

Organic Advisory Board
of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Division of Agriculture and Resource Marketing

Minutes of Public Meeting of January 25, 2010

Meeting Location: RI DEM Division of Agriculture
Conference Room
Room 370, 235 Promenade Street
Providence, RI 02908

Members Present: Erik Eacker, Brian Simmons, Dan Lawton, Peter Susi, Robert Mastin

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Ken Ayars, Scott Marshall, Matt Green (RIDEM/Agriculture)

Others Present: Eric Scherer (USDA NRCS)

The meeting began at 10:05 a.m. at the Division of Agriculture, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI. A quorum of board members was present.

Board membership was discussed. Matt Green informed that Erik Eacker, Brian Simmons, Dan Lawton and Peter Susi have been re-appointed to the board, and that Robert Mastin has been appointed as the new organic handling member of the board.

Erik Eacker made a motion, seconded by Brian Simmons, to approve the minutes from the OAB meeting of November 2, 2009, without corrections. The motion was approved unanimously.

USDA NRCS EQIP funding program for organic farms was presented by Eric Scherer. Technical Service Providers are being sought that could begin advising farms on how to transition to organic and make use of the EQIP program.

2010 certification fees and application deadlines were discussed. Matt Green informed that maintaining the fee for certification at \$200 is expected to cover fees to be charged by USDA to the Division to maintain organic certifier accreditation in 2010; the deadline of March 15 for application submission with \$50 application fee, and the remaining \$150 invoiced prior to inspection, was administered in 2009 and could be maintained in 2010.

Brian Simmons made a motion, seconded by Erik Eacker, to recommend keeping the 2010 application deadline at March 15, and fees for certification at \$200, with \$50 due at application and \$150 invoiced prior to inspection, which would cover the cost of the Division to maintain certifier accreditation. The motion was approved unanimously.

Matt Green informed that the same USDA organic certification cost-share programs are being administered by the Division this year, through which eligible operations may apply for partial reimbursement of organic certification fees. USDA has allocated to Rhode Island \$30,000 through the AMA program to reimburse eligible crops and livestock producers, and \$15,000

through the National program to reimburse eligible handlers in Rhode Island 75%, up to \$750, of the cost of certification or continuation of certification received from 10/1/09 through 9/30/10.

The 2010 meeting schedule was discussed. Monday, November 15, 2010, at 10:00 a.m. was proposed as the next meeting date.

Additional Business:

Posting of organic certificates at farmers markets was discussed. Options will be reviewed for promoting organic certification.

A topic requested for discussion at the previous meeting was re-visited, concerning the possibility of establishing a restricted receipt account for the DEM/Agriculture organic certification program to be used to develop the program using certification fees. Such an account has not been able to be created.

It was suggested that the possibility could be looked at of hiring and utilizing interns to work on making organic certification application forms fillable and/or entering certification application data into forms.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:16 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matt Green
Supervisor of Insect Pest and Plant Disease Control
RIDEM Division of Agriculture