

Proper Record Keeping: How to Do It & Why FOR ORGANIC FARMERS

For certified organic farmers, recordkeeping is more than paperwork — it is a practical tool for staying organized, meeting certification requirements, and making sound farm management decisions.

What is record keeping?

Recordkeeping is the collection and organization of financial and production records that provide farmers with the information needed to make critical risk management and farm viability decisions. Recordkeeping can be done electronically through systems such as Microsoft Excel or software platforms, by paper, or by hiring a person or an outside professional to maintain the records.



Why is record-keeping important for organic farmers?

Recordkeeping is important for organic farmers because good records help inspectors easily verify that the activities being done on the farm are acceptable. The records act as a safety net for farmers in the event that things do not go according to plan. Having historical field data helps.



United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
National Organic Program
Transition to Organic Partnership Program



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What records are important for organic farmers to maintain?

All certified organic operations must maintain records pertaining to production, harvest, and handling of agricultural commodities that will be sold, labeled, or represented as organic. Some of these records include:

- Field history (at least three years)
- Inputs - anything that is applied to the soil or plants, quality, date of application, and location of application
- Field Operation Records - e., farm activities such as mowing, pest management, tillage, planting
- Crop Movement - tracking of the crop from harvest to buyer
- Contamination and/or commingling risks - documentation of efforts made to prevent crops from being contaminated or mixed with conventional crops or prohibited substances. Records can include storage labeling, cleanout logs/procedures, and buffer zones.
- Seed Records - verification log that details varieties, lot numbers, and treatments used for seeds planted on the farm to ensure complete traceability from seed to sale (must be maintained for at least 5 years)

How long should records be maintained?

Records should be maintained for a minimum of five years from the date created and must sufficiently demonstrate compliance with organic standards and regulations.

Recordkeeping Tools

- [USDA Documentation for Organic Crop Producers](#)
- [USDA Documentation for Organic Livestock Producers](#)
- [North Carolina State University Organic Certification Recordkeeping](#)

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