

**About the
Author:**



Amy Griner has been with ICS since 2005, and has been working in the organic industry since 1998. She is an organic inspector in North Carolina, and has a half acre organic vegetable garden.

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Inspection Season

by Amy Griner

Ah, spring has finally arrived! Here in the south, the daffodils are blooming, trees are budding, the sounds of songbirds are filling the air! Also, a huge stack of files for farms needing inspection is also sitting on my desk. Definitely a harbinger of spring!

For those of you that don't know, inspecting organic farms and food processors is one of the many hats I wear in the organic industry. It's the primary work I do, in addition to being lucky enough to serve on the certification committee for ICS. By the end of this year, I will probably complete in the neighborhood of 100 inspections. I know what I look for during inspections, and am now here to offer advice on how to prepare for your inspection, and ensure you have a smooth, easy time this year.

First of all, be sure to read everything your CCS sends you. This is really important, I really can't stress this enough. One of the most important items you will receive from your CCS is a letter outlining what you need to have prepared for the inspector. Please get this information together before the inspector arrives. Inspectors will ask for this information, and having it readily available will make the inspection run more smoothly and efficiently.

And while I'm mentioning having things available for inspection, definitely have seed tags available. If the seed tag doesn't clearly state that the seed is untreated, have at least one seed bag available for the inspector to see. Actually, try to have at

least one bag for each variety you plant, just to be sure.

Have full audit trail at the ready. This includes receipts for the past 12 months. So, if you've already finished with your taxes, DON'T put the receipts in a box in the attic quite yet! Please wait until after your inspection. Field activity information for the past three years is critical, as are all storage and sales records for the same time frame.

One other document to make sure you have on hand is seed search verification. If you used ANY conventional seed, ensure documentation is in place showing that you attempted to source organic seed in that variety. And if the crop is corn, canola, or soybeans, you MUST have non-GMO documentation for the seed.

Finally, the night before the inspection, sit down and take a look at all the papers you've gathered. Make sure everything is updated. Check field histories...are spring inputs listed? Were there any changes to what was planned for planting? Have all sales been logged? Is all seed information up to date? Make sure all this information is complete when the inspector arrives.

Okay, now that the paperwork part of it is out of the way, what needs to be done on other areas of the farm? Look through the labels of the inputs you've used, and make sure they match what you put in the Farm

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Calendar

- ◆ All Things Organic (April 27-29): ICS Will be Exhibiting
- ◆ Memorial Day (May 26): ICS Office Closed
- ◆ IFT (June 28-July 2)
- ◆ 4th of July: ICS Office Closed



Classifieds

Please contact Brandi Eissinger, Marketing Specialist, to place a classified ad in the ICS Sustainable Times. Classified ads are free to ICS clients; ad rates available to non-ICS clients.

Submissions

Letters to the editor are welcome. Please include complete contact information including your daytime phone number and signature. All letters are subject to printing in our newsletter, however submission does not guarantee printing. Letters may be edited and cannot be returned.

For information on submitting an article, or if you have any ideas on articles that you'd like to see in our newsletter, please contact Brandi Eissinger at 701-486-3578 or via email at brandi@ics-intl.com. Letters to the editor may be sent to this same address.

Feedback

ICS welcomes and encourages feedback on our FVO Requirements as well as the other programs we offer. We also encourage comments and suggestions on our newsletter and website. If there is anything else you'd like to see, please let us know and we'll do our best to get you what you need.

To submit your feedback, either contact your Customer Care Specialist, email info@ics-intl.com, or contact our office at 701-486-3578.

