

## 5 reasons why it's so hard to know whether 'organic' food is really organic

Regulating [food] supply chains to ensure, for example, that “organic” foods deserve their labels is hard. Here are five reasons why.

### **1) The U.S. government doesn't enforce its standards for organic foods**

[T]he USDA doesn't actually administer the standards for imported foods. Instead, the certification — checking that the food meets U.S. standards — is done by USDA-recognized foreign regulators or USDA-authorized third-party organizations. This means the USDA outsources its authority to its equivalent agencies in other countries, as well as third-party certifiers.

### **2) Not all countries have U.S.-recognized regulators**

The number of USDA-recognized international regulators has been growing since 2009. However, it is still relatively small.

### **3) That's why third-party certifiers are necessary**

USDA's [Certifier Lookup](#) page lists 82 authorized third-party organizations. Although most of these USDA-accredited certifying agents are domestic, 33 are foreign agents. Also, although some of them are purely private, others are public.

### **4) But certification remains challenging in a complex global economy**

In practice, ensuring that imports labeled “organic” are actually organic is very hard, because global supply chains are complex and nontransparent. A number of suppliers or organizations may sell the product before they reach the final customer.

This creates ample opportunity for things to go wrong.

### **5) The problem stretches beyond the USDA**

This is not the USDA's fault — it is one regulatory agency with limited resources, trying to deal with a multitude of suppliers. Some of these suppliers, in all likelihood, are operating unethically.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Why it's so hard to know whether organic food is really organic](#)**