

**INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:**

Early Days of Organic Food	1
Organic Farmer Honored	2
News for Small-Scale Poultry Processors	3
The 2007 Farm Bill	3
Calendar of Events	4
National Organic Standards Board	5
Brand Name Material List	6
Responsibility, Rewards and Risk	9
“All Things Organic” Conference	10
International Program News	11
Web Sites With a Wealth of Information	11
WSDA Offers Verification of Good Agricultural Practices	12

Early Days of Organic Food

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Organic Food Program at the Washington State Department of Agriculture. Twenty years ago I returned to Washington State after a 3-year stay in upstate New York where I studied insect-plant ecology at Cornell University. I was hired by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) to inspect organic farms under the new state organic certification program. The WSDA program relied on Washington Tilth to provide training on how to certify organic farms. The application forms and inspection reports were copies of the Tilth forms that had been used under their certification program in the mid-1980s. The organic standards, entitled “Rules for the Production of Organic Food Products,” were one page long. The rules listed the materials that could be used in organic farming and included one sentence about maintaining records of the materials used on the farm.

Sixty-three farms applied for certification that year, and I had the pleasure of visiting each one twice. The application consisted of a 2 page questionnaire that asked general questions about soil management, pest control and what crops



were being grown. Certification fees ranged from \$150 to \$600. The certification process required 2 inspections per year and one sample that was analyzed for pesticide residues. There were 5 orchards in the program, 2 in Chelan, 1 in Yakima and 2 in the Kettle Falls area. Most of the farms were quite small, the largest farms were Trout Lake Farm with 500 acres of herbs and Willow Wind Farms with 200 acres of potatoes. There were no processors or handlers. There were no organic livestock standards or organic dairies. The total value of the organic food industry was estimated at \$2.5 million.

(Continued on page 2)

Organic Farmer, Nash Huber, Honored

Sequim farmer Nash Huber has been selected as the 2008 recipient of the Steward of the Land Award by American Farmland Trust (AFT). The \$10,000 award recognizes the American farmer that best demonstrates leadership in protecting farmland and caring for the environment. Nash Huber is the first farmer in Washington State and the first organic vegetable farmer ever to receive the prestigious award. Nash has been certified with the WSDA since 1988. Congratulations, Nash!

“The young people who find their way to my farm get hooked on producing top quality organic food to feed their community. I can’t think of another profession that offers so much satisfaction to a person who is willing to put in the work.”

Nash Huber, Organic Farmer

Early Days of Organic Food, (Continued from page 1)

One of my favorite inspections was Steve Bensel’s Nootka Rose Farm on Waldron Island. They had no phone and so they did not know when the inspector would arrive. The only way to get to Waldron Island was on the mail boat that went to the island once a day. From the dock it was a mile walk to the homestead. If Steve was not home I would walk to their other field where they grew the garlic. The inspection was done in the shade of a tree not far from the beach. I’d sleep on the beach before heading back on the mail boat the next day.

The state’s organic food industry has prospered since that time. Farm gate sales were over \$150 million in 2006 and total organic sales were over half a billion dollars. This prosperity was made possible through the work of the organic pioneers. They had many challenges with weeds, pests and unstable markets. As they faced those challenges, they paved the way for many other farmers to adopt organic practices. I feel privileged to have been able to visit all of those farms and learn from these farmers. The farmers welcomed me into their homes, explained their growing practices and shared their challenges with soils, pests, weeds and markets. They all had a passion for organic farming and a vision of an agricultural system that honored people and the land.

Thank you to all of those early pioneers – Anne Schwartz, Margaret Clark, Gene Kahn, Tony Maskal, Jeff Herman, Steve Walser, Pat Moore, Betsie DeWreede, Gordon White, Nash Huber, Diane Dempster, Ray Fuller, Esther Stefaniw, Lon Johnson, David Garretson and many more. Their work has helped lead the way to a more sustainable agricultural system. *By Miles McEvoy, Organic Program Manager*

The *Organic Quarterly* is published by the Organic Food Program of the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

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Back issues are posted on our website: <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/default.htm>

Mission Statement

The WSDA Organic Food Program protects consumers and supports the organic food industry by ensuring the integrity of organic food products. The program certifies organic producers and handlers to US National Organic Standards and enforces organic standards in Washington State. The program supports the development of export markets by providing certification to foreign organic standards.

