

Organic Matters

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Organically Speaking

PCO is starting 2023 right with some big recognitions that support our leadership in organic!

We have been chosen by the USDA National Organic Program to lead the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic region in their Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP), a cooperative agreement funding program that will support the work of recruiting, mentoring, and supporting farmers in the transition to organic in 13 states from Maine to West Virginia and additionally includes Washington, D.C. With six certifiers in the nation chosen as regional leads, we are honored to have the confidence of the NOP to accomplish this meaningful work. If you know a farmer that is thinking about transition, this is the time to send them our way! More information follows in this issue.

PCO has also been recognized at the state level to support transition to organic in Pennsylvania as part of a three-year, \$1.8M grant program from the PA Department of Agriculture. TeamAg will lead the project in partnership with PCO and Kitchen Table Consultants, and the focus is on transitioning not just producers but also processors, which is a big need in the state. Another awardee of this funding is Rodale Institute and their consulting program. Representatives from our organizations participated in a press event to recognize PA's commitment and support for organics at the PA Farm show alongside Secretary Redding. More information on that follows in this issue as well.

Earlier this year, Pasa Sustainable Agriculture, one of our longtime supporters and sister organizations, was awarded a \$55M Climate Smart grant as part of a \$1.8B pool of funding from USDA, and PCO will also be a partner in this work, which will spread over a large region of the Northeast and Eastern US. Stay tuned for ways this can benefit your farm as more information and the details of that enormous project are more clearly defined as we move into 2023.

It's also important to recognize the work of the PCO staff, who show me leadership everyday but are also leading in service to other organizations, like the National Organic Standards Board (Kyla Smith, PCO Certification Director), the Accredited Certifiers Association (Diana Underwood, PCO Operations Director), and in the creation of this publication (Katie Poppiti, Certification Specialist who has also been going above and beyond to help produce Organic Matters as we shift some responsibilities). The staff also demonstrated leadership this past year by working to achieve approval to offer the Regenerative Organic Certification™ (ROC), which we are now ready to steward clients through achieving as well!



View of the Rodale House and Stone Bank Barn, October 2022. Photo: Diana Kobus.

We need to recognize the PCO Board of Directors for showing incredible flexibility and commitment to leadership, especially long-serving member and current President Joe Miller. Under his leadership, we have recently updated our mission, vision, strategic plan, and even the articles and bylaws of the organization, including the structure of the board; this required updating the Board Manual. I want to recognize outgoing board member Kristy Borelli, who along with a small but mighty dedicated committee has been working on that project to its completion.

Finally I'd like to recognize all of you reading this, producer and processor clients and community supporters of this work. Without your hard work day in and day out, we would have no assurances about one of the most basic human needs – food. PCO is a community of people that will continue to lead for you with our vision for a world where agriculture systems prioritize health, ecological balance, fairness and care.

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PCO's VISION

A world where agriculture systems prioritize health, ecological balance, fairness and care.

PCO's MISSION

To uphold and advance organic principles and practices through certification, advocacy, and technical support.

PCO's CORE VALUES

1. **People & Service** – Keep people at the center of every action, interaction, and decision
2. **Organic Spirit & Environment** – Promote restorative practices that improve the world for future generations
3. **Honesty & Integrity** – Embrace transparency and integrity in all our work.

Organic Matters

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COVER PHOTO:

Cha de Magoma tea garden near Gúruê, Mozambique, provides organic and fair trade certified tea for Just Ice Tea drinks. *Photo: Just Ice Tea.*

Just Ice Tea:

Relationship Strengths Leads to Successful Product Re-Launch

SETH GOLDMAN, CO-FOUNDER OF AND CHIEF CHANGE AGENT OF EAT THE CHANGE; CO-FOUNDER OF PLNT BURGER AND HONEST TEA

On Sunday, May 22, 2022 I received a text message from a former colleague I worked with at Coca-Cola after the Honest Tea acquisition. He asked if I might be free to participate on a call Monday to hear an “urgent business update” from senior members of the Coca-Cola management team. Since I don’t have an ongoing relationship with the beverage giant, I suspected the update was somehow related to Honest Tea.

Sure enough, when I joined the call on May 23 I was told that while the juice drink Honest Kids was flourishing and would continue to expand, Honest Tea was going to be discontinued. My first reaction was shock and disappointment – I couldn’t believe our beloved brand that had been built by thousands of employees and sales and distribution partners was going to disappear.

It was especially hard to understand because Honest Tea was still the top-selling bottled tea in the natural foods industry and the top-selling organic bottled tea in mainstream channels. According to the leaders I spoke with at Coca-Cola, while Honest Tea was still leading in the natural channel, the Company had made the strategic decision to make “fewer, bigger bets” and Honest Tea was smaller than their non-organic tea brand, Gold Peak.

I was equally concerned about the communities in India and China where our tea was grown. Ever since Honest Tea created the world’s first organic bottled tea in 1999 (certified by PCO) I had visited most of the tea gardens and encouraged them to convert to organic certification. I had seen and heard the difference organic made to the local ecosystem. Most of the organic gardens we worked with were two thirds rainforest so

Above: Fair Trade premiums support community projects at Cha de Magoma, Mozambique, including a school, potable drinking water and an ambulance.

the birds and monkeys provide the sound track for tea gardens. Organic gardens also have a different level of resilience. I recall visiting a valley in Assam Northern India that was sandwiched between two gardens – one organic and one conventional. There had been a series of heavy rains the week before. The organic garden was soggy but fully intact, but the conventional garden had been hit with mudslides because the soil was not as hearty and resilient.

After Coke’s announcement, one of our main tea suppliers from the Honest Tea days reached out to share his reaction to the news. I had worked with his father to develop our supply chain back in 1999 and we continued to work together for 20 years. He wrote:

Very sad to hear the news. I am just hearing the news and reading your note on LinkedIn.

The story of Honest Tea is very connected to our own, our company, and the gardens and people with whom we work at origin, so the news is definitely a “gut punch,” for us as well. For my father and myself, while the financial consequences are material, the loss of confidence in organic and Fair Trade agriculture that this decision is likely to engender in the wider community is very saddening and probably more consequential over the long term – especially in terms of lost motivation at origins. We have been so inspired to be part of the journey that you led, and want to try to continue the effort (and fight the suggestion that this was all a failed experiment).

I certainly wasn’t willing to accept the notion that organic and Fair Trade was a “failed experiment,” so we got to work. On June 6, my Eat the Change co-founder Chef Spike Mendelsohn and my Honest Tea co-founder, Barry Nalebuff, joined me in announcing that we were going back into the bottled tea

I certainly wasn't willing to accept the notion that organic and Fair Trade was a "failed experiment," so we got to work.

business. And 90 days later, on September 6 we sold our first bottle of Just Ice Tea at a PLNT Burger in New York City.

So how did we manage to mobilize from the "go" decision to launch in three months?

First, we have to be honest. This wasn't a start-up – it was more of a jump-start. Though Eat the Change had not sold a single bottle of tea, we had a team up & running. And not just any team – a 12-person team that included six people with more than 100 years of tea-making & selling experience.

That said, it was still a fast launch by any standard. Some large beverage companies I know think 18 months is fast. So here are five keys to making this happen so quickly.

First, a talented & passionate team – Even though our team was experienced with launching tea, they were passionate, motivated & committed to an aggressive launch. Coca-Cola's decision to discontinue their beloved brand proved to be an extra source of motivation. As a result, we were able to quickly resolve challenges, including around potential trademark issues.

Because Coca-Cola was going to continue to build the Honest Kids brand, we couldn't call the brand Honest Tea so we

came up with the name Just Ice Tea. The term "Just" speaks to a set of working standards that we aspire to support. By committing to Fair Trade Certified™ sourcing we support a third-party inspection system which ensures all our suppliers pay the tea garden and factory workers a fair wage. In addition, with every pound of ingredients we buy, we pay a premium that goes directly to the workers for them to reinvest in their communities. The workers democratically vote on how the money is spent, empowering the workers, especially the women (who form the majority of tea pluckers), with financial resources and a say in their future.

Just also speaks to our aspiration to respect and support our planet. By making all our varieties certified organic, we commit to a third-party verified approach to avoid the use of synthetic pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, and fertilizers.

