

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 Canadian Food Inspection Agency Office interpretive guidance on issues related to the National Standards for Organic Agriculture (CAN/CGSB-32.310 and CAN/CGSB-32.311).

ACTIVITY REPORT

Public comment – 15 to 30 June, 2021

COMMENTED - NO MODIFICATION - TRANSFERRED TO FINAL Q&As

Is the manufacturer of a detergent required to test the biodegradability of its product based on the definition of "biodegradable" in clause 3.11 of the Canadian Organic Standard (CAN/CGSB 32.310)? (515.1)

In the 2020 version of CAN/CGSB-32.310, the definition of "biodegradable" (3.11) applies specifically to inputs and production aids in crop and livestock production. For detergents, biodegradability shall be assessed based on OECD definitions and standards; refer to Detergents, Table 7.4 of the PSL. Therefore, the manufacturer shall demonstrate that the biodegradability of the detergent meets or exceeds the guidelines defined by the OECD when assessing conformity to CAN/CGSB-32.310.

Can a so-called biodegradable detergent contain non-listed or restricted substances such as phosphoric acid, whose use is only permitted for dairy equipment? (515.2)

Yes. Detergents must meet the biodegradability requirements as outlined in Table 7.4 of Section 32-311. There are no other restrictions.

NOT COMMENTED - TRANSFERRED TO FINAL Q&As

Clove oil is permitted as a post-harvest sprout inhibitor for potatoes (Table 8.3). Can other plant oils, such as mint oil, be used for this purpose? (514)

Although only clove oil is specified in Table 8.3, following consultation with the PSL Preparation Working Group, the SIC has clarified that oils from three plant families, specifically Lamiaceae (mint family), Apiaceae/Umbelliferae (celery family) and Myrtaceae (clove family), may be used as post-harvest sprout inhibitors for potatoes.

Background on this SIC interpretation

On March 24, 2021, the Standards Interpretation Committee of Canada (SIC) submitted the following interpretation for public comment:

Substances listed in Table 4.2, such as 'Plant extracts, oils and preparations' are for crop production, not for post-harvest unless otherwise annotated. Therefore, non-organic plant oils, other than clove oil, may not be used as they are not listed in Table 8.3, Post-harvest substances (see 8.3.5, 32.310). But ORGANIC mint oil products may be used as sprout inhibitors as they are not prohibited by 32.310 - 1.4 or 1.5.

The Canadian potato industry reacted strongly: why wouldn't a non-organic vegetable oil that is equivalent to clove oil be allowed to inhibit sprouting in potatoes?

The SIC consulted with the Permitted Substances List Working Group (PSL WG), which was active in the 2020 revision of the Canadian Organic Standard, to clarify the rationale for the sole listing of clove oil as a sprout inhibitor in Table 8.3 – Post-Harvest Substances, and to determine whether other plant oils would be equivalent and acceptable.

The PSL WG agreed that non-organic mint oil does not threaten the biological integrity of the product when used as a sprout inhibitor and is not included in Table 8.3 only because no specific request for inclusion was submitted during the 2020 review. Consequently, the PSL WG recommended that the SIC expand the list of acceptable sprout inhibitors in Table 8.3 so that oils from three specific plant families - Lamiaceae (mint family), Apiaceae/Umbelliferae (celery family), and Myrtaceae (clove family) - can be used as sprout inhibitors in organic production.

Following the recommendation of the PSL Working Group, the SIC is therefore submitting for public consultation a revised interpretation about the acceptability of plant oils other than clove oil as post-harvest substances.

Organic sprout inhibitors Potatoes caught in red tape

By Janet Wallace

All it takes is one sprout to make a potato unmarketable. A farmer can grow a perfect crop and harvest beautiful, undamaged tubers, then lose the entire crop if it starts to sprout. Consequently, farmers, processors and wholesalers take steps to inhibit this natural sprouting process.



Cold storage conditions delay sprouting, but only for so long. Also, there is a narrow window of ideal storage temperatures. Long-term storage below 7C leads to a conversion of starch to sugar, which leads to blackening when fried. To inhibit sprouting, most North American non-organic farmers treat potatoes with isopropyl N-(3-chlorophenyl) carbamate, a herbicide also known as chloroprotham or CIPC.

Due to health concerns, this product is being phased out in Europe for all farms (organic and non-organic). CIPC is not permitted in organic production.

For Canadian organic farmers, finding a suitable sprout inhibitor is a challenge.

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