



Certification Made Simple

USDA ORGANIC &
TRANSITIONING TO
ORGANIC PRODUCTION



Presented by
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Intro

- Based in Richmond, VA
- Customer care background
- Working with QCS since April 2022
- Responsible for helping potential clients navigate the certification process
- Passion for sustainable agriculture, botany, horticulture, and mycology
- Thank you for having me!

*THIS IS MY DOG, SELKIE, WHO YOU
MIGHT HEAR IN THE BACKGROUND.*



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- USDA Organic
 - The Role of a Certifier
 - Certification Process
 - Cost & Timeline
 - Cost Share
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Terms & the Role of a Certifier

Role of a Certifier

- Certifiers are tasked to provide third-party, non-bias enforcement of standards.
- Certifiers oversee individual operations while control bodies oversee certifiers.
- Certifiers are the entity that issue certifications, whether for food safety or organic.
- Certification bodies must have rigorous quality systems in place to ensure compliance and can be non-profits, for-profits, state or local governments.

Common Acronyms

NOP - National Organic Program

CB - Certification Body

OSP - Organic System Plan

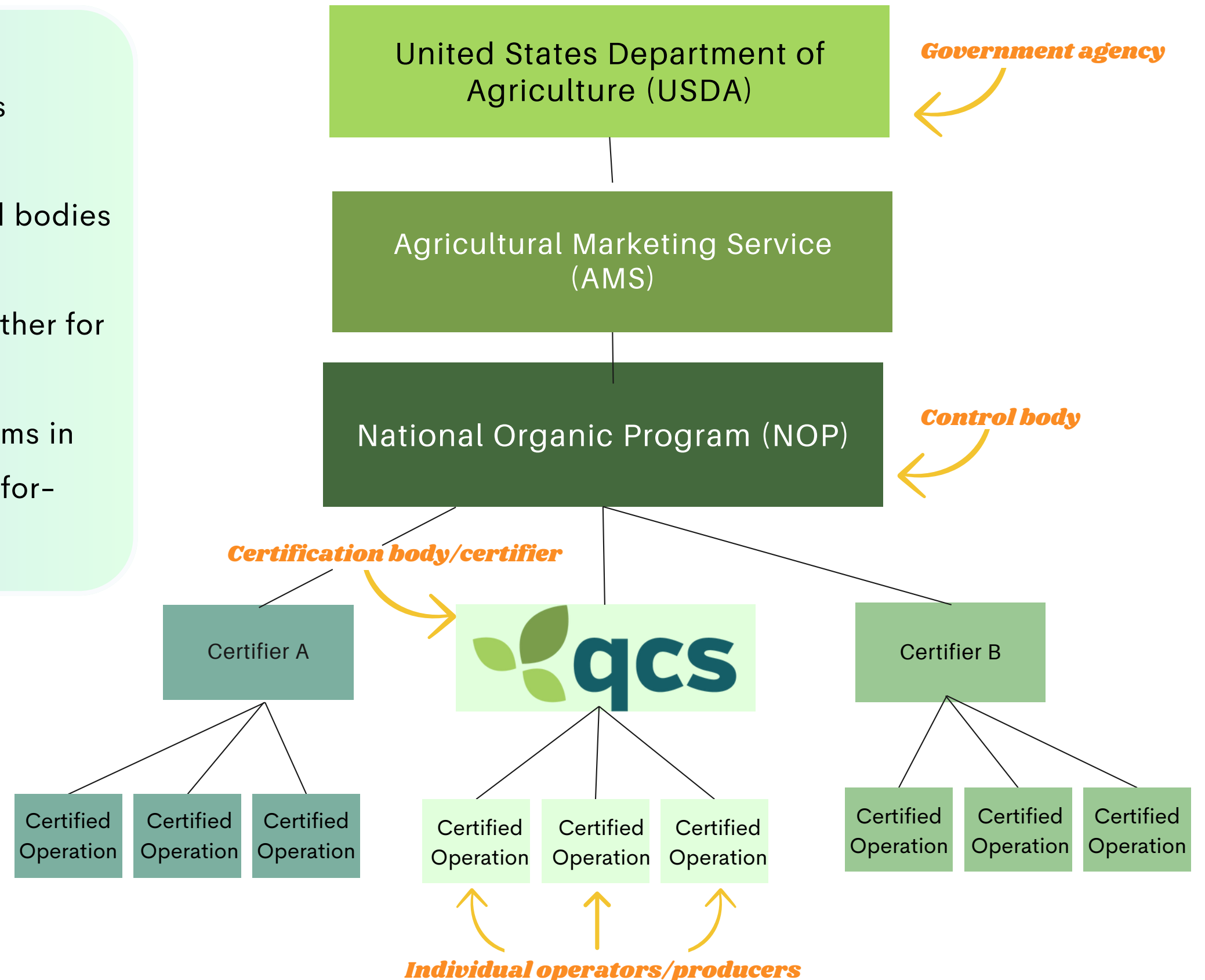
OGP - Organic Grower Plan

TOPP - Transition to Organic Partnership Program

OCCSP - Organic Certification Cost Share Program

ROC - Regenerative Organic Certified

MRO - Material Review Organization



Consultants - Who Can Answer What



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT A CERTIFIER CAN TELL YOU AND WHAT A CONSULTANT CAN TELL YOU?

Certifier

Anyone who works for QCS falls in this category



CAN ANSWER YES/NO QUESTIONS



CAN PROVIDE PUBLICLY AVAILABLE RESOURCES



CAN EXPLAIN REGULATIONS IN GENERAL TERMS



Think of a certifier as a proctor who has the answer key to a test - we can tell you if you got something right but can't give you the answer.

Consultants

Consultants can work for consulting institutions or be independent.



CAN ADVISE YOU ON THE "HOW" OF CERTIFICATION



CAN GIVE YOU ADVICE FOR YOUR SPECIFIC OPERATION



CAN COMPLETE CERTIFICATION PAPERWORK ON YOUR BEHALF

QCS's List of Consultants



USDA Organic

Certification in 5 Steps



1



Create an
Organic
System Plan

2



Initial
Review

3



On-site
Inspection

4



