

## My organic inspection is coming up soon—what can I do to make it as painless as possible?

**In a word: Prepare!** A visit from the organic inspector can strike terror into the hearts of even the most diligent, experienced producers. The inspector is the “eyes and ears” of the consumer. It is his/her job to look, listen and ask questions about literally every aspect of your operation and report these observations to your certifier. The inspector does not make the certification decision, nor may he/she consult or offer advice to help you meet the standard. However, the certifier uses the inspector's observations, together with the documentation you have provided, to determine whether or not you meet the requirements of the organic standard.

Taking the time to prepare ahead will help make the best use of your inspection time. Ask yourself:

1. Have you made changes since submitting your questionnaire? Write down any changes you have made to seeding practices, crop rotations, inputs purchased, animals purchased, land rented, etc.
2. Can you verify that you are addressing all of the requirements and recommendations from your previous year's certification letter?
3. Make a chart listing your total acreage and the number of acres managed organically, in transition or conventional. List the number of acres seeded to each crop. Double check the math—you would be amazed at how much inspection time is spent trying to get the numbers to add up!
4. Do you have a crop inventory on hand? Make a list including the amount, the year it was produced, whether or not it is organic, and where it is stored.
5. Have the records ready to show what you did with your buffer strips and any transitional or conventional harvests.
6. Did you use non-organic seed or seedlings? If so, have your documents verifying that your certifier granted you an exemption to use non-organic seed. If any of these seeds or seedlings are also available in a GMO variety, be able to document that yours were not GMO. Remember that if you are requesting certification to EU or Bio-Suisse levels, you *must* request those exemptions before planting.
7. Is your sales documentation complete? Include copies of transaction certificates, invoices, weigh slips, clean truck affidavits, harvest and storage records on *all* your current and previous year's crops.
8. Do you use any purchased inputs (e.g. soil amendments, inoculants, animal supplements, etc.)? If so, have the labels and documentation verifying that your certifier gave you permission to use them.
9. Do you use the same equipment for both organic and conventional crops? Have equipment cleanout records, including details of exactly how, when and where the cleaning was done, as well as what was done with any purged grain.
10. Have you acquired any new land, either purchased or rented? Make sure the inspector sees this land and notes it in the inspection report. Also update your maps and field histories and have a signed Prior Land Use Affidavit.
11. Do you store both organic and conventional products? Have your clean-out documentation ready. All storage should be clean and in good repair. Remember that grain bins are used to store organic food—consumers expect them to be free from bird or mouse droppings, as well as other contamination. If you have storage that is not yet food grade, explain your improvement plan.
12. Do you produce organic livestock or dairy? If so, have all the appropriate documents assembled, including records of: monthly bacteria counts and SCC reports for the past 12 months (for dairy), feed purchases, medical treatments (including labels, recipes, and other documentation for all medications/remedies), livestock identification, purchases, manure handling, pastures, holding and feeding.
13. Do you plan to sell any livestock for organic meat? Ensure that the animals meet all the standards for slaughter stock, and identify the certified organic slaughterhouse that you intend to use.
14. Did you use any black plastic mulch, bag wrapping or plastic silo covering? If so, explain how you disposed of them.
15. Do you do any on-farm cleaning or processing? If so, have your facility flow chart and floor plan ready as well as labels for all ingredients, cleansers,

pest control products, etc., with copies of your product labels.

16. Do you want certification to the Canada Organic Standard scheduled for implementation on December 14? If so, make sure both your certifier and your inspector are aware of this. There may be additional paperwork required.

Taking the time to prepare before the inspector arrives can make the difference between a long, stressful day and a pleasant visit. Take it seriously, but also remember to have fun!

## COMING EVENTS

### August 30: Whistler, British Columbia

*Sea to Sky. Feast of Fields 2008* Rebagliatti Park. [www.ffcf.bc.ca/feast.html](http://www.ffcf.bc.ca/feast.html)

### September 7: Vancouver, British Columbia

*Lower Mainland Feast of Fields.* UBC Farm. [www.ffcf.bc.ca/feast.html](http://www.ffcf.bc.ca/feast.html)

### September 7: Erin, Ontario

*Feast of Fields 2008.* [www.feastoffields.org](http://www.feastoffields.org). 905-859-3609. [www.everdale.org](http://www.everdale.org)

### September 11–14: Toronto, Ontario

*Canadian Health Food Association Expo East.* [www.chfa.ca](http://www.chfa.ca)

### September 21: Vancouver Island, British Columbia

*South Vancouver Island Feast of Fields.* [www.ffcf.bc.ca/feast.html](http://www.ffcf.bc.ca/feast.html)

### October 5–6: Toronto, Ontario

*All Things Organic* pavilion at the Ethnic & Specialty Food Expo. [www.organicfoodcanada.ca](http://www.organicfoodcanada.ca)

### October 15: Debert, Nova Scotia

*Workshop on rare breeds and heritage seeds* (tentative date and location). For details, contact Av Singh at [a.singh@agrapoint.ca](mailto:a.singh@agrapoint.ca) or 902-896-0277.

### November 2: Winnipeg, Manitoba

*Seeds of Diversity AGM and conference*, featuring Amy Goldman as keynote speaker. [www.seeds.ca](http://www.seeds.ca)

### November 7–9: Burnaby, British Columbia

*Organic Soil Management.* A 3-day course. \$549.00. 604-664-8888 or [gaiacollege.ca](http://gaiacollege.ca)

### November 16–18: Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

*3rd Bi-Annual Organic Connections Conference.* Workshops on Connecting, Sustainability, Lifestyles and Farming; a food fair and trade show highlighting organic and sustainable options for all; dinner and dance. 306-956-3110. [www.organicconnections.ca](http://www.organicconnections.ca)

### November 21–23: Orillia, Ontario

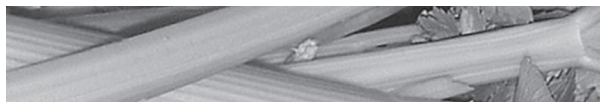
*Great Lakes Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) Conference 2008.* A venue for CSA farmers, future CSA farmers and small-farm advocates. *Seeding the Future—Growing Together*, conference workshops and presentations on practical techniques, tools and resources specific to organics and CSA. Topics include production, marketing and financial aspects of running a CSA operation. A CSA Mini-School (Nov 21) will introduce the concepts and practices of CSA farming. Hosted by COG, Ignatius Jesuit Centre of Guelph, EFAO, Heifer International and NFU-Ontario. Les services d'interprétation français-anglais seront offerts à la conférence. 519-341-0959 or [www.csaconference2008.ca](http://www.csaconference2008.ca)

### November 28–30: Victoria, British Columbia

*Organic Soil Management.* A 3-day course. \$549.00. 604-664-8888 or [gaiacollege.ca](http://gaiacollege.ca)

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