News for Small-Scale Poultry Processors

Equipment for Rent

In an effort to meet growing demand for locally grown chicken, 3 programs have been created to provide processing equipment for small farmers to rent:

WSU Mason Co. Extension

Contact Kirsten Workman, 360-427-9436, ext 14, or email kworkman@wsu.edu.

The Whatcom Pastured Poultry Group

Contact Terry Maczuga before 9pm (360) 384-4821, or email whatcompoultry@hotmail.com.

The Northwest Agricultural Business Center

(serves poultry raisers in Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan, Snohomish and Island counties)

Visit <http://www.agbizcenter.org/node/38>.

Puget Sound Meat Producers Cooperative strives to bring "Local Meats to Local Meals" with the introduction of the SOUTH SOUND'S own Mobile Meat Processing Unit (MMPU)! USDA certified local meat should be available by January 2009. You can be a part of the future, join us in making this project a success!

Contact: Pugetsoundmeatproducers@hotmail.com.

Licensing for Poultry Processing

Poultry processing operations must be licensed by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) or the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). To sell chicken direct to consumers from the farm, growers may obtain a WSDA Temporary Permit to Slaughter Pastured Chickens. The permit, which costs \$75 per year, allows a poultry producer to sell directly to the consumer at the producer's farm. This permit is only available to farmers processing 1,000 or fewer pastured chickens in a calendar year. For information and an application, visit <http://www.agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/TempChickenSlaughter/default.htm> or call the WSDA Food Safety Program (360) 902-1876.

Farmers processing more than 1,000 but fewer than 20,000 birds must obtain WSDA or USDA license for their processing facility. Only birds from a licensed WSDA or USDA processing facility can be sold at farmers markets, to grocery stores or to restaurants. Facilities that process more than 20,000 birds must obtain a USDA license.

For information and an application, visit <http://www.agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/TempChickenSlaughter/default.htm> or call the WSDA Food Safety Program (360) 902-1876.

The 2007 Farm Bill

After many years of work, the 2007 Farm Bill has finally passed. This is the first new Farm Bill since 2002 and it includes many new items for organic agriculture, including:

- National Organic Certification Cost Share. \$22 million over 5 years of mandatory funding. The program will be available in 2009 and will provide organic producers and handlers 75% of certification costs up to a maximum amount of \$750.
- Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative. \$78 million over 4 years in mandatory funding for a competitive grants program. Up from \$15 million in 2002.

- Organic Data Collection Initiative. \$5 million over 5 years to fund USDA organic data collection for better marketing information.
- Organic Crop Insurance. Ends discriminatory treatment of organic producers under the Federal crop insurance program.
- Organic Conservation Assistance. A new technical and financial assistance program to support farmers transitioning to organic production.

Additional information about the Farm Bill can be found at - http://www.sustainableagriculture.net/fb_reports.php.

Calendar of Events

Networking with Female Farmers,

July and August dates TBD, Wenatchee and Omak, WA. Network with farmers and resource people. Participate in discussions about business planning, direct marketing, farm succession, and other topics. For more information and to RSVP, please call Patrice Barrentine at 360-902-2057 or Email: smallfarms@agr.wa.gov

Tilth Producers Farm Walk at Alm Hill Gardens

July 28th, Everson, WA. This Farm Walk will be offered in both English and Spanish. For more information visit: www.almhillgardens.com or contact Tilth Producers at 206-442-7620.

Tilth Producers Farm Walk at 21 Acres

August 18, Woodinville, WA. For more information visit: www.21acres.org or contact Tilth Producers at 206-442-7620.

Tilth Producers Farm Walk at Methow Creamery

September 1, Twisp, WA. Contact Tilth Producers at 206-442-7620.

WSDA and USDA RMA Dairy Workshop

First week of September, Northwest Washington and North Central Washington. Workshops on organic certification, business planning, value-added products, and other topics. Call (360) 902-2057 for details.

BioFach Japan 2008

September 24-26, Japan. BioFach Japan is Asia's leading trade fair for organic products. For more information visit: <http://www.biofach-japan.com/main/Page.html>

Harvest Celebration Farm Tour

September 27, King County. For more information, contact Tricia Sexton at 206-205-3206.

Tilth Farm Walk at Styger Family Dairy Farm

October 6, Chehalis, WA. Contact Tilth Producers at 206-442-7620.

