

That big “ORGANIC” on a front label may catch your eye, but it does not tell you the whole story. The useful clues are the exact wording, the ingredients list and—when a product claims USDA organic certification—the certifier’s name. A seal is helpful, but it is not a substitute for checking the label details.

This matters whether you are shopping for food, skincare or a hemp-derived product in East Africa. A US label may use a recognised certification system, but “organic” is not a [potentash.com](https://www.potentash.com) promise that a product will suit your skin, work better or be free from allergens. Organic certification is mainly about how agricultural ingredients are produced and handled—not a guarantee of product performance.

Here is a quick way to read the wording, including the **100% organic wording**, **organic 95 percent wording** and **made with organic wording** used under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Organic Program.

The aisle check: three things to look for

1. **Find the precise claim.** Does it say “100 percent organic”, “organic”, or “made with organic...”? These phrases do not mean the same thing.
2. **Look for the certifier.** On a product making a USDA organic claim, check the information panel for the name of the certifying agent—not just a leaf graphic or the word “organic”.
3. **Read the ingredients and product category.** The USDA rules apply to eligible agricultural products. A label on a cosmetic or other non-food product may use “organic” differently, so do not assume the USDA seal applies to every product type.

If you have only a few seconds, turn the pack over. Front-of-pack language is designed to sell; the ingredients and certification details are where you can test what the claim actually means.

What the USDA organic wording means

The USDA has set categories for eligible products that meet its organic production and handling standards. In general, the tiers describe the proportion of organic ingredients and the rules governing the remaining ingredients. The percentage is not a rating of how “healthy” or effective the product is.

Label wording	What it means under USDA rules	Can it use the USDA Organic seal?
“100 percent organic”	All ingredients, excluding water and salt, must be certified organic.	Yes, the seal may be used.
“Organic”	At least 95% of the ingredients, excluding water and salt, must be certified organic. The remaining ingredients must meet USDA rules.	Yes, the seal may be used.
“Made with organic...”	At least 70% of the product’s ingredients, excluding water and salt, must be certified organic. The label can name up to three organic ingredients or ingredient categories.	No. The USDA Organic seal may not be used for this category.
Less than 70% organic ingredients	The product cannot use the main “organic” claim on the front in the same way. It may identify specific certified organic ingredients in the ingredients list, subject to the rules.	No.

“100 percent organic” wording

The **100% organic wording** is the strongest of these percentage claims: all ingredients, apart from water and salt, have to be certified organic. If the claim is valid under the USDA programme, the product may display the USDA Organic seal. The seal is optional, so its absence does not automatically disprove a claim; still, you should be able to find the certifier’s details and check that the claim is being used for a product covered by the programme.

Do not read “100 percent organic” as “100 percent natural” or “safe for everyone”. It describes organic production and handling under the applicable standard. It does not establish that a product is hypoallergenic, pesticide-free in an absolute sense, or suitable for a particular health need.

“Organic” and the 95 percent threshold

For the **organic 95 percent wording**, at least 95% of the ingredients—again, excluding water and salt—must be certified organic. The rest cannot simply be anything a manufacturer chooses: it must comply with the programme’s rules for permitted ingredients and substances. Products in this category may use the USDA Organic seal.

That “95%” is about ingredient composition, not a 95% guarantee of quality, purity or benefit. But here’s the catch:. It also does not mean that every ingredient has been grown on the same farm or in the same country. Certification verifies compliance with a standard, not a particular origin story unless the label separately substantiates that information.

