

Organic Matters

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Organically Speaking

The summer heat is on full blast, and in much of the world temperature norms are breaking boundaries and setting all-time records. **I am grounded each day by knowing that your work is contributing to solving our climate crises**, whether that's by caring for the health of your soil, steering clear of harmful chemicals, or contributing to your local food network, which importantly cuts down on fossil fuel emissions from transporting goods long distances.

This summer marks two years since I accepted my position at PCO, and I was reminded recently of the saying, "Change is inevitable, but growth is a choice." Because organic agriculture is centered around understanding natural systems and conserving important resources, our community understands the natural limits to growth in production. But there is more than one way to measure growth through change. An ecosystem will always attempt to compensate for imbalanced growth, striving toward balance, but the levels of quality in ecosystem health, human health, and mutual care are also important in the process. Focusing on specific systems and key metrics of our work, we have been finding our place of balance both quantitatively and qualitatively at PCO through this time of change.

In recent months, **a major rewrite of PCO's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws was approved**, which will help us be a more agile organization better prepared to serve your needs. Streamlining things as we have will result in savings in expenses and staff time and offer new opportunities for clients to contribute to board decisions through Advisory Committees.

In addition to adding more review staff, we have recently added a Client Services Team (CST) to help direct inquiries and assist new clients, giving our review staff more dedicated time to focus on file reviews uninterrupted. We are also adding additional services, such as Regenerative Organic Certified™ (ROC), and expanding into generating new partnerships and revenue streams through grant writing. I have also been working in support

of finding solutions to the human capital issues we face in organic, particularly with inspectors and the inspections model.

With increased oversight of organic crops and production and scrutiny of records with the Origin of Livestock (OOL) and Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) rules coming up soon on the horizon, **we will all have to grow our ability to accommodate these changes in documentation and record keeping.** We will be proactively communicating these changes to you, so please open all client letters, monthly e-newsletters, and next issues of *Organic Matters*.

The foundation of all this work is PCO's culture, and guiding our work is our strategic plan, both of which we are in the process of honing and strengthening. Our updated strategic plan, DEI purpose statement, and mission and vision, are all on track to be finalized by the end of 2022. While turnover has been a problem in our industry and was exacerbated by COVID-19, so far PCO has kept below general turnover rates and we have retained all new hires in the past two years, a testament to our rigorous and team-centric hiring processes and core values. We are looking forward to our first in-person staff gathering since 2019, happening at the end of July, and we are continuing to learn how to better communicate and support each other in a remote work environment.

With visits recently to PCO farms and operations including mushroom, grass-fed organic, and poultry scopes, I am enjoying meeting you and learning how we can be a better partner in serving your certification needs. As always, please feel free to reach out to me directly with feedback, questions, or concerns.

In service,



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VISION

All communities are enriched through organic food and farming

MISSION

To ensure the integrity of organic products and serve our farming community

CORE VALUES

1. **People & Service** – Keep people at the center of every action, interaction, and decision
2. **Organic Spirit & Environment** – Promote restorative practices that improve the world for future generations
3. **Honesty & Integrity** – Embrace transparency and integrity in all our work.

Organic Matters

Summer 2022



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COVER PHOTO: Alex Smith, *Spiral Path Farm*.

PCO Producer Profile: Denison Farm

Reflections on Farming and the Future

BY GABRIELLE ROVEGNO, CERTIFICATION SPECIALIST

Meet PCO clients Justine and Brian Denison of Denison Farm LLC. Justine and Brian manage a diversified vegetable operation on 164 acres of rich bottomland, wooded ridges, pasture/hayfields, marsh, and streams in the upper Hudson Valley of New York. The Denisons sell their fruits and vegetables through a 500-member CSA (community supported agriculture) and wholesale to local markets.

When thinking about just one of the many wonderful PCO producers to feature for this Organic Matters issue, the Denisons were top of mind. With every phone call about inputs or Annual Update questions, PCO gets a glimpse of how organic matters are managed and why organic *matters* to Denison Farm. Though the Denisons have been farming since the 1980s, they became certified for the first time in 2015. Through their years farming, Brian and Justine have farmed across the spectrum; they've moved from Maine to New York, grown from farming one acre part time to managing 20 member crews and selling their products wholesale and direct to consumers.

To better picture the Denisons, think a 2022 American Gothic; Brian with a pitchfork and Justine a laptop.

When diving into their roles on the farm, Justine remarked "Brian and I are such a good team. He is the grower and makes all the decisions regarding what we grow and how we grow it, I do everything else, the invisible work!" She's HR, PR, operations manager, marketer, oversees all the documentation PCO asks for and together as partners they manage Denison Farm.

After talking unfiltered for 2 hours – this time not as their Certifier – it is their passion and honest optimism that draws people in; and PCO is not the only one to take notice. The Denisons have been featured in many news articles, public radio pieces and even had their real life personas played by actors in a documentary play! Justine believes all this attention may be due to their proximity to the State capital and popularity of the Hudson Valley, but we believe it is their charisma and devotion to the land that draws people to their



Justine and Brian Denison

story. Although, Justine does acknowledge, "I'm always looking for ways to become a rockstar so we don't have to work so hard; it's hard not to when I see Brian working 12-hour days, maybe I need to learn how to write a good farm romance novel."

While this "Organic Matters" article may or may not be their big break for stardom, the Denisons are no strangers to the hard work it takes to be organic farmers. Later in our conversation, Justine discussed the challenges of hiring skilled, professional, farm labor, noting "this work is not laid back and it's romantic for about five minutes." *Perhaps her romance novel will need another muse.*

Justine and Brian met while Brian was earning his degree in Forestry from University of Maine; always wanting to be a farmer Brian also minored in Animal and Veterinary Science. After earning her degree in Early Childhood Education, Justine sat in on one of Brian's livestock classes, which she remembers being "mostly about sheep." And while they don't raise sheep, it was here, their journey tending the land began.

They started with one acre of cabbage and Brian's draft horses. Cultivating that acre of cabbage worked around Brian's forestry job, Brian's other job managing a Christmas tree operation and Justine's breaks in the school year. The Denisons along with 3 other local farmers started a farm stand called Four Farmers. The market started just after Justine's last day teaching and ran through Labor Day. Five days/week, 9am–2pm, they set up the pavilion and sold crops on behalf of the four farmers. One grew raspberries and asparagus, another strawberries and corn, the Denisons brought brassicas. Each operation grew different fruits and vegetables and all together Justine says they did pretty well. She managed the market with another teacher and to this day, says it was one of her favorite jobs. Looking back fondly, Justine remarks that she would love

to do a cooperative CSA. She really enjoyed the collaborative nature of Four Farmers, noting "it's hard to grow everything, the land supports certain crops better than others. We all have different soil and what may grow well for one farmer may not for another."

Their farm kept growing from one to 3.5 to 15 acres, all the while Justine was still working full time. The Denison's then moved to Bowdoinham, Maine where they started a family and full time farming.

Farming in Bowdoinham for 16 years, Justine and Brian managed a 20 person crew, 110 acres under cultivation and sold to markets in Portland and Boston, "[they] were big conventional farmers," with vast markets.

Justine recalls the beauty of the land they farmed, but it was coupled with health complications for all members of the family. Their farmland was located below high-tension power lines, nitrates and heavy metals were found in the water, and Brian was spraying a lot of pesticides.

It was when their youngest daughter developed similar health challenges as the rest of the family that they decided to start farming organically. In doing so, the Denisons decided to move into smaller retail markets like farmers markets and CSAs.

Leaving Bowdoinham in 1998, Brian and Justine took a few years to look for land that they could own. After moving west, bit by bit, in 2004, at 50 years old Justine and Brian stopped renting and became land owners in Schaghticoke, NY. The land they purchased had been previously farmed and certified by Janet Britt of Buttermilk Falls Organic Farm.

Upon starting in Schaghticoke, the Denisons did not immediately continue Buttermilk Falls's certification, though they were farming with organic values. Between teaching, raising a family and moving their operation to new land there was a lot going on. After settling in, Denison Farm became Certified Naturally Grown, but after some time, that just wasn't enough for Justine. Justine also felt with certified organic there would be less customer explanation about their growing practices. When they began the process of becoming certified Justine explains that she didn't know she had a choice, believing "if you live in New York, you are certified by New York." It was a local grocer who told her "not all certifiers are the



Brian in the greenhouse with tomato seedlings.

same, you have to find a good one." Justine invested time going to field days, information sessions and asking other organic producers about their certifiers.

Justine chose PCO after a referral from her neighbor who provides the egg share for the Denisons' CSA. Through all the changes that come with certification; like changing certification specialists, the switch to the new database, updated NOP regulations, Justine feels "[PCO] is on her team [and] wants to bring out the best in our certified operation."

