



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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## **WSDA reports flooded organic farms continue to meet organic standards**

**OLYMPIA** – The 17 organic farms in southwest Washington impacted by December’s devastating flood continue to meet organic standards. Field inspections and laboratory analysis of plant samples show no contamination by pesticides or chemicals that would compromise the farms’ organic status.

In December, Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) organic inspectors visited each of the 17 organic farms impacted by the flood. Inspectors walked the fields to note how high water levels rose, where the flood deposited sediment on the farmland, and if there were any signs of petrochemical residues or other contaminants. The inspectors’ initial assessments found silt, mud and woody debris, but no areas of concern from synthetic contaminants.

In recent weeks, WSDA inspectors collected 40 samples of plant material growing on the flooded farms. WSDA laboratory staff tested the plants for a wide range of pesticides that would threaten the organic status of the farms. Results show that the flood waters did not cause any contamination that threatens the farms’ organic status or prevents them from marketing this year’s crop as organically raised.

“Organic farming involves improving soil quality and the biological activity of the soil, as well as preventative pest management that does not rely on synthetic fertilizers or pesticides,” said Miles McEvoy, manager of the WSDA Organic Program. “Sample results confirm that the flood did not adversely affect these farms’ compliance with organic certification standards. The organic farms in the Chehalis river valley continue to follow organic management practices and comply with the National Organic Standards.”

Several farms experienced devastating losses of livestock, feed, harvested produce and equipment. The farms may never recover all the financial losses they have suffered. Loss of organic certification, which can take three years or more to attain, would have been another serious blow to economic recovery.

The organic sector continues to grow dramatically in Washington. In 2007, organic-certified acreage increased by one-third to more than 100,000 acres. The value of all organic products sold in Washington reached \$388 million in 2006, the latest year of available sales statistics. Organic farm products continue to receive premium prices at farmers markets and in stores.

More information about the WSDA Organic Food Program can be found at:

<http://www.agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic>.

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