

USDA Organic Regulations Topic Of Feb. 21 Meeting

BIRD-IN-HAND (Lancaster Co.) — Effective Feb. 21, the USDA organic rule will be the law of the land. It is vitally important that organic farmers and those considering organic certification understand how to work under the new regulations as soon as possible.

After the new law goes into effect, there is an 18-month phase-in period. That's not a lot of time, especially for livestock farmers and food processors.

Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO) will hold a training on the new regulations at its Southeast Regional Meeting on Feb. 21, in Bird-in-Hand. The presentation will be conducted by Leslie Zuck, executive director of PCO, along with PCO staff, industry experts and organic inspectors. Topics will cover procedures for organic certification of crops and livestock, processing and handling operation and materials allowed for organic production.

Specific requirements will be discussed and participants will be encouraged to ask questions pertinent to their operations. For example, once a dairy herd is converted to organic, all replacement animals must be certified

organic. This is a change from current standards and may raise questions about the source of dairy heifers.

Another change requires that all young dairy stock be managed organically from before birth (last trimester of gestation). Outdoor access will be discussed, as it is required for all animals, including poultry.

The new regulations impose more restrictions on compost production. Organic producers must now work with a new material list known as "The National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances." A copy of the new regulations and the National List will be handed out at the meeting.

Other Talks Focus On Crop Rotations, Tillage Practices, GMO Contamination

PCO is delighted to host Mary-Howell and Klaas Martens again this year as guest speakers at the meeting. In addition to showing their slide presentation and talking about real-life organic farming successes, Mary-Howell will delve into the trials and tribulations of protecting our organic farms from GMO contamination.

Klaas and Mary-Howell farm about 1,100 acres of soybeans, corn, small grains, red kidney beans, and processing sweet corn in the Finger Lakes area of New York. They also have a rapidly-growing organic animal feed business. Developing viable markets for organic crops is an ongoing project.

By paying careful attention to soil fertility management and various cultural weed control ap-

proaches, they are able to achieve very good weed control, high yields, and consistent good quality crops. Well-planned crop rotation breaks many weed and pest cycles, and helps maintain high soil fertility with a minimal need for purchased amendments.

The use of blind tillage implements, such as a coil tine harrow and a rotary hoe, effectively control many weeds before crop emergence, and a tractor equipped with both front and

back mounted cultivators is used to clean any remaining weeds from row middles. They have "how to" slides showing these innovative tillage practices and customized equipment.

For additional information: Pennsylvania Certified Organic, 1919 Gen. Potter Hwy., Suite 1, Centre Hall, PA 16828; phone: (814) 364-1344; fax (814) 364-4431; e-mail PaOrganic@aol.com; <http://home-town.aol.com/paorganic>.

OSU Ag Economist: Beans Take Hit in USDA Report

COLUMBUS, Ohio - A U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) report recently released increased the soybean carryout by 25 million bushels, fooling the grain trade that expected increased export volume related to Europe's concerns over "mad" cow disease.

"It looks like the report hammered the soybean market again," said agricultural economist Allan Lines, Ohio State University. "From the point of view

of the report, it did just the opposite of what the market thought soybeans would do."

USDA expects a 345-million-bushel carryout, an increase from 320 million bushels projected in its January report. Both numbers were a lot higher than the pre-report trade guesses for a 295-million-bushel carryout, Lines said.

The report upended the trade expectations for increased soy-meal exports to Europe in re-

sponse to those countries' recent bans on using meat and bone meal in animal feeds as a precaution against mad cow disease.

However, Europe's beef demand has plummeted anyway, thus reducing the need for soy-meal as an alternative feed for livestock. "Across western Europe, meat consumption has dropped by 30 percent and with that, there is less demand for our bean meal," Lines said. "When you start slaughtering all those potentially diseased cattle, as they have been doing recently, there aren't a heck of a lot of cows left to feed."

Other developments on the international scene also gave a pessimistic outlook for U.S. bean exports, Lines said. Soybean exports took a hit as Southeast Asian palm oil producers geared up production. In South America, a record soybean crop is expected. "Those combined factors just don't spell anything good for our exports," Lines said.

For corn, the carryout news wasn't good, but at least it wasn't as devastating as it was for soybeans, Lines said. USDA projected a 1.891-billion-bushel carryout, which was above the trade estimate of 1.85 billion bushels. However both numbers "went in the same direction" since USDA's January projection for a 1.806-billion-bushel carryout, Lines said.

"Corn hurt a little bit, but not like the beans," Lines said. "The trade was expecting that kind of thing."

Lines attributed the increased corn carryout to competition from Argentina and China, both of which can draw on either high production or existing stocks to fill the world's orders. Another issue might be that some Asian buyers might be wary of U.S. corn supplies that were found to be contaminated with the genetically modified StarLink corn not approved for human consumption, Lines said.

On the domestic front, though, ethanol production is increasing as "new plants are coming on stream," to meet the demand for an alternative to the MBTE gasoline additive that was found to be harmful to water supplies, Lines said.

Lines said the report doesn't contain anything drastic enough to force U.S. farmers to change their planting plans for spring. USDA will be releasing its 2001 prospective plantings report on March 30.

As for marketing strategies, Lines advises, "Be in a protective environment on beans." Think about forward contracting soybeans for late winter or March and then take advantage of a generous loan deficiency payment at harvest, he said.

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Saturday March 24, 2001

Tours will start at 9:30 AM and continue throughout the day. Speakers from 10:30 - 2:30 PM. Located at Route 422 and North 16th street in Lebanon.

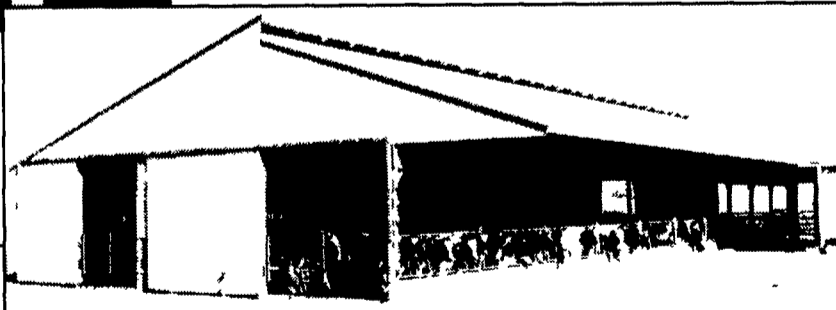
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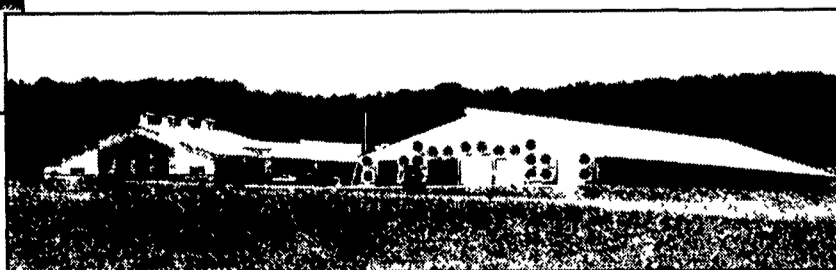
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