The word root "cide" means killing or destruction (as in homicide). Though regulators often say pesticides and herbicides are safe at diluted levels, we know these compounds, which are designed to kill living organisms, build up in our ecosystem and in our bodies. The ecosystem, tea pluckers, and our consumers are better off with less exposure to them.

This is especially true for tea leaves, which are one of the few agricultural products that are never rinsed. If chemicals are sprayed on tea leaves, the first time the compounds get washed off is when hot water is poured on them, and the chemicals get washed into the hot tea.

And finally, Just also speaks to the taste and formulation of our drinks, which are brewed with real tea leaves (as opposed to powders or concentrates) and are lightly sweetened for a "Just Sweet Enough" taste.

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Eat the Change celebrating its first production run; the brand went from idea to market in three short months.

PCO PROFILE: Sabine Carey, Full Circle Farms

*Celebrating over 20 Years
of Service to PCO*

After more than 20 years as part-time staff, Sabine Carey switched to a contract material review position in 2022. To celebrate her immeasurable service to PCO, we wanted to highlight the breadth of her work with PCO, her farm, and her community.

Where did you grow up, where were you raised?

I grew up in Europe, spending my childhood in Germany, Holland and Wales. I imagine this is where my love for flowers comes from! College took me to Penn State, where my studies focused on International Agriculture and Development.

How did you first get started working in food and agriculture and how has that led you to your work today?

Other than our family vegetable garden, my first ag experience was working as a research technician for the PSU Entomology Department throughout college. I spent a lot of time in the lab – and summers on the Penn State Research Farm, studying pesticide resistance of potato beetles. Working in pesticide research certainly opened my eyes to the threats of conventional agriculture. After graduation I happily completed a 9-month internship with Dr. Marianne Sarrantonio at the Rodale Institute, focusing on hairy vetch and other cover crops and their effect on soil respiration and microbial activity.

Continuing my passion for small farms brought me to Tait farm, where I managed a 2-acre asparagus patch, raspberries and also managed their on-farm food processing – I spent several years making historic raspberry shrub and other sauces.

What work do you do outside of PCO?

I have participated in our local farmers markets for more than 20 years, both as a vendor and holding various positions on the Board of Directors of the North Atherton Farmers Market (NAFM). In 2019, I spearheaded the Centre Markets effort to streamline collaboration and marketing between our local producer-only markets, and was able to obtain a small marketing grant to collectively promote our markets. Once COVID arrived on the scene in early 2020, my leadership role with NAFM allowed me to quickly start an on-line farmers market under the Centre Markets umbrella, and officially launched Centre Markets as an LLC later that spring.



How long has Full Circle Farms been in operation?

We purchased the family farm from my husband's parents in 2000, and started our small CSA that same year. It's the farm where my husband grew up, so our love for these 60 acres runs deep.

What are your favorite flowers to grow?

I can't choose just one! Zinnias and their colorful abundance bring me so much joy. Poppies with their delicate and short lived beauty are magical and fragrant peonies always make me smile.

How do you continue to evolve and grow your Full Circle Farms?

Although we have raised pastured poultry and pigs, as we all as a small vegetable CSA in the past, our farm currently focuses on raising specialty cut flowers which we sell through regular bouquet subscriptions. Our hay fields are certified organic and are rented out to a local organic dairy. We still raise some grassfed beef every year, but the majority of farm activity is now cut flower production.

Our flower marketing is evolving as I am learning to streamline the process and incorporate sales and delivery into our existing Centre Markets sales channels.

The USDA is soon to roll out the next census of agriculture. The last census of agriculture (2017) found that 36% of U.S. farmers are women and that 56% of farms have at least one decision maker. Centre Market is an independent woman-owned business working with more

than 40 local farmers and food artisans and works to support beginning and minority-owned businesses. As a farmer, business woman and entrepreneur what resources are most needed to support a beginning farmer or food artisan?

Working directly with our local farmers and entrepreneurs, the need for direct and in-person support for basic business and marketing skills, as well as access to commercial kitchen infrastructure very quickly became apparent. Whereas many producers already have experience selling baked goods etc. directly to customers at farmers market, the needs for our Centre Markets aggregation and delivery are different, and we continually provide guidance on licensing, labeling and insurance requirements to our vendors. Since our market is dedicated to reducing plastic packaging, we also provide guidance on suitable packaging as well.

Increasing availability to these identified missing resources is the driving force behind the creation of our new non-profit: Centre Kitchen Collective (CKC) which is being formed this winter. Centre Kitchen Collective and Centre Markets will work hand-in-hand to provide not only the physical space and marketing infrastructure, but also the support network for both farmers and food entrepreneurs to build a resilient local food hub in our county.

What advice would you give to those interested in developing their farm or food business?

I'd recommend folks start with a solid business plan with the help of an experienced person in that field – and be willing to frequently adjust it as needed. Change is constant, and we've all seen that being able to pivot as markets and demands change is crucial. I also found having a cohort of other farmers & business owners and mentors that you trust to bounce ideas around with to be invaluable.

What have been some of the biggest challenges and obstacles to the development of Centre Markets.

Centre Markets was created out of the urgent need to connect our local farmers and food producers to our community, and encountered the many obstacles that came along with the start of the COVID crisis. Over the past three years we have been able to overcome many obstacles, including finding a suitable online sales platform. After bouncing around from outside parking lot to church community rooms to fire hall we finally found a collaborative aggregation/ pickup location at a local healthfood store that rents us warehouse space once a week.

We are constantly finetuning our pricing structure, so that it is fair to both our producers and shoppers, while still allowing Centre Markets to be sustainable long term. One challenge still unmet has been improving access to our foods to those unable



to afford it. As an on-line market we have not been eligible to run a SNAP (food stamp) program, and I'm excited to have this as a priority for our 2023 expansion.

What has been your most proud moment?

I was thrilled to receive the PASA Community Leadership Covid Response Award in 2021. My family is a lifetime PASA member and getting this recognition for our Centre Markets efforts from my PASA community was an incredible honor.

Any new projects that you can share that are coming up?

Centre Markets has exciting plans for 2023! We have outgrown our current space and distribution model, and are actively searching for a physical retail space for our local food community. Together with our retail space, we are also developing an incubator commercial kitchen, which will fall under the guidance of our newly created Centre Kitchen Collective non-profit.

During your tenure with PCO, were you always working on the Materials side?

I started as a certification specialist with PCO before we even had that term. In my years at PCO I worked on reviewing files, materials review, and several years as an organic inspector.

From your first year to your final year with PCO, can you talk about how the Materials Team specifically has grown in focus of work over 20+ years.

When I started at PCO, our materials review consisted of a daunting stack of paper folders on a desk, with scribbled notes from Hue Karreman and the late Al Walker. At the time we were still working with the American Organic Standards, and collaboration between certifiers was rare. Phone calls and letter writing to manufacturers for labels were the norm, and there were no NOP or AAFCO to refer to for clarification. I created our first materials database from scratch in Filemaker, and that database was expanded and improved and in use for close to 20 years.

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Regenerative Healthcare: Linking Soil Health and Human Health



NADINE CLOPTON, RODALE INSTITUTE PROGRAM
MANAGER

Healthcare and agriculture, while inextricably linked, have sat in separate siloes for far too long.

Both sectors share a common set of challenges—the pervasive use of antibiotics and other synthetic inputs, a symptoms-based approach to addressing problems, and disconnection from being part of a much greater whole.

Yet many solutions to their shared challenges are also held in common—focusing on promoting biodiversity in both the soil and gut microbiomes, taking a root-cause approach, and looking at an individual or a farm as part of a much greater whole.

Before the advent of pharmaceutical interventions and synthetic agricultural inputs, we relied on the Earth to give us the food and medicines we need. While modern medicine and innovation in agriculture have given us many tools that enhance our quality of life, something sacred has been lost along the way.

We are part of a deeply interconnected, living, breathing ecosystem. The health of our soil and planet is not separate from the health of our own bodies.

Regenerative healthcare is a vision for the future in which healthy farming practices inform a prevention-based approach to human health. Rather than relying on toxic chemical inputs to solve agricultural issues and pharmaceutical intervention to cure disease, regenerative healthcare aims to prevent disease through an organic, whole-foods diet that starts on farms that work in harmony with nature.

Rodale Institute is at the forefront of creating partnerships, programming, and focused research on how food, and the way food is produced, can regenerate human health, communities, and the earth.

