



# OHIO ECOLOGICAL FOOD AND FARM ASSOCIATION OEFFA CERTIFICATION

JUNE 2021 BULLETIN

## GREETINGS FROM OEFFA CERTIFICATION!

This past year has been challenging for many of you and for us as well, and we thank you for your patience and support. We want to take a few moments to provide you with an update on OEFFA's progress in addressing the significant delays we have experienced over the past year.

As you may recall, OEFFA transitioned to a new database, Intact Platform (formerly Ecert), in the fall of 2019. Intact Platform is a robust and powerful database that has great potential to improve the efficiency of our program and provide you with more timely customer service. The switch to this new database required a significant amount of initial data entry and modifications to our existing systems.

The timing of the COVID-19 pandemic so soon after our database transition threw a significant wrench in our processes. To reduce the spread of the virus and protect the health of our certified operations, inspectors, and staff, we made changes to how inspections were conducted starting in the spring of 2020. These changes added more steps to our process of reviewing applications and inspection reports, which means our reviews are taking longer than normal.

Despite these significant setbacks, we are excited to share that the many improvements that we've made over the past few months are really starting to take off. Here are some highlights:

- Given the delay with 2020 inspection assignments, **we will be combining 2020 and 2021 inspections for many farm operations this year.** We will not be able to perform combined inspections for all operations but will use criteria that we've developed to determine when to combine inspections.
- **We hired four additional staff in mid-April** and they are already making significant contributions to our work.
- Ever since our transition to Intact Platform, we have continually evaluated our processes and looked for ways to improve our efficiency. **This year we are dedicating more time and energy to this work to ensure that we are making the most of Intact Platform's capabilities and reducing inefficiencies in our processes.**

**As a reminder, organic certificates do not expire and your current organic certificate remains valid.**

If you need a letter of good standing to provide to a buyer, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We again thank you for your continued patience and support of OEFFA. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with you!

## 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 highlight some upcoming deadlines:

- **August 15, 2021** is the final renewal deadline for all producers.
  - As a reminder, the final renewal deadline for producers will change to **June 15th starting in 2022**.
- **September 1, 2021** is the renewal deadline for Group B Handlers and the application deadline for new handlers and processors.

## BIODEGRADABLE MULCH FILM POLICY CHANGE

OEFFA has been allowing biodegradable mulch film to be used on certified organic farms as long as it is removed at the end of the growing season (like other plastic mulches). **Starting in 2022, we will no longer allow biodegradable mulch films to be used on OEFFA-certified operations.** We have changed our policy to align with the Accredited Certifiers Association Best Practices. There are no currently available biodegradable mulch films that are 100% bio-based; all commercially available mulch films contain petroleum products. Because these mulch films are designed to degrade, they cannot be fully removed from the field after use, and the long-term effects on the soil food web are unknown. The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) continues to debate the use of this material and we do not anticipate a change to the regulations in the near future. **If you currently use biodegradable mulch film, you may use it up during the 2021 growing season.**

## USDA SEEKING COMMENTS ON ORIGIN OF LIVESTOCK

USDA published a proposed revision to the not-yet-enacted 2015 final rule which would require all dairy animals to be managed organically from the last third of gestation except for a one-time transition period for a brand-new organic dairy. Under this rule, transitioned livestock could not be sold as organic or milked at a different organic operation from where they transitioned. USDA is seeking comments on whether sale of transitioned animals should be permitted; whether the one-time transition exemption language should apply to a “producer” or “operation”; whether USDA’s financial impact analysis is correct; if an implementation timeframe is needed; and exceptions to the one-time transition allowance. Comments can be made until July 12, 2021 at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/05/12/2021-09978/national-organic-program-origin-of-livestock-reopening-of-comment-period>. If you wish to submit comments by mail, contact OEFFA for more details.







## NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS BOARD (NOSB) SPRING MEETING

The NOSB met virtually in April, with two days of public comments and three days of discussion. Presentations were given on how proposed rules are considered and finalized by NOP and on organic research priorities. NOSB voted unanimously to accept a resolution urging USDA to reissue as final the 2017 Organic Livestock & Poultry Practices Rule without delay. NOSB discussed developing a rubric to evaluate breeding and genetic manipulation techniques for which should be excluded, instead of trying to develop an exhaustive list of specific excluded methods. The human capital management proposal prompted discussion of financial and logistical barriers to becoming an organic

inspector, the importance of diversity (race, sex, gender) in the inspector pool, and how NOP could partner with nonprofits and educational institutions to increase the pool of qualified inspectors and certification reviewers. NOSB also considered how research assistance to the Board, such as drafting regulatory language or doing a literature review, could help the Board do their work more effectively without compromising their independence.

