



OEFFA

41 Croswell Rd. Columbus, Ohio 43214

Phone: (614) 262-2022 ♦ Fax: (614) 421-2011 ♦ organic@oeffa.org

Positives and Pitfalls of Organic Inspector Training for Plain Community Members

Two Amish participants took part in the International Organic Inspector Association (IOIA) Basic Crop Training that took place in October 2014. Based on the participants' feedback, and the insight of Margaret Scoles, IOIA Executive director who led the training, we drafted the following takeaways:

- **Overall Positive Feedback from Two Individuals to attend IOIA Crop Inspector Training in October 2014.**
 - Both trainees stated that the course went well and that they felt it was a good use of their time.
 - Despite the tight timeline, they were able to meet deadlines and complete pre-course webinars.
 - One trainee was pleasantly surprised at the intensity of the course.
 - Both felt good information was learned and, only weeks after the training, each had already had the opportunity to apply it in his own community.
 - One trainee was immediately interested in conducting an apprenticeship to begin inspecting.
- **Cultural Differences to Keep in Mind:**
 - **Timing of Trainings and Travel:** Most IOIA trainings begin early on Monday mornings. Plain participants needed to remain at home for the duration of Sunday because Sunday is the Sabbath. They chose to travel very early Monday morning (4a.m.) to arrive on time for the training, rather than to travel on Sunday and miss spending that day with their families.
 - **Expectations:** Although we made efforts to prepare Plain trainees for the training, some details were missed and led to confusion. For example, Plain trainees thought they were responsible for arranging their own transportation to IOIA inspection field trips, though this transportation was included in as part of the cost and organized by the trainers.
- **Technology:**
 - Both participants completed the course without the use of a computer, hand writing all assignments, reports, and the final exam. This takes more time than typing, though both trainees completed all written assignments, reports, and exams on-time.
 - The pre-course assignment needed to be completed online, prior to the training. One of the two Plain participants had difficulty with the technology, and some Plain participants might not be able to use the internet at all, depending on the rules of individual church groups.
 - It is common for photographs to be taken by IOIA trainers on the fieldtrip portion of the training, as well as a group photo documenting the training. Plain people have different beliefs regarding photographs and whether or not to appear in them. IOIA trainers were aware of this difference and after remembering, made an effort to alert trainees of photographs and give them the opportunity to opt out.