



# Organic Matters

Quarterly Newsletter | Winter/Spring 2024

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# Organically Speaking

**A**s this issue finds its way to you, we are already well into the New Year, and I hope you were able to find time to both celebrate *and* rest during the holidays. The PCO staff were busy exchanging recipes leading up to the break, and I imagine the (organic!) tasty treats on their tables and yours were nourishing to the bodies and souls seated around your tables. We are so grateful and honored to serve you, your staff, and often your families.

We have been working very hard this past year to lay the foundations for giving you more of what you love from us: quality and availability of service, caring and supportive staff, and timely and sensible processing of our work. Changes in regulation and technology (and the combination of them both) often complicate our work flows and yours, but we are working diligently every day to make sure that we continue to lead the industry in the quality of our work while trying our best to make the burdens of certification as easeful as we can for our clients.

Our work is service-based, so our product can largely be seen as our staff. The best way we can make sure you have a good experience as a client is for us to take care of our staff, and along with the costs of just about everything over the past four years, the cost of doing that has risen significantly. Providing better service for you is the outcome of caring for people: more expertise, more attention to detail, and more integrity in the certification process. In addition to better service, some benefits of taking care of people can't be quantified in quite the same way: *maybe it's a calm and good mood that becomes contagious when we pick up the phone or send a message, maybe it's the way the staff begins to generate new ideas and find efficiencies in old processes, or maybe it's that we are invested in their success so that they can be invested in yours.*

Purpose, caring, and results – these things all work together synergistically in our culture at PCO, from board to staff to clients. This year with so many changes swirling around us in organic, at PCO we are keenly focused on results. We've worked so hard the past few years to lay the groundwork structurally and culturally to give you a new level of service, and it has shown up as we are able to help you navigate the regulatory changes so far, as well as those still to come. That hasn't



*Spring image from Unsplash*

been easy, for us or for you, but it's the work we all do because we believe it's imperative for the health of each other, our workers, our animals, and the planet.

This year we'll be focused not just on problem solving and the rigor of our work, but we'll also be focused on giving you more of what you love. Please always reach out with your questions and concerns as well as what you appreciate. While things often go unsaid in both categories, it's feedback that is equally as important for us to know, and the sooner the better in every case. We hope to serve you well in 2024 and beyond!

In service,

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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.

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COVER PHOTO: Dickinson Farm



# Farm Profile: Dickinson College Farm

Dickinson College Farm located in Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania (7 miles from Dickinson College campus) is an 80-acre, USDA certified organic farm and living laboratory where students can gain hands-on learning experiences. The farm currently has 15 acres in vegetable production supporting 100+ CSA members and families and 30 acres of pasture for rotating animals. This interview features Jenn Halpin, Director of Dickinson College Farm, Matt Steiman, Livestock Operations Manager, and Alex Smith, Vegetable Production Manager.

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**PCO: Can you talk about the farm’s journey to become certified? What were the reasons behind doing that?**

**Jenn H.:** The farm began as a garden in 1999 and achieved its first certification, Certified Naturally Grown, around 2001 or 2002 for a small three-acre plot. Despite its size, we operated a CSA and farmers market from there.

When proposing the transition to the college farm, the administration emphasized the importance of becoming certified organic. They sought the prestige associated with the label, believing it would help current and prospective students better understand our farm’s purpose without direct observation. Certified Naturally Grown, while valuable, wasn’t as widely recognized at the time, prompting the college administration to advocate strongly for the more familiar certified organic designation.

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**PCO: The term certified organic and the phrase “organic matters”, what does that mean for your team at the farm**

**and also the Carlisle/ Boiling Springs community?**

**Jenn H.:** So, taking a moment to backtrack, our certification journey began in 2007, and we underwent a three-year transition to achieve organic status, completing it in 2010. An interesting aspect of this transition was our collaboration with the International Business and Management class. They actively participated in and shadowed the organic certification process, providing valuable education for students in business, marketing, and food management plans.

**This collaboration allowed us to integrate an educational production component into the college farm’s framework within the context of a liberal arts institution.** From my perspective, and I’ll let Alex and Matt share their thoughts too, the decision to pursue organic certification was not isolated; we also considered the then-existing Food Alliance certification. We believed these certifications complemented each other, offering a comprehensive roadmap for continually improving our stewardship of natural resources.

Personally, I see the organic certification as instrumental in making us better record keepers. Matt can elaborate on our efforts to digitize records and collaborate with PCO. This approach ensures accountability, enabling us to promptly address inquiries and align with our philosophy, echoing the National Organic Program’s focus on management plans and inputs. Having a third-party entity verify our organic practices adds significant value, not only to us as farmers but also to our customers, reinforcing our commitment to organic practices.

**Matt S.:** We chose not to certify our livestock operation

primarily due to the intricacies of our marketing with some products sold through the college. Some are directly marketed, and the challenge of sourcing organic hay, given that we don't grow our own, made us hesitant to pursue organic certification. We currently purchase hay through auctions, and while we've implemented measures like a high-tensile fence with tree defense posts, we felt it was premature to elevate ourselves to the organic certification level.

Additionally, our livestock operation is still navigating the learning curve of animal husbandry, and having the flexibility to use conventional medications provided a comfort zone, especially as novices in raising cattle and sheep. Our local vet, in cases of illness or emergencies, may recommend antibiotics, and having the freedom to employ such treatments influenced our decision.

Our livestock are certified by A Greener World for our grass-fed practices and animal welfare standards. While we treat our animals mostly naturally, there's ongoing progress towards higher levels of natural practices. We can delve into our farm data and record management system, Farm Data, in more detail later.

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### **PCO: What have been some of the biggest challenges to organic production for the farm over the years?**

**Jenn H.:** Our most significant challenge, perhaps echoing a common sentiment, arises during the transitional period when some crops are certified while others are not. This transition makes it crucial to maintain organizational clarity, ensuring that we accurately label crops as either transitional or organic.

Generally speaking though, there haven't been many barriers. The efforts of the National Organic Program (NOP) and PCO have effectively addressed both actual and perceived obstacles over the years. Their work has made the certification process more cost-effective, particularly with cost-sharing opportunities that we have fully utilized.

It's important to note that sometimes people may be deterred by perceived challenges without exploring the actual processes involved. We want to emphasize that, from our perspective, there are well-defined avenues for certification, and we encourage others to explore and understand them fully.

**Matt S.:** To some extent, it's not just about the challenge of obtaining certification; rather, it's a challenge of continuously evolving as growers and expanding our knowledge base.

You know, none of us grew up on farms and so we all came to this kind of life post-college. Jenn and I came from Wilson College's Fulton Farm and Center for Sustainability Studies, where we managed that farm for five to seven years together.

We've always been organic farmers, even before we were certified, and never had an interest in using herbicide or pesticides.

Over time, we've evolved to embrace life, actively addressing challenges such as pest control while nurturing biodiversity on the farm through habitat crops and natural enemies. Recognizing the need for organic controls to ensure the highest quality produce, we eventually invested in a tracker sprayer. It took several years to establish an effective spray

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## **Farm Data ... gives a farmer the opportunity to record most things about their field work.**

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program, allowing us to successfully grow tomatoes in our climate.

Despite facing issues like blight, our experience has led to an evolution in understanding crop fertility and water management. The process of certification hasn't made these challenges any more difficult than if we were conventional growers; it's more about the continuous learning and adaptation inherent in the journey.

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### **PCO: Can you talk about the farm data system?**

**Matt S.:** Starting in 2021, we started a records management system at Dickinson working in collaboration with a computer scientist. In 2013 and 2014, we got a SARE Grant to expand that to make it open source and free to the public.

As part of that SARE Grant, we recruited the help of Lee Rinehart from PCO (PCO Education & Outreach Director 2011-2015). Lee was a major contributor to the development of Farm Data and he helped us understand how to present the records in a way that was valuable to a third party certifier.

The vision was when the project was completed, PCO and other entities like PCO, could be a hosting site for Farm Data so that farmer-clients could easily integrate these kinds of tracking tools.

It's really, once you understand how to use it, it's a pretty intuitive set of record keeping templates. The only challenge that most farmers can't do is set up their own account.

For a couple of years, we collaborated with Small Farm Central from Pittsburgh, known for developing Harvie, and they provided free hosting. Unfortunately in 2017, my colleague, who was the developer for Farm Data, passed away due to cancer. This event brought our progress to a standstill. While I have a farmer's understanding of operations, I lack the programming expertise to continue the development.

Farm Data paused in development and now thankfully it's taken up a new life. We've engaged a new set of programmers who are working on it and we're also partnered with PASA. There are also several students and professors from the college who are supporting us with this work, as well.

***Just to kind of give you an overview of what Farm Data is and what it does, it gives a farmer the opportunity to record most things about their field work, so we can record planting, we can record seed, seeding orders and then crop care, and other things like, compost application and fertilizer application. We've got a really good, nice program for recording all the details of what occurs in the spring and throughout the growing season into harvest and sales.***

During our annual audit, when the organic inspector visits

the farm to review our records, we find it so easy to generate a paper trail through this program. We can quickly provide information on the name of the crop, the quantity harvested, its source, and sales details for that year. This digital approach streamlines the paper trail process compared to traditional paper documentation.

