



United States  
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Agriculture

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Service

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**September 10, 2015**

**TO:** USDA-Accredited Certifying Agents

**FROM:** Miles McEvoy  
Deputy Administrator, National Organic Program (NOP)

**SUBJECT:** Organic INTEGRITY Database Launch (September 2015)

The National Organic Program (NOP) is finalizing the first release of the Organic INTEGRITY Database, the modernized list of certified operations. The purpose of this memo is to:

- Outline next steps and the timeline for transitioning to the new system
- Invite you to a September 15 training session for certifiers on INTEGRITY
- Share our plans for supporting your transition

Moving forward, your use of INTEGRITY will be in lieu of the previous annual certified operations data call.

### **The INTEGRITY Launch Timeline**

Last Fall, we invited certifiers to participate in a user group to provide input to the NOP as we developed a modernized database of certified operations; approximately 20 certifiers have been actively participating, and their feedback has been critical to developing INTEGRITY.

We will be accepting your new and updated lists of certified operations through INTEGRITY starting on September 30, 2015. The system will be built upon a new Excel template for data collection; you will have the option of:

- Downloading a pre-populated version of the new template with your 2014 data; you can use this as a foundation to develop your 2015 list and then upload it into the system.
- Starting with a blank new template to use to populate your data and upload it.
- Using INTEGRITY's user interface to enter data directly into the system through a web-based form.

Initiating these activities will require at least one user in your organization to register in INTEGRITY; you may have multiple system users if you wish. Once INTEGRITY has launched and you are registered, you will be able to:

- Immediately mark certified operations as surrendered, suspended, or revoked
- Add new certifier operations to your list at any time during the year
- Change other information about your list of operations at any time

Our September 30, 2015 launch will give you 3 full months to learn how to use the new system and submit at least one round of data before the annual regulatory submission date of January 2, 2016. Your first submittal is part of the 2016 data submittal requirement. You will be asked to attest to the completion of your 2015 data submission on January 2, 2016. After this submittal, we expect the system will be easy enough to use that you will be able to submit data more frequently.

### **Training Session Information**

We strongly encourage you to join us for a webinar training session on September 15, 2015 from 3:00 to 4:00 PM Eastern time (Washington DC/New York City).

Step 1: Dial In by Phone:

Toll-Free (U.S. & Canada): 866.740.1260

Access Code: 7202000

Step 2: Also Access the Web:

Meeting URL: <http://www.readytalk.com>

On the left side of the screen, enter Participant Access Code: 7202000

During the training, we will review the new template, review the new product category/item taxonomy, and describe how to register in the system. The webinar will be recorded.

### **Other Opportunities to Learn About INTEGRITY**

To talk with the NOP in person about the system, our Lead Business/System Analyst Stacy Swartwood will be at the NOP booth in the Natural Products Expo East exhibit hall in Baltimore, MD on September 17 and 18 from 10 am to 6 pm. She will be happy to answer your questions and walk through the template with you.

We will be convening user groups for certifiers with similar existing certification systems (Excel, Access, FileMaker Pro, and others) to help you plan the best path for extracting data from your existing system and providing it to us. If you would like to join, please send an email to [stacy.swartwood@ams.usda.gov](mailto:stacy.swartwood@ams.usda.gov) indicating what type of system you have.

INTEGRITY represents a significant advancement in our ongoing work to ensure organic integrity. High quality data submitted on a regular basis by certifiers will allow us to deter fraud by providing accurate and more timely information about operations certified to use the USDA organic seal. A modernized system with up-to-date data will also enable supply chain connections between buyers and sellers of organic goods, support international trading partner data needs, and strengthen NOP's oversight capabilities.

Thank you for your ongoing work to support organic integrity, and for your upcoming work to support the launch of INTEGRITY.

Attachments: Excel Reporting Template; Summary of August 4, 2015 webinar about INTEGRITY