

## ORGANIC CERTIFICATION FACT SHEET

USDA organic regulations require certified operations to prevent contamination of organic crops from prohibited substances, including preventing contamination from containers that may have come in contact with prohibited substances.

**7CFR Part 205.272** - USDA organic regulations require that organic operations implement measures necessary to protect organic products from contact with prohibited substances.

The regulation also prohibits the use or reuse of any bag or container that has been in contact with any substance in such a manner as to compromise the organic integrity of the organic crop placed in the same container, **unless** the bag or container has been thoroughly cleaned and poses no risk of contamination.

Tree fruit harvest containers may pose a risk of contamination to organic crops. Harvest bins used for non-organic fruit may have been drenched, fogged, or otherwise treated with substances not allowed for use in organic production.

Certified operations must outline the types of harvest containers used with organic crops in their organic system plan. During the on-site inspection, inspectors evaluate the accuracy of the system plan through observations, interviews, and a review of records that confirm there is not a risk of contamination from the reuse of a container.

### **Dedicated Organic Harvest Bins**

Permanently dedicating a plastic or wood harvest bin for organic production is the best way to ensure the container does not pose a risk to organic integrity. Producers and handlers should be prepared to discuss at inspection how their operation ensures bins with permanent and clearly stamped organic designations are used each harvest season.

### **Non-Dedicated Harvest Bins**

If a tree fruit producer or handler is unable to use or provide harvest bins that have been dedicated as *organic only*, additional steps are needed to protect the organic crop.

#### **Plastic Bins**

Non-dedicated plastic bins may be used with organic crops *if* the container is thoroughly cleaned prior to use. Records, such as a seasonal attestation from the packing shed, verifying reused harvest bins were cleaned must be maintained and available for review at inspections.

**Wood Bins**

Wood is a porous material that cannot be thoroughly cleaned if exposed to a prohibited substance. If a wood bin is not permanently dedicated for organic production, it may have been used with non-organic crops in the past. As a result, non-dedicated wood bins pose a high risk of contamination and cannot be used if organic crops will come in contact with the surface of the bin.

Fully lining the wood harvest bins may be a way to prevent contamination, provided the bin and crop will not go into a dump tank after harvest, exposing the organic crop to substances that may have been previously applied to the bin. Records, such as a seasonal attestation from the packing shed, confirming the lined wood bins used for organic crops *will not* be submerged in a dump tank should be available for review at inspections.

**Flowchart for Evaluating Tree Fruit Harvest Bins**



WSDA Organic Program  
 PO Box 42560 | Olympia WA 98504-2560  
 (360) 902-1805 | [organic@agr.wa.gov](mailto:organic@agr.wa.gov)  
[agr.wa.gov/organic](http://agr.wa.gov/organic)