And the forms are all built to be smart, which minimizes data entry errors. Back when we were collecting our records on paper, there were a lot of times where I'd think 'Boy, I don't know who wrote this record down in July and what they actually meant to write here'. You knew the records weren't complete. They weren't very valuable. And now instead of this situation, when we go to spray, for example, or when we go to harvest or plant, we're making the record in the moment at the same time and it's digitized in the moment.

So that work has already been done. It's not an additional chore at the end of the season where you have to go and digitize your records. And so, since 2014, we have this really great record system that allows us to go all the way back almost 10 years and tell you what was planted where and how much the yield was.

But it's only as good as the input that we put into it. We have to really maintain a culture of record keeping and empower and encourage our crew to use it. Then as managers, that's part of our job is to make sure that the records are being kept and provided we do that work, it's really nice. If Farm Data doesn't present the records in the way that we need, we can always download them to Excel and then further process them.

So it's out there. It's free and open source and if other growers want to get involved, they can contact us about it.

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**PCO: If you could have a meeting with NOP and/or USDA Secretary of Agriculture, what would be your top discussion topics with them?**

**Jenn H.:** One of the things we've done since we started, even with the garden, was working with the dining services at Dickinson College to collect all the food waste. Because we have the ability to collect this food waste, it prompted the dining hall to reconsider things like individually wrapped crackers and plastic coffee stirs versus cardboard or wood. It's been really neat to be able to influence their purchasing practices, because that enables the farm's ability to collect more from them. One of the paths that we journey down with regard to food waste collection was helping them convert from non-renewable feasible plastics to biodegradable plastics or plant-based cups, spoons, etc.

When I think about challenges, a large obstacle of ours was that the NOP regulations wouldn't allow us to take some of the plant-based plastics and compost them. We did kind of pursue this issue a little bit with the PCO certification staff, and we considered challenging the NOP on this issue at one point in time. But, we just had too many irons in the fire at that time. I do see an opportunity for collaboration between the NOP and the USDA to explore ways of incorporating aspects related to utilizing plant-based plastics.

We were able to change the purchasing behavior of the college away from single use plastics to more plant-based

items, but unfortunately, we can't integrate them into our compost at this time.

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**PCO: As it relates to certified organic, what would you say has been some of the proudest moments you've experienced on the farm?**

**Jenn H.:** One of the things that we have been able to do as part of our liberal arts institution is to successfully integrate classwork into our farm practices. For instance, the business class played a role in our certification process, and other departments have supported the focus on organic resource management. This aligns with ongoing research questions posed by faculty and students in environmental studies and biology, which is really empowering.

Our aim has been to create a holistic landscape that minimizes inputs, particularly in terms of sprays for pest-related issues. Student-initiated research projects have been so empowering.

One awesome study explored whether building eco habitats around the farm, near production fields, could recruit beneficial organisms to minimize pest issues. An example is the investigation into American Toads' migration patterns, which was sparked by their natural presence on the farm. We have a few small ponds and students observed the successful migration of American Toads away from the main pond into production fields.

This project, led by a biology professor, has expanded to explore the impact of native plant-populated ponds on recruiting beneficial insects. Entomologists and biologists, professors and students, collaborate to identify the toads' diet, enhancing our understanding of their preferences. This space for exploration allows us to share valuable insights and lessons learned with fellow farmers.

Additionally, our participation in the PASA soil benchmark study contributes to a broader agricultural knowledge base. This involves students developing hypotheses about soil



quality, layering this information with our management practices, and analyzing the outcomes. Being affiliated with the college provides us with inspired and knowledgeable individuals who contribute to pushing our practices further, all rooted in data-driven insights.

On a related note, Alex, who holds a profound passion for soil health, cover crops, and compost, has infused a renewed energy into these aspects. His dedication to cover crop and compost production has been particularly impressive.

I'm going to pass it over to Alex for a second for any other insights he may have.

**Alex S.:** We have a tremendously robust biology here on the farm— We have a diverse landscape and one of the successes that I wanted to articulate is that for the second year in a row now we're playing host to a family of ravens out in one of our cattle sheds. I attribute that in no small part to our commitment to organic standards.

***Farming is truly focusing on stewarding an ecosystem in such a way that you can achieve human food needs that also generate an upward spiral within the ecosystem you are working with. I want this land to be productive for decades, centuries and millennia to come and I really see the practices of cover cropping and composting as the most important tools in that regard.***

**Jenn H.:** We'd like to share two more examples with you.

If we weren't certified organic, we wouldn't be able to have long-term collaborations doing field-based research. Everything from roll-down systems to experimenting with daikon radishes, roll-down cover crops, no-till, and other organic practices.

Currently, we're in a multi-year research project with Rodale on the promotion of a soil amino acid called ergothioneine, and the relationship between ergothioneine and heritage and ancient varieties of wheat. So we worked with them over the past year with two fields of spelt and einkorn and doing plant and soil analyses, and understanding what the connection is.

**Just being a part of this movement to really quantify the impacts of organic practices, not only in the foods produced but the impact the farming practices have on the soil, is really inspiring for us and to be a part of that is really important and exciting.** So we aim to continue that kind of research partnership with Rodale.

The last thing I'll just add is that almost two years ago, we started a small store on campus where we have an eatery and shop that showcases all of our farm's products. Whether it's dryer balls that we felt from the wool that we sheared from our sheep, to lip balm that is made from herbs grown on our farm, all of these items align with the organic farm-to-table, mission-driven business concept. The students really express appreciation for the ability to have the choice to eat food that they know has come from our farm. Not only seasonally appropriate foods, but foods that reflect their personal values, and organic is one of those values that they emphasize on a regular basis. So, having that alternative option for students and our community has been something we've gotten a lot of positive feedback on.

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**PCO: Is there a percentage of products/produce from the farm to the dining halls?**

**Jenn H.:** Yeah. We've got a few channels where folks can grab our produce. There's the direct route to the dining hall through our very own store, Farm Works. Then, you can catch us at the local farmers market with our produce stand, and of course, there's our CSA.

When people choose to buy from us, it's often because of our organic certification. Depending on the season, the percentage of goods sourced from us can vary. We shine the brightest during September, October, and November — you know, when everyone's indulging, and we've got the product.

Summer's awesome, but with a bit of a lower population due to the school being on summer session, it's not our peak time. However, when we hit the sweet spot, we're talking 100% of their tomatoes, sour greens, peppers, and carrots all coming straight from our farm for a good stretch.

Then, winter rolls around, and things shift a bit. We're still the go-to for carrots, but melons? They might be coming from someone else.

**Alex S.:** A very very significant portion of our output here on this farm is not food, but the student and apprentice experience.

And, you know, this is coming up because we're interviewing apprentice and employee candidates right now. A lot of folks are specifically interested in working here and learning here because of our commitment to organic. So I think that's kind of like an interesting roundabout success story with our pursuit of organic.

**Jenn H.:** Yes, that's one of the 'crops' we try to grow: we produced over 60 apprentices, full-season and several hundred students who have been full-time workers on the farm over the 17 years that it's been open.

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**PCO: Can you touch on the decision making process for choosing the CSA model a little bit?**

**Matt S.:** We started the CSA when the farm was a garden. So the CSA has been running for 20 years. I think that that model is focused solely on the opportunity of getting financial support well ahead of the season. We are ensuring that we are

a revenue generating entity. Yes, we work for a college, but all of our program expenses need to be covered by the actual program. So seeds, plants, new greenhouses, new tractors are all paid for through carrots and salad mix and lamb and eggs that are produced on the farm. Having that cash flow ahead of season enables us to make the purchases and investments that we need to carry off the successful growing season.

So that was very much a part of that particular decision-making matrix. Also, our CSA is a **campus**-supported agriculture program, so we try really hard not to minimize that competition within our farming community as much as possible.

It's been really successful with our campus community to connect with the farm in meaningful ways. We have about 140 families that we support through that right now. I think that connection with faculty, administrators, and staff just really strengthens the program overall. Some of our faculty connections were CSA members first, you know, and it might be five or ten years into their CSA, but then there may be a time where they may think "I'll bring my class to the farm" or "I'd like to do this project with the farm".

It is so nice when we get to do something with administration or other staff on campus and they have that warm fuzzy feeling of like, "oh, yeah, I get my vegetables from the farm". There's a chemistry professor who mows the grass at the farm and he makes our soap. And those little things really help a lot. So that building a community around the farm through the CSA beyond just the marketing aspect of it. There's just a deeper value.

And we get the personal satisfaction of knowing our customers. There are even kids that we know that were born after we started the farm and their parents were in the CSA and now they're almost grown. To know part of their bodies are made from our vegetables is just so great.

**Alex S.:** If I could echo some of what Matt and Jenn said, sometimes I wonder if maybe we could be more profitable if we outsourced our sales to a single wholesale distributor that just handled all the distribution for us as opposed to what we do now, which is like in part relying on me to sell products and get it where it's supposed to go.

But with this model, we get to have a connection with our customers. And like Matt said, I'm feeding my youngest son now who's eight months old, some of his first foods, and I grew most of them. And there's just like no substitute for the peace of mind that you can get by knowing your farm, by having been there, by going there weekly to pick up your food.

I think that that's really valuable and I think that our customers really see that value, too.

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**PCO: Can you talk about the biodigester project, where it started and what you are working on now?**

**Matt S.:** You probably know a bio digester is a device to ferment farm waste and other biodegradables into methane. It works on the principle that methane is a burnable gas. When we put things like cow manure, sheep manure, et cetera, and food waste into the bio digester, what comes out is a burnable gas

called biogas and a digestate liquid. We see a lot of heat rising up out of compost piles which is energy waste. In the case of the bio digester, we capture the energy in a way that we can actually use it as an energy source.

