

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

Minutes of Public Meeting of November 14, 2011

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

Members Present: Brian Simmons, Dan Lawton, Michael Merner, Peter Susi

Members Absent: Robert Mastin

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

Others Present: None

The meeting began at 10:04 a.m. at the Division of Agriculture, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI. A quorum of board members was present.

Peter Susi made a motion, seconded by Brian Simmons, to appoint Dan Lawton as Chairman of the Organic Advisory Board. The motion was approved unanimously.

Peter Susi made a motion, seconded by Brian Simmons, to approve the minutes from the OAB meeting of January 24, 2011, without corrections. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dan Lawton informed about the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Rhode Island (NOFA/RI) interest in creating a list of local sources of products approved for use in organic production. Matt Green informed that products are reviewed as requested on organic plans of applicants for organic certification, and that source information could be provided of products currently approved for use on certified organic operations. It was discussed that general product information is available on the OMRI and other organic certifier websites, and that organic operations must receive approval from their certifier prior to use of any products in organic production or handling.

Brian Simmons requested that information be sent to organic operations on allowed application rates and amounts of fertilizers containing sodium (Chilean) nitrate. Matt Green informed that the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) of the National Organic Program (NOP) has recommended that sodium nitrate be re-listed in the National List section of the Standards without annotation, thereby prohibiting this material for use in organic crop production.* If subsequent NOSB recommendation and NOP rulemaking prohibit this material, fertilizer products containing this substance would be prohibited. Matt will pass along information to organic operators as it is received regarding any expected status change of sodium nitrate, as well as information on acceptable rates and amounts of approved fertilizers containing sodium nitrate according to restrictions on use.

*Additional notation as requested on board's review of minutes: NOSB recommended 4/29/11 to NOP to pursue rulemaking for the re-listing of sodium nitrate at NOP Standard 205.602(g) without annotation. Without such re-listing, October 21, 2012, is the sunset date at which the substance would drop from the national list and become an unrestricted nonsynthetic substance. Therefore recommended rulemaking effective prior to that date would list the substance without the current restriction annotation, prohibiting all use of sodium nitrate in organic crops production. A proposed rule for re-listing of sodium nitrate has not yet been published by the NOP.

2012 certification fees and application deadlines were discussed. Matt Green informed that maintaining the fee for certification at \$200 is expected to cover estimated fees to be charged by USDA to the Division to maintain organic certifier accreditation; 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, was administered in 2011 and could be maintained in 2012.

Dan Lawton made a motion, seconded by Brian Simmons, to recommend keeping the 2012 application deadline for producers at March 15, and for handler updates prior to their date of certification, 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 USDA organic certification cost-share programs administered by the Division are in effect in 2011-2012, through which eligible operations may apply for partial reimbursement of organic certification costs. 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 10/1/11 through 9/30/12.

Brian Simmons made a motion, seconded by Michael Merner, to recommend that the next OAB meeting be scheduled for Monday, January 23, 2012, at 10:00 a.m. The motion was approved unanimously.

Biodiversity Certification Program for RI Farms and Forests initiative at URI was discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matt Green
Environmental Scientist
RIDEM Division of Agriculture