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

Table of content

1. Public Comment Period: April 22nd to June 22nd 2015

1.1 Reassessment of Q60.2 – biodegradability of films made from petroleum products

Does the listing of "fully biodegradable films" in table 4.3 PSL under mulches include films made from petroleum products? (60.2)

Original answer:
No. Mulches made using petroleum are not considered to be "fully biodegradable" and must be removed from the field and may not be incorporated into the soil.

New proposed answer:
The listing could include such films as long as it can be demonstrated that they are fully biodegradable. The clause 1.4.1 does clearly exclude such films if they contain GMOs, nano-technology products, synthetic pesticides or synthetic growth regulators.

Note from SIC - The biodegradability of films made from petroleum products is under review and the Standards Interpretation Committee will be reassessing the compatibility of the use of the mulches with the standard after the Technical Committee has revised the definition of biodegradability and the annotation related to biodegradable mulches.

Being reconsidered and sent back to public comment, Q60.2 is removed from the Final Q&As; it remains the responsibility of the Certifying Bodies to determine the acceptability of crop production inputs.

1.2 Rewording of Q238 – about yeast and yeast derivatives

Yeast Derived Protein

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

Yes. Non organic yeast and yeast cell wall products are allowed as prebiotic feed supplements. Organic yeast and by-products can be used as a protein source.

Reworded answer:

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

1.3 New questions and answers

Scope

Mutagenesis - cisgenesis

Do seeds resulting from mutagenesis or cisgenenis fall within the Standard's prohibition of Genetic Modification? (255)
Mutagenesis and cisgenesis are not prohibited by the Standard. The use of these techniques is limited to combining plant materials from the same taxonomic family.

Offspring of GM seeds/plants

Can the offspring of GM seeds/plants be organic? (256)
No. The use of GE plants or seeds is prohibited.

Crop Production

Parallel production & Hydroponics

Can an operator engage in hydroponic production (not organic) and produce the same products using organic methods? (259)

5.1.2 does not allow parallel production for greenhouse annual crops. The production of visually indistinguishable plants is not allowed, regardless of the non-organic method of production

Livestock Production

Transitioning of dairy calves

Can a dairy calf which is part of an organic operation be fed conventional milk, then transitioned back to organic status? (see 6.2.2 d) (259)

No. 6.2.2.d applies only to herds in transition.

Transitional feed

Can the use of feed from transitional land allowed in 6.3.3 be extended to apply after the transition of the livestock is complete? (257)

No. 6.3.3 applies exclusively to the last year of transition of the herd.

Preparation and Handling of Organic Products

Lactoserum for feed

Can non organic lactoserum be used as feed if it is documented that organic lactoserum is not commercially available? (258)

No. Livestock Feed must contain 100% organic ingredients. (8.2.1 d)

2. Report - Comment period February-April 2015

The following Q&As are added to the Final Q&As section.

Specific Production Requirements

Sprout Production

Can bean sprout grown hydroponically be certified organic? (245)
Hydroponics is defined as the "Cultivation of plants in aqueous nutrient solutions without the aid of soil" (see section 3 of the standards for the complete definition). Since sprouting of beans does not use a nutrient solution, it is not considered hydroponics. Section 7.4 addresses the production of sprouts.

Wild Crops

Commented, not modified
Can wild seaweed meal be certified? (244)
Yes, seaweed meal can be certified under Section 7.6 - Wild crops - if it is for a food or feed use.

Permitted Substances Lists

Clove Oil

Is clove oil allowed as an organic sprout inhibitor for potatoes? (27)
Table 4.3 of the PSL lists "plant extracts, oils and preparations" as acceptable crop production aids. Clove oil would be acceptable for use on potatoes.

Citric Acid

Can citric acid be used as a pH adjuster during the extraction of Fulvic Acid? (248)
Yes. Citric acid is allowed as a pH adjuster in 32.311 Table 4.3.