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Commercial Availability of Organic Seed

Commercially available: The ability to obtain a production input in an appropriate form, quality, or quantity to fulfill an essential function in a system of organic production or handling, as determined by the certifying agent in the course of reviewing the organic plan.

In the fall of 2005, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) issued a formal recommendation, in the form of a guidance document, regarding the Commercial Availability of Organic Seed. The following year, in 2006, this recommendation began to be reevaluated. The interest in continually reevaluating this recommendation is based on the ongoing desire to suggest ways to increase the use of organically grown seeds and to offer additional guidance to certifiers on how to verify when a particular seed has been determined commercially unavailable.

The WSDA Organic Food Program and the National Association of State Organic Programs (NASOP) have submitted comments over the last 2 years stating our opposition to certain requirements of this recommendation. While we do feel additional guidance for Accredited Certifying Agencies (ACAs) on how to adequately document commercial availability of organic seed and more data relating to the availability of organic seed would be beneficial, we feel the imposed recordkeeping requirements would be burdensome to a number of organic producers and would not assist in the increased use of organic seed. Our comments also state that organic producers use organic seed when it is available and do not identify cost as an excuse for not purchasing and planting organic seed.

The NOSB continues to insist that certifiers and producers must do more to use organic seed. Recently, on November 19, 2008, the NOSB approved a new recommendation that specifies additional steps that producers, certifiers and the NOP should take to ensure increased use of organic seed. The NOSB guidance on the ‘Commercial Availability of Organic Seeds’ are divided among three entities: growers, ACAs and the NOP. Below is the section that specifies the responsibility of the certified grower or seed purchaser of a certified operation (please note, this is only the guidance that was issued by the NOSB and has not been adopted as rule by the NOP at this time):

Cost-Share Update:

Reminder to all Certified applicants eligible for cost share: You will receive two cost share applications; one for 2008 and one for 2009. For your convenience, applications and W9 forms are also listed on our web site.

<http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/default.htm>

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Program Manager:

Miles McEvoy

Newsletter Editor:

Kristy Jones

Organic Food Program

1111 Washington Street

P.O. Box 42560

Olympia, WA 98504-2560

Telephone: 360-902-1805

Back issues are posted on our website: [http://](http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/default.htm)

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Mission Statement:

The WSDA Organic Food Program protects consumers and supports the organic food industry by ensuring the integrity of organic food products. The program certifies organic producers and handlers to US National Organic Standards and enforces organic standards in Washington State. The program supports the development of export markets by providing certification to foreign organic standards.

Certification Guide

The 2009 organic application packets include the WSDA Guide to Organic Certification. This guide provides information on all aspects of organic certification including crops, seed requirements, livestock standards, labeling, and processing and handling requirements. The guide also provides a list of resources for marketing, organic production, and information about the expanding community of organic agriculture.

Organic Rules and Regulations

In January 2008, the Organic Food Program published the WSDA Organic Rules and Regulations book. The book includes the USDA National Organic Standards; Washington State's Organic Food Products statute, Chapter 15.86 RCW; the Material Registration rules, Chapter 16-160 WAC; and the Washington Organic Certification rules, Chapter 16-157 WAC. Explanations of organic certification fees are also specified within the guide. The WSDA Organic Rules and Regulations book is available on the WSDA Organic Food Program website, <http://agr.wa.gov/foodanimal/organic/default.htm>. You may contact us at (360) 902-1805 or email organic@agr.wa.gov if you would like to be sent a hard copy of the book.

Canadian Equivalency Efforts Progress – from the Organic Trade Association – Dec 15, 2009

Keith Robinson of CFIA's International Affairs branch has briefed Canada's organic sector on international trade, equivalency and import/export requirements under the coming regulations. In negotiating equivalency, the Canadian government wants to ensure organic claims are verifiable, costs are kept as low as possible, and the Canadian trade is supported. Canada is now negotiating equivalency with the United States and European Union to determine if the systems may be deemed equivalent and to ensure that organic production is based on recognized organic principles. Robinson stressed the regulations must protect the organic claim without imposing trade barriers. He said he's "very optimistic" that equivalency with the U.S. can be reached before Canada's regulations are launched June 30, 2009.

