

## Strengthening Organic Enforcement and Organic Slaughter

By Laurah Brown and Jade Archer, Livestock Certification Specialists

**T**he National Organic Program has identified slaughterhouses, stockyards and auction houses as elevated risks for fraud and is requiring certifiers to tighten up oversight as part of the implementation of the Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) Final Rule. SOE amends the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) organic regulations ([www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/strengthening-organic-enforcement](http://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/strengthening-organic-enforcement)) by strengthening oversight and enforcement of the production, handling and sale of organic agricultural products to protect integrity in the organic supply chain and build consumer and industry trust in the USDA organic label. MOFGA Certification Services (MCS) producers with livestock, including dairy cattle, on their organic product verifications as “some” or “all” eligible for organic slaughter will be directly affected by the SOE regulations.

The starting point for organic slaughter is a farm's completed Organic System Plan (OSP). It must identify who is responsible for the transportation of livestock, identifying the party or parties responsible for organic feed and management of slaughter stock, layovers and transfers. Each and every step of the road to organic slaughter must be written in the farm's organic system plan and approved by MCS before shipping to organic slaughter. If your plan needs updating, please contact your MCS specialist.

In 2022, MCS provided producers with an organic slaughter affirmation document to complete and submit to MCS for approval ahead of livestock being transported to organic slaughter. MCS also provided producers with information on meeting the requirements of SOE, specifically regarding buying and selling organic livestock, transportation and who needs to be certified.

Certified dairy and livestock producers looking to sell livestock for organic slaughter must complete the organic

slaughter affirmation document and submit the completed form to MCS for verification with herd records on file. This is a process requiring a reasonable amount of time ahead of shipping to complete.

**B**oth the producer and MCS sign the form, to affirm the livestock as eligible for organic slaughter. Organic slaughter eligibility requires an up-to-date herd list on file with MCS, solid herd records, health histories, and an auditable identification system for tracing livestock back to origin. Once the form is signed by MCS, we will keep a record of the document in our files, and the farmer should keep a record as well, in addition to sending the form along with the livestock shipment and your organic certificate and product list.

MCS will continue on-site inspections for verification of organic livestock for slaughter and transport records to ensure SOE requirements around organic slaughter eligibility and maintaining organic integrity are met.

MCS producers are expected to understand their responsibility in verifying organic slaughter eligibility and transport requirements are met and to utilize compliant practices when arrangements are made with slaughterhouses and haulers. If you have questions, please contact the MCS office at [certification@mofga.org](mailto:certification@mofga.org) or 207-568-6030. If you need forms mailed to you, please let us know.

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## Field Notes

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impacts not having a new Farm Bill will present. We have also outlined active discussions and proposals at the National Organic Standards Board, that if moved forward, will have additional impacts to certification agencies and producers.

I encourage everyone to read the articles in this issue. Please be in touch with our office if you have any questions or concerns. With SOE being the single biggest rule change since the start of the NOP in 2002, we (including the NOP) are all navigating what implementation will look like after March 19, 2024. We expect there to be bumps in the road, and we are committed to balancing the regulatory requirements with sound and sensible approaches to meet compliance.

Wishing you all a productive yet restful winter, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to make our local, regional and organic food system the best it can be.

