



Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



USDA Organic Consumer Outreach Toolkit

*Resources to Increase Consumer
Understanding of the Organic Label*

Developed and provided by the
USDA National Organic Program

February 21, 2024



Dear Retailers,

The **U.S. Department of Agriculture** (USDA) is pleased to provide you this toolkit, which contains a suite of graphics that you can display in your stores. **We developed this toolkit to raise consumers' awareness of, and trust in, the organic label.** Research has shown that consumers are increasingly confused by a saturated label landscape. USDA would like to showcase the organic label's unique attributes through these messages and signage.

We designed this toolkit with input from stakeholders, including organic trade associations, organic brands, and retailer representatives. The language is based on the organic regulations and the process USDA uses to develop and enforce those regulations. We have crafted the messaging to be clear, concise, and easy for consumers to understand. The toolkit's graphics are also designed to represent the diverse organic consumers across the country.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

The toolkit includes a variety of graphics that can be used in different sections of grocery stores and supermarkets, as well as in online or virtual shopping platforms. The following pages describe each graphic and how to use it, including recommended sizes, placement, and a photo mockup to demonstrate use (e.g., produce section, shelf tag, freezer door sticker, etc.).

USDA has carefully chosen the language and design; editing the text could cause unintentional changes in messaging or incorrect representation of organic products. Although the graphics are designed to complement each other as a package, you may use them individually, if you wish.

You can download the graphic design files **HERE**. We encourage you to use the **toolkit materials as designed**, without modification. While the images are designed with a set aspect ratio, you may resize them to fit your needs.



ABOUT THE NATIONAL ORGANIC PROGRAM

USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) regulates organic agricultural products. NOP is the **federal regulatory program** that develops and enforces consistent national standards for organic products sold in the United States. NOP also accredits third-party organizations to certify that farms and businesses meet the national organic standards.

NOP recently published the **Strengthening Organic Enforcement** (SOE) rule, the single largest update to the organic standards since the start of the program. SOE protects the integrity of the organic supply chain through federal oversight and enforcement of the production, handling, and sale of organic agricultural products. The rule improves NOP's authority to trace organic products from farm to store and our ability to provide robust enforcement of the USDA organic regulations. Several of the following graphics capture SOE's purpose with the tag line, "traced from farm to store."

Please note that the USDA organic seal is a registered trademark protected by federal law and that it is unlawful to alter or modify the USDA organic seal. The term "organic" is also regulated by the USDA. Before using organic claims or the seal, please review the information at the end of this toolkit.



THE FOUR PILLARS OF USDA ORGANIC

Consumers often struggle to understand what “organic” means, and consumer research has revealed that many are not familiar with the regulatory and enforcement processes that uphold the organic seal. The messages in these graphics concisely describe the four pillars of the USDA organic label. Each pillar highlights a key component of NOP’s process for developing and enforcing the organic regulations. These tag lines educate consumers on how organic integrity is maintained and increase consumer trust in the label.



Protected by law.

- The [USDA organic label](#) is the only government-backed marketing claim for organic food sold in the United States. Only foods produced according to the USDA organic standards can display the organic seal.
- USDA develops and strictly [enforces](#) specific standards for organic food to clarify what practices and inputs can and cannot be used in organic production and handling.
- The [USDA organic seal](#) is a registered trademark, which allows USDA to enforce criminal penalties against uncertified operations falsely using the seal to misrepresent products as organic. This protects the integrity of the organic seal and keeps fraudulent products out of the U.S. organic market.
- NOP also investigates complaints, takes action against businesses that violate the regulations, and accredits experts that inspect organic operations.



Inspected yearly by experts.

- Organic farms and businesses are certified and inspected yearly by [USDA-accredited certifiers](#).
- Specially trained organic inspectors visit each organic farm and business every year to confirm they still meet the organic standards. Every organic operation is also subject to additional surprise inspections and testing.
- USDA regularly audits certifiers to make sure they are correctly inspecting farms and upholding the integrity of the organic label.
- To become certified organic, operations go through a rigorous process to show that their practices follow the organic standards.



Traced from farm to store.

- The [Strengthening Organic Enforcement rule](#) increases the USDA’s ability to oversee and enforce the organic standards and trace organic products from the store all the way back to the farm.



- Farms and businesses keep detailed records of the organic products they produce, buy, and sell. This allows businesses to choose trusted suppliers and verify that what they sell is organic.
- Certifiers audit organic supply chains to detect and defer fraud before it reaches stores.
- NOP manages the [Organic INTEGRITY Database](#), which contains up-to-date and accurate information about operations that may or may not sell organic products. These systems and processes confirm that what consumers buy is genuinely organic.

Shaped by public input.

- Stakeholders and the public can provide feedback (public comments) on proposed regulations to shape final policy decisions.
- The organic standards are developed with recommendations from an advisory board—the [National Organic Standards Board](#) (NOSB)—composed of volunteers from the organic community.
- Stakeholders and the public can attend bi-annual NOSB public meetings and provide input to the NOSB on their recommendations.





GRAPHIC 1: SHELF TAG

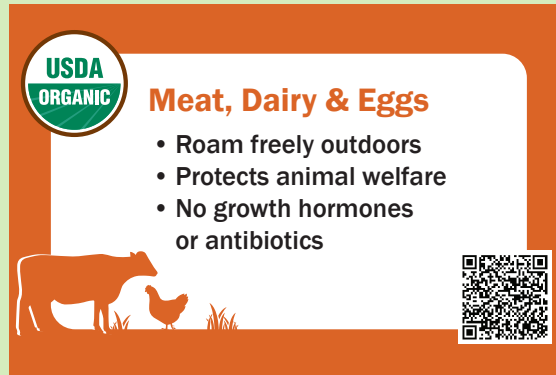
What is it and how should I use it? This graphic can be used as a small shelf tag to draw consumers to specific organic products on a shelf. It includes the four key pillars of organic, the recognizable USDA organic seal, and a QR code linking to a consumer-friendly USDA webpage.

Tips: To avoid misuse of the organic seal, this tag should only be used directly under, on top of, or close by organic products.

Recommended size: 5.5” wide x 3.25” high

Recommended printing specifications: Semi-gloss or matte finish on medium heavy weight paper. Please follow trims and bleeds in the graphic asset PDF.





GRAPHIC 2: COLOR TAGS

What is it and how should I use it? These three separate shelf tags provide consumers a high-level explanation of what is allowed, and not allowed, in organic production and handling. These signs explain the organic standards of the most common types of organic products consumers find in stores. They also include an organic seal to identify the marketing claim and a QR code linking to a consumer-friendly USDA webpage.

These scope-specific shelf tags can be displayed in parts of the store that sell specific, corresponding products, such as the meat counter (example below). The “produce and grains” tag could be displayed in the produce or bulk bins section of the store, while the “packaged goods” tag could be displayed in the aisles or endcaps, where processed goods such as chips and pasta are sold.

Tips: The example below is sized at 6” wide x 4” high. However, the design file allows you to scale the graphic up or down to meet your needs.

Recommended size: 6” wide x 4” high

Recommended printing specifications: Semi-gloss or matte finish on medium heavy weight paper. Please follow trims and bleeds in the graphic asset PDF.





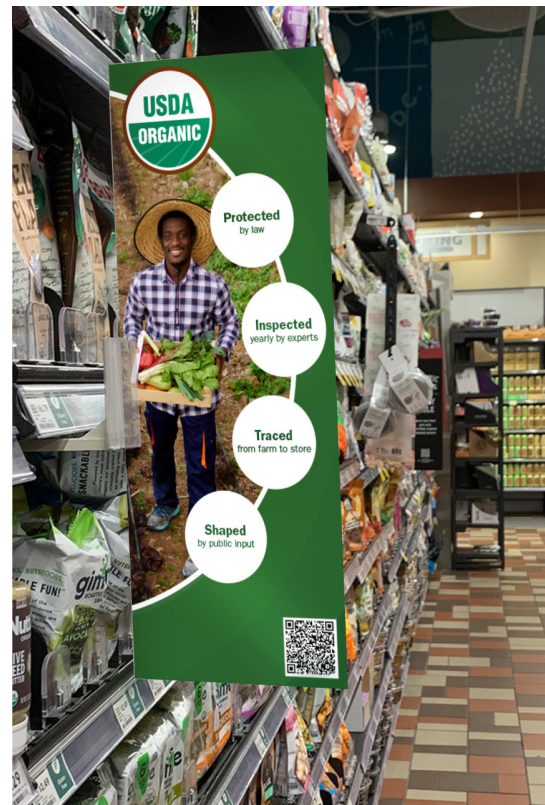
GRAPHIC 3: AISLE BANNERS

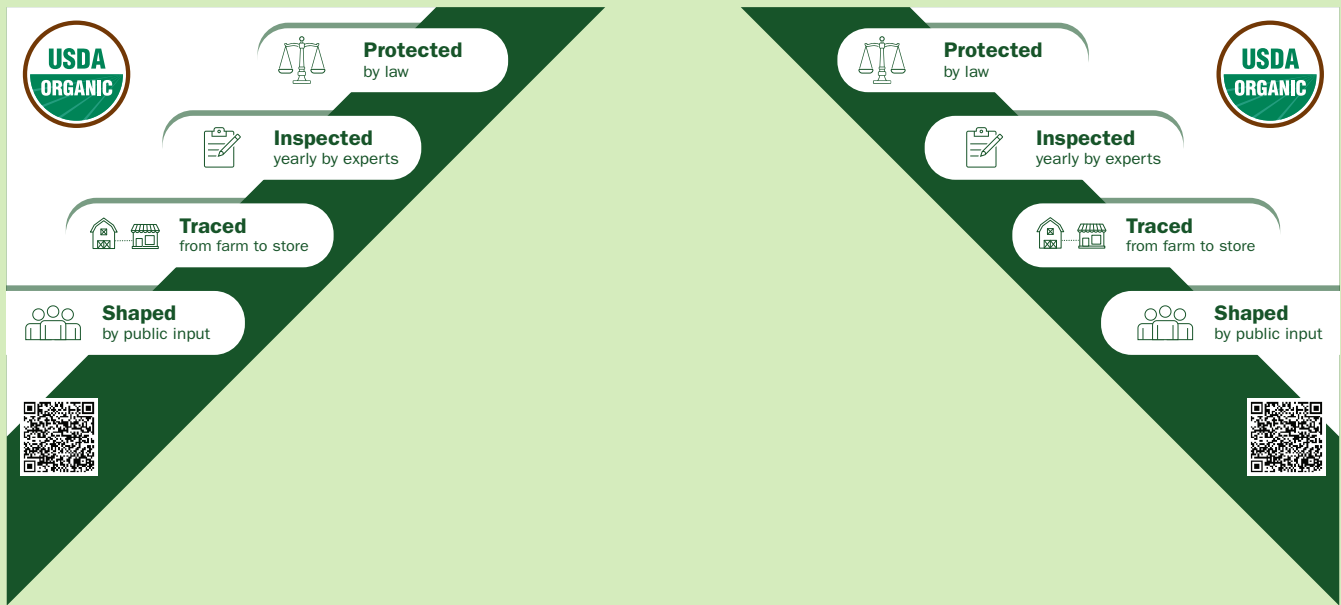
What is it and how should I use it? These vertical shelf tags pop out from the shelf to catch shoppers’ attention. We have provided an array of images that represent the diversity of the organic community, consumers, and products. They also include an organic seal to identify the marketing claim and a QR code linking to a consumer-friendly USDA webpage.

Tips: The example below is sized at 4.25” wide x 11” high. However, the design file allows you to resize it for your needs or other uses like endcap displays (up to 8.5” x 22”).

Recommended size: 4.25” wide x 11” high

Recommended printing specifications: Semi-gloss or matte finish on medium heavy weight paper. Please follow trims and bleeds in the graphic asset PDF.





GRAPHIC 4: FREEZER TAGS

What is it and how should I use it? Print these tags on adhesive labels to stick on refrigerator or freezer doors, as well as glass display cases, such as those in the meat department. They also include an organic seal to identify the marketing claim and a QR code linking to a consumer-friendly USDA webpage.

Tips: The stickers in the examples below are sized at 11.25” wide x 11.25” high. However, the design file allows you to scale the graphic up or down to meet your needs.

Recommended size: 11.25” wide x 11.25” high

Recommended printing specifications: Semi-gloss or matte finish vinyl or medium heavy weight paper. Please follow trims and bleeds in the graphic asset PDF.





GRAPHIC 5: FREEZER TAG

What is it and how should I use it? Print this tag on adhesive labels to stick on refrigerator or freezer doors, as well as glass display cases, such as those in fish and meat departments. It also includes an organic seal to identify the marketing claim and a QR code linking to a consumer-friendly USDA webpage.

Tips: The stickers in the examples below are sized at 3.5” wide x 12” high. However, the design file allows you to scale the graphic up or down to meet your needs.

Recommended size: 3.5” wide x 12” high

Recommended printing specifications: Semi-gloss or matte finish vinyl or medium heavy weight paper. Please follow trims and bleeds in the graphic asset PDF.





GRAPHIC 6: BANNER

What is it and how should I use it? This colorful, large-scale sign can be used in the produce department above or below the section of organic produce. You can hang it from the ceiling or post it as a banner at the top of refrigerated or chilled produce stands. It also includes an organic seal to identify the marketing claim and a QR code linking to a consumer-friendly USDA webpage.

Tips: This sign is the largest of the graphics and is sized at 5' wide x 3' high in the example below. However, you can scale it up (as large as 10' x 6') or down for additional uses.

Recommended size: 5' wide x 3' high.

