

# **YOLO CERTIFIED ORGANIC AGRICULTURE**

## ***YCOA***

### **Certification Handbook**

**YOLO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE/WEIGHTS AND MEASURES  
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*...“Man, despite his artistic pretensions, his sophistication, and many accomplishments, owes the fact of his existence to a six-inch layer of topsoil- and the fact that it rains.”*

*~Anonymous*

# **Yolo Certified Organic Agriculture Standards and Certification**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to YCOA! The Yolo County Agricultural Commissioner’s office is one of the few counties in California to offer an organic certification program to qualified agricultural producers and handlers. The concept to create an organic certification agency within the Agricultural Commissioner’s office was developed by the Agricultural Commissioner’s staff, and the Marin Organic certified agriculture staff. **Yolo Certified Organic Agriculture** or **YCOA** was created and inspired by the community it serves: local growers, and consumers. **The certification standards used by YCOA are the USDA’s National Organic Program (NOP).** YCOA is a USDA accredited certification agency.

“Organic” is a systems approach to production and handling. Organic certification is a process that approves a production/handling system, not a specific product. The issuance of a “certificate of organic operation” is the equivalent of a legal license. In order to earn this certificate, it is imperative that everything be done in a totally transparent manner. Certification verifies compliance with organic standards and documents the operational practices of a sustainable agricultural system. YCOA was created to provide organic certification at a local level.

## Purpose

YCOA’s purpose is to promote and support organic agriculture through a certification program in Yolo County as well as in neighboring counties. YCOA will offer its certification to organic operations that meet the requirements of the federal Organic Food Production Act of 1990 (Act or OFPA), as amended (7 U.S.C. 6501 *et seq.*), and the National Organic Program regulations issued pursuant thereto. The areas of operation in which applicants may seek to be certified are **crops, livestock, wild crop harvesting, or handling**, or any combination of these.

### Program Objectives:

- Provide a service that verifies through certification the authenticity of agricultural products marketed as organically grown.
- Enhance the credibility of organic agriculture as a sustainable system.
- Enhance the preservation of our environment to optimize the health of microorganisms, plants, animals, and people.
- Assure consumers that organically produced products adhere to the National Organic Program laws and standards.
- Facilitate commerce in fresh and processed food that is organically produced.
- Encourage and promote organic agriculture in the County of Yolo.

The principal guidelines for organic production are to use materials and practices that enhance the ecological balance of natural systems and that integrate the parts of the farming system into an

ecological whole. The methods used in organic farming minimize pollution of the air, soil and water. The primary goal of organic agriculture is to optimize the health and productivity of interdependent communities of soil life, plants, animals and people.

## **Background**

The Agricultural Commissioner's office has provided service to consumers and the agricultural industry in Yolo County for more than 100 years. Everyone benefits by receiving the best quality food and fiber available with the added assurance of safety and full disclosure of products produced.

Other functions of the Agricultural Commissioner's office include pesticide use enforcement, plant quarantine inspections, pest management, biological control, integrated pest management (IPM), phytosanitary inspections, insect and weed pest detection, and nursery inspections, in addition to weights and measures inspections. These functions contribute to the operation of a successful organic certification program.

Consumer demand for certified organic products is increasing, with an annual growth rate of more than 20 percent per year. There is an expectation by consumers that organic products are verifiable. YCOA is one certification agency among other governmental and private certification agencies representing California organic interests and insuring organic integrity.

The Yolo Certified Organic Agriculture program has been developed to provide a professional service to individuals and operations engaged in the production and distribution of organically grown commodities. Certification verifies compliance with organic standards and documents the operation practices of a sustainable agricultural system.

Each participant in this program is viewed as a unique entity. Because YCOA recognizes that no two operations are identical, each entity is provided with a high level of individualized service to assure the operation meets the organic standards of the National Organic Program and the principles of sustainable agriculture.



*“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise”.*

*~ Aldo Leopold*

## **YCOA’S Certification Standards and Manual**

*A bit about the certification standards...*

It is the policy of YCOA that the National Organic Program standards are the basis for YCOA’S certification system. The National Organic Program (NOP) final rule comes under the direction of the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), a division of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The goal of the national program is to facilitate domestic and international marketing of fresh and processed food that is organically produced and assure consumers that such products meet consistent, uniform standards. The program establishes national standards for the production and handling of organically produced products, including a National List of substances approved for and prohibited from use in organic production and handling. The final rule establishes a national-level accreditation program to be administered by AMS for State/County officials and private persons who want to be accredited as certifying agents. Under the program, certifying agents will certify production and handling operations in compliance with the requirements of this regulation and initiate compliance actions to enforce program requirements. The final rule includes requirements for labeling products as organic and containing organic ingredients. The final rule also provides for importation of organic agricultural products from foreign programs determined to have equivalent organic program requirements.

All necessary steps shall be taken by YCOA to evaluate conformance with the applicable NOP and the State Organic Program (SOP) standards. For complete information of the USDA National Organic Program, including the final rule please go to:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic>

### **Certification Authority**

YCOA is a USDA accredited certification agency. YCOA is a functional unit of the Yolo County Agricultural Commissioner's office and receives its authority to perform producer, handler, retailer and processor certification, conduct complaint investigations and perform audits as designated by the State of California Food and Agriculture Code (Sections 46000 – 46015) and the State of California Health and Safety Code (Sections 110810 – 110958).

