

Overview of Organic Equivalence Arrangements

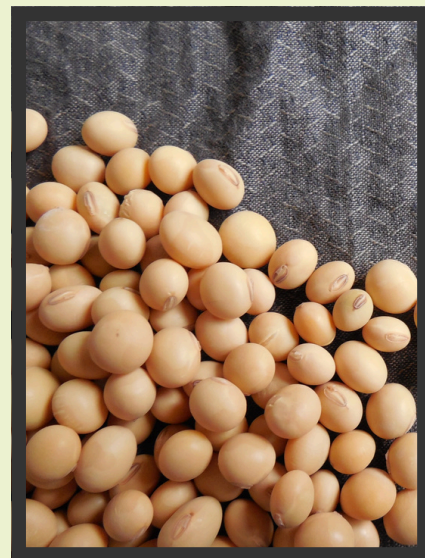
This is a brief overview of equivalency arrangements under the National Organic Program (NOP). Refer to the NOP website and talk to your certifier to confirm details about eligible products, labeling requirements, export documents, etc.

What are equivalency arrangements?

Equivalency arrangements are negotiated trade agreements with other countries or trading partners. The USDA establishes trade arrangements with foreign trading partners to open markets for U.S. farmers and companies and for the benefit of consumers. If USDA and the foreign trading partner determine the foreign organic regulation is equivalent to the USDA Organic Regulations, an agreement can be reached.

While equivalency does not mean the two regulations are exactly the same, according to the NOP, “...they achieve an equivalent level of [organic] compliance and maintain the high organic standards important to both programs.” Companies in both countries may then sell to the other country while being certified to their own domestic organic regulation.

For example, under the U.S.-Japan equivalence arrangement, a U.S. company may export USDA certified organic food-grade soybeans to Japan, and a Japanese company may export Japanese Agricultural Standards organic certified green tea to the U.S.



What do you need to know about these equivalencies for your business?

Your buyers may want verification that you meet requirements of an equivalency so your crop can be used for products that will be exported to another trading partner.

In some cases, there are important differences between the regulations (called “**critical variances**”) that must be met. If you want the option of selling your crop under such arrangements, it’s important to know these critical variances.



Which trading partners have equivalency with the United States ?

- Canada
- European Union
- Japan
- Republic of Korea (i.e., South Korea)
- Switzerland
- Taiwan
- United Kingdom (includes England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland)



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What are the critical variances for crops or livestock for these countries?



Canada:

- Sodium nitrate is prohibited. If sodium nitrate was applied, the crop cannot be used in products marketed to Canada as organic.
- Crops grown using hydroponic or aeroponic production methods cannot be marketed as organic in Canada.
- Nonruminant livestock stocking rates in the Canadian organic regulations must be followed for products derived from nonruminant animals.

Republic of Korea (i.e., South Korea):

- Only processed products (according to the Korean definition) can be exported. There are no critical variances for the crops used in those products.

Taiwan:

- Single-ingredient honey may not be exported as organic. (Organic honey is allowed as an ingredient).
- Livestock may not be treated systemically with analgesics, including procaine and lidocaine.

EU, Japan, Switzerland, UK: There are no critical variances for crops or livestock.

Note: Your organic certifier will verify whether you meet the requirements of the equivalencies. For example, for the US-Canada equivalence arrangement, the certifier will verify that no materials that include sodium nitrate were applied.

What if there is no equivalency with a country I want to sell to?

The USDA Organic Regulations may be sufficient to export to some locations, but most often it is necessary to certify to the domestic regulation of the destination country. Talk to your buyer and organic certifier for more information.

Resources

National Organic Program International Trade Partner page:

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



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