Commercial Availability on Organic Seed cont' from page 1

NOSB recommendation on Certified Grower's role in increasing organic seed use

1. Document annually all seed usage to determine the percentage of organic seed usage vs. total seed usage on an acreage basis.
2. Search for and request organic seed for all crops grown.
3. Document a diligent search for organic seed, by listing and legitimately working with a minimum of three seed vendors that are known within the industry as organic seed suppliers.
4. For an organic producer to receive an allowance to use non-organic seed or planting stock to produce a crop that can be sold or labeled "organic," the producer must provide records to the certifying agent as a part of the organic system plan demonstrating lack of "commercial availability." These records will provide:
 - A. Justification for use of non-organic seed or planting stock, based on the attributes of appropriate form, quality, and quantity of the seed or planting stock;
 - B. A description of the site-specific agronomic or marketing characteristics required by the operation;
 - C. Written evidence of efforts to locate and source organic seed by contacting at least three credible suppliers of organic seed – written evidence of such inquiries may include letters, faxes, e-mail correspondence, and phone logs.
 - D. Written description of trials comparing organic and non-organic seeds or planting stock. If the producer makes a claim that available varieties of organic seed are not equivalent to non-organic seed that the producer prefers to use, supporting documentation must be provided to the certifying agent. (Certifiers may grant an allowance from the organic seed requirement if an applicant or operator conducts "on farm" trials comparing organic and non-organic seed varieties. If so, documentation of "on farm" trials should be recorded in the operation's organic system plan.)

Also note that seed price differentials between organically grown and conventionally grown seed are not a factor in determining commercial availability.

The full guidance document can be viewed at:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateJ&navID=NationalOrganicProgram&leftNav=NationalOrganicProgram&page=NOSBCommitteeRecommendations&description=NOSB%20Committee%20Recommendations>

In WSDA's experience, most organic growers strive to utilize organic seeds. They understand that cost cannot be used as a factor to determine the commercial availability of organic seeds. They have good systems in place to evaluate organic seed availability by utilizing their information networks that includes seed companies, farm input supply companies, and other organic farmers. They maintain reasonable documentation that specifies which seeds are not organic and document the reason (quantity, quality, or variety). They maintain documentation that includes phone logs, seed catalogues, letters requesting organic seeds, and statements from seed suppliers concerning the availability of organic seeds.

The organic seed industry is expanding and organic growers are utilizing more organic seeds every year. WSDA will continue to advocate for a flexible system that enforces the organic seed requirements and supports the continued development of the organic seed industry.



Implementing the 2008 Farm Bill Organic Provisions

(Courtesy of the Organic Farming Research Foundation)

On June 18th, 2008 Congress enacted the 2008 Farm Bill. The massive law covers everything in the agricultural policy arena and includes several important provisions concerning organic food and agriculture. These legislative victories must now be translated into action by US Department of Agriculture (USDA) offices and Congressional funding appropriators. The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) and other organic advocates are actively engaged in this implementation process in order to ensure that the new policies benefit organic producers and handlers. These programs can have an impact on all links in the organic products value network. Below are brief summaries of the status of the organic provisions as of early October, 2008.

Organic Certification Cost-Share

The Organic Certification Cost Share Program reimburses growers and handlers up to 75% of the costs of organic certification with a maximum payment of \$750. The USDA has released funds to each state's department of agriculture, which is responsible for distributing the money to qualifying producers and handlers. To receive reimbursement for certification costs, farmers and handlers should contact their state department of agriculture.

