

Baystate Organic Certifiers

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Enclosed is the application packet for the Baystate Organic Certification Program. Please familiarize yourself with the National Organic Standards, and with Baystate's policies and procedures, prior to filling out the application forms. The Standards may be accessed on the Baystate or National Organic Program websites. Both the Standards and Baystate's Policies and Procedures are combined into our Program Manual which is accessible on our website. If you apply for certification, you will be sent a copy of the Program Manual. Becoming familiar with the National Organic Standards, and Baystate's policies and procedures, will help answer many of the questions you are sure to have. The completed application packet including attachments constitutes an Organic System Plan. You only need to submit the entire plan once. After that growers renewing their certification will submit a much shorter update plan, and will only have to submit maps and other documentation for new fields. An electronic version of these forms is available. Email me if you want these sent to you. The electronic forms are available for download at www.baystateorganic.org.

New applicants can apply for certification at any time. However, we encourage you to apply for any one of the three spring application deadlines. There are three different deadlines for application: February 15th, March 15th, and June 15th. These dates refer to the postmark of your application. These deadlines correspond to notification dates for certification decisions. Applications received before February 15th will receive their certification decision by May 1st. Applications received before March 15th will receive their certification decision by June 1st. Applications received before June 15th will receive their certification decision by August 15th. Applications received outside of these deadlines will receive a certification decision after their organic certification inspection has been completed. This process can be expedited to a matter of a week or two for operations that are prepared for inspection and certification. If you require expedited certification, call me as soon as possible in the application process, so I can arrange to have an inspector ready to inspect your operation. We have included a checklist for filling out the application packet. Following this checklist will guarantee that your application packet is complete when you submit it. All business related information on the application forms will be kept strictly confidential. If you have any questions about the application forms, or whether specific questions apply to your operation, call me and I will do my best to answer your questions. Some applicants find filling out the paperwork overwhelming. Though Baystate Organic Certifiers is prohibited from consulting with our clients, you can set up a telephone conference where we can answer all of your questions about the application forms.

Once your application has been received, you will be notified of its receipt and whether it is complete. If the application is incomplete, you will be given a list of missing paperwork needed to make it complete. Your application will then be technically reviewed to make sure your operation qualifies for certification. Once this review is complete, an inspector will inspect all aspects of your operation. Expect to spend two to four hours with the inspector. Once the initial inspection report is filed our staff will review the report and decide if your operation meets the certification standards. If there are any issues or noncompliances you will be given a chance to correct them. Organic Certification is valid for one year and must be renewed annually.

Should you disagree with Baystate Organic Certifier's decision concerning your operation, you may appeal that decision according to the process detailed in the Standards.

The National List of allowed organic inputs that is in the Program Manual does not have a list of brand name products you can use. Once a year we will send you a list of materials compiled by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) that are approved for organic production. OMRI publishes both a generic list of approved materials and a list of approved brand name materials, and you may use these lists as guidance documents for determining if a product may be used on your organic crops. You are not limited to the products on the OMRI list, however, if you choose to use a product that is not on the OMRI list you must prove that it is allowed under the regulations of the National Organic Program. We also publish a list of local compost and potting soil producers, and a list of livestock products that meet the requirements of the National List. These lists may also be used as guidance documents. The lists can be accessed at www.baystateorganic.org. All products on the NOFA Bulk Order have been reviewed and approved.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me.

Attached to this letter are some clarifications about Off Farm Inputs, and compost. Please read this information before filling out your application.

Sincerely,

Don Franczyk
Executive Director