Above: Dan Kemper, Rodale Institute's Master Trainer, holds a daikon radish (known as a "tillage radish") for attendees while sharing about regenerative organic methods of caring for healthy soil microbes.

THE CHALLENGE

Albert Einstein once said, "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

The challenges facing both our healthcare and agricultural systems are deeply interconnected, as are many of the solutions to these challenges. But how did we get here?

■ Soil Degradation

Many conventional farming practices, including mono-cropping, heavy tillage, application of synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides, have left our soil stripped of the microbial biodiversity it needs to grow nutrient-dense food and make our watersheds more susceptible to erosion. Persistent use of chemicals such as polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAs), known as "forever chemicals," and herbicides such as Glyphosate, contribute to diminished soil health and are proving to be detrimental to human health.

For additional reading: Exposure to glyphosate in the United States: Data from the 2013–2014 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey – ScienceDirect

■ Food As Food, Medicine As Pharmaceuticals

The modern medical paradigm focuses primarily on treatment and symptom management more than getting to the root of disease. 90% of the United States' \$4.1 trillion in annual healthcare expenditures are spent on the management of chronic and mental health conditions. That's \$3.7 trillion per year on management of chronic illnesses alone.

On average, doctors receive only 19.6 hours of nutrition education in medical school. As a result, nutrition is seldom

considered in either prevention or treatment protocols.

In the current system, food is food, while medicine is used to refer to pharmacological interventions.

■ Separation From the Local and Nature

How many miles did your food have to travel to get to your plate? That number is often staggering. We have been disconnected from our local farms, food-sheds, and ecologies. The longer food takes in transit to you, the lower the nutrient density, the higher the climate impact.

Additionally, humans have lived interconnected with their ecosystems for thousands of years. Over time, this interconnection gave way to traditional ecological knowledge – an intimate ecology of place – grounded in an understanding of the plants, fungi, and cycles surrounding us that we are inseparable from. Before the advent of pharmaceutical interventions and synthetic agricultural inputs, we relied on the Earth to give us the food and medicines we need. While modern medicine and innovation in agriculture have given us many tools that enhance our quality of life, something sacred has been lost along the way.

Traditional ecological knowledge plays a critical role in practices such as herbalism, homeopathy, and integrative medicine. Indigenous communities, even in the face of colonization, have managed to maintain their unique cultures and wisdom traditions grounded in living in right relationship with Earth, including a knowledge of the medicines all around us. Western society's disconnection from nature and our ecologies has diminished our awareness and understanding of looking to Earth for support with what ails us.

A ROOTS-UP SOLUTION

Regenerative healthcare is a return to our roots. By regenerating our soil, we regenerate ourselves and our communities.

Regenerative healthcare holds within it the potential for transformative healing of our food and healthcare systems by operating at the intersection of soil health and human health.

J.I. Rodale, 75 years ago, took a piece of chalk and wrote

what still serves as the core of Rodale Institute's guiding philosophy: "Healthy soil = healthy food = healthy people."

It is well established that the health of the soil is directly linked to the health of the plants that grow in it, and in turn, the health of the people and animals who consume those plants. This is because the soil acts as a vital source of nutrients and minerals for plants, which are then passed on to humans when we eat them.

However, the link between soil health and human health goes beyond just the nutrients provided by plants. The microbes found in healthy soil, such as bacteria and fungi, also play a crucial role in our overall health. These microbes form a complex ecosystem known as the microbiome, which is essential for many bodily functions including digestion, immunity, and even mental health.

Our gut microbiomes and the soil microbiome are not too different from one another. Both are comprised of billions of microbes, thrive on biodiversity, and the health of each depends on its environment and its inputs.

By providing leading edge education to healthcare professionals that bridges healthcare and agriculture together, filling key gaps in education, we can shift the paradigm of healthcare to be more integrated, prioritizing systems of roots-up healing rather than disease management.

RODALE INSTITUTE'S REGENERATIVE HEALTHCARE CONFERENCE

Hippocrates once said, "Let food be thy medicine... and medicine be thy food."

In October 2022, Rodale Institute hosted its inaugural Regenerative Healthcare Conference (RHC). The RHC was a four-day conference, the first-ever medical conference, to our knowledge, to take place on a living, breathing organic farm. Attendees included Doctors (MDs, DOs, NDs), Nurses (RNs, CRNPs, NPs), Registered Dietitians, Nutritionists, Health Coaches, among other key innovators and educators in the food system.

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Dr. Michelle Perro giving a compelling lecture at the inaugural Regenerative Healthcare Conference on the topic of "Glyphosate, and what's making our children sick."



Farm Manager, Aslynn Parazenese, gives attendees of the Regenerative Healthcare Conference an interactive, hands-in-the-soil tour of the St. Luke's-Rodale Institute Organic Farm at St. Luke's Anderson Hospital in Easton, Pennsylvania while discussing the importance of organic food in healthcare.

National Organic Standards Board Update

KYLA SMITH, PCO CERTIFICATION DIRECTOR

In October 2022, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) held their Fall bi-annual meeting in Sacramento, CA. It was the first meeting in two years and my first meeting as a board member held in an in-person setting. Due to the COVID pandemic, meetings in 2020 and 2021 were held virtually. It was beyond joyful to meet my fellow board members and engage with the stakeholder community in attendance to watch as we deliberated and voted on the topics before the board. Jenny Lester Moffitt, United States Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, and Karen Ross, Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, kicked the meeting off with remarks from leadership with USDA and CDFA.

The board deliberated and voted on several agenda items; below is a table for the motions and outcomes of all items voted on at the meeting. In addition to the items listed in the table, the board also considered 3 discussion documents at the Fall 2022 meeting:

- Climate Smart Agriculture: articulating why organic farming is "climate-smart" agriculture
- Ion Exchange Filtration-Resins: whether resins used in ion exchange filtration need to be listed on the National List
- Minimum Reporting Requirements: exploring need for universal auditing documents (mass-balance and traceback templates)

The Fall meeting also always includes officer elections. NOSB re-elected Nate Powell-Palm as Chair and Mindee Jeffery as Vice Chair. Amy Bruch was elected as Secretary. Outgoing NOSB member Rick Greenwood received recognition for his time and contributions to the board.

Lastly the board considered the following items as other business:

- Excluded Methods: The Materials Subcommittee acknowledges NOP's response to recommendations from last meeting on cell and protoplast fusion
- Organic Farming Research Foundation presented findings from the 2022 National Organic Research Agenda
- Former NOSB Members that didn't have a final in-person meeting shared reflections on the board service (Steve Ela, Jesse Buie, Asa Bradman, Scott Rice)


Save the Date for the Spring 2023 meeting Atlanta, GA • April 25-27, 2023

Oral comments will be heard the week before on April 18 and 20, Visit www.ams.usda.gov/event/national-organic-standards-board-nosb-meeting-atlanta-ga for additional information as it becomes available, including the agenda and when and how to submit written comments and register for oral comments.

VOTING CHART

Subcommittee	Proposal & Vote / Outcome	Subcommittee	Proposal & Vote / Outcome
CACS	Motion to accept the proposal on the NOP Risk Mitigation Table review: 15 Yes, 0 No. ✓ PROPOSAL PASSED: Recommendation is referred to USDA.	Materials	Motion to accept the proposal on NOSB 2022 Research Priorities: 15 Yes, 0 No. ✓ PROPOSAL PASSED: Recommendation is referred to USDA.
CACS	Motion to accept the proposal on Human Capital Management: NOSB Technical Support: 15 Yes, 0 No. ✓ PROPOSAL PASSED: Recommendation is referred to USDA.	Crops	Already on the NL and classified as synthetic. Motion to add carbon dioxide at §205.601(a) algicide, disinfectants, and sanitizer, including irrigation system cleaning systems: 15 Yes, 0 No. ✓ PROPOSAL PASSED: Recommendation is referred to USDA for addition to the National List.
CACS	Motion to accept the proposal on Acreage Reporting (Oversight improvements to deter fraud: Modernization of organic supply chain traceability): 15 Yes, 0 No. ✓ PROPOSAL PASSED: Recommendation is referred to USDA.	Crops	Already on the NL and classified as synthetic. Motion to add potassium hydroxide to the National List as a processing aid at 205.601: 0 Yes, 15 No. ✗ PROPOSAL FAILED: Remains prohibited for this use.

