

ORGANIC AND TRANSITIONAL EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM (OTECP)



Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program (OTECP) is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Producers and handlers incur significant costs to obtain or renew USDA organic certification each year, and the economic challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic have made obtaining and renewing USDA organic certification financially challenging for many operations.

Who is Eligible?

Certified organic producers and handlers and crop and livestock producers transitioning to organic who have paid eligible expenses during the 2020, 2021, and/or 2022 fiscal year may apply for reimbursement of the incurred expenses.

FISCAL YEAR	COVERED EXPENSES COVERED FROM	APPLICATION DEADLINE
2020	October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020	January 7, 2022
2021	October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021	January 7, 2022
2022	October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022	Announced at a later date

**OTECP payments will be issued after the applicable application deadline. If calculated payments exceed the amount of available funding, payments will be prorated.*

Is Organic Certification Required to Participate?

No. Crop and livestock producers that are in the process of transitioning to organic will be eligible to apply for cost share on transitional expenses, soil testing, and education.

However, organic certification will be required to be eligible for cost share for the crop, livestock, wild crop, handling, and State organic program fees categories. Certification must be provided by a USDA-accredited certifying agent. If your operation is not currently certified organic and you would like to learn more about the certification process, please visit fsa.usda.gov/organic.





What Expenses are Reimbursable?

Certified organic operations may receive reimbursement for certification application fees, inspection expenses, fees related to equivalency agreement/arrangement requirements, travel/per diem for inspectors, user fees, certifier sales assessments, and postage, as well as soil testing and educational event registration fees.

Transitional operations may receive reimbursement for fees charged by a certifying agent or consultant for pre-certification inspections and development of an organic system plan, soil testing, and educational event registration fees.

What Expenses are Not Reimbursable?

Ineligible expenses include inspections necessary to address National Organic Program regulatory violations, expenses related to non-USDA organic certifications, expenses related to any other labeling program, expenses related to materials/supplies/equipment, late fees, membership fees, consultant fees (except as described above for transitional operations), expenses related to educational event attendance other than registration fees, and expenses for tests other than soil testing.

What is the Maximum Reimbursement Amount?

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS	CATEGORY OF ELIGIBLE EXPENSES	PAYMENT AMOUNT OF ELIGIBLE EXPENSES PER CATEGORY
Certified operations	Organic certification – crops	25 percent, up to \$250
	Organic certification – livestock	25 percent, up to \$250
	Organic certification – wild crop	25 percent, up to \$250
	Organic certification – handling	25 percent, up to \$250
	State Organic Program fees	25 percent, up to \$250
Transitional operations	Eligible transitional expenses	75 percent, up to \$750
Certified operations and transitional operations	Educational event registration fees	75 percent, up to \$200
	Soil testing	75 percent, up to \$100

How Do I Apply for a Reimbursement?

You may apply directly to one of over 2,100 FSA offices. Applicants must submit an FSA-883, Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program form, and certify to eligible expenses, which may be subject to spot check.

More Information

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only; other eligibility requirements may apply. For more information, visit farmers.gov/otecp or contact your local FSA office.

To find your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.