

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

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Public Comment Period: October 27th to December 23rd 2014

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5. Crop production

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

Is embryo transfer (the collection of eggs from one female and subsequent implantation in another animal to complete gestation) allowed? (240)

No. In 6.5 (c) the Standard prohibits embryo transfer techniques in organic livestock.

7.1 Apiculture

Is it possible to pasteurize organic honey? (229)

No. Organic honey may not be pasteurized. Clause 7.1.15.2 requires that the operator “preserve and protect the quality and organic integrity of the honey” after it is harvested. Clause 7.1.15.4 limits the heating of honey to 35 C for extraction and 47C for decrystallization. While not explicitly referring to pasteurization, these restrictions clearly imply that the standard's intention is to prohibit pasteurization which requires much higher temperatures.

7.2 Maple products

Is it necessary to verify the quality of water used for cleaning/rinsing the osmosis membrane in maple equipment? (230)

No. The Standard does not call for evaluation of water quality used for rinsing the osmosis membrane in maple production.

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.

Permitted Substances Lists

Dextrose

Can Dextrose be used as a flavouring agent in organic products? (236)

Yes. Organic dextrose may be used as a flavouring agent in organic production.

Table 4.2 – Carbon Black

Can a biodegradable mulch contain Carbon Black (CAS-1333-86-4)? Can it contain ingredients from petroleum sources? (227)

Carbon black derived from petroleum sources does not meet the criteria for biodegradability necessary for fully biodegradable mulches. Carbon black derived from plant or animal sources would be permitted as these substances are listed on Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 – Trace contaminants

Relating to table 4.2 "Compost obtained from off-farm sources", which elements are considered "trace contaminants"? (231)

"Trace Contaminants" in Table 4.2, "Compost obtained from Off-Farm Sources" refers only to heavy metals, not trace elements considered plant nutrients.

Table 5.2 – Yeast and Derivatives

"Yeasts" are listed on Table 5.2. Are the derivatives of yeast, namely the yeast cell wall products, also allowed? (238)

Yes. Yeast and yeast cell wall products are allowed as prebiotic feed supplements.

Table 6.6 - Cellulose

Can cellulose be used in any other way than the one specified in table 6.6 of the PSL, for example as a flow agent in grated cheese? (235)

No. Cellulose is listed in Table 6.6, Processing Aids, which means that it may be used as a processing aid only, not as an ingredient.