Farm Bill cont' on page 9

2009 Brand Name Materials

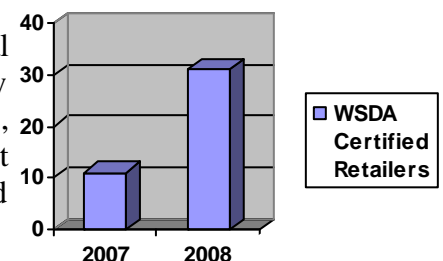
2009 Brand Name Materials Lists will be mailed to renewal applicants in January 2009 and will be available on the Organic Food Program website by January 15, 2009. Be sure to check the list for important changes to materials that have been previously approved but will not be allowed for the 2009 crop production year. If a product has been removed from the Brand Name Material List and you are not able to verify through OMRI or the EPA that the material is approved, you must discontinue the use of the product immediately. As a reminder, the use of a prohibited material will result in compliance actions against your organic or transitional certification.

In addition, be sure to list all materials on your 2009 renewal application packet. If you want to use a material that is not on your 2009 materials list, please be sure to notify our office to update your Organic System Plan.

Certified Organic Retailer Program

WSDA Organic Program has seen tremendous growth in the number of retail establishments that are seeking organic certification. In 2008 the number of certified organic grocery stores and restaurants more than doubled from 2007. Retail establishments that handle organic products are not required to be certified under the National Organic Standards. Therefore the certification of the 31 businesses in Washington State has been on a strictly voluntary basis. These operations site market demand and the need to increase consumer confidence in their organic products as reasons for obtaining organic certification.

Current WSDA certified organic retail establishments include PCC Natural Markets (eight stores), Bellingham Community Food Co-op, Skagit Valley Co-op, Central Co-op, Port Townsend Co-op, The Markets, LLC (20 stores), and The Mark Restaurant in Olympia. If you are interested in finding out more about Organic Retail Certification, please contact the Organic Food Program office or visit our website.



Access to Pasture

The USDA National Organic Program (NOP) published a proposed Access to Pasture Rule in the Federal Register on October 24, 2008. The proposal contained changes to the regulations around access to pasture for ruminant livestock, requirements for sacrificial pastures, changes to feed requirements, and other clarifications on the organic livestock standards. You can find the entire proposed rule at the Organic Food Program website under “Hot Topics”: <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/default.htm>.

Comments to USDA on the proposal were due on December 23, 2008. The WSDA Organic Food Program submitted comments that supported the NOP in their attempt to clarify the pasture requirements for livestock production. However, WSDA comments expressed concerns over the following changes and clarifications that appeared in the October proposed rule:



- **Requirement of year round access to pasture** - Requiring year-round access to pasture for ruminant animals contradicts the current requirement to maintain or improve the physical, biological and chemical condition of the soil [205.203]. In Washington State there are several agencies that regulate and evaluate the Best Management Practices for livestock grazing in wet conditions. These practices are put in place to protect soil and water quality from livestock waste. A requirement for year round access to pasture would put an organic livestock operation in direct violation of other federal, state and local regulations, including Department of Ecology, Natural Resource Conservation Service nutrient management plans and the WSDA Livestock Nutrient Management Program.
- **Sacrificial pasture** – The proposed rule adds a requirement for a sacrificial pasture. This is defined as a pasture or pastures, of sufficient size to accommodate all animals in the herd without crowding, where animals are kept for short periods during saturated soil conditions to confine pasture damage to an area where potential environmental impact can be controlled. WSDA believes that this new requirement is in conflict with the requirement that a producer maintains or improves the biological, physical and chemical condition of the soil and conflicts with the requirement of a preventative health management plan for organic livestock.
- **30% dry matter intake** – The proposed rule requires that during the growing season, producers provide not more than an average of 70 percent of a ruminant’s dry matter demand from dry matter feed. This must be calculated on a monthly basis. WSDA recommended that this prescriptive number be removed, as there are better methods of verifying that an animal has adequate access to pasture.
- **Recordkeeping** – The proposed rule has several new recordkeeping requirements around pasture management and feed management. Many of these requirements are redundant and are already covered under the crop production standards [205.200 through 205.206]. WSDA does not believe that additional recordkeeping specific to pasture management is necessary. In addition, new recordkeeping requirements specific to water-trough cleaning and feeding were seen to be burdensome and WSDA recommended their removal.
- **Requirement for organic bedding** - The proposed rule clarifies that bedding that is typically fed to livestock must be certified organic. WSDA currently enforces this requirement. However, the proposed rule includes straw as a bedding material that is typically fed to animals, thus requiring that it be certified organic. WSDA asked that the NOP remove the requirement for organic straw, as it is not a crop matter that is typically fed or consumed by livestock and adequate supplies of organic forms are not available.

