

Standards Interpretation Committee Questions and Answers Regarding National Standards for Organic Agriculture

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, in partnership with the Organic Federation of Canada, has developed the Organic Standards Interpretation Committee (SIC). The objective of the Committee is to provide, to the Canada Organic Office, interpretive guidance on issues related to the National Standards for Organic Agriculture (CAN/CGSB 32.310 and CAN/CGSB32.311).



Below are proposed answers to questions, raised by organic stakeholders, regarding the National Standards for Organic Agriculture. The proposed responses are subject to a 60 day comment period. All comments regarding these answers should be sent to OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca

Comment Period: August 28th to October 28th 2013

5. CROP PRODUCTION

5.2 Environmental Factors

Would dipping untreated wooden posts in paraffin wax or using a polyethylene sleeve be allowed under 5.2.2? (186)

Yes. Paraffin or polyethylene coverings can be used. The prohibition of wood treatments in 5.2.2 was aimed at eliminating toxins commonly used to prolong the life of wooden posts.

6. LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

6.3 Transition to Organic

When a beef cow herd is being transitioned to organic, does 6.3.3 give permission to use the transitional feed being produced on the farm, to feed gestating animals whose offspring will be eligible for sale as organic? (179)

Yes. Provided that the timing of the completion of the transition of the land on which the feed has been grown coincides with or precedes the birth of the organic offspring.

7. SPECIFIC PRODUCTION REQUIREMENTS

7.3 Mushroom Production

Can conventional straw be used as a compost feedstock for compost that is used to grow organic mushrooms? (178) (Ref: Question 142)

No. 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 c) indicate that the straw must be "in accordance with the Standard" or "obtained from vegetation grown in areas free of substances prohibited by par. 1.4.1 for at least three years, and shall be composted in accordance with this standard."

8. PREPARATION AND HANDLING OF ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Can water that has been processed through an alkaline filtration system be used in the preparation or processing of an organic food product? (185)

Providing the resulting water falls within Health Canada's Guidelines for Drinking Water; pH 6.5 to 8.5 and no substances or processes prohibited by the Standard are used, the water is acceptable.

Does the prohibition against using both the organic and non-organic form of an ingredient (8.2.5) apply to different varieties of grapes used in a wine, or different flours (e.g. barley and wheat) used to bake a single bread? (173)

Under 8.2.5, ingredients that are recognized as having distinct qualities could be considered as separate ingredients, even when they fall into the same general category of ingredients such as "flour" or "grapes". In the examples given, it would be possible to use one ingredient in organic form and the other in non-organic form without violating 8.2.5. For products that are organic (>95%), this is restricted to when the non-organic agricultural ingredient is less than 5% of the total and is not commercially available in organic form. For products between 70-95% organic content, commercial availability does not apply. In both categories, the organic and the non-organic ingredients must be listed on the label to be compliant with labelling requirements in the OPR and the guidelines from CFIA.

PERMITTED SUBSTANCES LISTS

4.2 Soil Amendments and Crop Nutrition

If a blended, multi-ingredient soil amendment contains non-organic molasses, can it be used in organic production? (188)

No. If molasses is available in organic form, the use of non-organic molasses would render the product non-compliant with the Standard. The only exception would be when organic molasses is not commercially available.