

Dear Certification Specialist...

By Jacomijn Schravendes-Gardei,
Associate Director of Crops

Dear Certification Specialist,

I received an email after my inspection notifying me that changes were made to my organic system plan as stated by my inspector in the inspection report. I am wondering how are changes made to my organic system plan?

Alter Correction

Dear Alter Correction,

This question has a three-fold answer!

Changes are made to your organic system plan in three ways:

- 1. During your annual update.** Each year we ask you to go over the data that we have on file for you and ask you to update it with your plans for the upcoming year. For most farms this happens in late winter or spring; for processing operations the timing depends on when you got certified. Once you submit your changes (electronically or on paper [in which case we enter the changes in our database for you]), your specialist reviews the changes and notifies you if any of these plans are not in line with certified organic production.
- 2. During the year.** You can make changes to your organic system plan by contacting your specialist. The National Organic Program (NOP) rule states that you must communicate changes to your organic system plan to your certifier. Of course we understand that usually a lot of little changes happen (for example, the field in which a certain crop is planted). However, big changes, such as adding new fields or input products,

need to be communicated directly to your specialist as these can have implications for your organic certification! A simple email or phone call is all that is needed. If you are adding an input, for example, just email your specialist before using the input. Your specialist can then let you know if it is approved or not!

- 3. With your organic inspection.** Lastly, changes to your organic system plan are often made after your annual inspection. Your inspector will go over your organic system plan with you and often comes prepared with questions that they received from your organic specialist about your farm plan. Your inspector will then relay in the inspection report what changes should occur to your organic system plan. Your specialist will make those changes for you and cite "NOP §205.201(a) Organic production and handling system plan (OSP)". The producer or handler of a production or handling operation intending to sell, label, or represent agricultural products as organic must develop an organic production or handling system plan that is agreed to by the producer or handler and an accredited certifying agent" in your inspection letter.

Hopefully that explains the process. If you have further questions, don't hesitate to contact us!



STAFF NEWS

Mariam Taleb Joins Farmer Programs

Please welcome the newest staff member of Farmer Programs, Mariam Taleb, Organic Crop and Production Specialist. Mariam has a dual-degree bachelor's in English and sustainable food and farming from the University of Massachusetts and a doctorate from Pennsylvania State University, where she studied spotted lanternfly and inequities of vulnerability to invasive organisms. She has worked on urban and rural organic farms across the Northeast. Mariam has also worked in extension for conventional and organic vegetable farms and has served on the board of a nonprofit food hub in central Pennsylvania. She is excited to help farmers in Maine build a food system that is more sustainable, viable and equitable. mtaleb@mofga.org