Access to Pasture cont' from page 5

Without significant changes to the proposed rule, WSDA believes that the rule should be withdrawn and rewritten rather than implemented as proposed. WSDA recognizes that there have been organic dairies that have used loopholes in the regulations to confine animals during inappropriate periods and we appreciate that the NOP has attempted to close this loophole. However, we are concerned that in an effort to address these “bad actors,” the proposed rule places undue burdens on the majority of dairies that are in compliance with pasture regulations. We have received feedback from WSDA organic dairies that indicate they may simply withdraw their certification rather than have to comply with the additional proposed requirements. We believe that this is not the intention of the proposed rule and encouraged the NOP to take this into consideration when developing the final rule.

WSDA also had concerns that many organic livestock operations did not have adequate time to understand the October proposal and provide comments. The proposed rule contains a number of new concepts that have not been discussed previously by the organic community. WSDA, the National Association of State Organic Programs (NASOP), the Cornucopia Institute, and other state departments of agriculture requested an extension on the comment period to allow more time for the organic community to adequately address the proposal. WSDA and other concerned members of the organic industry that provided USDA with comments must now wait for the final rule to be announced.

You can view the WSDA comments, and all other comments received by USDA, at www.regulations.gov. You may also contact our office to be sent a copy of our comments.

International Organic Program

In 2009, new requirements are being implemented for organic crops and products that are exported into Canada, and the European Organic Standards and import process are undergoing changes. WSDA has therefore expanded and revised the International Organic Program to meet these new market access requirements. The 2009 International Organic Program includes the Canadian, European and Japanese organic standards and maintains compliance with IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) and ISO Guide 65 accreditation requirements. The program enables operations to be evaluated under one application for compliance with Canadian, European, Japanese and IFOAM organic standards.

It is important that you communicate your marketing needs to all of your suppliers to help them determine if they need to obtain compliance with international organic standards. Your product may not comply unless all ingredients that are used have been certified according to the appropriate international standards; compliance with these requirements must be verified within the entire chain of custody and therefore from field to final product. WSDA organic operations that participated in the 2008 International Organic Program will receive an International Program application with their US renewal application packet. Other operations that wish to apply for the International Program may download the application packet from the WSDA Organic Food Program website or contact our office at (360) 902-1805, organic@agr.wa.gov.

International Program cont' on page 8

Cultivate the Soil: Resources for Beginning and Small-Scale Farmers and Ranchers in Washington State

A new publication produced by the Washington State Housing Finance Commission's Beginning Farmer/Rancher Loan Program is available at www.wshfc.org/FarmRanch/resources.pdf. Copies of “Cultivate the Soil” may be obtained from Viet Tran at 206-287-4482, viet.tran@wshrc.org. More information about the Beginning Farmer/Rancher Loan Program is available at www.wshfc.org/FarmRanch/index.htm.

Manure and Compost Guidelines

The WSDA Organic Food Program certifies producers, handlers and processors to organic standards used in the European Union, Japan (JAS) and Canada (COR) under the International Organic Program. Beginning in 2009, the WSDA is also evaluating materials for equivalency to international organic standards.

