

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 (Agri-SIC).

The objective of the Committee is to provide to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency interpretive guidance on issues related to the National Standards for Organic Agriculture (CAN/CGSB-32.310 and CAN/CGSB-32.311).



Public Comment Period – May 5 to June 5, 2022

All the Questions and answers have been transferred to [Final Q&As section](#) on OFC website on June 15, 2022.

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UNDER PUBLIC COMMENT

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Organic principles and management standards

Parallel production after harvest

Do organic and conventional crops need to be visually distinguishable while in the field, or only once harvested such as organic corn grown for grain and conventional corn grown for silage? (552)

Organic and conventional crops only need to be visually distinguishable after harvest to not be considered parallel production.

Frass from insects in mushroom production

COMMENTED – NOT REVISED

In organic mushroom production, is insect frass considered an 'other agricultural substance' as per CAN/CGSB-32.310: 7.3.2.3, and would insect feed need to be organic? Or would the final product need to be composted? (548.2)

Without a listing in the PSL, insect frass shall be considered as Animal manure. From an organic source or not, insect frass, shall be composted for use in mushroom production as per 7.3.2.2

Sunlight calculation in greenhouse

COMMENTED – REVISED WORDING

How much sunlight is needed to fulfill the requirement of primary source of light as indicated by 7.5.4? (551)

The photosynthetically active radiation (PAR) coming from sunlight must exceed 50% of the light delivered to the photosynthetic area over the total crop production period. This will need to be demonstrated by the operator If supplemental light is used (beyond on-farm seedling production)."

Permitted substances lists

Cobalt and selenium

COMMENTED – NOT REVISED

Are the micronutrients permitted under the Canadian Organic Standards limited to the micronutrients listed under PSL Table 4.2? Are unlisted micronutrients such as cobalt and selenium permitted, and if yes, are there any restrictions to the type of cobalt and selenium that can be used? (553)

The permitted Micronutrients listing is definitive. Other unlisted substances are permitted if they comply with other entries such as Mined Minerals, unprocessed. Use of these substances shall not exceed plant requirements or contaminate crops or water bodies (3.46 & 5.4.4, 32.310).

Note - A request for modification is to be submitted during the review of the Canadian Organic Standards to add selenium and cobalt to the list of Micronutrients in Table 4.2.

Frass from insects

COMMENTED – NOT REVISED

Should frass from insects (i.e., black soldier fly larvae) be reviewed as per CAN/CGSB-32.311 Table 4.2 Worm castings for use as input in crop production? (548.1)

No. Without a listing in the PSL Table 4.2, insect frass shall be considered as Animal manure, shall be from organic insects if commercially available (32.310 - 5.5.1) and comply with either 5.5.2 or 5.5.3. Insect frass would also be a permitted Compost feedstock (Table 4.2).

REWORDED Q&As

Transition – New management

COMMENTED – NOT REVISED

In the case where there is a change in management of an operation, is a 12-month transition period necessary? (58)

No. A change in management or control by a new owner/operator/manager of an organic operation does not require a transition period.

Growing media for propagules

7.5.2.1 describes acceptable soil composition for container systems. However, layering and cutting propagation techniques may require an initial soilless rooting medium that provides no nutrition to propagated plants (water, moist air, perlite, vermiculite, sand, peat moss). Can soilless media be used for cutting and layering plant propagation? (204.2)

Plant nutrition must be based on soil as defined in 3.73 and 7.5.2.1 of CAN/CGSB-32.311. This nutrition cannot be brought through hydroponic or aeroponic production methods. However, when a propagule needs no nutrition (cutting, layering, initial seed sprouting stage), it is possible to use a medium that does not meet criteria of 7.5.2.1 of CAN/CGSB-32.311 as long as it does not contain prohibited substances (see 1.5) and it is composed only of substances listed in Table 4.2 (Column 1) of CAN/CGSB-32.311.