

**Short answer: no.** In the USDA organic percentage calculation for a multi-ingredient product, added water and salt are excluded from both the total used for the calculation and the organic portion. That means they do not lower the percentage of organic ingredients—but they do not count as organic ingredients either.

This detail matters when you compare products with different formulas. A sauce, drink or moisturiser <https://potentash.com/2026/10/14/organic-certifies-beauty-wellness-labels/> may contain a lot of water, for example, but the USDA organic percentage is not simply the organic ingredients divided by everything in the package. The calculation follows the rules of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which focus on agricultural ingredients and how they were produced and handled.

Here's how to read the percentage, understand the label tiers and check that an organic claim is backed by certification rather than just prominent packaging.

## How the USDA organic percentage works

For a multi-ingredient product, the organic percentage is generally calculated using the weight or fluid volume of the relevant ingredients, excluding added water and salt. The ingredients counted as organic must meet the applicable USDA organic requirements. Water and salt are left out because they are not treated as agricultural ingredients for this calculation.

Think about it: so, if a recipe contains organic tomatoes, organic herbs, water and salt, the water and salt do not dilute the organic percentage. The calculation looks at the ingredients that count under the rules, not the product's entire packaged weight or volume.

This is why the phrase **water excluded organic calculation** is useful when comparing labels: a product's organic percentage is not necessarily a measure of how much of the finished product, as sold, is made from organic material. Likewise, the **salt excluded organic calculation** means added salt does not count as either organic or non-organic in the percentage calculation.

## A simple example

Imagine a product made from 80 grams of ingredients that count towards the calculation, plus 20 grams of water and salt. If 76 grams of the counted ingredients are certified organic, the organic percentage is 95%: 76 divided by 80. It is not 76% based on the full 100 grams.

This is a simplified illustration, not a formula for checking every product. Ingredient types, how a product is processed and the applicable organic rules all matter. The certifier is responsible for reviewing the operation and the product's compliance.



## USDA label tiers and what the percentages mean

The USDA National Organic Program sets different labelling categories. The percentage helps determine which organic wording a product may use, but the percentage is only one part of compliance. A product must also meet production, processing, handling and certification requirements for its category.

Label wording General requirement USDA Organic seal? "100 percent organic" All ingredients, excluding water and salt, must be certified organic, subject to the applicable rules. May be used. "Organic" At least 95% of the ingredients, excluding water and salt, must be certified organic. The remaining ingredients must meet the rules for that category. May be used. "Made with organic [ingredients or food groups]" At least 70% of the product's ingredients, excluding water and salt, must be certified organic. The wording must follow USDA requirements. May not be used. Less than 70% organic ingredients The product cannot make the above organic claims on its main display panel. It may identify specific organic ingredients in the ingredient statement, where permitted. May not be used.

These tiers are often the most practical starting point when you are shopping. A package with "made with organic" ingredients is not in the same labelling category as one carrying the USDA Organic seal. Neither wording should be treated as a general guarantee that the product is healthier, safer, more effective or suitable for sensitive skin.

## Organic certification is a process standard

Organic certification is about how a product's agricultural ingredients are grown, handled and processed, and whether the operation follows the applicable rules. It is a **process standard**, not a promise about a particular outcome for every shopper.

For example, organic certification does not automatically mean that a product is hypoallergenic, pesticide-free in an absolute sense, or more effective than a non-organic alternative. It also does not mean that every ingredient in a finished product is agricultural. The USDA percentage rules specifically distinguish between ingredients that count towards the calculation and additions such as water and salt.

That distinction is especially important in personal care. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates cosmetics in the United States, while the USDA's organic programme applies to products and ingredients that meet its organic standards. A cosmetic's organic claim should not be confused with a certification of how well it

performs or how it will work for your skin. Always check the complete ingredient list and any relevant safety or use information.

## Look for the certifier, not just the front label

When a product is certified under the USDA organic programme, the certifying agent's name or identifying information is required on the product information panel under the applicable labelling rules. The **USDA Organic seal** can be a useful visual cue for products in the eligible categories, but the seal is not the only thing to check. It is also optional for products that qualify to use it, so its absence does not by itself prove that a product is uncertified.

Make a habit of turning the package around and looking for the certifier line. A bold "organic" claim on the front is not a substitute for the required certification details. If you cannot find the certifier name or the product's category is unclear, check the brand's information or ask who certified the product.

Brands sometimes use words such as **natural**, **clean** and **pure** to describe their products. Those words may be part of a brand's marketing, but they do not, by themselves, establish USDA organic certification or tell you the USDA organic percentage. Do not treat attractive front-of-pack language as a certification seal.



## What this means for supplements and personal care

For products such as supplements, oils or cosmetics, organic claims can get confusing because the product may contain water, salt or other ingredients alongside agricultural ingredients. The same shopping principle applies: read the claim in context, check the ingredient list, and look for the certifier information when the product is presented as USDA-certified organic.

For instance, shoppers comparing wellness brands such as Joy Organics should assess the specific product and its label rather than assuming that a brand name, "clean" positioning or a single organic ingredient tells the whole story. Look for the product's exact certification claim, the certifier line and the ingredients. If a product mentions testing, check what is tested and whether the information relates to that particular batch. **Batch testing** may provide useful information about quality or composition, but it is separate from USDA organic certification and does not replace it.

# A quick aisle checklist

Use this short check when you are comparing two products:

1. **Read the exact wording.** Is it “100 percent organic”, “organic”, “made with organic” or simply a marketing phrase?
2. **Check the percentage tier.** Remember that the USDA organic percentage excludes added water and salt.
3. **Find the certifier line.** Look on the information panel, not only at the front of the pack.
4. **Look for the USDA Organic seal.** It is allowed for eligible categories, but not every certified product must display it.
5. **Read the ingredients.** Organic certification does not mean every ingredient is organic, particularly in lower-percentage categories.
6. **Separate certification from performance.** An organic claim does not prove that a product is hypoallergenic, more effective or right for you.
7. **Treat vague words cautiously.** “Natural”, “clean” and “pure” do not tell you the USDA organic percentage.

## So, do water and salt count?

No. For the USDA organic percentage calculation, added water and salt are excluded; they do not count as organic ingredients and do not reduce the percentage of the ingredients that do count. That is why a product’s organic percentage may differ from the share of the finished product that is organic by total weight or volume.

For a confident read, pair the percentage with the label tier, ingredient list and certifier information. The USDA Organic seal can help you spot an eligible claim, but certification is about compliance with a defined production and handling standard—not a blanket promise about safety, purity or performance. When the front says “organic”, turn the pack around and check who certified it.