VOTING CHART

Subcommittee	Proposal & Vote / Outcome	Subcommittee	Proposal & Vote / Outcome
Handling	Motion to add peroxy lactic acid (PoLA) for use as an antimicrobial agent in process water, ice, or brine used in the production, processing, and preparation of meat and poultry products, at § 205.605(b) of the National List: 0 Yes, 15 No.  PROPOSAL FAILED: Remains prohibited for this use.	Livestock	Motion to remove Chlorhexidine from the NL 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Herbicides, soap-based 1 Yes, 14 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Livestock	Motion to remove Tolazoline 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Biodegradable biobased mulch film 9 Yes, 6 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Livestock	Motion to remove Copper sulfate 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Boric acid 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Livestock	Motion to remove Elemental sulfur 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Sticky traps/barriers 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Livestock	Motion to remove Lidocaine 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Elemental sulfur 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Livestock	Motion to remove Glucose 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Coppers, fixed 2 Yes, 13 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Handling	Motion to remove Attapulgit 1 Yes, 14 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Copper sulfate 2 Yes, 13 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Handling	Motion to remove Bentonite 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Polyoxin D zinc salt 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Handling	Motion to remove Diatomaceous earth 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Humic acids 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Handling	Motion to remove Magnesium chloride 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Micronutrients: Soluble boron products 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Handling	Motion to remove Nitrogen 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Micronutrients: Sulfates, carbonates, oxides, or silicates of zinc, copper, iron, manganese, molybdenum, selenium, and cobalt 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Handling	Motion to remove Sodium carbonate 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Vitamins C and E 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Handling	Motion to remove Acidified sodium chlorite 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Squid byproducts 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Handling	Motion to remove Carbon dioxide 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Lead salts 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Handling	Motion to remove Sodium phosphates 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
Crops	Motion to remove Tobacco dust (nicotine sulfate) 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.	Handling	Motion to remove Casings 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
		Handling	Motion to remove Pectin 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.
		Handling	Motion to remove Potassium acid tartrate 0 Yes, 15 No. Motion fails. RELIST: Remains on National List.

Preparing for 2023 Inspections

CORINNE WESH, INSPECTION PROGRAM MANAGER

As we embark on the 2023 inspection season, please review the following inspection basics to support a positive inspection experience this year:

■ **Plan for an onsite inspection in 2023.** The regulations require that all inspections must be conducted onsite. PCO expects that all inspections will be conducted onsite in 2023 unless personal illness, biosecurity restrictions, or other unpreventable barriers arise that limit the inspector's ability to be onsite. In cases where illness, biosecurity restrictions or other preventable barriers are present, you must contact PCO to discuss contingency inspection plans. If approved, we will work with you to develop an inspection plan that meets your onsite needs and complies with the USDA-NOP regulations.

■ **Communicate needs and concerns ahead of time.** As in previous years, PCO will prioritize the health and wellbeing of PCO operations and inspectors while meeting the requirements of the USDA-NOP regulations. If you have concerns about social distancing, illness, biosecurity, or other safety measures during the inspection, please communicate these to your inspector prior to their arrival onsite.

■ **Prepare ahead of time.** Preparing records and other documentation ahead of your inspector's arrival will make the inspection process more efficient – which translates to saving money on inspection fees!

Keep in mind that any elements of the OSP that cannot be verified during your annual inspection will be noted by the inspector and may require a supplemental inspection at a later time. Follow-up inspections will be billed separately from the initial inspection activity and may be announced or unannounced.

■ **Communicate promptly with your inspector.**

Failure to respond to 3 requests to schedule an inspection may result in a noncompliance for Inspection Refusal.*

Failure to communicate inspection cancellations to your inspector 5 days ahead of your planned inspection date may result in a noncompliance, a \$100 inspection cancellation fee, and any additional incurred inspection-related fees.*

Rescheduling an inspection more than 3 times will result in a noncompliance.*

*Exceptions may be made for justified reasons, including death in the family, religious reasons, or illness.

■ **The USDA-NOP regulations are changing significantly in 2023.** The USDA-NOP is increasing oversight in many areas of the regulations. This means that PCO may be requiring

additional information from you during the Annual Update process. It also means that your inspector may ask you questions that you haven't been asked to address in previous inspections. If you have specific questions or concerns about how changes to the regulations impact your operation, contact your Certification Specialist.

■ **Expedited certification options are available to all producers in 2023.** If you are adding a new scope of certification, a new field or facility, or a new mode of production to your certified operation and require certification in 60 days or less, contact PCO to learn more about expedited certification. For an additional fee, PCO will review your request and, upon approval, coordinate an inspection to meet your accelerated certification timeline. As always, prompt communication with PCO and your inspector at all stages of the expedited certification process are required to ensure successful outcomes. Expedited certification does not guarantee certification by a specific date and certification can only be granted upon full verification of compliance.

We want to hear from you! If you have feedback you'd like to share about your inspection experience, please reach out to the PCO Inspections Team. You can reach us in several different ways:

Phone: 814-422-0251

Email: inspections@paorganic.org

Inspection evaluation survey:

<https://forms.gle/CrVARixcMtc7i429>



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PCO Giving Back

GABRIELLE ROVEGNO, CERTIFICATION SPECIALIST

Passionate about all things trees, PCO Certification Specialist, Gabrielle Rovegno volunteers as a Forest Steward with the urban forestry non-profit Tree Pittsburgh. Just around the corner from where she lives there is a hillside bordering a neighborhood park. In the past few years the hillside has become destabilized and too steep for city crews to mow. To aid, Tree Pittsburgh and the City planted 100 trees to increase tree canopy, stabilize the hillside and reduce invasive pressure. As a Forest Steward, Gabrielle conducts seasonal plant inventories and leads volunteer events to care for the young trees. Volunteer days on the hillside include removing invasives, mulching, and minor pruning. Though some community members were not initially excited by the prospect of foresting the hillside – as it interferes with some prime neighborhood sledding – neighbors have started to come around since “it doesn’t snow like it used to” and are enticed by the foraging opportunities Gabrielle has explained.

In addition to buckeyes, cedars and pines, the hillside is planted with two varieties of serviceberries, as well as American Hazelnut and Eastern Redbud. Gabrielle is looking forward to more batches of local serviceberry jam and redbud jelly in the coming years!



Gabrielle checking on young trees at the neighborhood park.

When she’s not caring for these young trees, you can also find her leading Tree ID walks around the city with the Allegheny County Master Naturalists. Though not terribly common in the city of Pittsburgh, Gabrielle enjoys traveling to some of the state parks nearby and finding cool, coves where the Eastern Hemlock, the state tree of Pennsylvania, likes to reside. Fun Fact: The Eastern Hemlock is a slow-growing tree that can take over 200 years to reach full maturity and can live for over 800 years.

Seeking Cover Images for Organic Matters — Share your Organic Farm/Processing Photos



Do you love capturing images of farm life? Maybe you have a special image that reflects what organic production means to you. We would like to highlight photos from our clients on the cover of our *Organic Matters*. Our publication is shared with over 1,900 individuals who are passionate about organic and its impacts on the health of our environment and communities.

Submission requirements:

- High-resolution photo (JPEG, JPG, Tiff) ideally with 150 dpi (dots per inch)
- Image must be good quality in a 8.5" x 11" size
- Send your submissions to our *Organic Matters* Editor, at newsletter@paorganic.org

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Board Corner

Message from the President

JOE MILLER, BOARD PRESIDENT



At the start of the New Year, many of us set goals, aspirations, or resolutions. Even when we don't follow through with all of them, the very act of assessing and setting these goals is an act of self-reflection and movement toward improvement. We must be able to assess

where we fall short of our own ideals to know where we need to improve. During the past two years, the PCO board and PCO leadership has spent a lot of time assessing where we are at and what our goals for the future should be. I've written about this several times in past Organic Matters and won't relive the process and changes we've gone through to get here. One of the exciting parts of any journey towards a better tomorrow is seeing the validation of our efforts along the way. Today, I'd like to celebrate several validations PCO has received in the past year.

