



Basics of Organic Certification

Ib Hagsten, Ph.D.


Independent Organic Inspector

Organic Farming Forum with KRC 11.13.12

Basics of Organic Certification

- Select NOP-accredited Certifying Agency (ACA)
- Develop Organic Systems Plan (OSP) incl. maps
- Get the modified OSP pre-approved by ACA
- Have an organic inspector assigned
- Go thru the “whole farm” organic inspection
- Sign-off with inspector on reportable findings
- Wait for ACA to “question” reportable data
- Answer the non-compliances (minor or major)
- Receive an annual organic certificate

Select an NOP-approved ACA

- Who is **NOP**?
- This is the **10th** anniversary of USA's official **National Organic Program**, which is an independent branch within the USDA The USDA Organic logo is a circular emblem with a brown border. Inside, the word "USDA" is written in green above the word "ORGANIC" in white, which is set against a green background with a stylized leaf pattern.
- NOP's current motto: "Age of Enforcement"
- ACA's administer organic certifications (based on their individual "interpretation" of the NOP program Manual and Annotations)

Select an NOP-approved ACA

- Who are the **ACA**'s? (OCIA, ICO, MOSA, OTCO, QAI, etc)
- For profit or not-for profit service agencies
- NOP-only or COR, EU, JAS, etc. certifications
- Farm & livestock; Handling & processing; etc.
- Some “as helpful as NOP allows” ... others not
- Some has “one fee” ... others have various fees
- They will **all** get your farm certified – once you meet NOP & their OSP-related requirements

Develop an Organic Systems Plan

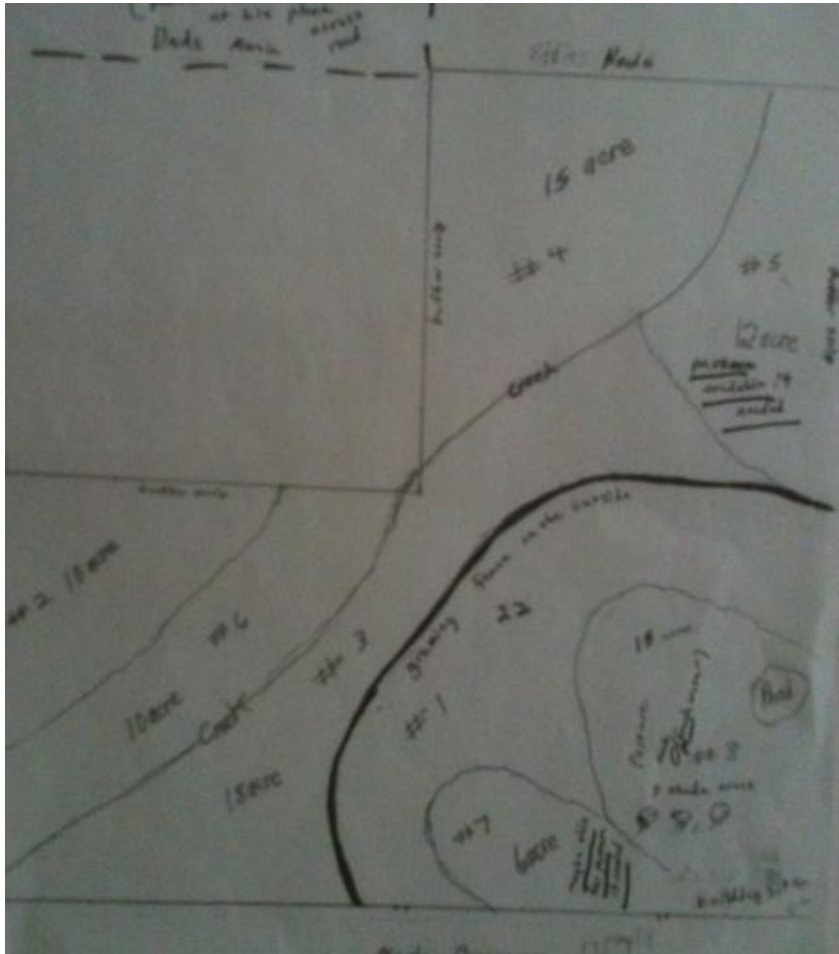
- Each ACA has their own version of an **OSP**
- All OSP's cover the same required topics:
 1. General farm Information
 2. Soil & Crop Fertility Management
 3. Crop Management
 4. Maintenance of Organic Integrity
 5. Record Keeping System
 6. Affirmation



Get modified OSP pre-approved

- **General Farm Information ...**
- Did you fill-in all the blanks?
- Did you submit maps? / Readable maps?
- Why total acres in OSP not same as map acres
- How can the inspector find your farm?
- Account for farmstead, woods, roads, fields, buffers, adjoining land usage?
- Prior certifications & with whom?

