

Organic Practices Guidelines

In accordance with GSH Para. 871D, AIPs must provide a copy of the following Organic Practices Guidelines to all insureds for whom the Organic Certified (OC) or Organic Transitional (OT) practices may apply.

These guidelines are provided to enable insureds to properly report planted or perennial acreage insured under an organic practice consistent with their crop insurance policy. It is important that these guidelines be utilized to document whether, at the time insurance attaches, insureds are aware of what is required to properly report and insure their crop under an organic practice. The guidelines, in their entirety, are substantive and are to be given to the insured.

A. Definitions

The following definitions are provided to facilitate a uniform understanding of the standards and guidelines for insuring acreage under the Organic Certified (OC) and Organic Transitional (OT) practices.

1. **“Buffer Zone:** Acreage designated in your organic system plan that separates agricultural commodities grown under organic farming practices from those grown under conventional farming practices. A buffer zone must be sufficient in size or other features, as stated in the National Organic Program published in 7 CFR part 205, to prevent or minimize the possibility of unintended contact by prohibited substances or organisms applied to adjacent land acres with an area that is part of the certified organic farming operation.”
2. **“Organic Certified / Certification:** A determination made by a certifying agent that a production or handling operation complies with the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C 6502) and the regulations, which is documented by a certificate of organic operation in accordance with 7 CFR part 205.”
3. **“Conventional Farming Practice:** A system or process that is necessary to produce an agricultural commodity, excluding organic farming practices.”
4. **“Certifying Agent:** A private or governmental entity accredited by the USDA Secretary of Agriculture for the purpose of certifying a production, processing, or handling operation as organic.”
5. **“Organic INTEGRITY Database:** A database maintained by the National Organic Program. [INTEGRITY Database](https://organic.ams.usda.gov/integrity/) located at organic.ams.usda.gov/integrity/ lists organic transitional and organic certified operations and contains up-to-date and accurate information about operations that are permitted to sell products bearing an organic designation. Being listed as Transitional or Certified in INTEGRITY indicates you have an organic system plan and meet

requirements for insuring acreage under an organic transitional system plan or organic system plan.”

6. **“Organic Crop:** An agricultural commodity that is organically produced, consistent with section 2103 of the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 6502).”
7. **“Organic Farming Practice:** A system of plant production practices used on organic acreage and transitional acreage to produce an organic crop that is approved by a certifying agent in accordance with 7 CFR part 205.”
8. **“Organic Standards:** Standards in accordance with the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 6501 et seq.) and 7 CFR part 205.”
9. **“Organic System Plan:** A written plan, in accordance with the National Organic Program published in 7 CFR part 205, that describes the organic farming practices that you and a certifying agent agree upon annually or at such other times as prescribed by the certifying agent.”
10. **“Sustainable Farming Practice:** A system or process for producing an agricultural commodity, excluding organic farming practices, that is necessary to produce the crop and is generally recognized by agricultural experts for the area to conserve or enhance natural resources and the environment.”
11. **“Transitional Acreage:** Acreage in transition to organic where organic farming practices are being followed, but the acreage does not yet qualify as certified organic acreage.”

B. Requirements

1. “For acreage to be insured under a certified organic or transitional practice:
 - (a) The practice must be specified in the actuarial documents; or
 - (b) Coverage is allowed by written agreement – see section 18 of the Common Crop Insurance Policy, Basic Provisions for requirements.
 - (c) For certified organic acreage, a written certification (an organic certificate) in effect and directly received from a certifying agent indicating the name of the person certified, effective date of certification, certificate number, types of commodities certified, and name and address of the certifying agent (a certificate issued to a tenant may be used to qualify a landlord or other similar arrangement). A certificate issued from the National Organic Program’s Organic INTEGRITY Database (or successor certificate reporting tool) is acceptable.

- (d) For transitional acreage, an organic system plan documenting the use of practices that would result in certified organic status and that includes the record information as described in (c) above, or written documentation from a certifying agent indicating that an organic system plan is in effect for the acreage.

Exception: If you do not meet the requirements in (a) or (b), you must provide documentation that you have requested, in writing, written certification for organic system plan on or before the Acreage Reporting Date (ARD).

Your certificate or plan must be in effect prior to the earlier of the end of the insurance period or when coverage ends as provided in section 11(b) of the Common Crop Insurance Policy, Basic Provisions.

Acreage will remain insured under the practice reported on the ARD. However, if you have a loss and do not have a certificate or plan in place at the time the claim is finalized, then your acreage will be insured under the practice for which it qualifies.

- (e) For certified organic and transitional acreage, records from the certifying agent showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, transitional, buffer zone, and acreage not maintained under organic management.
- (f) If you claim a loss on any acreage insured under an organic farming practice, you must provide the AIP with copies of the records required above.”

C. Important Consideration for the Organic Practice in the Event of Damage or Loss

1. “Insurance is provided only to protect against unavoidable, naturally occurring events. A list of the covered naturally occurring events is contained in the applicable Crop Provisions.