### **YCOA Staff Organization**

The structure of the YCOA staff shall foster confidence, integrity, and a commitment to quality in its certifications. In particular, YCOA shall:

- Be impartial;
- Be responsible for decisions relating to its granting, maintaining, renewing, extending, suspending, and terminating of certification.

### **Policy and Procedures of the YCOA Certification Program**

The policies and procedures under which YCOA operates shall be non-discriminatory and shall be administered in a non-discriminatory manner. The County of Yolo/YCOA prohibit discrimination against or harassment of any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, physical or mental disability, medical condition, ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation or citizenship.

YCOA shall make its services accessible to all applicants whose activities fall within its authorized field of operation. Access shall not be conditional upon the size of the operation or membership of any association or group. The criteria for certification of an operation administered by YCOA shall be those outlined in the NOP organic standards. If explanation is required as to the application of the organic standards for a specific type of production or handling system, it shall be formulated by relevant and impartial persons possessing the necessary technical competency.

YCOA shall not make false or misleading claims about its accreditation status, the USDA accreditation program for certifying agents, or the nature or qualities of products labeled as organically produced.

YCOA shall provide sufficient information to persons seeking certification to enable them to comply with applicable requirements of the California Organic Foods Act of 2003 and the NOP regulations.

All requirements, applications, onsite inspections and decisions regarding certification are confined to matters specifically related to the scope of the certification being considered.

YCOA shall accept certification decisions made by any other certifying agent which has been accredited or accepted by USDA pursuant to 205.500[205.501(a) (13), 205.505(a)(1)].

As previously stated, YCOA does not exclude from participation in, or deny the benefits of, certification to any person due to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.





*“To forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves.”*

*~ Gandhi*

## **Section 1 Procedures and Policies**

YCOA shall update the Certification Handbook as needed. Updates may occur through regulation changes (NOP or State Organic Program) or fee restructure. All fees related to YCOA shall be set forth in the Yolo County Organic Certification Fee Ordinance Schedule and may be amended from time to time by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors. **All fees received by YCOA are nonrefundable.**

### **Application for Certification**

All new applicants to YCOA (including organic reciprocity applicants) will pay a **nonrefundable fee of \$275** that is due at time of the application submittal. The application package will consist of: The YCOA Certification Handbook, application forms including a Notice of Applicant’s Rights and Responsibilities and Onsite Inspection Standards and Procedures, an Organic System Plan questionnaire(s) and instructions, and a copy of USDA’s *The National Organic Program*. The applicant will return the completed forms and required attachments with a check for \$275 to the Yolo County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, 70 Cottonwood St, Woodland, CA 95695. The YCOA application for certification may be requested by calling **(530) 666-8140**.

A detailed overview of the submitted application questionnaires, Organic System Plan(s), and supporting documents will be reviewed for completion and accuracy. YCOA will notify applicant of any missing information that must be supplied prior to making an appointment for an on-site inspection.

### **Membership**

For the purpose of this Certification Handbook, “members” refers to growers, livestock producers, and handler/processors that have been accepted into the YCOA certification program. All

members must be currently registered as organic through the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) or the Department of Health Services (DHS). Members must renew their membership with YCOA annually in order to maintain their certification status. Growers outside of the established county boundaries may be certified at YCOA'S discretion and under the terms established by YCOA.

The certification standards used by YCOA are those set forth by the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP). All applicants and renewal members should thoroughly review the NOP for all organic standards and compliance requirements.

### **Initial Inspection**

After the application documents and organic system plan(s) are reviewed and approved, an inspector will be assigned to perform the initial inspection within thirty (30) days.

### **Certification Categories**

The certification categories or types of operations are the following: crops, livestock, wild-crop harvesting and/or handling (which includes processing). Per NOP 205.2, the definitions are defined as the following:

**Crop:** A plant or part of a plant intended to be marketed as an agricultural product or feed to livestock.

**Handling Operation:** Any operation or portion of an operation (except final retailers of agricultural products that do not process agricultural products) that receives or otherwise acquires agricultural products and processes, packages, or stores such products.

**Livestock:** Any cattle, sheep, goat, swine, poultry, or equine animals used for food or in the production of food, fiber, feed, or other agricultural-based consumer products; wild or domesticated game; or other non-plant life, except such term shall not include aquatic animals or bees for the production of food, fiber, feed, or other agricultural-based consumer products.

**Processing:** Cooking, baking, curing, heating, drying, mixing, grinding, churning, separating, extracting, slaughtering, cutting, fermenting, distilling, eviscerating, preserving, dehydrating, freezing, chilling, or otherwise manufacturing, and includes the packaging, canning, jarring, or otherwise enclosing food in a container.

**Wild crop:** Any plant or portion of a plant that is collected or harvested from a site that is not maintained under cultivation or other agricultural management.

### **Certification Review**

The YCOA Management staff shall have sixty (60) days to review the inspection report(s) and provide official written notice of determination of certification to the applicant.

The YCOA Management staff shall review and evaluate the inspection report for compliance with the National Organic Program standards and the California Organic Foods Act of 2003. In addition to complying with the NOP, certification status shall be assigned or denied to each parcel and/or processing operation and the criteria may include but are not limited to:

1. Applicants providing complete information which is verified during the on-site inspection.
2. Applicant's ability to resolve outstanding questions during the review process.