Final Review

5



Certification
Decision



Step 1: Create an Organic System Plan (OSP)

An OSP is a record of your operation.

Essentially it is asking three main questions:

1. Is this something you do on your operation?
2. If you do, how are you doing it?
3. Do you have records to confirm it?

OGP 2: ORGANIC CROP PRODUCTION SUMMARY		USDA Organic Regulations §205.102; §205.200; §205.201
A. PRODUCTION DESCRIPTION		
Types of production (check all that apply)		Structures used for organic production (check all that apply)
<input type="checkbox"/> Crop production (fruits, row crops, vegetables, nuts, pasture, etc.)		<input type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse – plants grown in containers, including hydroponics
<input type="checkbox"/> Pasture for organic livestock production		<input type="checkbox"/> High Tunnel – plants grown directly in the ground
<input type="checkbox"/> Fungi/Mushroom production		<input type="checkbox"/> Other indoor production (e.g. seed starting under lights):
<input type="checkbox"/> Sprout production		
Post-harvest handling		
Do you conduct/plan to conduct any post-harvest handling of organic crops on this operation? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
If yes, check all that apply, and complete OGP 13: On Farm Post Harvest Handling.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Washing/Sanitizing	<input type="checkbox"/> Sorting/Grading	<input type="checkbox"/> Packing
<input type="checkbox"/> Shelling/Hulling	<input type="checkbox"/> Drying	<input type="checkbox"/> Curing
		<input type="checkbox"/> Oil-pressing
		<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
B. CROPS REQUESTED FOR ORGANIC CERTIFICATION		
List all products intended to be sold, labeled or represented as organic . <input type="checkbox"/> Additional pages attached.		
1. Crops (e.g. tomatoes, corn, hay. Variety names do not need to be listed.)		
2. Seedlings, transplants or other plants in containers: <input type="checkbox"/> Check if produced only for on-farm use <input type="checkbox"/> Check if seedlings are grown under contract. Who sources the seeds? <input type="checkbox"/> Self <input type="checkbox"/> Buyer		
3. Seeds and planting stock <input type="checkbox"/> Check if produced only for on-farm use		

Step 2: Initial Review

Once you submit your OSP, it goes to a reviewer for your scope.