BioFach America 2008

October 16-18, Boston, MA. This is North America's largest all-organic and natural show. For more

information visit: <http://www.biofach-america.com/main/Page.html> or contact Ms. Miriam Stahel, Phone: +49-911-8606-8692

WA State Farmers Market Week

August 3-9. For more information about how to start a farmers market, go to <http://www.agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm> and download the **WA State Farmer's Market Manual**.

WSDA Organic Advisory Board Fall Meeting

November 6th, Bellingham, WA. This meeting will be in conjunction with the Washington Tilth Producers Conference. Contact Miles McEvoy at 360-902-1924, for more information.



Organic Expo 2008

July 25-27, Sydney, Australia. For more information, visit: www.organicexpo.com.au

National Organic Standards Board

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) met in May 2008. The NOSB advises the National Organic Program (NOP) on many aspects of the national organic standards. During their meeting, they addressed the budgetary status of the NOP, an update to the pasture rule for livestock, and made recommendations on approval of several materials to the National List. They also heard comments on criteria for the Commercial Availability of Organic Seed.

Commercial Availability of Organic Seed

On October 1, 2007, the NOSB issued a document titled *Further Guidance on the Establishment of Commercial Availability Criteria*. The draft was proposing to create a burdensome process that would require a lot of additional paperwork for organic growers and certifiers. It would have required organic growers to submit lists of non-organic seeds to the certifiers and then the certifiers would compile these lists and send them to a national database. This database would then be used to determine commercial availability of organic seeds. After the NOSB received many negative comments, including one from WSDA, they decided to table this issue until their fall meeting. They have asked the certification agencies to propose a method of strengthening the organic seed requirement without making unreasonable hardships on organic growers and certifiers. The NOSB's recommendations and public comments can be viewed on the USDA National Organic Program website at www.ams.usda.gov/nop/



Crop Materials

Microcrystalline cheese wax (CAS #'s 64742-42-3, 8009-03-08 and 8002-74-2) (paraffin wax) is recommended to be added to 7 CFR 205.601 as a production aid in log grown mushroom culture made without either ethylene-propylene co-polymer or synthetic colors.

Livestock Materials

Fenbendazole has been recommended to be added to 7 CFR 205.603 with the following annotation: Only to be used upon written diagnosis of clinical infestation by a veterinarian; prohibited in slaughter stock, allowed in emergency treatment for dairy and breeder stock when organic system plan-approved preventive management does not prevent infestation. Milk or milk products from a treated animal cannot be labeled as provided for in subpart D of this part for 90 days following treatment. In breeder stock, treatment cannot occur during the last third of gestation if the progeny will be sold as organic and must not be used during the lactation period for breeding stock.

The expiration date for Methionine was extended to October 1, 2010.

Processing/Handling Materials

The following substances were recommended to be added to 7 CFR 205.606:

- Alcohol, Cooking Wine: Marsala
- Alcohol, Cooking Wine: Sherry.
- Seaweed, Kombu, defined as Pacific Kombu Seaweed (*Laminaria japonica*, *Laminaria japonica* var. *ochotensis*, *Laminaria angustata*, *Laminaria angustata* var. *longissima*).
- Tragacanth Gum, water extracted

Please note that this is simply a brief overview of the actions taken at the NOSB meeting. We have summarized the items that we felt were most applicable to our certified operators. Please refer to the meeting notes to be published on the NOSB website for further details. You may also contact our office at any time for further information. *By Kathrine Withey, Organic Certification Coordinator, and Miles McEvoy, Organic Program Manager.*

BRAND NAME MATERIAL LIST UPDATE

June 12, 2008

This list is to be used as an addendum to the Brand Name Material List distributed to all new and renewal applicants for certification. All materials listed below are approved as of June 12, 2008. You may access a complete updated Brand Name Materials List at the WSDA Organic Food Program website:

<http://agr.wa.gov/foodanimal/organic/default.htm>.

