

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 30 day comment period. All comments regarding these answers should be sent to OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca

Comment period – September 30 to October 30, 2019

REPORT

Note: The questions and answers in this report were published in the [Final Questions and Answers](#)- Canadian Organic Standard on December 2, 2019.

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General Principles and management standards

4 Organic Plan

Records for short-shelf life products

Do operators producing short-shelf life products need to keep 5 years of daily production records to satisfy 4.4.5 of CAN/CGSB 32.310? (469)

Yes.

5.1 Land requirements for organic production

Use of GE seeds before transition

Can prohibited substances, including GE seeds, be used by an operator in fields not yet in the 36 months transition period? (468)

Yes. Prohibited substances can be used prior to the start of the 36-month transition period providing the crop is not parallel production with organic crop on the operation. Take note that in the case of GE crops, calculation of transition period begins after harvest and /or destruction of the crop per SIC Q&A 459a.

5.3 Seeds and planting stock

Organic percentage for seeds

Do seed coatings or treatments need to be considered when calculating the organic percentage of an organic seed product? (472)

No. Seed does not fall under Clause 9, therefore a calculation of percentage of organic ingredients is not applicable. The seed needs to be organic and any coating or treatment must be listed in PSL 4.2, 4.3.

5.4 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management

Rotation with crops not under COR

Can an operator use crops not covered under the Canada Organic Regime (COR) (tobacco or cannabis) as part of the operation's rotation and still keep the organic status of the fields? (466)

Yes. Crops that are not covered by the scope of the COR may be grown in a rotation without affecting the organic status of the field(s), provided that they are managed in accordance with the standard.

7.5 Greenhouse crops

Crops grown in production shelters

Is the greenhouse clause (7.5) applicable to berries grown in protective shelters? (454a)

Yes. All applicable requirements in 7.5 must be satisfied excluding 7.5.5 which is specific for greenhouse vegetable crops that are containerized and staked. Please note that this topic is under review during the 2020 revision of the standard.

Composition of growing media

Does a growing media containing a pinch of sand, 10% compost and the balance peat moss meet the requirement of 7.5.4? (454b)

No. The intent of this clause was to establish the profile of the required soil structure to ensure sufficient air and water drainage and nutrient holding capacity. Please note that clarifying language is being developed for the 2020 revision of the standard.

May coconut coir be part of a growing media used in container growing systems? (454c)

Yes. Coir may be used. It is covered by the "Plants and plant by-products" listing in Table 4.2

Could a soil media blend of coir, peat moss, perlite and compost be used to grow perennials? (454d)

No. Soil used in containers to grow perennials should also contain a mineral fraction that is not covered by perlite. It should contain sufficient sand, silt or clay to contribute to the physical soil structure.

Permitted Substances Lists

Crop production

Evaluation of extractants

For substances used in crop production, does the scope of evaluation for extractants require assessment of all materials used or only those that remain in the final product? (443)

For substances used in crop production, only extractants that remain in the final product are subject to evaluation, unless extractants are specifically addressed in the substance annotation.