



CATTLE CORNER

Livestock Auction Facilities
Must Be Certified Organic

MOFGA COMPOST REVIEW PROGRAM

By Katy Green, MCS Program Specialist and
Materials Review

On February 12, 2014, the NOP released an instruction to organic certifiers that clarified which operations relating to agricultural production needed to be certified organic. The intent was to clarify that operations that handle agricultural goods need an organic certificate. Auction houses were not specifically named in that instruction.

On March 16, 2018, Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO), Pennsylvania-based organic certification agency, announced a policy change stating that animals purchased through a livestock auction facility that does not hold a valid organic certificate will lose their organic status.

This change may affect producers in Maine who would like to sell a herd or group of cattle through a dealer at one of the large Pennsylvania auction houses. Maine sellers who would like to sell their

herd as certified organic should inquire with cattle dealers and haulers prior to making arrangements for cattle to travel to auction, requesting organic certificates for the auction house. Sellers must also provide paperwork to accompany the cattle during their travels.

Certified organic auction houses will need to maintain a valid certificate with an organic certifier. They will need an organic system plan and annual inspections to demonstrate that they have implemented practices to prevent certified organic livestock from contact with conventional feeds and prohibited materials while in the custody of the auction house.

As always, MCS requires that transactions of certified organic cattle must be accompanied by a valid organic certificate, itemized bill of sale listing the animal IDs, and health records.

Many certified organic producers who make compost are familiar with the verification that compost meets the organic standards during the annual review and inspection process. MOFGA Certification Services performs a similar review for suppliers of bulk and bagged composts that choose to go through MOFGA's compost review program. Local manufacturers who would like to sell compost to certified organic farmers are required to pay a review fee and update their compost review documents on a three-year cycle. Site visits and records checks are part of the verification process. In the past some of this work was handled by MOFGA's Agricultural Services Department, but the compost review program is now administered by MOFGA Certification Services under the purview of our existing materials review program.

One change to the program implemented in the past year is the end of production of the annual approved compost list. Since composts are on a three-year review cycle there is little change in the list year to year. Similarly, as products are removed from the list it's hard to control distribution of old versions of the list. These were among the reasons in the decision making process for no longer publishing a list for distribution. However, we have gotten some requests for a printed list and are now re-considering this decision. Have you found the list helpful? Would you like to see a printed list put back into production?

Contact Katy Green (kgreen@mofga.org or 207-568-6033) with feedback or with questions about the compost review process.

Regenerative Organic

(cont'd from Page 8):

Organizations that are represented on the board of the Regenerative Organic Alliance include:

Leah Garces, Compassion in World Farming; Paul Dolan, Demeter; David Bronner, Dr. Bronner's; Dana Geffner, Fair World Project; David Vetter, Grain Place Foods; Rose Marcario, Patagonia; LaRea Pepper, Textile Exchange; Will Harris, White Oak Pastures and Jeff Moyer, Rodale Institute (Chair).

The Regenerative Organic Alliance board will conduct stakeholder review processes covering Required Practices, Optional Practices, Critical Tolerances, implementation roadmap for producers, auditor qualifications, and onsite assessment requirements. The Regenerative Organic Alliance board will also perform a benchmarking exercise to determine which existing standards to leverage as part of the

Regenerative Organic Certification equivalency process."

MOFGA Interface and Concerns

Late last year MOFGA Staff provided input, critique and suggestions, as requested, to the organization creating the standards during the comment phase. Some concerns expressed by staff:

- A complicated process and prescriptive standards.
- The requirement that farms (operations) must achieve the Gold level after a specific period of time.
- Control and representation on the ROC Board by farmers.
- Measuring soil carbon sequestration and metrics for organic matter accumulation, especially how it relates to annual crops.
- Metrics for animal welfare across agricultural regions.
- The affect of the requirement for farmers to pay a "living wage", especially regarding beginning farmers and farms participating in farm apprenticeship programs.