Organic matters to Justine, in fact, "it means everything! It means everything about [their] whole life and what [they're] passionate about." For the Denisons, organics is "really critical, it [has] always been critical but at this point especially. It's vital to our health, economy and family and the Earth. That's why I said it means everything." When the Denisons received their first certified organic certificate, Justine posted about it on Facebook. As someone "who doesn't usually share much online" she was overwhelmed by the number of responses and positive comments. Justine is proud of the impact they have by farming the way they do and the feedback and connection they have with their customers. Countless times over the years, they've heard folks say "I didn't know vegetables could taste like this!" Candidly, Justine remarks, "it's not like we grow the best strawberries but it's clean and the customer is really tasting their food." Justine notes that the "responses and comments from the CSA are really moving." She's heard how the Denisons' CSA has changed a whole family and their eating dynamic. "I mean, we got some responses from our bagged radishes in Maine," Justine notes, "but now I know who our food is going to and that is powerful."

When diving into challenges organic operations face, Justine said, "let's get this straight, it's not the paperwork or the money, when people say that, no." For Denison farm she feels the greatest challenges lie in the growing, not the process of organic certification. Currently, the Denisons are experiencing challenges with larger supply chain issues, and Brian immediately remarked that professional, experienced labor is a

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Justine at the Troy Farmers Market.

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challenge followed by the changing climate. Justine noted that some years are better than others but overall the climate has had a huge impact and it exacerbates other challenges like pests and water. Last July, New York had one of the wettest on record! The creek that runs through the Denison's property has experienced flooding from three, hundred year storms in the years since Hurricane Irene in 2011. "Climate change is creating a whole new level of stress, creating weather events that are so severe and unpredictable."

Five years ago, at 62, Justine and Brian sat down with financial advisors and began their farm succession plan. They don't know what it will look like exactly, but she says, "we do know we will farm in retirement, it will look different, and that feels right for us." COVID catalyzed their retirement from farmers markets, they've also shaved off a few crops, and though they don't have an exact timeline for downsizing, or specifics about dropping down to a certain amount of acreage, they discuss it daily. There will be more time for Brian to paddle and for Justine to pen a series of children's books. The Denisons do hope to go back to Maine or Vermont and farm on one track of land; it is Brian's dream to have one field and one irrigation line run versus the multi-location field set-up they have now.

While the Denisons would love to pass the land off to future organic farmers, Justine notes "I don't see many young folks interested in how Brian and I farmed," with the challenges of H2A labor, interstate trucking, and wholesale markets. Justine acknowledges the important role urban farmers are playing by "feeding and engaging their communities," but for her, she loves the land and what that space affords them. "I wish we could make money cover cropping," Justine enthusiastically remarks, "I love looking out and seeing cover crops. They are

beautiful and I know their purpose and it's incredible. That's what keeps us going."

Another challenge facing the Hudson Valley is the rise of 'Fairy Tale Farms.' Justine discussed the recent New York Times profile on the influx of urbanites moving to the agricultural areas outside of major cities like New York, Seattle and Austin. New folks have moved in, with hopes of getting more fresh air, space and sometimes starting agricultural enterprises like farm weddings, corporate retreat spaces, farm experiences etc. As a result it has put a strain on the existing farmers in the region. For those who haven't grown up in agriculture, it's the image of the "country" new transplants have that has been at odds with manure spreading, tractor traffic and the realities of commercial farming.

In talking about the future for Denison Farms, we also discussed what Justine sees for the future of organics, and what she would say to Secretary Vilsack if given the chance. Chuckling, she said "we need more support." Specifically, "more awareness around the necessity of supporting smaller farms and the diversity within 'small' farms." While some "see [Denison Farm] as 'the man,' and industrial in certain ways," they are a small farm with connection between their cover crops and all their CSA members. "We don't have lobbyists, [though] some people think we do and are subsidized," Justine remarks, "which is hysterical, by who!" Amidst all the growing and everything USDA oversees, Justine urges, don't forget to nourish the small, organic farms nourishing the Earth and the people. "It's really helpful to be certified," Justine comments, "there's collectiveness in organics; urban farms, dairies, wholesale operations, certification gives "[us] common ground across the diversity of farms. That's important, [so] we can speak the same language."



Head lettuce fields: colorful lettuce rows, Summer of 2021.

Inspections 101

Tips and Tricks for an Efficient Inspection

BY CORINNE WESH, INSPECTION PROGRAM ASSISTANT MANAGER AND NATHAN LEHRMAN, INSPECTION PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The 2022 inspection season is upon us! To help you prepare for your next inspection and make it efficient for you and your inspector, remember these basics:

SUBMIT YOUR ANNUAL UPDATE ON TIME

The first step in the inspection process is the submission of your Annual Update. Inspectors need your Annual Update to do their work. Take the time to fully complete your Annual Update during the annual update period. Errors or omissions in your reporting may lead to more work for the inspector and longer inspection times for you. Also, remember late submission of your Annual Update may result in delays in scheduling and completing your annual inspection.

COMMUNICATE PROMPTLY WITH YOUR INSPECTOR

After receiving your file, your inspector will contact you to schedule your inspection. Contact may be by phone, email, or letter. Provide timely responses to your inspector.

If you need to change or cancel your scheduled inspection time, contact your inspector right away. Cancellations within 5 days of the time of the inspection may be subject to PCO's cancellation policy and incur a penalty fee.

PREPARE BEFORE YOUR INSPECTOR ARRIVES

Preparation is a key aspect of a successful inspection.

Your inspector's job is to verify that your Organic System Plan reflects the practices and procedures used by your operations.

- Be prepared to take your inspector on a tour of your entire organic operation. A facility and/or farm tour is a required component of organic inspections. Inspectors may also request to view non-organic areas of your operation, if applicable.
- Ensure that all personnel required during the inspection are available to answer the inspector's questions.

- Provide your inspector with updated Materials (sanitizers, fertility amendments, livestock healthcare treatments, etc)

Inspectors also verify that records required by the USDA National Organic Program are maintained at your operation.

- Have all records easily accessible.
- Provide your inspector with updated Standard Operating Procedures, maps, Land Leases, or other required documentation
- If you aren't sure which records your operation is required to keep, look on the PCO website (<https://paorganic.org/certification/already-certified/guidance-documents/>) or contact your Certification Specialist. Remember that inspectors may request to see non-organic production records, as applicable to your operation.

EXPECT TRACEABILITY AUDITS TO BE CONDUCTED

Traceability audits verify the organic integrity of the products you produce or sell. They are required for all certified organic operations regardless of scope, scale, location, or type of production. There are two types of traceability audits that your inspector will conduct: the traceback audit and the mass balance.

■ **Mass balance audit.** Mass balances look at amounts of product moving in and out of your operation over a specific period of time. Your inspector will select a specific time period such as a sales quarter or crop growing season, and evaluate whether sufficient organic ingredients or products were harvested, purchased, or manufactured to equal the final product quantity sold or distributed during the same audited time period.

- Records you will need to have available include:
 - Inventory records
 - Sales records
 - Purchase and receiving records
 - Records of waste, spoilage, personal use, bartering, samples
 - Production records (harvest records, batch records,

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Organic Trade Association Share Summary of Survey Results

Trust Indicators & Value of USDA Organic

BY: KATHRYN POPPITI, CERTIFICATION SPECIALIST

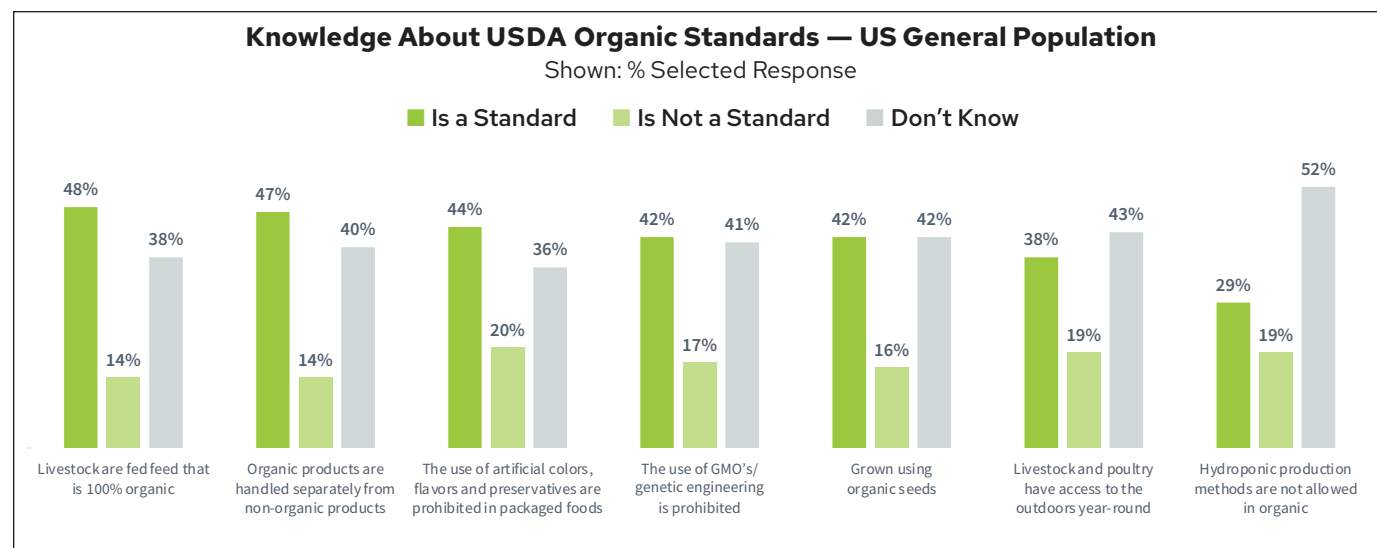
Earlier this year, Edelman, a global public relations and communications firm, published results from an in-depth study analyzing consumer trust in the USDA Organic seal. Edelman, known for its Trust Barometer, has conducted surveys for over two decades polling nearly 30,000 participants in 28 countries. They specialize in analysis surrounding trust and credibility of government, business, NGOs, and media. Under contract with the Organic Trade Association, Edelman designed a companion project examining trust and credibility of USDA Organic

...89% of Americans say that USDA should review and update organic standards periodically and reflect evolving understandings about soil, climate, toxicology, animal welfare, etc.

among consumers in both the U.S. and global markets. According to Laura Batcha, former CEO and Executive Director of OTA, "The information gained from this analysis will inform our organic promotion efforts globally and fill a crucial gap in understanding consumer perceptions and trust of U.S. organic products. The outcomes also will shape our association's ongoing consumer promotion efforts in foreign markets and enable us to better target foreign consumers. It will help us build for the future" (OTA 2021).

THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Identify potential risks to trust in organics and understand how trust in organic and challenges to organic integrity are perceived across diverse audiences
- Identify the value that organic provides to the lives of a wide range of consumer audiences
- Understand what sources of information key stakeholders use to gather information about organic products
- Discover what expectations consumers have for organic products and how these expectations differ from conventional products



Perceptions About Organic Products — US General Population

Shown: % Top 2 Agree



The organic trust survey was completed across six markets and 28 countries with more than 1150 participants per country. Included below is a summary of the findings predominantly surrounding U.S. markets:

1. There is widespread confusion about what it means to be organic.

The organic label is multi-layered and complex. Survey results indicate that there is a wide ranging disagreement between distinguishing what is part of the organic label and what is not. For example, 42% of respondents selected that the USDA Organic Standards require use of organic seeds. An equal 42% selected "Don't Know." When asked whether live-stock are fed 100% organic feed, 48% of participants said yes while and additional 38% were unsure. In addition, findings show that one in four shoppers don't know who's responsible for enforcing organic with only one-third of respondents selected USDA as responsible for enforcement.

2. The things people say they care about coincide with many of the elements of the organic standards.

Results found that the most important factors for consumers surrounding food and other consumable products/goods directly coincide with elements of the organic standards. This includes the following; use of chemicals in food and farming, treatment of workers on farms and in processing facilities, environmental impact of food and agriculture, treatment of animals (meat and dairy industry) and the use of GMOs. Most

consumers do believe organic products are healthy, have less pesticides and use fewer GMOs than conventional products.

Overall, findings indicate consumers think organic practices are better for both farmers and animal welfare.

3. Americans cite purchasing organic for reasons related to their health and the environment.

While more Americans are concerned for not only the health of their family but also the environment in recent years,

there is still a gap in purchase decisions between conventional and organic. As demonstrated in the graph results, fruits and vegetables were the only products indicated that consumers buy evenly between organic and conventional. Across all other categories, including dairy, eggs, and meat, there is about a 10% difference between organic and conventional purchases with conventional leading across each category.

4. Trust in organics is being held back by a lack of familiarity — Producers of raw materials are more trusted than manufacturers.

Producers of raw materials including produce, meat and dairy (identified as closer to the farm) tend to be more trusted than those that provide manufactured goods. This indicates an opportunity for education surrounding the organic standard, and how robust the standard is from field to retail.

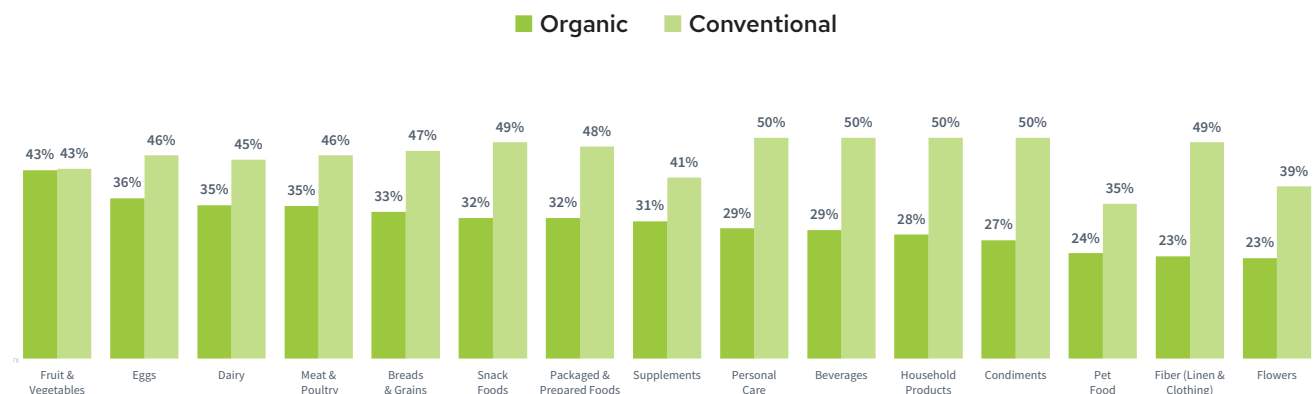
5. Consumers are using labels to make purchases — even when they are not verified in any way.

Unfortunately in today's retail atmosphere, shoppers rely on numerous labels to make purchasing decisions but are often unaware if and how those labels are verified. As noted on the graph, many attributes on either side of the USDA Organic label selection are in fact aspects of the organic label such as, "Raised Without Antibiotics" and "non-GMO." When asked how likely a consumer would purchase products based on specific labels, 60% of respondents selected "All Natural" as opposed

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Buys Organic or Conventional — US General Population

Shown: % Sometimes + Usually Buy Organics, Sometimes + Usually Buy Conventional



PA Preferred Organic Initiative

KRISTEN MARKLEY, PA ORGANIC INITIATIVE MANAGER

Pennsylvania has long been a leader in agricultural progress, with our farmers and producers seeing opportunities to advance yields, production methods, income, and sustainability while still delivering incredible products to consumers around the world.

As farmers continue to look for ways to differentiate themselves in the marketplace, practice environmental stewardship, and address market trends, organic has emerged as a solution.

As of 2019, findings from the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service's Certified Organics Survey ranked Pennsylvania third in the nation for sales at \$742 million (i.e. the total value of certified organic agricultural products sold). Washington was ranked second at \$886 million and California first at \$3.6 billion. The 2019 data indicated that PA is number 1 in the country for organic livestock and poultry sales (this category is high because of broiler sales), number 1 for organic eggs, number 1 for organic mushrooms, and number 8 for organic milk.

Pennsylvania consumers, and those throughout the nation, are increasingly interested in purchasing a greater quantity and variety of organic foods. By producing more organic products in-state, Pennsylvania farmers can meet the demands of this rapidly expanding market opportunity by diversifying their farm, generating greater income, and strengthening an already robust PA agriculture industry. With 1,048 certified organic farms and 107,550 acres of certified organic land in the commonwealth, PA farmers are well on their way to addressing this growing need.

Through the PA Preferred® Organic Initiative, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) aims to support the number of PA certified organic farms and increase the certified organic acres. In partnership with The Rodale Institute, PDA offers free, on-farm technical assistance for Pennsylvania producers interested in transitioning to organic. Rodale provides one-on-one on-farm consultations on organic system plan and certification assistance, recordkeeping guidance, benchmark soil sample analysis, and more.

To learn more about these free services, please visit Farm Consulting – Rodale or contact Sam Malriat, the Director of the Organic Consulting Program at sam.malriat@rodaleinstitute.org or (610) 683-1416.

In addition to external resources, PDA

encourages transitioning and certified organic farmers to learn about the abundance of resources and services available through the department to all types of farmers throughout the commonwealth including:

- **Agricultural Business Development Center** services including:
 - Farm transitions
 - Beginning farmers
 - Risk management
 - Financial assistance
- **Farm Vitality Planning Program** for Farm Vitality Planning grants.
- **Realty Transfer Tax Exemption** is available for the transfer of preserved farmland to a qualified beginning farmer.
- **Resource Enhancement & Protection Program (REAP)** is a program in which farmers, landowner, and businesses earn tax credits for implementing "Best Management Practices" (BMPs) that will enhance farm production and protect natural resources.
- **Urban Agriculture Infrastructure Grant Program** provides funding in the form of a reimbursement grant to eligible applicants seeking to improve urban agriculture infrastructure in Pennsylvania.
- **Very Small Meat Processor Grant Program** provides funding to reimburse some portion of the costs associated with meeting federal inspection and certification guidelines during the planning and start-up periods for a very small meat processor operating within this commonwealth.

For more information about the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and the PA Preferred® Organic Initiative, visit PA Preferred® Organic or contact Kristen Markley, the Organic Initiative Manager, by email at kmarkley@pa.gov or by phone at 717-787-6006.





