

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

Public Comment period – from November 2 to December 2, 2020

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Organic Principles and management practices

5. Crop production

External buffer zone

Can a buffer zone be established on land not owned by the operation? 499a

Yes. The buffer zone is measured from the edge of the area treated with a prohibited substance to the edge of the organic crop, regardless of the entity owning/managing the land in the buffer zone.

Buffer zone – immature hedgerow

Does a newly planted, immature hedgerow eliminate the requirement for an 8m buffer zone? 499b

No. When a risk of contamination is present, this new planting is insufficient, and an 8 m buffer zone will need to be put in place until the hedgerow fills in. An effective physical barrier does not have to be 8 metres wide.

7.1 Apiculture

Wax for foundation and comb foundation

Can plastic foundation that has been dipped in non-organic beeswax be used when organic beeswax dipped plastic foundations are not commercially available? 506a

No. The wax covering the plastic foundation must be organic (7.1.13.3).

Can non-organic wax comb foundation be used when organic sources are not commercially available? 506b

No. Non-organic comb foundation may not be used. Organic comb foundation from the operation or from another source is required. (7.1.15.3)

Vitamins and minerals added to organic products

Can vitamins and minerals be used to fortify organic products if not legally required? 500a

No. Unless legally permitted in dairy substitutes that are plant based. See Vitamins and mineral nutrients, PSL 6.4.

Do vitamins and minerals have to be certified organic to be used in organic products with 95% or above organic content? If yes, are commercial availability searches required? 500b

No. Vitamins and minerals are not agricultural products and hence are not certifiable to organic standards. Commercial availability is not applicable as per 9.2.1 a, but there are restrictions in the listing annotations on when they may be used. See Vitamins and mineral nutrients, PSL 6.4.

Permitted substances lists

Potassium nitrate not allowed

Can potassium nitrate be an allowed fertilizer in organic production, if the nitrogen was derived from compliant anaerobic digestate? 502

No. It no longer is a digestate, and neither is it listed in the Potassium listing in PSL, Table 4.2.

Corn steep liquor as an amendment

Is non-organic corn steep liquor allowed as a soil amendment/fertilizer in organic production? 503

No. However, organic corn steep liquor would be permitted. Refer to SIC Q&A 60a for further insight.

Revised wording

Chlorine to disinfect poultry carcasses

Can peracetic acid or chlorine be used to disinfect all types of livestock carcasses? Are there alternative substances or processes? (254) (476)

Peracetic acid may be used in wash or rinse water in direct contact with plant and food including livestock and poultry carcasses (Table 7.3). Chlorinated water may also be used if chlorine level does not exceed maximum limits for safe drinking water (See Table 7.3 - Chlorine compounds). Alternative physical processes for disinfection such as steam, hot water or High-Pressure Processing (HPP) are allowed.