Coverage and Documentation:

- (a) You must provide the AIP with copies of the records required for certified organic and transitional organic acreage listed in accordance with your policy and Subpara. B requirements above.
- (b) The AIP will verify insurability, practice, and, if applicable:
 - i. that your reported acreage agrees with the acreage shown on the certifier’s records for certified acres and the organic system plan or written documentation issued by a certifier if you only have transitional acreage;
 - ii. the exact field locations of certified organic, transitional, and buffer zone acreage;

- iii. the exact field location of acreage not maintained under organic management (i.e., crops grown under conventional or sustainable farming practices);
 - iv. rotation requirements, fertilization methods, insect, disease, and weed control methods, etc.; and
 - v. whether you have followed good farming practices for the type/practice insured (see Subpara. D below).
- (c) In accordance with the Common Crop Insurance Policy, Basic Provisions, if you have a loss and do not have an organic certificate or an organic system plan in place at the time the claim is finalized, then the acreage will be insured under the practice for which it qualifies.
- (d) If acreage qualifies as certified organic or transitional on or before the ARD, and the certification is subsequently revoked or suspended by the certifying agent, or the certifying agent does not consider the acreage as transitional for the remainder of the crop year, the acreage will remain insured under the reported practice for which it qualified at the time the acreage was reported.”
2. “Uninsurable Causes of Loss:
- (a) failure to follow recognized Good Farming Practices (GFP) for the type/practice of the insured crop;
 - (b) any loss due to failure to comply with the organic standards will be considered an uninsured cause of loss (COL);
 - (c) contamination by application or drift of prohibited substances onto land on which crops are grown using organic farming practices will not be an insured peril on any certified organic, transitional, or buffer zone acreage; and
 - (d) other causes of loss which are not covered as listed in the Common Crop Insurance Policy, Basic Provisions and Crop Provisions for your policy.”

D. Good Farming Practices

1. “The purpose of the GFP provisions is to ensure that your production methods do not adversely affect the quantity or quality of the production. This applies to any practice that could affect the amount and quality of the crop, from ground preparation through harvest. In the case of perennials, this applies to practices from post-harvest of the previous crop year through harvest of the current crop year that could affect the amount and quality of the crop. You are responsible for establishing that the farming practice in question

constitutes a GFP. All GFP evaluations, including decisions made by the AIP and determinations made by the Risk Management Agency (RMA), must be in accordance with the GFP provisions. Specifically, the production methods you use must:

- (a) allow the insured crop to make normal progress toward maturity;
- (b) produce at least the yield used to determine the production guarantee or amount of insurance, including any adjustments for late planted acreage;
- (c) not reduce or adversely affect the yield; and
- (d) be regarded as generally recognized GFP by organic agricultural experts for the area.

Approved Agricultural Experts include personnel whose research or occupation is related to the specific crop, and practice, in the region for which such expertise is sought, have demonstrated expertise in the production practice in question, and does not have a personal or financial interest in the insured or the crop.

Approved Agricultural Experts for the organic industry include, but are not limited to:

- (a) the Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service www.attra.ncat.org;
- (b) the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education organization, www.sare.org; or
- (c) USDA Accredited Certifying Agents (ACA). These are third party agents who certify operations under USDA organic standards. A list of ACAs is available in the Certifier Locator on the Agricultural Marketing Service website www.ams.usda.gov.

For additional information regarding Approved Agricultural Experts, contact your AIP.

If a person does not qualify as an expert, based on the information in Subpara. 21A of the GFP Handbook, persons certified through other programs may be recognized as agricultural experts by RMA if their research or occupation is related to the specific crop and practice, in the region for which such expertise is sought, and has demonstrated expertise in the production practice in question.

To obtain approval for such persons, contact RMA's Deputy Administrator for Insurance Services by email to rma.rmsd@usda.gov."

E. Contract Pricing

1. “The Contract Price Addendum (CPA) allows you to insure your crop at the contract price if you are a certified organic or transitional producer with a written contract from a buyer on or before the ARD.

This allows you to qualify for a federal crop insurance guarantee that more closely reflects the actual value of the certified organic or transitional crop. Where available, you have the choice to use either the contract price or the published RMA price as the crop insurance projected price or price election.

Availability - For a listing of crops see the Contract Price Eligibility by Commodity at www.rma.usda.gov/about-crop-insurance/fact-sheets/contract-price-eligibility-commodity. For contract pricing availability for a particular commodity type or practice, please follow the prompts on RMA’s Actuarial Information Browser at aibpf-rma.fpac.usda.gov/apps/ActuarialInformationBrowser/CropCriteria.aspx and see the ‘Prices’ tab. Information on how to apply the CPA is in (a)-(c) below:

- (a) For contract pricing and availability for a particular commodity type or practice, follow the prompts on RMA’s Actuarial Information Browser. See the “Prices” tab. When a contract price code of “yes” exists on the Prices tab for the crop, type, and practice, you may use a contract price to determine your insurance guarantee.
- (b) For commodities insured using the Commodity Exchange Price Provisions (CEPP), CPA information can be found in the CEPP.
- (c) For commodities that do not use the CEPP to determine prices, contract pricing information can be found in the Special Provisions. Please ask your crop insurance agent for a copy of the Special Provisions for the insured crop.

If a commodity type or practice allows or requires the use of a contract price through the Crop Provisions or Special Provisions, the CPA is not applicable.

To be eligible for contract pricing, you must elect the contract pricing option on or before the sales closing date and provide a copy of the contract to your crop insurance agent on or before the ARD. Unless changed by you, contract pricing coverage continues as your selection as long as your insurance policy remains active.”