2021 ANNUAL REPORT

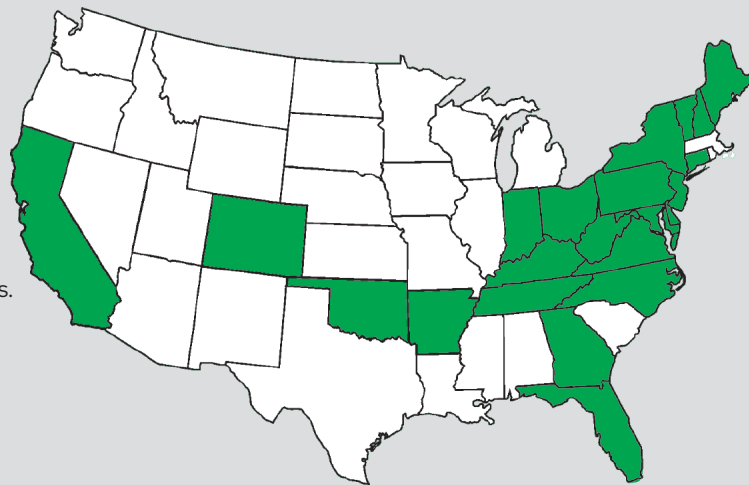
PCO continues to be the 5th largest certifier in the US

— following, CCOF, MOSA, OTCO and QAI*

PCO certifies operations in **23 states**.

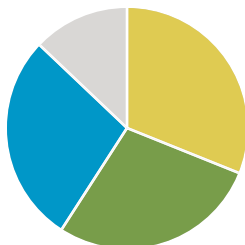
Each year we grow our organic community by certifying new clients. In 2021, we welcomed **195 Newly Certified Clients**.

**based on data pulled from the Organic Integrity Database 2/2022 (organic.ams.usda.gov/integrity)*



1,690 TOTAL ORGANIC CERTIFICATIONS

Poultry	31%
Crops	28%
Livestock	28%
Handling	13%

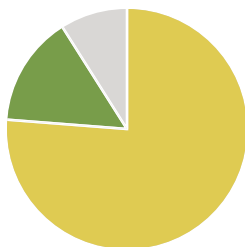


2021 FINANCIALS

TOTAL INCOME

Certification	76%
Inspection	15%
Other*	9%

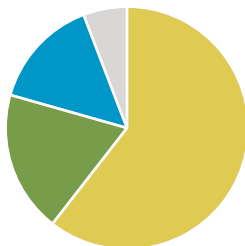
TOTAL: \$4,239,849



TOTAL EXPENDITURES

Payroll	61%
Inspection	19%
General & Administration	15%
Other	6%

TOTAL: \$3,815,909



**Includes Payment Protection Program loan forgiveness during COVID-19 crisis.*

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES FOR 2021

- **Increase staffing capacity**
 - 2021 was a year of growth and reorganization, with support to the certification review process being the priority. There were eight Certification Specialists on staff in June of 2020, with three Manager/Assistant Manager level staff; today we have 13 Certification Specialists, with three Assistant Managers in the department.
- **Certification database** – continue to upgrade technology to support services
 - Self-Assessment module added to client portal giving clients access to up-to-the-minute progress of their certification process.
 - Completed one full certification cycle in our new Intact Platform.
- **Revise organizational documents to support an agile business model**
 - The PCO Board drafted new Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws for vote by membership.

A COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI)

Throughout 2021, the PCO staff and board participated in facilitated trainings to better help us understand how we can build a more just, inclusive culture within our organization and how this can impact the larger organic industry.

- **Understanding Cognitive Diversity**
- **Fostering Connected Communication**
- **Creating a Culture of Respect**
- **Effectively Resolving Conflict**

As a result, PCO staff and board have been working on crafting a DEI purpose statement which embodies how we want to show up in this work. Though always evolving, we are excited to share it with our community in the coming months.

VISION:

Our vision is that all communities are enriched through organic food and farming.

MISSION:

Our mission is to ensure the integrity of organic products and serve our farming community.

CORE VALUES:

- Keep people at the center of every action, interaction, decision.
- Promote restorative practices that improve the world for future generations.
- Embrace transparency and integrity in all our work.

From the Board

Foundations Help Foster Change

JOE MILLER, BOARD PRESIDENT



Since our humble beginnings 25 years ago a lot has changed in the world. PCO has had to grow, adapt, stretch and readjust with the evolving organic landscape. Recently we saw the approval of resolutions to our organizational bylaws, which lend itself to establishing a more agile board structure. As highlighted in the last *Organic Matters* the new bylaws will enable us to be a much more efficient and resilient organization as we work to support you and our organization for the next 25 years.

Yet with all of the changes, a lot remains the same – especially our commitment to uphold the integrity of organic standards. In 1997, when PCO was incorporated, organic food was a growing movement among growers who believed in ecological principles of production; soil fertility, crop rotation, and biodiversity. It wasn't until 2002 when the USDA finalized the organic standards and launched the organic seal that established our position in the marketplace. Though organic sales continue to rise, organic food in the United States is still only 4% of overall food sales. We love to see the growth of our community and support for organic agriculture. However, there is a long way to go for organic to be the go – to default option in the marketplace. PCO intends to be here to support and grow this industry for the next 25, 50, and 100 years.

To set ourselves up for the best success in achieving this goal, we have been working with Cathi Hight from Hight Performance Group, Inc., to develop a strategic vision and actionable plan for the future of PCO. We thank everyone who participated in the interviews and surveys that were sent out. I'd like to highlight some of the themes that we heard from the responses:

- When it comes to **PCO's strengths**, you indicated our top traits were upholding organic integrity, the professionalism of staff and our respect in the industry.
- Your suggested areas of **improvement** include staff retention and assessment of fee structures as they relate to the value of service provided.
- With the pending NOP rulemaking, you stressed the importance of providing **educational resources** to help you navigate any changes in the regulations.

All of the data collected will filter into our strategic planning process. Thank you for your feedback and insightful comments – all towards a brighter organic future!

Recently, the staff shared with me their earliest archival issue of *Organic Matters*. When reading through it, I recognized another area that remains the same. We need YOU! Tom Beddard, from Lady Moon Farms, wrote a stirring article highlighting the importance of our community and your participation in its development and growth. We need your input on what issues are impacting your operations and how we can better serve you. The PCO Board is establishing an advisory committee made up of you, our clients, to advise us on what you need from PCO, where PCO can do better and what PCO should be focusing on next. Our goal is that this advisory committee of peers within your industry will be a community that will benefit you and PCO. You will interact with both the team at PCO and the Board. We would love to have your voice at the table. If you, or someone you know is interested in serving on this committee please reach out to me or Diana Kobus to nominate yourself.

I'll close with Tom's closing statement in that Fall 1997 *Organic Matters*:

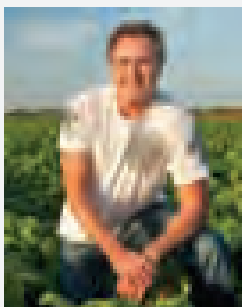
"We have already seen what is possible when we work together to achieve our goals. I urge you to participate."

Sincerely,

Joe Miller, joehasit@gmail.com • 717-385-4610

Joe is the Sales & Brand Manager for Kalona SuperNatural





With a dream to live in the country, smell the fresh air and see the stars at night, Tom Beddard founded Lady Moon Farms in 1988 with his wife Christine on five acres in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania.

Lady Moon Farms is known for its ethically and socially just practices, providing year-round employment and fair wages. It was the first tomato grower to join the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in 2009 and is the first produce grower to support Whole Foods Market's non-profit, Whole Kids Foundation, supporting schools to improve children's nutrition and wellness.

You're Not Done Volunteerin'

I know people blame me for all the trouble over PCO, but last winter I was home, minding my own business, when Leslie Zuck called, saying "Do you want to start a certifying agency with the word 'Pennsylvania' in it?" Eleven months later PCO is the largest certifier in the state with recognition and reciprocity nationwide. But the work has just begun.

It started with a dream of state identity, ease of use and affordability. Our rapid growth bears out that these three goals have been achieved.

Another goal was to afford a paid administrator to run the day-to-day business for all of PA's farmers. The challenge now is to find funding and also stay true to the ideal of affordability for even the smallest grower.

So the creation-euphoria is over. We exist. But now we are facing the

reality of getting the job done. How do we keep the momentum going, involve our members and keep PCO viable and growing? The phone must be answered when it rings, information must be sent out in a timely way. Now that we have recognition, we must continue to grow in a professional manner. PCO has to maintain a high profile at all related workshops and conferences, regionally and nationally. This will make marketing our products easier and more profitable.

I would like to see PCO grow to include all organic farmers and processors in this state and stay focused as a certifying agency that is responsive to its members.

We are THE VOICE of organics in Pennsylvania. We want to have market recognition at the consumer level

so that Pennsylvania Certified Organic really does "assure the integrity of organic products in the market place."

This is a lot to think about, and a lot to organize. But it really isn't that difficult. Consider our first certifying season. It wasn't any harder than any other year — and certificates went out earlier than they ever had before, I know we're all busy — but we need to pitch in and get the groundwork laid for an effective PCO. Please be ready to contribute your ideas.

Let me conclude by welcoming everybody: fanners, processors, consumers, wholesalers, retailers — anyone who cares about organics, to PCO's first annual meeting November 18th. We have already seen what's possible when we work together towards our goals. I urge you to attend.

