

Planning for Transition and Succession on Your Farm: Saturday, March 18
 Clark State Community College Leffel Lane Campus • Springfield, Ohio

SAVE THE DATE! OEFFA, in partnership with the Tecumseh Land Trust, is facilitating a day-long workshop for farmland owners seeking to transition land, co-sponsored by Clark State Community College.

Whether your farm has been in your family for 200 years or two, many choices regarding the future of your land lie ahead. If it's a family farm, who will be in charge in the next generation? If you are renting your land, or farming "on the halves," is there someone who would like to own the land after your death? Do you have multiple heirs who may disagree about future plans and ownership of your farm? If you have no heirs, what legacy do you want to leave?

This workshop can get you started down the path to the solutions that are right for you. Learn about different models of farm succession and transition, family communication strategies to facilitate successful transfer, resources to begin developing your plan, and professionals and service organizations that can assist you.

Registration will open in early February. For more information, contact Begin Farming Program Coordinator Kelly Henderson at (614) 421-2022 Ext. 213 or kelly@oeffa.org.



How to Contact Us

OEFFA Certification
 Phone: (614) 262-2022
 Fax: (614) 421-2011
 Email: organic@oeffa.org

Madeline Ciofu
 Certification Specialist
madeline@oeffa.org
 Extension 236

Michelle Kozlowski
 Senior Certification Specialist
michelle@oeffa.org
 Extension 231

Carol Goland
 Executive Director
cgoland@oeffa.org
 Extension 202

Elise George
 Senior Processing Certification Specialist
elise@oeffa.org
 Extension 221

Julie Laudick
 Materials Specialist
jlaudick@oeffa.org
 Extension 230

Camille Ackerman
 Certification Specialist
camille@oeffa.org
 Extension 233

Katie Hawkins
 Certification Specialist
katie@oeffa.org
 Extension 235

Maria Losh
 Compliance and Quality Assurance Coordinator
maria@oeffa.org
 Extension 220

Kurt Belser
 Certification Specialist
kurt@oeffa.org
 Extension 232

Andy Hupp
 Certification Program Manager
andy@oeffa.org
 Extension 225

Becky Pelishek
 Administrative Assistant
becky@oeffa.org
 Extension 228

Alana Brownell
 Administrative Assistant
alana@oeffa.org
 Extension 227

Jen Kindrick
 Certification Specialist
jen@oeffa.org
 Extension 224

Samira Zoofan
 Administrative Specialist
samira@oeffa.org
 Extension 226

Sheryn Bruff
 Certification Specialist
sheryn@oeffa.org
 Extension 223

Anissa Khan
 Certification Specialist
anissa@oeffa.org
 Extension 229

Julia Barton – OEFFA Education Program
 Sustainable Agriculture Educator
julia@oeffa.org
 (614) 421-2022 Extension 401

Steve Cabral
 Inspection Coordinator
steve@oeffa.org
 Extension 222

Dusty Kline
 Certification Specialist
dusty@oeffa.org
 Extension 234

Eric Pawlowski – OEFFA Education Program
 Sustainable Agriculture Educator
eric@oeffa.org
 (614) 421-2022 Extension 209



A New Year is Upon Us!

As the new year arrives, so does a new certification year. While we understand that many of your days are spent planning for the upcoming growing season, we hope you can find time to read the important updates, information, and news about organic certification in this bulletin.

If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding organic certification, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are always here to help you.

Sincerely,
 The OEFFA Certification Team



A Look Back at 2016

2016 was another year of growth for us here at OEFFA Certification. In 2016, we processed more than 1150 applications for certification or recertification, an increase of about 200 from the previous year. Among all applicants 1065 requested certification for crops and land, 456 for livestock and/or poultry, and 138 for handling or processing, with many operations certifying for multiple scopes. Many of the 259 operations that were not certified with OEFFA in 2015 were new to organic certification altogether. Among livestock operations, 319 were dairy farms, and 113 were poultry operations. Of the crop operations, 194 grew produce. 515 of the operations we served were in Ohio. To keep up with this growth and to provide you with more timely and higher quality service, our staff also grew from 14 to 17. In addition to reviewing your OSP and inspection report, corresponding with you, keeping OEFFA in compliance with the NOP, and making sure you have what you need to make the process go smoothly, our staff also conducted about 10% of OEFFA's 2016 inspections.

We are truly grateful that you choose OEFFA to be your certifier and will continue to do our best to be a good partner to you in the certification process as the organic industry and community continue to grow and evolve.

When are Certificates Issued?