Manure and compost products pose a challenge for evaluation due to the way that these products are allowed under international organic standards. For example, international organic standards restrict the use of manure and compost from factory farms though they do not provide a clear definition of a factory farm. Our understanding is that factory farm manure is restricted because of concerns that the manure/compost may be contaminated with prohibited substances such as heavy metals and pesticides. We have therefore developed guidelines for evaluating manure (raw, composted or processed) that addresses these concerns and is equivalent to the European, Canadian and Japanese organic standards.

Specific Clarifications:

Poultry Manure – Under the international standards, no raw manure is allowed from caged poultry operations. Composted or heat processed caged poultry manure is permitted if it meets standards for residue testing (see table below).

Residue Testing – Manure sourced from non-organic operations may be contaminated with materials prohibited in organic production. In order to verify that these sources do not pose a contamination risk to certified producers, manure must be tested annually for the presence of contaminants, including pathogens, heavy metals, and pesticide residues. Testing requirements apply to raw, composted, and heat processed manure used under the international program as noted in the table below.

	Analytes	Accepted Test Methods	Standard
Pathogens (composted and processed manure only)	Fecal coliform, salmonella	No specific requirements if performed at an independent laboratory	May not contain more than 1×10^3 (1,000) MPN (Most Probable Number) fecal coliform per gram and not contain more than 3 MPN Salmonella per 4 gram sample
Metal testing (raw, composted, and processed manure)	Arsenic, Cadmium, Cobalt, Mercury, Molybdenum, Nickel, Lead, Selenium, Zinc	As given in Chapter 16-200 WAC	Must meet Washington state fertilizer standard for metals, WAC 16-200
Pesticides (raw, composted, and processed manure)	Broad spectrum of organochlorines and organophosphates	EPA Test Methods 8081, 8081A, 8141, 8141B. Other test methods may be allowed with prior approval.	Must be below FDA Action Level or below 5% of the EPA Tolerance level

Manure products that have been registered through the WSDA Organic Material Registration Program *and* have received approval as compliant with international organic standards, have met the above testing standards.

All manure sources, attempts to source organic manure, and applicable test results must be documented and this documentation must be available during an inspection.

International Organic Program cont' from page 6

Canadian Organic Standards

Canada's new organic standards, the Canadian Organic Regime (COR), will be implemented on June 30, 2009. The COR will require all organic products sold and distributed in Canada after June 30th to meet the Canada Organic Standards; products certified to the USDA National Organic Standards will no longer comply. USDA and Canada are in negotiations to establish an equivalency agreement between the organic standards of the two countries. The Canadian organic standards are comparable to the standards established under the US National Organic Program (NOP), however, the COR was written to more closely reflect European organic standards rather than US standards.

WSDA hopes that the USDA and the Canadian Food Inspection Service (CFIS) establish an equivalency agreement before the June implementation date. Many dedicated people are working on creating a solution that allows organic trade between the US and Canada to continue unimpeded by additional certification requirements. However, if there is no equivalency agreement between Canada and the US, you will need to be certified according to the Canadian Organic Regime to ship organic products to Canada after June 30, 2009.

Materials Approved for International Standards

WSDA is now reviewing materials for compliance with international standards through the Organic Material Registration Program. Beginning in 2009 there is a new column on the Brand Name Material List that will specify whether a material is compliant with organic standards in Canada, Japan and the European Union. Please note that this is not a required registration and therefore the Brand Name Material List is not a comprehensive list of materials that comply with International Organic Standards. As with any material or input application, contact the Organic Food Program staff prior to its use to ensure that the substance is allowed for use in organic production.

Organic Food Processing Eco-Industrial Park in Dayton, Washington

"The world's first eco-industrial park dedicated to the recruitment and marketing of organic and artisan food processing companies will be located in Dayton, Washington," announced Jennie Dickinson, Port of Columbia Manager. Dayton, located within the Port's economic development jurisdiction in South Central Washington, has a long and illustrious entrepreneurial history in agriculture and food processing. The eco-industrial park, named "Blue Mountain Station," is a natural evolution of that history and the changing nature of the food processing industry.

