OEFFA is participating in a pilot program to offer Certified Grass-Fed Organic Livestock verification in 2019. This certification, administered by Organic Plus Trust, is an add-on for certified organic dairy and meat producers and processors. It was developed by certifiers and organic companies and will be implemented as an accredited third-party certification program. OEFFA will make this certification available to organic livestock farmers and handlers who produce and process organic milk, meat, and related products.

The standards require NOP organic certification as a baseline. Beyond that, they use the existing organic standards as a framework, but extend some of the basic parameters, particularly related to pasture management and grazing. The standards require that all animals certified to this program receive 60 percent of their dry matter demand from pasture over at least a 150-day grazing season (as opposed to 30 percent and 120 days per the NOP standards). Grains and grain by-products are prohibited as feed by these grass-fed standards. Animal welfare and pasture management practices are also addressed.

Handlers of organic grass-fed products must use only grass-fed milk, meat, and related products in their recipes and must avoid mixing grass-fed products with other organic products that do not meet the additional requirements.

Our staff are currently training, planning, and preparing resources about this certification. We are working to make this additional certification accessible and affordable to operations who want to market their products as both organic and grass-fed. This includes integrating the necessary paperwork with organic certification forms and conducting both the organic and grass-fed inspections at the same time.

Fees for this certification are based on what we pay to the organization that administers the program and our cost to verify compliance with the organic grass-fed standards. You can find fees for 2019 on your Fee Sheet. We will proactively send forms and documents to operations who we believe are already marketing grass-fed products. If you do not receive the application packet and are considering seeking grass-fed certification through OEFFA, contact us for more information.

GREETINGS!

We hope this finds you warm, rested, and full of hope for the new year! Here at OEFFA, the new year causes us to reflect on the previous year - how we can improve our work, serve you better, and continue protecting the integrity of organic products - so take a look at what we’ve been up to!

Best of wishes,
OEFFA Certification
COST SHARE PROGRAM

Details for cost share in 2019 will be worked out over the next several months, but all indications are that the program will continue to operate much as it has in the past several years. OEFFA will share updates as this develops. If you never submitted a cost share application in 2018, there may still be time. Farm Service Agency county offices will be able to process cost share applications through March of the following year as long as money remains available. Contact your local FSA office for more information.

FASTER CERTIFICATES IN 2019

OEFFA has implemented changes to the certification renewal process in recent years with the goal of ensuring the best customer service and the highest level of integrity we can, while maintaining reasonable fees and minimizing the impact on the businesses we serve. For 2019, we have made further adjustments in order to update most organic certificates for renewing operations before the annual inspection. We will also dedicate additional staff time to identifying and tracking priorities, urgent situations, and special circumstances.

Though most operations will receive an updated certificate earlier in the year, please continue to look for correspondence from OEFFA after your inspection. We will need to continue to work with you to collect missing items or verify your plans to fix any issues identified during the visit. See the “Making Sense of the National Organic Program...” article in the Winter 2019 OEFFA Newsletter for more details.

CHANGES TO THE NATIONAL LIST

On December 27, 2018 the National Organic Program published a final rule detailing changes to the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances. The changes are based on a proposed rule from about a year ago and, before that, recommendations from the National Organic Standards Board. The changes above will go into effect on January 28th, 2019, except those where a different date is specified. We are pleased to see that feedback OEFFA provided on behalf of operations we certify is included in the final rule and that operators will have some additional tools available when dealing with the challenges of producing and handling organic products. Please review the changes carefully to ensure you remain in compliance. An insert with the full text of the changed standards is included with our 2019 NOP standards book and a summary insert is included with this bulletin. Contact OEFFA if you have questions about how these changes affect your operation.

OPEN TO NEW APPLICANTS IN NY & WI!

OEFFA Certification is now accepting new applicants from New York and Wisconsin! For several years, OEFFA has continued to certify operations who have moved from our current service area to these states, but starting in 2019, OEFFA will accept any new producer or handler operations in these two states that wish to certify with us. We look forward to working in two additional states that have a strong organic presence in the national market and well-developed local organic economies.

FORM UPDATES FOR 2019

We work hard to keep forms as clear and concise as possible. Each year, we review all forms that we send out and try to improve the questions we ask to better understand and verify compliance of the operations we certify. Below are a few of the updates you may notice as you work through the forms this year. Let us know if you have any questions or suggestions!

PRODUCER OSP

• Revised the conventional production section and clarified the circumstances under which it needs to be completed.
• Added a section to include narrative changes not otherwise captured by our forms.

LIVESTOCK OSP

• Added a transportation section that includes some new questions moved from other sections along with some new questions that ensure the organic status of animals is preserved during transport.
• Added questions about poultry management and egg handling.

HANDLER OSP

• Clarified ingredient sourcing requirements, particularly for imported ingredients and those sourced through uncertified entities.
• Clarified expectations for records and how records should be organized such that inspectors can review and audit them.
• Added a section to include narrative changes not otherwise captured by our forms.

POLICIES

• Added seed mixing policy created based on clarifications from NOP.
• Added policy clarifying the requirements for sourcing inputs and ingredients through uncertified operations.
• Condensed the international policy and translated much of the information into a chart.

FEES

• Added an additional tier to the handler fee sheet, for operations earning more than $10 million from organic products.
• Added a tier system for on-farm handling fees.

ORGANIC INTEGRITY DATABASE

The Organic Integrity Database (OID) is a website (https://organic.ams.usda.gov/Integrity/) that contains up-to-date information about operations that may and may not sell products as organic. It is an excellent resource in increasing supply chain transparency for buyers and sellers, promoting visibility for organic operations, and deterring fraud. You can find a certified organic farm or business, or search for an operation with specific characteristics such as the status of an operation, the scopes for which an operation is certified, and the organic commodities and services that operations offer. Many operations use it to find suppliers and buyers, and we increasingly see operations incorporating OID checks into their procedures for verifying the organic status of purchased ingredients and inputs. Certifiers are required to update listings at least annually and most, including OEFFA, update monthly.
OEFFA’S 40TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE (YES 40!)

will be held at the Dayton Convention Center February 14-16, 2019. This year’s conference will feature all day workshops on Thursday that fit a wide range of interests, including efficient vegetable production with Ben Hartman, weed control in organic grains with Gary McDonald, regenerative poultry systems with Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin, and agroforestry with a team from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Additional conference features include nearly 80 workshops on a wide-range of topics, a trade show featuring dozens of businesses, non-profits, and government agencies, and activities for kids. See our website, our most recent newsletter, or contact us for more information.

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