



Organic Inspections During COVID-19

COVID-19 requires our food and farming community to make changes in how work is conducted. WSDA's organic inspection process has adapted to protect certified operations and agency staff while ensuring compliance with USDA organic regulations.

Limited Contact Inspection Steps

During COVID-19 restrictions, organic inspections have been divided into four separate steps to ensure social distancing is maintained and organic integrity is upheld.

1. Preliminary Meeting

- A phone call or video call is set up between you and the inspector.
- Your recordkeeping system, production activities, and technology tools are discussed.
- The inspector identifies the records you must submit to verify your business' compliance.
- Due dates for submitting records are set and next steps in the process are scheduled.

2. On-site Visit

- If needed to verify compliance, the inspector will visit your business to observe your practices.
- Six feet of separation between you and the inspector must be maintained at all times. The inspector will reschedule the on-site visit if physical distancing is not possible.
- The inspector may be able to visit a location alone and call you while on-site.
- Samples of your organic crop or product may be collected for pesticide residue testing.

3. Desk Audit

- The inspector compares your submitted records to their on-site observations.
- Required audits are conducted independently by the inspector.
- The inspector identifies questions or concerns to discuss with you at the final meeting.
- You may be notified of additional records to have available at the final meeting.

4. Final Meeting

- The inspector meets with you over a video call, using document-sharing technology. In some cases, a phone call may be sufficient for the final meeting.
- Additional records are reviewed and the inspector interviews you and your employees.
- The inspector provides technical assistance and discusses any findings with you.
- After the final meeting, the inspector submits their report to our review team.



How to Prepare for a Limited Contact Inspection

Preparing for your inspection ahead of time will help ensure an efficient process and reduce the amount of additional information requested of you.



1. Respond to Meeting Requests

- Quickly respond when an inspector reaches out to schedule an inspection. Failure to schedule a preliminary meeting may result in a delay in the organic certification process, which may impact your ability to market organic crops or products.

2. Ensure Records are Organized and Ready to Submit

- The inspector will request records for activities since your last on-site inspection. If you are a new applicant, records that demonstrate your recordkeeping system and organic activities to date will be requested, including but not limited to 36 months of land history for new sites.
- Organize your records so you are ready to discuss them with the inspector and you can easily share your records when requested.
- Scan or take photos of hardcopy records so they may be sent electronically. If you must send records by mail, only send copies. Do not send original records; these must remain in the control of your business.
- The specific records you need to submit will be determined during the preliminary meeting with the inspector. Typically, records must be submitted no later than two business days from the date of your preliminary meeting.

3. Come to Inspection Meetings Prepared

- Ensure knowledgeable staff are available to answer questions about all organic production and handling activities. Discuss any key absences with your inspector when scheduling meetings.
- Ensure you practice physical distancing of at least six feet with the inspector during all on-site visits. If needed, make arrangements for the inspector to conduct an on-site visit alone.

4. Ask Questions

- The organic inspection remains an opportunity for you to ask questions about the certification process and requirements. The organic inspector is available to provide technical assistance as well as direct you to resources on how to comply with organic standards.

Find additional organic certification resources on our website.

Or contact us by phone or email with your questions.



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