— Tom Beddard

from the Fall 1997 issue of "Organic Matters"

Advertise in Organic Matters

Organic Matters is the quarterly newsletter of Pennsylvania Certified Organic, a non-profit organization serving growers, processors and handlers of organic products. Issues contain articles on the latest news and research in the organic industry, often highlighting our certified members. Approximately 1,500 copies of each publication are distributed directly to members and those requesting information about organic agriculture, and made available to the public at conferences, exhibits and educational programs in the Mid-Atlantic region.

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The above rates refer to a single-issue ad placement and a subscription for ad placement in four consecutive issues.

A 15% discount is granted for the purchase of the 4-issue subscription.

For more information, please contact newsletter@paorganic.org or call the PCO Office at 814-422-0251.

Looking Back...

As Joe Miller mentioned in "Foundations Help Foster Change," PCO has had to grow, adapt, and re-adjust over the last 25 years. Yet with so much change, PCO's mission and vision remain the guiding light of our work. To help celebrate PCO's 25th Anniversary, we contacted some of our founding farmers to get their take on the most valuable lesson they have learned since becoming certified organic.

In addition, we revisited some archived issues of *Organic Matters*. To offer both reflection and inspiration in thinking about serving on the new advisory committee, included on page 11 is Tom Beddard's original article from Fall 1997 issue of *Organic Matters*.

Anais Beddard

Lady Moon Farms, LLC

“...that real organic begins and ends with healthy living soils.”



The Brownback Family

Spiral Path Farm

“We believe that our stewardship of the land promotes a living soil, which grows healthy plants from which we harvest flavorful and nutritious food.”



Meghan Klotzbach

C.P. Yeatman & Sons, Inc./ Mother Earth, LLC

“...The most important thing that we have learned over the last 32 years of growing, marketing and selling organic mushrooms is that the organic market has been a sustainable

market throughout the years. We were the first commercial mushroom grower to become certified organic, but always had a fear that others would go organic and steal our market. We have learned that the organic market is here to stay and has more room for growth every year! Growing, selling and eating organic was never a fad and it has become a lifestyle that has not plateaued in popularity.”



Look for more memories in future issues of *Organic Matters*.

On the Road with PCO

On Wednesday, May 11, eight members of the USDA AMS National Organic Program (including staff of the Standards Division, Material Review, and Ag Economics) visited three PCO certified mushroom farms and processors to hear more about organic production directly from farmers. The group first visited ToJo Mushrooms and Brownstone Mushroom Farm (Avondale, PA) to see an overview of Phase I and Phase II substrate preparation for *Agaricus* mushroom production followed by a visit to traditional mushroom doubles (growing rooms) to view mycelium growth and colonization, through mushroom fruiting and harvesting. In addition, the group toured ToJo's mushroom packing facility. Later that afternoon, attendees toured Phillips Mushroom Farm (Kennett Square, PA) for a look at specialty mushroom production including oyster, shiitake, maitake, pom pom, and royal trumpet mushrooms.

On June 21st, Executive Director Diana Kobus and Materials Program Assistant Manager, Hector Nunez, participated in a field day/farm walk at Henry K. Esh Farm in Ronks, PA. Sponsored by Organic Valley, the event provided technical consulting in an open discussion format with Organic Valley veterinarians, Organic Valley products staff, Penn State Extension, and other interested parties. PCO discussed the requirements for OPT Grass Fed Certification and the basics of the certification process.



NOP staff examining mycelium growth on shiitake log at Phillips Mushroom Farm.



NOP staff learning about Phase I composting and raw materials (Brownstone Mushroom Farm).

PCO Core Values in Action

Using our Core Values to Hire New Team Members

DIANA UNDERWOOD, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

PCO's core values serve as a guide for how PCO works and makes decisions every day. One of the most important decisions we make as an organization is hiring! In this column, we previously highlighted the ways our core values show up in the workplace and how we make business decisions, as well as the importance of using our core values to guide us in addressing social injustices in the world. Today, we will highlight how we bring our core values to life in the hiring and onboarding process.

Every hiring decision we make at PCO impacts our stakeholders: certified clients, supporters and members, PCO staff and contractors, partner organizations, and the community and environment. It is this entire stakeholder group that must be considered when we apply our values in our hiring process. Applying our core values to our hiring process supports PCO in recruiting top talent who are uniquely competent in delivering exceptional client service while maintaining organic integrity. When we hire really great team members and support them with a caring and empowering workplace, they are equipped to thrive and take care of our clients, which serves all of our stakeholder groups.

- 1. Keep people at the center of every action, interaction and decision** (*Provide Support*).
- 2. Promote restorative practices that improve the world for future generations** (*Engage Stewardship*).
- 3. Embrace transparency and integrity in all our work** (*Cultivate Trust*).

There are many examples of how these values are applied within PCO's hiring process, both small and large decisions. Below are some examples to highlight these values in action.

TRANSPARENCY OF PAY: You might notice that with each employee job posting, PCO posts the salary band for the position. This supports our core value of embracing transparency and integrity (core value 3). Compensation is an important part of any hiring process. By stating this information clearly and transparently, we help potential employees know what to expect as compensation. This prevents someone from investing their time in the process but then later realizing that the compensation did not align with their expectations. Most importantly, transparency with the salary band also ensures we are equitable in our compensation offering. If we only relied on

what a candidate might list for salary expectations, we could perpetuate inequities that already exist in the workforce.

COLLABORATIVE PANEL PROCESS: One thing you may not realize is that PCO utilizes a panel interview process when hiring each new team member. This means that several people from across the organization and in various roles have the opportunity to serve on the hiring committee. By using this type of process, we ensure that we keep people at the center (core value 1) by creating a workplace of inclusion and empowerment. An important aspect of empowerment is having a voice in the decision-making process. Panel interview committees empower a whole team to be a part of the interview and selection process for new employees joining PCO. By participating in a panel interview committee, current team members are able to put the PCO culture of empowerment and inclusion into action. This also allows the candidate to interact with a diverse group of PCO staff, supporting them in making an informed decision on whether to join the PCO team.



PCO and Grow Pittsburgh staff at a recent volunteer event at Braddock Farm.

ONBOARDING / TRAINING PLAN: Now that we've been clear on salary expectations and having a collaborative panel process, it's now time to onboard our next great PCO team member. Onboarding new team members is also an important part of the process. When an employee feels welcomed, included, and set up for success, then they are more likely to stay and feel engaged with their work. At PCO, there are several teams involved in onboarding, from IT to Admin to HR to the hiring manager. Everyone is included to make sure the onboarding is a success. Once an employee starts, they can expect a mapped-out training plan that serves as a reference and guide to their first couple weeks at PCO. It can be scary to start a new role and we want to put as much planning and ease into the process as possible, which is another way we keep people at the center (core value 1).

As PCO grows and changes, attention to our core values is even more essential to guide our decisions, especially with hiring the great team members our clients interact with day to day. As always, these values are foundational to who PCO is, meaning they do not change even as the organization matures. Learning, growing, and improving are all part of the important work we all do to support a vision where **all communities** are enriched through organic food and farming.

"...relief from swelling... recover quickly."

— Jonathan Miedema



DUTCHLANE DAIRY, SHERBURNE, NEW YORK
Jonathan and Lisa Miedema
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SCC 180 - 200,000

"We like Udder Comfort™ and have been using it a long time. Being an organic dairy farm, it's good to have this natural product for preventive use for our fresh cows. It's part of our multi-pronged approach for naturally healthy udders and quality milk," says Jonathan Miedema of Dutchlane Farms, milking 125 cows near Sherburne, New York. He and his wife Lisa are the third generation dairying and the second generation to be certified organic, operating the farm with his parents and sister. The farm has been producing organic milk over a decade.

"Udder Comfort provides relief from swelling. We apply it after consecutive milkings, keep them stripped out, and they recover quickly."

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Certification Update

Cathy Jackson
Certification Program Asst. Manager



ANNUAL UPDATE NONCOMPLIANCES

Certified operations must submit annual updates and fees to their certifier each year to maintain certification. PCO has issued noncompliances to operations who have not yet submitted their annual update. Failure to resolve the non-compliance by contacting PCO to surrender or submit the annual update will result in a Proposed Suspension.

CHANGE TO THE ANNUAL REVIEW CYCLE

To streamline our certification process, we are no longer sending Initial Review Reports to all operations renewing their certification prior to inspection. An Initial Review Report will only be completed if your annual update indicates changes affecting your compliance, such as new fields, products, or materials. If no changes are submitted with the to...annual update, the next step will be a communication from an inspector to schedule.

HIGH PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI)

The spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is an active concern in the poultry industry. The NOP has requested that certifiers halt organic inspections for poultry operations in counties with APHIS-recognized detection of HPAI. PCO staff and inspectors are proactively monitoring this issue and flagging files in areas of known detection. If you are a certified organic poultry operation who needs to confine your poultry:

- Contact your Certification Specialist to request the "Request for Temporary Confinement due to Disease Threat" form.
- Submit a complete temporary confinement plan to your Certification Specialist to review.
- Provide any additional information requested and wait for approval of your temporary confinement plan.
- Upon approval of your plan, follow the agreed upon practices for temporary confinement and keep records of all your monitoring practices.
- If you witness symptoms in your flock, report it immediately to your State Veterinarian.

