Does it take 3 years to certify a farm organic?
Only if substances prohibited by the National Organic Program (NOP) have been applied in the last three years. The landowner can sign an affidavit that this hasn’t happened and can get certified in as little as 60-90 days.

Are there pesticides and fertilizers in certified organic production?
Yes. Products and materials derived from non-synthetic substances are allowed while synthetics are not. OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) has a label for products that meet NOP standards. Products not OMRI approved can still be allowed by a farm’s certifying agent on a case by case basis. OMRI publishes a guide of approved products. There are organic herbicides on the market, but they are not effective. See www.omri.org for more information.

Does a farm have to use certified organic seeds?
Only if the farm documents that it could not find the variety it was looking for from at least three other sources. Treated seeds not OMRI approved are still not allowed.

Who actually certifies farms for organics?
The USDA accredits independent non-profit and for-profit organizations to certify farms. An accredited certifier can certify a farm anywhere in the world. It is good to go with a certifier that has experience with your type of production. See next page for certifiers in the region.

How much does certification cost?
Approximately $500-$750 annually for small farms. The State of Georgia offers a 75% cost share for farmers toward the cost of certification. Find details on Georgia Organics’ website.

Is the record keeping onerous?
The records required by organic certification are documents most farms keep anyway, such as records on what is planted, where it is planted, and what inputs are applied in what quantity, when, where and for what purpose. Farmers can keep this information in a notebook.
Certifying Agents

**Georgia Crop Improvement Association**
706-542-2351, www.certifiedseed.org

**Quality Certification Services**

**Clemson University**
864-646-2140,
www.clemson.edu/public/regulatory/plant_industry/organic_certification/index.html

Resources

**Georgia Organics**
The Georgia Organics website aggregates some of the best articles, publications and resources locally and nationally on organic production and certification of crops and livestock. Georgia Organics also offers a mentoring program that pairs new or transition-ing farmers with experienced producers for technical assistance.
http://www.georgiaorganics.org/farmers.aspx

**Managing Cover Crops Profitably**
Southern Agriculture Research and Education
http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Books

**Crop Rotation on Organic Farms**
Southern Agriculture Research and Education
http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Books

**Building Soils for Better Crops**
Southern Agriculture Research and Education
http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Books

**Practical Pest Management**
Serenbe Farms, Palmetto GA