

Principles of Organic Production and Handling¹

Submitted by NOSB Accreditation Committee, 3/7/01

- 1.1. Organic agriculture is an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It emphasizes the use of management practices in preference to the use of off-farm inputs, taking into account that regional conditions require locally adapted systems. These goals are met, where possible, through the use of cultural, biological, and mechanical methods as opposed to using synthetic materials to fulfill specific functions within the system.²
- 1.2. Organic products are identified under specific and precise ecologically sound production and handling standards that are intrinsic to the identification and labeling of such products.
- 1.3. Certification is a regulatory system of trust which allows consumers to identify and reward operators who meet organic standards. Certification requires informed efforts on the parts of producers and handlers, and careful vigilance with consistent, transparent decision making on the parts of certifying agents.
- 1.4. Organic production systems strive to achieve agro-ecosystems that are ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable.
- 1.5. Organic standards require that each certified organic operator must complete and submit for approval by a certifying agent, an organic plan detailing the management of the organic crop, livestock, wild harvest, processing, or handling system. The organic plan outlines the management practices and inputs that will be used by the operation to comply with organic standards.
- 1.6. An organic production system is designed to:
 - 1.6.1. Maximize soil biological activity;
 - 1.6.2. Maintain long-term fertility;
 - 1.6.3. Minimize erosion;
 - 1.6.4. Maintain or enhance the genetic and biological diversity of the production system and its surroundings;
 - 1.6.5. Provide livestock with optimal living conditions for health and well being;
 - 1.6.6. Recycle materials of plant and animal origin in order to return nutrients to the land, thus minimizing the use of non-renewable resources;
 - 1.6.7. Promote the environmentally responsible use of soil, water, and air;
 - 1.6.8. Minimize agricultural pollution; and
 - 1.6.9. Become established on an existing farm or field through a period of conversion³ during which an organic system is implemented.

¹ *American Organic Standards*, Organic Trade Association, October 20, 1999.

² *Green Book*, condensed from NOSB definition of "organic", page 199.

³ "transition"

- 1.7. Organic handling practices are based on the following principles:
 - 1.7.1. Organic processors and handlers must implement organic good manufacturing and handling practices in order to maintain the integrity of organic products through all stages of processing, transport, and storage;
 - 1.7.2. Organic products must not be commingled with non-organic products, except when combining organic and non-organic ingredients in finished products which contain less than 100% organic ingredients;
 - 1.7.3. Organic products must not come in contact with prohibited materials;
 - 1.7.4. Proper records must be kept to verify that the integrity of organic products is maintained;
 - 1.7.5. Organic products should be handled with emphasis on careful processing methods with a goal of maintaining the integrity and quality of the products; and
 - 1.7.6. Ecologically sound management practices should be a goal of organic handling operations. Efforts should be made to reduce packaging, use recycled materials, and reduce solid, liquid, and airborne emissions produced by handling operations.
- 1.8. Organic production and handling operations must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and address food safety concerns adequately.
- 1.9. Organic certification, production, and handling systems serve to educate consumers regarding the source, quality, and content of organic foods and products. Product labels must be truthful regarding product names, claims, and content.
- 1.10. Genetic engineering is designed to control nature at the molecular level, with unforeseen consequences. As such, it is not compatible with the principles of organic agriculture (either the production, processing, or handling). Genetically engineered/modified organisms (GEO/GMO's) and products produced by or through the use of genetic engineering are prohibited.
- 1.11. Organic standards do not allow the use of prohibited materials such as synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and genetically engineered organisms, but cannot ensure that organic products are completely free of residues or contaminants due to background levels of environmental pollutants.