

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Is AsureQuality's certification internationally recognised?**

Yes the AsureQuality Organic Standard is NZFSA and IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movement) accredited and based on the EU Regulations as well as the Australian National Standard. This gives AsureQuality certified products access to organic markets worldwide.

**Q. How do I confirm that AsureQuality is recognised by the USDA?**

*USDA Recognition of a Foreign Government's Conformity Assessment Program as Authorized under 7 C.F.R. §205.500(c)(1)*

The Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has determined the following foreign government conformity assessment programs sufficient to ensure conformity to the technical standards of USDA's National Organic Program (NOP). These determinations allow organic certification organizations in good standing, under the programs listed below, to apply the NOP technical standards to certify operations that produce or handle New Zealand agricultural products that will be sold, labeled or represented as organic in the United States. Production or handling operations certified by an organization that is recognized under these determinations may only use the USDA organic seal on their products when those products have been produced and handled in accordance to the NOP regulations.

*1. New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (NZ MAF) Effective Date of Recognition: December 2, 2002 Status: Current Certification Organizations in Good Standing as of December 2, 2002:*

1. Bio-Gro New Zealand Ltd
2. AsureQuality New Zealand Ltd

This can be found at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/NOP/TradeIssues/NewZealand.html>

**Q. If I am currently certified as organic, can I transfer this to the AsureQuality Organic Standard?**

Yes, if you meet the AsureQuality Standard you can have your organic status transferred.

**Q. How long does it take to become certified organic?**

That depends on the nature of your business. Some rough guidelines are, up to two years for livestock, two years for annual horticulture crops and three years for perennials but these are subject to individual variables such as the nature of your property. Farms that are in a transition stage and have been using organic practices for a period of 12 months or more may label their products as "conversion to organic" provided all requirements are met.

**Q. If I have already been implementing organic practices, can my certification period be shortened?**

Yes. In this situation you should request an affidavit to legally declare that you have implemented organic practices and subject to an auditor's inspection and soil tests your conversion period may be shortened. See Appendix (h).

**Q. Do I have to convert my entire property all at once?**

No, but all organics including land, production areas and storage facilities must remain separate from non-organic areas.

**Q. I have returned my Registration Form and Management Plan/s, when can I expect an auditor to visit me?**

Once you have returned your Registration Form and Management Plan/s AsureQuality will contact you to arrange an audit date. You can expect an auditor to visit within approximately three months.

**Q. How often will I be audited?**

Audits occur annually as part of the certification process but in addition to this AsureQuality will randomly audit 10-15% of certified practices every year.

**Q. Does being organic involve more than just the elimination of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers?**

Yes, an organic certification assures consumers of much more than food that is free of synthetic pesticide and fertiliser. An organic certification includes a broad range of requirements such as the implementation of sustainable growing practices, the omission of genetically modified organisms, and that animals are raised in a humane manner, fed only organic feed and are given no synthetic hormones or antibiotics. Although the use of antibiotics is prohibited, animal health is of great importance and every attempt possible should be made to minimise stress to the animal, such as ensuring appropriate density of animals and responding rapidly to those sick or injured.

**Q. How can I let people know I am Certified Organic?**

AsureQuality have signs, stickers and logos you can use to let people know you are certified full organic, or in conversion. You can apply for our mark to print on your packaging using the Mark Licence Application Form in your pack.

The signs are ideal for putting on your gates and boundaries to let your neighbours know that you are organic. They are also good for taking to trade shows, or putting in your organic store. Your first full, or in-conversion organic sign from AsureQuality is free, with each subsequent sign being \$30 excluding GST.

The stickers can be placed on produce or packaging to advertise your organic status until your packaging has been redesigned. The organic stickers are in rolls of 5000 and cost \$65 including GST. Signs and stickers can be ordered from AsureQuality Customer Services.

**Q. I have been provided with an AsureQuality Certified Organic mark. Can I change the mark to suit my packaging?**

The AsureQuality Organic mark is available in a range of formats, both in colour and black and white but you need to adhere to the minimum logo size. All information regarding the use of the AsureQuality Organic mark is in the licence agreement that is included in this pack. See Appendix (a).

**Q. What happens if I want to go organic and my neighbour isn't?**

An agreement with your neighbour needs to be made so that any effects they may have on your property can be minimised. Measures that could be implemented include spraying when there is no wind or the wind is blowing in a favourable direction, planting hedges or having buffer zones between the properties.

**Q. Where can a list of organisations with AsureQuality organic certification be found?**

We have a list of organisations that are certified to the AsureQuality Organic Standard available on our website. This is a PDF file that can be downloaded or printed off, and will be updated regularly ([www.asurequality.com](http://www.asurequality.com)). Alternatively, contact us on 0508 00 11 22 and a list can be sent through to you. (Note: this list may not be complete as it is subject to consent from each organic practice).

**Q. I live in a very remote area; will an auditor be able to visit me?**

Yes, AsureQuality have organic auditors that cover all of New Zealand and even do audits for overseas organisations on request.