Since 2008, we've been running a small bio gas project on the farm. We had a small bio digester built that we use to run a little bit of waste through and then make enough gas for cooking on the farm. Our resident apprentices can use that on the farm, as well as the packing house kitchen where we make our pickles, for example.

We realized in 2018 that we have enough waste coming into the farm that we could actually make a substantial amount of energy, if we had a bigger biodigester. That's when our initiative kicked off- we got some funding in 2020 through the USDA and NRCS for a larger bio digester and that really got the project moving in the right direction. For the past year, we've been building the digester and it's coming online in March of 2024. The machine is almost finished and when that happens, we'll begin collecting waste from a local dairy that neighbors the farm.

Our dairy neighbors had an old barn where their manure was leaking into the local stream and that was a major concern for the state and the USDA, so we upgraded that facility to a modern dairy barn (free stall barn) and made a way to capture manure that's suitable for digestion. We built a big digester and a reception pit for food waste, so we're actually increasing our food waste collection beyond just the cafeteria to include commercial businesses in Carlisle with the goal of eventually having about three tons per day of food waste coming into the system. **When that's complete and up and running, ideally in a couple months, we'll be making enough energy to power the whole farm with renewable electricity.**

When you have a lot of biogas, on a smaller farm like ours, you'll have enough to run an engine, so we push that biogas into an engine, make electricity and the electricity goes right into the farm grid and then what's left over we can actually backfeed into the utility. This project will be utility interactive, kind of like a big solar project. We'll power up the farm but then also export the grid and sell it for additional revenue. We estimate we'll power the farm project plus about 30 homes in the community through our bio digester project.

We're also going to be pivoting our compost program too. Currently we're taking all the solid food waste and mixing it with a carbon source like mostly leaves and wood chips. Now we're pivoting to pumping some of the digestate liquid from the digester back over to our composting system. It will be essentially spraying that through our compost turner into the leaf piles and making a compost that leaves us the high nutrient amendment from the digestate coming out as a liquid. We did research on that back in 2020 to 2022 to make sure that that was a feasible system and we made fine quality compost with just liquid waste.

Our permit through the DEP for the compost program is all but done. We're waiting on the final approval of that permit, so it's very exciting! **We'll be one of the smallest farms in the United States to have a modern digester like this and part of our agenda is to share this technology with other farms.**

As you might know, in Pennsylvania there's about 5,000 dairy farms, but the average size is only around 100 cows per farm. You see these digesters mostly on very large farms in Pennsylvania. I think there's about 17 [biogas digesters] in the state; they're all on farms that have 500 to 800 head.

We're on a mission to make a difference. If just 10% of the 5,000 dairy farms out there could get a small digester, that's 500 farms, and could power 30 homes each. That's a whole bunch of homes lit up with energy from cow manure and food waste. This valuable stuff usually ends up in landfills, creating methane and mixing with batteries, diapers, and paint cans – not exactly the ideal combo.

Our goal is to save that nutrient-rich food waste from the landfill, haul it over to the farm, and keep those valuable nutrients in the farming loop. Plus, we get to generate some energy, make a bit of cash, and do our part in fighting climate change.

Outreach to fellow farmers is a big deal for us too and we're hitting up the Pasa Conference this year, got loads of field days lined up, and as a farmer and teacher, I love sharing this stuff with others. We want to be an example of a farm that is doing their part to be as sustainable as possible.

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**PCO: What are some future (short or long term) goals for the farm? Any other ones we didn't touch on that you guys want to mention?**

**Alex S.:** The goal is to keep growing better stuff, right? Always looking to up our game. Personally, I'm forever hungry to expand, even though I'm not entirely sure if our market's ready for it. But, I do see some potential for us to dive deeper into the world of veggies.

On another note, we're committed to delivering really great student and apprentice experiences. I grew up in the suburbs of Baltimore, never set foot on a farm until I landed here. It's a big deal because we need more farmers, and let's face it, unless you've grown up on a farm, getting into farming can be a bit tricky.

So, what we're doing here is pretty cool – offering an alternative path into farming. I think it's crucial to keep cranking out these experiences that mold good farmers. Short and sweet, that's the plan.

**Jenn H.:** I'll just say also like we frame our apprenticeship as a leadership training program within the context of a farm. They're definitely learning technical farming skills, but I think just as important to that is how to manage projects, how to manage people. While some might not go on to actively farm, their involvement with the food system is paramount to their lifestyle, which has been really cool to see.

I think a lot of that is because they're learning more than just the drill of farming in this program and we try to place a lot of emphasis on that through educational classes, field trips and the Pasa apprenticeship program, setting them up for success. Some of our apprentices come with no prior experience, so it's a spectrum of who we get that comes on. Meeting them where they're at and stewarding their interests is so important. Alex did a great job at that last year.

One other thing I would add is increasing diversity in our team that we serve. Just because of the nature of Dickinson as a liberal arts college, we are mostly dealing with kids studying certain disciplines and we're really trying to make the future of farming more racially and economically diverse.

---

**PCO: What would you like to see in the future of organic, where do you see organic going, and what are you excited about?**

**Jenn H.:** Well, something that you brought up asking us how to remove barriers to the entry of agriculture. What does the NOP, the USDA, and certifying agencies, what power and influence do they have to work with existing nonprofits addressing these particular issues? What are they doing to try and clear all those barriers as much as possible through innovative thinking and collaborating. I think there's a great opportunity there.

Keeping on climate change and how it will impact organic farmers, what benefit can organic farmers provide to carbon sequestration and if there's any opportunity for an organizing project through PCO to help farmers get some credit for their soil carbon? Obviously we can always use more money and so if there's a way that any of the funds can trickle down to farmers through the government agencies, I would see this to be very helpful.

**Alex S.:** I guess what I'm thinking is staying up to date with the latest and greatest of the science around the anthropological impact on our environment. Organic was already a well-established thing by the time I came around. But at the beginning of my career, it felt like it was like, "well, don't spray, but here's a few other things that you could try". Part of the appeal of agriculture for me is that it is like this incredibly dynamic algorithm of decision-making and the impacts it can have on the local ecosystem.

So really identifying ways in which we can not only not poison our consumers or the local farm ecosystem, but how we can improve health, how we can improve the total ecosystem, how we can sequester carbon, stuff like that.

**Jenn H.:** I would also like to add that it's all about holding onto the integrity of that organic certification and staying true to the original mission and vision of what organic really means.

There's a level of accountability there. I think the NOP should really give it emphasis and make sure it's upheld because if organically certified farms start doubting the integrity of the organic label, we all take a hit. It's a team effort, and we've got to keep that trust intact.

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**PCO: Special thanks to Jen, Matt, and Alex for sharing their wonderful work with us. For additional resources, visit the websites below.**

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**ADDITIONAL INFO**

**Dickinson Farm Job/Volunteer Postings:**

[www.dickinson.edu/info/20058/college\\_farm/2017/jobs\\_and\\_volunteering](http://www.dickinson.edu/info/20058/college_farm/2017/jobs_and_volunteering)

**Dickinson Farm Works Store:** [www.dickinson.edu/farmworks](http://www.dickinson.edu/farmworks)



# The Role of Long-Term Research in Sustainable Agriculture

Farming Systems Project, Sustainable Agricultural Systems Lab in Beltsville, MD.

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ELIZABETH TOBEY,  
ORGANIC FARMER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

**T**he word unprecedented has become tiredly overused as we weather the storms of one climate-induced disaster after another and set new records for temperature extremes. Farmers and farm workers, in particular, are keenly aware of the impacts of this climate chaos; in a profession dependent on and deeply affected by the weather, people working in agriculture are canaries in the coal mines of rapidly changing weather patterns and new climate extremes. Earlier this year, farmers in Vermont raced to harvest crops before flood waters overtook fields and contaminated crops, while farmers throughout the West Coast donned n95 masks or respirators to work the fields amid hazardous air quality due to wildfire smoke. These stories are sadly not uncommon; everywhere you look, farmers are working hard to stay afloat in challenging conditions. Climate change is impacting farms and ranches across the nation and organic farms are particularly vulnerable, but they are also full of potential for climate adaptation and even mitigation.

A recent Civil Eats article showcased how the history of extractive agriculture in Maui set the stage for the devastating wildfires in early August. While it explains the tragic history leading up to the disaster, it also points out that agriculture can be part of the solution. "Basically everything that can be done negatively, agriculture can also do it positively. Agriculture can contribute to soil remediation, improved water quality, and biodiversity."<sup>1</sup>

Because organic farms do not rely on synthetic chemicals, they tend to be more dependent on natural systems than their conventional farming counterparts. This can mean they are more vulnerable and easily impacted by climate change, but organic systems also hold tremendous potential to build climate resilience. Farmers have always adapted, and the unpredictability of our current climate continues to push farmers to seek innovative solutions and evolve their farming practices to help withstand and even mitigate the extremes of

climate change.

