



WELCOME...

to the first edition of Organic News. To keep you abreast of news you need to know, we will be publishing a quarterly newsletter. Because our focus is on you, we want to offer you a variety of ways to obtain the information. Each quarter we will post the information on our website at www.agriculture.state.ia.us/agdiversification.htm; in addition, if you'd like to have it emailed to your personal email

address, we would be happy to accommodate your request. Please send your request to tammy.stotts@idals.state.ia.us.

We welcome any comments or suggestions you have for the newsletter as it is our goal to better serve you and we feel this is one tool to aid us.

Watch for deadlines and events throughout the year.

January 3, 2007

Issue 1

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Changes to the certification fee schedule
- Clarification of Buffer Requirements

IOWA ORGANIC PROGRAM HERE TO ASSIST YOU

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

- Certification application packets will be sent this month
- Deadline for early application is MARCH 15
- Applications received after May 31 will not be accepted

2006 CERTIFICATES

We are working diligently to send out the remaining 2006 organic certification documents. If you have not supplied us with all necessary forms or information, please do so immediately.

If you believe you have submitted all necessary materials and still have not received your certificate, please contact Mary Nieland at 515-281-7656.

2007 APPLICATION PACKETS

As 2006 comes to a close, we are working on application packets for 2007. These are scheduled to be sent to you in mid-January. For renewal applicants, the certification documents being sent to you are for the same crops or livestock you certified in 2006. If you will be making any changes in

your current operation, please contact Mary Nieland so the correct information can be sent to you. Please also note that the deadline to mail these packets is March 15. The application fee will remain \$75 for applications post-marked prior to the deadline. Applications post-marked after March 15

will be assessed a late fee of \$125, a \$75 increase from last year's fee.

It is critical to this department that we have ample time to review system plans and schedule farm inspections.

**SAVE \$125 BY
MAILING
YOUR
APPLICATION
PACKET
PRIOR TO
MARCH 15**

CHANGES IN PRODUCER FEES

Because of the fluctuation that can occur throughout the year in a livestock producer's operation, the method of calculating the certification fee for dairy cows has been changed. Effective for the 2007 certification program year, a flat fee of \$10/head will be charged for all

dairy cows in production whether or not they are lactating at the time of inspection. Replacement heifers on the dairy operation will no longer be charged a fee.

An increase will be assessed in the certification fee of dairy goats. The time expended to

certify goats is much like that of cattle and the current fee is not reflective of the time involved in this procedure. The new fee for dairy goats will be \$5/head.

Review the fee sheet included in your application packet for additional changes.

PROCESSOR UPDATES

An amendment to the National Organic Program (NOP) Regulation 205.606 scheduled to take effect on June 9, 2007 may affect certified organic producers and processors. If nonorganically produced agricultural products or nonagricultural products are intended to be included in products labeled as organic, only those approved by the NOP and listed in 205.605 or 205.606 are allowed.

Processors and handlers are encouraged to petition the NOP for inclusion of any currently used or proposed ingredients or processing aids that do not appear on the list at this time. You may use this link to file a petition: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/Petition/PetitionHome.html>. A list of all inputs that have been petitioned and their current status can be found at the following link: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/NationalList/>

Find the latest in National organic news and information on the NOP website at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/indexIE.htm>

CLARIFICATION OF BUFFER REQUIREMENTS

A common question many producers have is in regards to the buffer requirements, especially as more organic farmers add organic livestock to the organic system. As a review, NOP §205.202 (c) states “Any field or farm parcel from which harvested crops are intended to be sold, labeled, or represented as ‘organic’ must have distinct, defined boundaries and buffer zones such as runoff diversions to prevent the unintended application of a prohibited substance to the crop or contact with a prohibited substance applied to adjoining land that is not under organic management.” To start with, the distinct, defined boundaries means that the dividing line between an organic field and non-organic field must be easily recognizable throughout the entire season. Having an organic soybean field adjacent to a non-organic corn field is not acceptable if there is not a strip of grass, fence posts, or something similar separating them. While it may be obvious where the dividing line is during the growing season, it may not be too clear the next spring after several tillage operations have taken place on both the organic and non-organic field. In this case it would be quite possible for the dividing line to be moved if grass strips or fence posts are not in place. Secondly, all organic fields must be surrounded on all sides by buffer zones. Although the regulation does not specify the width of the buffer zone, our policy, like most certifiers, is to require a minimum of 25-30 feet. If the fence line has a solid row of trees, 15’ of buffer may be acceptable. The buffer zone may be crop that is managed as organic, harvested separately, sold on the conventional market, and documented for the inspector. Transitional crops in adjacent fields would be considered as the buffer too. Many farmers like to grow grass in the buffer zones to avoid the need to keep grain harvests separate, and to help with weed control on the difficult to manage end rows. If the neighboring farmer has organic crops, transitional crops, hay fields, pastures, CRP, and/or timber that are not fertilized with



commercial fertilizers, not sprayed (not even spot sprayed), or does not receive any other inputs that would be disqualified for organic production, you may make a **written** agreement with your neighbor to use his land as your buffer zone. If your neighbor agrees to let you use his land for your buffer, he only needs to agree to not apply prohibited inputs in the 25’-30’ that is along your border. Where roads are boundaries for organic fields, similar procedures need to be followed. It is important to remember that road departments have the responsibility and right to control brush and weeds along roadsides to keep motorists safe, to comply with weed laws, and for general maintenance. As an organic farmer, you cannot stop the road department from using necessary methods to control the weeds and brush in the ditches. However, many road departments are very accommodating and will agree not to spray the ditches near your organic fields. Sometimes this means that you will be responsible for controlling weeds and brush with methods that are acceptable in organic production. **Your agreement with the county must be documented as well if you want to use the road ditch as a buffer zone.** While posting “No Spray” signs is a good way to remind workers to not

spray the ditches, one cannot assume the road department will comply with your request. Please be aware that many counties that quit spraying ditches now have serious tree problems and have started spraying again. **Power companies** also spray under power lines, so they need to be contacted as well if you do not wish to maintain a buffer area. Finally, it is noted that organic livestock grazing pastures and crop residues must be kept out of the buffer areas, since the buffer is not considered organic, and the agricultural feedstuffs fed to organic livestock must be 100% organic. Please review your boundary and buffer situation for your operation this winter, and update any necessary documentation that is not current.

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WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

The Organic Advisory Council is an eleven member council established in Code of Iowa section 190C.2(a). The council may exercise only those duties as requested by the Department pursuant to this section.

The Organic Advisory Council shall not review applicant files nor make any certification decisions regarding applicants' re-

quest for certification but is established to provide information and expert opinions relating to organic agricultural products and matters. Two vacancies currently exist under Gubernatorial Appointments. If you are interested in becoming a member of this board, contact the Governor's office to get more information on application procedures.

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION COST-SHARE

Please note that applications for the Federal Organic Certification Cost-Share Program are not being accepted at this time. Funds were not allocated this year for the cost-share program

which was established to offer partial reimbursement for the cost of certification.

We will announce funding changes to this program should they occur.

IDALS Certified Operations

