



ORGANIC IS REGENERATIVE

A TOOLKIT FOR FARMERS & ORGANIC ADVOCATES

DOWNLOAD THE TOOLKIT → [Organic is Regenerative Toolkit](https://marbleseed.org/files/Organic-is-Regenerative-Toolkit.zip)
(marbleseed.org/files/Organic-is-Regenerative-Toolkit.zip)

ORGANIC - THE OG CERTIFICATION

**Organic is regenerative —
and always has been.**



OVERVIEW

Why we created this kit

When it comes to organic and regenerative food, there are many competing voices in the marketplace. Understanding what these terms mean and the history behind them is imperative to anyone in agricultural spaces who use them. As many small farms get ready to sell CSA shares or plan their sales and marketing for the year, they may be questioning how and when to use these terms. They may also get questions from consumers about the two terms. For farmers who have put in the effort to gain organic certification or are working toward it, we hope the language and images in this toolkit will help you explain the differences to customers.

LEARN MORE

Supporting resources

Please note that this “Organic Is Regenerative” campaign was developed by Marbleseed, a nonprofit that supports the organic farming movement, and adapted from Organic Farming Research Foundation’s Organic is Regenerative Toolkit. Marbleseed’s toolkit was funded by the Farmer’s Advocating for Organic grant program through Organic Valley.



WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Background and history of organic
- Copy/paste email newsletter language
- Ready-to-post social media graphics

HOW TO USE THIS KIT

Share it with your farm followers

You may use the language in the following “Background” section for your farm’s communications, such as newsletters, signage, or social media. We’ve also created a series of social media posts that highlight some of this information.

MARBLESEED

- www.marbleseed.org → [@marbleseedorg](https://twitter.com/marbleseedorg)
- [Marbleseed’s Organic is Regenerative Campaign](https://marbleseed.org/programs/organic-is-regenerative)
(marbleseed.org/programs/organic-is-regenerative)
(marbleseed.org/files/Organic-is-Regenerative-Toolkit.zip)

ORGANIC FARMING RESEARCH FOUNDATION

- [OFRF’S Organic is Regenerative Toolkit](https://ofrrf.org/organic-is-regenerative/)
(ofrrf.org/organic-is-regenerative/)

ORGANIC VALLEY

- [Farmers Advocating for Organic Grant Program](https://organicvalley.coop/why-organic-valley/power-of-we/farmers-advocating-organics/)
(organicvalley.coop/why-organic-valley/power-of-we/farmers-advocating-organics/)

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MAKING THE MOST OF THIS KIT

As a grower, we encourage you to:

- Understand what “organic” really means
- Know the history of “organic”
- Share this information with your customers and collaborators
- Work to defend and strengthen the “organic” name.

IDEAS FOR USING THIS KIT

We hope you’ll use the language and graphics included here in any of the following ways:

- On your social media
- In newsletters and other communications
- On info flyers at farmers’ markets, with CSA pickups, in communications with food hubs and other parts of the supply chain.

BACKGROUND

Certified organic — a label you can be proud of

If a product is “certified organic” it comes from a farm or handling facility that complies with USDA organic regulations. Only after an on-site and review by a USDA-accredited certifying agent can a business legally use the word “organic” or the USDA organic seal.

The process is strict, and farmers who have earned certification should not only be proud but help educate their prospective customers on the level of scrutiny their food has passed. As part of the certification process, a farmer provides a comprehensive plan that includes the land history of all fields; a fertility and nutrient management plan; a pest, weed, and disease management plan; and the origin, feed, and health care of livestock. In addition, they must report all products used on the farm, including dates and rates of application.

HISTORY

More than a philosophy — it’s a federally-protected system of agriculture

Organic certification began in the early 1970s at the state and local level. As organic farming grew and more states created standards, it became clear that a federal standard was needed. In 1990, Congress passed the Organic Foods Production Act to mandate a national standard.

In 2002, the USDA’s National Organic Standards officially became the law for organic production, handling, and labelling. It defined “organic” as “a production system ... that respond(s) to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical processes that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biological diversity.”

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GROWING DEMAND AND CONFUSION

Before regenerative was a buzzword, organic was a farmer-led movement

The beginning of the organic movement coincided with acceleration of the use of synthetic chemical inputs, such as fertilizers, pesticides, and antibiotics, as well as growing awareness of the dangers made to human health. Today, many people seek out food and other products that are certified organic out of concern for their health and the environment.

There is increasing awareness among consumers that our food system is directly tied to our personal health and to our collective environmental health. Synthetic inputs, such as the herbicide glyphosate and PFAS (aka “forever chemicals”), have been linked to cancer, while industrial agriculture practices, like excessive use of synthetic fertilizers and monocropping, are directly linked to erosion and water contamination.

Crops, livestock, processed and packaged products, and wild crops can all be certified. According to the USDA, there are more than 28 thousand certified organic farms and businesses in the U.S. The organic industry is the fastest-growing segment of U.S. agriculture.

In concert with consumer awareness, the term “regenerative” has become more popular. Farmers, consumers, and the food industry use this term but in various and unsubstantiated ways. Unlike “organic,” however, there is no legally established definition of “regenerative.”

Several definitions include:

“Regenerative agriculture strives to work with nature rather than against it. ... It is about reversing degradation and building up the soil to make it healthier than its current state.”

