



U.S. – Japan Organic Equivalence Arrangement Questions and Answers

The U.S. has an “equivalence arrangement” with Japan. What does this mean?

This means that as long as the terms of the arrangement are met, U.S. and Japanese organic products certified to the USDA organic standards or Japanese Agricultural Standards (JAS) may be sold, labeled, and represented as organic in both countries. As long as the operation is certified by a USDA-accredited or Japan-accredited certifying agent, this arrangement facilitates access to each country’s organic market.

Does Japan accept the USDA organic seal? Does the U.S. accept Japan’s organic seal?

Yes. As a result of the trade arrangement, either organic seal may be used on products traded under the arrangement. Products traded under the arrangement must meet the labeling requirements in the destination country. Labeling requirements: [U.S.](#) | [Japan](#)

When does this equivalency arrangement take effect? Is there an implementation period?

The equivalency arrangement was announced September 26, 2013. However, products cannot be traded under the arrangement until its effective date of January 1, 2014.

Which products can be traded under the arrangement?

Plant or plant-based products. The arrangement includes organic plant, including fungi, and plant-based processed products of U.S. or Japanese origin. This includes products that were either (1) produced within the U.S. or Japan or (2) products whose final processing or packaging occurs within the U.S. or Japan.

Other organic products. This partnership also clarifies how USDA organic dairy products, meat, alcoholic beverages, and other products not regulated by the JAS law can enter the Japanese organic market.

What happens if an organic operation or certifying agent violates the terms of the arrangement?

Significant non-compliances will be reported to both countries and appropriate enforcement actions may be pursued under the respective country’s regulations.



What are the next steps that the U.S. and Japan will take to implement the arrangement?

To ensure that the terms of the equivalency arrangement are being met, the U.S. (USDA National Organic Program) and Japan (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) will conduct regular assessments of each other's organic certification systems.

Shipping USDA organic products from the U.S. to Japan

What is required to ship USDA organic products to Japan?

Products must be certified to the USDA organic standards, and must meet all Japanese organic labeling requirements (including compliant use of the JAS organic seal). Certain products have specific documentation requirements (see below).

Can USDA organic products produced outside the U.S. be exported to Japan under this arrangement?

No. In order to be exported to Japan under this arrangement, USDA organic products must be produced within the U.S. or have their final processing or packaging occur within the U.S.

What is the JAS organic seal?

The JAS organic seal verifies that the product has met all requirements in the Japanese Agricultural Standards (JAS) for organic products.

Which products may carry the JAS organic seal?

All organic plants, including fungi, and plant-based processed products must be labeled with the JAS organic seal if they are sold as organic in Japan.

Which products may not carry the JAS organic seal?

Products not regulated by the JAS law—such as meat, dairy products, or alcoholic beverages—can't be labeled with the JAS organic seal under the terms of the arrangement.



Can a U.S. operation apply the JAS organic seal to their products?

Any plants, including fungi, and plant-based processed products sold or labeled as organic in Japan must be labeled with the JAS organic seal. These products must be imported by a JAS-certified importer. The JAS organic seal may be applied using one of two methods:

Method 1. If a U.S.-based farm or business wishes to apply the JAS organic seal to their products in the U.S., they must contract with a JAS-certified importer.

Method 2. If the U.S.-based farm or business doesn't have a contract with a JAS-certified importer, a JAS-certified importer must apply the seal to the product once it arrives in Japan.

For a list of JAS-certified importers, see <http://www.maff.go.jp/e/jas/specific/organic.html>.

Are products in the USDA's "made with organic..." labeling category included in the arrangement?

No. Japan doesn't have a labeling category "made with organic..." like the U.S. does. Only products with 95% or more organic content may be labeled as organic in Japan.

What about products in USDA's "100 percent organic" labeling category?

Japan doesn't have a "100% organic" labeling category like the U.S. does. However, these products—and any product above 95% organic ingredients—could be labeled "organic."

What documentation is required for products traded under the arrangement?

All organic plants, including fungi, and plant-based processed products exported from the U.S. to Japan must be accompanied by an export certificate. It is used to document the production location, identify the certifying agent, certify that the terms of the partnership were met, and allow traded products to be tracked. View the USDA's TM-11 export certificate: <http://bit.ly/usda-organic-export>.

Export certificates aren't required for products not regulated by the JAS law, such as meat, dairy products, honey, or alcoholic beverages. However, alcoholic beverages labeled with the word "organic" in the Japanese language must be accompanied by an export certificate that includes the name of the certified alcoholic beverage, the name and the address of the certified farm or brewery, the number and date of certification, the address and name of the operator, the country of origin, and the address and name of the certifying body.



How do U.S. operations obtain an export certificate?

To start, U.S. operations should inform their certifying agent that they wish to ship products to Japan. Certifying agents will ask the operator a few questions, complete the form, and return it to the operator for inclusion with their shipment of organic products. The list of USDA-accredited certifying agents is available at www.ams.usda.gov/NOPACAs.

Shipping JAS organic products to the U.S.

What is required to ship JAS-eligible organic products to the U.S.?

Products must be certified to the JAS organic standards, and must meet all USDA organic labeling requirements (including compliant use of the USDA organic seal). Organic products must also travel with a U.S. import certificate signed by a certifying agent accredited by the USDA or Japanese government.

Can products not regulated by the JAS law be sold as organic in the U.S.?

Yes. Products that aren't plants, including fungi, or plant-based processed products must be certified to the USDA organic regulations by a USDA accredited certifier. Such products include dairy products, meat, and alcoholic beverages.

Can plants and plant-based processed products in conversion to organic be traded under this arrangement?

The U.S. doesn't have a "transition to organic" labeling category like Japan does. Therefore plants and plant-based processed products in conversion to organic can't be traded under the terms of this arrangement.

Can organic products produced outside of Japan be exported to the U.S. under this arrangement?

No. In order to be exported to the U.S. under this arrangement, Japanese organic products must be produced within Japan or have their final processing or packaging occur within Japan.



Who completes the U.S. import certificate?

Upon request of the organic operation or shipper, a JAS-accredited certifying agent completes the U.S. import certificate. The completed import certificate accompanies the product to the U.S. The list of recognized JAS certifying agents is available here: www.maff.go.jp/e/jas/specific/organic.html.

How do JAS operators obtain a U.S. import certificate?

To start, JAS operations should inform their certifying agent that they wish to ship products to the U.S. Certifying agents will ask the operator a few questions, complete the form (<http://1.usa.gov/nop-import-certificate>), and return it to the operator for inclusion with their shipment of organic products.