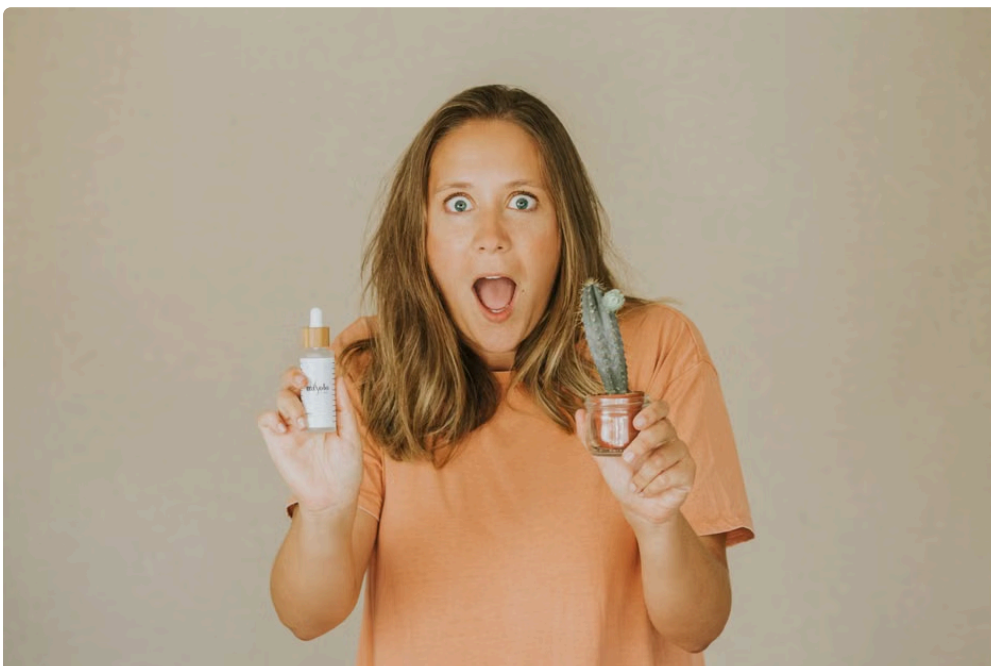
“Made with organic...”

The made with organic wording applies to products with at least 70% certified organic ingredients, excluding water and salt. The label may say, for example, “made with organic oats” or identify an eligible organic ingredient category. This reminds me of something that happened made a mistake that cost them thousands.. It can name up to three organic ingredients or categories in that statement.

This tier cannot use the USDA Organic seal, and the product cannot be presented as simply “organic” in the same way as a product meeting the 95% threshold. A package that puts “made with organic...” in small print but gives a much larger “organic” impression on the front deserves a closer look. Read the full claim rather than relying on the most prominent word.

Seal versus sales language

The **USDA Organic seal** is a regulated mark for eligible products certified under the USDA programme. It is different from a brand’s own leaf icon, farm illustration or green badge. A logo can look official without being an independent certification mark, so check who issued it and what standard it represents.



Words such as “**natural**”, “**clean**” and “**pure**” are not interchangeable with USDA organic certification. They may be useful descriptions in context, but by themselves they do not tell you that ingredients were certified organic. “Natural” can refer to a product’s positioning; “clean” may be a brand’s own language; and “pure” needs a clear explanation of what is pure and how that is established.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates many aspects of food, drugs and cosmetics, but it does not operate the USDA organic certification programme. The USDA sets and oversees the organic standard for eligible products. The FDA’s role is not a shortcut for confirming that a front-label organic claim is certified. In practical terms: a product being regulated by the FDA does not, by itself, mean it is USDA organic.

Where should the certifier’s name appear?

For products making USDA organic label claims, the label must identify the USDA-accredited certifying agent on the information panel.

Look for wording such as “Certified organic by [certifier name]” or an equivalent statement. This is why checking the certifier line matters: it connects the claim to the organisation that certified the product, rather than leaving “organic” as an unsupported front-label impression.

The certifier is not necessarily the manufacturer or the farm. It is the organisation that assesses compliance with the standard. If you cannot find the certifier’s name, the package may be incomplete, the claim may relate to a different certification scheme, or the product may not be covered by USDA certification. Ask the seller or brand for clarification rather than assuming that a seal-like graphic proves certification.

Certification rules vary by country and scheme. A product sold in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania or elsewhere may carry a non-US organic certification, or may use “organic” descriptively under local rules. In that case, look for the name of the relevant certifier and the standard it verifies. A USDA claim and a different country’s organic mark are not automatically the same certification.

