Organic Integrity Database Update

February 10, 2015
USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
National Organic Program
The NOP is responsible for the integrity of the USDA organic seal. The 2014 Farm Bill provided $5-million funding for technology investments for the program.

The Organic Integrity Database will be a modernized certified organic operations database that will:

- Contain up-to-date and accurate information, deterring fraud
- Increase supply chain transparency
- Promote market visibility for organic operations
Business Case for Modernized System

• Deter fraud by providing updated and accurate information about all certified operations
• Reduce the hundreds of phone calls currently made to confirm certification status
• Enable market research and supply chain connections between buyers and sellers
• Support international verification of operator status to support import/export certificates
• Establish technology connections with certifiers to provide more accurate and timely data
User and Beneficiaries: Overview

**Certifiers**
- Primary data providers and consumers
- Provide and change data in the system
- Use to check on operation status

**NOP**
- Primary data provider and consumer
- Use for compliance and enforcement activities, research, and reporting

**Trade, Industry, Public**
- Data consumers of data to support market analysis, check the certification status of operators, and find partners
Key Starting Point Capabilities

- Key Operator Information
- Certification Changes
- Product Taxonomy
- Operation Mapping
- Data Uploads and Updates
- Search and Reporting
- Certificate Module
- Permissions Management
Key Starting Point Capabilities

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Key Operator Information

- All operators that produce, handle, label, sell, represent organic product (except exempt/excluded) are to be certified and listed in the database.
- We will continue to collect all variables requested for the annual list of certified operations.
- We may propose limited new fields based on certifier and industry feedback – there will be a transition period for any new fields.

**Key database considerations:**
- Initial data set will be 2014 list you submitted.
- We will implement address validation to confirm that locations exist (mailing and physical).
Database Will Capture Scopes

• Database will indicate scope(s) for each operation:
  – Crops
  – Wild crops
  – Livestock
  – Handling
  – Aquaculture (future)
  – Mushrooms (future)
  – Pet food (future)
Key Starting Point Capabilities

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Certification Changes Over Time

• Being able to search on operator history would save time for certifiers in the certification process, and serve as a check on operator reporting.

• **Key data and design considerations:**
  – In sending data to NOP, should we have certifiers include operators that withdrew before getting a certificate (but perhaps after getting an NONC)? Many certifiers say YES.
  – How do we handle operations that switch certifiers? (Likely a new certification record in the system, not a transfer between certifiers)
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Towards a Common Product Taxonomy

**Current State**
- Open free text fields
- Hard to search

**Transition Plan**
- Text analytics will help build scope-driven taxonomy based on existing data
- We will align taxonomy with NASS and trade code lists

**End State**
- Standard Taxonomy for certifier adoption

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Key Starting Point Capabilities

Key Operator Information
Certification Changes
Product Taxonomy
Operation Mapping
Data Uploads and Updates
Search and Reporting
Certificate Module
Permissions Management
Address Validation
Geocoding Tool
Easy Link to Map

Accurate Address
Data Is Key!
Key Starting Point Capabilities

Key Operator Information
Certification Changes
Product Taxonomy
Operation Mapping
Data Uploads and Updates
Search and Reporting
Certificate Module
Permissions Management
Data Uploads and Updates

• 3 likely options to feed new and updated data to NOP:
  – Direct user data entry
  – Excel file uploads
  – Web services/API calls

• We will work closely with certifiers to understand your existing tools, so we can facilitate data transmittals as smoothly as possible.
Key Starting Point Capabilities

- Key Operator Information
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- Product Taxonomy
- Operation Mapping
- Data Uploads and Updates
- Search and Reporting
- Certificate Module
- Permissions Management
Search and Reporting (Set and Ad Hoc)

• **For Public**
  – Search to confirm operator’s certification
  – Searches for specific product providers
  – Search for operations meeting certain criteria in a State or Zip Code
  – Pre-built reports on operations per State or other common requests.

• **For Certifiers**
  – Search for same elements that public wants
  – **AND/OR**
  – Searches to research operator history (not on public list)
  – Searches for operations that have surrendered or withdrawn (not on public list)
Key Starting Point Capabilities

- Key Operator Information
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- Search and Reporting
- Certificate Module
- Permissions Management
Optional Certificate Module

• **Goal:** Move to a shared certificate format that facilitates online verification of authenticity

• **Initial Feedback from Certifiers:**
  – Some would like the option if the system can generate the certificates (generally small certifiers using Word templates)
  – Some certifiers have significant concerns given diversity and number of certificates for a single operation.
  – There appears to be generalized support for a federated format that certifiers could build into their own systems....
Key Starting Point Capabilities

Key Operator Information
Certification Changes
Product Taxonomy
Operation Mapping
Data Uploads and Updates
Search and Reporting
Certificate Module
Permissions Management
## Permissions Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operator Information</th>
<th>Certifier A</th>
<th>Certifier B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operator Name</td>
<td>Operator 1</td>
<td>Operator 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Operator 2</td>
<td>Operator 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Information</td>
<td>Operator 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification Scope</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER FIELDS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Operator Information**
- **Certifier A**:
  - Operator 1: General Information About All Certified Operations Viewable by Public, Certifiers, NOP/Appeals
  - Operator 2: Grower Group Count
  - Operator 3: Certification History

**Certifier B**:
- Operator 4: Grower Group Count
- Operator 5: Certification History

**Protected Information**
- About All Certified Operations Viewable by NOP/Appeals and the Certifier Responsible for Operation

**Key Points**
- Only Certifier B and NOP can modify records for Certifier B operations.
- Certifiers must have multiple options for adding new operators and updating data within operator records:
  1. Hand Entry
  2. Batch Updates
  3. Real-Time Mirroring

Examples:
- Change operator from “Certified” to “Suspended;”
- Add “corn” to certified products list;
- Change contact name.
Project Priorities

- **Early User Engagement**
  - Agile software model

- **Certification Knowledge**
  - Team must understand organic

- **Sustainable Operations**
  - Design must minimize future costs

- **September 2015**
  - Initial system delivery

- **Play Well With Others**
  - We are not replacing existing systems you like and use!
Project Work To Date

• Needs Assessment and Business Requirements Document was posted in 2013; Funding was provided in the 2014 Farm Bill.

• 2014 Activities:
  – Hired a full-time IT project manager
  – Convened a certifier user group (18 certifiers)
  – Met with interested vendors
  – Developed a list of key priorities and timeline
  – Posted a “Request for Information” to determine capabilities and interest – Over 40 responses
  – Developed contracting strategy
We Plan to Have Two Companies Support Development

- Business Requirements and Technical Advisory Services
  - Intact

- Technology Development
  - Harmonia
February 2015
Contracting;
Kickoff;
Certifier User Group Meeting

Early March 2015
User stories and requirements;
Certifier User Group Meetings

Early May 2015
Development “Sprints”
Certifier User Group Feedback

September 2015
Initial system deployment
What We Need from Certifiers

• Participate in the Certifier User Group! Jennifer.Tucker@ams.usda.gov

• As we share updates and key proposed decisions/directions, send us your feedback and questions.

• Prepare for new process roll-out this Summer/Fall.