Long-term agroecological research is critical in order to provide farmers with a cutting-edge understanding of how climate change affects different production systems and how different production systems can build resilience to withstand climate change. While a lot can be learned in short-term studies, there are things that only long-term observation can reveal. To better understand the role of long-term agriculture research OFRF recently spoke with Michel Cavigelli, PhD, about his work at the long-term agricultural research (LTAR) station in Beltsville, Maryland, ancestral homelands of the Piscataway and Nacotchtank. "I was always interested in long-term research because everything changes every year," Cavigelli said.

Weather patterns can change so much from year to year that a two-year study, for instance, may fall over the course of two good-weather years or even a good year and a bad year, and the results will not accurately represent the full picture of how a farming system behaves over the course of several years and weather cycles. Other elements of agriculture change so slowly that it's nearly impossible to measure them in a short period of time.

"You need long-term data to look at things that change a lot from year to year, and you also need long-term data to look at things that change slowly," Cavigelli explained. "Soil organic carbon changes slowly; that's probably the most notorious one. You usually need at least ten years of a treatment difference to see those [changes] statistically."

Running a long-term study offered Cavigelli a unique opportunity to study Soil Organic Carbon (SOC). "There's all this talk now about climate-smart agriculture and looking at ways to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture. So any increase in soil carbon is a decrease in atmospheric carbon."

At the Beltsville research site, they have five different cropping systems in place: two conventional and three organic, with a variety of tillage practices and crop rotations in place. The cropping systems they maintain are:

### Conventional

No-till, 3-year corn-soybean-wheat rotation  
Standard tillage, 3-year, corn-soybean-wheat rotation

### Organic

Standard tillage, 2-year corn-soybean rotation  
Standard tillage, 3-year corn-soybean-wheat rotation  
Standard tillage, 6-year corn-soybean-wheat-alfalfa rotation, with alfalfa as a three-year perennial crop

The conventional systems receive a double-cropping of soybeans after wheat harvest, while the three-year organic rotation gets a hairy vetch planting. "It's still corn, soybean wheat, and then a legume," said Cavigelli of the 3-year organic rotation. "So it's quite comparable to the two conventional systems." This variety of cropping systems allows them to compare different production methods.

Along with studying SOC, Cavigelli also looks at crop yield, economic viability, soil quality and soil properties, weed population dynamics, and the overall health of the soil food web. He also explained the long term trial site functions as a base for other researchers to look at things that they don't study at the Beltsville lab, such as soil invertebrate communities. "We provide the long-term study for people to kind of helicopter in and do their specialty, which provides a lot more depth of knowledge of the different systems," Cavigelli said.

The results of these studies help researchers like Cavigelli give more accurate and useful advice to farmers and ranchers. Along with publishing scientific reports on their findings, researchers at Beltsville engage in a variety of outreach activities to share their findings with the agricultural community. Prior to Covid, Cavigelli said he regularly presented at ag conferences and hosted field days at the research site that would draw groups of 80-100 farmers and others at a time. He also worked with partners at the local university extension office on a "traveling road show" tour to present findings to ag

communities in the mid-Atlantic region and is eager to reinstate those outreach activities now that the national emergency has ended.

There have been a lot of studies on no-till conventional agriculture, which allowed people to develop some robust conclusions early on. "That's why no-till became the focus of what farmers ought to do to sequester carbon," Cavigelli said. Based on this, he explained that his initial hypothesis was that the organic systems would retain soil carbon at a rate somewhere between the conventional tillage and conventional no-till systems, taking into account the added organic matter from the organic systems but the disturbance from tilling.

Some of the initial results they've found in studies have surprised even Cavigelli. He initially expected the no-till systems to have higher SOC levels because of the decreased soil disturbance. However, when they looked at the findings after 11 years, the organic system actually had more soil carbon than the no-till system, although he made sure to point out that their latest study on SOC has not been fully vetted by peers yet; they will be submitting the paper soon.

"A critical part of the story is that when the experiment was started, we had relatively high SOC because the site had been planted to perennial alfalfa for at least 14 years," Cavigelli said. "This also points to the value of perennials." When Cavigelli's team compared their results to archived soil samples from 1996, before the trials of the long-term system began, the only cropping system that was not losing soil organic carbon over the long term was the 6-year organic rotation. As noted above, this rotation differs from the others by adding a three-year planting of perennial alfalfa before going back into an annual corn-soybean-wheat rotation. "It's not a tree, it's not the native perennials, but it's still a perennial," Cavigelli explained about the alfalfa. "And during the three years that it's in there, you're not tilling, and you're increasing root biomass and all that." As a legume, the alfalfa roots have a symbiotic relationship with



Cultivating corn at the Sustainable Agricultural Systems Lab in Beltsville, MD, with cultivated beans in the foreground.

rhizobial bacteria that pull atmospheric nitrogen from the air and fix it in the plant, while the perennial root systems and the lack of tillage or soil disturbance for those three years support the soil in sequestering carbon. Alfalfa is also a valuable cash crop in itself, providing high-quality livestock feed.

"When we look at the difference between time-zero, 1996, and all five of our systems, they all lose carbon except for the six-year organic system," Cavigelli said. "It's not just that it's organic, but it's that we have a perennial in there. So it looks like the story is that perennials are the best way to either maintain or increase soil carbon."

As we head into the unknown of our changing climate, long-term research will be increasingly important to help farmers and ranchers make informed decisions about their management practices and to help policymakers respond to the climate crisis with effective programs. However, funding for these long-term projects is precarious. All the funding comes from Congress, and Cavigelli explained that it can be tough to make the case for long-term research. "They like to see more quick results, and it's not quite as sexy as developing a new technology," he laughed. Researchers like Cavigelli are limited by Congress's funding decisions. "It's a harder sell," Cavigelli continued. "And it's a sustainability sell. The only way to measure our sustainability is doing things long-term. And the amount of money we get is directly related to how much research we can do."

The summary that was proposed to the Beltsville Office of Comms:

Climate change is impacting farms and ranches across the nation. Organic farms are more dependent on natural systems, so can be greater impacted by climate change than other operations. But, organic farming also has great potential for being a piece of answering the challenges in both mitigating and adapting to climate change. Researchers like Michel Cavigelli at the Agricultural Research Service's (ARS) Beltsville

Agricultural Research Center are deeply involved in helping farmers understand and adopt cutting-edge research findings. The Beltsville facility is part of the Agricultural Research Service's Long-Term Agroecosystem Research Network, a nationwide network of ARS research sites that are intended to provide long-term research projects stability to produce findings related to the effects on whole farming systems, like organic management.

Dr. Michel Cavigelli is a Co-Director of the USDA Northeast Climate Hub, providing expertise on cropping system management and impacts on greenhouse gas emissions. He is also a Research Soil Scientist with the USDA Agricultural Research Service at the Sustainable Agricultural Systems Lab in Beltsville, Maryland. He serves as Lead Scientist of a research project that includes evaluating the long-term impacts of organic and conventional cropping systems management on sustainability. His areas of expertise include organic and conventional cropping systems, nutrient management, and environmental and microbiological controls on soil nitrous oxide production and emissions. He received a B.A. in Biology at Oberlin College in 1984, a M.S. in Agronomy at Kansas State University in 1990, and a Ph.D. in Crop and Soil Sciences and Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Michigan State University in 1998.



#### ADDITIONAL INFO

1 How Centuries of Extractive Agriculture Helped Set the Stage for the Maui Fires: <https://civileats.com/2023/08/23/how-two-centuries-of-extractive-agriculture-helped-set-the-stage-for-the-maui-fires/>



Organic soybeans at the Sustainable Agricultural Systems Lab in Beltsville, MD.

# Board Corner

## Message from the President

JOE MILLER, BOARD PRESIDENT



Greetings and welcome to 2024! As we begin a new year, we start by reflecting on the past year and marking where we want to go in the future. 2023 was a year of growth for the PCO team and the PCO Board. The Board spent time focusing on PCO's position in the Organic Community, our responsibilities here, and our goals for the future (more on that in a bit).

This past year, we faced many challenges. An uncertain economy meant that many of us were wondering if the market would remain resilient and growing for organic food and if sustainable farming practices would continue to be supported. The encouraging reality throughout the year was that consumers continued to vote with their dollars and told us they valued food that improved their health, communities, and the world.

I'd like to share a few highlights of the past year and my time on the Board interacting with PCO. In July, I had the privilege of spending time with the PCO staff for a service day in Washington, DC. We spent the day helping at one of Dreaming Out Loud's Farms at Kelly Miller. We helped by weeding, moving a wood chip pile, and more. Later, we gathered for

dinner, where I talked with the staff and gained a deeper appreciation of their passion for their work. That passion is reflected in their desire to do their best to serve you and your business. In the past three years, Diana Kobus and her leadership team have done a tremendous job of pulling the staff together, focusing on serving each other and our farming community. The staff culture focuses on excellence and service; I'm proud to say it is strong!

In October, the Board met for two days during our annual Board Retreat. The primary focus was on PCO's role in the community and our vision for the future. Our board is unique, with diverse backgrounds and experience. Each Board Member is passionate about the mission of PCO and that we establish an organization that's ready for the future. This road isn't always easy, but it's worth it when the outcome positively impacts our community and planet. One of the key areas we focused on during the retreat was understanding our core business and its value to farms, processors, and consumers. We know that as we help with your success, our partnership will grow, and we'll be successful together. As a board, we want your input and feedback on this. **What can your favorite certifier — PCO — do to help you be successful?** What resources would be helpful for us to provide to your farm and business? Please email if you'd like to share feedback or schedule a call or visit. I would be happy to make time to connect.

