



Livestock and Seed Program Audit, Review, and Compliance Branch Quality System Audit Report

Applicant: Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA)
Program : National Organic Program – Initial On-site Audit
Location(s): 1616 Missouri Blvd., Jefferson City, MO 65102
Audit Date(s): June 8-9, 2004
Audit File Number: NP4160KA
Action Required: Yes
Auditor(s): Lauren Kavanaugh, Lead Auditor; Miguel Caceres, Auditor;
Alan Kohles, Observer
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AUDIT ACTIVITIES

On June 8 -9, 2004, representatives of the USDA, AMS, LS, Audit, Review, and Compliance Branch (ARC) conducted a site evaluation audit of the Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA) Organic Certification Program, Jefferson City, MO. The objective of the audit was to assess compliance to the requirements of the National Organic Program (NOP), 7 CFR Part 205. The scope of the audit included MDA's certification procedures, decisions, facilities, and the administrative and management systems. The audit also included observation of MDA's certification and inspection activities at Organic Land Management sites located in Clinton County, MO. This was an initial NOP certification inspection conducted by MDA Program Coordinator Sue Baird. Organic Land Management produces organic crops on sites located in Missouri, Nebraska, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. The site located in Clinton County, MO was previously certified by Quality Assurance International and consisted of six adjacent sites comprising 400 acres producing soybeans, field peas and yellow corn.

The opening meeting was conducted with the Program Administrator Judy Grundler, Program Coordinator Sue Baird, and MDA Organic Program inspector Joan Benjamin. The MDA audit plan and cost estimate were reviewed with the Program Administrator. The closing meeting was held in Kansas City, MO with Judy Grundler and Sue Baird. MDA is a state government that was accredited as a certifying agent by the USDA for crop, wild crop, livestock, and handling operations on April 28, 2003. MDA currently has 49 clients certified to the NOP with the majority listed as crop operations. MDA organic program procedures, policies and records were reviewed during the audit with Program Coordinator Sue Baird. The audit documentation is on record and available for review (**NP4160KA Audit Doc**).

FINDINGS

Observations made, interviews conducted, and records reviewed indicated that MDA was applying its organic certification program in accordance with the National Organic Program except as noted in the "Findings" section. There were three minor non-compliances identified during the 2004 Annual Update (**NP4154KA**). The report for the annual update had not been received by MDA prior to the on-site evaluation audit therefore there was no response to the non-compliances and they remain outstanding (**See NP4154KA**). Five minor non-compliances and one continuous improvement point observation were identified during this audit.

New Non-compliances

NP4160KA.NC1 - Minor - 205.404(a) - requires that certification decisions be based on compliance with the regulation. *The revised Missouri Department of Agriculture Organic Crops and Wild Crops Production System Plan includes the statement “Adjoining land owners/manager must be notified that you are producing organic crops”. The Certifying Agent cannot require applicants for NOP certification to notify neighbors of organic production.*

NP4160KA.NC2 - Minor Section **205.501(a)(6)** requires “A Private or governmental entity accredited as a certifying agent under this subpart must: Conduct an annual performance evaluation of all persons who review applications for certification, perform on-site inspections, review certification documents, evaluate qualifications for certification, make recommendations concerning certification, or make certification decisions and implement measures to correct any deficiencies in certification services”. *The performance evaluations were not available for review during the on-site visit. MDA had requested the performance evaluations reports from the Human Resources department, however they had not been supplied as of the date of the audit.*

NP4160KA.NC3 – Minor - Section **205.501(a)(7)** requires that “A Private or governmental entity accredited as a certifying agent under this subpart must: Have an annual program review of its certification activities conducted by the certifying agent’s staff, an outside auditor, or a consultant who has the expertise to conduct such reviews and implement measures to correct any noncompliances with the Act and the regulations in this part that are identified in the evaluation”. *The annual program review was based on the MDA Organic Program Advisory Board goals, not the organic program certification activities. Areas addressed in the report were; promoting and improving public awareness of the MDA Organic Program; monitoring the progress and providing input into policies and procedures; liaison with other sustainable agricultural organizations; assisting in development of organic educational workshops and research agendas for organic production methods; and listing the acres and number of certified operations.*

NP4160KA.NC4 – Minor - 205.405(c)(2) requires the certifying agent to “Issue a written notice of denial of certification to an applicant who fails to respond to a notification of non-compliance” *MDA had not issued a denial of certification to one applicant that had failed to respond to a notification of non-compliance within the specified time period.*

NP4160KA.NC5 – Minor - 205.201(a)(5) requires the Organic production and handling system plans to have “A description of the management practices and physical barriers established to prevent contact of organic production and handling operations and products with prohibited substances. Additionally, MDA Organic Certification Manual Organic Crop and Wild Crop Production Section E, Boundaries or Buffers Standards requires the buffer zones to be clearly defined on the farm plan map submitted with the Organic System Plans. *The buffer zones were not clearly described on the Organic System Plans nor were they designated on the maps. The buffer zones were verified and documented during the on-site inspections.*

Continuous Improvement Point (CIP)

NP4160KA.CIP1 - 205.501(a)(4) requires the certifying agent to “Use a sufficient number of adequately trained personnel, including inspectors and certification review personnel, to comply with and implement the organic certification program established under the Act and the regulations in subpart E of this part.” *The MDA Organic Program does have a sufficient number of adequately trained inspectors to comply with this requirement. However, the Program Coordinator has been performing all of the document reviews and on-site inspections. As the MDA Organic Program continues to grow and annual update*

inspections become due, it will be difficult for one person to adequately perform all of these functions without using additional inspectors to perform on-site inspections.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The audit team recommends that the Missouri Department of Agriculture Organic Program retain accreditation with normal surveillance audits as required by the National Organic Program. This recommendation is conditional on MDA providing corrective actions to the findings listed in this report.