International Certification Services, Inc

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Sustainable Times

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About the Author:

Terry Jacobson has been with ICS since 1982. He owns and operates an organic farm in NE North Dakota, raising beef cattle, sheep, and small grains.

Inside this issue:

Soil Building for Sustainability

By Terry Jacobson

The majority of organic farmers know that crop rotation is a fundamental part of organic farming. Equally important, soil building is a crucial component of crop rotation. Effectively feeding the soil makes the difference between the farm management system being extractive or sustainable. It is extremely important for a farmer to give careful thought to the soil building portion of his or her crop rotation.

FVO Crop and Soil Building requirement 2.04 states:

" A plan for building soil should include:

a. Using crop varieties that produce maximum bio-mass;

b. Planting of deep rooted legumes or other green manure crops with extensive root systems;

c. Reducing the number and speed of tillage operations;

d. Maintaining sufficient surface residue and/or growing plants to support beneficial insects and soil biological life for as long as possible throughout the seasons;

e. Cycling nutrients from a grass, hay, or forage crop back to the soil through applications of livestock manure or compost to the fields;

f. grazing stubble or crop residues;

g. reducing weed, insect, and disease problems through diverse and varied crop rotations."

It is commonly stated in the organic community that organic farmers feed the soil so that it can feed the crop. But how much thought is being directed towards that practice? Frequently it is treated more as a technicality for organic certification than an organic farming fundamental. Effective soil building has the added benefit of minimizing the need for expensive off-farm inputs.

Legumes, such as clover, alfalfa, and vetches are highly favored for green manure crops because they are deep rooted and they fix nitrogen. Legumes frequently produce substantial biomass to be returned to the soil. This supports biological activity in the soil. When a non-legume green manure crop such as rye, buckwheat, oats or weeds are used a farmer or certifier must ask the question "where is the nitrogen coming from?"

The non-legume cover crops can be valuable in conjunction with manure applications because they help capture nitrogen and store it in organic matter, which biological life in the soil can help release gradually over the next growing season. Manure or compost is also valuable in soil building because of the micro-nutrients, phosphates, and beneficial bacteria also present. This is why the requirements allow longer periods between green manure crops when livestock manure or compost is part of the soil building. Small grains used as a cover crop or green manure crop also break down very rapidly in the soil because the plants are not particularly fibrous. Buckwheat seems to have a particularly valuable quality of helping to take tied-up

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Calendar of Events

- **December 24th—January 2nd: ICS OFFICE CLOSED for the Holidays**
- January 18-19—MN Organic Conference; St. Cloud, MN; ICS Exhibiting
- February 8-9—Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society (NPSAS) Winter Conference; Mandan, ND; ICS Exhibiting
- February 21-23—Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference (UMOFC); La-Crosse, WI; ICS Exhibiting
- April 27-29—All Things Organic (ATO) Show; Chicago, IL; ICS Exhibiting
- June 28-July 2—The Institute of Food Technologies (IFT); New Orleans, LA; ICS Attending

Submissions

Letters to the editor are welcome. Please include complete contact information including your daytime phone number and signature. All letters are subject to printing in our newsletter, however submission does not guarantee printing. Letters may be edited and cannot be returned.

For information on submitting an article, or if you have any ideas on articles that you'd like to see in our newsletter, please contact Brandi Eissinger at 701-486-3578 or via email at brandi@ics-intl.com. Letters to the editor may be sent to this same address.

Organic Practices Outpace Conventional

ORGANIC PRACTICES OUTPACE CONVENTIONAL IN LONG-TERM RESEARCH

AMES, Iowa -- After nine years of comparison, the clear differences between organic and conventional crop production systems are emerging: the longer rotations and careful management of the organic system show greater yields, increased profitability, and steadily improved soil quality over conventional practices.

