



Washington State Dept. of Agriculture Organic Food Program

Certification Fact Sheet

Seed, Annual Seedling and Planting Stock Guidelines

National Organic Standards Section 205.204

Certification Criteria and Recordkeeping Strategies:

- Organic seeds must be used unless they are documented to be commercially unavailable. This requirement includes cover crops and forages. Sprouts are specifically required to be produced with organic seed only.
- Organic annual seedlings must be used to produce an organic crop. Temporary variances to this rule may be granted in the event of a natural disaster.
- Organic perennial planting stock must be used unless it is documented to be commercially unavailable. Crops from non-organic, untreated planting stock harvested within the first year of planting may be sold as organic. The sale of organic planting stock may only occur after at least 1 full year of organic management.
- Seed and planting stock treatments are only permitted if all ingredients are documented to comply with the National Organic Standards.
- Inoculants must be documented to meet National Organic Standards, including verification that the treatment isn't produced from genetically modified organisms.
- Verification of all seed sources and their compliance with the National Organic Standards is required to be maintained in a grower's files. This includes invoices, organic certification verification and commercial unavailability documentation.

Verifying Commercial Unavailability:

If organic seed or planting stock are not available, non-organic (untreated) seed or planting stock may be used. Organic producers must search for organic seed and planting stock and document their commercial unavailability before non-organic substitutes are used. Documenting the unavailability of organic seed and planting stock should include the following steps:

- Contact three or more organic suppliers and document whether organic seed or planting stock are available. Organic producers should ensure that they are contacting suppliers that offer organic varieties.
- Document all seed and planting stock used on the Organic Seed Availability Form (AGR 2261). If non-organic varieties are used, document the reason(s) why organic ones were unavailable.

Reasons organic seed or planting stock may not be commercially available:

- Inappropriate form/quantity for your operation.
- Unsuitable variety for your production system or specific market (i.e., disease resistance, fruit size, root stock).
- Documented quality concerns from on-farm variety trials.
- Documented unavailability in an organic form, verified by a letter from supplier that regularly sells organic seed or planting stock.

Note: The cost of organic seed is not valid justification for the use of non-organic seed.



Seed and Planting Stock Guidelines (page 2)

Genetically Modified Organisms:

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are not allowed in organic production per Section 205.105 of the National Organic Standards.

Common GMO Crops and Seed Materials:

Alfalfa, Barley, Canola, Cantaloupe, Corn, Cotton, Dry Beans, Flax, Mustard, Oats, Papaya, Peanuts, Potato, Radicchio, Rapeseed, Rice, Rye, Safflower, Sorghum, Soybean, Squash, Sugarcane, Sugar Beet, Sunflower, Sweet Potato, Tobacco, Tomato, Watermelon, Wheat, Zucchini. Forage and Legume Inoculants.

- USDA Database of GMO crops for food and feed: http://usbiotechreg.nbio.gov/database_pub.asp

Resources for Organic Seeds:

The following organizations provide helpful information and resources for locating organic seed.

- Organic Seed Alliance - www.seedalliance.org or phone 360-385-7192
- ATTRA, Seed Supplier Search - http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/organic_seed/ Phone: 800-346-9140 (English) or 800-411-3222 (Español)
- Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI), seed sources database - <http://seeds.omri.org/> or phone: 541-343-7600 ext: 100.

Organic Seed Decision Tree:

