

U.S. – SWITZERLAND ORGANIC EQUIVALENCE ARRANGEMENT

Questions and Answers

The United States has an “equivalence arrangement” with Switzerland. What does this mean?

This means that organic products certified to the U.S. or Swiss organic standards and meeting the terms of the arrangement (see below) may be sold and labeled as organic in both countries. This arrangement eliminates the need for organic operators to have separate organic certification to both U.S. and Swiss standards, which avoids a double set of fees, inspections, and paperwork.

Prior to establishing this arrangement, officials from each country had the opportunity to conduct an extensive review of the other side’s organic production rules and control systems under their respective regulations¹. Through a series of meetings and the comprehensive site audits of both programs, officials on both sides were able to ensure that while some of the National program rules and approaches are not identical, they achieve an equivalent level of compliance and maintain the high organic standards important to both programs. This type of recognition is referred to as an “equivalence arrangement.”

When can I start shipping organic products under the arrangement?

- The arrangement becomes effective on July 10, 2015.

Which organic products are covered under the arrangement?

The arrangement covers USDA and Swiss organic crops, wild crops, livestock, and processed products that meet the origin requirements below. There are additional requirements for wine and Swiss livestock products traded under the arrangement (see below).

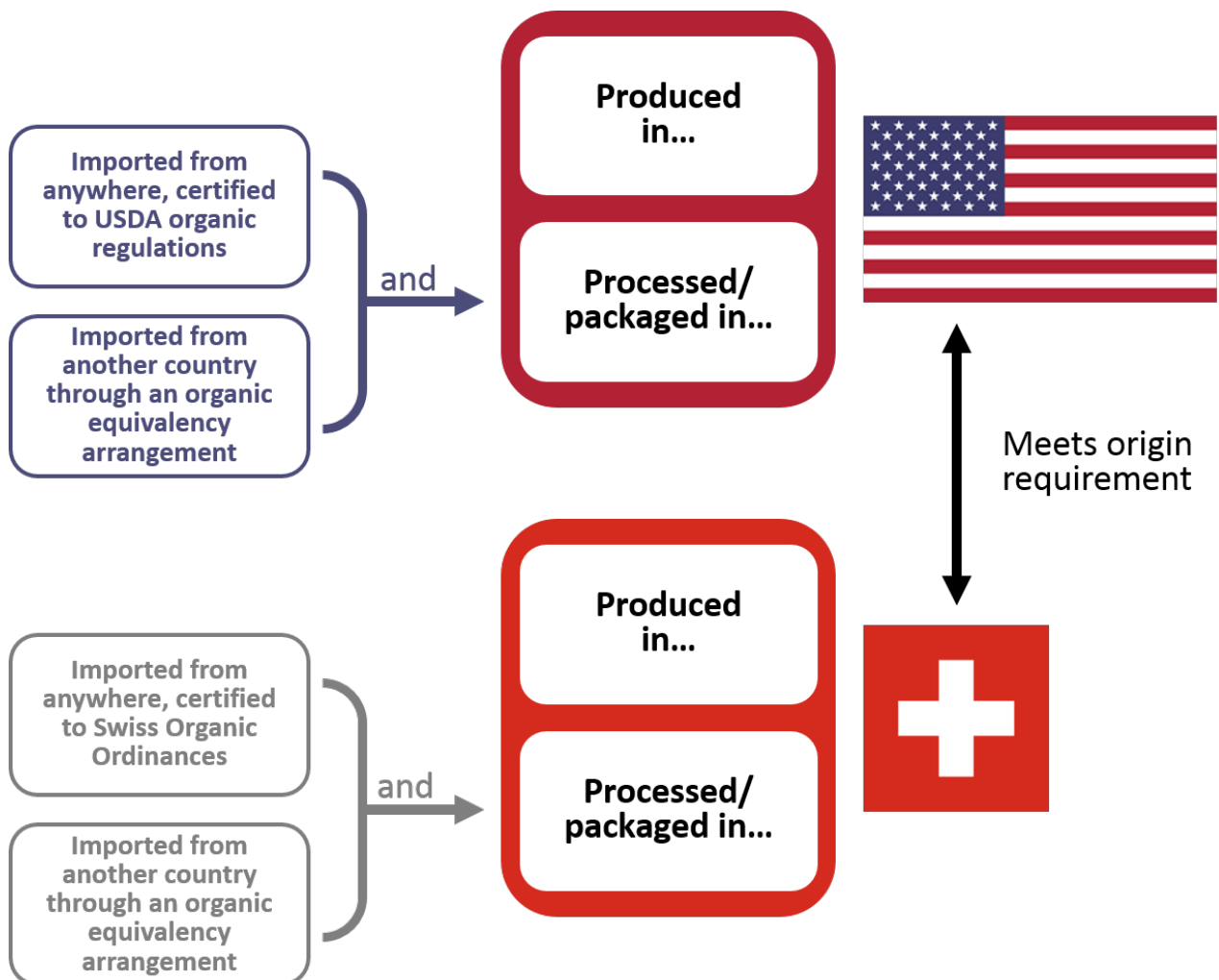
¹ In the United States, all USDA organic standards, including prohibited practices, requirements, and the [National List of Allowed and Prohibited Materials](https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/national-list) <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/national-list> are set out within the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, [7 CFR, Section 205](https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/national-list). In Switzerland, organic ordinances, set out in the Swiss Ordinance on Organic Farming and the Labeling of Organically Produced Products and Foodstuffs (910.18) and Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) Ordinance on Organic Farming of 22 September 1997 (910.181), can be found <https://www.blw.admin.ch/blw/en/home/markt/kennzeichnung/biolandbau.html>

Are there origin requirements?

Yes. The arrangement is limited to products certified to the USDA organic regulations or Swiss Organic Ordinances that are either:

1. Grown or produced in the United States or Switzerland; or
2. Have their final processing or packaging occur in the United States or Switzerland.

If the product is:



Livestock products or any livestock products used as ingredients in any products must be derived from animals not treated with antibiotics.



If an operator is producing a multi-ingredient product, do all the ingredients have to be sourced from the U.S. or Switzerland?

No, but the arrangement is limited to organic products of U.S. or Swiss origin. Products whose final processing or packaging occurs within the U.S. or Switzerland are covered by the scope of the arrangement. This includes products processed or packaged in the U.S. or Switzerland that contain organic ingredients from foreign sources that have been certified to the USDA or Swiss organic standards. Therefore, such products may contain organic ingredients from the United States, Switzerland, or any other country as long as:

1. Such ingredients have been imported as organic into the U.S. or Switzerland; and
2. Ingredients derived from livestock products have not been produced from animals treated with antibiotics.

What are the requirements for Swiss organic livestock products shipped to the United States?

The USDA organic regulations require that organic livestock products be produced without the use of antibiotics. In order to be traded under the arrangement, Swiss organic livestock products or ingredients derived from organic livestock (e.g., eggs, milk, meat) must be from organic animals that were produced without the use of antibiotics. This means that if a Swiss-authorized certification body wants to issue the National Organic Program (NOP) import certificate for organic livestock products or a product that includes ingredients derived from organic livestock, it must ensure that no antibiotics were used.

Swiss regulations require that the operator:

- Maintain veterinary records;
- Abide by an “antibiotics handling plan,” showing which animals have not received any treatments with antibiotics; and
- Ensure that all animals that have not received any treatments with antibiotics can be identified at any moment.

Is organic wine covered by the arrangement?

Organic wine exports must follow the importing country’s winemaking and labeling rules, which can include restrictions on substances and winemaking practices. The organic winemaker’s



control body will be able to certify that they meet these obligations without the need to obtain separate certifications.

Learn more about wine requirements at

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/international-trade/Switzerland>

How does the equivalence arrangement reduce costs and administrative burdens for organic operators?

For operators who wish to sell organic products in the United States and Switzerland, it is not necessary to pay for two separate certifications and abide by two separate organic production standards. On either side of the Atlantic, each operator's control body or control authority will be able to provide the certificates necessary for marketing and selling organic products in the U.S. and Swiss markets.

LABELING

Which seals can be used for USDA organic products exported to Switzerland?

The Swiss Government does not administer an organic seal. As a result of the equivalence arrangement, organic products exported to Switzerland may include the USDA organic seal as well as the seal of the product's certifying agent.

For information about Swiss organic labeling requirements, view the Swiss Organic Ordinances found at <https://www.blw.admin.ch/blw/en/home/markt/kennzeichnung/biolandbau.html>. The use of private trademarks and logos is not restricted by the equivalence arrangement.

Can the USDA organic seal be used for Swiss products exported to the United States?

Yes, the equivalence arrangement authorizes Swiss products meeting the terms of the arrangement to be labeled with the USDA organic seal.

Unlike the United States, Switzerland does not have a labeling category for “made with” organic * products. How should such products be labeled in Switzerland?**

If the product contains less than 95 percent organic ingredients, the reference to organic may only appear in the list of ingredients. This means that labeling claims such as, “made with organic corn” may not be used. Additionally, the overall percentage of organic ingredients must be stated on the ingredient panel. For more information on Swiss labeling, view the Swiss Organic Ordinances at

<https://www.blw.admin.ch/blw/en/home/markt/kennzeichnung/biolandbau.html>.

What is required to ship U.S. organic products to Switzerland?

Products meeting the terms of the arrangement must be accompanied by a Certificate of Inspection (COI) signed and issued by a U.S. certifying agent through the European Union’s TRACES. For more information, visit the Government of Switzerland’s website

<https://www.blw.admin.ch/blw/en/home/markt/kennzeichnung/biolandbau.html>.

How do U.S. operations obtain a Swiss import certificate?

The U.S. operation should inform their certifier that they wish to ship products to Switzerland. Certifying agents will verify the operator’s compliance, complete the form, and return it to the operator for inclusion with their shipment of organic products.

SHIPPING SWISS ORGANIC PRODUCTS FROM SWITZERLAND TO THE UNITED STATES

What is required to ship Swiss organic products to the United States?

Products meeting the terms of the arrangement (see above) must be accompanied by U.S. import certificate that must be signed by a SAS-accredited certifying agent.

Download import certificate: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/NOP2110-1.pdf>

Instructions:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/NOP%20Instructions%20for%20completing%20import%20certificate.pdf>

Where is a list of Swiss certifying agents that are authorized to issue U.S. import certificates?

The list of Swiss recognized certification bodies and control authorities can be found at <https://www.blw.admin.ch/blw/en/home/markt/kennzeichnung/biolandbau.html>.

How do Swiss operators obtain a U.S. import certificate?

The Swiss operation should inform their certifier that they wish to ship products to the U.S. Certifying agents will verify the operator's compliance, complete the form, and return it to the operator for inclusion with their shipment of organic products.

ACCREDITATION

I am a certifying agent based in Switzerland and all my clients are in Switzerland. Do I need to maintain my direct accreditation to the USDA organic standards?

No. However, you should maintain your direct accreditation with the USDA NOP if you certify products produced or processed outside of Switzerland that will be marketed or sold in the U.S.

I am a certifying agent based in Switzerland but I have clients based in South America, Europe, and Asia. If I wish to continue to certify them to the USDA organic regulations, do I need to maintain my accreditation with the USDA NOP?

Yes. You must maintain your accreditation with the USDA NOP in order to certify operations to the USDA organic regulations.



I am a USDA-accredited certifying agent based in a South American country. Can USDA organic products produced there be exported directly to Switzerland?

No. Any USDA organic products traded under the arrangement must be produced in the U.S. or have their final processing or packaging occurs in the U.S.

I am a U.S.-based certifying agent, but I have several clients outside the U.S. that are certified to the USDA organic regulations. Are those operations eligible to label and ship products to Switzerland?

No, these products must be certified to the Swiss regulations independently of USDA organic certification. Only products produced or processed/packaged in the U.S. to the USDA organic regulations can be exported to Switzerland under the equivalence arrangement.