



The ACA Guidewire

Newsletter of the Accredited Certifiers Association, Inc.

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April 2006

News from State College, PA

ACA Annual Meeting Report

Following a great meal of local and organic foods, ending with a fantastic crème brulle dessert and great conversations, the ACA held it's annual meeting. ACA members as well as our non-member guests enjoyed the food and discussions.

During the business portion of the evening, reports were presented regarding our past activities, financial reports, and our bylaws were adopted.

The following ACA members were elected to our first official Board of Directors:

Baystate Organic Certifiers	Don Franczyk
Midwest Organic Services Association	Bonnie Wideman
New Mexico Organic Commodity Comm.	Brett Bakker
Organic Certifiers Inc.	Susan Siple
Oregon Tilth	Kristy Korb
Pennsylvania Certified Organic	Leslie Zuck
Quality Certification Services	Jonathan Austin

The Board of Directors will be meeting soon to select the officers of the ACA and officially adopt our proposed policies.

Much of our meeting focused on services ACA will offer to members, and ways to increase membership. In our discussions at the meeting, and throughout the week,

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certifiers emphasized the need to present consistent interpretations to clients and to the NOP. Our current fee structure was also discussed. Some non-member certifiers felt that they are not sure what they will be receiving for these funds, and thus were reluctant to join. It was agreed that since we are a start up group it has been difficult to demonstrate significant benefits to date. Moving forward with our activities, and demonstrating the benefits will encourage additional members. In conjunction with this, the dues structure was discussed briefly, as well as instituting additional membership categories. Our Board will address these topics more fully, with new proposals sent to the membership.

One task that those attending were asked to do was to identify priority issues (1st, 2nd & 3rd priorities) where consensus/clarification is most needed. These issue areas will be a starting point for our work.

Many thanks to the staff of **Pennsylvania Certified Organic** in organizing the dinner for our attendees. A special thank you to all the farmers and other companies that donated food for our dinner, and to the chef at the Hilton Garden Inn for the preparation of the wonderful food. The chef at the Hilton has been working with local producers for the past year to feature organic specials at the Hilton Restaurant. In his brief remarks to our meeting the chef highlighted the importance of freshness and taste in meal preparation, thus his efforts to source local produce (the Hilton has 6 shares in a local organic CSA). Staff training in the importance of sourcing the freshest and best

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food has also been a part of his job. The quality of our meal was a testament to his philosophy. Complete minutes of our meeting will be sent to all members shortly.

ACA Website

www.AccreditedCertifiers.org

The ACA Website will be operational very soon. Our website will:

- highlight the mission and work of ACA
- provide contact information for our members
- provide contact information for the ACA Board of Directors & Staff
- offer a list of resources for certifiers
- provide a calendar of events of interest to certifiers
- provide a printout membership form to join ACA
- house copies of the past issues of the **ACA Guidewire**

Our site will be updated frequently and new services will be provided as the need is determined. Suggestions for additions to our website are welcome.

ACA Meeting at All Things Organic, May 7th

Certifiers attending the All Things Organic Show will have an opportunity to meet on **Sunday, May 7, from 12:30 – 2:30, in room # S503a.** The ACA will host an informal meeting in order to discuss our current activities, and solicit ideas for future tasks for ACA.

Welcome Rejoining Members

Thank you to the following renewing members who are supporting the work of ACA:

- American Food Safety Institute, Intl.
- Baystate Organic Certifiers
- Georgia Crop Improvement Association
- New Mexico Organic Commodity Commission



National Organic Standards Board Meeting, State College, PA

The **National Organic Standards Board Meeting**, April 18-20, began with an orientation session for new Board members. Primary agenda items were: the Pasture Symposium; recognition of retiring NOSB members, aquaculture working group report; pet food task force report; consideration of deferred sunset materials, committee work plans and public comment on NOSB agenda items.

The **Pasture Symposium**, hosted by the National Organic Program, provided an opportunity for the presentation of specific information pertaining to the current pasture requirements of the National Organic Program and the requirements contained in the Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for pasture. Four panels – industry experts, a farmer panel, a certifier panel and a consumer panel – provided very detailed information regarding the benefits of pasture on the animal and for consumer perception of organic dairy production. The ability of farmers to meet the proposed requirements, the drawbacks of requiring specific numerical requirements and the difficulty some farmers in arid sections of

the country will have in meeting these requirements were also discussed.

The NOSB Members participated in discussion with the panel members. Direct audience participation was not permitted; written questions were allowed. Many in the audience were dairy farmers from all over the US.

One very critical point that was emphasized **many** times throughout all of the meetings during the week was the fact that enforcement of the livestock pasture requirement is not being done in a consistent manner by certifiers. It was stated on several occasions that confinement of dairy livestock is being permitted in an organic production system.

Discussions by dairy producer groups throughout the US were held prior to the symposium, and there is agreement among many dairy farmers that the requirements proposed in the ANPR can be met by farmers in all parts of the US. Several farmers from more arid regions of the US did voice their concern that their farms would not be able to meet the specific requirements for dry matter intake and days of pasture requirements. Concern was expressed regarding the use of specific numerical requirements in legislative regulations. It was felt that this may result in the suspension of farmers who cannot meet the exact numbers specified. Many felt that the intent of operators was more critical than meeting a specific numerical requirement.

The “symposium” concept was a new one for the NOP, and based upon comments from the audience, a very welcome form of presenting information to the NOP. Information presented at the symposium, along with public comments, will be utilized by the NOP in determining the requirements

of the actual Proposed Rule for clarification of the NOP pasture requirements.

