GREETINGS FROM OEFFA CERTIFICATION!

Greetings from OEFFA Certification! We hope the new year finds you well and in good health. Here at OEFFA, our certification staff and inspectors have been hard at work making significant progress to address the delays that we started experiencing in 2020. We have made numerous improvements to aid us in this work and are excited to share with you some changes to the certification renewal process this year. Please read this information carefully. We sincerely appreciate your patience and look forward to meeting your certification needs this year!

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE RENEWAL PROCESS

For those of you who are currently certified with OEFFA and renewing your certification for 2022, you will find that your application looks a bit different. We have made changes to the forms to reduce the paperwork that you need to complete. Your renewal application packet consists of two main sections:

1. A Renewal Report – this is a NEW form that is pre-filled with some of the information that you listed on your most recent Organic System Plan (OSP), such as contact information, fields, inputs, and/or products. You will need to review and complete the blank sections of this form but won’t have to fill out as much information from scratch!

2. An OSP for Renewing Operations – this version of the OSP is condensed and contains only the sections that you need to complete and send back to OEFFA. NOTE: Any new fields, inputs, and/or products that are not listed on your Renewal Report must be listed in this OSP.

We know that change, even if it is for the better, can be challenging at first. Please be sure to thoroughly read the Organic Certification Application Instructions for OEFFA-Certified Operations before you start filling out your paperwork. If you have any questions, please give us a call. We hope that you find these changes help reduce the paperwork burden and simplify the process for you.
DRIFTWATCH: TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT SPRAY DRIFT

DriftWatch, which is hosted by FieldWatch, is a database that lists the locations of registered organic farms and specialty crop growers. Some states and counties that perform emergency pest or disease treatment programs and pesticide applicators utilize this database to avoid spraying and take extra precaution to prevent drift around registered farms. This registry serves as another tool to help prevent drift onto your organic farm and crops!

If you haven’t already, you can register your farm in the DriftWatch registry by visiting www.DriftWatch.org. If you don’t have internet access, contact OEFFA and we can help you register. Currently DriftWatch/FieldWatch is active in the following U.S. states: Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

UPDATE ON PROPOSED RULES

Three final rules, Origin of Livestock (OoL), Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP), and Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) have all been written and are currently in the legal and USDA clearance process. We are now waiting for further updates from the NOP on when the final rules will be published.

2022 DEADLINES

PRODUCERS

Producers Renewing Certification –
The standard deadline for renewing producers is April 15th. An early bird discount is available for those that apply or renew by March 15th. New this year, the final producer renewal deadline is June 15th. Operations remain in compliance until this anniversary date, though additional fees apply after the standard deadline of April 15th. The earlier renewal deadline will help us meet your certification needs more efficiently.

New Producers Requesting Certification –
The deadline for new producer applicants that are requesting certification is March 15th. Applications from those certifying with OEFFA for the first time cannot be accepted if postmarked after this date.

HANDLERS

Handlers Renewing Certification –
Handlers who receive renewal paperwork in January must renew by March 31st and those that receive renewal notices in June must renew by September 1st to remain in compliance.

New Handlers Requesting Certification –
New handlers may be accepted year-round. Contact us to talk about your operation if you are interested in applying.
OEFFA’S 43ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

ROOTED AND RISING

Online February 12,
Dayton February 17-19, 2022
www.oeffa.org/conference2022

This year’s can’t-miss OEFFA conference will offer the best of both worlds with online and in-person learning opportunities. Whether you like the convenience of attending events online or the connections made in person, every attendee can grow when joining others committed to local food, sustainable agriculture, and a more resilient food system.

This hybrid conference offers four days of learning, sharing, and networking for organic producers and others with:

• More than 50 workshops on topics such as grazing management, cover crops, organic no-till soybeans and corn, crop insurance for organic farmers, marketing organic products, cultivating outdoor mushrooms, and more by speakers such as Jim Embry, Margaret Krome, Scott Marlow, and Kathleen Merrigan;
• Powerful keynote sessions with Mary Hendrickson and Francis Thicke on corporate power in the future of our food system and how to apply regenerative agriculture to our own farms;
• Engaging Food and Farm School classes on soil management, building a successful meat business marketing a farm, and writing an Organic System Plan;
• An in-person trade show featuring dozens of businesses, nonprofits, products, and more. Bring your questions to the Certification booth and connect with goods and services to help you succeed;
• A 2023 Farm Bill discussion, Exhibit Hall social, community conversations and networking, and an open mic night, and
• An easy-to-use app and online event platform that allows you to send messages to other attendees, create a custom schedule, play games, and more—along with instructions and support so you have your best experience!

Sliding scale rates and scholarships are available. Be a part of this inspiring community of food and farm advocates helping to build a strong and sustainable food chain!
Learn more and register at www.oeffa.org/conference2022.
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS BOARD (NOSB) FALL MEETING

In October, the NOSB held a virtual meeting that consisted of two days of public comment and three days of discussion and voting on proposals. Below are some highlights from the meeting.

Ammonia Extracts – Three separate proposals were brought to the board regarding ammonia extracts.

- The first two proposals were to add stripped ammonia and concentrated ammonia to §205.602 – non-synthetic substances prohibited for use in organic crop production. These two proposals passed.
- The third proposal was to add at §205.203(f): Nitrogen products with a C:N ratio of 3:1 or less, including those that are components of a blended fertilizer formulation, are limited to a cumulative total use of 20% of crop needs. This proposal was sent back to subcommittee for further discussion and evaluation.

Biodegradable Biobased Mulch – The board voted to change the annotation for biodegradable biobased mulch films to require that films used in organic production must biodegrade by at least 90% within two years in the soil and must be comprised of at least 80% biobased content.

Carrageenan – Carrageenan is a food additive that is used as an emulsifier and thickener and currently allowed in organic production. During the last sunset review for carrageenan, the NOSB voted to remove it from the National List, but the NOP did not implement this recommendation. The proposal at this meeting was to remove carrageenan from the National List, again, but the proposal did not receive enough votes to pass. Carrageenan remains as an approved input.

You can access more information from the meeting by visiting https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/nosb/meetings. Recommendations passed by the NOSB do not go into effect until the NOP implements updates to the organic regulations.