Late last year, PCO was invited to be one of six leads in a new USDA Organic program to support transitioning farms going to Organic. The USDA NOP contacted PCO to ask them to lead the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic region. Through this program, we will connect with dozens of other organizations throughout our region to support farms and a brighter, healthier tomorrow. What an honor and privilege to be selected for this role. It is a significant validation of USDA's respect for PCO and our leadership within the community. You can read more about this program at: <https://paorganic.org/topp/>

Over that same time, our friends at PASA were awarded a Climate Smart grant which PCO is a partner, along with other certifiers in the region. This USDA grant will finance partnerships to support the production and marketing of climate-smart commodities. We appreciate PASA's partnership on this and the validation of the work PCO is doing with farmers to support organic farming.

We have also been recognized by the PA State Department of Agriculture as part of an awarded grant project led by TeamAg and including Kitchen Table Consultants that will support operations interested in the transition to organic in Pennsylvania. If you know a producer or processor who is interested in transition, please reach out to our Executive Director Diana Kobus at dkobus@paorganic.org.

As part of our efforts to improve and be the best certifier we can be, we need your help and insight. Last year we set a

goal to establish an Advisory Committee of certified clients to advise the PCO Board and Leadership from the viewpoint of someone directly affected by what we do. This was not accomplished last year due to the volume of other priorities that we were working to accomplish. We are excited to be moving forward with establishing our first Advisory Committee in early 2023. While we are able to call up an Advisory Committee for any reason or scope, our inaugural committee will be a more general representation of our clients, and we will be depending on this first cohort to help us solidify policies and procedures for operating advisory committees as well as garnering feedback about our services and the future direction of PCO.

If you are interested and available to serve in this capacity, please respond to me directly.

Thank you for your continued support of PCO and organic farming! I will leave you with this quote by President John F Kennedy as he encouraged a nation on the efforts that would be needed to go to space:

We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard; because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win, and the others, too.

— John F Kennedy in his address on the Nation's space effort

While we are not attempting such an audacious goal as going to space, our vision is no less challenging: **A world where agriculture systems prioritize health, ecological balance, fairness, and care.**

Sincerely,

Joe Miller, joehasit@gmail.com • 717-385-4610

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Dear Aggy



Use of Micronutrients

Dear Aggy,

I'm working with a new crop consultant this year. She just told me that, based on the results of the soil samples she pulled, she is planning on including micronutrients in most of my custom mixes. Am I even allowed to use these?

— Martha M.

Dear Martha,

Yes, synthetic micronutrients are allowed – but restricted – for use in organic crop production. Micronutrients recognized in the NOP rule include boron, cobalt, copper, iron, manganese, molybdenum, selenium and zinc. Micronutrients may be applied in sulfate, carbonate, oxide or silicate form.

When using synthetic micronutrients as plant or soil amendments in organic crop production, soil deficiency of each micronutrient **must** be documented by testing. Soil deficiencies are typically documented by performing a soil test which includes testing for micronutrients and comparing results with desired levels for a particular crop or soil type. Keep in mind that not all basic soil tests include testing for micronutrients, so

make sure to confirm with your lab what is included. You may have to specifically request testing for micronutrients.

In some cases, PCO will accept tissue testing (foliar testing) as a means to demonstrate a micronutrient deficiency. Tissue sampling can be a useful tool for understanding nutrient uptake and deficiencies as they occur in the growing season. For example, a soil test might show adequate levels of a micronutrient, but the plant itself could still be deficient because of other conditions in the soil (such as cooler temperatures or pH variations) that make that micronutrient unavailable to the plant.

PCO will also accept justification of a micronutrient deficiency from an independent scientific source (such as your crop consultant, extension agent or agronomist) that utilizes testing as supporting evidence for their conclusions. Examples may include a report showing that testing methods demonstrate a systemic deficiency across a particular geographic region or that particular visual indicators of the plant indicate a specific micronutrient deficiency.

PCO may perform residue testing of soil to verify compliance with 205.203(d), which requires operators to not contribute to contamination of crops, soil, or water by plant nutrients, pathogenic organisms, heavy metals, or residues of prohibited substances.

As always, if you have any questions about materials, be sure to reach out to your certification specialist before application to clarify your specific situation and obtain confirmation on whether or not the application is permitted.

— Aggy

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Organic Matters is the quarterly newsletter of Pennsylvania Certified Organic, a non-profit organization serving growers, processors and handlers of organic products. Issues contain articles on the latest news and research in the organic industry, often highlighting our certified members. Approximately 1,500 copies of each publication are distributed directly to members and those requesting information about organic agriculture, and made available to the public at conferences, exhibits and educational programs in the Mid-Atlantic region.

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A 15% discount is granted for the purchase of the 4-issue subscription.

For more information, please contact newsletter@paorganic.org or call the PCO Office at 814-422-0251.

PCO Core Values in Action

Are We Upholding Our Core Values?

DIANA UNDERWOOD, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

PCO's core values serve as a guide for how PCO works and makes decisions every day. We previously highlighted the ways our core values show up in the workplace and how we make business decisions, as well as the importance of using our core values to guide us in addressing social injustices in the world. But how do we know if we are upholding those values as an organization? How do we ensure that these values are more than words that live on a page?

In order to help answer those questions, PCO conducts a staff wide core value survey. This survey helps us understand if we are putting our Core Values in action as an organization, and aids with creating all staff training content, or other values based programs. In addition, we can also compare the results from our last survey to assess overall trends.

When assessing the results for the survey, we review overall scores whether employees strongly disagree to strongly agree (on a 5 point scale) that PCO is upholding each core value:

- **Keep people at the center of every action, interaction and decision** (*Provide Support*).
- **Promote restorative practices that improve the world for future generations** (*Engage Stewardship*).
- **Embrace transparency and integrity in all our work** (*Cultivate Trust*).

In total, our target is an overall rating of 70% agree or strongly agree. Our last survey was in 2019 and we reached a score of 68%, which was a great start especially given the amount of time our core values had been in place. We also strive for a 100% participation rate. It is an important way for all team members to have their voice heard and play an active role to support future programming around our core values. While we do not reach full participation, we typically reach approximately 75% response rate. A fantastic response rate for any survey.

So how did we do in 2022? Our overall summary score was 83% of team members agreeing or strongly agreeing that we are upholding our core values. This is a significant increase from the 2019 survey and indicates we are on the right track. Of course, there is always room to improve so we will celebrate our successes as well as identify areas to improve upon.

Now that we have this valuable information, what will we do with it? First, in keeping with our core value of transparency, we summarize and share the results with the entire team. This way all team members can see in aggregate how we are doing as an

organization. Next, we will assess what is working well to ensure we continue those business practices. Finally, we will review lower scoring areas to determine how we can improve. For example, determining if there is a business practice that needs to change or do we need additional training in a certain area. All of this would not be possible without team members sharing their voice and participating in the process.

While assessing our core values is an important process, it's equally important to understand why we do it as an organization. Just like the organic practices of continuous improvement, so it is the case with our culture and core values. There is always room to improve and enhance *how* we do this important work. Through teamwork, team member participation, and identifying areas for improvement, this allows us to better serve each other, our clients, and all stakeholders connected to our organic community so we ultimately serve our mission and vision at the highest level.

Regenerative Healthcare

continued from page 7

Conference faculty included healthcare luminaries such as Dr. Mark Hyman, Dr. Michelle Perro, Dr. T. Colin Campbell, Dr. Scott Stoll, Dr. Maya Shetreat, Dr. Monica Aggarwal, and Pennsylvania-based physicians on the cutting edge of regenerative healthcare, including Dr. Meagan Grega, Dr. Shehzad Malik, Dr. Andy Goodbred, and Dr. Ileana Perez-Figueroa. Inspirational leaders from the world of regenerative organic agriculture such as Jeff Moyer, Christa Barfield, and Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin also contributed to the discussions, among many others.

Rodale Institute wove in key insights from its newly released 40 Year Farming Systems Trial Report and the Vegetable Systems Trial. Most critically, conference attendees were taken out of the conference room—or in our case, barn—and out onto the farm for a hands-in-the-soil immersion. The fourth day of the conference included a tour of the Rodale Institute farm at St. Luke's Anderson Hospital and robust programming focused on how farm-to-hospital models can transform the way we approach healthcare.

Throughout the conference, attendees learned about food as medicine, the link between regenerative organic agricultural practices and human health, and how to change how they approach healthcare.

One presentation in particular, Dr. Michelle Perro, was a fan favorite that walked the line between stand-up comedy and making one of the most compelling medical cases for why Glyphosate is single-handedly one of the most destructive chemicals to human health.

