

Words of Wisdom on Going Organic

Lynn Clarkson (00:29):

So why is organic? One, it supports the values I like, and two, it makes money.

Michael Gutschenritter (00:36):

For us, it was worth it. It allowed us to scale out a lot. And now we're actually making a living off of our farm for our family and saving for retirement. That's the kind of thing that comes from taking the steps like getting certified organic and getting the certifications that your customers truly care about.

Harold Wilken (00:58):

I can't see starting a food company in this day and age that isn't organic. I mean, you got to be very sleight of hand to do this conventionally. Organic does pay the bills.

Kaylee Pickering (01:19):

It opened us up to a very big organic producer and that has, they've become our number one customer, so it's been huge. I also think being organic shows how much you care about your products and your customers and that you're willing to be honest and show your integrity and produce a quality product that people are going to enjoy and talk about.

Mike Dill (01:46):

There's not a lot of space in a produce aisle of a grocery store. You have a conventional and you have an organic. But the one that stands out is always the USDA seal. And without being certified, we wouldn't have that. So without certification, I don't think we'd be in business right now.

Nate Powell-Palm (02:03):

Who has thrived in certified organic? It's companies who said, "I see that this is a long-term investment, and I'm willing to make the long-term investment in my company to participate."

Genevieve Albers (02:15):

I think for anybody watching this video, I want to encourage you to stay the course and stay strong in the face of, you know, this, is this even worth it? Why am I doing this? Why am I torturing myself? Why am I putting myself through this? I think it's really important. I think customers really care. I think you'll feel better about your product and it's absolutely attainable. It's a thing you can do and it's worth doing and you're in good company.

Chad Olson (02:57):

Be real clear with yourself that it's about certification. Sure, you want to go organic because it's important to you. There's a strong identification with that. But you need to set that emotion aside for a



moment and say, "What is the compliance?" And you're going to get a black and white list from the agency of what you need to do. And so focus on that.

Ellen Rawley (03:17):

This is a process that you elect into a lot of times because of values. But once you elect into this process, you then have to keep up the process that you said yes to. So there can be this energy of I'm being forced to do this. Like I know that I do things the right way, and now I have to show someone this piece of paper. But that is so important for the consumer to know that there's actually an audit process, that you actually have to show the documentation that you did the right thing. It's 100% the only reason that organic means anything at all. And it's not just a piece of paper. It's you actually having the transparency with an end customer and how like revolutionary in some ways that is.

Lynn Clarkson (04:11):

Why do you need certification at all? If you're dealing with people that know you, you probably don't. But if you want to reach beyond your friends and the five or ten mile circle around your operation, then you need to verify that you're doing things the right way. And for that, you need certification.

Nate Powell-Palm (04:31):

Organic certification is worth it if you feel really comfortable with the known investment that it's going to take to be certified organic. If you feel a lot of heartburn over shelling out, say, \$5,000 to get certified organic, then you want to really ask yourself, are you also willing to invest in the systems that make it possible, that make it safe? I don't think you'll have to subscribe to any ethos to engage in the organic market, but I do think you have to say that I'm going to build a system that honors just how much integrity organic requires. And I'm not going to expect really quick returns on a one-off certification then leave organic. I just don't see it working out very often for folks who don't embrace the investment.

Debbie Byrne (05:18):

Day by day will change because you're going to be frustrated. And they need to know that too. It's going to be frustrating. There's going to be days you're going to say, "This is not worth it," but then you got to see why did you do this? Believe in what you're doing, but know it's going to be a heck of a lot of work to get there.

Ellen Rawley (05:42):

I highly recommend training staff specifically on organic, not just admin staff, but all staff that are going to be touching the finished product or touching receiving, touching production.

Mike Dill (05:56):

Because it's one thing for me working in an office and developing an SOP to come up with a process, but if it doesn't work for the people that are living this every day and have to administer this, it's just not going to work. It's not going to be successful.

Aileen Mannion (06:10):

Make it easy for them to understand. I don't talk about high-level, hard-to-pronounce words from the government, but I just say like, "Okay, here's the regulation." And then I just give them example instead of verbiage of what the rules are. People need to understand the whys. So we train our employees to be aware of what those regulations are. I'm proud of my team here. <laugh> Yeah.

Humberto Maldonado (06:38):

A culture is something that you learn by socializing with others. So you need to make that part of your company DNA, from the top of the organization to the bottom of the organization that everybody's committed and shared the vision about what organic is.

Griffin Berger (06:59):

Coming from me as the, as the leader of the team, I don't complain to my team about, "Oh, we have to keep these records and that's not a good way to do it." It's, "this is just what we do and this is what is required of us." And we ask nicely. You know, people forget to fill out a log, we catch it. We ask nicely, "Please fill out the log." Eventually people learn, and they get it, and they care.

Mike Dill (07:20):

But when you get a young adult, they're learning how to move boxes in a warehouse or repack potatoes on a packing line, it might not be important to them at first. So it's really critical that we explain to them and really kind of share our belief and philosophy behind organic. And if we can convince some of those new folks that didn't come here just for organic and for our principles to embrace organic for what it is, then I think we can pretty much do that with anyone.



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