



The ACA Guidewire

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Upcoming ACA Events

General Discussion Session

November 28, 2007 at the NOSB Meeting, Holiday Inn National Airport Hotel, Washington DC

Certifiers attending the NOSB Meeting are invited to join us from 5:30 - 7 pm on Wednesday, November 28, for an informal discussion session regarding events happening at the NOSB meeting and whether they might require public comments. We are also open to discussing other topics of interest, including thoughts on potential activities for ACA in the coming year. We will meet in the Commonwealth Board Room. There will be light refreshments available.

All are welcome - so join us!



ACA Annual Meeting & Dinner

January 14, 2008, The Patron Restaurant, Louisville, KY

Join other ACA members for a meal of local and organic foods followed by our annual business meeting. We have reserved *The Patron Restaurant* for our dinner and meeting, so join us at this distinctive local restaurant. Dinner reservations are required by December 21, 2007 - see *Training Agenda / Registration* form. Annual meeting will begin at 8 pm. There is no charge to attend the Annual meeting.

ACA / NASOP Professional Development Training

January 14 - 16, 2008, Galt House Hotel, Louisville, KY

Join us for a great program, good speakers and lots of discussions. Our first joint meeting with multiple trainings at one location - the National Organic Program Training, and our first joint training with the National Association of State Organic Programs. You were recently sent the Agenda / Registration form via e-mail. Registration is due December 21, 2007; this deadline also applies to Galt House lodging reservations at the conference rate. Don't miss the chance to meet fellow certifiers and support the work of ACA.

All Agenda / Registration information is on our website:

www.accreditedcertifiers.org

ACA Board Positions Available

The current Board of Directors of ACA would like to *encourage additional members* to join them in overseeing the work of ACA. Currently we have 7 board members, however, our ACA bylaws stipulate that the Board of Directors may consist of between 5 and 9 members. **How about additional members volunteering?**

The slate of nominees will be voted upon at our Annual Meeting, January 14, 2008, with the terms beginning in April, 2008.

Current Board responsibilities are to actively participate in the work of the ACA Board and to participate in our monthly conference calls.

To submit your name, please contact Pat Kane at PatriciaKane@accreditedcertifiers.org

Report on IOAS Training - *Management of Certification Agencies* by Dave Engel

Representatives of 19 US private and state certification programs desperately in need of and wisely in search of *training, experience and education* gathered in Medina ND and enjoyed three days of what I personally would judge to be a rather well-developed and well-presented course on a timely topic, Managing Organic Certification Agencies. The training was sponsored by International Organic Accreditation Services.

These 19 people represented 12 different organic certification agencies, including PCO, NMOCC, ICS/FVO, OEFFA, NICS, WSDA, CCOF, One Cert, Maryland Dept of Ag, Organic Certifiers, Inc, MT Dept of Ag, and North Carolina State University and 2 other certification bodies doing humane animal treatment verification and sustainable food production practices verification.

The course consisted of 3 full days of 8 forty-five minute sessions covering aspects of organic certification from 30,000 feet (*overview, developments, trends*) down to the nitty gritty of personnel and many practical areas we all have to handle each day such as: *Risk in inspection management; sanctions, complaints, appeals; export requirements and authorizations; detection of problems; certification, certificates, logo misuse; special situations; internal audits and management review...*

and several others, with three or four of them taking up two 45-minute slots, such was their importance and scope.

A newly published 116-page booklet entitled Management of Organic Certification - A Training Manual was the course foundation, and
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ACA Board Conference Call Summaries

September BOD Conference Call Summary

- **NOSB Report** - Joe Smillie indicated the Certification, Accreditation & Compliance Committee will put forth a recommendation for Certification of Multi-site Operations and will not revise the 2002 NOSB Recommendation for Grower Group Certification. The CAC Committee is also drafting a recommendation for Commercial Availability. The Handling & Materials committees will be working on developing definitions for ag/non agricultural ingredients and synthetic/non-synthetic materials.
- **Certification Issues Project (CIP)** - The Board discussed the lack of participation in the development of a position on Grower Groups and the impact this has on our ability to put forth a position on topics.
- There was continuing discussion regarding the joint meeting & training with NASOP.