The business portion of the NOSB meeting began with recognition of retiring board members and the **NOP Program Report**. Mark Bradley, Association Deputy Administrator, noted the new staff additions, including J.D. Melvin, Acting Accreditation Manager; and Valerie Frances, Executive Director for the NOSB. Arthur Neal will be passing some of his duties with the Board to Valerie, and will be taking on some responsibilities associated with working with CODEX issues. Bradley noted that the Harvey lawsuit NOP Rulemaking will be published soon; format changes to the NOP website will be completed soon making the site more user friendly; NOP will be posting the compliance actions on the website once the process appeal process is complete. Actions regarding certifiers will also be posted. When asked about the docket for livestock materials, Bradley indicated this will be available soon. He also noted they are working on the federal notice for paracetic acid and activated carbon.

Many commentors signed up for the **Public Comment** sessions. NOSB indicated they had received requests totaling 6.5 hours of testimony. While comments were to be limited to NOSB agenda items, with the large contingent of dairy farmers present, many comments focused on the Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Pasture Requirements and other dairy issues. As comments on the ANPR are due June 12, 2006, many indicated that since this was the only public comment session available in the time frame, their comments were necessary. Again, there were many comments regarding the inconsistent enforcement of the current pasture requirements by certifiers. NOP was asked numerous times how this could be, and was also asked to

address this problem. Many dairy farmers also commented about the continual transition of non-organic animals into the organic dairy. Several indicated adequate numbers of organic cattle are available – and due to lack of sales they are currently being sold on the conventional markets.

There were several comments regarding the correction of current annotations on National List items during the sunset process. The NOP noted that this is not part of the sunset process, and that anyone may petition for a change in an annotation at any time.

Comments were put forth regarding the lack of consumer input into the Pasture Symposium. The consumer portion of the panel discussions included a retailer and a synopsis of a survey, commissioned by NOP (will be posted on NOP website), provided by a marketing specialist. No consumer organizations were asked to participate in the symposium.

The 2nd day of the NOSB Meeting ran from 9:00 am until 9:15 p.m., with only minimal breaks. Many commentators expressed thanks to the NOSB members for their dedication and work. This session certainly demonstrated their dedication.

NOSB Presentation & Discussion on Deferred Sunset Materials Action Items

On Thursday, the Committees reviewed their recommendations in the morning and received additional public comments in the afternoon. Following the public comment the Committees voted on their recommendations for the deferred sunset materials. A summary of the votes follows (courtesy of Lynn Coody & Emily Brown Rosen).

Crops Committee

- Chlorine materials – recommends renewal
 - Calcium hypochlorite
 - Chlorine dioxide
 - Sodium hypochlorite
- Horticultural Oils – recommends renewal
- Hydrated Lime – recommends renewal
- Hydrogen Peroxide – recommends renewal
- Streptomycin and Terramycin – recommends renewal
- Tetramycin – recommends renewal
- Aquatic Plant Extracts – recommends renewal
- Humic Acids – recommends renewal
- Lignin sulfonate – recommends renewal
- Sodium silicate – recommends renewal

Livestock Committee

- Non-organic milk replacers – recommended removal from National List
- Hydrated Lime – recommends renewal
- Chlorine materials – recommends renewal
 - Calcium hypochlorite
 - Chlorine dioxide
 - Sodium hypochlorite
- Oxytocin – recommends renewal
- Ivermectin – recommends renewal

Handling Committee

- Colors – recommends moving colors from “renewal” to “deferred”; asked for public to petition for the types of colors that are needed. These items were never considered by NOSB and a TAP review was not conducted.
- Flavors – recommends renewal
- Chlorine materials – recommends renewal
 - Calcium hypochlorite
 - Chlorine dioxide
 - Sodium hypochlorite
- Bleached lecithin – does not recommend renewal; will be removed from National List
- Unbleached lecithin – recommends renewal

NOP Certifier Training

There was a good turnout of certification agencies for the NOP training. The training was conducted by Mark Bradley. He emphasized that the trainings which have been held in various parts of the country have been identical in content. Mark also indicated that this type of training will be held every year in various locations.

Accreditation Renewal – One year prior to accreditation renewal NOP will send out a renewal notice. Applications are due 6 months prior to expiration. As soon as applications are received, on-site visits will begin.

ISO and NOP audits may be combined. NOP audit checklist will be revised to include ISO 17011 – updated version of ISO 61. Audit fees will be \$108.00 per hour.

NOP will be reviewing the operation of chapters, and there will also be an emphasis on the education, training and experience of certification agency staff. Education needs to be relevant to the field of study; training programs, especially in house training, needs to be documented in order to be considered; experience should be relevant to the type of work being done. These requirements apply to all staff in each area of accreditation.

The NOP is suggesting certifiers submit a qualification matrix for all staff. A sample is below:

	Education	Training	Experience
Joe Smith Cert. Dir.			
Bob Smith Reviewer			
Don Jones Crops Insp.			
Linda Jones Livestock Insp.			
Tom Tully Handling Insp.			

Bradley suggested a summary such as above will expedite the desk audit and save money.

Accreditation will be granted or denied for each area (livestock, crops, handling, wild crops) of accreditation. Thus, it is possible to have certifiers denied accreditation for areas in which they were previously approved. If accreditation is denied certifiers will be able to appeal the decision. Certifiers may reapply for area that was denied; the NOP will only audit the area reapplied for.

NOP noted that they will begin posting names of clients who have been suspended or had certification revoked.

It was also noted that certifiers are not required to accept product review decisions of other certifiers, since these are not certification decisions.

Several case studies were presented to demonstrate conflict of interest, present various labeling issues, process used when prohibited substance is found, etc.

Join the ACA in
Chicago at the
ALL Things Organic Show

Sunday, May 7, 2006

12:30 to 2:30

Room S 503A

Update on ACA Activities
What are your top priority issues?
What are your training needs?