The purpose of initial review is to verify how your operation complies with National Organic Program regulations based on the information in your OSP.





Step 3: Inspection

After initial review, we will send an accredited organic inspector to your operation.

Inspectors will review records, walk your operation, and conduct an Exit Interview.

The purpose of the inspection is to confirm that the processes you have detailed in your OSP are in place on your operation.



Step 4: Final Review

Once inspection is complete, your OSP and the inspector's report goes into final review. The process of final review is to verify that your OSP aligns with the inspector's observations.

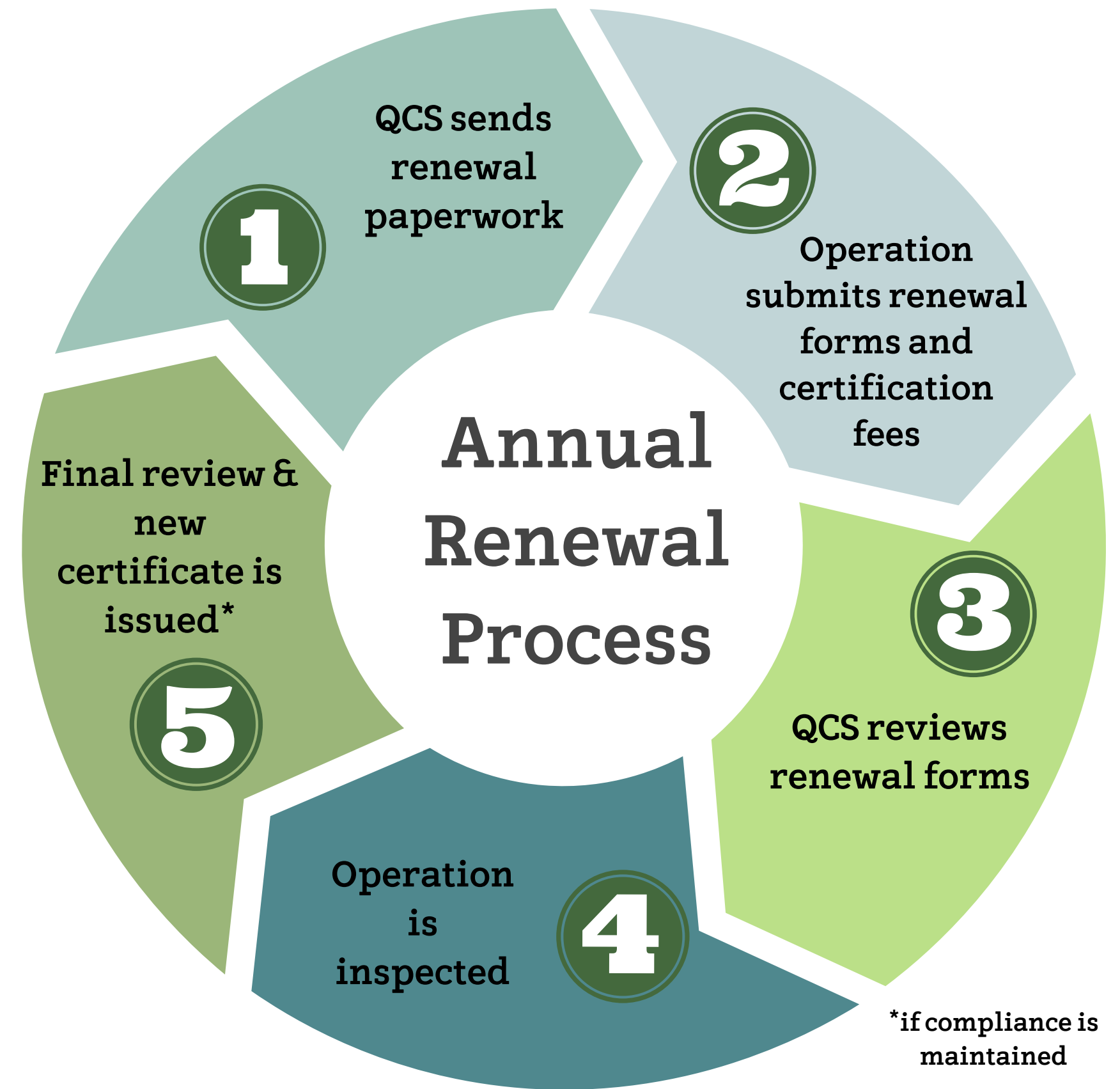
Before making a final certification decision, the reviewer may reach out to you to address any compliance issues that arise from the inspection report.