Washington has become a leader in the organic industry. Washington State University in Pullman, less than a two-hour drive from Dayton, was the first in the United States to create an organic farming degree and online certificate program in organic agriculture. The Port of Columbia is taking the next logical step, partnering with food specialists in a number of disciplines to develop a fully integrated certified organic food chain from the farmer to the processor, from the processor to the wholesaler, and finally to the retailer. The organizers of Blue Mountain Station will create an "umbrella brand" where organic and artisan food processing companies can participate in the many advantages of operating in Blue Mountain Station, along with participating in other local, regional, national and international marketing programs.

Small farmers and artisan food processors not currently certified as organic, but desiring to participate in the Blue Mountain Station Project, will be provided professional assistance to successfully achieve organic certification. "Blue Mountain Station creates a new model in industrial park development. We believe that organic food processing is the right industry, Dayton is the right place, and now is the right time." Dickinson said. After initial research confirmed that such a project was viable, the state of Washington provided grant funding to the Port of Columbia for continued project development.

For more information on the Blue Mountain Station Project, contact Jennie Dickinson, Port of Columbia Manager, at phone 509-382-2577 or email at jennie@columbiainet.com.

Farm Bill cont' from page 4

Agriculture Research and Education Programs

The Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) which funds projects that enhance the ability of producers and processors to grow and market high quality organic agricultural products, was OFRF's top priority in the Farm Bill. OREI received a total of \$78 million in mandatory funding for the life of the Farm Bill, \$18 million of which is allocated for FY09. Unfortunately, OREI's 2008 funding is threatened by both the Senate and the Bush Administration's proposed budgets; the Senate proposed a \$2 million cut in funding for OREI for FY09 and the President proposed an even larger cut of \$8 million. Congress won't be taking up the FY09 budget until early next year. Defending the full 2008 Farm Bill funding level for OREI will be OFRF's top priority. In the meantime, the Request for Applications (RFA) to OREI will likely be published in early 2009.

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) is a competitive grants program funding initiatives directed at helping beginning farmers and ranchers, including those interested in farming organically. This program received its first mandatory funding of \$75 million in the 2008 Farm Bill. Like OREI, the Senate also proposed a \$2 million cut for BFRDP's FY09 budget, but OFRF will work to defend that when the budget is finalized in February or March of 2009.

The Organic Data Initiative received mandatory funding of \$5 million in the 2008 Farm Bill. Half of this funding will go to the Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) for price collection. The remaining funds will be allocated between the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Agricultural Statistics Survey (NASS). NASS is preparing a national survey of organic producers to follow up from the 2007 Census of Agriculture and ERS will continue their baseline data collection about organic producers and acreage.

Organic Conversion and Conservation Programs

The 2008 Farm Bill establishes a new policy specifically providing support for farmers converting land and livestock to organic status. Financial and technical support for organic conversion will now be part of the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**, a USDA conservation program which supports improved environmental performance on farms and ranches. EQIP is managed by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Support for organic conversion will provide up to \$20,000 per year with a limit of \$80,000 over six years. The



detailed rules governing the new Organic Conversion Support benefit have not been issued, but an interim final rule is expected in December 2008. There will be an opportunity for public comment once the interim final rule is published. OFRF will publicize the comment period on the interim final rule through our Organic Farmers Action Network (OFAN).

Producers who want to participate in EQIP during 2009 must register with NRCS and fill out a preliminary application. Check with your local USDA Service Center to find out your state's deadline. USDA Service Producers who have never applied for an NRCS program need to make an appointment with their local USDA Farm Service Agency office to get into their system.

In addition to the Conversion Support program within EQIP, other provisions of the Farm Bill now explicitly recognize organic agriculture as a conservation system. The bill requires USDA to make a "crosswalk" between NRCS and the National Organic Program that oversees organic certification and labeling. This provision is intended to reduce duplication between the paperwork for the various programs. Rule-making for this provision is also expected in December.