Different types of maps ...



Get modified OSP pre-approved

- **Soil & Crop Fertility Management ...**
- General farming management information (fertility plans / crop management plans)
- Compost use
- Manure usage
- Natural resource conservation (tillage/erosion/water/biodiversity/wildlife habitat)

Biological diversity & Wildlife Habitat



Get modified OSP pre-approved

- **Crop Management ...**
- Crop rotation
- Weed management **PLAN** ... *Design or Default*
- Pest management plan
- Disease management plan

Farmer, “I have a great round-up program”



Get modified OSP pre-approved

- **Maintenance of Organic Integrity ...**
- Adjoining Land Use & Buffers
- Equipment
- Harvest
- Post-harvest Handling
- Crop Storage
- Transportation



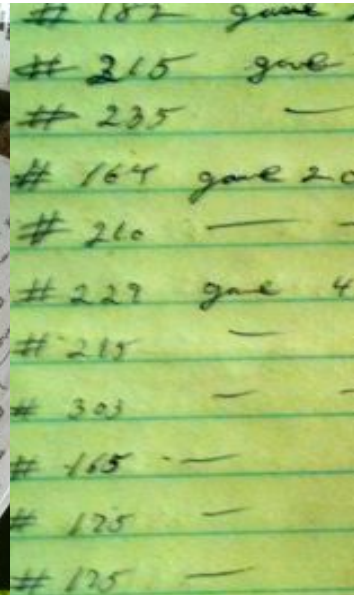
Buffer/Crop Rotation/Hoophouse



Get modified OSP pre-approved

- **Record Keeping System ...**
- Did you fill-in all the blanks?
- Do you intend to keep records for 5 years?
- Do you maintain a complaint log?
- Which of following two-dozen records kept?
- Do labels/sales docs accompany org. products
- Provide lot # used (example: ER-2012-OSB-4)

Tags/bags ... Receipts ... Records



ORGANIC SEED SEARCH Year 2012

Use this form if you plant nonorganic seed. Give to your inspector during your annual inspection. Vegetable producers may provide this information in a different format.

Variety	Company	Date Contacted	W
Red Winner	US Seed Less		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C
# 630 MC corn	Master Choice Lam. Ag. Dept to Kings Agri Seeds		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C
W353 LH UT alfafa	WTL Lam. Ag. Dept to Kings Agri Seeds		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C

Get modified OSP pre-approved

- **Affirmation ...**
- Signature
- Date

- Reminder to keep copies of ALL documents, receipts, labels, invoices, affidavits, maps, field histories, clean-out logs, etc. for a minimum of five years

Have an organic inspector assigned

- “8 am on Tuesday in two-weeks, is that OK?
(When sign-up with ACA you agreed to be there ...)
- When inspector arrives together we will see ALL your fields/crops/buffers (organic/conventional)
- Your buildings/storage/equipment (field/harvest)
- Verify all you OSP information (“eyes/ears” on farm)
- Conduct traceability audit trail (organic/conventional)
- Assess accuracy of OSP, maps & verified data

Will he/she be reliable ?



Go thru whole-farm organic inspection & sign-off agreed-reportable findings

- It is your farm, your OSP & your organic farm...
- NOP has Organic Standards / Requirements ...
- Inspector verifies your OSP (1) by being the eyes & ears & (2) by assessing the traceability..
- ACA chosen will work with you to get your farm certified so that you can sell organically-certified crops to customers with confidence

Wait ... Answer ... Wait ...

- **1st Wait:** Will ACA understand/accept the report & all the corresponding attachments
- **Answer:** Next you received a letter with minor non-compliances. You have 30 days to reply / rebut/ collect & submit the “missing data”

(If you get certified mail: Major non-compliance, act fast)

2nd Wait: “Eventually” you will receive annual organic certificate (& be able to sell crop in bin)

“The Age of Enforcement”

- **So what's new from NOP?**
- Increased unannounced ACA audits
- Increased unannounced NOP audits
- Increased residue testing & sampling
(pesticide/arsenic/GMO/hormone/antibiotic)
(now the inspector qualifications just increased exponentially)

Basics of Organic Certification

- Select a NOP-accredited Certifier
- Develop an OSP including good maps
- Get modified OSP pre-approved
- Have an inspector assigned
- Do the “whole farm” inspection
- Sign-off with inspector
- Wait for ACA to review report
- Answer non-compliances
- Receive organic certificate – annually



In Summary ...

- A local Kansas organic farmer stated recently,
- “If you want to ride the organic train, you need to buy the ticket.”

- Thank you ...
- Any questions?

