

WHY certifications MATTER

Without standards, it's easy for companies to misrepresent the facts. Here's a list of the top organizations and what differentiates them.

By **Mark Wuttke**

When the demand for natural and organic products was minimal, certification was unnecessary. Manufacturers sold their products directly to local consumers who due to close proximity, had access to the manufacturer and held them accountable for what they produced.

As the demand for natural and organic products grew, so did the number of brands, manufacturers and suppliers which led to an increasingly complex, less accountable marketplace. Today, ingredients are sourced from multiple manufacturers, in multiple countries with multiple standards, making a third party regulatory standard body essential. Third party certification standards level the playing field by ensuring products are what they say they are and that the language communicating claims is clear, consistent and correct.

Certification standards are a way to cut through the vague terminology open to marketing spin and equivocation. Without standards, it's easy to misrepresent the facts. Imagine purchasing a Toyota Prius only to wonder if it's actually a hybrid. Imagine purchasing an expensive diamond and later discovering it's cubic zirconium. To ensure that doesn't happen, the GIA certifies diamonds' origins, and the certification allows consumers to buy with confidence by bringing expert oversight to the market.

It's clear how certification benefits consumers, but it's equally important to manufacturers and retailers. If consumers can't buy with confidence, they'll choose to shop elsewhere or align themselves with a different brand. Certification provides the transparency and trust the consumer needs to make the purchase. For example, Natrue Certification standard provides complete transparency by allowing consumers to search the individual products they have certified online. natrue.label.com

MAJOR CERTIFICATION ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR STANDARDS

There are eight major international organizations with certification standards. It's important to understand where each one is located and what their standards represent as they all have different standards with different requirements. A solid understanding of each one makes consumer choices easier.

USDA NOP

Type: 100% Organic, Organic,

and Made with Organic

Country of Origin: USA

Business Type: Government

Web: ams.usda.gov



USDA NOP is a food standard for organic and made with organic ingredients. "100% organic" must contain only organically produced ingredients. "Organic" must contain at least 95 percent organically produced ingredients. "Made with Organic Ingredients" must contain at least 70 percent organic ingredients. Limited amounts of synthetics are allowed in the "Organic" and "Made with Organic" standard. Excludes water and salt in calculation of organic content.

NATRUE

Type: Natural, Organic and

Natural with organic portion

Country of Origin: Brussels International

Business Type: Non Profit

Web: natrue.org



NATRUE is a cosmetic standard that requires 100 percent certified pure natural and derived natural (natural origin) plus some limited nature identical* as a baseline for entry as "Natural Cosmetics". "Organic cosmetics" guarantees at least 95 percent of the natural ingredients stem from controlled or organic production. "Natural with organic portion" guarantees at least 70 percent of the natural ingredients stem from organic production. Excludes water and salt in calculation of natural and organic content.

NATRUE has an equivalency agreement/recognition with NSF/ANSI 305.

NSF/ANSI 305**Type:** Contains Organic**Country of Origin:** USA International**Business Type:** Non Profit**Web:** nsf.org ansi.org qai inc.com

NSF ANSI 305 standard requires 70 percent organic ingredients to comply with the contains organic standard. Limited amounts of synthetics are allowed. Excludes water and salt in calculation of organic content.

**ECOCERT****Type:** Natural and Natural / Organic**Country of Origin:** France**Business Type:** Profit**Web:** ecocert.com

EcoCert requires a minimum of 95 percent natural origin as a baseline entry and a minimum of 5 percent organic content for the "Natural" standard and a minimum of 10 percent organic content for the "Natural / Organic" standard. Up to 5 percent of ingredients can be synthetic. Limited synthetic preservatives are allowed. Water can be included in its calculation of organic content.

**SOIL ASSOCIATION****Type:** Organic and made with Organic ingredients**Country of Origin:** United Kingdom**Business Type:** Non Profit**Web:** soilassociation.org

Soil Association is a standard for organic and made with organic ingredients. "Organic" must contain at least 95 percent organically produced ingredients. "Made with Organic Ingredients" must contain at least 70 percent organic ingredients. Limited amounts of synthetic preservatives and ingredients are allowed. Excludes water in calculation of organic content.

**BDIH****Type:** Natural**Country of Origin:** Germany**Business Type:** Profit Membership required**Web:** bdih.org

BDIH requires 100 percent natural origin/nature identical* to gain the "natural" standard. Does not have a standard for organic certification.

**COSMOS****Type:** Organic and Natural**Country of Origin:** Brussels**Business Type:** Non Profit**Web:** cosmos-standard.org

COSMOS is a cosmetic standard for organic and natural ingredients. "Organic" must contain at least 95 percent organically produced ingredients. "Natural" may contain natural/organic ingredients but does not allow active marketing of organic content. Limited synthetics are allowed in the "Organic" and "Natural" standard for some product types. Excludes minerals in calculation of organic content.

**NPA****Type:** Natural**Country of Origin:** USA**Business Type:** Non Profit

Membership required

Web: npainfo.org

NPA requires a minimum of 95 percent natural origin for the "Natural" standard. Limited amounts of synthetics are allowed. Does not have a standard for organic certification.



**Nature identical ingredients are those that are 100 percent identical in composition to their counterparts in nature, but are created in the laboratory to ensure stability, safety and sustainability. Nature identical substances may only be used when natural substances cannot be recovered from nature using reasonable technical effort.*

THE FUTURE OF CERTIFICATION STANDARDS

Consumers are placing more pressure on companies to raise the bar. They're demanding that natural and organic claims be supported by the brand's willingness to exhibit the transparency and traceability that certification standards offer.

But certification is only a means to an end. The ultimate goal is a market where honesty, traceability, and transparency is expected of the producers of the products we put on our skin, our bodies, and of course into the environment, as well. ☐

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