Until next time, keep pressing on!

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

Managing Partner at Kalona Organics LLC

## Advertise in Organic Matters

*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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\* The 2-issue price represents a 10% discount.

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

## January

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 New Year's Day PCO office closed	2	3	4	5	6 PA Farm Show
7 ← PA Farm Show	8	9	10	11	12	13 →
14	15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day PCO office closed	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

## February

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 President's Day PCO office closed	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

## March

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

## April

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

# May

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 Spring NOSB Meeting	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 Organic Trade Association's Organic week	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27 Memorial Day PCO office closed	28	29	30	31	

## KEY

Conferences

Certification Due Dates

PCO office closed

# June

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17 Juneteenth PCO office closed	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						



**PCO**

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Spring Mills, PA 16875

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United States Department of Agriculture  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
National Organic Program  
Transition of Organic Partnership Program



The Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) is a USDA initiative that will invest up to \$100 million over five years to provide education, technical assistance, and support to help producers transition to organic.

### TOPP funding will support several components:

- Farmer to Farmer Mentoring
- Technical Assistance and Training
- Community Building

For more information visit [www.organictransition.org](http://www.organictransition.org)

This is a certifier-neutral program. You may be working with any certifier to participate.

## July

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Independence Day  
PCO office closed

Rodale Field Day?

## August

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

NOFA-NH  
VA State Uni Extension  
PASA  
Penn State Extension  
NOFA-VT Organic Certification for Vegetable Farms

Uni of ME Uni Extension  
MOFGA  
Rodale  
NOFA-VT (Maple Regulations Organic Certification & Food Safety)

Ag Progress Days →

PCO Annual Meeting

## September

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Labor Day  
PCO office closed

NOFA-NJ (North Jersey RC&D: No-Till & Regenerative Grazing Conf.  
NOFA-NY (CRAFT Seed Saving)  
NOFA-NH (Applying Subtable Practices)

## October

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Indigenous People's Day  
PCO office closed

Fall NOSB Meeting →

# November

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2			
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11 Veteran's Day PCO office closed	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 Thanksgiving Holiday Break	29	30

## KEY

Conferences

Certification Due Dates

PCO office closed

# December

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24 ← Winter Break	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

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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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# PCO Core Values in Action

LEE BLAHATO INSPECTION PROGRAM COORDINATOR

## PCO'S COMMITMENT TO BUILDING A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE FOOD SYSTEM

In our 2023 summer issue, we highlighted the specific, actionable commitments PCO made to embody our mission of building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive food system. These goals help to steer our organization, not merely towards a singular destination, but towards the journey down a road of growth and understanding. As we reflect back on 2023 and the road we've traveled, we want to offer a glimpse into where we've been and where we're headed from here. In this reflection, we highlight one specific leg of our journey, but also take a moment to acknowledge our friends in the organic industry that have joined our trek.

With the commitment to partnering with stakeholders to increase access to the organic marketplace, we wrote previously about our intentions to work with an existing farmer train-

ing program to develop an internship, in the hopes of supporting education and job training in the organic industry. We reached out to Grow Pittsburgh, to create a program that would benefit not only the stakeholders involved, but the industry at large. As we progressed through the development, we found that the intention aligned well with the Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP). Soon after the project evolved away from an internship and into a new framework that other urban farms across the country will be able to utilize.

One of the goals Grow Pittsburgh expressed in the early development of this partnership, was to educate their staff and eventually obtain organic certification. Certification is often a daunting process, and an urban farm model poses a unique challenge. With the aid of TOPP funding and resources, not only will Grow Pittsburgh put together an Organic System Plan that fits their model, but they have also committed to producing educational deliverables so that other urban farms may follow suit. They intend to develop resources for urban farms to navigate the recordkeeping aspects of certification, such as examples of their records or an educational webinar. Another important resource they hope to develop is an informational hand-out to help urban farms determine if the pathway to organic certification is right for them.

From here, Grow Pittsburgh sets out on their own journey of growth and education. While we take a step back to discover new ways to approach this specific commitment, we also want to celebrate the events that unfolded. Acting as a catalyst, PCO's DEI mission has set in motion a new way that urban farming communities can grow, learn, and farm organically.



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## One way to make our food system more equitable and accessible is to simply speak and write in language that is easily understood by all.

Looking ahead, PCO is also working on simple steps to set up a successful foundation in our DEI journey. One of the ways we are doing this is taking some time to be thoughtful and intentional, and work to integrate our DEI purpose statement with our core values. We want our DEI work to not be considered additional to our day-to-day lives, but integral. As we reflect on ways to truly embody our intentions, it was proposed that we revisit the language sent in letters to clients. Often, we staff live and breathe regulatory language and jargon, and it is so easy to forget that those we interact with do not. One way to make our food system more equitable and accessible is to simply speak and write in language that is easily understood by all. While these changes are small on a grand scale of things, they are also foundational, which is crucial to make lasting change in our world.

**If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.** — Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

## Marketplace

### Winter Marketplace

Certified organic large square bales of meadow grass hay. \$100 each. Call 717-476-1220. York County

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

### Opportunities

The Dickinson College Organic Farm is looking for a Crew Leader. This full-time position will run from early spring until mid-December and includes a competitive compensation package, including paid vacation and sick leave. A complete job description and online application for the Crew Leader position can be found below. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis – the first qualified applicant will fill the position.

### Additional Info:

Crew Leader application:  
<https://blogs.dickinson.edu/farm/2024crewleader/>

### Events Information

Join us at the Penn State Extension Southeast PA Winter Vegetable Meeting, February 21 in Collegeville, PA. Topics include diseases, berry crops, FSMA and market pricing. <https://extension.psu.edu/winter-vegetable-meeting> or 1-877-345-0691 for details.

## New Faces



### WREN FRUEH

In 2023, Wren Frueh joined PCO as the TOPP Mentorship Program Coordinator. They grew up in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, where they still reside today. Wren earned a BA in Agriculture and Sustainable Development from Grinnell College. As part of their senior capstone, they conducted an ethnography on farmers in

central Iowa, delving into their connections with local food. Wren's educational journey extended beyond the classroom, with travels to Ecuador, Malawi, and Italy, where they gleaned insights from sustainability activists and smallholder farmers.

Before joining PCO, Wren dedicated their efforts to a land trust committed to preserving the natural and working landscapes of the Shenandoah Valley. Here, they played a crucial role in protecting over 2000 acres of Virginia farmland. Wren loves calling the Blue Ridge Mountains home, finding joy in exploring Shenandoah National Park, enjoying local music, and whipping up delicious meals for friends and family.

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# Standards & Policy Update

Kyla Smith, Certification Policy Advisor  
NOSB Chair, USDA Accredited  
Certifying Agent Seat, 2021–2026



## STRENGTHENING ORGANIC ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

The Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) final rule **implementation date of March 19, 2024** is right around the corner. This final rule was published about a year ago and operations were given about 14 months to come into compliance.

PCO has developed and sent several resources and communications regarding the changes to the regulations and how they could impact your operation. If this is the first time you are hearing about this major rule change, you are behind and could be at risk of receiving a noncompliance or having disruptions to your supply chain.

The following are highlights of the Strengthening Organic Enforcement final rule and are reflected in the questions in the revised Organic System Plans that were sent out in November 2023. **These forms are due back by March 1, 2024.** If you haven't received these forms yet, please contact your certification specialist immediately.

### Who Needs to be Certified?

SOE made adjustments to which types of operations require certification and which are exempt. The overall goal of this rule was to strengthen oversight and integrity of the organic supply chain. The best way to do that is full supply chain certification. Operations that produce or handle organic products are required to be certified unless they meet one of the allowed limited exemptions that exist for operations that engage in low risk activities.

### Import Requirements

Another major focus area of SOE was import oversight, specifically as it relates to import certificates. After March 19, 2024, ALL imports coming into the US will be required to have an NOP Import Certificate (regardless of country of origin) generated out of the Organic Integrity Database (OID) by the certifier of the organic exporter (located outside of the US). The organic exporter will then pass that import certificate to the importer. (A physical copy does not need to accompany a shipment; electronic transfer of records is already common in the industry.)

Each import must be declared organic, and certificate data must be entered by the importer into the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) system, the electronic system through which the trade community reports imports and exports, and the government determines admissibility. If the importer is a licensed customs broker, they may upload the data themselves. The importer

also verifies compliance of the import, including confirmation that the shipment has a valid import certificate and has not been fumigated or irradiated.

### Supply Chain Traceability and Fraud Prevention

Organic fraud continues to be an area of concern for organic stakeholders. SOE aims to protect the organic seal and keep fraudulent products and bad actors from entering the organic supply chain. The focus areas already discussed in this article will certainly accomplish that. As will the requirement to include procedures as part of an operation's organic system plan for how organic operations will verify their suppliers and verify organic product status - otherwise known as the organic fraud prevention plan. These are likely procedures that are already occurring but perhaps aren't written down as standard operating procedures, such as ensuring organic operations have a valid certificate and that product being received matches what you think you purchased and correlates with the organic certificate and other audit trail documents (e.g. receipt, BOL, etc). Or perhaps there are additional procedures that may be important to start doing such as mapping your supply chain or performing a vulnerability assessment to determine very the most likely place for fraud to occur in your supply chain might be and then to try to think of steps you could take to try to prevent that risk or chance of fraud from occurring.