Those are the conclusions drawn from experimental plots set up at the Iowa State University Neely-Kinyon Research Farm near Greenfield. The plots are part of the Long-Term Agro-ecological Research (LTAR) initiative led by Kathleen Delate of the ISU agronomy and horticulture departments and supported by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture since 1997. The study is believed to be the largest randomized, replicated comparison of organic and conventional crops in the nation.

Delate is now finishing her tenth year of organic production at the farm, and has nine years of comparative data from the combined crop trials.

"We set up the experiment in 1998 to examine suitable crop rotations that would provide high yields, grain quality and adequate soil fertility during the three-year transition to organic and following certification," she explained.

"We replicated conventional and organic systems, using identical crop varieties, and found that organic crop yields were equal to conventional acres in the three years of transition. In the fourth year, organic corn yields in the longest rotation outpaced those of conventional corn. Organic and conventional soybean yields have been similar every year of the trial."

But the biggest differences are in soil and water quality. Delate said the organic plots infiltrate more water, which reduces soil runoff and more effectively recharges groundwater supplies. The organic soils also cycle nutrients more efficiently, making them available when and where the plants need them. Soil structural stability also remained good, despite increased tillage involved with the organic rotations.

Delate will discuss her research at the 7th Annual Iowa Organic Conference November 19 in Ames. The conference also includes sessions on organic livestock production, weed management, direct marketing and opportunities for selling organic crops, and ways of producing fruit and vegetable crops in an organic system.

Through its research and education programs in the areas of policy, marketing and ecology, the Leopold Center supports development of profitable farming systems that conserve natural resources. The Center was established by the 1987 Iowa Groundwater Protection Act.

(News Release published in part from http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/news/newsreleases/2007/organic_111307.htm. Please visit the Leopold Center website for more information: http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/)

Feedback

ICS welcomes and encourages feedback on our FVO Requirements as well as the other programs we offer. We also encourage comments and suggestions on our newsletter and website. If there is anything else you'd like to see, please let us know and we'll do our best to get you what you need.

Classifieds

To submit an ad for print in the ICS Sustainable Times, please send your classified ad to the editor, Brandi Eissinger, at brandi@ics-intl.com. Final approval is at the option of the editor. Any questions you have on this opportunity, please contact Brandi via the afore mentioned email address, or call 701-486-3578.

Stop Genetically Engineered Sugar Beets

GENETICALLY ENGINEERED SUGAR TO HIT STORES IN 2008 (scroll to the bottom of this page to take action) Background Information: American Crystal, a large Wyoming-based sugar company and several other leading U.S. sugar providers have announced they will be sourcing their sugar from genetically engineered (GE) sugar beets beginning this year and arriving in stores in 2008. Like GE corn and GE soy, products containing GE sugar will not be labeled as such.

Since half of the granulated sugar in the U.S. comes from sugar beets, a move towards biotech beets marks a dramatic alteration of the U.S. food supply. These sugars, along with GE corn and soy, are found in many conventional food products, so consumers will be exposed to genetically engineered ingredients in just about every non-organic multiple-ingredient product they purchase.

The GE sugar beet is designed to withstand strong doses of Monsanto's controversial broad spectrum Roundup herbicide. Studies indicate farmers planting "Roundup Ready" corn and soy spray large amounts of the herbicide, contaminating both soil and water. Farmers planting GE sugar beets are told they may be able to apply the herbicide up to five times per year. Sugar beets are grown on 1.4 million acres by 12,000 farmers in the U.S. from Oregon to Minnesota.

Meanwhile candy companies like Hershey's are urging farmers not to plant GE sugar beets, noting that consumer surveys suggest resistance to the product. In addition the European Union has not approved GE sugar beets for human consumption.

(Reprinted from: http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/oca/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=12700)

Changes to OMRI Listings

Notice of Products Removed From the OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) Products List

Please be advised that E.I duPont de Nemours and Company has requested that their products:
DuPont" Kocide(R) 2000 Fungicide/Bactericide and
DuPont" Kocide(R) 3000 Fungicide/Bactericide
be removed from the OMRI Products. These products are no longer OMRI Listed(R) as of 11/30/07.

