



ASCO Newsletter



Agricultural Services Certified Organic, LLC

Introduction

Agricultural Services Certified Organic has long believed “compliance through education” is the better approach to servicing the needs of our clients.

This newsletter is intended to educate, inform and enlighten!



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Organic News

NOP News: Sodium Nitrate

The National Organic Program (NOP) issued a notice regarding the upcoming change to the use of Sodium Nitrate /Chilean Nitrate.

As of October 21, 2012 the status of the Sodium Nitrate is due to expire from the list of natural substances prohibited for use in organic crop production (Section 205.602(g)). This change means sodium nitrate may be used without restrictions on the amount used in organic crop production. Compliance to all requirements of the soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard must be continued.

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) recommended that sodium nitrate be completely prohibited from the non-synthetic substance list. The NOP has not issued a decision for this recommendation as of yet. To remain on the list it must be approved by the Secretary of Agriculture.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) states that any changes to your organic system plan that may affect compliance with the USDA organic regulations must be submitted to your organic certifying agency (205.400)(f). Organic producers that decide to begin using or increase use of sodium nitrate on their fields must inform their certifying agent before the changes are made! This will ensure producers’ continued compliance according to USDA organic regulation.

Sustainable Agriculture News

Is the AG Waiver Agriculturally Sustainable? One of the requirements of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Board is a “Farm Plan”. No farmer should be without a farm plan, but this is often stored away in the farmers mind. The benefits of a written farm plan are numerable. This gives the farmer a place to compare and evaluate how the farm operation is progressing. With a certification program like the ASCO’s Sustainable Agricultural Practices (SAP) the farm plan is built into the system plan. The ASCO SAP standards clearly define a sustainable approach to long term crop production both for the Organic farmer and the conventional farmer. You might ask what is Sustainable Agriculture? Sustainability is the result of good land and environmental stewardship along with economic and social considerations to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need. For more information about he ASCO SAP certification program please contact our office.



Sustainable Agricultural Practices Certification

Food Safety News

Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI)

What exactly is a GFSI recognized food safety standard? GFSI is a benchmarking organization. Food Safety Standards (scheme) must meet the rigorous requirements of the GFSI guidance document. Consistent audit results is the main agenda for the GFSI benchmarking process. CanandaGAP, Global GAP, PrimusGFS and SQF are a few of the GFSI recognized standards. ASCO has developed a Food Safety Verification program that will verify that the farmer’s food safety program meets the requirements of any given food safety standard or guidelines beginning with USDA, FDA, United Fresh GAP Harmonization Food Safety Standards including GFSI standards and those standards required under a contractual agreement with the buyer or handler of fresh fruits and vegetables.



Nature

Agriculture and nature have always had a special relationship. One fact is sure that without nature there would not be agriculture. Without agriculture there would not be food for the world. Co-management is an important factor when managing an effective food safety program. Sterilizing the crop production area is an impossible task. Monitoring and managing crop production areas and mitigating or managing potential and present food safety hazards is the best approach. Crop defense benefits from the use of natural resources as well as man made. The use of commercial pesticides must be reduced for a healthier environment and for safer food. Not only does natural insectaries and beneficial vegetation help the environment they help with erosion and dust control. “Co-Management: is an approach to conserving soil, air, wildlife, and other natural resources while simultaneously minimizing microbiological hazards associated with food production. Leafy Green Marketing Agreement—LGMA , 2012



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