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National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)

The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 authorized a 15-member National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The Board's main mission is to decide which materials are allowed to be used in organic production and handling. The NOSB also makes recommendations to USDA on other aspects of implementing the National Organic Program. Decisions made by the NOSB have a profound impact on organic standards and policy. The NOSB website provides a lot of information on materials and NOSB recommendations - www.ams.usda.gov/nosb/index.htm

The NOSB meets twice a year and receives hundreds of public comments that it considers when making decisions. The NOSB goes to great lengths to read and listen to all public comments and is especially influenced by comments from organic farmers. During the November 2008 meeting in Washington DC the following recommendations were approved.

Organic Aquaculture

Over the opposition of consumer groups including the Puget Consumers Cooperative (PCC), the Consumer Union (Consumer Reports) and Whole Foods, the NOSB approved organic aquaculture standards. The standards allow for the use of up to 35% nonorganic feed (sustainably harvested wild fish). The standards also allowed for marine net pens (salmon farming). The net pen issue was the most controversial part of the proposal. Over the next few years, USDA will take the NOSB's recommendations and draft proposed rules for organic aquaculture. Organic aquaculture standards will take a few more years to finalize through the federal rule making process.

Multi-Site Certification (aka grower groups)

The NOSB approved the recommendation on Multi-Site Certification. The Multi-Site Certification recommendation allows small farms that sell to a cooperative to obtain certification as a group. The cooperative implements an Internal Control System that oversees the adherence to the organic standards. Inspectors inspect a sampling of the growers based on a formula for Multi-Site Certification. Each individual farm does not have to be inspected under this system. This is a common certification practice in developing countries especially with coffee and cacao crops. The NOSB recommendation requires all new growers to be inspected and recommends that only growers with less than \$5,000 in sales are eligible for Multi-Site (grower group) Certification.

Ethylene for winter pears

The Northwest Horticultural Council and the Pear Bureau Northwest petitioned to add ethylene to the National List for ripening winter pears. Ethylene is currently approved for the postharvest ripening of organic tropical fruit (e.g. bananas) and degreening of organic citrus. Ethylene is a plant hormone that plants produce during ripening. The conventional pear industry utilizes ethylene to condition winter pears so they are available on the market sooner. The ethylene petition just barely failed approval. Eight members supported the petition, five were against. A 2/3 majority is needed to add substances to the National List. Nine votes were needed to approve adding ethylene to the National List.

Antibiotics for fire blight

The NOSB made it very clear that they would like to remove antibiotics for fire blight from the approved materials list. This will most likely occur in October 2012 when the sunset period for antibiotics is complete. The only allowance for antibiotics under the US organic standards is for controlling fire blight in apples and pears. This allowance is a relic from the early development of organic standards when the Northwest organic tree fruit growers influenced the first National List of approved materials. Streptomycin and tetracycline (oxytetracycline calcium complex) have both been utilized by the organic tree fruit industry to control outbreaks of fire blight. Fire blight can be devastating to pears and apples as infected trees are killed. Alternative controls are being developed but none are as effective as antibiotics during a severe infection period. Antibiotics are prohibited under International organic standards. In 2008 some Washington organic growers that were in the International Organic Program lost many trees to fire blight because they could not utilize antibiotics.

NOSB cont' from page 10

During the November NOSB meeting a petition to add tetracycline hydrochloride to the National List was discussed. Although tetracycline (oxytetracycline calcium complex) is allowed, another tetracycline compound, tetracycline hydrochloride is not currently allowed. These compounds are basically different salts of the same material but due to the manner in which the organic regulations were written only the oxytetracycline calcium salt are allowed. The NOSB voted to approve adding the tetracycline hydrochloride salt to the National List. Final approval of tetracycline hydrochloride will not occur until USDA publishes a final rule.