OEFFA is making changes so that more operations will receive updated certificates earlier in 2017!

An organic operation receives its first organic certificate from OEFFA when we verify that all aspects of the scope(s) requested for certification comply with the applicable NOP standards. The effective date listed on the organic certificate is the first date we made the verification, and products harvested or produced after that date are considered organic. Although certification is an annual process, organic certificates do not expire. Buyers sometimes mistakenly think that a certificate that is more than a year old is no longer valid. For renewal operations, OEFFA has generally issued an updated certificate showing the current year's crops and products after the renewal process is complete for the year. However, in reality an updated organic certificate can be issued at any time as long as the crops, livestock, and products listed on the certificate have been verified. In response to increased requests for updated certificates earlier in the year, and in addition to increasing staff, we will be issuing certificates after inspection for operations who do not have significant changes and which are in general compliance with NOP standards. This means that many operations will receive an updated certificate earlier than they have in the past. However, since the renewal process may not be complete when the updated certificate is issued, you may still hear from OEFFA Certification staff requesting additional information or clarification of items not fully addressed at your inspection. Please be sure to review all correspondence from OEFFA staff and respond within the deadlines provided. As always, if you have any questions or need more time, just contact us.

Fee Changes

Modest fee increases were necessary for the 2017 certification year to ensure that we can continue to provide quality service while improving our timeliness to meet your expectations. Each year, OEFFA staff and the board determine expenses expected in the coming year and set fees at a level that covers those expenses. OEFFA is a non-profit organization, so “net zero” is the target. Recent additional requirements at the national level including mandatory inspector field evaluations, unannounced inspections, and pesticide residue testing have increased our costs to comply with NOP requirements. OEFFA staff must visit certified operations to complete these activities, which means that operations further from our office are more expensive to serve. To reflect our increased cost, base fees for operations outside of Ohio have increased by \$50 this year. The last base application fee increase was in 2013.

The fee for livestock and/or poultry certification has also increased by \$50 this year for the first time since 2012. Two rule changes for organic animals that will be a great challenge to implement are in process at this time. OEFFA has already invested substantial resources in studying and commenting on both the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices and Origin of Livestock proposed rules to help guide the final standards in a way that is reasonable for organic producers and protects the integrity of the organic label. Once the final standards are released, we will need to train our staff and inspectors, provide technical assistance to certified operations to be sure they understand the new rules, and verify compliance by the deadline NOP provides. Our work has already begun on several of these fronts. As we expect livestock and poultry inspections to involve more verification after these standards are in place, this change also helps to increase inspector pay for livestock and poultry visits.

Finally, the fee for expedited service for handlers and processors increased from \$300 to \$500 because high demand has challenged our ability to ensure that each operation requesting expedited service is given the highest priority.

OEFFA is committed to providing low-cost service and this commitment is encoded in the organization’s strategic plan. We will continue to evaluate the fees we charge for certification and ensure we are providing the best service we can at the lowest price possible.

Cost Share Program Reimbursement for 2017 Application Fees

We are happy to announce that the Cost Share program, which reimburses organic operations 75%, up to \$750 per scope will continue in 2017. You should expect to receive reimbursement information with your invoices for paid application and inspection fees and with your organic certificate. Renewing OEFFA operations may apply for reimbursement once they receive their 2017 application fee invoice. You do not have to wait until you receive your updated organic certificate. However, new OEFFA applicants must wait until they receive their organic certificate to apply for reimbursement. Application fees and inspection costs are both reimbursable. This reimbursement rewards organic farmers for the environmental benefits their practices provide. By taking part in the Cost Share program you help protect its longevity in future Farm Bills. Organic producers and handlers may have new options for applying for cost share in the coming year; be sure to read application instructions carefully. If you have any questions regarding the program, contact us at (614) 262-2022 or costshare@oeffa.org. For more information, visit <http://certification.oeffa.org/costshare.php>



However, new OEFFA applicants must wait until they receive their organic certificate to apply for reimbursement. Application fees and inspection costs are both reimbursable. This reimbursement rewards organic farmers for the environmental benefits their practices provide. By taking part in the Cost Share program you help protect its longevity in future Farm Bills. Organic producers and handlers may have new options for applying for cost share in the coming year; be sure to read application instructions carefully. If you have any questions regarding the program, contact us at (614) 262-2022 or costshare@oeffa.org. For more information, visit <http://certification.oeffa.org/costshare.php>

