UCCE Beginner Rancher and Farmer Program
Sonoma County Agropreneurs
Organic Certification Process

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How Do Certifiers Differ?

• Non-profit vs. for profit.
• Area of expertise/service
  – Regional/national/international.
  – Particular crops or process specialty.
  – Service niche.
• Cost and fee structure -per acre or sales volume etc.
• Differing accreditations/market access.
• Level of activism, market promotion, and education.
• We all love acronyms!
Who is CCOF?

- Nonprofit organic certification and trade association since 1973
  - Organic Certification
  - Trade Association - education, promotion, marketing & PR support
  - Political Advocacy
- Certification throughout North America for producers, processors, private labelers, brokers and retailers.
- More than 1,700 growers, 100 livestock producers, 500 processors, including more than 1,000 certified product categories
- Currently certify more than 75% of California’s organic acreage (>500,000 acres) and 11% of U.S. certified organic businesses
- More than 35 years of organic certification experience, fully accredited by USDA, and one of the oldest and largest certifiers in North America
Organic Regulations

• October 21, 2002- full implementation of the National Organic Program (NOP)

• “level playing field”

• Federal enforcement of organic regulation.

• ANY use of “organic” marketing claims requires certification by an accredited certifier
Certifier’s Role in Organic

- All products sold as “organic” in US must be certified by a USDA accredited certifier
  - Exception for <$5,000/year and retail stores/brokers.
- Agents of USDA - Issues federal license to client
- Must maintain accreditation with USDA
- Certifiers may be non-profit, for profit, have trade associations or political roles
NOP Rule: Organic Production and Handling Standards

• 205.201 Organic System Plan
• 205.202 Land Requirements
• 205.203 Soil and Crop Nutrient Practices
• 205.204 Seeds and planting stock
• 205.205 Crop Rotation
• 205.206 Pest Management
What is Organic?

More Than Input Substitution!

Organic production:

“responds to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity.”
205.202 : Land Requirements

No prohibited substances three years prior to harvest
Distinct defined boundaries and buffer zones
Establishing Land History

• Document three years of Land History
  – letter from previous landowner or manager (Personal land history)
  – letter from county verifying “clean” use permit history (3rd party land history)

• Submit 3rd party and/or hand drawn maps showing neighboring land use
205.204 Seeds and Planting Stock

• Seeds must be organic, unless equivalent organic seed variety is not commercially available—Untreated, non-organic seed.
• Annual transplants must be certified organic.
• Perennial stock: One year organic management unless grown annual
205.206 Pest Management Highlights

• **First:** Preventative Practices and Best Management Practices, such as…
  – Cultural
  – Biological
  – Mechanical methods

• **Second:** Application of Allowed Materials
Materials and the National List

National List:

- 205.601 Synthetic Substances Allowed for Use in Organic Crop Production
- 205.602 Non-Synthetic Substances Prohibited for Use
Critical Control Points

• Critical for identifying risk and control measures to avoid:
  – GMOs
  – Pesticide drift
  – Neighboring land use issues

• If crops are grown in a buffer, they may not be sold as organic

• Other safeguards such as neighbor notification, signage etc. are recommended

• Treated lumber prohibited for new installations
  – Existing wood can stay
Critical Control Points

- Application equipment cleaning issues must be addressed
  - Must be able to demonstrate that shared fertilizer and/or pesticide equipment is cleaned prior to use in organic
  - Must be able to document efforts

- Irrigation water
  - Source, contamination concerns
  - Fertigation, shared plumbing

- Storage of prohibited materials on farm
  - Must describe how accidental use is avoided
  - Separate organic and non-organic materials storage is common
  - Clear signage for employees
Recordkeeping

• Must be able to show that you meet the standard.
• Input applications tracked.
• Track products back to field.
• Keep record of sales.
• Different scales for different operations.
• Records kept for five years.
Certification Process Overview

Six Steps:

1. Application and OSP
2. Review
3. Inspection
4. Inspection Report Review
5. Certification
6. Annual Inspection
General Tips

• Be proactive. Know the organic standards, know your OSP, and ensure systems are in place.
• Be careful about materials!
• Make sure fields are signed
  – Protects you, applicators, contractors, delivery people.
• All material labels, receipts for inputs, and records must be available for inspections.
• Organization = cheaper inspections.
How much is this going to cost?
CCOF Certification Fees

- **Application Fee $275** – Due with first year application only.
- **Inspection Costs** – Billed on a time and materials basis upon completion of the inspection. Farm inspections typically range $250-$500.
- **Annual Certification Cost** – These costs are based on the **Gross Organic Production Value** (GOPV) of the CCOF certified products. For example:
  - <10K all organic = $200
  - 10 to 20K all organic = $275
  - 20 to 50K = $350
  - 50+ to 100K = $525
  - 100+ to 200K = $600
  - 200+ to 300K = $725 +

  (Farm GOPV is calculated as all farm gate organic value)
- **Processors (handlers)** deduct the “Cost of Organic Goods” from “Gross Organic Sales” to arrive at their fee category.
- **Additional Services** – CCOF charges modest fees for additional services such as international standards verification, additional processing facilities, mid year additions of acreage or processed products, and completion of export documents.
Resources:

- **CCOF** - www.ccof.org
  (Links to these sites)

- **Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI)** - www.omri.org


- **WSDA**
  http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic

- **National Organic Program**
  www.ams.usda.gov/nop

- **ATTRA**
  www.attra.org
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