Update: As of July 14th, 2022 all Pennsylvania counties have been released from HPAI control zones.

COST SHARE

Certified operations can now apply for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP). Costs associated with certification (50% or up to \$500 per scope of certification) incurred from October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022 are eligible for reimbursement. Applications may be submitted through the Farm Service

Agency office at your local USDA Service Center or through a participating State Agency. Applications are due by October 31, 2022. Please consider taking advantage of these benefits to support the program and help ensure future funding.

EXPEDITED SERVICES

PCO has implemented several new expedited services in 2022 for applications, product review, and export certificate requests. The goal of these expedited services is to assist operations who have critical timing needs. However, they do not guarantee approval by a specified date. The success of the expedited service lies in an operation's ability to comply with the National Organic Program and timely responses to requests for information. For more information about expedited fees and services, see our 2022 Certification Fee Schedule.

CLIENT SERVICES TEAM UPDATE

PCO's new Client Services Team focuses on the new client application process. New clients or those interested in certification may use their new email address (cst@pa-organic.org) for questions related to applying for certification with PCO.

Standards & Policy Update

Kyla Smith
Certification Director



SAVE THE DATE: PCO TO OFFER REGENERATIVE ORGANIC CERTIFIED™

PCO is proud to announce that we have nearly completed the process of becoming an approved certification body by the Regenerative Organic Alliance (ROA) and will begin to offer certification to the Regenerative Certified Organic™ (ROC™) program in the near future.

PCO has been tracking operations that have expressed interest in this add-on certification either via the question regarding ROC™ certification on our organic annual update paperwork or through phone/email correspondence. We will follow up directly with these operations to confirm interest and provide additional information on fees and the certification process.

The certification process is slightly different from that of organic certification, in that all interested operations must request and submit an application directly through ROA. ROA does a review for completeness prior to passing along to PCO to complete the rest of the certification process (initial review, inspection and final certification decision).

The ROC™ program consists of three pillars: Soil Health & Land Management, Animal Welfare, and Farmer & Worker Fairness. ROC™ has three levels: Bronze, Silver, and Gold. Each requires a different number and scope of regenerative organic

practices used. Operations interested in the ROC™ program can request certification of certain pillars and levels that meet the operation where they are today. The baseline requirement is organic certification; meaning that in order to achieve ROC™, an entity must first hold USDA organic certification or an international equivalent formally recognized by the National Organic Program (NOP). The ROC™ program is also based on continuous improvement so there is the expectation that over time operations are “leveling up” their certification.

You can find more information on PCO's ROC™ webpage, <https://paorganic.org/certification/get-started/regenerative-organic-certified/> including fee information and how to request an application. Additionally, ROA's website, www.regenorganic.org, is a wealth of information, including program standards, applications and other resource documents/forms. You may also contact the PCO office for more information at 814-422-0251.

As of 8/1, PCO is now ROA-approved! Keep your eyes open for a client letter that will share details on this additional add-on certification.

Inspection Update

Corinne Wesh
Certification Program Asst. Manager



2022 INSPECTION CYCLE

As we enter into the 2022 certification cycle, the PCO Inspections Team offers our appreciation for the efforts PCO clients and inspectors have and will continue to make in order to complete inspections in accordance with USDA-NOP requirements during these uncertain times. In light of the continued pandemic, PCO will continue to use inspection methods that prioritize the health and safety of PCO clients and inspectors. To ensure that inspections are completed in compliance with the USDA-NOP regulations, inspectors may use a combination of inspection approaches to meet regulatory requirements.

Your 2022 inspection may include any of the following inspection methods:

■ Limited Contact Onsite Inspections:

- The inspector and client must discuss and agree upon social distancing and other safety measures indicated by current CDC guidelines.
- The inspector and client must communicate regarding any illness or exposure to illness, as applicable, prior to meeting face to face.
- The onsite inspection may be limited to essential viewing of the premises. The inspector or the client may request that the interview and paperwork portions of the inspection are handled by phone or other remote means.

■ Remote/Virtual Inspections:

- Remote/virtual inspections may occur if the inspector and client can use web conferencing or other software that enables real-time dialog and visual verification of the OSP.
- A preliminary meeting should be held to verify technological capabilities and assure a mutual understanding of inspection processes.
- Records should be organized in advance of the virtual/remote inspection so they can easily be shared with the inspector.

■ Desk audits:

- These are typically reserved for cases in which it is not feasible to conduct an onsite inspection or remote/virtual inspection.
- The inspector will request records from the client for verification of OSP details.
- The inspector will establish a reasonable timeline for exchange of information, suitable to the client's circumstances, and the client should adhere to that request.
- Scans or copies of records sent to the inspector. Clients should not send original copies since these must remain in the control of the client's business.

Please note that any elements of the OSP that cannot be verified via remote/virtual inspection or desk audit will be noted by the inspector and followed up on using an onsite visit. This will be billed separately from the initial inspection activity. Follow-up inspections may be announced or unannounced. The USDA-NOP has NOT waived certifiers' responsibility to conduct onsite inspections.

continued on page 18



continued from page 17

■ Inspection Timing in 2022

The Intact Platform has streamlined the Annual Update and Initial Review process for PCO's Certification Team, so you may be contacted for an inspection earlier in 2022 than in previous years.

As in any year, preparing ahead of time for your inspection can aid in a more efficient (and potentially less costly) inspection.

■ Inspection Refusal and Inspection Cancellation Policy Review

When working with your inspector to schedule and complete your 2022 inspection, remember that prompt, clear communication is critical to successful inspection completion, especially during the pandemic.

Please keep in mind the following policies about inspection cancellations, rescheduling, and refusal:

- Clients that cancel an inspection with less than 5 days notice for a non-justified reason* or fail to communicate an inspection cancellation request may be responsible for customary expenses incurred by the inspector attempting to conduct the inspection and a \$100 penalty fee.
- Clients that deny access of the inspector to any part of the operation may be issued a Notice of Noncompliance for Inspection Refusal.
- Clients that reschedule an inspection 3 times for non-justified reasons* may be issued a Notice of Noncompliance for Inspection Refusal
- Clients that do not respond to 3 requests to schedule the inspection may be issued a Notice of Noncompliance for Inspection Refusal
- If at any time PCO clients or inspectors feel that the PCO Standards of Professional Conduct policy have been breached, either party may end the inspection and report immediately to PCO
- If either party feels that agreed-upon social distancing protocols or other pandemic safety measures are not being followed, they may end the inspection at any time and notify PCO of the issue
- Any other instance(s) of uncooperative behavior on behalf of the operator that may be interpreted as a refusal of inspection may result in a Notice of Noncompliance for Inspection Refusal

*justified reasons include death in the family, religious reasons, illness

■ Unannounced Inspections

Every year PCO conducts unannounced inspections of at least 5% of certified operations as required by the USDA-NOP regulations. All certified operations fall under this requirement, regardless of scope, scale, or location.

Unannounced inspections may be conducted onsite or remotely over the phone or video call. They may be full annual inspections or focused inspections that verify specific areas of

the regulations. Unannounced inspections may be conducted to follow up on compliance, as the result of an investigation, or based on random selection.

If an inspector arrives at your operation or contacts you by phone or email to conduct an unannounced inspection, they will describe the requirements to you and lay out a process for completing the inspection. Following your inspection, you will receive a report and response from your assigned Certification Specialist.

Refusal of an unannounced inspection, which includes failure to adhere to the requirements outlined by the inspector (such as submitting certain documents or refusing onsite access) may result in a noncompliance.

For any questions about PCO inspections, please contact PCO Inspection Program Assistant Manager, Corinne Wesh (cwesh@paorganic.org).

Materials Update

Hector Nunez C.

Materials Program Assistant Manager



MATERIAL REVIEW STATUS CHANGES

The PCO Materials Team is sharing some bittersweet news in this newsletter; Jen Berkebile is no longer with PCO. We appreciate the years of dedicated service she had with PCO and wish her the very best in her future endeavors. Former Certification Specialist, Hector Nunez C. has accepted the new role of Materials Program Assistant Manager. It has been a busy quarter with many materials changing status and some news from the NOP. The new Add/Drop list will be published in the next few months including detailed information of these changes.

The Organic Materials Review Institute, OMRI, has released a Summer of 2022 update. Several materials have changed status with many inputs being assigned a drop status. Your

The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to PCO at no additional cost to you. Simply go to www.smile.amazon.com from your web browser. Then select **"Pennsylvania Certified Organic"** using your existing Amazon.com account.

Certification Specialists and other PCO staff will be contacting you with some of these changes if you were affected by the status change. Our new database has many helpful features that makes this process quite fast.

Another substantial material change is the National Organic Program's Amendment to the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (2022 Sunset). The full details of this change can be found here: www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/02/28/2022-03851/national-organic-program-amendments-to-the-national-list-of-allowed-and-prohibited-substances-2022. The rule is effective on March 30, 2022 but the compliance date for the rule is March 15, 2023. PCO will be updating its material database to reflect these changes and contacting you as well if you were affected by the change.