- Noble Research Institute

...a holistic approach to farming that encourages continuous innovation and improvement of environmental, social, and economic measures.”

- Rodale Institute

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ROBUST AND RIGOROUS SYSTEM

The organic label comes with a legally binding certification

While regenerative offers many positive philosophical goals – including a focus on carbon sequestration and social justice – they are aspirational. There is no universal definition or legally binding certification standards for regenerative, making it easy for the term to be used disingenuously in marketing and packaging.

The organic label comes with a legally binding certification process that includes

- Land free of prohibited substances for at least three years
- A detailed compliance plan in place
- Thorough record-keeping that is shared during annual review and inspection process

This robust and rigorous system of checks and balances includes fostering healthy soil, contributing to clean water and biodiversity, and supporting thriving farm communities. Organic grows climate-solutions.

Like any system, it has room for improvement. Namely, industrial food conglomerates have co-opted organic principles and used their financial power to weaken the standards. One concern, for example, is the allowance of industrial-scale hydroponic operations to be allowed organic certification.

ORGANIC IS A MOVEMENT WORTH DEFENDING AND PROMOTING

Farmers fought hard for the organic label. Let's continue to protect it

There are notable farmer-led movements to not only take back the “organic” certification but to strengthen it by including some of the principles most associated with regenerative. The Real Organic Project, for example, provides an add-on certification – similar to ones found in the EU – to which already-certified organic farms can apply. These add-ons represent a higher level of commitment to soil health, animal welfare, and ethical labor practices.

As one of the oldest organic farming organizations in the country, Marbleseed is dedicated to the idea that organic is a movement – a movement of growers and eaters, of practices and principles, of elder farmers who fought for recognition and younger farmers who are passionate about carrying that work forward.

We believe that organic farming at its best – the way the movement's earliest adapters intended it to be – is the original regenerative. The latter would not be here without the former. We cannot lose the foundational strength of organic certification in favor of a word that is too often used to greenwash products. Together, let's educate, strengthen, and defend “organic.”

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SOCIAL MEDIA CAPTIONS

Suggested language for your social media captions



1 → ORGANIC — The OG Certification

Organic is regenerative — and always has been.

We believe that organic farming at its best — the way we believe the movement's earliest adapters intended it to be — is the original regenerative. The latter would not be here without the former.

Together, let's educate, strengthen, and defend organic.

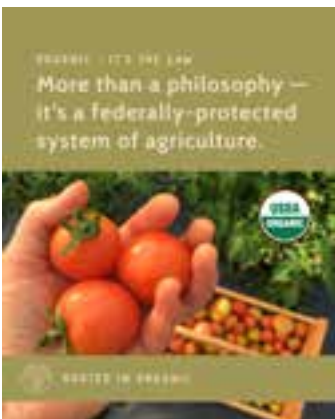


2 → ORGANIC — It's Roots Run Deep

Before regenerative was a buzzword, organic was a farmer-led movement.

In the early 1970s, small-scale farmers began defining their practices in response to the rise of industrial agriculture and synthetic chemicals. What started locally grew into a national standard rooted in soil health, ecological balance, and integrity.

Let's continue to grow the roots of the organic movement.



3 → ORGANIC — It's the law

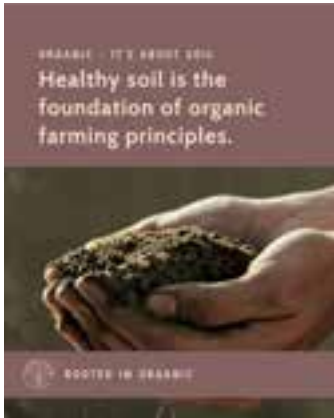
More than a philosophy — it's a federally-protected system of agriculture

In 2002, the USDA National Organic Standards officially became the law for organic production, handling, and labeling. Any farm using the word organic must undergo a rigorous certification process, including annual inspections, detailed records, and full transparency.

The organic label means accountability.

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4 → ORGANIC — It's about soil

Healthy soil is the foundation of organic farming

Critical to soil health are four practices at the heart of organic farming: cover cropping, organic amendments, reduced tillage, and diverse crop rotations. Certified organic land must also be free of prohibited substances for at least three years — long before a single label is earned.

When you support organic farms you are helping create healthy soil!



5 → ORGANIC — It's a movement

Organic is more than a label — it's a living movement we're proud to carry forward.

A movement of growers and eaters, of practices and principles, of shared values and shared work. Of elder farmers who fought for recognition and younger farmers committed to carrying that legacy forward.

Help us continue the legacy!



6 → ORGANIC — It's worth defending

Organic works when we continue to protect it.

Farmers fought hard to establish organic as a legally binding term that is protected by federal law. As industrial agriculture works to dilute its meaning, farmers and consumers alike must defend organic by holding the USDA accountable, demanding strong enforcement, maintaining strict adherence by producers of all sizes, and ensuring transparency and public participation in decision-making.

Help protect the integrity of organic by purchasing from organic farms!

THANK YOU FOR USING THIS TOOLKIT!

This toolkit was funded by the Farmer's Advocating for Organic (FAFO) grant program through Organic Valley. **LEARN MORE HERE** → [Farmers Advocating for Organic Grant Program](#)