

**Organic Advisory Board  
February 5, 2008  
Mercato's Restaurant  
Olympia, WA**

**Members Present:** Michele Catalano (Consumer Representative), Dan Dufault (Emmanual Enterprises), Steve Hallstrom (Let Us Farm), Andrea Pipitone (Pipitone Farm), Phil Unterschuetz (Material Industry), Jay Gordon (Gordon Dairy, Inc.), Aaron Avila (GS Long), David Granastein (WSU),

**Members Absent:** Luis Acuna (CF Fresh/OTA), Harold Austin (Zirkle Fruit), Eiko Vojkovich (Skagit River Ranch)

**Guests:** Jennifer Harte – WSDA Future of Farming Project Coordinator

**WSDA Staff Present:** Miles McEvoy, Les Eklund, Brenda Book, Katherine Withey (afternoon)

**Recording:** Brenda Book

---

## Introductions and Announcements

---

### Organic Program Update – Miles McEvoy

#### OFP Performance Goals

- Customer Feedback
  - Staff is continuing to obtain direct customer feedback on key areas via phone surveys. Overall results have found customer satisfaction in the following areas:
    - Organic integrity
    - Timeliness
    - Paperwork
    - Communication
- Financial
  - Both revenue and expenses are slightly higher than budgeted. The fund balance stayed out of negative during slow time of year, which is the first time in many years.
- Process
  - Goal: To have processes that complies with accreditation criteria and result in customer satisfaction.
  - Team charters in the main areas of the program have been established to outline projects and deliverables for staff
  - Goal to update strategic plan has not been completed, but on project list.
  - Recent internal audit focused on how we can improve our processes for efficiency.
- Internal Customers (staff)
  - Currently 20 staff members with four open positions.
    - Administrative Coordinator
    - 2 Crops reviewer
    - Handler/crops reviewer

- Inspector
  - Administrative Coordinator will be in place by end of February.
  - Three new reviewer positions (2 office, 1 remote) are in the interview process.
  - One new inspector position announcement will go out this spring with position to be filled April. Position will be in Olympia or King County but will work statewide.
  - Eastside supervisor opportunity for existing WSDA employees.

#### **Enforcement and Compliance – 2007 overview**

- 2 Civil penalties were issued in 2007 and we are waiting for default orders
  - Guerrero – selling non-organic product as organic
  - Patterson's Fruit Stand in Gig Harbor – selling non-organic fruit as organic
- Mislabeled products have also been found in the marketplace and have been forwarded to National Organic Program Compliance.
- ▶ OAB members reiterated importance of enforcement on the organic claim and publication of revoked certifications.
- ▶ Concern about limited authority WSDA has over violations of operations that are not certified by WSDA.

#### **Certifier Training – ACA (Accredited Certification Agencies) and NASOP (National Association of State Organic Programs)**

- Miles McEvoy, Jerry Buendel, and David Simpson attended the NOP Training in January 2008, as part of the NASOP and ACA Certifier training in Kentucky.
- USDA will post training notes in May 2008 after additional trainings have taken place. Some items of interest:
  - NOP clarified that the allowance to not visit all sites of a 'grower group' during an inspection is only in relation to producer communities and cannot be applied to handling operations (such as Whole Foods). \*\*WSDA has always required separate certification and inspection of each facility.
  - USDA accreditation will go from one audit every five years to two audits every five years.
  - USDA is seeking legal counsel on legitimacy of certification for brokerage and marketing companies that do not physically handle organic products. NOP currently indicating that this is not allowed under the rule.
- ▶ OAB member discussion about how a change in this approach would substantially disrupt industry and cause a loss in oversight by certifiers during the chain of custody = lower consumer confidence.
- Miles McEvoy was appointed President of NASOP (National Association of State Organic Programs) during their Annual Meeting in January.

#### **GMAP (Government Management Accountability Process)**

- The Organic Program may be presenting to the Governor in May 2008 session and reporting how program is tracking and measuring our activities around performance goals and customer satisfaction.
- There will be more information during the spring OAB meeting.

**UDIS (United Database Information System)**

- Project started in the winter of 2006.
  - Organic Program is scheduled to go live with new system March 1. However, other programs that are already using system are having trouble.
  - Organic staff are not convinced that product will suit our certification needs.
  - Other systems exist that are specific to certification agencies (E-cert).
- ▶ The OAB encouraged staff to look into this program to ensure resources are used on a system that efficiently meets needs.
  - ▶ The OAB is willing to help communicate to agency on the importance of efficiency in conducting certification work; in addition to concern over a system that already has taken more staff time and resources than planned.