The focus on fraud and supply chain traceability will not only fall to the certified operations. Certifiers like PCO will also be required to perform additional audits of operations and products that we determine to be high risk. Together we will be able to determine which operations are following the rules and which are not and get those that are not out of the organic supply chain.

### Nonretail containers

SOE revised the requirements pertaining to nonretail containers which now requires that nonretail containers display the identification of the product as organic as well as a lot code or other unique identifier that links the nonretail container to the audit trail documents associated with the container. PCO has determined based on the rule text and preamble that a nonretail container that does not move through the supply chain, such as a harvest bin that does not leave the operation, is not required to contain the information specified for nonretail containers. That said, these types of containers must still meet the requirements pertaining to the prevention of commingling and contamination. Nonretail containers that do move through the supply chain must display the specified information (e.g. identification of product as organic and lot code).

PCO has also determined that due to the use of the word "display" in the rule text that this means affixed to the nonretail container or to the agricultural product that is in or on a nonretail container. Examples might include:

- Stamp on a produce box or master case
- Pallet tag
- Seal, tag or magnet on a railcar
- Truck/trailer number with "organic" direct on truck or some

other signage

- Plastic doc holder on outside of shipping container with audit trail docs

### On-site Inspections

Lastly, SOE incorporated long standing practices related to inspections into the rule. The audits that are performed at inspections are now specifically referenced, as is the requirement for certifiers to perform unannounced inspections on at least 5% of our certified operations annually. These practices have been occurring so there isn't really anything new here. However, it is a good reminder of why these practices are part of the certification process – because they help to strengthen the organic market and reduce fraud.

Check out the Certification Update for information pertaining to form update timelines. We are here to support you throughout this implementation process. Please contact your Certification Specialist with any questions.

## ORGANIC LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY STANDARDS UPDATE

In addition to the Strengthening Organic Enforcement final rule, the National Organic Program published another final rule aimed at promoting animal welfare and encouraging consistent livestock production practices. The Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards final rule has the following staggered implementation dates:

All organic operations must comply with the requirements by January 2, 2025 except:

- (1) Currently certified organic layer operations and layer operations that are certified before January 2, 2025, must comply with the §§ 205.241(c)(2), (c)(4), and (c)(5), concerning outdoor stocking density requirements and soil and vegetation requirements, by **January 2, 2029**.
- (2) Currently certified organic broiler operations and broiler operations that are certified before January 2, 2025, must comply with §§ 205.241(b)(10), (c)(2), and (c)(6), concerning indoor and outdoor stocking density requirements and soil and vegetation requirements, by **January 2, 2029**.
- (3) Currently certified organic poultry operations and poultry operations that are certified before January 2, 2025 must comply with § 205.241(b)(4), concerning poultry house exit area requirements, by **January 2, 2029**.

This rule introduces new provisions for livestock handling and transport, slaughter, and avian (poultry) living conditions. Additionally, it expands and clarifies existing requirements related to livestock care, production practices, and non-avian living conditions.

These changes are designed to uphold a transparent and consistent standard for organically produced foods, fostering consumer confidence in USDA organic products. The changes also align with consumer expectations, particularly regarding outdoor access, and aim to streamline interstate commerce in organic products.

Full text of the **Organic Livestock and Poultry**

**Standards (OLPS)** final rule can be found at or contact the PCO office for a hard copy.

Visit the NOP's Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards webpage at for additional resources, such as a fact sheet, the final rule and the slide deck from the informational webinar.

PCO will be providing more details on our implementation plan shortly. This plan will include policy revisions, form updates and training opportunities.

## Legislative Update

Alison Garber  
Communication and Executive  
Coordinator



## THE OMD ACT: PAVING THE WAY FOR ORGANIC MARKET ADVANCEMENT

On September 27, 2023 the Organic Market Development (OMD) Act made its debut in the Senate, introduced by Senators Tammy Baldwin, Angus King, Peter Welch, and Kirsten Gillibrand. Its companion bill in the House was presented by Representatives Anne Kuster, Chellie Pingree, and Andrea Salinas. This legislative initiative holds promise in unlocking the potential of the organic marketplace, ensuring sustained growth across the United States.

The OMD Act focuses on leveraging investments to cultivate new and expanded organic markets. By directing funds towards increased processing capacity, market development activities, targeted equipment purchases, and other strategies to boost the consumption of domestic organic commodities, this legislation aims to invigorate the organic sector. Notably, it seeks to address supply chain gaps within the market, providing essential support to organic farmers and businesses.

At its core, the OMD Act codifies an existing U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program, signaling a commitment to solving supply chain challenges. The legislation establishes a development program, administered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, designed to offer annual grants to eligible applicants. By codifying the Pinpointed Organic Market Development element of the Organic Transition Initiative, OMD targets supply chain gaps in the organic marketplace and reinforces domestic organic production through strategic investment in infrastructure.

Structured around three project types, OMD grants are tailored to meet the diverse needs of the organic sector. The 24-month Simplified Equipment-Only projects, with funding ranging from \$10,000 to \$100,000, aim to provide targeted support for essential equipment. Simultaneously, the 3-year Market Development and Processing Capacity Expansion projects, with funding between \$100,000 and \$3,000,000, focus on broader initiatives to enhance market capabilities.

To ensure the sustained support of organic initiatives, OMD maintains the 2023 funding base of \$75 million annually

through Commodity Credit Corporation funding. Additionally, the legislation allows for authorization of appropriations amounting to \$15 million for 2024 and each fiscal year thereafter, underlining a commitment to ongoing organic market development.

Eligible applicants are business entities (regardless of legal structure) who produce or handle organic foods, non-profit organizations, including trade associations, tribal, state, territory, and local government entities.

Entities who are at least 51 percent owned and operated by the same parent company may not submit multiple applications. Applicants who produce or handle organic foods must either be certified to the USDA organic standards or in transition to organic certification, consistent with 7 C.F.R. §205. Applicants must be registered in the Organic INTEGRITY Database before the date of the Notice of Award. This requirement does not apply to non-profit or government entities.

Eligible applicants must be in the 50 states, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the United States Virgin Islands.

In conclusion, the introduction of the OMD Act represents a significant stride toward fortifying the organic marketplace. By addressing critical supply chain gaps, supporting organic farmers and businesses, and strategically investing in infrastructure, this legislation plays a vital role in advancing the organic sector's growth. As discussions surrounding the OMD Act unfold, its potential impact on the organic market's future remains a beacon of optimism for stakeholders invested in the continued success of organic agriculture in the United States.

For more information please visit:

<https://ubchapter-M/part-205>

<https://organic.ams.usda.gov/integrity>

[www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/omdg](http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/omdg)

## Certification Update

Sarah Brown  
Certification Director



### HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Our team is returning refreshed and rejuvenated from time spent with friends and family. We hope this new year greets you well.

Our focus over the next two quarters is getting all of our client partners smoothly through the annual renewal process. If you haven't already, you will soon be receiving your Annual Update forms. Every client is asked to annually complete these forms to ensure we're updated on any changes to your business. As you well know, this year we're also requiring submission of a completed Organic System Plan. Our team has undergone rigorous training to ensure effective review of all

that will be submitted over the next few months.

### Key reminders:

Full revised organic systems plans (OSPs) and supplemental forms are required to be completed and submitted to PCO by **March 1, 2024 to maintain your certification**. These forms are revised due to the strengthening organic enforcement (SOE) final rule that has an implementation date of **March 19, 2024**. They were mailed out at the beginning of November. If you have not received blank OSP forms to complete, please reach out to your certification specialist immediately.

Be on the lookout for the standard Annual Update paperwork notification, which will be sent out in January. This paperwork will also be **due back to PCO by March 1, 2024**.

PCO has over 1,600 certified operations all working within these deadlines. We've mapped out a careful plan and efficient procedures for supporting processing and review of all these forms. We kindly request your adherence to these deadlines to ensure you receive the best customer service, the most efficient (and cost effective) inspection coordination, and avoid compounding late fees.

Please let us know if you need assistance or have any questions about these requirements. We're here to help!

In addition to the typical renewal workflow, the PCO team is wrapping up final tasks related to SOE implementation and diving into the Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards (OLPS) final rule. This rule requires compliance by January 2, 2025. PCO will have much more information coming your way in early 2024.

### ORGANIC LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY STANDARDS

The Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards (OLPS) Final Rule updates the USDA organic regulations (7 CFR part 205) to promote animal welfare and encourage consistent livestock production practices. It adds detailed regulations regarding indoor and outdoor space requirements for avian species, animal health care practices, confinement, transportation, euthanasia, and slaughter.

The NOP published OLPS with staggered implementation dates as follows. All organic operations must comply with the requirements by January 2, 2025 except:

(1) Currently certified organic layer operations and layer operations that are certified before January 2, 2025, must comply with the §§ 205.241(c)(2), (c)(4), and (c)(5), concerning outdoor stocking density requirements and soil and vegetation requirements, by **January 2, 2029**.

(2) Currently certified organic broiler operations and broiler operations that are certified before January 2, 2025, must comply with §§ 205.241(b)(10), (c)(2), and (c)(6), concerning indoor and outdoor stocking density requirements and soil and vegetation requirements, by **January 2, 2029**.

(3) Currently certified organic poultry operations and poultry operations that are certified before January 2, 2025 must comply with § 205.241(b)(4), concerning poultry house exit area requirements, by **January 2, 2029**.