Virtual access to the conference will be available online beginning in February 2023. While particularly geared towards healthcare workers, the content of the conference is valuable to anyone looking to take charge of their own wellbeing and learn more about the connection between human health and agriculture. Follow this link to sign up and be the first to know when it goes live: Regenerative Healthcare Conference: Virtual Access (rodaleinstitute.org)

PCO Chosen to Lead the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic Region in the Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP)

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Organic Program (NOP) has chosen PCO to lead the northeast region of the Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP). TOPP is \$100 million, five-year cooperative agreement with USDA NOP to facilitate program support for transition to organic agriculture across the country in six regions, that will each receive \$15M over the five year period. This work is one part of the USDA's \$300M Organic Transition Initiative (OTI) announced in 2022.

As we know, farmers face technical, ecological, cultural, and market shifts during the transition period and the first few years of organic certification. The Northeast/Mid-Atlantic Regional Partnership for Organic Transition will be a coalition of organizations providing technical assistance and wrap-around support for transitioning and existing organic farmers. PCO will lead activity in the northeast region and work with

other certifiers, state departments of agriculture, universities and extension, and non-profits in supporting farmer to farmer mentoring, community building programs, technical assistance/training, data collection/reporting, and workforce training/development in rural and urban areas across the region. Further information will be shared in upcoming issues of Organic Matters.

Just Ice Tea

continued from page 3

Second, we had strong relationships at every part of the supply chain – From the people who pick the tea leaves to retail buyers, we had developed trusting & transparent partners. Our tea suppliers knew we would only consider organic & fair trade tea leaves and our bottling plant knew we work on aggressive timelines & were willing to schedule a pilot run before we had all the ingredients in the building. Our grocery store buyers knew we could execute a national launch even though Eat the Change had never sold a bottle of tea.

Our longstanding relationship with PCO was a very important ingredient in our recipe for success. Over the past few years, our Operations team developed an effective relationship with our certification partners, and it helped that our bottling plant was also PCO certified. Receiving PCO's organic approval within a short time period meant that we could gain distributor authorizations in time to meet our grocery partners' deadlines.

Third, we had Seamless Communication – Daily calls with our team and often with our partners kept everyone in the loop all the time. Remote workplaces weren't an issue because we were constantly texting, teaming & phoning. The rule was "overcommunicate all the time."

Fourth, we relied on Confidence and Muscle Memory – We took to heart Leonard Bernstein's quote "To achieve great things, two things are needed: a plan, and not quite enough time." Whereas a start-up might spend weeks pondering certain decisions, our experience & the tight timeframe was an advantage. A September launch required final label designs by July 10. There was no wiggle room & we stuck to it.

And finally, Karma – the reason our partners were so responsive is because we treated them right throughout the Honest Tea relationship & thereafter. For several of our partners, I had begun the relationship with the founder & was now dealing with the next generation. One even said, "It's an honor for me to continue the legacy my father started with you." Extended payment terms & other forms of support helped us race to launch. If Honest Tea had squeezed our vendors or created unbalanced relationships, they wouldn't have been eager to work with us again.

So now Just Ice Tea is distributed nationally in Whole Foods, Sprouts and in regional retailers like Giant Food, The Giant Company and hundreds of independent natural retailers. Eight months ago we weren't even thinking about being in the ready-to-drink tea category and eight months from now we expect to become the top-selling organic bottled tea. Again!



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Certification Update

Cathy Jackson
Certification Program Manager



CERTIFICATION REPORTS AND COMPLIANCE

As the annual inspection season comes to a close, Certification Specialists are busy reviewing inspection reports. After each inspection report is reviewed, a Certification Report letter outlining any identified compliance findings is sent to the inspected operation. Other types of compliance letters may also be issued at this time if previous compliance findings were resolved or serious issues were identified that resulted in adverse action.

After receiving your Certification Report and any other compliance letters, please read through this information carefully to ensure you take appropriate steps to address each compliance finding. It is important to be aware of any due dates listed. Failure to submit requested information by the due date listed may result in further adverse action that jeopardizes your certification. Compliance responses may be mailed or faxed to the PCO office, or emailed directly to your Certification Specialist.

The status of some compliance findings may be noted as "Closed" or "Pending Check at Next Inspection." It is important to follow through with corrective action steps outlined in the letter and/or corrective action plans previously submitted to PCO. Failure to fully correct previously issued compliance and/or remain in compliance with any standards violated within the past 2 years may result in further adverse action that jeopardizes your certification.

As a reminder, your organic certificate remains valid unless it is surrendered, suspended, or revoked. If your operation is issued a proposed adverse action, such as a Notice of Proposed Suspension, you can no longer surrender or submit a corrective action plan to resolve the issue. Your only options are to submit a request for Mediation or submit an Appeal to the NOP. Additional fees for Mediation apply. To avoid these additional procedures and costs associated with adverse action, please be sure to follow the compliance instructions and guidelines outlined above.

Contact your Certification Specialist if you have any questions about compliance findings issued to your operation, information that needs to be submitted, or any steps that need to be taken by your operation to maintain compliance.

2023 ANNUAL UPDATE PROCESS

PCO anticipates sending out 2023 Annual Update information in early January with a due date of March 1, 2023. As part of our commitment to customer service, we are making several improvements to the process for 2023.

To help operations accurately report changes with their Annual Update submission, PCO is sending current Organic System Plans (OSPs) with Certification Reports for each oper-

ation who receives correspondence from PCO via postal mail. Current OSPs are also available in PCO's certification portal. Please review your current OSP and other certification information when completing your Annual Update submission.

For operations using PCO's certification portal, we are no longer using the Self-Assessment module for Annual Update submissions. Instead, Annual Update forms will be available in the portal to download, fill out, and email to annualupdate@paorganic.org. We anticipate this change will both improve the overall experience and simplify the Annual Update process.

EXPEDITED SERVICES FOR ANNUAL UPDATE SUBMISSIONS

Expedited services will be available for operations renewing their certification in 2023 for a nonrefundable fee. This change will allow PCO to best accommodate the timing needs of all certified operations.

All changes requiring inspection prior to approval must be submitted to PCO at least 60 days prior to the requested approval date, otherwise the request must be expedited. Please keep this in mind while planning the timeline for your Annual Update submission.

While expedited service does not guarantee approval by a specified date, it provides expedited attention for initial review, prioritized inspection assignment, inspection report submission within 5 business days of the inspection Exit Interview, and review of the inspection report within 5 business days. More information about expedited services will be provided with the Annual Update information you receive.

Materials Update

Hector Nunez C.
Materials Program Assistant Manager



With a new year there is an expectation of new changes and improvements. Collecting your feedback and in order to match the practices of other certifiers, PCO and the Materials department have updated one of the most important policies that affect the industry. PCO decided to make all of our material reviews valid for 5 years or until a formulation change happens.

The previous policy was that material review decisions were valid for 3 years. We are hoping that this change will allow operators and manufacturers to have less of a recordkeeping burden in responding to information requests and to allow operators to have more materials to pick from. You will notice that the 2023 Material Lists will contain products that may have been dropped in 2022. The emails containing pdf files for the Material Lists as well as the paper versions should be arriving during the first quarter of 2023. If for any reason you did not receive it or have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us at the information below.

PCO submitted comments to the National Organic

Standards Board (NOSB) for the Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (APNR) on Inert Ingredients in Pesticides for Organic Production. The comment period closed on December 31st, 2022 and we hope that you had a chance to express your opinions on this proposed rule change. PCO worked with other Organic Certifiers and the Organic Trade Association to present a comprehensive comment that includes the opinions of a wide range of individuals in the organic industry. A separate letter updating operators about the proposed plans as well as the comment information was sent out during the last quarter of 2023. If you missed this information and would like to take a look back at the proposal, follow this link bit.ly/PCOInertsComment

The last topic to mention is not widely spread but it will be a significant change for the people in the greenhouse, seedling, and processing industry. The USDA AMS amended the National List to include paper pots. More specifically called paper-based planting aids for transplanting crops on organic farms. They also allowed low-acyl gellan gum for the intended use of thickener, gelling agent, stabilizer, and ingredient in processed organic products. If you would like to take a detailed look at the National List changes follow this link bit.ly/NL-changes2022

Contact us at 814-422-0251 for updates and questions. Your Certification Specialist can add most materials and check a status right over the phone! Remember to first collect your intended use, the full material name, and the material manufacturer name. For more technical questions, feel free to dial extension 3 or email us at materials@paorganic.org

We sincerely appreciate your business.

