

# Avoid Certification Delays



ORGANIC FACT SHEET

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## Certification is a Three Step Process

When you submit your completed application and Organic System Plan(s), the file goes through a three main steps before a certificate can be issued. This fact sheet will help you understand the steps and avoid common mistakes that delay the process.

### Initial Review

The first step is the “Initial Review” of application forms. The Initial Review confirms that all necessary information has been provided to begin our determination of compliance with the National Organic Standards.

To ensure that your application is complete, MOSA provides a checklist with your application forms. Make sure that you have completed this checklist before submitting your application. If information is missing, we’ll send a letter noting what’s needed. , Your file cannot move forward to inspection until we find apparent compliance with the regulations.

### Inspection

Once you have received notice that the Initial Review is complete, your file will move on to a qualified organic inspector. The inspector will contact you to arrange a time to visit your operation. Farm inspections must be completed during the growing season.

## Quick Facts

- All certification requests undergo a three step process: Initial Review, Inspection and Final Review.
- Missing information will prevent your file from moving through the process.
- Avoid “Show stoppers” during Final Review by reading our list of common mistakes.

The primary job of the organic inspector is to verify that the information provided on your Organic System Plan matches what is really going on at the operation. They will review the OSP with you, update any changes to the operation, collect additional information necessary for final review and visually inspect all aspects of the operation.

If there is missing information, or areas of concern, the inspector will discuss these with you during the Exit Interview. An inspector does not make any certification decisions, but acts as a reporter, verifying the OSP and writing a report that is used to determine compliance during the last step - Final Review.

## The Final Review

In the MOSA office we have a list of what we refer to as “show stoppers” during the Final Review process. A show stopper is a critical piece of missing information, which will prevent your file from moving on through the process and prevent us from issuing your certificate.

If we are missing information and are unable to complete our certification decision, we will send a Pre-Decision Requirements letter (PDR) before issuing our certification decision letter. These letters may identify the issues you need to correct, or information you need to supply, before your certificate can be issued.

Here is a list of the most common reasons we would need to issue a PDR:

- **Seed receipts that were not viewed or were not available at inspection.**
- **Non-GMO and/or untreated verification for seed that was not available at inspection.**
- **An incomplete Organic System Plan.**
- **Incomplete Field history or Prior Land Use Declaration (PLUD) forms for new land.**
- **Missing or incomplete field maps.**
- **Use of a crop or livestock input that has not been reviewed or is prohibited.**
- **Missing verification of organic status of livestock or livestock feed from an inspection audit.**

- **Missing Winter & Summer Livestock rations forms for ruminant animals.**
- **Missing or incomplete livestock list.**
- **Non-compliant labels, labels that have not been reviewed, or misleading/inaccurate website/marketing materials.**
- **Missing MOSA Terms & Conditions Agreement (MTCA).**
- **Unpaid fees.**
- **Other items, depending on their relevance to your operation and/or determining compliance with the National Organic Standards.**

The best way to avoid these “show stoppers” is to have all Organic System Plan and audit information available at your inspection. The deadline for responding to a PDR is typically three weeks, but it is best to get the requested information in as soon as possible so that we can offer clarification if your response is incomplete. If more time is needed, or if it is unclear what information is being requested, please contact the certification specialist working on your file. Their name will be on the bottom of your PDR letter, and they are the best equipped to answer specific questions about your certification process.

MOSA is committed to making certification as clear, open and transparent as possible. We welcome your questions at every step along the way. Please contact our friendly staff - we are happy to help.

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