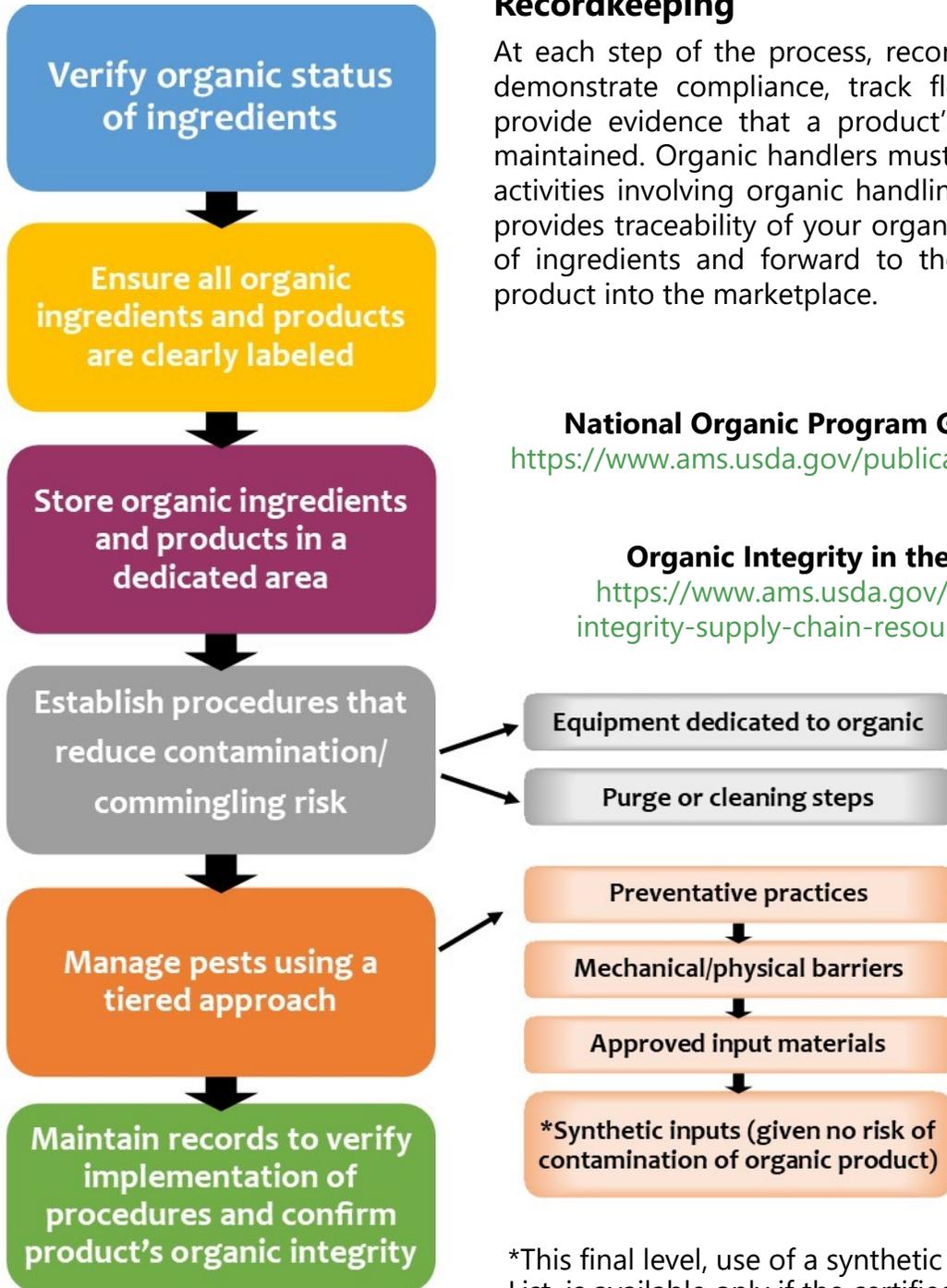
Additional Resources

National Organic Program Guide for Organic Processors

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/publications/content/guide-organic-processors>

Organic Integrity in the Supply Chain: Resource List

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/publications/content/organic-integrity-supply-chain-resource-list-organic-certifiers-and-certified>



*This final level, use of a synthetic material not on the National List, is available only if the certified operation adopts the first three levels but finds them inadequate to control the target pest. The levels must build upon, not replace, each other.



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