

General

Certification Requirements

1. Do all products on a farm need to be certified to ROC?

No. The ROC program allows for certifying portions of an operation, such as certain fields or products. The ROC levels (Bronze, Silver, and Gold) incorporate two different scope requirements:

- 1) the percentage of the operation land that must be certified, and
- 2) the percentage of total revenue from crops or livestock that the certification represents.

For instance, in order to achieve ROC Silver, >50% of fiber-or-food producing land is required to undergo ROC certification *and* >50% of the operation's revenue is required to be within the operation's ROC scope.

ROC Scope Requirements by Level		Bronze	Silver	Gold
Land	% of fiber-or-food producing land required for ROC certification	N/A	>50%	100%
Revenue	% of fiber or food production revenue required for ROC certification	N/A	>50%	100%

In cases where the ROC levels for these requirements do not align, the certification level shall defer to the lower level. For example, if 60% of the physical land is ROC certified, but this only represents 10% of the operation's revenue from fiber or food production, the operation would receive ROC Bronze certification.

2. Does everything on-farm need to be certified organic before pursuing ROC?

No. Only the portions of the farm that are intended to be certified to ROC must be certified organic. However, appropriate barriers and separation must exist between organic/ROC and conventional fields or products. Any portion of the farm that is intended for ROC must be certified organic.

3. Does the ROA offer aid to farmers in getting soil/animal welfare/social certifications?

Yes. The ROA provides some resources to help producers determine which baseline certifications are appropriate for your operation, but does not endorse specific certifications. The certification bodies that are approved to audit to ROC can also provide guidance to help you get started. See the Approved Baseline Standards and Equivalency Gap Analysis for more information.

4. How does ROC accommodate for different farm types, sizes, etc.?

The ROC standard is intended to be flexible and inclusive of different farming conditions, sizes, and types of operation. The three ROC certification levels (Bronze, Silver, and Gold) provide flexibility for farms to participate in the program at a beginning stage to test out regenerative practices on small portions of an operation and implement additional practices over time.

5. What needs to be included in the ROC system plan? Can I combine this with my other documentation (i.e. for NOP Organic)? Do you have any templates?

The ROA has developed guidance on the elements that should be included in the ROC System Plan, which are available in the Participant Handbook. If deemed necessary in the future ROA may develop a template. We suggest that the additional elements of your ROC Plan be incorporated into your existing Organic System Plan. If you are currently using templates that have been successful and would be willing to share those with ROA, they may be helpful to other participants.

6. Does ROC accommodate group certifications?

Yes. Group-level certifications are allowed under ROC where practices are consistent across the group, such as for farm co-ops. Group certifications are subject to the Sampling Methodology outlined in the Group Certification and Sampling Methodology document.



7. How does a brand-holder get certified?

Brands should work with their suppliers to identify farms and/or products that are good candidates for ROC. Brands can support farms through the certification process and ensure that the appropriate chain of custody and post-farm supply chain is in place to meet the Chain of Custody Guidelines and Labeling Guidelines.

Auditing

1. Will there need to be multiple audits to meet all the requirements of ROC (e.g. NOP Organic, Social Fairness, plus ROC)? How can we reduce the number of on-farm audits?

The ultimate goal of the ROC is to build off of existing certifications and partner with certification bodies that can audit to the ROC requirements in addition to the baseline certifications. Ask your Certification Body(s) if the add-ons of the ROC requirements could be built into existing audits and performed at the same time. The add-on requirements are detailed in the Equivalency Gap Analysis. In the early stages, additional audits may be required as we work towards onboarding more certification bodies with expertise in each of the pillar areas. If your current certification body is interested in becoming approved to certify to the ROC, please refer them to the Certification Body Handbook for more information.

2. Does the crop to be certified need to be growing in the field at the time of the audit?

Soil Health audits should be conducted during the growing season. Similarly, Animal Welfare and Social Fairness audits should be conducted at appropriate times during the production cycle, such as during harvest. Consult your CB to coordinate your audit cycle(s).

Cost

1. What is the cost for certification?

Costs will vary depending on the CB(s) you work with and your operation's existing certification(s). ROA is working to leverage additional CBs and streamline audits in order to reduce the cost for participants. We plan to use the 2019 pilot phase to inform the costing structure for the official launch of the program.

ROC Recognition

1. How can I communicate my involvement in ROC? Are there marketing/PR tools or templates available to me?

Throughout the ROC Pilot program, the ROA will work with you to create and approve messaging. Throughout the pilot phase and official launch, additional materials will be made available for communication guidance, including talking points and/or templates for your marketing team.

Only operations that reach ROC Silver or Gold certification levels are eligible to make product claims or use on-pack labeling. Refer to the Labeling Guidelines for more information. For Bronze Level, we encourage you to share your involvement in ROC with the public, but require ROA approval of all messaging.

Soil Health

1. How does ROC accommodate for regional variability in soil types, textures, etc.?

The ROC Soil Health pillar is intended to be flexible and inclusive of varying regional conditions. The practices included in ROC can be applied to a wide range of existing soil types and geographic circumstances.

2. Can multi-cropping replace the 3-7 year crop rotation requirement on small farms?

Yes, multi-cropping could take the place of rotation. The crop rotation requirement would not apply to perennial crops.