Brand Name	Company Name	Sub-Type	Type	Restrictions of use
AgriCoat NaturalCoat™	AgriCoat LLC	Seed Coating	Crop Production Aid	None
AgriCoat NII Film Coat™	AgriCoat LLC	Seed Coating	Crop Production Aid	None
AgroThrive LF	Progressive Digestion Corporation	Liquid Fertilizer	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
AgroThrive SA	Progressive Digestion Corporation	Liquid Fertilizer	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
Aqua-Clear 15	CH ₂ O, Inc.	Chlorine Dioxide Precursor	Post Harvest Material	Must be used for the generation of chlorine dioxide only. Residual chlorine levels in the water shall not exceed the maximum residual disinfectant limit under the Safe Drinking Water Act [205.601(a)(2)]
CHB Cal-Mate II	Bio-Gro, Inc.	Humic Acid	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
CHB Copper 5%	Bio-Gro, Inc.	Copper Sulfate	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	Soil deficiency must be documented by testing
Desert Brand Calcium Chloride OP	Hill Brothers Chemical Company	Calcium Chloride	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	Only for use as a foliar spray to treat physiological disorders associated with calcium uptake [205.602(c)]
EnviroMoss	GDR Power	Manure	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	Must be used in compliance with NOP 205.203(c)(1)
FOAM BLAST® ORGANIC 71	Emerald Foam Control LLC	Foam Control	Processing Aid	Label Use Only
Foli-Gro Liquid Foliar Fertilizer 543	Wilbur Ellis Co.	Chelated Fertilizer	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	Soil deficiency must be documented by testing
GreenMatch Burndown Herbicide	Cutting Edge Formulations	Herbicide	Disease & Pest Control	Label Use Only

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Brand Name	Company Name	Sub-Type	Type	Restrictions of use
GreenMatch EX	Marrone Organic Innovations	Herbicide	Disease & Pest Control	Label Use Only
GTX Gold-L	GTX Technologies	Fulvic Acid	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
Humasol	KWS Distributing, LLC	Humic Acid	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
IAP Organic 440 Spray Oil	Independent Agribusiness Professionals	Horticultural Oil	Disease & Pest Control	Label Use Only
IAP Organic Summer 415 Spray Oil	Independent Agribusiness Professionals	Horticultural Oil	Disease & Pest Control	Label Use Only
Isomate-CM/LR TT	Pacific Biocontrol Corporation	Pheromones	Disease & Pest Control	Label Use Only
Kumulus DF	Arysta LifeScience North America Corporation	Sulfur Product	Disease & Pest Control	Label Use Only
Leaf Life Organic 2% Boron Solution	Western Farm Service	Boron	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	Soil deficiency must be documented by testing
Living Alaska HUMASOIL	Soil Health Solutions dba Bountea	Alaskan Humus	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
Microthiol Disperss	United Phosphorus, Inc.	Sulfur Product	Disease & Pest Control	Label Use Only
Nature's Shield 220-ACL	Pace International LLC	Fruit Wash	Post Harvest Material	Label Use Only
N-PHOS	Pacific Calcium, Inc.	Blended Fertilizer	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
Organic BioLink All-Purpose Fertilizer 1-5-5	Westbridge Agricultural Products	Blended Fertilizer	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
Organic BioLink All-Purpose Fertilizer 3-3-3 AG	Westbridge Agricultural Products	Blended Fertilizer	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
Organic BioLink Root-Boost 2-0-5	Westbridge Agricultural Products	Liquid Fertilizer	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
PERACLEAN 5	Evonik-Degussa	Peracetic Acid	Processing Aid	For use in wash and/or rinse water according to FDA limitations. For use as a sanitizer on food contact surfaces [205.605(b)].

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Brand Name	Company Name	Sub-Type	Type	Restrictions of use
Phytamin 611	California Organic Fertilizers, Inc.	Liquid Fertilizer	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
ProNatural Dry 13-0-0	Wilbur Ellis Co.	Blended Fertilizer	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
QB-10 Granulated	Quality Borate Co. L.L.C.	Boron	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	Soil deficiency must be documented by testing
RhyzoCarb	Biological Soil Inoculants, Inc.	Soil Inoculant	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
RhyzoComp	Biological Soil Inoculants, Inc.	Soil Inoculant	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
RhyzoPlex	Biological Soil Inoculants, Inc.	Soil Inoculant	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
SANI-PAC	CH ₂ O, Inc.	Peracetic Acid	Post Harvest Material	Label Use Only
Sereus	Biological Soil Inoculants, Inc.	Soil Inoculant	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
SSO Organic Compost	Silver Springs Organics, LLC	Compost	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
Tetrasul 4s5 Reg No. 71096-11	OR-CAL, Inc.	Lime Sulfur	Disease & Pest Control	Label Use Only
Tree Wash	Roger R. & Sally Ellis Organic Farm	Tree Wash	Crop Production Aid	None
Tsunami® 100	Ecolab Inc.	Peracetic Acid	Processing Aid	Label Use Only
Twin N	Mapleton International Ltd	Microbial Product	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
Vigor-Cal	Agro-K Corporation	Blended Fertilizer	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	Label Use Only
Cascade	Tulare Ag Products	Soil Amendment	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	None
RSA Liquid Organics Crop Mix I	Winfield Solutions	Chelated Fertilizer	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	Soil deficiency must be documented by testing
RSA Liquid Organics Iron 5%	Winfield Solutions	Chelated Fertilizer	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	Soil deficiency must be documented by testing
RSA Liquid Organics Manganese Sulfate 5%	Winfield Solutions	Manganese Sulfate	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	Soil deficiency must be documented by testing