### **Annual Membership Renewal**

In order to remain certified, operators shall annually apply for certification renewal. YCOA will send membership renewal/organic system plan update questionnaires and renewal contracts to all members' thirty (30) days prior to expiration. **The renewal process must be done within the 30-day time frame. In the event of an unusual circumstance, the 30-day time frame may be extended; however, the situation must be communicated to the certifier. If there is no communication, the certifier will be obligated to issue a notice of noncompliance, which in turn, may lead to proposed suspension or revocation of organic certification.**

If the renewal information is complete and fees submitted, YCOA shall arrange for an on-site inspection within a reasonable amount of time. If the on-site inspection determines compliance with the organic standards, a certification agreement will be issued. If the updated information is found to not be in compliance with the organic standards, YCOA shall notify the applicant of rejection of the application. If YCOA determines based on the inspection report and a review of the information submitted for renewal, that an operation is not complying with all applicable requirements of the organic standards, YCOA shall provide written notification of noncompliance to the operation. If compliance is not achieved within a reasonable amount of time, YCOA shall suspend or terminate the operation's certification.

## **Initial and Annual On-site Inspection Process Overview**

YCOA will assign an inspector for each operation and forward the inspection forms, maps, organic system plan(s), and any other necessary information to the inspector. The inspector shall conduct the inspection for the purpose of gathering all information necessary to determine whether the operation is in compliance with the organic standards. The inspector will return the completed inspection report, organic system plan, and operation history to the YCOA Management staff for final certification review.

### **On-site Inspection**

The following guidelines will assist applicants in successfully completing the requirements for certification:

- a) Allow yourself ample time for inspection. The duration of inspection varies based on operation size and complexity.
- b) Applicant representative(s) with the knowledge of production, harvesting, storage and record keeping must be present during inspection.
- c) Prepare to tour all facilities listed on your Organic System Plan, which include, but are not limited to, storage areas, material storage areas, product handling area, equipment and record keeping locations.
- d) Prepare to have a complete record review, i.e. harvest records, input records, seed lists, labels, etc.

### **Inspection Procedure for Certification**

The inspector will document the member's compliance on an Inspection Report form.

The inspection will include but is not limited to:

- a) All substances applied to seeds, transplants, growing grounds, stored crop(s), growing medium, growing area, storage area, irrigation, post-harvest with dates, input rates, method of application, and name of applicator.
- b) All substances administered and fed to livestock (i.e., medication/drugs and feed), with dates and dosages. All substances applied in any area where livestock or livestock products are kept, with dates, rates, method of application and name of applicator. All substances used in the handling of food or applied in any area or container where food is handled or stored, while under the ownership of the certified entity who handles the food,

- c) with dates, rates, method of application and the name of applicator.
- d) Proof of certification of all products from external sources handled, and all organic ingredients used for each product labeled as “organic” or “with organic ingredients”.
- e) Records of all inputs, products handled, date, source, lot number and quantity. Sales records with date whether bulk, raw or processed, source lot number, quantity and recipient/transferee. This will enable the inspector to validate the organic integrity for all transactions during the period of time in which the certified entity holds title to the product whether or not the product is physically in the possession of the certificate.
- f) Organic System Plan. The plan must describe the management practices and procedures, inputs used or intended to be used by the operation, a description of the monitoring practices used to verify that the plan is effectively implemented, and a description of the record keeping.
- g) Discussions of problems and solutions

### **Inspector Assignment**

YCOA reserves the right to assign YCOA inspectors or to sub-contract to Independent Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA) trained inspectors for producers, livestock producers and handler/processors.

### **Inspection Reports**

The inspection of an operation shall be sufficient to assess the operation’s compliance, or ability to comply, with all applicable requirements of the organic standards, including verification that information submitted in the Organic System Plan accurately reflects the practices and/or inputs used or to be used by the operation. The inspector shall conduct an exit interview with an authorized representative to confirm the accuracy and completeness of inspection observations, discuss the need for any additional information, and address any issues of concern.

For certification renewal, inspections shall be sufficient to assess continued compliance with organic standards, including implementation of all conditions specified by YCOA in the certification agreement.

Inspection reports will include the completed Inspection Report form, accompanying narrative and attachments if applicable. A copy of the Inspection Report, along with a copy of the test results for any samples taken by an inspector, will be mailed to the operation within a reasonable amount

of time.

### **Additional Acreage/Operation Certification**

A member seeking to add additional acreage, parcels and/or operations into the YCOA certification program must complete and submit the Additional Acreage and/or Operation Application. The new acreage must meet land history requirements and the operation must be in compliance with the organic standards. If all information is complete, an on-site inspection will be scheduled for verification of compliance.

### **Notification of Noncompliance**

If a noncompliance is found, YCOA will send a written notification of noncompliance to the place of business of the certified applicant or the certified operation. The notice will contain: a description of each noncompliance, facts upon which the notice of noncompliance is based, and the date by which the applicant must rebut or correct each noncompliance.

### **Approval of Certification**

Upon completion of the on-site inspection and receipt of the inspection report, application forms and all supporting documents shall be reviewed by the YCOA Management staff. If compliance with the organic standards is verified, an operation may be certified after one inspection. If an operation is determined to not be in compliance with all applicable organic standards, a follow up inspection will be scheduled for correction of the stated noncompliance(s).

Once certification approval is determined, YCOA shall provide a written notification through an Organic Certification Agreement to the applicant's place of business. The Organic Certification Agreement may contain restrictions or requirements, if any, imposed as conditions for certification. The agreement must be signed by the applicant and returned to YCOA. Upon receipt of the signed certification agreement, YCOA shall send the applicant their official organic certificate and certificate of compliance.

