



**U.S. Department of Agriculture**  
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# News Release

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## **USDA Provides New Cost Share Opportunities for Organic Producers and Handlers**

*Organic Producers and Handlers May Apply for Certification Cost Share Reimbursements; Expanded Eligibility for Transition and State Certification Cost*

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21, 2016 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that starting March 20, 2017, organic producers and handlers will be able to visit over 2,100 USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices to apply for federal reimbursement to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic or transitional certification.

“USDA reimburses organic producers up to 75 percent of the cost of organic certification, but only about half of the nation’s organic operations currently participate in the program,” said FSA Administrator Val Dolcini.

“Starting March 20, USDA will provide a uniform, streamlined process for organic producers and handlers to apply for organic cost share assistance either by mail or in person at USDA offices located in almost every rural county in the country.”

USDA is making changes to increase participation in the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP) and the Agricultural Management Assistance Organic Certification Cost Share Program, and at the same time provide more opportunities for organic producers to access other USDA programs, such as disaster protection and loans for farms, facilities and marketing. Producers can also access information on nonfederal agricultural resources, and get referrals to local experts, including organic agriculture, through USDA’s Bridges to Opportunity service at the local FSA office.

Historically, many state departments of agriculture have obtained grants to disburse reimbursements to those producers and handlers qualifying for cost share assistance. FSA will continue to partner with states to administer the programs. For states that want to continue to directly administer the programs, applications will be due Feb. 17, 2017.

“The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the National Organic Program look forward to this exciting opportunity to leverage the Farm Service Agency’s rural footprint to reach more organic producers and handlers,” said AMS Administrator Elanor Starmer. “At the same time it is important to recognize and continue the valuable partnerships with states that remain at the core of the program.”

Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic or transitional certification fees to a [USDA-accredited certifying agent](#). Application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement/ arrangement requirements, travel/per diem for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage are all eligible for a cost share reimbursement from USDA.

Once certified, producers and handlers are eligible to receive reimbursement for up to 75 percent of certification costs each year up to a maximum of \$750 per certification scope—crops, livestock, wild crops and handling. Today’s announcement also adds transitional certification and state organic program fees as additional scopes.

To learn more about organic certification cost share, please visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/organic](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/organic) or contact a local FSA office by visiting <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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USDA is committed to helping organic agriculture grow and thrive. USDA strongly supports the organic sector through a wide variety of programs, including conservation grants, organic crop insurance, certification cost-share, organic market news, and simplified microloans. Under the Obama administration, USDA has signed five major organic trade arrangements and has helped organic stakeholders access programs that support conservation, provide access to loans and grants, fund organic research and education and mitigate pest emergencies. To learn more about USDA support for organic agriculture, visit our updated organic portal at [www.usda.gov/organic](http://www.usda.gov/organic).

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