Cosmetics, supplements and hemp products: check the product type

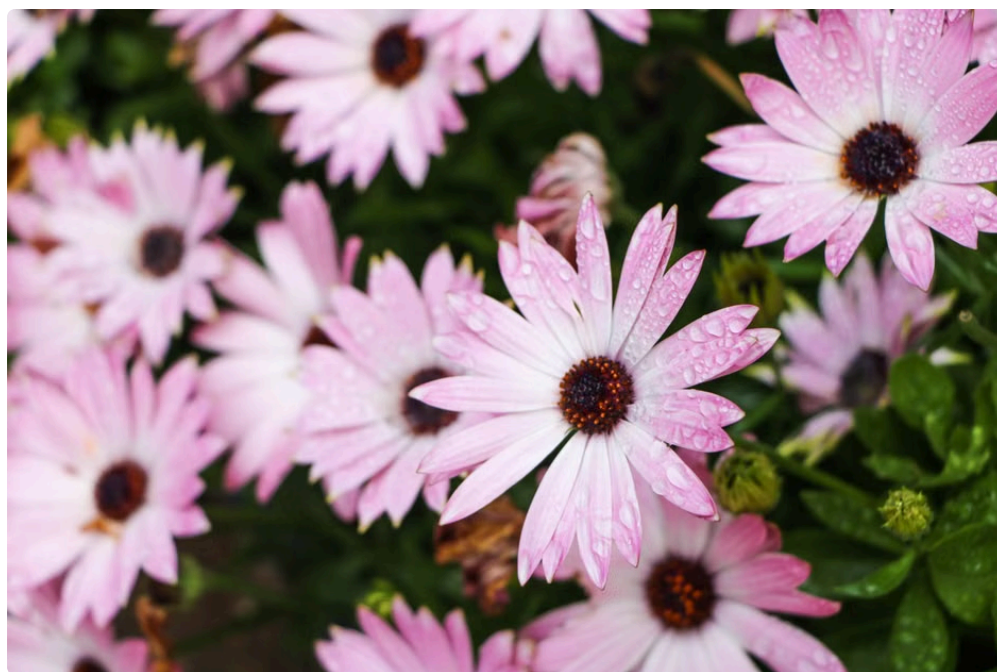
Organic rules can be confusing when a product is not a straightforward food. USDA organic certification is based on agricultural production and handling standards. It may apply to eligible agricultural ingredients or products, but a skincare product is not automatically USDA-certified just because it contains organic plant oils. A cosmetic may also be subject to FDA requirements without being certified organic by the USDA.

For supplements and hemp-derived products, check the exact product and the exact claim. Do not assume that a certification on one ingredient or another product in a brand’s range covers the finished product. For example, if you are considering a product from Joy Organics, check the certification and ingredients information for the specific item and the market where it is sold. A company name or product name is not a substitute for the certifier line.

Also separate organic certification from **batch testing**. Batch testing can provide information about the tested batch and the substances or quality measures included in that test. It does not establish that ingredients were organically produced. In the same way, organic certification does not automatically tell you the results of a particular batch test. They answer different questions, so look for each piece of evidence when it matters to your purchase.

What organic certification does—and does not—tell you

Organic certification is a **process standard**. It verifies that production and handling followed specified requirements, including rules around permitted substances and practices. It is not a direct test of the finished product's effectiveness, nutrition, safety for every person or environmental impact in every respect.



- **It can tell you:** that the product or ingredients meet the requirements of the named organic certification programme, where the claim is valid.
- **It does not automatically tell you:** that the product is hypoallergenic, non-irritating, more nutritious, more effective or appropriate for your medical needs.
- **It does not replace:** checking allergens, use directions, expiry dates, ingredient sensitivities or product-specific test results.

Want to know something interesting? organic is not a synonym for “chemical-free”. Everything made of matter contains chemicals, and organic standards focus on approved production methods and inputs—not on whether something contains chemicals. If you have a known allergy or sensitive skin, compare the full ingredient list and follow advice from a qualified health professional where appropriate.

A 30-second shopping checklist

1. Turn the pack around and find the full organic wording.
2. For a USDA claim, check whether it says “100 percent organic”, “organic” or “made with organic...”.
3. Look for the USDA Organic seal only where the product category is eligible; remember that “made with organic...” products cannot display it.
4. Find the certifier’s name on the information panel. If it is missing or unclear, ask who certified the product and under which standard.
5. Read the ingredients list. The front label cannot tell you whether a particular ingredient is suitable for you.
6. For products where test results matter, look for batch-specific testing separately from organic certification.

The bottom line

When a pack says “organic”, do not stop at the biggest word on the front. Check the precise claim, the applicable certification seal and the certifier’s name. Under USDA rules, “100 percent organic” and “organic” products meet

different thresholds from “made with organic...” products, and only the first two categories may use the USDA Organic seal.

Then keep the claim in perspective. Certification tells you about production and handling standards; it does not promise that a product is safer for you, works better or has passed batch testing. A quick turn of the pack—and a careful look at the wording—can separate a meaningful certification claim from packaging language that merely sounds reassuring.