

Implementation of revised Canadian Organic Standards

Date: February 23, 2016

To: Conformity Verification Bodies (CVBs) designated by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Certification Bodies (CBs) accredited by the CFIA.

Subject: Implementation of revised Canadian Organic Standards

Revised versions of the Canadian Organic Standards were published on November 25, 2015. This update included:

- *CAN/CGSB 32.310 - Organic Production Systems – General Principles and Management Standards*; and
- *CAN/CGSB 32.311 - Organic Production Systems – Permitted Substances Lists*.

As per ISO 17065, when a certification scheme introduces new or revised requirements that affect the client, the CB shall ensure these changes are communicated to all clients. The CB shall verify the implementation of the changes by its clients and shall take actions required by the scheme. As per section C.5.1 of the Canada Organic Office (COO) Operating Manual, the CB is required to notify all its operators of any amendments to the regulations or standards within two months after publication.

Under the *Organic Products Regulations* 2009, all new and returning applicants for certification must meet the most recent versions of the standards at all times. As per section C.5.2 of the COO Operating Manual, a period of up to 12 months can be granted to previously certified operators who must be able to demonstrate conformity to the new requirements by November 25, 2016.

Some of the revisions in the standards may require more than 12 months to implement, such as barn renovations to comply with new flock sizes, exit spaces and natural lighting in poultry installations. When applicable, any period longer than 12 months is specified within the standards.

CVB responsibilities

- Starting March 31, 2016, CVBs designated by the CFIA are to assess CFIA-accredited CBs during on-site, witness and verification audits to confirm they are trained and ready to certify organic products to the updated Canadian Organic Standards.

CB responsibilities:

- CBs must update training materials, certification procedures and checklists to reflect the 2015 versions of the Canadian Organic Standards.
- By March 31, 2016, all verification officers and certification staff must receive training on the revised standards that specifies the differences between the 2006 (as amended) and 2015 versions.
- Records of all related CB training sessions, materials and attendees must be maintained and provided to the CVB upon request.
- If a CB finds that an operator is not producing organic products according to one of the new requirements, then a non-conformity can be issued and addressed prior to the end of the transition period.
- All certification documentation must reflect the revised standards by November 25, 2016.

Operators of organic products responsibilities

- Operators certified prior to November 25, 2015 are encouraged to produce organic products according to the revised standards throughout the 12-month implementation period. Except where additional time has been specifically granted within the standards, operators must be fully compliant with the new requirements by November 25, 2016.
- Organic products produced and certified before November 25, 2015 in compliance with the previous versions of the standards (CAN/CGSB 32.310-2006 and CAN/CGSB 32.311-2006) remain compliant with the *Organic Products Regulations, 2009*. These products can continue to be marketed as organic after November 25, 2016.
- Ingredients certified as organic before November 25, 2016 that are in compliance with the previous version of the standard can continue to be used in manufacturing products certified to the new versions of the standards and will be accepted as compliant with the *Organic Products Regulations, 2009*.

Valeriya Staykova
Lead Auditor
Canada Organic Regime
Valeriya.Staykova@inspection.gc.ca