## **Denial of Certification and Denial of Certification Renewal**

If YCOA has reason to believe that an applicant for certification has willfully made a false statement or otherwise purposefully misrepresented the applicant's operation or its compliance with the NOP certification requirements, YCOA may deny certification without first issuing a notification of noncompliance.

If YCOA has reason to believe that an applicant/certification renewal is not in compliance with applicable organic standards, YCOA shall provide written notification of noncompliance to the applicant/operation.

If adequate proof of compliance is provided and a follow up inspection verifies compliance, YCOA may issue organic certification of the operation. If adequate proof of compliance is not provided and/or a follow up inspection verifies this, YCOA shall issue a notification of noncompliance and inform the applicant the right to request mediation or appeal to the State Organic Program and the AMS Administrator. A written Denial of Certification shall be issued to the authorized representative of the operation, the State Organic Program Manager and the AMS Administrator.

*Note:* An applicant that voluntarily withdraws its application prior to the issuance of a notice of a noncompliance will not be issued a notice of noncompliance. Similarly, an applicant that withdraws its application prior to the issuance of a notice of certification denial will not be issued a notice of certification denial.

## **Suspension or Revocation of Certification**

If, following the review, YCOA determines that the certified operation or any portion of the operation:

- Is not in compliance with the organic standards;
- Has made a misrepresentation/false statement intended to mislead an inspector/YCOA about its compliance with organic standards;
- Attempted to have a label indicating that an agricultural product is organically produced when such product was produced or handled in a manner that is not in accordance with the organic standards;

- Failed to correct noncompliance(s) within the prescribed time period, or correction of the noncompliance is not possible;
- Failed to pay fees required by YCOA; or
- Otherwise violated the organic standards or certification requirements,  
YCOA shall notify the applicant/operation of suspension/revocation of certification.

### **Notice of Suspension/Revocation of Certification**

YCOA may suspend an operation's certified status if it is determined to be out of compliance with the YCOA/NOP requirements. YCOA will clearly state why the operation is suspended and what must be done to return to the certified status. YCOA shall inform the operator of the proposed effective date of suspension or revocation, as well as the USDA AMS Administrator and the Manager of the State Organic Program. YCOA will state reasons for denial of certification including the description of each noncompliance and the facts upon which notification of noncompliance was based. **A notice of suspension** shall clearly state that the operation cannot sell or represent products as organic while suspended. Additionally, the notice of suspension will contain a statement that the operation, whose certification has been suspended may at any time submit a request to the USDA Secretary for reinstatement of its certification, provided that this request is accompanied by evidence demonstrating the corrective actions taken by the operation and that each noncompliance has in fact been corrected, and that products have not been sold or represented as organic while suspended.

**A notice of revocation** shall contain a statement that the operation whose certification has revoked is ineligible to receive certification for a period of five years following the date of such revocation, except that the USDA Secretary may, when in the best interest of the certification program, reduce or eliminate the period of ineligibility. The operator has the right to reapply for certification at any time with YCOA or request mediation or an appeal to the State Organic Program.

### **Request for Mediation**

YCOA applicants and certified members shall have the right to request mediation with respect to any dispute pertaining to denial of certification or proposed suspension or revocation of certification. The request for mediation must be filed within 30 days at the YCOA office located at 70 Cottonwood St. Woodland, CA 95695.

If the request for mediation is rejected, appellant is entitled to written notice of rejection from



YCOA and has the right to appeal this rejection within 30 days.

If request for mediation is accepted, such mediation shall be conducted by a qualified mediator agreed upon by the parties involved in the mediation.

Parties to the mediation shall have no more than 30 days to reach an agreement following a mediation session. Mediation procedures will be those adopted by the CDFA Organic Program and approved by the USDA Secretary. If mediation is not successful, the applicant or certified operation has 30 days from when mediation ended to appeal YCOA's decision not to grant mediation. Any mediation agreement reached must be in compliance with the Act and NOP regulations and the agreement is subject to review from, and rejection by, the USDA Secretary to ensure such conformity.

### **Process of Appeal**

YCOA applicants and certified members shall have the right to appeal a YCOA determination. Appeals shall be made directly to the California Department of Food and Agriculture Organic Program located at 1220 N street Rm. A447, Sacramento, CA 95814. A written appeal must be submitted within thirty (30) days of receipt of notification of certification status. All requests of appeals must be made in writing and accompanied by supporting documentation. If the CDFA organic official sustains an applicant's appeal of YCOA's decision, YCOA may not challenge this decision, and the organic certificate will be issued/continued. If the CDFA organic official denies an appeal, a formal administrative proceeding will be initiated to deny, suspend, or revoke the certification. This proceeding will be conducted pursuant to the USDA's Uniform Rules of Practice or the CDFA's rules of procedures.

### **Appeals, Complaints and Disputes**

Appeals, complaints, and disputes brought before YCOA by applicants, certified operators and/or other parties shall be documented on an official complaint log and handled in a timely manner. YCOA shall keep a record of all appeals, complaints, and disputes and remedial actions relative to organic certification, including their resolution. YCOA shall take appropriate action and document the action taken and its effectiveness.

If an applicant, operator, or other party disagrees with YCOA's appealed decision, the operator may file a further appeal, complaint, or dispute with the State Organic Program and the USDA NOP/AMS Administrator.

### **Confidentiality Policy**

Within the Yolo County Agricultural Commissioner's office, YCOA is the only body authorized to release any documents in a member's file for public information. All information released to the public will be done so under the guidelines of the California Organic Foods Act of 200d (section 110845(b)) and the California Public Records Act.

