

Dear Certification Specialist...

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Talk to me about buffers! My neighboring farmer has a conventional cornfield right next to my organic vegetable field. He sprays several times a season and uses a conventional fertilizer. How big should the buffer be? He is a friendly guy and stated that he is willing to have part of the buffer be on his land.

*Thank you,
Buffered Out*

Dear Buffered Out,

Ah buffers! An often discussed topic here at the certification office. NOP 205.2 states that a buffer zone is an area located between a certified production operation or portion of a production operation and an adjacent land area that is not maintained under organic management. Buffer zones are needed to protect organic crops and land from contaminants that may be used on adjacent properties.

Since the adjoining land use of your organic field poses a contamination threat, you are indeed required to have a large enough buffer that will protect your organic crops and land from contamination. The size of the buffer depends on many things, such as contamination risk, GE crops, how the spraying is conducted, lay of the land, prevailing wind conditions, drainage, presence of any vegetation that could help block contamination risks, etc. Historically, MOFGA recommended a buffer of at least 100 feet between fields on which certified organic crops are to be produced and any field receiving applications of prohibited materials. The National Organic Program does not mandate a particular size buffer, but

states that an adequate buffer must exist to prevent unintended application of prohibited materials (NOP 205.202).

We ask our farmers to identify the size of the buffer, as you know your land the best! Once you take in all the risk factors and make a determination of the size of the buffer, your inspector will assess this buffer with you at your next inspection. The inspector will then give a recommendation to your specialist about the buffer and your specialist will get back to you if the buffer you established is deemed enough or if it should be increased (or possibly decreased). The size of your buffer should be recorded on the corresponding map and field history. Please note that you may be required to have documentation to defend your buffer size. An example might be a written "no spray" agreement with DOT for the stretch of the highway that is adjacent to an organic field, or a buffer agreement with your friendly neighbor.

Crops may be grown in a buffer zone but they may not be sold or represented as organic. If you choose to grow a crop in a buffer zone, make sure you have documentation for your inspector that shows the buffer zone crops where not sold as organic.

It is important to remember that MOFGA Certification Services may do pesticide residue testing at any point to verify that buffer zones are adequate

If any drift incident does occur, please immediately contact the MCS office at 568-6030 and the Maine State Board of Pesticide Control at 287-2731.

Hope that was enough talk about buffers, if you have any questions about buffer zones be sure to contact your certification

NOSB Meeting

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production and Training and oversight of inspector and certification reviewer personnel. In addition, the NOSB reviewed 38 "sunset materials" on the National List for possible removal or relisting and considered 14 new-petitioned materials and six proposals to changes in the NOSB process. The full list of proposals on materials and NOSB processes can be seen at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/>

