



Organic Policy Statement Unannounced Inspections

UNANNOUNCED INSPECTIONS

Pertinent NOP Rules: §205.400
General requirements for certification
§205.403 On-site Inspections
NOP Guidance: 2609

Background

The USDA organic regulations (7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §205.403(a)(2)(i)(ii) and (iii))describe the conditions where certifying agents conduct additional on-site inspections. Additional inspections may be announced or unannounced, and the Administrator may require that additional inspections be performed by the certifying agent.

On June 23, 2011, the Deputy Administrator of the National Organic Program (NOP) issued a memorandum to the chair of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) requesting a proposal on best practices for unannounced inspections. The NOSB reviewed the request and, in consultation with representatives from the organic community, developed a proposal. On December 2, 2011, the NOSB approved the proposal, and submitted it as a recommendation to the NOP.

On February 27, 2012, the Office of the Inspector General recommended that the NOP develop guidance on the frequency with which certifying agents should conduct unannounced inspections of NOP-certified milk operations, and to select milk operations based on the risk inherent in each operation. AMS concurred with this recommendation, and agreed to issue guidance to

certifying agents regarding conducting unannounced inspections.

The CDA in reference to the NOP Guidance 2609, developed an internal policy outlined below effective September 12, 2012.

Policy Requirements

1. The CDA will conduct unannounced inspections of 5 percent of total certified operations per year.
2. The CDA will not accept applications for certification from locations the CDA is unable or unwilling to conduct unannounced inspections.
3. Operations chosen for unannounced inspections may be random or risk based, including operations that are requesting reinstatement through the CDA.
4. Unannounced inspections may fulfill the requirements for annual on-site monitoring inspections, required by section §205.403, only if the CDA inspector is able to conduct a full inspection of the operation as required by this section.
5. Unannounced inspections may be limited in scope, depth and breadth and may cover only certain aspects of the operation, such as parcels, facilities, buffers, products, records, etc...
6. CDA inspectors may conduct sampling during an unannounced inspection.

7. CDA will attempt no prior notification to the inspector's arrival. But, if the operation is located more than 15 miles from the inspector's territory, the inspector will give no more than four (4) hours notice to the operation before arriving on-site. This is to ensure that appropriate representatives are present.
8. The CDA will not charge the operation for unannounced inspections unless sampling occurs or the inspection is the annual inspection.
9. Each operation must sign the Organic Operator Agreement in which the CDA has requested unrestricted and complete access to all organic and nonorganic portions of the operation. If an operation fails to complete the form, organic certification will be denied.
10. If the authorized representative is not present when the CDA inspector arrives on the premises, the inspector will call the Primary Contact listed on the Organic Systems plan notifying them that the inspection will continue as planned.
11. An inspection report will be completed by the CDA inspector upon completion of the unannounced inspection.

Additional Information on Organic Inspections can be found at:

International Organic Inspectors Association:
www.ioia.net

National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service:
www.attra.ncat.org/organic.html

Organic Trade Association:
www.ota.com

USDA- National Organic Program:
www.ams.usda.gov

Issues of Concerns Identified During Unannounced Inspection

If the authorized representative (AR) is not present for the unannounced inspection thus unable to sign the inspection report, the report will be sent to the AR for review and signature to acknowledge what issues of concern were identified by the CDA inspector. The inspector will also address the need for additional information at this time.