Standards & Policy Update

Kyla Smith
Certification Director



USDA ORGANIC SEAL ANNOUNCES TRADE-MARK OF SEAL

In December 2022, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announced that the USDA organic seal had been officially trademarked, providing additional enforcement authority for misuse of the seal by uncertified operations.

The Organic Foods Protection Act (OFPA) specifically describes the USDA seal's trademark and is currently protected by federal regulation, which grants additional intellectual property rights to further restrict the use of the trademark or a confusingly similar one, by uncertified farms and businesses.

"While we have always had the authority to enforce against fraudulent use of the organic seal, registering the seal with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office significantly increases the cost of fraud and helps us better protect U.S. consumers and

farmers" said USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Jenny Lester Moffitt.

These additional enforcement opportunities include:

USDA ability to seek additional civil remedies such as injunctive relief and monetary damages under the Lanham Act.

Application of the Trademark Counterfeiting Act in which operations trafficking in counterfeit organic goods or otherwise willfully misusing the USDA organic seal may be subject to fines and imprisonment.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) ability to now detain, reject, or re-export imported products confirmed to be fraudulently using the USDA organic seal.

The USDA organic regulations authorize certified organic operations to use the organic seal to identify the composition of their products and receive a premium for those products. Certified organic operations are not required to change their labels to include the registration mark ® of the seal, and certified organic products currently in the marketplace still meet the requirements of certification. Operations may choose either version of the seal and existing labels do not need to be revised or discarded. However, for uncertified operations trademark authority and penalties for misusing the seal are in effect regardless of whether the ® is included.

If operations choose the updated version of the organic seal with the registration mark ®, it is available for download in multiple file formats on the AMS website at www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/organic-seal. As always, certified operations are to seek approval from their certifier before making any product label changes.



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Sabine Carey

continued from page 5

Over the years the expansion of our review services to include other certifiers, even manufacturers, as well as the creation of the ACA Materials Working Group have moved materials review consistency and accuracy forward tremendously. Being able to support our farmers and producers at a time of need with quick materials decisions – such as a sick cow in the barn, or a fertilizer delivery waiting to be unloaded, has always been one of my favorite parts of reviews.

Can you share some recollections of the humble beginnings of PCO and your early experience with a then, new organization?

I walked into the PCO Office more than 20 years ago to help answer the phones, so that Leslie Zuck could take the time to interview applicants for new certification staff. I thought I would offer a few hours so she could get caught up. I had a job, and a farm, and was not looking for work. However, I quickly decided that I did want to be a part of this young organization, and over the years loved working with our farmers and producers, staff, volunteers and board. I frequently brought foster dogs to the office with me, and I still remember yelling down the stairs in the early years: “The fax machine is unplugged, I need to log into AOL to check our email.” We only had two phone lines...

Do you have a favorite client or farmer/story you can share?

I’ve met and learned from so many inspiring folks at PCO over the last twenty years.

When I started at PCO, with that big pile of material folders on my desk, one of the folks that I spent quite a bit of time talking with was Jerry Brunetti, founder of Agri-Dynamics. I knew those calls would never be quick, and I’d better be prepared for a deep discussion on the unmet demands for Selenium. Trying to absorb information from Jerry was like trying to drink from a firehose – even if I only grasped a fraction of his brilliant conversation.

One of my favorite files to review – and farms to visit – was always Jonas and Judy Stoltzfus. One of our founding farmers, Jonas was always quick to smile, and farm inspections often included a speedy ride on a 4 wheeler and detailed description of all the projects he had planned for the impressive pile of scrap metal always at the ready. His annual paperwork was often accompanied by a poem, and Jonas was frequently the one to open our annual meetings with a heartfelt blessing.

Why does “certified organic” matter to you?

At a time when integrity and farming practices can no longer be easily verified through personal interactions at the farmers market, or a trusting handshake, the certification process plays a crucial role to allow me to quickly know that the items purchased on a grocery store shelf were produced to a standard that I know so well and trust.

What do you hope to see for the future of organic certification?

I would like to see continued evolution and develop-

ment of organic standards, as well as complimentary certification such as Regenerative. The collaboration that has grown between certifiers through the efforts of the ACA and working groups is an incredible boost for our organic industry, allowing for more consistent programs as well as system improvements to make it easier for our farmers and producers to participate with fewer barriers.

New Faces



Alison Garber

Alison is originally from Lancaster, Pennsylvania and grew up exploring the farmland that surrounded her family’s home. She graduated from Chatham University with a B.A. in art history but after graduation, she found that her real passion was rooted in the organic product industry. She spent sixteen years working for Whole Foods Market where she strengthened her knowledge and commitment to preserving the integrity of our food systems. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her partner and dog String Bean as they wild forage for food and medicines around their home in western Pennsylvania.



Tanay Nestico

Tanay began working for PCO as an Organic Inspector in 2019 and joined the team as a Certification Specialist in January of 2023. Prior to joining PCO she worked for two years as a Certification Specialist with Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association. In her free time she enjoys hiking, kayaking, snowboarding, and showing her kids the wonders of nature.



Maggie Saskia

Maggie joined PCO in January of 2023 and comes with a diverse background in agriculture. She holds a B.S. in horticulture and M.S. in plant science both from the University of Connecticut. Prior to PCO she most recently held positions as operations manager at a certified organic greenhouse and in field vegetable production. Her experience has deep roots, beginning young with her first summer job working on an organic small fruit farm as a summer harvester and selling at farmers markets. Maggie’s love of botany and plant production extends to outreach work and teaching college level organic agriculture courses. When not working, Maggie can be found with her daughter, two dogs, and partner, spending time outdoors in eastern Pennsylvania.

New Members

PCO Welcomes 4th Quarter
New Members!

NEWLY CERTIFIED ORGANIC

AK Farms LLC
Carneys Point, NJ

Scott E. Barry
Elizabethville, PA

Balsam Breeze Farm
Brownfield, ME

Delton Burkholder
Little Falls, NY

John S. Byler
Hogansburg, NY

Derreck Dillon
Bellefontaine, OH

Johnny N. Detweiler
Bombay, NY

Ivan Z. Eberly
Penn Yan, NY

Levi F. Fisher
Loganton, PA

Larry & Bonnie Flook
Needmore, PA

Gardners Candies, Inc.
Tyrone, PA

Goffle Road Poultry Farm, LLC
Wyckoff, NJ

Hilltop Tea, Inc.
New Providence, NJ

Hokto Kinoko Company
San Marcos, CA

David Hoover
Liberty, KY

Burnell Hoover
Dundee, NY

Hutchison Farm
Easton, MD

Brian Jenkins
Lexington, VA

King Brands LLC
Fort Myers, FL

Ephraim B. King Jr.
Ronks, PA

Paul Lengacher
Harlan, IN

Lime Kiln Ag LLC
Womelsdorf, PA

David K. Martin
Tyrone, PA

Philip K. Martin
Spring Grove, PA

Mordan Farms
Danville, PA

Orchard Farm Organics
Princeton, NJ

The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA

Pro Gro LLC
Waterford, PA

Dan Raber and Chris Raber
Millersburg, OH

Regal Foods, Inc.
Lancaster, PA

Keith A. Ringler
Blandon, PA

Andrew Rudnitsky
Unadilla, NY

**Rutgers University,
Snyder Research and
Extension Farm**
Pittstown, NJ

Marcus Schwartz
Carlisle, KY

James Sensenig
Shiloh, OH

Ken Smith
Kreamer, PA

Alvin Stoltzfus
Kinzers, PA

Leroy F. Stoltzfus
Spring Mills, PA

Joseph L. Swartzentruber
Theresa, NY

John Wall
Staley, NC

Jason Weaver
El Dorado Springs, MO

Ben S. Zimmerman
Little Falls, NY

James Zimmerman
Lewisburg, OH

Marvin Z. Zimmerman
Stanley, NY

Henry Zook
Myerstown, PA

BUSINESS MEMBER

Homestead Nutrition
New Holland, PA

Marketplace

CROPS

Organic wrapped balage for sale. 2021 wet bails: \$40 each; 2022 wet bails: \$50 each; 2022 dry bales: \$20 each. Please contact James and Donna at 570-746-1651. Bradford County.