### **Public Information**

YCOA makes public information available when requested. Information that is made available to the public is based on the public information sheet (ORG-003) that is provided to all YCOA clients during the certification process. This information includes: operator's name, address, phone number, total acreage farmed, commodities grown, labels/brands, certification status and date of last inspection.

### **Inspection Reports**

Inspection reports include the inspection forms, the accompanying narrative, and attachments. Inspection reports are not normally made available outside the certification system. However, reports may be released with the following guidelines:

- a) YCOA will release to members copies of their own inspection reports if they request them. Inspectors may release their reports directly to the member without an official request.
- b) The member may release to any third party her/his inspection report.
- c) The member may submit an Inspection release form to forward their report to a designated party.
- d) YCOA will release reports to law enforcement authorities, including Agricultural Commissioners if they are conducting an investigation of which the specific member's organic operation is of concern.

### **Conflict of Interest Policy**

Conflict of interest is considered to be an individual using his or her position for personal gain, or otherwise jeopardizing the integrity of the organic program. Inspectors shall not inspect operations for applicants or members where a conflict of interest exists.

Conflict of interest includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a) Financial interest in a transaction involving the sale or distribution of the member's products.
- b) An employee of or financial interests in any company that is party to any transaction involving the products of the member.
- c) Working for the member in any capacity in the year prior to the inspection or certification decision, and/or having worked for or in partnership with the member in the twelve (12) months following the inspection and certification decision.

All YCOA Staff shall file a conflict of interest statement which shall be updated annually.

### **Use of Licenses, Certificates and Marks of Conformity**

YCOA shall exercise proper control over ownership, use and display of licenses, certificates and marks of conformity. Incorrect references to the certification system or misleading use of licenses, certificates or marks shall be dealt with by suitable action, including, but not limited to, corrective action, withdrawal of certification and, if necessary, other legal action.

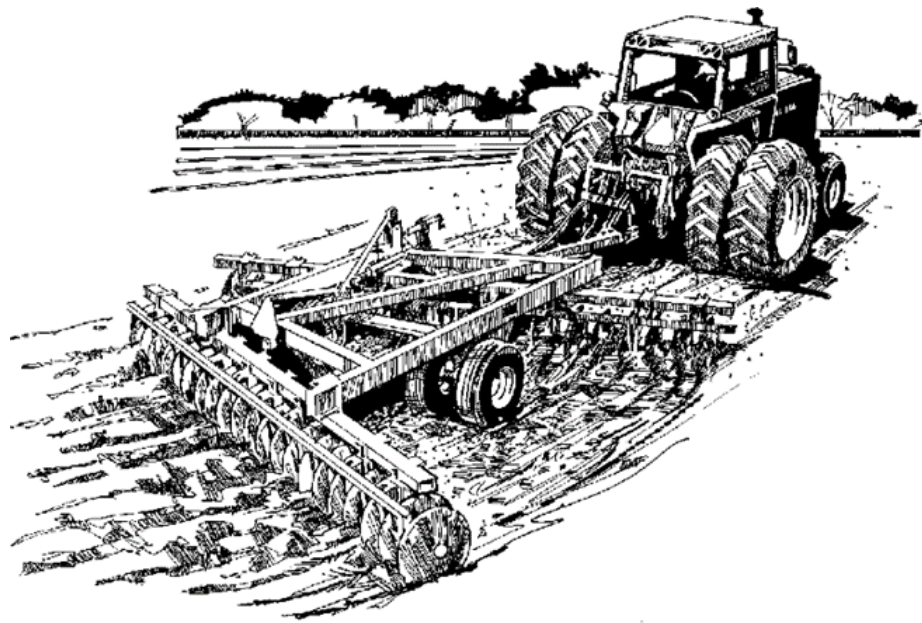
All certified members displaying the **YCOA certification** name on their label are encouraged to use the Comic Sans MS font for uniformity.

### **Proprietary Information**

Members may request confidential treatment of proprietary information on financial, marketing, and technical items.

### **Investigations/Audits**

Inspectors involved in certification for the YCOA certification program may additionally perform California Organic Program Spot Inspections. Investigations and complaints shall be conducted by an Agricultural Inspector and reviewed by the Agricultural Commissioner.



*“The first farmer was the first man, and all historic nobility rests on possession and use of land”*

*~ Ralph Waldo Emerson*

## **Section 2 Certification Fees**

The following is an outline of the application and certification fees. **All fees received by YCOA are non-refundable unless noted.** All interested parties may contact the YCOA office for a fee quote estimate prior to submitting their application fee. There are three areas of certification categories: Crop production (including wild-crop harvesting), Livestock, and Handling/Processing or any combination of the above.

### **Application Fees**

All *new* applicants to YCOA pay a **non-refundable fee** of \$275 that is due at the time of application. This amount will cover administrative review. A detailed overview of the submitted application questionnaires, organic system plan(s) and supporting documents will be reviewed for

completion and accuracy. YCOA will notify applicant of any missing information that must be supplied prior to making an appointment for an on-site inspection.

### **Annual/Renewal Membership Fee**

An annual membership fee will be billed to all new and renewing members according to the fee schedule on pages 23-24. Each member must complete the forms (application/renewal forms) and return them with all applicable fees. Annual membership fees are refundable up to 1 week prior to the initial inspection.

