

UNDERSTANDING MATERIAL PRODUCT REVIEW

by Katy Green, Inspector / Materials Review

At MCS we often field questions from producers who would like to use a particular product and they are not sure whether or not it is permitted in organic production. Our goal is to give everybody a clear and timely answer about if, and how, a material can be used. Our material review program is currently a free service to our certified clients.

What can be used?

MOFGA certification allows products approved for use by Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI –www.omri.org), WSDA (<http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/>), and PCO (Pennsylvania Certified Organic). Locally produced composts that have been approved for use by MOFGA's Agricultural Services Department may also be used.

As always, you must pay attention to any annotations or restrictions and notify your certification specialist prior to use of a new product not mentioned on your material list. Bear in mind that products are added and removed from these lists periodically, so keep an eye out for changes.

Other materials

Materials that don't appear on the lists above may be reviewed by MOFGA Certification Services at the request of a client who would like to use a product. Certified clients can submit materials for review to their certification specialist. Generally speaking, the more complete information that we receive about a product the swifter the review process. Information that you'll need to provide about a product includes the full product name, manufacturer, and a description of how and when you'd like to use the product. Additional information that can be useful, but is not required, includes a copy of the label and/or contact information for a representative of the manufacturer.

Once this information is received by MCS we initiate a product review. As part of the review we need to look at all of the ingredients in a product. Ingredients in products for crop or livestock production must be either a natural substance (there are a few exceptions) or a synthetic substance that is included on the "National List" of allowed products. All ingredients, whether or not they are listed on a product label, must be reviewed. Sometimes obtaining a full ingredient

list from manufacturers is not possible or takes a great deal of time. We will contact the producer who requested the review when a determination is made.

All products approved by MCS are re-reviewed every three years. During that time we determine if a product is still in use by a MOFGA certified organic grower. If a product does not appear on any producer's materials list we remove it from our review list. For all others we work directly with the manufacturer to determine if a product can still be approved for use. Status changes that impact a large number of producers will be announced in this publication. Otherwise, MCS will make an effort to contact individual producers who are using products that have been removed from the list.

MCS typically sends out a MOFGA approved compost list and a livestock materials list to certified producers annually. These lists are intended to help clients of MCS make informed product decisions. Producers should make their certification specialist aware of any materials changes, even if using a product that appears on a list supplied by MCS.



MOFGA Goes Solar!

On March 8, MOFGA took a giant step toward energy self-sufficiency when it flipped the energy switch to solar power at its Common Ground Education Center in Unity. With inspiration, guidance and generous financial support from Liberty-based ReVision Energy, MOFGA dramatically expanded its renewable energy infrastructure by installing a 102.08 kilowatt solar array and air source heat pumps. After almost 20 years at its home in western Waldo County, MOFGA is fulfilling its dream of becoming self-sufficient with energy.

For several years, MOFGA has partnered with ReVision Energy to accelerate the plan for energy self-sufficiency. A key part of MOFGA's programming is an assortment of small-scale energy systems that visitors may view and recreate in their own homes or on their farms.



Aspects of design for conservation and energy efficiency include building orientation for solar gain and use of local materials; a flat-plate solar wall on the structure that houses water tanks for the sprinkler system in the main building to keep the temperature above freezing; a flat-plate solar wall on the south side of the main building that preheats water and pumps it to a 1,500-gallon insulated water tank that serves the general heating system; a 10 kW Bergey Excel wind generator atop an 80-foot tilt-up tower; and a grid-tied 11.7 kW solar photovoltaic array installed on MOFGA's 200-year-old red barn.

"We should be saving about 5,000 gallons of fossil fuel (diesel, propane, heating oil) per year. About 85 percent of our energy is going to be generated on-site. Revision previously did the solar panels on our red barn, which offset energy used at our bunkhouse/woodshop."

Jason Tessier, MOFGA's buildings and grounds director

"Each of these components was an important step along our path to energy self-sufficiency," says Jason Tessier, MOFGA's buildings and grounds director. "But now we really can demonstrate that it's possible to shed our dependence on fossil fuels and embrace a clean and dependable source of energy."