DEADLINE REMINDER

As a reminder, all certified operations must submit their renewal paperwork each year by the renewal deadline in order to remain in compliance.

- **June 15, 2024** is the final renewal deadline for all *producers*.
- **September 1, 2024** is the standard renewal deadline for *Group B Handlers*. The final renewal deadline is October 1, 2024.

OEFFA GOOD EARTH GUIDE

We’re thrilled to announce the relaunch of OEFFA’s beloved Good Earth Guide (GEG)! This searchable online database connects consumers to local farms and businesses. OEFFA members/certified operations can create a free profile on the GEG highlighting their products and services for anyone searching for a sustainable, local option.

Keep an eye on your mailbox for news and instructions to join the GEG later this summer!
We are pleased to announce that Khara Strum has joined OEFFA as executive director, effective May 1, 2024.

“With over two decades of leadership and conservation experience, Khara embodies the qualities necessary to propel OEFFA forward as a leader in organic certification, land stewardship, and local food advocacy,” said OEFFA Board President Sarah Paul. “By embracing Khara’s wealth of expertise, fresh perspective, and collaborative spirit, we are eager to embark on this new chapter.”

For most of her professional career, Strum has worked in conservation and agricultural land protection. She most recently served as director of the Philander Chase Conservancy, guiding the organization in its work to protect farms, woodlands, waters, and open spaces around Kenyon College. Before then, her work at both Audubon California and Point Blue Conservation Science involved managing projects, partner relationships, and programs and strategies for the organizations’ conservation goals.

“I am thrilled to be joining OEFFA as executive director,” Strum said. “I am excited to work with the staff, Board, and partners to advance organic farming and access to local food with tools that combat climate change and ensure local ecosystems and communities thrive.”

As executive director, Strum will continue building on a strategic vision to achieve OEFFA’s mission. By overseeing the organization’s operations, fundraising, program leaders, and budgets, the executive director guides OEFFA’s impactful long term work.

“We extend our deepest gratitude to our dedicated staff and the invaluable guidance of Interim Executive Director Bonnie Chavez throughout a transformative year for OEFFA,” Paul said. “The OEFFA Board reaffirms its unwavering commitment to stewarding the organization and our vibrant community of members with integrity and compassion. Together, we will carry on OEFFA’s legacy of excellence in organic and sustainable agriculture for generations to come.”
NONRETAIL CONTAINER LABELING UNDER SOE

The new regulations effective March 19, 2024, known as Strengthening Organic Enforcement, require “Nonretail containers used to ship or store certified organic agriculture products to display identification of the product as organic; and The production lot number, shipping identification, or other unique information that links the container to audit trail documentation.” [NOP 205.307] This applies to all scopes (producers and handlers) and all types of operations (split, parallel or 100% organic). What does this mean for your operation?

• Evaluate your operation and determine where nonretail containers are used to ship or store certified organic goods.
  • Nonretail containers are used to ship or store either packaged or unpackaged organic products, and may include the following: Produce boxes, totes, bulk containers, bulk bags, flexible bulk containers, harvest crates and bins; Boxes, crates, cartons, and master cases of wholesale packaged products; and Trailers, tanks, railcars, shipping containers, vessels, cargo holds, freighters, barges, grain elevators, silos, grain bins, or other methods of bulk transport or storage.
  • For storage, OEFFA is looking at any container used for long-term storage on-site. Producers that are 100% organic may note in the OSP that they do not have any non-organic crops on-site instead of labeling storage.
  • For items shipped, OEFFA is looking at containers once they leave your facility or farm site, not intra-site transport such as from the field to the storage bin. The entity (either buyer or seller) managing the transport is responsible for ensuring the requirements are met, even if they do not own the transport. Producers that sell only organic products may note this in the OSP as their own form of risk management, but buyers may still require containers to be labeled.

• Once you have identified all nonretail containers used to ship or store organic product, implement a plan to DISPLAY a unique identifier and organic status. For example, you may label a silo “Bin 1 – ORGANIC.” Also, ensure this information connects to records regarding the certified product (inventory, BOL, etc.).

• Have a template of your labeling plan available for your inspector to collect this year.

OEFFA understands that there is inconsistency in how some certifiers are enforcing this new regulation. We strive to be consistent in the organic industry and have requested certifiers come together to discuss this specific topic. If you have any questions, please contact OEFFA. We are happy to help.
TEMPORARY VARIANCES

The weather forecasts are predicting a very hot summer in the Midwest and contiguous United States in general. In anticipation of record-breaking heat and more extreme weather events, such as flooding or drought, we wanted to take a moment to provide a reminder on temporary variances. According to the organic standards at §205.290, temporary variances from certain practice requirements (§205.203 through §205.207, §205.236 through §205.240 and §205.270 through §205.272) may be established by the NOP for the following reasons:

(1) Natural disasters declared by the Secretary;
(2) Damage caused by drought, wind, flood, excessive moisture, hail, tornado, earthquake, fire, or other business interruption; and
(3) Practices used for the purpose of conducting research or trials of techniques, varieties, or ingredients used in organic production or handling.

If a temporary variance is established, the NOP will inform certifiers of the specific variance and how long it will be in effect. Certifiers can also recommend to the NOP that a temporary variance be established based on conditions they are observing or hearing from certified operations that relate to the reasons mentioned above.

If you are experiencing damage caused by extreme weather events, such as drought impacting your normal grazing season, please contact OEFFA and we can determine if a request should be made to the NOP for a temporary variance.