**2007 Internal Audit – Miles McEvoy**

- Conducted in December 2007 by Krista Wanser of Tree top Quality Systems.
- One of most complete and in depth internal audits for the program.
- Summary of Findings –
  1. Confidentiality Training needed. *Completed at January staff meeting.*
  2. Cost Estimates issue from USDA audit. Krista believes we adequately do provide cost estimates and thinks this needs to be explained better to USDA.
  3. WA state law adoption process for changes to NOP Rule needs to be more routine.
  4. Need for more centralized applicant information. *New Rules and Regulation Book is first step.*
  5. Suggestions for Quality Manual improvements in organization and process
  6. Investment in new database is needed. In the interim, ensure all staff are consistently entering data into current system for accuracy in queries and reports.
  7. Update Internal Audit Procedures
  8. HR Improvements for ensuring training and staff changes are recorded in a timely manner.
  9. Update Appeals letter template
  10. Move materials review system into quality manual. *Working to get program ISO compliant.*

**Motion** – To Accept the 2007 Internal Audit and review the corrective action plan at April meeting.

Moved: Aaron  
 Seconded: Dan  
 Passed Unanimously

**Future of Farming Advisory Committee – Jennifer Harte, WSDA Future of Farming Project Coordinator**

- Jennifer is in need of an individual to represent the organic agriculture industry of WA for the project's steering committee.

**Motion** - To nominate Steve Hallstrom as the organic representative for the WSDA Future of Farming Steering Committee.

Moved: Michele  
 Seconded: Dan  
 Passed Unanimously

**Board Business and Assessment – Michele Catalano**

- **Approval of November 2007 meeting minutes.**

**Motion** – To approve November meeting minutes with minor corrections noted in meeting.

Moved: Jay  
 Seconded: David  
 Passed Unanimously

- **2008 Meeting Schedule**
  - Spring Meeting: Tuesday, April 29th – Wenatchee –Tree Fruit Research Station
  - Fall Meeting: Thursday, November 6th – Olympia
  - EU Review Committee – Wednesday, November 5th – Noon start time.
  - A summer conference call will only occur if there is a specific topic that needs to be addressed. No call is scheduled at this time.
- **Reappointments and New Members**
  - Bob Pearson and Harold Ostenson have resigned from the board.
  - Staff will assist nomination committee in locating and contacting industry members.
  - There is a need for handler and processor representation.
  - Phil's co-chair, David's reappointment, and Dain's reappointment is up.
  - Note – Michele was re-elected as Chair in November 2007.
  - ▶ Dain will be talked to see if there is an interest in remaining on the board before re-nominating him for another term. *Followup: After February meeting, Dain decided to resign from the board.*

**Motion** – To reappoint David Granestein for another term to the OAB. To reappoint Phil Uterschutz as Co-Chair for another term.

Moved: Steve  
 Seconded: Andrea  
 Passed Unanimously

**Flooding and Organic Certification – Update – Miles McEvoy**

- WSDA inspectors have conducted observation inspections on all affected farms in the December 2007 flood areas.
- Samples from the affected farms will be conducted by mid February.
- At this time, no problems have been identified.
- Once sample results are in, a press release will go out.
- An information document is now on the website under 'hot topics'
- Affected applicants were given a one month extension on renewal deadline (March 1).

- Letters to livestock producers about organic feed sources has been sent.
  - ▶ Steve and Jay talked about their experience and gave kudos to OFP staff for response. They also reinforced that the floodwaters moved very quickly over the land during this flood and, therefore the possibility for contaminants to soak in was minimal in their experience.
- 

#### **International Program – Miles McEvoy and Brenda Book**

- Final 2008 International Program Additional Requirements presented.
  - International Program fees were not raised for 2008.
  - A fee increase may occur in 2009 after it is known if a Canada Program will also be needed.
  - The OFP is currently being evaluated for EU compliance under the new EU Import Regulation. Additional changes to the WSDA EU program (specifically in regards to exceptions for parallel production) may be required in 2009 due to this evaluation.
  - The new Canadian Organic Regulation will go into effect December 2008 and will require certifier accreditation with Canada unless a US and Canada agreement is reached.
  - NOP has indicated that 'all will be worked out' with a reciprocity agreement between US and Canada. WSDA, and other certifiers, have not taken action to start accreditation process at this time.
  - Miles is working with both NASOP and ACA on getting USDA attention on the importance and urgency of the Canada issue.
  - Miles discussed the motion to the IFOAM General Assembly on the rejection of the IFOAM Benchmark Standards (which would replace the IFOAM Norms with less strict standards). Many accredited certifiers have indicated that they may drop IFOAM accreditation if the standards are watered down.
  - The OAB Review Committee evaluated the 2007 EU program on February 4<sup>th</sup> as part of our IFOAM requirements.
  - ▶ OAB members gave kudos for the work OFP staff is doing and noted some improvements on process that could be made.
- 

#### **New Product Fee – Brenda Book**

- Proposal to charge for review of new products under WAC 16-157-250 presented:
  1. Due to the increased demand for organic products, we have seen an increase in the amount of new products that are submitted to our program for review and certification.
  2. A majority of these requests are received separately from an applicant's renewal paperwork.
  3. WSDA Certified Organic Handlers and Processors are welcome to submit new products for certification to our office at any point throughout the year. However, beginning in 2008, a minimal review charge will be accessed in order for our program to recover our costs for processing these additional products.
  4. Products submitted with the annual renewal application **are not** subject to this fee.
  5. We anticipate this new process, and recovery of our expenses, will allow our staff to process requests in a more efficient and timely manner.

