



## I'll say goodbye to organic certification

Posted by [Leslie Price](#)

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[Leslie Price](#)

[I'll say goodbye to organic certification](#)

May 13, 2020 06:52AM

Registered: 5 years ago

Posts: 20

For 15 years it was a struggle to keep up with the always changing and always more burdensome mountain of bureaucracy that the Washington State Dept of Agriculture required for organic certification but at least it seemed the annual fees kept in line with farm sales. My family farm is very small and has hovered around the minimum sales figures or maybe one or two tiers higher depending on conditions. This year, after sending in the annual application and fees I was then inspected as usual and then I received a bill for an amount equal to about 4 times the original application fee! This is the first year WSDA has done this and I imagine it is impacting a lot of small growers. I wrote a letter and got back a short note with total lack of concern.

So I gave up my certification, frankly its just not that important anyway, but I am very concerned as to the trend of segregating out small growers that WSDA is now engaged in.

Leslie Price  
Jones Creek Farms  
Lyman, WA  
zone 8a  
skagitvalleyfruit.com

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 05/13/2020 06:54AM by Leslie Price.

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[Karen Brindle](#)

[Re: I'll say goodbye to organic certification](#)

May 13, 2020 07:35AM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 103

Oh that is wrong on so many levels, organic food prices will be going up, availability reduced, I'm so sorry to hear this.

[Vista Ridge Orchard](#)

Zone 8a in Washington

235 Cider and heritage apple trees, 72 varieties,

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[Todd Parlo](#)

[Re: I'll say goodbye to organic certification](#)

May 13, 2020 10:20PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 301

I had no idea there was so much discrepancy state to state. In Vermont, an orchard grossing up to 99,999 dollars only pays 500.00 total fee, of which 75 percent is returned from the feds. That leaves 125.00 a year. We don't have to pay the whole 500 up front at filing time. All calculating is done at inception, so there wouldn't be a surprise. For us, 125.00 is about what we would pay for a single newspaper ad, so an organic label is very cheap advertising.

Whether or not organic really means anything anymore (or ever), is another discussion entirely. There are a lot of words to say about the greenwashing and inconsistencies in this system.

[Walden Heights Nursery & Orchard](#)

Zone 3 in Vermont

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[Leslie Price](#)

[Re: I'll say goodbye to organic certification](#)

May 14, 2020 07:36AM

Registered: 5 years ago

Posts: 20

Here in Washington there are 3 income tiers below 100,000.00 one can fall into, the lowest one being less than 25,000.00 annual. And yes the pricing always has been up front at application time.... only makes sense, right? This year however I sent in my 200.00 application fee based on my last years income plus some other nonsense like site fees and new products. It was after this that they came out with their new system and sent bills to everyone for inspection fees. These fees were not listed on the application. My total fee then went up to 1,075.00. So, if I had that money up front, I could have filed for the feds rebate and waited months for the max of 750.00 but at this point ive had

enough. Im not going to keep shoveling money into what is obvious to me a broken system. For all I know, and would bet, WSDA is gaming the system. After years of watching the farmers getting all these checks from the feds they decided they could raise the fees and get their share of the pot.

(file that last rant under conspiracy threads)

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[Reply Quote](#)

[Pat Pryal](#)

[Re: I'll say goodby to organic certification](#)

May 17, 2020 03:49PM

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 76

My wife and I grow vegetables and cut flowers to sell at 2 farmers markets and we grow everything organically, but we have never been certified and our customers don't really care about that certification. we have a sign that states we grow with no sprays, chemicals or non organic fertilizers and they are fine with that. Never had a customer turn away because we didn't have that certification. All the BS with record keeping , fee's, etc.....no way !

Leslie, I think you'll find that not having that certification won't hurt you at all....good luck, this year could be tough. We're expecting a 30% drop in sales because of reduced traffic at the markets.

Pat

Brampton Lake Orchards

Zone 4a Upper Michigan

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[Todd Parlo](#)

[Re: I'll say goodby to organic certification](#)

May 17, 2020 10:48PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 301

I agree that in places like farmers markets, farm stands, events, and the like really do not require organic certification to increase sales. These of course are places where there is opportunity to tell your story, verbally, with signage, etc. I would even include specialty stores and small co ops. However, if you are wholesaling to retail outlets it is very unlikely that your story will be told. This leaves a more "wholesome" apple (rutabega, whatever) right next to a "conventional" one with little to distinguish them to the average buyer. Here lies one of the only good arguments for that organic sticker- people (sort of) understand what they are getting. If you had to read the placard for every item in a market to understand what you were getting you would go nuts. The alternative is an expensive marketing campaign for your own growing practices. This could be more an argument for supporting local systems, including small stores, co ops and farmers markets, and knowing your farmer. How you do that in a metropolitan area where the nearest farm is 90 minutes away I have no idea. So, my two cents is that the certified organic model sucks, but at the moment its better than nothing if you have volume that is going wholesale.

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