Organic Wheat Straw, Dry Alfalfa, Dried Grass and Wrapped Balage. 717-860-3504. Franklin County.

Certified Organic dairy quality balage for sale. 1st \$50.00. 2nd \$60.00. Discount available on large quantities. 570-727-2322. 570-396-3280. Starrucca, Wayne County.

Certified organic hay for sale. Cut May 30th, 2022. Grass legume balage, can deliver. \$70 per bale. Call 315.823.2671. Herkimer County.

EQUIPMENT

Farm cultivators for sale. Four and six rows; John Deere and IH, ready to go to work (both rebuilt). Contact Carl Modica for prices. 814-267-5640. Somerset County.

SERVICES

Ag plastic recycling – I can use black and white bunker covers, bale wrap, plastic twine, clear stretch film, greenhouse covers, flats, and pots. Call for details. 717-658-9660. Franklin County.

STAY CONNECTED,VIST:
paorganic.org

Event Calendar

NOTE: With all in-person events, it is advised that participants follow current CDC and COVID-19 safety protocol and guidelines.

All times listed are Eastern Time Zone unless otherwise indicated.

FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 21

Penn State Extension

**Food Safety Modernization Act:
Produce Grower Certificate Training**

Mercer

<https://extension.psu.edu/fsma-grower-training>

FEBRUARY 22

Rodale

**Webinar: Replacing Plastic Mulch
with Cover Crops in Organic Vegetable
Production Systems for Economic
Benefit, Soil Health, and Environmental
Stewardship**

2:00 PM-3:00 PM

<https://rodaleinstitute.org/education/webinars/>

FEBRUARY 23

**Pennsylvania Department of
Agriculture**

State Ag Land Preservation Board
Meeting

10:00 AM

2301 North Cameron St. Harrisburg, PA
17110, Room 202

Available to participate virtually/ call-in
www.agriculture.pa.gov/Pages/Meeting-Notices.aspx

FEBRUARY 23

PA Farm Link

Farm Succession Workshops

9:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Indiana Conservation District Office:
435 Hamill Rd, Indiana, PA

<https://pafarmlink.org/workshops/>

FEBRUARY 23

Penn State Extension

**Food Safety Modernization Act:
Produce Grower Certificate Training**

New Holland

<https://extension.psu.edu/fsma-grower-training>

FEBRUARY 25

Grow Pittsburgh

Growing Mushrooms Indoors

Garden Dreams, 806 Holland Ave.,
Pittsburgh, PA 15221

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

www.growpittsburgh.org/event/growing-mushrooms-indoors/

FEBRUARY 28

PASA

**Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Grower
Training Course:**

8:30AM-5:30PM

PASA Office, 1631 N. Front St., Harris-
burg, PA

<https://pasafarming.org/events/category/pasa-event/>

MARCH

MARCH 1

PA Farm Link

Farm Succession Workshops

9:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Chester County Economic Development
Office: 737 Constitution Dr, Exton, PA
19341

<https://pafarmlink.org/workshops/>

MARCH 1

Penn State Extension

**Food Safety Modernization Act:
Produce Grower Certificate Training**

Bloomsburg

<https://extension.psu.edu/fsma-grower-training>

MARCH 6

Penn State Extension

**Food Safety Modernization Act:
Produce Grower Certificate Training**

Oxford

<https://extension.psu.edu/fsma-grower-training>

MARCH 8

Rodale

**Webinar: Weed Management in Rota-
tional Organic No-Tillage Systems**

2:00 PM- 3:00 PM

<https://rodaleinstitute.org/education/webinars/>

MARCH 8

Penn State Extension

**Food Safety Modernization Act:
Produce Grower Certificate Training**

Carlisle

<https://extension.psu.edu/fsma-grower-training>

MARCH 15

Rodale

**Webinar: Exploration of Rodale Insti-
tute's Food Access Models**

2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

<https://rodaleinstitute.org/education/webinars/>

MARCH 18

Grow Pittsburgh

Seed Starting Workshop

Garden Dreams, 806 Holland Ave.,
Pittsburgh, PA 15221

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

www.growpittsburgh.org/event/seed-starting-workshop/

MARCH 22

Rodale

**Webinar: Soil Testing: Let's Create a
Plan of Attack**

2:00 PM- 3:00 PM

<https://rodaleinstitute.org/education/webinars/>

MARCH 23

Penn State Extension

**Food Safety Modernization Act:
Produce Grower Certificate Training**

Center Valley

<https://extension.psu.edu/fsma-grower-training>

STAY CONNECTED,
VISIT:
paorganic.org

PCO on the Road



Photo: RULE program.

■ PCO Executive Director Diana Kobus is part of the PA Rural-Urban Leadership Program XIX, and the vision of this program from Penn State Extension is that RULE promotes engagement in public issues, networking, public decision making, strategic design, lasting relationships, and civic engagement. The November program was held in Gettysburg and featured speakers including PA Secretary of Agriculture Russel Redding.



Photo: D. Kobus

■ Rodale Institute again kindly hosted the annual PCO Board in-person retreat in October 2022, where the main focus was our updated strategic plan and DEI purpose statement. As inspiration for this team of leaders, we were treated to a tour of this internationally recognized research farm as part of our time there (as well as some deli-

cious organic lunch, seen here with Board Vice President Katherine Dimatteo).



Photo: PA Dept. of Agriculture

With support from the PA Department of Agriculture, PCO shared a presence at the 2023 Keystone Farm Show with other organizations in support of soil health and agroecological practices:

■ At the 2023 Pennsylvania Farm Show, Secretary Redding announced the award of new grant funds in support of organic transition in Pennsylvania, and PCO Executive Director Diana Kobus was part of a panel that thanked the state leadership for their vision and support of this important work. Speakers included Senator Elder Vogel, Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding, Dr. Sue Ellen Johnson, Cheryl Cook, Jeff Moyer, Senator Judy Schwank, Steven Wray, and Representative Jamie Barton.

■ And we can't report about the PA Farm Show without a photo of the 2023 butter sculpture! The theme for this year's farm show was "Rooted in Progress."

Photo: D. Kobus



PCO Founding Farmers

Special thanks to those PCO Founding Farmers who participated in the past year by submitting comments on the value of organic and lessons they have learned since becoming certified with PCO. Thank you for helping us to celebrate 25 years! We will close out this feature with Preston Boop of Briar Patch Organic Farms. *"It was my wife Wanda (a lifelong organic gardener) that insisted we farm organically starting in the late 1980s. Learning to farm organically required a steep learning curve about soil science, weeds, and insect pests. The most important lesson I've learned is, 'Healthy soils make healthy plants, which make healthy animals and people.'"* – Preston Boop

We also would like to recognize another Founding Farmer, the late Jonas "Joe" Stoltzfus. The 2nd anniversary of Joe's passing is this March. In reflecting on Jonas's passing, former PCO staff member Sabine Carey shared this: "Jonas frequently opened our PCO meetings or field days with a blessing, an original poem. His presence at our meetings always set a tone of gratitude and generous willingness to share and learn. His detailed farm life observations and amazement at the wonders of nature inspired many."





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- Beneficial use in conditions of biotic and abiotic stress conditions

Conversion Recommendations from HNI: Explorer 10-0-0

Excellent Conditions:

High Organic N (*with Manure*)

2 Quarts = 60 lbs. Nitrogen

Low Organic N (*without Manure*)

2 Quarts = 30 lbs. Nitrogen

Challenging Conditions:

High Organic N (*with Manure*)

3 Quarts = 60 lbs. Nitrogen

Low Organic N (*without Manure*)

3 Quarts = 30 lbs. Nitrogen

ANIMAL BASED NITROGEN VS. EXPLORER™ LIQUID 10-0-0

	Animal- Based Nitrogen	Explorer™ Liquid 10-0-0
Nitrogen Availability	Slow Release, requires bio-decomposition	100% - Immediately
Solubility	Not fully soluble	100%
Application Restrictions	Foliar Applications not recommended	None
Ease of Use	Smell, mixing procedure	None
Origin	Chicken/Fish/Manure	Non- GMO, soy protein hydrolysate
Effect of temperature on availability	Slower or no release in colder temperatures	None
Amino Acid Profile	Inconsistent to None	98.6%/60.9% Iq Amino Profile
Stability	Adulterated for insuring some stability	Complete and lifetime




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