Contact us at 814-422-0251 for updates and questions. Your Certification Specialist can add most materials and check a status right over the phone! For more technical questions, feel free to dial extension 3 or email us at materials@paorganic.org

We sincerely appreciate your business and patience.

Legislative Update

Kyla Smith
Certification Director



On Wednesday, June 1, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced USDA's framework to transform the nation's food system, including its intention to invest \$300 million into a new Organic Transition Initiative program.

ACCORDING TO USDA:

"Up to \$300 million [will be available to support] a new Organic Transition Initiative to provide comprehensive support for farmers to transition to organic production. Organic production provides producers with the ability to demand a premium in the marketplace and thus take home a greater share of the food dollar; there can also be climate and environmental benefits.

This initiative will deliver wrap-around technical assistance, including farmer-to-farmer mentoring; provide direct support through conservation financial assistance and additional crop insurance assistance and support market development projects in targeted markets."

This programming will fill much needed gaps that PCO continuously hears from producers transitioning to organic production, easing the process and making it more accessible, which will result in industry growth and organic acreage expansion.

To read the full USDA announcement, visit: www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2022/06/01/usda-announces-framework-shoring-food-supply-chain-and-transforming

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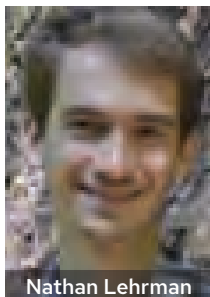
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New Faces



Nathan Lehrman



Hannah McGilvary



Hank Rieder

Nathan Lehrman Certification Specialist

Nathan joined PCO in 2022. He is originally from Central Washington, where he spent his summers working in various agriculture positions, including for crop consulting companies. He holds a B.A. and M.S. in Biology from Central Washington University. His Master Thesis was a collaborative research project, with USDA ARS, on the apple maggot. While working on his Master's degree, he conducted research at a USDA lab on various tree fruit pest insects. He spent the last ~7 ½ years at the Idaho State Department of Agriculture. First working in the Division of Plant Industries, and was then the Organic Program Specialist since 2018, where he was involved with every facet of organic certification. He is an avid gardener, including seed saving, and always looks for odd fruits and vegetables to grow.

He also enjoys hiking, playing piano, collecting insects, and spending time outdoors with his wife and two children.

Hannah McGilvary Certification Specialist

Hannah joined PCO as a Certification Specialist in April 2022. Originally from the suburbs of Milwaukee, WI, Hannah relocated to the Driftless Region of Wisconsin in 2018, where she currently resides. Before joining PCO, Hannah worked with Natures International Certification Services (NICS) as a Client Relationship Officer. When Hannah isn't working, you can find her spending most of her time on the Mississippi River kayaking and fishing. On the off chance she isn't on the river, you can find Hannah reading her favorite book, tending to her plants (both indoor and outdoor), or enjoying the outdoors.

Hank Rieder Certification Specialist

Hank joined PCO in April 2022 as a Certification Specialist. Prior to PCO, he worked as a Processing/Handling Certification Reviewer with another USDA-Accredited Certifying Agent. Before his time in organic certification, Hank worked as the Quality Manager for an ISO/IEC 17025 accredited food microbiology testing laboratory. Hank grew up in Miami, Florida and the Florida Keys. He is currently a part-time graduate student at Washington State University in the Food Science; Management and Molecular Biosciences master's programs. Hank graduated from the University of Florida with a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science with a concentration in Animal Biology.

New Members

PCO Welcomes 2nd Quarter
New Members!

NEWLY CERTIFIED ORGANIC

Alvin E. Yoder
Vinton, OH

Christian Beiler
Marshall, IN

Clean Green Growers
Sellersville, PA

Denali Investments LLC
Middletown, MD

Daniel M. Stoltzfus
Lowville, NY

Edward A. Yoder
Vinton, OH

Hicks Brothers IV LLC
Kelton, PA

Jersey Legacy Farms LLC
Cedarville, NJ

John Wengerd
Geneva, IN

Kevin & Clayton Bullock
Waterford, VT

KoRo Inc.
Wilmington, DE

Marlin Wadel
Wolcott, VT

Micro Mama's LLC
Weare, NH

Nathan Schlabach
Saint Charles, KY

Pete & Gerry's Organics LLC
Monroe, NH

Philip N. Weaver
Mohawk, NY

Reuben Eicher
Vinton, OH

Roman Yoder
Vinton, OH

Sam Beiler
Rockville, IN

Seth Kivett
Seagrove, NC

Simon Jr Yoder
Apple Creek, OH

Stephen S. Stoltzfus
Rockville, IN

Sundreams Farm LLC
Everett, PA

Tomato Girl LLC
Easton, PA

Wilmer Seigrist
Elizabethtown, PA

BUSINESS MEMBERS

Verticarb
Anthony, FL

AgSolve Inc.
Anthony, FL

Key Input Solutions
Pelzer, SC

YourBiotics LLC
Clearwater, FL

STAY CONNECTED,
VIST:
paorganic.org

Inspections 101: Tips & Tricks

continued from page 5

A basic mass balance equation is:

$$\text{Beginning inventory} + \text{Incoming Product} = \\ \text{Outgoing Product} + \text{Ending Inventory} - \text{Product Loss}$$

Any difference between calculated ending inventory and actual ending inventory results in a variance. Inspectors will report both reasons for small, accountable variances and issues of concern for large, unaccountable variances. If an operation sold more organic product than was produced or purchased, the mass balance will need to be further evaluated.

■ **Traceback audit.** This exercise is intended to trace final products back to their initial point of receiving at your operation. The inspector will select a finished organic product and follow its recordkeeping trail of production through your recordkeeping. Your inspector will use unique identifiers in your records such as lot numbers, production codes, packing dates, invoice numbers, and dates to build connections between records that may span months or years.

- Records Records you will need to have available include:
 - Sales invoices
 - Production records
 - Inventory records
 - Packing records

- Planting records
- Harvesting records
- Receiving records
- Purchase records
- Bills of lading
- Organic certificates
- Phytosanitary certificates, as applicable

Unless otherwise instructed by the certifier, the scope and focus of audits are at the discretion of the inspector. If either audit is unsuccessful, an inspector may attempt an additional audit within the same or similar production system. If an audit is unsuccessful due to missing records or unaccounted for discrepancies, then the inspector will describe this as an issue of concern in the inspection report.

ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR INSPECTION DURING THE EXIT INTERVIEW

The Exit Interview is a required component of every inspection. During this time, your inspector will review any issues of concern noted during your inspection, any changes to your Organic System Plan (OSP), and any additional information that you may need to submit to your Certification Specialist after the inspection. This is also the time for you to ask your inspector questions you may have about the results of your inspection. If you don't understand something that the inspector is noting as an issue of concern, ask them to explain



Secretary Redding connecting with PCO Staff.



PA Dept. of Ag Secretary Redding paid a visit to Grow Pittsburgh's Braddock Farms to celebrate our 25th Anniversary. PCO staff spent a morning volunteering at the farm as part of our recent staff retreat. More to follow in our next issue of *Organic Matters*.

Marketplace

CROPS

Organic wrapped balage for sale. 2021 wet bails: \$40 each; 2022 wet bails: \$50 each; 2022 dry bails: \$30 each. Please contact James and Donna at 570-746-1651. Bradford County.

Organic Wheat Straw, Dry Alfalfa, Dried Grass and Wrapped Baleage. 717-860-3504. Franklin County.

Certified Organic dairy quality balage for sale. First \$50, second cut \$60. Discount available on large quantities. 570-727-2322. 570-396-3280. Starrucca, PA. Wayne County.

EQUIPMENT

Farm cultivators for sale. Four and six rows; John Deere and IH, ready to go to work (both rebuilt). Contact Carl Modica for prices. 814-267-5640. Somerset County.

SERVICES

Ag plastic recycling — I can use black and white bunker covers, bale wrap, plastic twine, clear stretch film, greenhouse covers, flats, and pots. Call for details. 717-658-9660. Franklin County.



Job Opportunity with PCO

Kyla Smith, current PCO Certification Director, is transitioning to a new position at PCO at the beginning of 2023. This new position will focus on policy and certification program training. It will also allow Kyla more time to focus on her National Organic Standards Board service. Kyla has worked for PCO in some capacity for 20 years; her roles ranging from inspector to reviewer to program director. She reports to be "excited to return to a position dedicated to the parts of the organic industry that fill me up and to tackle some new challenges."

Therefore, PCO is hiring for a Certification Director (the posting is below). PCO is a great organization full of amazing people doing amazing work. Come join our team!

Certification Director Job Posting

Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO) announces a job opening for Certification Director. The Certification Director is responsible for the leadership of the Certification department and the growth and continual improvement of the PCO Certification Programs. The

position is responsible for overseeing all certification program processes, resources, and results-based outcomes. This position will collaborate closely with the Director of Operations and Executive Director as part of the Leadership Team of PCO.