### **Reciprocity**

If a producer is currently organically certified, YCOA may consider membership through organic reciprocity with other NOP accredited certification organizations. Reciprocity certification with YCOA will be based on a mutual or cooperative recognition between organic certification agents that have equivalent standards and have a verified competency assessment or accreditation.

### **Site Inspection Fees and Mileage Fees**

After application documents and the organic system plan are thoroughly reviewed and found to be adequate, an on-site inspection will be promptly arranged. The following fees include but are not limited to the following areas: production acres, rotation acres, buffer zones, livestock production, records, document review, travel time and handling/processing facilities. Time and mileage will be based on the YCOA Fee schedule (pages 22 and 23). Inspection time can vary depending on individual circumstances and the size of each operation. All fees are the responsibility of the producer and should be submitted at the conclusion of the site inspection.

*Note: Pre-Inspection Organization:* Prior to the scheduled inspection, the applicant should organize all records which document that the commodities under review are certifiable as organic. The cooperation of the applicant in being prepared and providing thorough and proper documentation and maintenance of records will greatly contribute to a timely and cost-effective completion of the entire certification process.

### **Additional Acreage or Operation Fee**

YCOA charges an administrative fee of \$250 for each additional acreage application and for each additional operation entered into the program. See page 13 for procedures and policies regarding

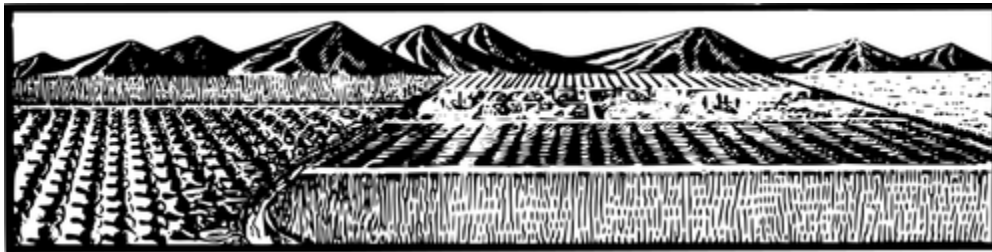
additional acreage.

### **Change of Ownership and/or Management Fees**

YCOA requires a new application and a \$165 administrative fee when ownership and/or management of an operation change. YCOA may waive annual membership fees if the operation already paid them for the year.

### **Collection and Refund Policy**

All membership dues, assessments, fees and invoices are due upon receipt. YCOA considers payment delinquent after thirty (30) days from the date of invoice. Failure to pay the required fees may result in denial or revocation of certification. Membership dues, assessments, and fees are refundable up to 1 week prior to the initial inspection, unless otherwise noted.



*“The soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all. It is the healer and restorer and resurrector, by which disease passes into health, age into youth, death into life. Without proper care for it we can have no community, because without proper care for it we can have no life.”*

*~ Wendell Berry*

# Fee Structure

- |     |  | <u>Amount</u>               |
|-----|--|-----------------------------|
| I.  | Application Fee (new applicants/non-refundable): ..... | \$275                       |
| II. | Site Inspection Fee: .....                             | \$123/hr                    |
|     | Mileage Fee: .....                                     | current county mileage rate |

**III. Annual Membership Fees for Certification Categories:**  
(refundable up to 1 week prior to the initial inspection)

**Producer/Grower:**

<u>Acres</u>	<u>Amount</u>
0 to 1 .....	\$75
1.1 to 5.0 .....	\$150
5.1 to 15 .....	\$185
15.1 to 30 .....	\$325
31 and up .....	\$500

**Specific Production Category for Hay, Silage and Pasture:**

<u>Acres</u>	<u>Amount</u>
0 to 50 .....	\$125
51 to 200 .....	\$190
201 to 500 .....	\$295
Over 500 acres....	\$190/per year for every 200 acres or portion thereof.

**Non-irrigated Pasture/Rangeland**

<u>Acres</u>	<u>Amount</u>
0 to 200 acres .....	\$125
201 to 500 acres .....	\$190
501 to 1000 acres .....	\$295
Over 1000 acres....	\$190/per year for every 500 acres or portion thereof.

**Livestock Producers (except dairy):**

<b><u># of Animals</u></b>	<b><u>Amount</u></b>
0 to 50 .....	\$335
51 to 150 .....	\$420
151 to 300 .....	\$505
301 to 450 .....	\$625
450 and up .....	\$730

**Livestock Producers-Dairy:**

<b><u># of Animals</u></b>	<b><u>Amount</u></b>
0 to 50 .....	\$650
51 to 150 .....	\$995
151 to 300 .....	\$1270
301 and up .....	\$1,700

**Poultry (for egg production only):**

<b><u># of Animals</u></b>	<b><u>Amount</u></b>
0 to 50 .....	\$125
51 to 200 .....	\$250
Over 200 .....	\$450

<b>Handler/Processor</b>	<b>Handler</b>	<b>Processor</b>
<b><u>Gross Sales</u></b>	<b><u>Amount</u></b>	<b><u>Amount</u></b>
0 to 50,000 .....	\$125	\$250
50,001 to 100,000 .....	\$250	\$360
100,001 to 250,000 .....	\$505	\$560
250,001 to 500,000 .....	\$660	\$850
500,001 to 1,000,000 .....	\$1,120	\$1,725
1,000,001 to 2,500,000 .....	\$1,990	\$2,780
Over 2,500,000 .....	\$3,400	\$4,110



