



Organic at the Farmers' Market

FARMERS' MARKET BEST PRACTICES GUIDELINES

The purpose of this guide is to help organic producers and farmers' market managers better understand how the word "organic" may be used at farmers' markets. CCOF has developed these Best Practices to help prevent confusion about the proper way to display organic produce, and to help organic consumers make educated decisions in their purchases at farmers' markets. These guidelines speak specifically to California Farmer's Market practices. Growers outside California should check with their state agriculture department for information on how farmers' markets' are regulated in their state.

Prevent Commingling of Organic and Non-Organic Products

The USDA organic regulations require organic farmers and processors to implement measures to ensure clear tracking of organic and non-organic products, and to protect organic product from contact with prohibited substances.*

Organic and non-organic products must be separated during transport. For example growers may have yellow bins for organic product and white bins for their non-organic product to clearly distinguish and separate products during transport.

Organic and non-organic products must also be physically separated on the table or display area. It is also required to have signage which clearly identifies organic and non-organic products (see 1a and 1b).

Product displays must be arranged so that organic products and non-organic products cannot touch (see 2a and 2b), unless they are separated by packaging. To prevent accidental mixing, organic and non-organic versions of the same product (such as tomatoes) should not be placed side by side.



*USDA National Organic Program Standards SS 205.272

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Clear Differentiation of Organic and Non-Organic Products

Many farmers have both organic and non-organic products for sale. Many consumers see the word "organic" in a farm name (such as "ABC Organic Farm") or see an "organic" sign and believe that all of the products being sold at that booth are organic. This is not always true! There must be clear signage stating which products are organic and which are non-organic to prevent unintentional misrepresentation of products sold at the same booth.

If the farm has "organic" in their farm name or has other signage (such as the "CCOF Certified Organic" sign) indicating that the farm is organic, then all non-organic products must be clearly labeled as such.

This labeling could look like:

- » Signs on each product stating whether it is organic or not
- » A single sign stating which products are organic and which are not should be used as illustrated in this photo

It is not acceptable for a farm selling organic and non-organic products to have an "organic" sign or use the word "organic" in their farm name unless they have the type of signage described above.

Appropriate Organic Claims & Organic Certification

"Organic" is a federally regulated term. Only farmers that are certified, or small enough to be exempt, can legally use this term.

The use of language such as "better than organic," "have applied for organic certification," "almost organic," etc. is misleading and may not be used.



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Misleading

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Proof of Organic Certification and Registration*

All operations should post their organic registration and certification in plain view. This is a requirement of farmers' markets that are part of the California Department of Food and Agriculture Certified Farmers' Market producer program.

Signage for Operations Exempt from Certification

Farms may be exempt from organic certification if they sell less than \$5,000 of organic product annually. Such "exempt" farms must still be registered with the California Department of Food and Agriculture as an organic producer, and have that organic registration document available in their market booth. Only those who fall under this exemption category may use the words "organic" without being certified. They must not use the words "certified organic" to refer to their products.

Prohibit the Use of "No spray" or "Pesticide Free" Signs

Signs describing production methods such as "No spray" or "Pesticide Free" can also be misleading to consumers and should not be allowed at farmers' markets.

"No spray" or "Pesticide Free" are not verified claims and do not mean that the crops were grown without poisonous chemicals through methods such as fumigation or application of chemical fertilizers. Only certified organic products are third party verified as being produced without such chemicals. Market managers have the right to prohibit "No spray" or "Pesticide Free" signage if it is stated in their market rules.** If this is not stated in market rules and producers continue to use such language, the state-based standardization programs may take samples for verification.



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May Be Prohibited

*Ca Code of Regs Conditions of Direct Marketing 1392.4

**Food and Ag Code 47004 A gives the authority to the Market to have more restrictive rules in the market's rules and regulations.