



Using the USDA Organic Seal: Media, Marketing & Educational Materials



What is the Organic Seal?

The USDA organic seal is an official mark of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). It was first published with the implementation of the National Organic Program – Final Rule. Since then, the seal has become a highly sought-after labeling mark in the world of agricultural products and has appeared on millions of labels, advertisements, and marketing materials.

The USDA organic seal is protected by federal regulation ([7 CFR Part 205.311](#)). AMS is responsible for monitoring seal use, and making sure that the seal is not used in a way that would negatively impact the value, integrity, or security of the seal as a marketing tool for certified organic products.

Getting Approval for Common Use of the Organic Seal

AMS allows certified operations and USDA-accredited certifiers considerable flexibility in placing the seal on product labels and marketing material. The USDA organic seal is commonplace in stores and a broad range of media used to promote organic products.

All labels and marketing materials that use the USDA organic seal in association with certified products must be reviewed and approved by a USDA-accredited certifying agent before being used in the marketplace. To avoid costly errors, certified organic producers and handlers wishing to display the USDA organic seal need to contact their certifying agent and request a review of the label or marketing material before printing.

When incorrect use of the seal is discovered, certified operations are required to correct the error. Operations with sales of organic products that total \$5,000 or less annually are not required to be certified but must comply with the organic regulations. These uncertified operations may not use the USDA organic seal.

For more information on the appropriate labeling of organic products and to access a downloadable version of the USDA organic seal, visit: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/grades-standards/organic-labeling-standards>.

Limitations on Using the Organic Seal

The USDA organic seal may never be used to misrepresent non-organically produced products as organic. Violations of this regulation are subject to civil penalties of up to \$11,000 per violation. The USDA organic seal may NOT be used:

- In any displays or on labels for products not certified organic to the USDA organic regulations.
- On broad display in stores or advertisements in a way that misrepresents non-organically produced products as organic.
- By uncertified operations, or operations that have been suspended or revoked from organic certification.

Examples of Other Approved Uses

The USDA organic seal may be used in materials not intended for marketing organic products, pending approval by the USDA National Organic Program (NOP). Examples of approved uses are:

- Using the seal next to an article that accurately describes what the organic standards are.
- Placing the seal next to a list of confirmed certified organic operations (list must be kept current to use the seal).
- Using the seal in an academic, newsletter, or outreach article that provides technical assistance on organic certification or production and handling practices.

Those who wish to use the USDA organic seal in media should submit a request to the NOP at least two weeks in advance of the publication date. This request should include a description of the article in which the seal will be used (e.g., publication, audience, intent) and a draft of the article, if possible.

To initiate a request, please call the NOP at 202-720-3252 and request to speak with a communications specialist.

Access Related Fact Sheets

- All NOP Fact Sheets: <http://bit.ly/NOP-Fact-Sheets>
- Labeling Organic Products: <http://bit.ly/labeling-organic-products>
- Labeling at Farmers Market: <http://bit.ly/organic-labeling-FM>