

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

Minutes of Public Meeting of January 24, 2011

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

Members Present: Brian Simmons, Dan Lawton, Robert Mastin

Members Absent: Peter Susi, Erik Eacker

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

Others Present: None

The meeting began at 10:18 a.m. at the Division of Agriculture, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI. A quorum of board members was present.

Dan Lawton made a motion, seconded by Robert Mastin, to approve the minutes from the OAB meeting of November 15, 2010, without corrections. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dan Lawton informed about the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Rhode Island (NOFA/RI) Organic Farm Advisors program, which is funded through RIDEM/Agriculture by the USDA Specialty Crops Block Grant. The NOFA/RI program provides technical guidance to farmers who want to learn how to implement organic methods on their farms. Experienced organic farmers are paired with new or transitioning farmers to provide assistance in organic farm planning and production issues. NOFA/RI also has been conducting organic grower workshops. Information is available on the NOFA/RI website. It was discussed that there is a need for organic livestock advisors, which would not be funded through the present grant, but for which other sources of funding could be sought.

2011 certification fees, application deadlines and fillable forms were discussed. Matt Green informed that the fee for certification of \$200, and the submission deadline for producer applications of March 15, and for handler update applications prior to the date of the handler's certification, with \$50 application fee, and the remaining \$150 invoiced prior to inspection, as recommended at the last OAB meeting, would be in effect for 2011. Fillable application and organic system plan forms would be posted shortly on the Division's website for use in 2011.

Matt Green informed that the USDA organic certification cost-share programs administered by the Division are in effect in 2010-2011, through which eligible operations may apply for partial reimbursement of organic certification fees. USDA allocated to Rhode Island funds sufficient to reimburse presently known eligible producers and handlers in Rhode Island 75%, up to \$750, of the cost of certification or continuation of certification received from 10/1/10 through 9/30/11.

Final procedural guidelines from USDA NOP for cost share programs had not been received, but when received, this information would be forwarded to eligible operators.

Ken Ayars informed of several initiatives in the state promoting agriculture: Food Day in Rhode Island on October 24, 2011, promoting local food system development; creation of a Food Policy Council; 5-year RI agriculture plan; and Farm Fresh RI Local Food Forum, February 8, 2011.

It was suggested that the organic agriculture sector could be involved in such initiatives. It was discussed that increasing promotion of the benefits of organic certification could encourage greater participation in the organic certification program. Matt Green, representing RIDEM Division of Agriculture Organic Certification Program, would attend the Local Food Forum to promote and inform attendees on organic certification. NOFA/RI also would be in attendance to promote organic agriculture.

Dan Lawton made a motion, seconded by Robert Mastin, to recommend that the next OAB meeting be scheduled for Monday, November 14, 2011, at 10:00 a.m.

The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 11:24 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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