This means that organic layer operations must comply with the indoor space requirements (e.g. stocking densities) by January 2, 2025.

If a poultry operation (e.g. layer or broiler) is certified prior to January 2, 2025 but then surrenders after that date and reapplies, that operation must be in compliance with all the delayed requirements with the implementation date of January 2, 2029, immediately.

Look for more information in 2024 regarding PCO's implementation plan. In the meantime, visit NOP's Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards webpage.

## Materials Update

Hector Nunez C.  
Materials Program Assistant Manager



### THE 2024 LIST OF APPROVED MATERIALS IS ON THEIR WAY

As we head into the new year, we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the operators, members, and partners within the organic industry. Your dedication to our food system doesn't go unnoticed. The PCO Materials Review Team was able to re-review over 3,000 materials in 2023, and the results will be shared with you in the 2024 List of Approved Materials. There are Crops, Livestock, Processing, and Facility books that you may receive based on your operation's uniqueness. The lists will be emailed or mailed during January. Please let us know if you have not received it by February 1st. We would like to draw your attention to a few notable changes:

PCO has revised its policy regarding the inclusion of materials in the list. As a result, the list now encompasses several new intended uses and general use categories.

The Input Master Code is now introduced in the table, serving as a unique identifier for each material under each intended use. The new addition aims to improve communication, especially for materials reviewed with multiple uses. As an example, we may have three different Input Master Codes for the same material since they are being used for various purposes. For example, you can now communicate with your Certification Specialist, mentioning that you want to use input 101010.

We have re-reviewed over 3,000 materials during 2022 and 2023, so you'll see that many materials have changed status due to the re-review, or there are new materials added.

The Livestock book now includes a table for Single Vitamin/Mineral Formulations. The book can be found in the last section of the Livestock list.

PCO also allows materials approved for use as organic inputs by Material Review Organizations recognized by the NOP. Those lists may be obtained directly from the publishing Material Review Organization. Using a material with status will ensure the organic certification of your fields, livestock, and products is maintained. Below is the contact information for those organizations:

#### ■ Organic Materials Review Institute

[www.omri.org/omri-lists](http://www.omri.org/omri-lists), (541) 343-7600

#### ■ Washington State Department of Agriculture

<https://agr.wa.gov/departments/organic/input-material-registration>, (360) 902-1800

#### ■ California Department of Food and Agriculture

[www.cdffa.ca.gov/is/ffldrs/fertilizer\\_OIM.html](http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/is/ffldrs/fertilizer_OIM.html), (916) 900-5022.

For updates and inquiries, please contact us at 814-422-0251. Your Certification Specialist can assist in adding most materials and checking their status directly over the phone. Remember to provide information about your intended use, the complete name of the material, and the manufacturer's name. Please remember that materials allowed for one use might be prohibited for a separate use. Using a material outside of For more technical questions, don't hesitate to reach out to your Certification Specialist or email us at [materials@paorganic.org](mailto:materials@paorganic.org).

We sincerely appreciate your continued support and business!

## TOPP Update

Leilani Durand  
TOPP Northeast/Mid-Atlantic  
Program Director



### TOPP MENTORSHIP/EVENTS

The first Northeast/ Mid-Atlantic TOPP mentorship cohort, matched in November, is underway! We have 67 mentor/mentee pairs across the region plus two group mentorships. A second cohort start is planned for February/March 2024. If you are interested in becoming a TOPP mentor or mentee, please visit [www.organictransition.org](http://www.organictransition.org) or reach out to TOPP Mentorship Coordinator, Wren Frueh ([wfrueh@paorganic.org](mailto:wfrueh@paorganic.org)). There are lots of winter events happening around the region for TOPP mentorship pairs to attend and/or all beginning farmers. Check out [www.organictransition.org/region/northeast-mid-atlantic/events/](http://www.organictransition.org/region/northeast-mid-atlantic/events/) for current regional events listings.

### ORGANIC TRANSITION INITIATIVE – DIRECT FARMER ASSISTANCE

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can  
*continued on page 22*

# PCO on the Road

KATIE POPPITI, TOPP PROGRAM COORDINATOR

## NORTHEAST/MID-ATLANTIC TOPP PROGRAM MEMBERS TRAVEL TO MARYLAND AND VIRGINIA FOR OUTREACH EVENTS

**P**CO team members engaged in the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic TOPP program undertook travel in January to champion the cause of organic transition and the enhancement of food system resilience.

Leilani Durand, the director of the TOPP program, and Wren Frueh, coordinator of the TOPP mentorship program, participated in the inaugural Virginia Association for Biological Farming–Small Farm Outreach Program Summit 2024. This transformative event brought together a diverse community dedicated to sustainable, biological, regenerative, and organic agriculture. From January 19th to 21st, 2024, members of the agricultural community convened to foster collaboration and exchange knowledge.

Simultaneously, Katie Poppiti, the coordinator of the TOPP mentorship program, represented the team at the 2024 Future Harvest Annual Conference. Taking place from January 18th to 20th, this conference attracted small- to mid-scale diversified farmers to their regional agricultural conferences for learning,

sharing, collaboration, and networking. Keynote speakers inspired farmers of all experience levels with their stories of success, special sessions addressed industry pest challenges, and producers interacted with agricultural service providers, seed companies, and conservation organizations.

Throughout these three-day events, Leilani, Wren, and Katie actively promoted the TOPP program—a USDA-funded initiative providing technical assistance and comprehensive support for transitioning and existing organic farmers.



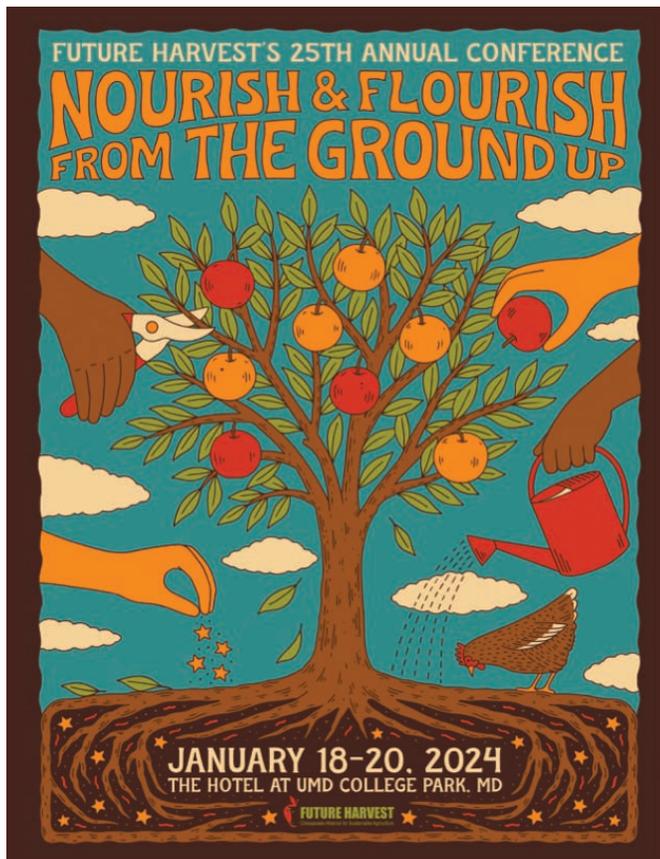
## TOPP Update

*continued from page 21*

help you transition to organic through the Organic Transition Initiative (OTI). NRCS staff will support and host hands-on organic training and fielding organic-related staff questions. Visit [www.farmers.gov/your-business/organic/organic-transition-initiative/assistance](http://www.farmers.gov/your-business/organic/organic-transition-initiative/assistance) for information on how to find your local service center and apply.

## RODALE FREE WEBINARS IN 2024

Sign up for Rodale's FREE webinars and learn directly from Rodale's scientists, farmers, and organic consultants. Hear the latest research updates; learn new growing techniques; get tips for starting your own farm; learn how to battle weeds better, and so much more. Get all the latest information on regenerative organic agriculture – straight from the source—without leaving the comfort of your home. Visit <https://rodale-institute.org/education/webinars/>



STAY CONNECTED, VISIT:

[paorganic.org](http://paorganic.org)

PHONE:

814.422.0251

# Event Calendar

All times listed are Eastern Time Zone unless otherwise indicated.