Staff Changes at OEFFA Certification

At the start of the year, we welcomed four new staff members to our team, including two new Certification Specialists, Sheryn Bruff and Anissa Khan. Sheryn graduated from the Ohio State University with a degree in agriculture. She has worked on a dairy farms for eight years and managed an organic dairy farm for five years. Anissa Khan received her Masters in Economics from Miami University of Ohio and worked with an OEFFA-certified mixed vegetable operation. A new position, Materials Specialist, will review inputs requested for use by OEFFA-certified farms and handlers. This position will be held by Julie Laudick. She recently received her Masters in Environmental Science at the Ohio State University, where she researched microbial biostimulants used by organic farmers. Administrative Assistant, Alana Brownell, also joins our staff. Alana is a nutrition therapist and has four years of previous experience in customer service. Please join us in welcoming these new team members!

Crop Rotation

Due to an increasing number of questions about how farmers can comply with the crop rotation standards, OEFFA Certification has developed a new crop rotation policy, which you can find in our 2017 Policies and Procedures Manual. Crop rotation is one of the essential features of organic farming and the organic standards are written to ensure that farmers implement crop rotations on their operations that build the soil, result in healthy crops, and limit pest and erosion problems. Please review the policy and contact us with questions. We also have a fact sheet available regarding crop rotations and OEFFA has education staff that can assist you in developing a successful, profitable, and compliant crop rotation plan for your farm.

Updates to the National List

The National Organic Standards Board had many important topics on the docket for their fall meeting in St. Louis including several decisions to make about adding and removing materials from the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances.

The board voted to remove (“sunset”) both Carageenan from §205.605(a) and Ivermectin from §205.603(a). Carageenan is used widely in food processing for gelling, thickening, and stabilizing foods and was removed from the national list due to health concerns and the existence of alternatives to achieve these functions. Ivermectin is a parasiticide used in livestock and was removed from the list due to concerns regarding the substance’s toxicity in the environment, its negative impact on dung beetles, and the existence of similar alternatives on the National List. Although these changes are not final until NOP changes the rule, they generally follow the recommendations of the board and organic operations using these materials should begin working on a plan to replace these materials in their management systems.

Listings were renewed for copper sulfate, ozone gas, peracetic acid, EPA List 3 inerts, and calcium chloride in crop production, and for agar-agar, animal enzymes, calcium sulfate, glucono-delta lactone, tartaric acid, cellulose, potassium hydroxide, silicon dioxide, and beta-carotene extract color for processing and handling organic products.

The board did not vote to accept any of the petitions requesting that items be added to the list. These included soy wax, 1-methylcyclopropene, potassium cellulose glycolate, aluminum sulfate, ammonium citrate, and ammonium glycinate for use with organic crops, aluminum sulfate, sodium bisulfate, and acid-activated bentonite for use in organic livestock productions, and non-organic oate protein concentrate for use in organic processed products.

At the Spring 2016 meeting in Washington D.C., hypochlorous acid generated by electrolyzed water was added for all scopes, acid stabilized squid was added for crops, and sodium lactatae and potassium lactate were added for handling. A petition to add ash from manure burning for crop production was rejected at the spring meeting.

OEFFA Certification Service Area

Though many certifiers work with operations nationally and even internationally, OEFFA has remained a regional certifier to ensure that our resources are used wisely in providing the best service possible at a reasonable cost. OEFFA Certification currently serves operations in 16 states across the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest regions of the US. In several of these states, we have not accepted new applicants for some time and currently serve only a handful of operations that originally came to OEFFA through a variety of circumstances. In October of 2016, OEFFA’s Board of Directors determined that it is no longer within our administrative capacity to serve operations in Nebraska, South Dakota, Arkansas, and South Carolina.

In recent years, the National Organic Program has instituted several new and additional requirements for certifiers. These requirements include a mandatory evaluation in the field for every inspector we work with every year and unannounced inspections and pesticide residue testing on at least five percent of the operations we certify. Though there are some positive aspects of these changes, the new requirements are quite costly and they require significant staff time to accomplish. Over this same time period, the number of operations we certify has grown more than ten percent per year. In the long term, OEFFA does not believe we will be able to maintain high quality service, improve timeliness, charge a fair price, meet customer expectations, and maintain the integrity of the organic label in these areas.

OEFFA will continue to work with operations in these states for one more renewal cycle to ensure that there is ample time to locate and begin a relationship with a new certifier. We will also notify operations individually that this change is taking place. If you are in one of these states, contact us if you need help finding certifiers that serve your area. After the 2017 renewal cycle, we will not send renewal paperwork to operations in these states and our fee schedule will be modified to reflect the change in this areas.