Step 5: Certification Decision and Continuing Certification

Once you have obtained organic status, you will go through yearly renewal. Renewal follows the same process of review, inspection and final review.

During the year, be sure to let your certifier know of any changes to your operation **before** you implement them.





Cost & Timeline

Our current timeline for certification is **3-4 months**. Expedited options are available for an additional cost.

QCS breaks certification cost into two parts: Review fees and inspection cost. Review fees are based on **annual gross sales** of organic product and inspection cost is based on the **location, timeline, and simplicity to complexity** of your operation.





Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP)

OCCSP is an annual reimbursement program that covers up to **75% up to \$750** of eligible organic certification costs per scope.

Applications are submitted through various state/local agencies.

You will need to submit paid invoices from **Oct - Sep** of the previous year along with any other application documents.



Recordkeeping

7 CFR 205.103(b)

- (1) Be adapted to the particular business that the certified operation is conducting;
- (2) Fully disclose all activities and transactions of the certified operation in sufficient detail as to be readily understood and audited;
- (3) Be maintained for not less than 5 years beyond their creation; and
- (4) Be sufficient to demonstrate compliance with the Act and the regulations in this part.

A good rule: if it happens in your operation, write it down and keep it.

Transitional Land

No matter what type of operation you have, you do not have to transition your entire operation at one time.

Your operation can phase in organic practices over time (with specific provisions for transitional livestock).

QCS offers a Transitional Certification for crops.

- Limited scope paperwork
- Optional inspections
- Ready for certification at the end of 3rd year

Resources are available to transitioning farmers through the **Transition to Organic Partnership Program** in your region.



Inputs: How to Remain Compliant

The National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances

- ➡ Part of the National Organic Program, located in 7 CFR 205.600-606.
- ➡ Outlines **individual compounds** that are allowed for use in all three scopes of organic production.

Example: 205.601(a)(4) shows **hydrogen peroxide** is an approved algicide, disinfectant, and sanitizer (including use as an irrigation system cleaning system) for crop production.

Material Review Organizations (MROs)

- ➡ MROs are third party, independent institutions that are responsible for auditing **branded products** for compliance with the National List.
- ➡ QCS recognizes four MROs: OMRI, WSDA, PCO, and CDFA.

HP 50 Hydrogen Peroxide

RULING BODY: NOP

STATUS: Allowed with Restrictions

PRODUCT CODE: cys-10553

CLASSIFICATIONS: Crop Management Tools and Production Aids

CATEGORIES: Hydrogen Peroxide

RESTRICTIONS: For use as disinfectant or sanitizer, including irrigation system cleaner.

COMPANY: CYC Solutions Co.

DATE LISTED: 2-Mar-2018

EXPIRATION: 1-Jun-2024

Resources

Material Review Organizations

- Organic Material Review Institute
- Washington State Department of Agriculture
- Pennsylvania Organic Certified
- California Department of Food and Agriculture

Organic Certification Cost Share Program Fact Sheet

Organic Integrity Database

Organic Integrity Learning Center

QCS's Website & FAQ Page

Transition to Organic Partnership Program

7 CFR Part 205: The National Organic Program (NOP)



THANK
YOU



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