



Historic US - Canadian Organic Standards Equivalency Agreement Reached.

On July 1, 2009 the Canadian Organic Regime (COR) became effective for organic products sold in Canada. WSDA Organic Program was one of the first US agencies to receive voluntary accreditation in accordance with the new organic standards. In December 2008 WSDA revised our International Certification Program to include the requirements of the Canadian Organic Standards. These steps were put in place to ensure continued market access for Washington organic products after the June 30, 2009 implementation date of the new Canada regulation.

However, as the implementation day approached, changes occurred that positively affect most US organic operations. On June 18, 2009 USDA and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) signed an agreement that recognizes each country's organic standards as equivalent. This historic agreement, the first of its kind for the US, promises to benefit US and Canadian producers, processors and consumers.

Under this equivalency agreement any raw agricultural products grown without Sodium ("Chilean") Nitrate after July 1, 2009 and processed products that are certified to the USDA National Organic Standards, are not required to obtain additional Canadian certification. Likewise, Canadian organic products certified to the Canadian Organic Standards may be sold or labeled in the United States as organically produced, provided antibiotics were not used to treat animals producing organic meat and dairy products. Both the USDA Organic seal and the Canada Organic Biologique logo may be used on certified products from both countries, in addition to the certifier's logo.

US-CANADA EQUIVALENCY REQUIREMENTS

Farm/Grower Requirements for Export to Canada:

- No use of Sodium Nitrate after July 1, 2009 for raw agricultural products sold in Canada.
- WSDA certified operations must be prepared to demonstrate through their production records that raw agriculture products sold in Canada meet this requirement. The equivalency agreement includes provisions to allow CFIA to conduct audits and other verifications to ensure compliance. At this time, this restriction does not apply to products or ingredients used in processed goods.

Handler/Processor Requirements for Export to Canada:

- Handlers, brokers, or traders selling raw agricultural products to Canada are required to ensure that these crops were grown without Sodium Nitrate after July 1, 2009.
- WSDA handlers may demonstrate compliance of raw produce through affirmations or certificates signed by their raw produce supplier's organic certifier. At this time, this requirement does not apply to products or ingredients in processed goods.

Labeling Requirements for Export to Canada:

- Products certified by WSDA, or by another US certification agency, as "organic" (containing 95% or more organic ingredients) and meeting the US-Canada Equivalency requirements may use either the USDA or Canadian Organic Regime (COR) seal beginning July 1, 2009.
- The COR Seal may not be used on any products in the marketplace prior to July 1, 2009.



- Products from the US or other countries using the COR seal must include a country of origin statement or the word "imported" in close proximity to the seal.
- Use of the COR, USDA, or WSDA seal is optional.
- All organic products must include the phrase "Certified organic by Washington State Department of Agriculture" on the package.

How Does This Change Affect Your Certification?

1. For operations currently enrolled in the WSDA International Organic Program:

- Operations who have already received certification by WSDA to the Canadian Organic Regime meet both the requirements of the US – Canada Equivalency Agreement and the full Canadian Organic Standards and do not need to take further action at this time.
- Operations who have applied for International certification by WSDA will continue to be evaluated during the inspection and certification processes for compliance with international standards. WSDA will grant an affirmation that verifies compliance to all organic products that are eligible under the US - Canada Equivalency agreement. If applicable, full certification under the Canadian Organic Regime may also be obtained on a site by site basis for the sites and crops meeting the full requirements of the Canadian Organic Standards.

2. For operations not currently enrolled in the WSDA International Organic Program:

- If your raw agricultural products are shipped to Canada (and not to the European Union), and you have already obtained US Organic Certification, you may request an affirmation from our office that verifies compliance with the US – Canada Equivalency Agreement provided the requirements noted above have been met.

Further Information:

- The WSDA Organic Food Program website contains information on exporting organic products <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/>. Or feel free to contact Brenda Book at (360) 902-2090, email: bbook@agr.wa.gov
- The USDA National Organic Program Website contains further information on the historic equivalency agreement. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateN&navID=NationalOrganicProgram&page=USCanadaDeterminationofEquivalency&leftNav=NationalOrganicProgram&description=US-Canada%20Determination%20of%20Equivalency&acct=nopgeninfo>
- The Canadian Food Inspection Agency website has information on new Canadian Organic Standards and enforcement of the new regulation. <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/orgbioe.shtml>
- The Organic Trade Association has been working to keep the US market informed regarding the new Canada Organic Standards. The Association facilitated a Canada-US equivalency task force which WSDA has been a part of throughout the development of an equivalency agreement. <http://www.ota.com/index.html>