Recommended printing specifications: Semi-gloss or matte finish on medium heavy weight paper. Please follow trims and bleeds in the graphic asset PDF.





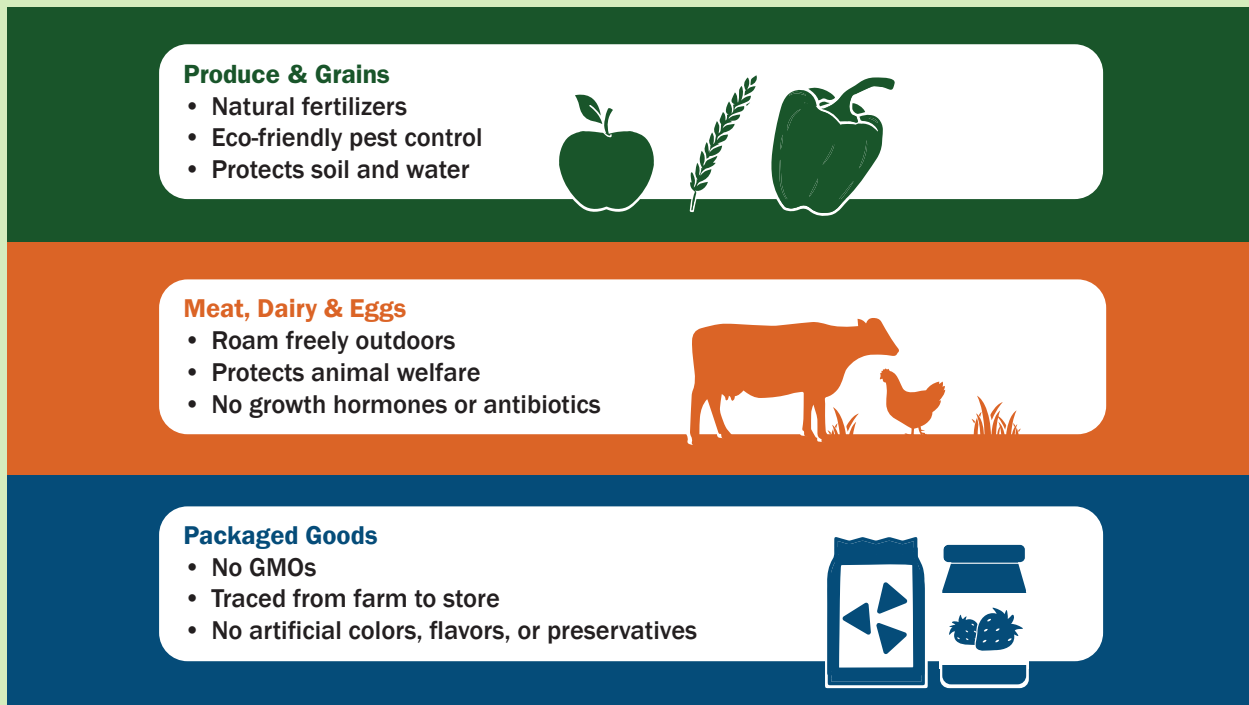
GRAPHIC 7: SOCIAL MEDIA BANNER

What is it and how should I use it? This graphic highlights the four tag lines that convey NOP’s development and enforcement of organic regulations. It uses photos to showcase each of the four main pillars of NOP’s process. You can use the design above on web sites, in newsletters or emails, and on virtual shopping platforms. As a reminder, you can only use the seal and these graphics in conjunction with certified organic products.

Tips: In addition to using it as a social media post, try pairing this graphic on a webpage with more detail about a particular organic product or aspect of your business that you would like to highlight.

Recommended size: Facebook: 1200 x 628 pixels. Twitter/X: 900 x 450 pixels. Instagram: 1080 x 1080 pixels. LinkedIn: 1350 x 440 pixels.





GRAPHIC 8: SOCIAL MEDIA BANNER

What is it and how should I use it? This graphic gives consumers a high-level explanation of what is allowed, and not allowed, in organic production and handling. The graphic explains the organic standards of the most common types of organic products consumers find in stores.

Tips: In addition to using it as a social media post, try pairing this graphic on a webpage with more detail about a particular organic product or aspect of your business that you would like to highlight.

Recommended size: Facebook: 1200 x 628 pixels. Twitter/X: 900 x 450 pixels. Instagram: 1080 x 1080 pixels. LinkedIn: 1350 x 440 pixels.



