

Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau Ask Laura Column May 2017 (printed June 2017)
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Q: What can you tell me about the Organic Certification Cost Share Program?

A: If you are a certified organic farmer or handler this federal program could be very helpful to you. The 2017 cost share program is administered by the US Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (USDA - FSA). The FSA Service Center, which assists Santa Cruz County farmers, is located in Salinas. Alternatively, you may also contact the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) in Sacramento for assistance.

To participate you must be certified by a USDA Accredited Certifying Agent, for example, California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF), Monterey County Certified Organic or Quality Assurance International (QAI), among others. The program will reimburse you for eligible certification expenses incurred between October 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. Eligible expenses include, but are not limited to, those associated with application fees, inspection costs and sales assessments. Ineligible costs include, but are not limited to, those associated with transitional certification fees, late fees and materials and supplies. Farmers and handlers may be reimbursed for up to 75 percent of certification costs or a maximum of \$750 for each “certification scope”. Scopes include crops, livestock, handling and state program fees.

To apply for reimbursement of eligible expenses, you will need to fill out an application, show proof of certification, submit an itemized invoice of certification costs, and may also be asked to submit additional information. Program contacts for this area are:

USDA – Farm Service Agency
744 LaGuardia Street, Suite A
Salinas, CA 93905
Contact: Vivian Soffa
Telephone: (831) 424-7377 ext 2
<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/occspl/>

California Department of Food and Agriculture
Organic Cost Share Program
Attn: Sharon Parsons
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
sparsons@cdfa.ca.gov
<https://organic.cdfa.ca.gov/costshare/>

Eligible certification expenses are reimbursed on a “first come, first serve” basis; the program may end earlier than September 30, 2017 if allocated funds for the program have been expended.

Please contact our office with any additional questions you may have!