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2021 Inspections & COVID-19

Date: October 2020
To: NOFA-NY Certified Organic Farms and Operations
RE: 2021 Inspections & COVID-19

NOFA-NY is currently planning to perform on-site inspections for the 2021 season; continuing to follow any NYS required safety protocols to protect the health of our inspectors, certified operations, and communities while ensuring compliance with the USDA organic regulations. However, note that on-site inspections could be halted if additional COVID concerns arise or as mandated. If the COVID-19 pandemic continues, alternative inspections such as virtual inspections and records audits may continue to be offered in 2021 based on inspector and operation preferences as well as risk assessments. Below describes how we plan to continue with on-site inspections through the 2021 season if the pandemic is still a risk.

On-Site Inspections

Inspections will minimize COVID-19 risk by following a required safety plan, limiting the on-site time, and may use virtual methods when possible for segments of the inspection. The inspector will work with you to determine approach and technology best suited for your operation.

For us to best serve you and follow requirements per NYS, all operations must be fully cooperative with the following safety precautions during the on-site portion of inspections:

- All participants must be healthy with no respiratory/COVID-19 symptoms in the past two weeks.
- Observe social distancing requirements of at least six feet distance and no direct human contact.
- Wear face masks/coverings for the duration of the inspection.
- Minimize the number of people involved in the on-site portion of the inspection.
- Schedule the inspection at a time when there is low worker density on-site.
- Assist inspectors as needed so they can avoid touching things on-site.
- Provide access to all areas, some of which may need to be inspected by the inspector alone.
- Cooperate and coordinate with the inspector to provide remote access to key staff, documents, and other resources needed to verify organic compliance.
- Where WHO, CDC, regional, state, or local guidelines require more strict precautions, those must be followed and communicated to the inspector in advance.

Your inspector will review the safety plan with you prior to scheduling the inspection. Please clearly communicate with your inspector any extra precautions or concerns. It is critical that all parties adhere to the protocols. Operations who refuse to follow protocols will be responsible for all costs of an incomplete inspection, as well as any follow up inspections required to verify compliance with the organic regulations.

We appreciate your efforts to work with the inspector. Thank you for your understanding as we create the safest space possible to continue to certify your operation to the organic standards. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the certification office.

Thank you!