October BOD Conference Call Summary

- **Financial Report** - we are continuing to show a loss for the year. Pat noted that there are still several renewals to come in during the next month or so.
- **NOSB Report** - Joe Smillie was not able to make the call.
- **CIP** - Pat noted that since the NOSB did not propose revision of the 2002 Recommendation, no additional work was done on the Grower Group topic. The Board indicated that based upon our prior questionnaire results, we should submit a comment that ACA does not support the Multi-site Certification recommendation. Pat will draft a statement based upon our previous work and forward to the Board for approval. The Board approved the draft via email. Comments were distributed to the members and submitted to NOSB.

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~ Thank You ~ To the Following New & Renewing Members



Agricultural Services Certified Organic
Center for Systems Integration
Georgia Crop Improvement Association
Indiana Certified Organic LLC
Minnesota Crop Improvement Association
Natures International Certification Services
New Hampshire Department of Agriculture
New Jersey Department of Agriculture
New Mexico Organic Commodity Commission
North Carolina Crop Improvement Association
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Association
Organic Agsystems Consulting
Organic Certifiers, Inc.
Organic National & International Certifiers
Rhode Island Department of Environment
Vermont Organic Certifiers

Board Conference Call Summaries (cont.)

October BOD Conference Call Summary (cont.)

- **Events / Meetings** - Pat noted that the planning is nearly complete for the joint training in Louisville. The goal is to have the Agenda / Registration form out to the membership by the end of this month. We are also scheduling an informal meeting to be held at the NOSB Meeting in November to discuss current topics. The Board also decided we will have a meeting at the All Things Organic Show on April 27, from 12 - 2. All certifiers present at ATO are encouraged to attend.
- **Board Meeting Minutes** - A member requested that Board Meeting Minutes be sent to all members. Pat indicated that a summary of the calls is contained in the Newsletter,

and she would like to have them remain in the Newsletter for content.

- **Member Survey** - Pat noted she has been contacting members regarding the survey. This survey has not been sent to all members. It is sent to members with a scheduled phone call date, so that direct contact can be made. Approximately one third of the membership has been contacted, beginning with members who have not been participating in the discussion group. Results are being compiled.

November BOD Conference Call Summary

Due to scheduling conflicts and illness, no formal meeting was held.

IOAS Training (cont.)

David Crucefix and Ken Commins, principals in the International Organic Accreditation Service, presented the course. I would imagine the booklet is available for purchase, inquire: info@ioas.org or check website www.ioas.org.

Of special note was an 'planned impromptu' session where we discussed very briefly a half dozen or so topics/issues that we certifiers felt were areas that we would like to delve into in more depth, given an opportunity, place and time. These areas were briefly brainstormed and could form a basis for future trainings:

1. Personnel - recruitment, retention, training;
2. Conflict of interest - recruiting boards, etc, decision making, training;
3. Certifier hopping (and dumping!... 'black list') - ins and outs, need for NOP website, hopping to a 'lower' standard, etc. - lots of twists and turns;

4. Gaps in standards - ID places where standards are same/different;
5. Administering multiple certifications - communications with and understanding(s) of clients, tools needed, assessing need to have multiple accreditations;
6. Media fallout/public interest group pressures how to respond when approached, need for ACA to handle, etc.

IOAS shared how they handle their data base (low key, existing software approach) and ICS/FVO gave a presentation of the Cadillac model, *Ecert*, a modular software product designed specifically for certification bodies, with the promise of providing an electronic certification protocol service, start to finish.

For more information or perspective on any of the above, feel free to contact either Ken or David at IOAS, (701) 483-5504.