Below is a list of products removed from the OMRI Products List during the period September 13, 2007 to December 3, 2007 due to non-renewal of their OMRI Listing.:

BioVigor , Global Organics, LLC
CheckMate(R) CM-WS, Suterra, LLC
Cockadoodle DOO(R) pH + Plus , Pure Barnyard, Inc.
Eco-Poly 21, Eco-Nutrients, Inc.
FOAM BLAST(R) ORG 31, Emerald Performance Materials, LLC
FOAM BLAST(R) ORG 50, Emerald Performance Materials, LLC
FOAM BLAST(R) ORG 51, Emerald Performance Materials, LLC
Garden Treasure Fulvic Acid, Absorbent Products Ltd.
Hoof Mate , Hux, Inc.
IoGold Recharge, IoGold Systems, Inc.
Isomate(R) - M 100, Pacific Biocontrol Corp.
Mallard Mulch, Sonoma Compost Co.
Organic Adhesive Adjuvant, Monterey AgResources
Organic BioLink(R) All-Purpose Fertilizer 5-5-5, Westbridge
Organic BioLink(R) Phosphorus Fertilizer 0-12-0, Westbridge
Petrel Brand Calcium Phosphate Fertilizer , Petrel Mark International, Inc.
Rhizogen Ag-GRO 3-4-3, Rhizogen

Also removed from the OMRI Products List:

Champion Wettable Powder by Newfarm Americas and Signal Sulfur by Wilbur Ellis

If you are using any of the above listed products, and/or wish to use these products, you must submit a label for review and approval by the Certification Committee. If you have any questions on this information, please contact your Customer Care Specialist.

Soil Building for Sustainability
By Terry Jacobson

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phosphorous into its tissue making it available when the plant material breaks down. However, this only can happen if there is phosphorous there in the first place. High PH soils often have such almost unavailable phosphorous.

The green manuring practices vary according to different climate conditions. FVO requirements attempt to take that into account. In areas of shorter growing season, one entire growing season of green manure crop is required every 4 or 5 years. In areas of longer growing seasons where there is substantial growth in the fall after harvest and in the spring before planting, cover crops are frequently grown as a second crop to meet this soil building requirement. Where this practice is employed, the requirement calls for two cover crops every 4 to 5 years. Where this practice is used, the farmers should again think about the nitrogen question.

Failure to have a green manure crop frequently enough starves the soil microbiology and thus short-circuits the nutrient cycling in the soil, making off-farm inputs more necessary to maintain fertility.

Soybeans are frequently used as a nitrogen source in a crop rotation. It is a good crop in the rotation. However, when a soybean crop is harvested, most of the nitrogen produced by the plant is removed with the seed, leaving relatively small amounts for subsequent crops. This is also true for sweet clover when it is first hayed off and only the regrowth is disked in. The second cutting of alfalfa as a green manure seems to work better, however. In both the alfalfa and the hayed clover example, the hay crop removes substantial water from the soil. This can be helpful or harmful depending on the climate conditions a farmer is working in.

Orchard floor management is the way soil building is accomplished in orchards and vineyards. Minimizing the time the soil is exposed and the wise use of grasses and legumes in a perennial crop system are key elements for soil building in orchards. The use of animal manure or compost is similar in importance to its use in annual crops.

Because of the importance of soil building to organic management, the Certification Committee requires photographs to document how much green manure is worked into the soil. We feel this is preferable to the added costs of an additional inspection.

The Certification Committee wishes to encourage all our farmers to think through their soil building practices and how they can be improved to better feed the soil. Making your soil building program more effective will make your farm more productive. Good soil building on an organic farm is truly in the best interest of the land and the farmer.

Help from Your CCS:
We Can Assist with Your International Needs

A reminder to all ICS clients about the international opportunities available to you through International Certification Services, Inc:

If you are currently certified under the Farm Verified Organic (FVO) Program, you already have international certification. FVO is IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) and ISO 65 accredited, allows for easy access into many international markets, and is highly recognized and respected worldwide.

