

Export Information United States

Canada/US Organic Equivalency or Import/Export Agreement – 2010/06

On June 17, 2009, the Government of Canada entered into an agreement on the trade of organic products with the United States. The intent of an import-export agreement is to allow organic producers to certify only once to their domestic regulations and simultaneously meet domestic requirements and the import requirements of the importing country.¹

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/orgbioimporte.shtml>

United States Department of Agriculture
National Organic Program

Organic production is a system that is managed in accordance with the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) of 1990 (PDF) and regulations in Title 7, Part 205 of the Code of Federal Regulations to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity. The National Organic Program (NOP) develops, implements, and administers national production, handling, and labeling standards. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop>

The OFPA and the National Organic Program (NOP) regulations require that agricultural products labeled as organic originate from farms or handling operations certified by a State or private entity that has been accredited by USDA.

Understanding Organic Labelling in the United States



The USDA organic seal is used on raw, fresh products and processed products that contain organic agricultural ingredients.

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateA&navID=NationalOrganicProgram&leftNav=NationalOrganicProgram&page=NOPUnderstandingOrganicLabeling&description=Understanding%20Organic%20Labeling&acct=nopgeninfo>

¹ Canadian Food Inspection Agency, "Information on the Canada/US Organic Equivalency or Import/Export Agreement," October 27, 2009.

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/orgbioimporte.shtml>

Does natural mean organic in the United States?

No. Natural and organic are not interchangeable. Other truthful claims, such as free-range, hormone-free, and natural, can still appear on food labels. However, these should not be confused with “organic.”



The FDA and the USDA regulate the term “natural” differently.

- The USDA has had a formal enforcement policy since 1982 and approves each label individually prior to marketing. Recently, it issued an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to clarify this complicated issue.
- The FDA has sent a number of warning letters to companies over the years, but has never issued formal rules on the matter and takes enforcement action only after the fact. Unfortunately, both agencies have allowed deceptive claims to remain in the marketplace.²

There is no actual symbol or certification for the term “natural.”

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² Center for Science in the Public Interest, “Food Labeling Chaos – The Case for Reform,” Part X-1, pg. 105, March 2010.
http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/food_labeling_chaos_report.pdf