



Washington State Dept. of Agriculture Organic Food Program

Certification Fact Sheet

Treated Wood in Organic Production

National Organic Standards Section 205.206

WSDA Organic Food Program receives numerous questions each year regarding the use of treated wood in organic production systems. The National Organic Standards state that “the producer must not use lumber treated with arsenate or other prohibited materials for new installations or replacement purposes in contact with soil or livestock.” This fact sheet has been created to clarify the certification criteria around the use of treated wood in organic production.

Common Questions about the Use of Treated Wood in Organic Production

- Q: I am installing a new fence around my organic site. Can I use treated wood?**
A: You may use treated wood if the organic crop does not come into contact with the treated wood or the soil around the treated wood. In organic livestock production, animals must not be allowed contact with the treated wood or pasture in proximity to the treated wood.
- Q: I am installing a new trellis system in my organic orchard/vineyard. Can I use treated wood in my new system?**
A: No. In organic & transitional sites, treated wood cannot be used for any structure that will come into contact with crops or soil used to produce organic crops.
- Q: I am installing a new greenhouse. Can I use treated wood?**
A: Treated wood is prohibited in greenhouses where the wood is in contact with the organic crop, roots or the soil in the area of production. Treated wood may be used in greenhouses that produce organic crops on benches in flats, pots or other approved containers provided the organic crop does not come into contact with the treated wood.
- Q: I am in the process of a construction project on my farm and I would like to use treated wood. If I wrap the treated wood in something or sink treated wood posts into concrete prior to installation, can I use treated wood?**
A: No. Except where indicated in this document, treated wood may not be used, even when a barrier is placed between the treated wood and the soil. It is important to note that buildings such as sheds, loading docks and homes are not included as part of the organic production site and all applicable building codes should be followed. If crops and livestock are grown adjacent to these buildings, efforts should be made to exclude the crops and livestock from contact with the treated wood.

If livestock are housed in a barn constructed of treated wood, animals should be restricted from contacting the treated wood.



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- Q:** I have just purchased/leased an orchard that has treated wood in the trellising. Can I bring this orchard into the organic program?
- A:** As with any other site, organic certification of the orchard will be subject to the requirement that no prohibited materials, including treated wood, be applied in the 36 months prior to the first organic harvest date.
- Q:** I need to replace a treated post in my organic orchard. I have treated posts in an area of my organic site that is no longer in production. Can I reuse these treated posts in other areas of my orchard?
- A:** No. National Organic Standards do not allow for the use of treated posts for new or replacement purposes.
- Q:** I could not find any materials other than treated wood that would suit my needs on my organic site. I went ahead and installed treated wood. Can my site still be considered organic?
- A:** No. Because treated wood is considered a prohibited application, unless used in an allowed application as outlined in this document, your site must transition back to organic status. The site will be eligible for organic status after 36 months from the date on which you installed the treated wood.

National Organic Standard citations and further reading:

- From National Organic Standards 7 CFR Part 205 Section 205.206:

(f) The producer must not use lumber treated with arsenate or other prohibited materials for new installations or replacement purposes in contact with soil or livestock.
- From Production and Handling Preamble, Subpart C: Organic Crop, Wild Crop, Livestock and Handling Requirements:

The producer must not use lumber treated with arsenate or other prohibited materials for new installations or replacement purposes that comes into contact with soil or livestock.
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3003494&acct=noprulemaking>
- National Organic Standards 7 CFR Part 205 Section 205.206(f) of the NOP Final Rule states “a producer must not use lumber treated with arsenate or other prohibited materials for new installations or replacement purposes in contact with soil or livestock.” The Preamble (Crop Production–Changes Based on Comments (7)) elaborates on 205.206(f) as follows:

“This provision prohibits the use of lumber treated with arsenate or other prohibited materials for new installations or replacement purposes in contact with an organic production site. We included this modification to clarify that the prohibition applies to lumber used in direct contact with organically produced and handled crops and livestock and does not include uses, such as lumber for fence posts or building materials, that are isolated from production. The prohibition applies to lumber used in crop production, such as the frames of a planting bed, and for raising livestock, such as the boards used to build a farrowing house.”
- Organic Food Program’s Treated Wood Policy POL-OFP 038
- National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service publication “Organic Alternatives to Treated Wood”;
<http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/lumber.html>