You can find a list of post-meeting resources, including recordings, here: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/event/national-organic-standards-board-nosb-meeting-crystal-city-va-0>

## NOSB MATERIALS UPDATES

Chlorine materials were discussed in relation to crops, livestock and handling with calls from the Board to conduct a comprehensive review of sanitizers including robust practice standards and a separate section of the National List for cleaners and sanitizers. For the handling scope, NOSB voted to allow ion exchange recharge materials included on the National List and left it to NOP to determine whether resins are considered food contact substances or food additives. Ammonia extracts, petitioned for

prohibition, were discussed at length; NOSB wanted greater clarity on which types of products could fall into this category and considered the benefits of highly soluble nitrogen for certain regions and weather conditions in the context of holistic farm nutrient management. In discussing kasugamycin, a petitioned antibiotic for fruit trees, NOSB weighed its effectiveness in treating fire blight against the general prohibition of antibiotics in organics. Most materials discussed will be voted on at the Fall NOSB meeting.

# COST SHARE UPDATE

The Organic Certification Cost Share Programs provide financial assistance to certified organic producers and handlers. Through these programs certified operations may receive a reimbursement of up to 50% of certification fees, with a maximum of \$500 per certified scope: crop, wild crop, livestock, and handler.

As of June 1, 2021, the cost share funds for 2021 have not yet been released from the federal government. For now, the 2021 reimbursement amount will remain the same as 2020, 50% and a \$500 maximum per scope, and we are working with partner organizations across the country to advocate for an increase.

This year OEFFA will continue to partner with the Ohio Department of Agriculture to administer Ohio's cost share program. For any Ohio-based operation which we certify, if you have already received a copy of your paid invoice (and certificate, if you are new to certification) you will receive the cost share application soon. If you have not yet received a copy of your paid invoice, you will receive the application with it. The application will also be available on the OEFFA website <https://certification.oeffa.org/cost-share/>. For operations outside of Ohio, we can provide cost share contacts for each state. All certified organic operations can apply for funding through their county Farm Service Agency (FSA) office, once they begin accepting applications.



## CONTACT OEFFA

**OEFFA Certification**  
41 Croswell Rd  
Columbus, OH 43214  
[www.oeffa.org](http://www.oeffa.org)

Camille Ackerman  
Quality Systems  
Coordinator  
[camille@oeffa.org](mailto:camille@oeffa.org)

Haley Behnfeldt  
Inspection Administrator  
[haley@oeffa.org](mailto:haley@oeffa.org)

Sheryn Bruff  
Farm Review Coordinator  
[sheryn@oeffa.org](mailto:sheryn@oeffa.org)

Katie Everett  
Certification Specialist  
[kathleen@oeffa.org](mailto:kathleen@oeffa.org)

Carol Goland  
Executive Director  
[cgoland@oeffa.org](mailto:cgoland@oeffa.org)

Emma Hendrickson  
Administrative Assistant  
[emma@oeffa.org](mailto:emma@oeffa.org)

Lauren Hirtle  
Food Justice Certification  
Specialist  
[Lhirtle@oeffa.org](mailto:Lhirtle@oeffa.org)

David Houston  
Certification and  
Inspection Specialist  
[david@oeffa.org](mailto:david@oeffa.org)

Joy Johnson  
Certification Specialist  
[joy@oeffa.org](mailto:joy@oeffa.org)

Shakita Kabicek  
Certification Specialist  
[shakita@oeffa.org](mailto:shakita@oeffa.org)

Jen Kindrick  
Senior Certification  
Specialist  
[jen@oeffa.org](mailto:jen@oeffa.org)

Amber Mitchell  
Administrative Coordinator  
[amber@oeffa.org](mailto:amber@oeffa.org)

McLane Nagy  
Certification Specialist  
[mclane@oeffa.org](mailto:mclane@oeffa.org)

Tanay Nestico  
Certification Specialist  
[tanay@oeffa.org](mailto:tanay@oeffa.org)

Kris Olson  
Compliance Coordinator  
[kris@oeffa.org](mailto:kris@oeffa.org)

Rowan Patton  
Database and Certification  
Specialist  
[rowan@oeffa.org](mailto:rowan@oeffa.org)

Erin Payne  
Certification Specialist  
[erin@oeffa.org](mailto:erin@oeffa.org)

Kate Pierfelice  
Handler Review  
Coordinator  
[kathryn@oeffa.org](mailto:kathryn@oeffa.org)

Sarah Pinkham  
Assistant Certification  
Manager  
[sarah@oeffa.org](mailto:sarah@oeffa.org)

Emily Romain  
Certification Specialist  
[emily@oeffa.org](mailto:emily@oeffa.org)

Alisha Schleining  
Certification Program  
Manager  
[alisha@oeffa.org](mailto:alisha@oeffa.org)

Anna Sekine  
Certification Specialist  
[anna@oeffa.org](mailto:anna@oeffa.org)

Madison Taylor  
Administrative Assistant  
[madison@oeffa.org](mailto:madison@oeffa.org)

Steve Wilson  
Training Coordinator  
[swilson@oeffa.org](mailto:swilson@oeffa.org)

**Materials Review:**  
[MaterialsReview@oeffa.org](mailto:MaterialsReview@oeffa.org)

**Sustainable Agriculture  
Educators:**

Julia Barton  
[julia@oeffa.org](mailto:julia@oeffa.org)

Eric Pawlowski  
[eric@oeffa.org](mailto:eric@oeffa.org)

All Certification Staff can be reached by phone at (614) 262-2022, by fax at (614) 421-2011, and by email at [organic@oeffa.org](mailto:organic@oeffa.org)