3. When is tillage acceptable? Is shallow cultivation tillage allowed?
Cultivation tillage is not prohibited under ROC tillage restrictions. Tillage should be conducted infrequently and never to a depth greater than 10 inches, except in the case of field preparation for certain perennials (i.e. tree crops). If tillage is required other than as planned in the ROC System Plan, the reason should be documented.
4. Does the cost of certification include soil testing costs?
The cost of soil testing is the responsibility of the farm and is not included in the audit cost. The cost of soil testing will vary by operation and geography, and can range from \$0 to \$150 per sample.
5. **What are ROC's expectations for soil sampling and testing?**
The ROA is developing a guidance document for soil sampling and testing. This will be made available once finalized.
6. We already do soil sampling. Can we provide our standard soil test results?
As long as soil sampling results include all of the required metrics for ROC, and the sampling protocol is followed, you may continue to use your local lab. If your standard tests do not include all of the required parameters, you will need to either contact your lab to add on the additional tests or source an additional testing partner.

Animal Welfare

1. There are many common animal identification techniques that are prohibited. Are there approved alternatives to marking animals (i.e. alternatives to hot/cold branding, ear-notching)?
The prohibited animal handling practices are based on ensuring high-bar, humane animal welfare standards. Alternative visual and electronic animal identification tags exist that are allowable under ROC. Contact the ROA or your Certification Body for additional guidance for your operation.
2. If the farm operation is certified Organic, 100% grass fed and not CAFO, does it still need additional certification for animal welfare?
Yes. The current ROC Framework requires a baseline Animal Welfare certification for all farms with commercial animal operations. As we learn from the pilot process, some modifications may be made to accommodate exceptions.
3. Do I have to use all ROC feed?
No. Feed requirements vary by certification level and type of animal. At minimum, 100% of feed must be certified organic.
Monogastrics: At ROC Silver at least 50% of feed should be certified ROC or come from on-farm sources (either certified organic or ROC). At Gold level at least 75% should be ROC or from on-farm sources.
Ruminants: Should be primarily grass fed, with the remainder of feed from organic sources. ROC Bronze requires >50% grass-fed, Silver >75%, and Gold 100% grass-fed, including finishing.
4. **If the farm doesn't currently have animals**, do animals need to be added for rotational grazing and manure production?
No. Animals are not required to be on-farm for ROC. If no animals are onsite, the Animal Welfare pillar is not required to achieve ROC certification.

5. Can I certify only my crops and not my animals?

Yes. The ROC program allows for certifying portions of an operation, such as certain fields or products. The ROC levels (Bronze, Silver, and Gold) incorporate two different scope requirements:

- 1) the percentage of the operation that must be certified, and
- 2) the percentage of revenue that the certification represents.

For instance, in order to achieve ROC Silver, >50% of fiber-or-food producing land is required to undergo ROC certification *and* >50% of the operation’s revenue is required to be within the operation’s ROC scope.

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6. **If I don’t intend to certify my animals to ROC, do they have to be Organic certified?**

If animal products are not intended to carry any organic or ROC claims, they do not need to be certified organic. However, to achieve ROC Silver Level certification or above, at least 50% of the operation’s revenue-producing activities *must* be included in ROC scope. If animals provide more than 50% of the farm’s total revenue, both Organic and Animal Welfare certification are required for animal operations in order to make ROC claims on any product (animal or non-animal) resulting from the operation.

7. I have animals on **-farm that aren’t used for commercial sale** (i.e. animals for education, family use, or farm work). Do I have to certify to the Animal Welfare pillar?

Animals that are not used for commercial purposes are not required to be included in your certification. In other words, if you only have non-commercial animals on-farm, you do not need to participate in the Animal Welfare Pillar as long as those animals represent less than 50% of your operation’s revenue-producing activities.

However, all ROC auditors will be instructed to provide a visual inspection of on-farm animals and record any instances where animals are treated inhumanely—regardless of whether animals are included in the scope or sold for commercial production.

The ROC Gold Level requires all animals, both commercial and non-commercial, to be included in the audit. At ROC Bronze Level or Silver Level, non-commercial animals do not need to be included in the Animal Welfare audit.

Social Fairness

1. **My operation doesn’t currently have a Social Fairness audit/certification. Do we need a Social certification prior to conducting the ROC audit, or can we get that later?**

If you are not currently participating in a social fairness audit, we recommend initiating that process as soon as possible. It may be possible to conduct the ROC bolt-on audit in conjunction with the initial Social certification audit, but ROC certification cannot be issued until your baseline certification is in place. Contact an approved CB for additional guidance.



2. **My farm meets all the requirements of the ROC Social Fairness Pillar, but we don't have an existing certification. Can we be audited only to the ROC requirements instead?**
Not at this time. Currently, the ROC Framework requires a baseline certification for the Social Fairness pillar for all farms in order to receive certification. However, we will continue with the on-site pilot audits regardless of whether a social certification is in place at your operation.

3. **I have fewer than 5 workers on my farm. Do I still need to hold a Social certification?**
Yes. Currently, the ROC Framework requires a baseline certification for the Social Fairness pillar for all farms, regardless of size. As we learn from the pilot process, some modifications may be made to accommodate exceptions.