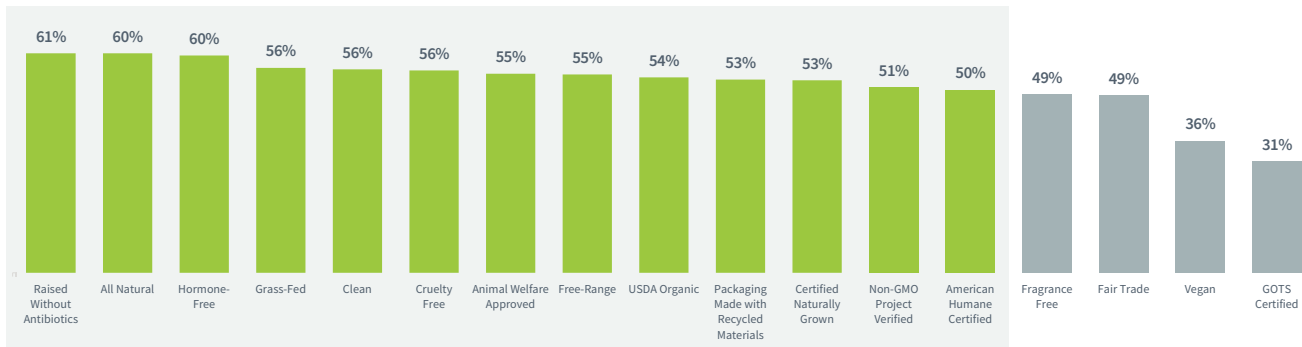
PCO is a growing non-profit organization that works with organic farmers and food producers across the US. PCO provides organic certification services to more than 1600 operations, employs approximately 35 staff, and sub-contracts with around 40 field inspectors. Our staff are dedicated to our vision: all communities are enriched by organic food and farming, and we are committed to our culture of purpose, caring, and results.

- This is a full-time, exempt, telecommuting position.
- Salary range: \$68,000–\$93,500, depending on experience.

Please submit a resume and cover letter at the link provided on our website (paorganic.org/openings) by **Monday, September 19, 2022.**

Impact on Purchase Likelihood — US General Population

Shown: % Top 2 More Likely to Purchase



OTA Summary of Survey Results

continued from page 7

to 54% “USDA Organic.” In addition, more respondents also selected “Raised Without Antibiotics,” “Cruelty Free,” and “Animal Welfare Approved.”

6. People are searching for a go-to source — and they don't think it exists.

The study found that the majority of Americans find that there is not enough information readily available about organics and that the information that is available is not easy to understand. When asked about sources of information, friends and family ranked highest (24%) while social media, cooking publications and local tv news followed with nearly equal ranking (16%-17%).

7. Consumers expect organic standards to keep pace with evolving knowledge about human and planetary health.

There is an expectation that organic standards are regularly updated and reflect evolving knowledge. According to the survey results, 89% of Americans say that USDA should review and

update organic standards periodically and reflect evolving understandings about soil, climate, toxicology, animal welfare, etc.

STRATEGIES LOOKING AHEAD:

Overall, the results of this survey demonstrate that there is ample work to do for the USDA Organic label to become the label that people look to, understand the meaning behind the label, and give them reasons to trust in the label. As new labels like “regenerative” continue to emerge, organic needs to be the foundation and serve as a baseline for consumers. As emerging knowledge and science develop around nutrition and climate, consumers expect the seal and its meaning to evolve. Lastly, this study indicates an opportunity for the organic industry to establish a go to source for consistent, updated information that currently does not exist.

SOURCES:

Eissenstat, Everett and Angela Jagiello. (2022, May 13). Benchmarking Trust in Organic [PowerPoint Presentation] Organic Trade Association

Organic Trade Association (OTA). (2021, September 7). Organic Trade Association announces 2022 Organic Week [Press Release] www.ota.com/news/press-release/21877

Advertise in Organic Matters

Organic Matters is the quarterly newsletter of Pennsylvania Certified Organic, a non-profit organization serving growers, processors and handlers of organic products. Issues contain articles on the latest news and research in the organic industry, often highlighting our certified members. Approximately 1,500 copies of each publication are distributed directly to members and those requesting information about organic agriculture, and made available to the public at conferences, exhibits and educational programs in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Ad size	PRICING		Dimensions (in)
	Single	4 Issue Sub.	
Back cover (<i>in color</i>)	\$572	na	8.5 × 9
Full Page	\$362.50	\$1,232	8 × 10
Half Page	\$242.50	\$824	7 × 4.5 (<i>horizontal</i>) 3.25 × 8.75 (<i>vertical</i>)
Quarter Page	\$152.50	\$518	3.25 × 4.5 (<i>vertical</i>)
Eighth Page	\$112.50	\$382	3.25 × 2.25 (<i>horizontal</i>)

The above rates refer to a single-issue ad placement and a subscription for ad placement in four consecutive issues.

A 15% discount is granted for the purchase of the 4-issue subscription.

For more information, please contact newsletter@paorganic.org or call the PCO Office at 814-422-0251.

Event Calendar

NOTE: With all in-person events, it is advised that participants follow current CDC and COVID-19 safety protocol and guidelines.

All times listed are Eastern Time Zone unless otherwise indicated.

AUGUST

AUGUST 9-11

Penn State Extension

Ag Progress Days

Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center

9:00-5:00 pm

***Come visit us in the JD Harrington Building, Booth J309**

agsci.psu.edu/apd

AUGUST 10

Rodale Institute

Webinar

Reducing Tillage to Improve Soil Health and Organic Grain Production

2:00-3:00 pm

rodaleinstitute.org/education/webinars

AUGUST 17

Rodale Institute

Webinar

Successful Winter Grazing

2:00-3:00 pm

rodaleinstitute.org/education/webinars

AUGUST 17

Pasa Sustainable Agriculture

Workshop

Adding Trees to a Draft-Powered Vegetable Farm

Good Work Farm, Nazareth, PA

4:00-7:00 pm

pasafarming.org/events/category/pasa-event

AUGUST 19

Pasa Sustainable Agriculture

Workshop

Boosting Productivity on an Urban Orchard

Weavers Way Farms, Philadelphia, PA

10:00 am-1:00 pm

pasafarming.org/events/category/pasa-event

AUGUST 23

Pasa Sustainable Agriculture

Webinar

Vegetable Disease ID & Prevention with Dr. Beth Gugino

12:00-1:30 pm

pasafarming.org/events/category/pasa-event

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER 5

Labor Day holiday

PCO Office will be closed

SEPTEMBER 6

USDA NRCS Science and Technology Webinar

Organic Agriculture as a Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy

3:00-4:00 pm

conservationwebinars.net/upcoming-webinars-1

SEPTEMBER 14

Rodale Institute

Webinar

Certified Organic Mushroom Production

2:00-3:00 pm

rodaleinstitute.org/education/webinars

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 8 & 9

Pasa Sustainable Agriculture

Workshop

Mushroom Production Intensive with Tradd Cotter

Quiet Creek Herb Farm, Brookville, PA

8:00 am-5:00 pm

pasafarming.org/events/category/pasa-event

OCTOBER 12

Rodale Institute

Webinar

Managing Plant Surplus Carbon to Generate Soil Organic Matter in Regenerative Agriculture

2:00-3:00 pm

rodaleinstitute.org/education/webinars

OCTOBER 18 & 20

National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)

Virtual Public Comment Days

OCTOBER 19

Rodale Institute

Webinar

Update 2022 – Organic Control Strategies for Swine Parasites in Organic Pastured Pork Systems

2:00-3:00 pm

rodaleinstitute.org/education/webinars

OCTOBER 20-21

PCO Board of Directors

Quarterly Meeting and Retreat

OCTOBER 25-27

National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)

Public Meeting Days

Sacramento, CA

ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/nosb/meetings

OCTOBER 31

Deadline for cost-share application

Check with your local USDA Farm Service Agency for submission requirements

STAY CONNECTED,
VISIT:
paorganic.org

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Super N 4-2-4

Super K 3-4-7

Custom Blends

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December 5%

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- Does not volatilize
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- Natural product with no negative environmental impact
- Beneficial use in conditions of biotic and abiotic stress conditions

Conversion Recommendations from HNI:

Explorer 10-0-0

Excellent Conditions:

High Organic N (with Manure)

2 Quarts = 60 lbs. Nitrogen

Low Organic N (without Manure)

2 Quarts = 30 lbs. Nitrogen

Challenging Conditions:

High Organic N (with Manure)

3 Quarts = 60 lbs. Nitrogen

Low Organic N (without Manure)

3 Quarts = 30 lbs. Nitrogen

ANIMAL BASED NITROGEN VS. EXPLORER™ LIQUID 10-0-0

	Animal-Based Nitrogen	Explorer™ Liquid 10-0-0
Nitrogen Availability	Slow Release, requires bio-decomposition	100% - Immediately
Solubility	Not fully soluble	100%
Application Restrictions	Foliar Applications not recommended	None
Ease of Use	Smell, mixing procedure	None
Origin	Chicken/Fish/Manure	Non-GMO, soy protein hydrolysate
Effect of temperature on availability	Slower or no release in colder temperatures	None
Amino Acid Profile	Inconsistent to None	38.6%/40.9% Amino Profile
Stability	Adulterated for ensuring some stability	Complete and Lifetime


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