**Change of Ownership/Management:** .....\$165  
**Additional Acreage or Operation:** .....\$250

### **Summary of Fees**

#### **New Applicant:**

- I.** Application Fee (one time only/non-refundable) . \$275
- II.** Site Inspection Fee .....\$123/hr
- III.** Mileage Fee .....current county mileage rate
- IV.** Annual Category Fee .....see fee structure

#### **Renewals:**

- I.** Site Inspection Fee .....\$123/hr
- II.** Mileage Fee .....current county mileage rate
- III.** Annual Category Fee .....refer to fee structure



**“Nothing happens in living nature that is not in relation to the whole”**

**~ Goethe**

## **Section 3 Certification Requirements**

The requirements below are commonly asked inquiries and apply to all operations in YCOA except where otherwise noted. See the National Organic Program Subpart A through G for more specific requirements to crops, livestock and handler operations.

### **Operation**

For each member operation, YCOA will require a designated person (s) for contact purposes regarding communications, operation requirements, inspections, and providing records. The designated contact person must be able to provide all information pertaining to business operations and record keeping during inspect

### **Changes in the Organic Systems Plan**

Each member **must notify the certifier** if changes are made to the organic systems plan. Changes in an organic systems plan can affect an operations' compliance with the organic standard. Changes in the organic systems plan include: addition of inputs; addition of new crops or acreage; changes to, or development of a product label; new handling or processing protocols. Failure to notify certifier of changes made to the organic systems plan is in violation of 7 CFR § 205.406, and may result in a notice of noncompliance or suspension/revocation.

**Changes in Ownership/Management**

When ownership or management changes, an updated application must be submitted. Failure to notify YCOA of changes may result in suspension or decertification

**Member Responsibility/Standards**

It is the responsibility of the member to demonstrate that her/his practices meet the requirements of the National Organic Program (NOP) and the California Organic Foods Act of 2003 (COFA).

**Withdrawal, or Surrender, From the Certification Program**

The member must contact YCOA and provide a signed written notice of withdrawal when withdrawing from the program. A written notice of withdrawal is also called a “letter of surrender”.

**Inspection**

YCOA will conduct an initial on-site inspection of each production unit, facility, and site that produces or handles organic products and that is included in an operation for which certification is requested. All operations will be inspected at least annually thereafter for certification verification. Members must grant YCOA inspectors access (during normal operating hours) to the premises used in producing, packing, storing, processing, and to any products marketed as organically grown. Upon request by inspectors, members must provide records, organic system plans, receipts, invoices, and input rates of application and materials associated with organic product production. Additional inspections may occur to verify noncompliance correction.

## **Pesticide Residue Sampling**

All sample collections will be administered and supervised by the YCOA management staff.

Samples will be collected by inspectors under the following conditions:

- When there is reason to believe that the commodity grown has come into contact with a prohibited substance, either intentionally or through drift, or produced using excluded methods, such as the use of genetically modified organisms and antibiotics (NOP 205.670 (b)).
- When a certifying agent conducts periodic residue testing for commodities to be sold, labeled, or represented as organic (NOP 205.670 (c)).
- When a certifying agent must, on an annual basis, sample and test a minimum of five percent of the operations it certifies (NOP 205.670 (d)).
- To gather evidence as part of an investigation.

In the event of pesticide residue detection, the certifier response may vary and is dependent on degree of residue contamination and the situation on how the contamination came about:

### **Residues detected at less than 0.01ppm.**

The product may be sold as organic. Certifier must assess why residue is present.

### **Residues detected at or above 0.01ppm.**

Certifier must assess if EPA has established a tolerance for the pesticide for the commodity tested.

- If residue is detected at or below 5% of the EPA tolerance, and as long as the residues are not intentional, the product can be sold as organic.
- If residues are detected above the 5% of the EPA tolerance level, but not above the EPA tolerance level, the product **may not be sold as organic.**
- If residues are detected above the EPA tolerance level, the product **may not be sold as organic,** and the violation must be reported to the appropriate agency immediately. Adverse actions will be coordinated with the NOP.

### **No EPA Tolerance, but FDA Action Level Exists**

If residue is detected below the FDA action level, and as long as the residues are not intentional, the product can be sold as organic.

If residue is detected above the FDA action level, the product **may not be sold as organic**, and the violation must be reported to the appropriate agency immediately. Adverse actions will be coordinated with the NOP.

**No EPA or FDA Action Level**

If residues are detected above 0.01 ppm, the product **may not be sold as organic**, and the violation must be reported to the appropriate agency immediately. Adverse actions will be coordinated with the NOP.



## **Certified Organic and Labeling Status**

Certified Organic status shall not be assigned to operations until they meet the requirements of the NOP and the California Organic Foods Act of 2003, as well as any additional standards established by YCOA. Members may use the YCOA name on products or promotional material only after review of the material and receiving official written notice from YCOA. YCOA certified growers, producers, and processors may use the term “certified” on their labels if “YCOA” or “Yolo Certified Organic Agriculture” precedes or follows “certified” in the same type or the suggested font Comic Sans MS. All product labels must be clear, distinct and approved by YCOA *prior* to use. The YCOA name shall at no time be used with any product that is in transition or used in labeling as “transitional organic” or any similar claim. Processors must label all organically processed foods in accordance with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration Code of Food Requirements.

Use of the YCOA name shall be discontinued when membership is terminated. All labels and labeling must meet all applicable requirements of the NOP.

