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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Joint Organic Valley/PCO Meeting Focuses on**

**Milk Markets, Organic Transition**

Interested in shipping organic milk? Do you have questions about how to become certified organic? Please join Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative and Pennsylvania Certified Organic on March 24th or 25th 2015 and discover Organic Valley’s sustainable milk marketing opportunities and learn from PCO how to transition to organic dairying. OV/CROPP members, PCO members, and especially those who are interested in organic certification for shipping organic milk are welcome.

The March 24th meeting will be held at the Mifflin-Juniata Area Agency on Aging, 47 CJEMS Lane in Mifflintown, PA and the March 25th meeting is scheduled for Yoder's Country Market

on Tower Road in New Holland, PA. Social time will begin at 9:00am and the meeting will start at 9:30am. The events include lunch and snacks and will conclude at 3:00pm.

Organic Valley and PCO have developed the meetings to bring our members and farmers interested in organic production together to provide a forum for engaging in discussions on production and organic practices, learn new ideas, and network with members, Organic Valley, and PCO staff.

“The joint meeting concept was designed to engage farmers in a broad conversation,” says PCO’s Director of Education and Outreach Lee Rinehart. “It is an opportunity to learn from expert organic practitioners, get to know other members, and learn important organic certification and marketing requirements.”

Solomon Meyer and Terry Ingram from Organic Valley/CROPP will discuss information about the cooperative and organic crop & dairy market opportunities. Lee Rinehart and Nicole Lawrence McNeil of PCO will talk about certification, standards, and policies that are important to organic producers. Included in the program is information on PCO’s Transition Program, designed to assist farmers through the process of becoming organic.

The Transition Program offers educational opportunities, farm visits by PCO staff to assist with applications and paperwork, and access to mentors. “Many organic farmers have said that having a mentor, someone who has gone through the process, was crucial to successfully transitioning and getting certified,” notes Rinehart. “The PCO Transition Program was designed to bring people together and develop a support network where farmers can engage each other, get their questions answered, and plan for their first inspection with confidence.”

For more information on the March meetings please contact OV/CROPP on the Farmer Hotline at 888-809-9297 or Lee Rinehart at PCO at 814-470-9734. The free meetings are open to all interested farmers.

Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative is a farmer-owned mission-driven cooperative, promoting regional farm diversity and economic stability by the means of organic agricultural methods and the sale of certified organic products. View CROPP’s opportunities at www.farmers.coop. PCO is a USDA-accredited organic certifying agency that educates and certifies growers, processors, and handlers of organic crops, livestock, and livestock products in Pennsylvania and adjoining states. Learn more about organic certification with PCO at www.paorganic.org.

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