If you currently hold certification only under the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) and would like to market your product internationally, please contact your Customer Care Specialist to find out what your options are or for more information about our FVO program.

ICS also has other options available to you in addition to the FVO program. These include EEC 2092/91 compliance for ease into the European markets; Bio Suisse approval to reach the Swiss markets; and both JAS facilitation and JAS compliance for ease into the Japanese markets.

Please contact your Customer Care Specialist with any questions and interest you have on the above programs.

David Gould: Moving On

David Gould has worked for International Certification Services, Inc since 1998, providing us and the rest of the organic industry with his expertise. From reviewing files and making certification decisions, to revising our standards and insisting on complete integrity, to writing excellent articles for the Sustainable Times, David has been an integral part of our daily operations.

David has recently accepted the position of Director of Technical Services for FoodChain Global Advisors. ICS had the chance to sit down with David to discuss this opportunity.

ICS: So, David, I hear you got a real job?
DG: One *job. This is the first time in a long time when I have only worked for one employer. My work of the past many years was plenty real, but it involved many different clients and programs. I had to keep each of those separate at least to some degree. Now I get to integrate all those parts into one more cohesive whole. It's been a nice change.*

ICS: Does this mean the organic industry will never see David Gould again?
DG: *Absolutely not. I remain in contact and working with many of the people I have been with for the past twelve years. This is a new opportunity for me to explore innovative ways of making food chains and helping communities and ecosystems thrive. The organic sector is hugely important. I fully intend to stay engaged with it.*
ICS: What are you working on now that is exciting?
DG: *FoodChain has several hot irons in the fire right now. The Non-GMO Project is a chance for organic and other producers to voluntarily participate in a streamlined approach to assuring that even their organic food does not contain GMO's. Many of the organic companies we know and love are participating. Creating ways to connect and communicate among the stakeholders of our community breathes new life into the system and breaks down barriers. I am helping develop efficient, transparent, and cleaner food chains from seed to table. We are working with a variety of programs including organic, animal welfare, fair trade, non-GMO, food safety, and other aspects of supply chain compliance. FoodChain also works one-on-one with any producer or company that faces particluar challenges to improving their own systems or meeting market demands. I am being afforded the chance to manifest the vision I have shared with many colleagues over the years - especially with ICS - to a quantum level higher.*

Thank you for your time David, and we wish you the best of luck!

New Certifications

ICS welcomes the following organizations to our family of certified clients. We're proud to have you with us.

FVO Certifications:

Travaille & Phippen, Inc., Contract Service
Alluvium Organics, LTD, Family Farm
Baldev S. Sran Farm, Family Farm
Jerry Van Hoosen, Family Farm
Ag Commodities Inc. aka Life Force Organics, Handler
Five Rivers Hulling, Handler
Ecotech LLC,
Processor/Mfg.

NOP Certifications:

NDSU Dickinson State Research, Commercial Farm
Bakh Sran Farms Inc., Family Farm
Bannockburn Farm, Family Farm
Brunner Dairy Inc., Family Farm
K & N Sczech Organics, Family Farm
La Finca, Inc., Family Farm
Mower Farms, Family Farm
Rafter K, Family Farm
Larry Stec, Family Farm
Newly Weds Foods, Ontario, Processor/Mfg.
Maria Elena's Authentic Latino, Processor/Mfg.
Wimmer's Meat Products, Processor/Mfg.