Collaboration with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

The WSDA Organic Food Program is collaborating with Oregon Tilth, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and other key partners on aligning conservation programs with the organic certification standards. The 2008 Farm Bill increases funding for organic producers through NRCS programs including EQIP, and the Organic Transitions Program. This project will improve coordination between NRCS and the organic community.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has provided leadership in a partnership effort to help America's private land owners and managers conserve their soil, water, and other natural resources. Since 1935, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (originally called the Soil Conservation Service) has provided leadership in a partnership effort to help America's private land owners and managers conserve their soil, water, and other natural resources. Traditionally, farmers and ranchers seeking conservation assistance through receive guidance from NRCS. At the same time, growers seeking organic certification through USDA's National Organic Program are required to meet a different set of standards with guidance and assistance from other sources.

The project will bring natural resource professionals together (NRCS, conservation districts and organic certifiers, in particular) to find solutions and develop successful, localized conservation practices in compliance with National Organic Standards. This higher level of coordination and conservation practice alignment will benefit organic producers who are trying to navigate the maze of regulations and requirements to develop sustainable agricultural systems.

While the overall goals of organic certification and conservation practices may be the same, often the methods and implementation strategies have been different. In addition, professionals in both the organic and conservation arenas have limited knowledge and experience working in each other's realms. This project is an opportunity to share information between NRCS and organic certification agencies, and help shape how Farm Bill legislation is implemented in the region.

Grant funding for the project is provided by the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (WSARE) Professional Development Program. Oregon Tilth is the project leader of this project for the tri-state region. Project partners include Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington State University, Oregon State University, NRCS offices in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho and other organizations specializing in organic certification requirements.

WSDA Organic Food Program

PO Box 42560
1111 Washington Street
Olympia, WA 98502-2560
Phone: 360-902-1805
Fax: 360-902-2087
Email: organic@agr.wa.gov

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"We need a new environmental consciousness on a global basis. To do this, we need to educate people."
- *Mikhail Gorbachev*

Farm Bill cont' from page 9

Crop Insurance Reform for Organic Farms

The Farm Bill requires USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) to contract for studies that address the current inequities in premiums and payouts for organic producers, and provide options for creating a fairer structure. RMA has 180 days from the date of enactment of the Farm Bill to enter into a contract with an outside entity. OFRF will work to ensure that the public has input on the studies and will keep you informed on this process through the Organic Farmers Action Network.

Please contact Tracy Lerman at the Organic Farming Research Foundation if you have questions: tracy@ofrf.org or (831) 426-6606 x 108. For more information about the Organic Farming Research Foundation visit www.ofrf.org.

Organicology Event

The organic food and farming sector will gather at Portland's Doubletree Lloyd Center from February 26-28, 2009, for *Organicology*, a conference offering intensive workshops, networking, a trade show, and key notes on sustainable food. *Organicology* is a "must-attend" for anyone concerned with food sustainability. Speakers include the world-renowned Dr. Vandana Shiva, Director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology, and Natural Resource Policy; Paul Roberts, author of *The End of Food* and *The End of Oil*; and Claire Hope Cummings, author of *Uncertain Peril: Genetic Engineering and the Future of Seeds*. Workshops feature in-depth courses on all aspects of sustainable farm production, sustainable business initiatives, organic seed production, labor practices, organic certification, renewable energy, managing the threats of genetically-engineered crops, and the challenges and opportunities of organic local food systems. The first-time event is presented by Oregon Tilth, Organic Seed Alliance, the Food Trade Sustainability Leadership Association, and Organically Grown Company. Opportunities for Sponsors and Trade Show participants open now. Learn more about the conference and register now at www.organicology.org. Sponsors include: WSDA Organic Food Program, Heath & Lejeune, Organics Unlimited, Earthbound Farms, Organic Trade Association, CF Fresh, Cross Creek Trading and PCC Natural Markets.