IMPORTANT NOTES ON THE USE OF THE USDA ORGANIC SEAL

The USDA encourages retailers to use the term “organic” and the USDA organic seal on in-store labeling and online marketing to help shoppers identify products that are certified organic. Both the term “organic” and the USDA organic seal are federally regulated, and their use is subject to legal requirements. The USDA organic seal is a registered trademark protected by federal law, and it is unlawful to alter or modify the USDA organic seal. Before using organic claims or the seal, we strongly encourage you to review the information below to confirm the organic claims and trademarked USDA organic seal are used responsibly.

How to Use the Organic Seal in a Retail Setting

The term “organic” and the USDA organic seal must only be used in the labeling or display of certified organic products. Retailers need to be careful about where and how they display the USDA organic seal and information materials. Here are some tips on how to use the organic claims and the seal (including the graphics in this tool kit) in your store.

- Make sure that organic claims, the seal, and the graphics in this toolkit are only used to refer to certified organic products. Place organic signage as close as possible to organic products (for example, directly below, above, or next to organic products). Avoid using organic signage in a way that could confuse shoppers about which products are organic.
- Use the graphics in this toolkit as designed. No changes to design, color, or messaging can be made, but graphics can be resized as needed and printed on a variety of materials as required by the store. Any attempts to edit or modify the graphics could result in misrepresentation of organic products or violations of the registered trademark of the USDA organic seal.

For more information about the USDA organic seal, check out the USDA organic seal webpage at www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/organic-seal.

Retailers Are Responsible for Organic Integrity

The materials included in this toolkit were developed to educate consumers on the organic label and educate retailers on how to display the label in stores. Retailers have a responsibility to maintain the integrity of organic products from the time they receive a delivery to the time consumers purchase those products at the register. Here are some tips for retailers to maintain the integrity of certified organic products:

- Avoid commingling organic and nonorganic products: keep unpackaged organic products (like produce) separate from nonorganic products during storage and display. Clearly label unpackaged products to avoid confusion between organic and nonorganic products.
- Prevent unpackaged organic products from being contaminated by chemical cleaners, fumigants, or other substances that are prohibited in organic regulations. For more

information on prohibited substances, check out the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances at www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/national-list.

- Be aware that if a retailer does any on-site processing or repackaging of organic products, there may be additional requirements like recordkeeping or organic certification. For more information about exemptions from certification and responsibilities for exempt operations, check out our webpage at www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/need-be-certified.

If you have questions on how to use these materials, please contact us at nop.guidance@usda.gov. For more information, visit our free, online learning center at: www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/training.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

Talking points and answers to frequently asked questions are included below. Retailers may use these for training or to answer customer questions.

What is organic?

- Organic is a label that indicates that a food or other agricultural product has been produced according to the [USDA organic standards](#), which require operations to use practices that cycle resources, conserve biodiversity, and preserve ecological balance.
- The USDA organic label is the only government-backed marketing claim for organic food sold in the United States.
- The organic standards set specific requirements for different types of products.
 - Organic production emphasizes natural processes and ingredients.
 - Organic products do not contain GMOs (genetically modified organisms) or artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives.
 - Meat, dairy, eggs, and other livestock products are produced without growth hormones or antibiotics.

How do I know if a food labeled as organic truly meets the organic standards?

- USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) develops and enforces the standards for organic crops, livestock, and agricultural products so consumers can feel confident purchasing organic.
- The USDA organic seal is a registered trademark, which allows USDA to enforce criminal penalties against uncertified operations that falsely use the seal to misrepresent products as organic.
- Only foods produced according to the USDA organic standards can display the organic seal.
- Crops are grown with natural fertilizers and pesticides. Most chemical fertilizers and toxic pesticides are prohibited.

- Organic products are traced across the supply chain, from farm to store. Organic farms and businesses must keep detailed records of the organic products they produce, buy, and sell.
- Specially trained organic inspectors visit farms yearly to ensure they abide by the organic standards and audit organic supply chains to check for fraud.
- To become certified organic, operations must go through a rigorous process to show certifiers that the operation's practices follow the organic standards.

How can I get involved?

- Stakeholders and the public can provide feedback (public comments) on proposed regulations to shape final policy decisions.
- Experts from the organic community can volunteer to serve on the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), which advises the NOP on organic policy.
- Stakeholders and the public can attend bi-annual NOSB public meetings and provide input to the NOSB on their recommendations.

Is organic food good for the environment?

- Organic practices can store carbon in the soil and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Organic production methods protect soil health, water quality, and biodiversity (the existence of all kinds of animals, plants, and microorganisms).

Is organic humane?

- The organic label incorporates animal welfare standards.
- All livestock have access to the outdoors, and grazing animals (like cows) are raised on pasture.

Where can I find more information?

Visit the USDA National Organic Program's web site:

www.ams.usda.gov/organic