Help from Your CCS: Reduce Follow-Up

To help speed up our process, and minimize the amount of follow-up between you, your Customer Care Specialist, and our Certification Committee, please be certain to include any of the following information that pertains to your operation when renewing your paperwork for 2008:

- Indicate the variety of crop (i.e. hard red spring wheat, winter wheat, white corn, yellow corn, dark hylum soybeans, clear hylum soybeans) on your field history sheet.
- Fill out the Field History Sheets for all fields, including organic, conventional and conversion fields. If you are uncertain what will be planted on a field in 2008, enter what you will most likely plant. The inspector will update the information if needed during the inspection.
- Save seed bags to show that it is untreated seed when labels do not indicate that it is untreated.
- If you are purchasing non-organic corn, soybeans or alfalfa, obtain a non-GMO statement from your distributor.
- For all inputs you wish to use, labels must be submitted and reviewed **prior to use**. Include these with your production plan.
- If you've purchased new land, be certain to obtain a land affidavit and map from the previous owner.
- Provide updated maps if there have been changes or if the maps previously submitted are getting difficult to read.
- Be certain to sign and date Module 1 and Module 3 and send in along with your inspection minimum.
- Review all questions and your answers in your production plan. If something is no longer relevant, particularly the inputs used, please cross off or delete and add the new information.
- Return all necessary paperwork, including your revised production plan and all the information listed above by the deadline provided by your Customer Care Specialist. We do charge a $100 late fee after this deadline.



Changes to FVO Requirements:

Requirement 2.04 - Crop Rotation and Soil Building: added 5 (d) under Required section: "clipping the bio-mass from 1 square yard and setting it aside for the inspector to view at time of inspection".

Requirement 2.07 - Seeds, Seedlings, and Plant Propagation Materials: Added "To sell planting stock: Seed and plant materials shall be propagated under organic management one generation, in the case of annuals, and for perennials, two growing periods, or 12 months, whichever is the longer, before being certified as organic seed and plant material"

Requirement 3.06 - Fiber and Textile Processing: Added to General Principles: f) "All inputs, additives and processing aids used in textile manufacturing will be evaluated against appendix 1 of the IFOAM Basic Standard".

Requirement 5.01 – Postharvest Handling, Storage, and Transportation: Added "Whomever owns the product at the point it is being transported also has the responsibility to ensure that integrity is maintained through the transport process. An exception may be considered when action is taken by governmental entities or other authorities".

There have been additional changes to the requirements, which can be found on the summary provided with your revised copy of the FVO Requirements book. If you have any questions concerning these revisions, please contact your Customer Care Specialist.

ICS in 2008

Growth of organic production and processing in 2007 has been both a blessing and a curse for the organic certification industry. We thank you for your continued patronage and want to tell you a little bit about what you can expect in 2008.

We are in the process of restructuring our certification decision procedures, adding more qualified certification decision makers and fully developing and employing our new certification database system (e-Cert).

Before the 2008 inspection season, we will have the structure in place to support our current client base in a timely and efficient manner, as well as handle the influx of new business we are currently experiencing.

Please continue to send your questions, comments and concerns to ICS so that we can all help each other grow this upcoming year and each year after.

Organic Food is Healthy & Safer, Four-Year EU Investigation Shows

By Emily Dugan

Published: 29 October 2007 The Independent

A £12m EU-funded investigation into the difference between organic and ordinary farming has shown that organic foods have far more nutritional value.

Up to 40 percent more antioxidants, which scientists believe can cut the risk of heart disease and cancer, could be found in organic fruit and vegetables than in those conventionally farmed.

In the four-year Quality Low Input Food project, the biggest of its kind to date, a farm in northeast England grew conventional produce alongside organic varieties. Cattle were also farmed on the 725-acre plot, where it has been discovered that organic milk contains 60 percent more antioxidants and desirable fatty acids than ordinary milk.

Professor Carlo Leifert, coordinator of the study said: "We have shown there are more of certain less nutritionally desirable compounds and less of the baddies in organic foods, or improved amounts of the fatty acids you want and less of those you don't want".

The study, whose overall findings will be published next year, is the first systematic comparison of farming techniques. Led by Newcastle University, 33 academic centers across Europe are analyzing the information.

For the past seven years the organic food lobby has been trying unsuccessfully to persuade the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to acknowledge the benefits of organic food. The FSA says the "balance of current scientific evidence" does not support the view that organic food is safer or healthier.