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BNML continued from previous page

Brand Name	Company Name	Sub-Type	Type	Restrictions of use
RSA Liquid Organics Quick Cal	Winfield Solutions	Calcium Chloride	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	Only for use as a foliar spray to treat physiological disorders associated with calcium uptake [205.602(c)]
RSA Liquid Organics Zinc 7%	Winfield Solutions	Chelated Fertilizer	Fertilizer & Soil Amendment	Soil deficiency must be documented by testing

Responsibility, Reward and Risk

You have a great deal of responsibility when you choose to grow, handle or process organic crops and products. You are responsible for fully understanding the National Organic Standards and implementing your personally-designed organic system plan. When you sign the Organic Operator Agreement with WSDA, you accept responsibility for all actions taken by yourself, your employees, and contractors on your certified operation. It is crucial that the employees and contractors are aware of the organic requirements to keep your operation in compliance. Violation of organic standards, whether accidental or intentional, will jeopardize your certification. You can reduce your risk by monitoring the organic control points in your operation, i.e. the points at which the organic integrity may be compromised.



Application of pest control sprays is an important organic control point. Before spraying, verify that materials are allowed, and be sure that the spray applicator understands the importance of correctly recording the name of the material. Seed planting is also an important organic control point. In addition to choice of seeds, consider seed treatments and planting equipment.

Although several biological seed treatments are allowed, many seed treatments are prohibited. Refer to the OMRI list or the BNML to ensure that you use an allowed material. Even if your seeds are untreated, the use of planting equipment contaminated with fungicide-treated seeds will compromise the organic integrity of your crop. To prevent this, ensure that equipment is cleaned before entering an organic field.

The ultimate responsibility for organic certification rests on the shoulders of the individual who signs the Organic Operator Agreement. If you accept the responsibility for ensuring adherence to organic standards, you can reduce your risk and continue to enjoy the rewards of being a certified organic operation. *By Linda Condon, Organic Crop Certification Coordinator*

Product Withdrawals from the Brand Name Material List

Products may be withdrawn from the Brand Name Material List for many reasons – a company may reformulate a product, stop making a product, or go out of business. Some companies also withdraw registrations due to compliance action. When the Organic Food Program notifies you that the registration was withdrawn, you must stop using the product or provide verification that it still meets the National Organic Standards. If the material remains listed by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI), the material is allowed for use.

“All Things Organic” Conference

The Organic Trade Association organized an outstanding All Things Organic conference in Chicago April 26 – 29. I was fortunate to attend this event on behalf of the WSDA Organic Food Program. Staff from the National Organic Program (NOP) provided a one-day training session for certification agents where clarifications on some of the National Organic Standards were provided. The NOP is posting questions and answers on their web site so that certifiers and certified operations can stay abreast of these clarifications. Certifiers are looking forward to having the NOP include references to the particular National Organic Standards citations when making clarifications and decisions. This will help all assess how well the standards support the NOP decisions and

clarifications.

I also attended a meeting held by the Accredited Certifiers Association, Inc. several of the break out sessions to learn about a variety of topics and touch the ever-changing and developing pulse of the organic industry, like the developing standards for personal care products and fabric textiles. Several other accredited certification agents were exhibiting booths for their certification services. I met many of our counterparts and also met with some of our certified producers, handlers & processors exhibiting at All Things Organic. Chicago was in full bloom with tulips lining Michigan Avenue -- quite gorgeous! *By Linda Condon, Organic Crop Certification Coordinator*



Participants in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) pay the farmer at the beginning of the season, then receive a share of the produce each week. A typical share for early June may include red lettuce, green lettuce, spinach, radishes, daikon, swiss chard, and broccoli, as in the photo above. More unusual items such as chamomile (pictured) or garlic scapes, may also be offered.