## **USDA Organic Seal Use**

To display the USDA organic seal, organically produced products must have been produced and handled by operations certified by a USDA-accredited certifying agent. Operations that have been certified by YCOA may display the USDA organic seal on their organically produced and/or handled products.

## **Certified Organic Labels, Labeling, and Marketing**

In general, all products to be sold or labeled as “100 percent organic”, “organic”, or “made with organic ingredients”, must be produced and handled without the use of synthetic substances, prohibited substances, nonagricultural substances, nonorganic agricultural substances, excluded methods, ionizing radiation, or sewage sludge. **The National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances** Subpart G – Administrative is the evaluation criteria used for allowed and prohibited substances, methods, and ingredients. All labeling requirements are detailed specifically in Subpart D of the NOP regulations, entitled Labels, Labeling and Market Information (205.300 et .al

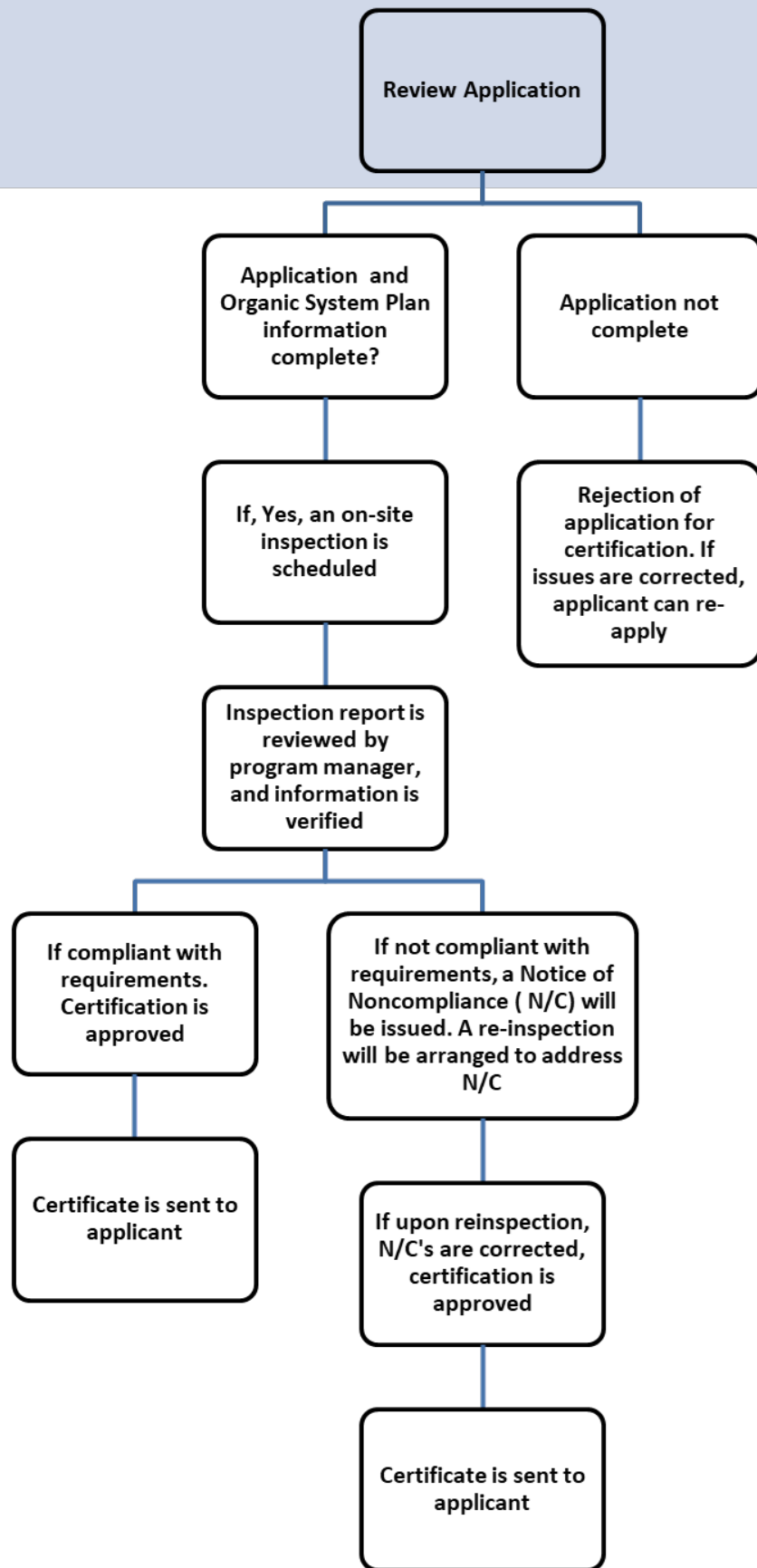
### **Certification, Application/Renewal Status**

Requirements of certification apply to all organic practices: production facilities, processing and handling facilities, land management and crop/livestock production. Renewal certification will be conducted annually and based on the calendar month of enrollment that the member entered into the certification program. All operations must pay all applicable dues and fees before they are eligible for certification. Certification status may be in jeopardy if a member has a balance outstanding for 30 days or more (See Collection Policy, Section 2).

### **Rejection and Reapplication**

YCOA may reject an application and deny membership renewal to operations that cannot demonstrate compliance with the YCOA requirements and/or NOP standards. YCOA encourages all operations to reapply when they are better prepared to demonstrate compliance with the YCOA requirements and/or NOP standards.

# Certification Procedures Flow Chart





# Certification Renewal

