

Canadian Organic Standards Update* – April 2008

Overall

Labeling requirements will be in the revised Regulation and all references to labeling in the standard have been removed. Old Section 11 is now Section 10 and was thoroughly reviewed and outlines the Requirements for Adding to or Amending the PSL. Extensive revisions were made to the Permitted Substance List (PSL) 32:311 and its various tables and categories. **IMPORTANT - the changes listed here are not absolute until ratified by ballot. The results of this ballot may not be known until Dec 08.**

In the Crop Principles (32.310)

The definition of soil was adjusted and the prohibition against hydroponics and aeroponics was clarified. Discussed changes in manure source requirements, but no final decisions have yet been reached as more research is needed to build consensus.

In the Crop PSL (32.311)

- Latex paint was removed.
- Synthetic pheromones for insect lures were added.
- Only certain types of formulants approved by PMRA will be acceptable as components of pest control products.
- Compost listing is being wordsmithed to add clarification.

In the Livestock Principles (32.310)

When organic feed might be temporarily unavailable in the event of a local, farm scale catastrophe like a fire, transitional feed & then non organic feed can be used for less than a ten day period. Given that some veterinary drugs necessary for health management (e.g. anti-inflammatories, corticosteroids) are not on our PSL, a 14 day withdrawal period or double the label requirement withdrawal period, whichever is longer, was created before products from treated animals can be considered organic. Reference to antibiotic free vaccines has been removed as all vaccines now contain antibiotics in micro amounts. Only hutches with access to an enclosed yard or run are now allowed for dairy calves. Cloned farm animals and their descendants are prohibited which requires a producer to know the lineage of any non-organic animal brought into organic production. Force feeding of ducks and geese is prohibited. The prohibition against keeping poultry in cages was clarified to specify battery or row cages in layer barns. Following a national poll of organic dairy farmers the milk withdrawal period following emergency antibiotic intervention was increased from 14 to 30 days. Stocking densities for turkeys and rabbits were updated for both indoor and outdoor areas. Keeping rabbits in cages is not permitted. Section 6.1.3 was amended to include a requirement that 30% of the total forage for mature ruminants must come from grazing.

In the Livestock PSL (32.311)

- Remove the reference to requiring Livestock Health Inputs are registered with the Veterinary Drug Directorate (VDD). Reason this was done is the VDD has not yet implemented a method for approval of products needed for organic use such as homeopathic and related natural animal health remedies like tinctures, which are not registered as veterinary drugs.
- The oxytocin annotation was clarified to affirm slaughter stock will retain their organic status following a withdrawal period (14 days).
- Milk replacer must be from organic sources unless it is not commercially available and then only for emergency use and only without antibiotics and animal by-products.
- Chlorhexidine teat dips are allowed only as a post milking cleaner and then only when other teat dips have been shown to have lost effectiveness.

The Emergency Pest or Disease Principles (32.310)

Paragraph 9.1.2 amended to include an informative note urging operators to contact their certifiers in the event of governmental applications of any prohibited substances.

In the Processing Principles (32.310)

- For organic products (95% and above): up to 5% of non-organic agricultural ingredients and non-organic processing aids (if not commercially available in organic form) are allowed. If non-organic agricultural processing aids are used they must be listed in table 6.6 of the PSL. Non-organic agricultural ingredients and processing aids must be non-GEO, non-irradiated and from non-cloned stock.
- Clarifying revision for cleaning in a food processing system. Some cleaners can be used without a mandatory intervening event to clean, disinfect or sanitize organic food or food-contact surfaces, provided that the origin and use are consistent with the annotation for that substance, while other cleaners need to be removed from food contact surfaces prior to organic production.
- Additionally pest control protocols were also previously revised and are out to vote on the second ballot. The revision has a tiered approach making it critical for the operator to ensure no pest control substances come into contact with organic products. If necessary pest control products not listed on the PSL can be used on the exterior of a facility.

In the Processing PSL (32.311)

- Cellulose has been added as a filtering agent.
- Calcium hydroxide (lime) has been added as a clarifier (processing aid)
- Calcium chloride was authorized for use in milk products, fat products, fruits and vegetables, soybean products.
- Egg whites as clarifiers now have to be organic.
- Non-synthetic acetic acid may come in contact with food and plants, both non-synthetic and synthetic acetic acid can be used on equipment, and does not need to be rinsed.
- Vinegar non organic and organic can be used on food surfaces.
- Non-synthetic and synthetic ethyl & isopropyl alcohol can be used on equipment, and does not need to be rinsed.

Next Steps

The second ballot is due shortly (mainly administrative changes, with very little impact on the ground) and there will be a third ballot in response to the amendments listed above. There may also be a fourth ballot.

A published version of the standard with amendments from the ballot process may be available between December 08 and March of 09. A Stream of Commerce Policy is being negotiated between the Canadian Organic Office (COO) of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the Organic Federation of Canada (OFC) to determine how our sector shall proceed with implementation of the regulation (Planned for December 08). Stay tune for more news.

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*Recognition must be given to Janine Gibson's for her notes covering the Ninth Meeting of the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) Committee on Organic Agriculture in Gatineau Quebec March 31st to April 2nd, 2008