



# Ensuring Organic Integrity

## Introduction to OMRI with FAQs

### About OMRI

OMRI is a nonprofit organization serving the organic community and the public by verifying “inputs,” such as fertilizers and other products intended for use in producing certified organic food or fiber. Products that meet the USDA organic regulations are listed in the *OMRI Products List*<sup>®</sup> and are allowed to display the OMRI Listed<sup>®</sup> seal on their labels and in advertising. For the Canadian market, OMRI reviews products to the Canadian Organic Standards and compliant products may display the OMRI Canada seal. You can always search or download the latest *OMRI Products List* or *OMRI Canada Products List*<sup>®</sup> at [OMRI.org](http://OMRI.org).



### Product Manufacturers

OMRI is a voluntary program that offers manufacturers an independent and confidential review of their products to assure compliance with the organic standards. More than just a look at the label, OMRI review includes ingredient verification and evaluation of the manufacturing process to ensure that OMRI Listed products are made without prohibited substances. As a result, farmers and producers recognize and rely on OMRI and the OMRI seal to help protect the integrity of their organic systems. Interested suppliers can contact OMRI or visit the OMRI website to order an Application Kit and start the listing process.

### Home Gardeners

For home gardeners, the OMRI seal helps simplify organic buying options. Products with the OMRI seal have been reviewed and approved for organic growing. It is also helpful to check the *OMRI Products List*, available free online at [OMRI.org](http://OMRI.org), for the most current listings. OMRI lists products for specific uses, so it's important to make sure the category matches your intended use for the product. For example, a product that is OMRI Listed as a livestock feed may not be allowed for use as a fertilizer. It's recommended that gardeners check the *OMRI Products List* to make sure the intended use is allowed for organic production.

### Organic Producers

Organic growers and producers can use OMRI Listed products with confidence because certifiers accept OMRI's product review decisions. Thousands of certified farmers use the *OMRI Products List* or *OMRI Canada Products List*. OMRI also offers a subscription program that provides organic operators and professionals with current and comprehensive information about materials for organic use. OMRI subscribers receive timely answers to their questions and copies of all OMRI publications: the *OMRI Products List* and quarterly updates, the *OMRI Generic Materials List* and the *OMRI Materials Review* newsletter, with all the latest news and standards developments.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Are OMRI Listed products “certified organic”?

Products that pass OMRI’s rigorous review are considered “OMRI Listed” and “allowed for use in certified organic production,” but inputs like fertilizers and livestock health care products are not eligible for organic certification. Although the term “organic” is federally regulated for food and fiber, there is very little oversight of its use on input product labels. Input materials claiming to be “organic” or “natural” are not certified under any federal laws. To be sure that a product is suitable for organic use, organic producers, gardeners and certifiers check the *OMRI Products List* and always look for the OMRI seal.

### How does OMRI review products?

Manufacturers of input products show their commitment to organics by voluntarily applying and submitting all of the necessary product information, along with full payment in advance. This payment structure helps to ensure an impartial review process. The application includes all ingredient information and a full description of the manufacturing process, as well as additional information specific to each product use (i.e., crops, livestock, processing and the various use categories). On average, between 10-20% of the products that apply to OMRI do not qualify for OMRI listing and are prohibited.

### What are use restrictions?

Some OMRI Listed products are “Allowed with Restrictions.” OMRI developed the use restrictions to tell users about important qualifications for using the product in a certified organic system. All use restrictions are based on the organic standards. The use restrictions provide organic growers and producers with guidance to ensure they use the product in a manner that is compliant with the standards.

### The OMRI website refers to products and generic materials. What’s the difference?

“OMRI Listed” products are brand name, formulated products available for purchase from a retailer. The *OMRI Products List* and *OMRI Canada Products List* include specific product names and manufacturer contact information. “Generic materials” are the broader substances or individual ingredients that may go into a product. The OMRI website materials search and printed *Generic Materials List* and *OMRI Canada Standards Manual* offer guidance concerning which materials are allowed. This is helpful information for formulating a blended fertilizer or other input, or to research questions about the ingredients in a product.

### Who decides what materials can be used in organic production? How and when do these rules change?

In the U.S., the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA) created the organic standards and a government body under the USDA called the National Organic Program (NOP) to oversee implementation. The National Organic Standards generally allow inputs made from nonsynthetic materials, as well as a “National List” of allowed synthetics. More information is available on the OMRI website through the Links page. To allow for changes in the industry, OFPA required establishment of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The NOSB is comprised of representatives from various sectors of the organic industry. Anyone can petition the NOSB to allow or disallow a certain material, or to amend the standards in another way. Materials on the National List are also re-reviewed through a “sunset” process every five years to incorporate new information, and to research potential alternatives. OMRI attends all NOSB meetings and presents clarifying comments to the board. The NOSB has also asked OMRI to research individual materials and provide Technical Reports to help them make determinations concerning the use of that material.

Amendments to the Canadian Organic Standards are developed by the Technical Committee on Organic Agriculture and finalized by the Canadian General Standards Board. Amendments are made in response to public comment and petitions. Because the Canadian Organic Standards are “owned” by the organic industry, working groups of industry experts review comments and petitions and create proposals to approve, reject, or approve changes with edits. Working groups then present the proposed changes to a sub-group of the Technical Committee to debate the changes and approve or reject them. Proposed changes are then presented to the organic industry for public comment and vote by the entire Technical Committee. Ongoing interpretations of the standard are also provided and published by the Standards Interpretation Committee. OMRI staff participates as a non-voting Technical Committee member.