International Program News

Exporting Organic Products to Europe— Getting Started

Each year many organic operations become certified with WSDA's European Organic Program (EOP). If you wish to export crops organic crops to Europe, consider the following:

- Your US Organic Certificate is required before an EU Organic Certificate can be issued.
- Each site that produces EU crops must be in the organic program (organic or transitional status) for 12 months prior to receiving your EU Organic Certificate.
- The EOP Producer application must be submitted to Olympia and reviewed before inspection.
- Please let your inspector know if you are interested in exporting to Europe.
- The document *European Organic Program Additional Requirements* provides useful information, and it can be requested from our office or downloaded from our web site, www.agr.wa.gov/foodanimal/organic.

European Organic Standards— Potassium Bicarbonate Allowed

On May 6, 2008 the European Union authorities amended the European Organic Regulation (EEC 2092/91) to approve the use of potassium bicarbonate for disease management in EU organic crop production. Due to this change in the EU regulation, the WSDA European Organic Program Additional Requirements have been updated. Potassium bicarbonate is no longer prohibited on crops to be exported to Europe.

If you used potassium bicarbonate in previous years, or earlier this year, the site and crops may be eligible for EU organic certification. If you would like to have any new sites or crops evaluated for compliance with WSDA's EU organic certification standards, please contact Brenda Book, at (360) 902-2090 or email bbook@agr.wa.gov. Please note that potassium bicarbonate remains prohibited under the WSDA Japan Organic Compliance Program.

Canadian Organic Standards

In December 2008, Canada's new organic regulation will go into effect. The WSDA Organic Food Program is currently undergoing the process to receive accreditation to certify products in accordance with the new regulation. WSDA's Canadian Organic Program will be available to certified operations in 2009 with further details available later this year. If you have any questions about selling, labeling, or representing products as 'organic' in Canada, please contact Brenda Book at (360) 902-2090 or bbook@agr.wa.gov.

Web Sites With a Wealth of Information

www.606organic.com

This website lists organic versions of the non-organic agricultural ingredients permitted for use in organic processed products. Manufacturers of organic ingredients are encouraged to visit the site and submit ingredients for listing on the site. Ingredients will be reviewed before they are listed. There is no fee for submitting an ingredient for listing.

www.organicprocessing.com

This website offers an on-line version of *Organic Processing Magazine*, a business-to-business publication for the organic food, fiber and personal care industries. *Organic Processing Magazine* shares practical, proven strategies to help the industry successfully manage operations and systems to meet the challenges of this expanding market. A paper subscription can be requested through the web site.

<http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/greenbook.htm>

This website has *The Green Book: The Handbook of Regulations for Direct Farm Marketing*, a comprehensive handbook designed to help farmers become familiar with Washington State regulations associated with direct marketing of farm products, including eggs, meat, nursery products and processed foods. It also has product labeling information.

WSDA Organic Food Program

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“Food is power Do you have control of yours?”

John Jeavons

WSDA Offers Verification of Good Agricultural Practices

After high-profile food-borne disease outbreaks, fresh fruit and vegetable farmers are seeking third-party verification of their farm’s Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) that reduce the risk of microbial contamination of fresh produce. Processors and handlers are seeking certification for their Good Handling Practices (GHP). An increasing number of national wholesalers and retailers are requiring GAP/GHP certification from the growers and processors from whom they source their foods. Federal nutrition programs, including the nation’s school lunch program, began requiring GAP/GHP audits last year for all produce. Many international buyers are also looking for proof of the audit.

Auditors from the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) can verify that growers are following USDA Good Agricultural Practices. Auditors can also verify that warehouses and packing plants are following Good Handling Practices (GHP). Audits are valid for one year and are conducted on a fee-for-service basis. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defined the terms of the GAP and GHP audits, and developed the audit checklist used to evaluate growers. WSDA performs the audits to meet or exceed those requirements, and provides tools to help producers prepare for the audit process. More information about GAP/GHP audits can be found at: www.agr.wa.gov/Inspection/FVInspection

Farm practices that are audited include:

- Irrigation water tested for micro-organisms;
- Ability to trace produce back to a field and harvest date;
- Clean covered trucks to haul all produce;
- Potable water for hand washing;
- Proper storage and refrigeration of produce;
- Proper sanitation training for farm workers.