



# GETTING STARTED WITH WILD CROP HARVEST CERTIFICATION



**Overview:** Wild crop harvest certification is a process regulated by the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) that allows for the sustainable collection of wild crops while ensuring they meet organic standards.

**This guide outlines the key steps for beginners to achieve certification.**



## STEP 1: UNDERSTAND ORGANIC STANDARDS

Familiarize yourself with the USDA NOP guidelines:

- **Definition of Wild Crops:** Any plant or portion of a plant that is collected or harvested from a site that is not maintained under cultivation or other agricultural management.
- **Allowed Practices:** Organic wild crop harvest must adhere to sustainable practices that protect the environment and biodiversity.
- **Prohibited Substances:** Know what substances are not allowed in organic production (e.g., synthetic fertilizers and pesticides).



## STEP 2: IDENTIFY CROP AND HARVEST SITE

- **Select Your Crop:** Determine which wild crops you intend to harvest. Common examples include berries, mushrooms, and herbs.
- **Research:** Learn about the ecological requirements and harvest practices specific to your chosen crop.
- **Harvest Site:** Ensure that the site has not been treated with prohibited substances in the last 36 months.



## STEP 3: DRAFT AN ORGANIC SYSTEM PLAN (OSP)

- **Documentation:** Develop an OSP that outlines your practices for harvesting, handling, and processing.
- **Key Components:** Include details about:
  - Harvesting techniques
  - Land management practices
  - Measures taken to prevent contamination



## STEP 4: CHOOSE A CERTIFYING AGENT

- **Certification Body:** Select an accredited USDA certifying agent. Research their requirements and services.
- **Initial Consultation:** Schedule a consultation to understand the application process and fees involved.



## STEP 5: SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

- **Complete Application:** Fill out the application provided by your certifying agent, including your OSP.
- **Fees:** Pay any associated fees for the certification process.



## STEP 6: UNDERGO INSPECTION

- **Schedule Inspection:** Your certifying agent will conduct an on-site inspection to verify compliance with organic standards.
- **Prepare Documentation:** Have all relevant records and your OSP ready for review during the inspection.



## STEP 7: RECEIVE CERTIFICATION

- **Approval:** If you meet all standards, you will receive your organic wild crop harvest certification.
- **Renewal:** Keep in mind that certification is an ongoing process; you will need to renew your certification annually.



## STEP 8: IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

- **Harvest Responsibly:** Follow sustainable harvesting methods to avoid over-harvesting and ensure long-term viability of the crop.
- **Record-Keeping:** Maintain records of harvesting dates, quantities, and locations to provide evidence of sustainable practices.
- **Land Access:** Secure necessary permission or permits for land that is being harvested on.



## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Stay informed about changes in organic standards.
- Network with other wild crop harvesters for shared knowledge and best practices. The Organic Integrity Database can be a helpful resource.
- Participate in workshops/training on organic certification.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

**Organic Integrity Database:** <https://organic.ams.usda.gov/integrity>

**USDA National Organic Program:**

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/programs-offices/national-organic-program>

**Organic Certification Cost Share Program:** <https://ofrf.org/news/cost-share/>