\* Notes a TOPP Core Partner Regional Event

## MARCH

### Maple Operation Energy Efficiency

March 12, 2024

1PM-3PM

John's Sugar House: Westmoreland, NH

To Register: Matt at

[matt@cheshireconservation.org](mailto:matt@cheshireconservation.org) or call

603-756-9282

### UMass Extension Vegetable Program: Organic Small Fruit Production

March 14, 2024

10AM-1PM

Brigham Hill Community Farm: North Grafton, MA

To Register: Sue Scheufele -

[umassveg@umas.edu](mailto:umassveg@umas.edu)

### 4-Wheel Tractor Operation, Safety & Applications (Eastern PA)

March 19, 2024

8AM-5PM

The Seed Farm: Emmaus, PA

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

### 4-Wheel Tractor Operation, Safety & Applications (Western PA)

March 21, 2024

8AM-5PM

New Morning Farm: Hustontown, PA

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

### NOFA CT Winter Conference

March 23, 2024

Eastern Connecticut State University

<https://ctnofa.org/winter-conference/>

### High Tunnel Energy Efficiency

March 26, 2024

2PM-4PM

Dog Days Farm: Fitzwilliam, NH

To Register: Matt at

[matt@cheshireconservation.org](mailto:matt@cheshireconservation.org) or call

603-756-9282

### UMass Extension Vegetable Program: Organic Greenhouse

## Production

March 27, 2024

10AM- 1PM

Brigham Hill Community Farm: North Grafton, MA

To Register: Sue Scheufele -

[umassveg@umas.edu](mailto:umassveg@umas.edu)

## APRIL

### UMass Extension Vegetable Program: Organic Management of Vegetable Pests

April 10, 2024

10AM- 1PM

Brigham Hill Community Farm: North Grafton, MA

To Register: Sue Scheufele -

[umassveg@umas.edu](mailto:umassveg@umas.edu)

### Compost Like A Pro

April 18, 2024

2PM- 4PM

Rodale Institute Founders Farm:

Allentown, PA

<https://rodaleinstitute.org/events/compost-like-a-pro-2024/>

### UMass Extension Vegetable Program: Organics & Food Safety

April 24, 2024

10AM- 1PM

Brigham Hill Community Farm: North Grafton, MA

To Register: Sue Scheufele -

[umassveg@umas.edu](mailto:umassveg@umas.edu)

## MAY

### Rodale Institute

May 1st, 2024

2PM-3PM

Overcoming Common Barriers to Organic Certification

Webinar

<https://rodaleinstitute.org/events/webinar-overcoming-common-barriers-to-organic-certification/>

## Penn State Extension

May 2nd, 2024

10AM-1:30PM

Women Rooted In Agriculture: Goot

Essa Cheese Tour

Howard, PA

<https://extension.psu.edu/women-rooted-in-agriculture-goot-essa-cheese-tour>

## Rodale Institute

May 9th, 2024

2PM-4PM

Workshop: Organic Gardening 101

Rodale Institute Founders Farm

Allentown, PA

<https://rodaleinstitute.org/events/workshop-organic-gardening-2024/>

## Rodale Institute

May 16th, 2024

2PM-4PM

Workshop: Container Gardening 101

Rodale Institute Founders Farm

Allentown, PA

<https://rodaleinstitute.org/events/workshop-container-gardening-101/>

## NOFA NJ

May 26th, 2024

9AM-10AM

Monthly Organic Open House

Virtual

<https://nofanj.org/event/monthly-organic-open-house-4/>

## JUNE

### Rodale Institute

June 6th, 2024

2PM-4PM

Hobby Beekeeping

Rodale Institute Founders Farm

Allentown, PA

<https://rodaleinstitute.org/events/hobby-beekeeping-2024/>

## NOFA NJ

June 26th, 2024

9AM-10AM

Monthly Organic Open House

Virtual

<https://nofanj.org/event/monthly-organic-open-house-4/>

# New Members

PCO Welcomes 4th Quarter New Members!

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## NEWLY CERTIFIED ORGANIC

**Freshpet, Inc.**  
Bethlehem, PA

**Bella Bella Gourmet Foods LLC**  
West Haven, CT

**Jacob K. Stoltzfus**  
Danville, PA

**Benuel G. King**  
Quarryville, PA

**Katydid Hill LLC**  
Orwigsburg, PA

**Mapeks USA**  
Allentown, PA

**Eric Moser**  
Milton, PA

**Windmill Farms**  
Sunnyside, WA

**Stephen T. Geib**  
Elizabethtown, PA

**Lime Valley Mill Farm LLC**  
Peach Bottom, PA

**William and Kelly Shaffer**  
Hunker, PA

**Nelson Sensenig**  
Rock Stream, NY

**My Forest Foods**  
Green Island NY

**Thomas Oryniak**  
Mount Laurel, NJ

**Samuel S. Fisher**  
Marshall, IN

**Darrell L. Beidler**  
Granville Summit, PA

**Marvin Lee Oberholtzer**  
Shippensburg, PA

**Manatawny Farms Inc.**  
Oley, PA

**Daniel Gaston**  
Moravia, NY

**Elmer S. King**  
Myerstown, PA

**Paul Burkholder**  
Liberty, KY

**Hill Country Food Works LLC**  
Lockhart, TX

**Chris Strawser**  
Mc Alisterville, PA

**David N. Weaver**  
Kutztown, PA

**Henson Farms**  
Russell Springs, KY

**Kelvin Fox**  
Willard, OH

**Caleb Hoffman**  
Mount Pleasant Mills, PA

**Marvin Hoover**  
Elkton, KY

**David Martin**  
Winfield, PA

**Solrig Farm, LLC**  
Pipersville, PA

**Kyle Burbaugh**  
Harpster, OH

**Joseph Fernandez**  
Waymart, PA

**River Nutrition, LLC**  
Smoketown, PA

**Sunberry Paw Paw Beverages Limited, LLC**  
Farmington Hills, MI

**Pero Farms of NY**  
Delray Beach, FL

**Randy Dunkelberger**  
Middleburg, PA

**Carl Hurst**  
Robesonia, PA

**Blue Oak Farms**  
Holtwood, PA

**Myron Martin**  
Reinholds, PA

**Merriment Afoot, LLC**  
Tulsa, OK

**Koffee Kult Corp**  
Hollywood, FL

**Alpine Foods Inc.**  
Lakeville, MN

**Beekman Market Garden LLC**  
Poughquag, NY

**David Fox**  
Shiloh, OH

**David Mclanahan**  
Fulton, KY

**Tomorrow's Coffee LLC**  
South Fork, PA

**Toby Gingerich**  
Sugarcreek, OH

**David Zimmerman**  
Russellville, KY

**Debra Shuey**  
Jonestown, PA

**Abe Warner**  
Broad Top, PA

**SDG Enterprises**  
Millhall, PA

**Scott Klein**  
Purdy, MO

**Jeremy Schlabach**  
Auburn, KY

**John Hostetler**  
Russellville, KY

**Larry Leinbach**  
Elkton, KY

**Lindgren Farm**  
Duncannon, PA

**Mai Her**  
Noel, MO

**Nelson Miller**  
Wooster, OH

**Leroy Yoder**  
Upper Sandusky, OH

**Alvin Jantzi**  
Crofton, KY

**Thomas Leinbach**  
Elkton, KY

**Laurence Leinbach**  
Elkton, KY

**Lovell Miller**  
Logan, KY

**Lester Rissler**  
Elkton, KY

**David Schlabach**  
Vinton, OH

**Kevin Martin**  
Bernville, PA

**David Buch**  
Ephrata, PA

**Stan Napier**  
Water Valley, KY

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## NEW ADVOCATE

**Scott & Emelie Swackhamer**

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## NEW BUSINESS

**Adisseo USA Inc.**



**NORTHEAST/  
MID-ATLANTIC**  
TRANSITION TO ORGANIC  
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM



# MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

for Transitioning and Certified Organic Producers

*The Northeast/ Mid-Atlantic Transition to Organic Partnership Program mentorship program pairs experienced organic producers and producers transitioning to organic, supports the transition process, and creates a stronger network of organic producers across the country. This is a certifier-neutral program. You may be working with any certifier to participate.*



## MENTORSHIP SUPPORT

Certified organic producers serve as a paid mentor, supporting producers through the transition and certification process. Transitioning producers receive free mentorship.



## PRODUCER PARTNERSHIP

Northeast/ Mid-Atlantic TOPP will provide guidance and support for the mentorship. Mentors and transitioning producers will meet regularly on their own either virtually or in person.



## TAILORED GUIDANCE

Mentors and transitioning producers will work together to set goals for the mentorship year and build a communication system tailored for their individual needs and preferences.

**NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS**  
Learn more and apply at [www.organictransition.org](http://www.organictransition.org)

Mentorship available in Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia.

For more information, contact the Northeast/ Mid-Atlantic TOPP Mentorship Coordinator at [topp-ne@paorganic.org](mailto:topp-ne@paorganic.org).



United States Department of Agriculture  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
National Organic Program  
Transition to Organic Partnership Program





106 School Street, Suite 201  
Spring Mills, PA 16875

Non-Profit Org  
US POSTAGE PAID  
STATE COLLEGE, PA  
PERMIT NO. 21

# Foliar Application

## A Quality Source of Organically Acceptable Nitrogen!



### EFFICIENT, PLANT-DERIVED AMINO ACIDS

#### BENEFITS OF EXPLORER™ LIQUID 10-0-0:

- Does not volatilize
- High carbon content makes excellent food source for soil biology
- Carbon based and contains plant derived amino acids
- Natural product with no negative environmental impact
- Beneficial use in conditions of biotic and abiotic stress

#### 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
<b>Nitrogen Availability</b>	Slow Release, requires bio-decomposition	100% - Immediately
<b>Solubility</b>	Not fully soluble	100%
<b>Application Restrictions</b>	Foliar Applications not recommended	None
<b>Ease of Use</b>	Smell, mixing procedure	None
<b>Origin</b>	Chicken/Fish/Manure	Non- GMO, soy protein hydrolysate
<b>Amino Acid Profile</b>	Inconsistent to None	98.6%/60.9%lq Amino Profile
<b>Stability</b>	Adulterated for insuring some stability	Complete and lifetime



Available through:



494 W. Broad Street  
New Holland, PA 17557  
(888) 336-7878  
www.homesteadnutritioninc.com