6. Notification of this new procedure will be sent out will all renewal response letters to handlers and processors.

**Motion** – To accept proposal to begin charging a new product review fee with a minimum of \$40 (one hour of review and admin processing). More than one hour will be charged at a rate of \$40/hour.

Moved: Aaron  
 Seconded: Andrea  
 Passed Unanimously

---

**Material Program Update** – Katherine Withey

- The additional material registration fees have helped with providing adequate resources for program.
- Priorities of program:
  1. ISO Guide 65 accreditation and Quality Manual
  2. Official USDA Recognition – *Miles will be meeting with USDA at end of February about materials program.*
  3. Registration of materials for EU and Japan compliance
  4. Inspections of Brand Name Material Registrants
  5. Re-review of all materials for continued compliance
- Contracts with other certifiers
  - Could be a means to gain recognition and value in material registration.
  - Currently we have a contract in place with CCOF.
- Nu-Film Saga:
  - Under regulation, EPA List 4 inerts are allowed in pesticides
  - EPA website of List 4 inerts was last updated in 2004.
  - Due to delay in updating website, allowance of inerts has been granted based on letters from EPA stating compliance as a List 4 inert.
  - In 9/07, USDA said EPA letters cannot be used and website only must be referenced.
  - In addition, EPA list 4 inert category is going away.
  - NOSB must review all list 4 inerts on a case by case basis.
  - Nu Film is currently on the WSDA list based off of a letter from Bob Pooler at NOP stating that a petition for the approval of the inerts in Nu Film is not needed.
  - ▶ OAB members expressed concern about the problems with the NOP communication that this issue brings up. Members are willing to provide support in getting these issues clarified.
- Gopher Blasters
  - Prohibited
- Sunset Materials
  - WSDA comments were submitted on two crop production materials and one handling material that are slated for sunset in November 2008.
  - ▶ Discussed OAB role in making recommendations on behalf of certified operations in the state.
  - ▶ Staff will ensure OAB is provided with issues and information when public comment periods are announced.

---

**Open Forum**

- Michele discussed a conversation with Senator Ken Jacobson about the OAB bringing organic bills to the legislature.
- Concerns that enforcement of organic integrity is not getting the appropriate support through tax dollars.
- Some ideas discussed by OAB members on possible bills:
  - ▶ Registration Program – requiring all organic operations in the state to be registered with WSDA. This would ensure we have knowledge on non-WSDA certified operations and bring in extra revenue for enforcement activities.
  - ▶ Surveillance/Enforcement. Currently certification fees support this work by the program; consumers are not paying for oversight of organic labels. Funding for one FTE out of general funds could support a compliance inspector.
  - ▶ Required Transitional Certification
- Other project ideas:
  - ▶ International Marketing Development
  - ▶ Local Food and Local Farms – make sure organic is a part of conversation.
  - ▶ Education and Outreach information for consumers

**Motion** – Staff should bring ideas to the board on how the program could be better supported.

Moved: Dan

Seconded: Jay

Passed Unanimously

---

**Adjourned**

---

**Handouts:**

1. February 5, 2008 Meeting Agenda
2. 2007 Internal Audit Report (Summary) for WSDA
3. Organic Advisory Board Member Roster – 1/29/08
4. November 2007 OAB Meeting Minutes
5. International Organic Program Additional Requirements (Producers, Handlers and Processors)
6. International Organic Program Application
7. EU Regulation on Parallel Production
8. Request for Review of a Processed and/or Handled Organic Product
9. 1/28/08 Letter to USDA regarding Sunset Materials
10. WSDA Rules and Regulations Book
11. January 2008 Quarterly Report

**Motions Summary:****Passed Motions -**

- To accept the 2007 Internal Audit and review the corrective action plan at April meeting.
- To nominate Steve Hallstrom as the organic representative for the WSDA Future of Farming Steering Committee.
- To approve November meeting minutes with minor corrections noted in meeting.
- To reappoint David Granestein for another term to the OAB. To reappoint Phil Underschutz as Co-Chair for another term.
- To accept proposal to begin charging a new product review fee with a minimum of \$40 (one hour of review and admin processing). More than one hour will be charged at a rate of \$40/hour.
- Staff should bring ideas to the board on how the program could be better supported.

**Additional Staff Task Summary:**

- Ag stats survey is not asking organic question – can we work with them to add this?
- Site Fee billing information is not on producer renewal form – should the fee be submitted or will billing occur later?
- Dan Dufault would like to be sent a generic material OMRI book.
- Staff will assist nomination committee in locating and contacting industry members.
- Staff will ensure OAB is provided with issues and information when public comment periods are announced in regards to Organic Regulations.