The Soil Association, the UK's leading campaigning and certifying organization on organic farming, said: "It is time the FSA caught up with the available science and adjusted its statements to reflect that science."

The FSA said: "We will be getting a consultancy to carry out a systematic review of the evidence, which will include this latest study."

The report's key findings

* Organic milk contains higher amounts of vitamin E, according to the EU study. The antioxidant contributes to a healthy circulatory system

* Potatoes, kiwi fruit and carrots were among the organic produce found to be higher in vitamin C than their chemically-farmed counterparts. The vitamin has been credited with boosting the immune system and helping to keep cancer and heart disease at bay

* Higher levels of minerals and antioxidants were found in organically-farmed lettuce, spinach and cabbage

The Independent <http://lists.grist.org/t?ctl=13E8D:80D40E41D948E6AEAB548A31D3C9E375>

Parallel Productions in the FVO Program (Requirement 1.05):

1.Operations containing parallel production must present a plan to the CC, including a timeframe for compliance, showing how they will move out of parallel production.

2. All requirements for split production must be followed for parallel production.

3. Except in the case where parallel production is unavoidable as described in the definition, a second inspection is required. Additional inspections may be needed.

Additional Bio Suisse Requirements:

Bio Suisse considers any production of the same crop (on conventional or on transitional land) as parallel production. Therefore, the organic crop grown parallel to the same crop in transition is downgraded to “in transition”. Exception: perennial crops. Conventional fields are not accepted at all in Bio Suisse operations and will always lead to disapproval of the whole farm.

Additional Requirements For Product Produced In Or Imported Into The European Union:

Parallel Production is prohibited. In cases where organic and conventional production occurs at non adjacent farm sites, where prohibited materials are not stored at the organic farm site and where separation of organic and convention operations is otherwise demonstrable the organic product may be eligible for sale in accordance with relevant European Authorities decisions.

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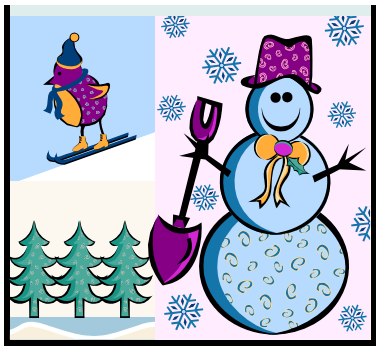

"Whenever man comes up with a better mousetrap, nature immediately comes up with a better mouse." - ***James Carswell***

New Website

ICS has recently redesigned their website. The new format will allow for more interaction between clients as it is equipped with discussion boards, an area for certified clients to place classified ads, forms, news feeds, and much more. We're also moving towards a subscription based online newsletter, which means that you can subscribe or unsubscribe at your leisure, and will always be certain to get the most current news from ICS.

Registration on the site opens up more options including access to documents and discussion boards. To be certain our clients who register receive access to all parts of the site, please include what your organization name is during registration. Some areas will be available immediately upon registering; however please allow 24 hours for access to other restricted areas.

As the saying goes, "children are our future," and therefore, we couldn't leave them out. The new site has a complete separate area for children, complete with online games, printable puzzles, and fun facts. This separate area does not require registration.

In addition to what is already available, we're currently working on updating the way our client pages are done so that each client who wishes will be able to have their own blog on our website. Look for an update in the next issue of the ICS Sustainable Times.

7-Layer Bar: Treat Your Friends & Family this Holiday Season

Use organic ingredients to make this sweet treat even tastier:

1/4 cup melted butter

1 cup graham crackers—crushed

1 cup coconut

1 cup chocolate chips

1 cup peanut butter chips

1-14 oz can Sweetened Condensed Milk

1 cup chopped nuts

Melt butter and mix with graham cracker crumbs. Place in 9"x13" pan.

Layer coconut, chocolate chips and peanut butter chips over graham cracker crust.

Pour sweetened condensed milk evenly over the layers.

Sprinkle nuts over the top.

Bake at 350° for 22-30 minutes.

Let cool, cut and serve.