GREETINGS!

We hope that the close of 2019 came to you peacefully and full of hope for the year ahead!

For us at OEFFA, 2020 marks the full implementation of our new database and digital file maintenance. We gladly go through this transition which aims to reduce our environmental impact and serve you more efficiently.

We look forward to serving you this year!

Warm regards,
OEFFA Certification

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION OF INDUSTRIAL HEMP

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, also known as the 2018 Farm Bill, reclassified hemp as an agricultural commodity instead of a Schedule 1 controlled substance and directed the USDA to establish regulations for hemp production. On October 31, 2019, the USDA established the U.S. Domestic Hemp Production Program through an interim final rule. Under this program, the USDA is reviewing plans submitted by States and Indian Tribes for the production of industrial hemp. It also created a Federal plan that producers will need to comply with if their state or Indian Tribe does not have a USDA-approved plan in place.

On November 26, 2019 the National Organic Program updated NOP 2040: Instruction on Organic Certification of Industrial Hemp. The updated instruction states that “for hemp produced in the United States, only hemp produced in accordance with the U.S. Domestic Hemp Production Program and/or the 2014 Farm Bill may be certified as organic, if produced in accordance with USDA organic regulations.” If you are producing hemp in accordance with the U.S. Domestic Hemp Production Program and the National Organic Program and would like to request it for certification, please be sure to include it in your 2020 Organic System Plan. Contact us if you have questions regarding organic certification of hemp.
**FOOD JUSTICE CERTIFICATION**

OEFFA has partnered with the Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) to offer Food Justice Certification starting in 2020! AJP’s Food Justice Certification standards address ethical working and living conditions for agricultural workers and fair trade and pricing for farms and other agricultural businesses. We are excited for this new partnership and new certification as we continue our work in supporting sustainable, ecological, healthful, and just food systems.

For 40 years, OEFFA has promoted sustainability in our food system. As we take account of all that we have gained, we also acknowledge the work that still lies ahead. We know that the injustices in our food system are pervasive and deep. We are both committed and honored to begin this partnership with the Agricultural Justice Project to address the inequities which stand in the way of a truly sustainable project to address the inequities which committed and honored to begin this transition once certified. Broad support for changes to these standards remains among dairy producers, consumers, and advocates and continued pressure by these groups has brought the issue back onto the regulatory agenda. NOP accepted additional comments on the proposed rule in late 2019. A timeline for the final rule has not yet been established.

**NOP RULE MAKING UPDATES**

In addition to the changes to inputs and materials detailed on the opposite page, the NOP is working on two substantive changes to the organic standards at this time:

- **Strengthening organic integrity** – This update to the standards is expected to be a broad attempt to update the standards to reflect the current state of the organic industry, helping the NOP and certifiers to manage compliance over long supply chains with international players. Specific items we expect to see in the rule include certification requirements for brokers and traders, minimum training requirements for inspectors, non-retail labeling specifications, standardized organic certificates, and increased certifier data reporting. In addition, companies importing organic food products will be required to utilize electronic import certificates. As of this writing, the proposed rule has not been released, though we expect it to be posted for public comment in early 2020.

- **Origin of Livestock** - This rule was originally proposed in 2015, but stalled in the rule-making process after NOP received comments from the public. The rule is intended to clarify the one time, one-year transition for a dairy operation and prohibit continual transition/re-transition once certified. Broad support for changes to these standards remains among dairy producers, consumers, and advocates and continued pressure by these groups has brought the issue back onto the regulatory agenda. NOP accepted additional comments on the proposed rule in late 2019. A timeline for the final rule has not yet been established.

**CERTIFICATION DEADLINES**

Application deadlines are the same this year as in past years: the standard deadline for producers is May 15th. An early bird discount is available for those that apply or renew by March 15th. Operations remain in compliance until their anniversary date, which for producers is August 15th, though additional fees apply after the standard deadline.

- **Handlers** who receive renewal paperwork in January must renew by March 1st and those that receive renewal notices in June must renew by September 1st to remain in compliance.

- **New handlers and producers** whose production does not fit the standard growing season may be accepted year-round. Contact us to talk about how to proceed if this applies to your operation.

- **Blood meal** made with sodium citrate was proposed to be allowed for use as a soil amendment, while natamycin has been proposed to be prohibited in organic crop production. Tamarind seed gum is proposed to be allowed to be used as a nonorganic ingredient in organic handling when an organic form is not commercially available.

- **NOP** also published a final rule in October that amends the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances. Elemental sulfur is now listed at §205.60(1)(b) to be used as a slug or snail bait to reduce crop losses. Polyoxin D zinc salt is now listed at §205.60(1)(11) for plant disease control. Magnesium chloride has been reclassified from a nonorganic ingredient to a synthetic from a non-synthetic substance. This decision was made because ivermectin and moxidectin are part of the same chemical class, and both have broad spectrum efficiency against the same internal and external parasites. Moxidectin remains on the list because it does not have the negative environmental impacts that ivermectin does.

Certified organic natural flavors are now required when they are commercially available. Nonorganic non-synthetic flavors may still be used when an operation conducts and documents an adequate search for organic flavors.

**MATERIALS UPDATES**

**Microcrystalline cellulose is now prohibited for use in organic handling.**

Glycerin has been reclassified from a nonagricultural substance listed on §205.605(b) to an agricultural product on §205.606. Organic Glycerin must be used when it is commercially available. An operation must conduct and document an adequate search for an organic source before using non-organic Glycerin. Additionally, an annotation is added that requires glycerin to be produced from agricultural source materials and processed using biological or mechanical/physical methods as described under §205.270(a).

**UPDATES**

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JOIN US AT CONFERENCE!

For many of our farmers, homesteaders, and backyard gardeners, 2019 will be remembered as a year with an unforgivably wet spring, followed by a bone dry summer. It had many asking “Could this be our new normal?”

Before we understood just how extreme this year’s weather was going to be, we had selected “A Climate for Change” as OEFFA’s conference theme. We saw this as an opportunity to explore the concept of resiliency, better understand the challenges created by more frequent severe weather events, discuss what role farmers and eaters can play in being part of the solution, and connect with experts—including keynote speaker Laura Lengnick—to visualize a path forward. This year’s theme allows us to consider other ways in which the climate for agriculture is changing, including how addressing social justice can bring meaningful food system reform. As keynote speaker Eric Holt-Giménez will point out, it is imperative that we find a way to harness our diversity to forge the political will to make structural changes in our food system. And, with almost 80 food and farm related workshops to choose from, as well as an excellent trade show, there is something for everyone. Our Kids’ Conference and child care options make this event family friendly. Sign up early to get the best rate!

CONTACT OEFFA

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