GREETINGS from OEFFA Certification!
Here in Ohio it finally feels like summer is on its way.
This spring has presented numerous challenges for the organic community and beyond, from the COVID-19 pandemic to unseasonably cold and wet weather. We hope that you, your family, and staff are all doing well and staying healthy.

Despite the ever-evolving situation with COVID-19 and the challenges it has presented, we remain available and ready to help you with your certification needs. Most of our staff have been working remotely since late March in an effort to minimize the spread of the virus in our communities. You can still reach us through all the regular means of communication: mail, phone, email and fax. You can also call (614) 947-1624 to hear up-to-date recorded messages regarding OEFFA’s certification process and educational programs. OEFFA’s website has a page dedicated to providing resources to help you navigate the COVID-19 situation (https://www.oeffa.org/news/covid/). For the foreseeable future, all events, including the Sustainable Farm Tour and Workshop Series have either been cancelled or moved online. Please visit OEFFA’s Event Calendar on our website (https://www.oeffa.org/events) for a list of online events, meetings, and webinars.

COST SHARE
As of May 27, 2020, the cost share funds for 2020 certification fees have not yet been released from the federal government. Once the funds are released through the National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program, OEFFA Certification will send cost share information to certified operations when sending paid invoices and certificates. For operations in Ohio, this cost share information will include the application to apply for funding.

DEADLINE REMINDER
Thank you to those who have already submitted your annual renewal paperwork! All certified operations must submit their renewal paperwork each year by the renewal deadline in order to remain in compliance. As we move into summer, we wanted to remind you of some upcoming deadlines:
• **August 15, 2020** is the final renewal deadline for all producers.
• **September 15, 2020** is the renewal deadline for Group B Handlers.

NEW APPROVED PRODUCTS LISTS
The June 2020 Approved Products Lists (APL) have fewer products than the January 2020 lists because a number of products approved by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) were removed to avoid redundancy. Products approved by OMRI are still allowed for use in organic production.
On May 4th we sent a letter to all OEFFA certified operations and applicants to let you know of some changes to inspections that we are implementing this year. The letter includes more detailed information about our inspection plans, so please contact us if you did not receive it.

We collaborated with the Accredited Certifiers Association (ACA) and the International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA) to ensure that our plan for inspections this year is consistent with others in the organic industry. Our goal is to keep you and our inspectors safe during inspections while upholding the integrity of the organic label. We greatly appreciate your understanding and patience this season as we all adapt to a new set of challenges.

On-site inspections are still required for operations that are new to organic certification and may be required in other situations. When on-site inspections are necessary to verify compliance and both the operation and inspector are willing to proceed, we ask that you and your inspector follow the CDC’s guidelines and maintain social distancing during the inspection.

We will use two new types of inspections to verify compliance this year: records audits and remote inspections. We will use a risk-based approach when reviewing your application to determine whether one of these new inspection types is recommended for your operation. Before a records audit, we will send a letter to request copies of the operation’s records. The inspector will review the records and current Organic System Plan and perform a phone interview by asking questions about the operation. A remote inspection includes a review of records and an interview, but also involves visual verification of the operation. This could be through a digital platform (like Facetime, Zoom, or Skype) or videos and photos. Once we have reviewed your renewal paperwork, we will contact you if your operation is recommended for a records audit or remote inspection and will provide more detailed information and instructions on how to proceed with these new types of inspections. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns in the meantime.
**ORGANIC POLICY UPDATES AND COMMUNITY NEWS**

The Spring 2020 National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting took place virtually on April 29-30 following two days of oral public comments. Approximately 130 members of the public attended each day of the meeting and comments addressed a wide range of issues. The NOSB discussed the highly anticipated topic of paper pots and paper-based planting aids at length, and ultimately voted to send the paper proposal back to the Crops Subcommittee for further revision; paper pots will continue to be allowed while the NOSB deliberates. The Crops Subcommittee is considering revising the annotation for biodegradable biobased mulch film to allow 85% biobased content, down from 100%, which would mean that products currently on the market may comply. As part of a broader discussion on marine materials, the Crops Subcommittee is also considering a stricter annotation for sources of fish for fish fertilizers. Public comments on most National List inputs due for Sunset Review showed consensus; exceptions were vitamin D3 and sodium silicate for crops; poloxalene for livestock; carnauba wax, glycerin, starches, and Turkish bay leaves for handling. If you use these inputs, please contact Sarah Pinkham at OEFFA Certification (sarah@oeffa.org or 614-725-1467) so we can incorporate your feedback into our next public comment to the NOSB.

Just before the NOSB meeting, the National Organic Coalition (of which OEFFA is a member) held a virtual meeting as well. Four farmers, from California, Georgia, New York and Ohio, described how they were coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, such as implementing new sanitation and social distancing measures in the packing shed and at the farmers market, wearing masks in the milking parlor, and finding new direct market options to compensate for the loss of wholesale accounts. One of the farmers advocated for stricter organic seed sourcing rules, another for better enforcement of the pasture rule and another for preventing fraudulent grain imports. OEFFA and NOC have both been advocating at the federal level to help small businesses, farmers, and consumers through the four coronavirus relief packages, the Paycheck Protection Program, expanding SNAP benefits, and allowing SNAP and WIC use for direct and online purchases from small farms, CSAs, and independent grocery stores.

A lawsuit brought against USDA by the Organic Trade Association (OTA) resulted in renewed focus on the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP) rule, which despite 47,000 overwhelmingly positive public comments was withdrawn by USDA in 2018. A federal judge ordered USDA to address mistakes in its economic analysis of the rule, and in response, USDA published a report on April 23, 2020 analyzing and correcting its mistakes. OEFFA submitted a public comment on this report and reminded USDA that the outdoor access requirements of OLPP close loopholes in existing regulations that cause inconsistent enforcement of soil management and animal health requirements of OFPA (the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990). OEFFA stated that prompt implementation of OLPP is needed to improve organic integrity and ensure a level playing field for organic livestock producers.
The USDA Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), which will provide $16 billion in aid to farmers, opened for applications on May 26th with a bumpy start. One of the major concerns is that the program is expected to work best for simple production systems that can show a loss in price or sales this year and sell into commodity and wholesale markets. Therefore, the program will prove difficult for diversified farms, those who sell into local and regional markets, and for value-added producers such as organic farmers.

The applications are accepted online and will be processed by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) on a first come, first serve basis. There were glitches with the application program the first day that have since been fixed.

The program will NOT be based on a farmer’s actual losses as payments are determined by a formula that accounts for volume and “fate” of eligible commodities multiplied by a USDA determined price based on national wholesale prices and do not include any price premiums for products such as organic or grass-fed for example. Despite the fact that producers will be paid 80% of the calculated loss with the 20% reserved to purportedly allow the money to reach more growers, the more likely scenario is that the funding will be fully utilized in the first several weeks. If you have not, but are considering, completing an application or would like more information about the program read this blog from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition: https://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/covid-cfap-signup/ to learn more about the program and decide if it is right for you. You can find the links on the blog to move forward with the application process and can also contact your local FSA office.

If you do apply to the CFAP, please contact Amalie Lipstreu (amalie@oeffa.org, 614-947-1607) to share your experience.