Resources for New Organic Growers

Looking for answers of how you should do things and what exactly the NOP requirements are asking of you? Or do you know of someone considering transitioning to organic? The following are only some of the good resources available to everyone:

- The New Farm: <http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/home>
- ATTRA—National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service: <http://www.attra.org/>
- Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education: <http://www.sare.org/>
- Foundation for Agricultural and Rural Resources Management and Sustainability: <http://www.farrms.org/>; info@farrms.org or 701-486-3569
- USDA National Organic Program: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/indexIE.htm>
- Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service: www.mosesorganic.org or 888-551-4769
- Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society: www.nebusag.org
- Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society: www.npsas.org; npsas@drtel.net; 701-883-4304 (or 5205)

Help From Your CCS: Tips to Speed Up the Certification Process

Organic certification is extensive and due to the review and inspection process, can take awhile to complete. To alleviate some of the wait and to help speed up the process, your Customer Care Specialist has provided the following tips:

1. Get your paperwork back to ICS as soon as possible, and before the given deadline. After your first year, most of this paperwork only involves updating anything that has changed.
2. Make sure to include everything requested – maps, input labels, etc. If in doubt, contact your CCS to find out if it's needed, or simply include it anyway.
3. Don't forget your inspection minimum! In trying to get all the paperwork completed in time, sometimes this fee gets forgotten. In general, it should be sent in with the production plan, and it has to be in our office before your operation can be inspected.
4. Try to keep responses as quick as possible. If you have email or fax access, make use of them. It really speeds the process along.
5. If you know you're not the easiest

person to get a hold of (such as most growers during the growing season), let ICS and/or the inspector know the best times to reach you. If you have a mobile phone, this too will speed up the process and hopefully limit the amount of "phone-tag".

Try to be patient. If a lengthy amount of time has passed and you haven't heard anything from ICS – please call and ask. Otherwise, understand that we are doing everything in our power to make this as fast, efficient and painless as possible.

Keep The Comments Coming!

We would like to thank everyone who completed the Service Survey which was handed out during inspections. We take your comments and suggestions provided very seriously and are doing everything we can to ensure your concerns are taken care of.

One of the comments we have seen mentioned a few times is that many of you would like more information on the NOP requirements and how to meet them. Unfortunately, we are not able to offer consultation on how you can meet these requirements, but we can and will give you as much information as we're allowed to help you find the answers yourself. Coming up

within the next month, our website will have a page dedicated just to links to sites that help out transitioning and new organic growers as well as new organic processors.

We also have a discussion board open to all clients of ICS (please register on the site and be certain to indicate that you are a client so that you can be given proper access). Please feel free to use this forum to post questions, or respond to other clients' questions. Although ICS staff cannot answer the questions posted on the forum, other clients may have had the same issues and may be able to assist you.

As for other comments and concerns brought to our attention: we have been trying to answer them either through direct communication or by inserting a relevant article in our newsletter. If you feel your concerns haven't been addressed, please let us know.

This year we will once again include the Service Survey in the inspection paperwork. Please continue to send us your comments, concerns and suggestions either through the form provided, through the survey available on our website, or by contacting your Customer Care Specialist.

In Recognition of our Long-Standing Clients!

The staff at ICS is grateful for the many years our clients have stuck with us; and are equally grateful for having the pleasure of working with all of our clients over the years.

Included in this issue are those clients who have been certified with International Certification Services, Inc for 10 years or longer. These clients were with us before the National Organic Program came into effect, when we were still known as Farm Verified Organic.

Please note that this list does not include anyone who was a sub-grower under another client or who was still in transition—it is based solely on the date of their first FVO certificate. We have many more who were working with ICS and just didn't receive a certificate by 1998. Know that we are equally proud to have all of you with us as well.

If we unintentionally left someone off this list, please contact Brandi (brandi@ics-intl.com) immediately.

Thank you all for the wonderful years, memories and experiences!

Name	Yrs Certified	Name	Yrs Certified	Name	Yrs Certified
Stan Barth Farms	19	Vince Meyer Family Farm	13	Eck Organic Farms	11
R & C Mittleider Farms, Inc	18	Wilcox Farms, LLP	12	The Grain Place	11
Swany White Flour Mill Co.	18	Stroh, Bryan & Karri	12	The Bliss Farm	11
Baugher Ranch Organics	17	North Outback Farm	12	Green, Art	11
Vig, Donald	15	Stroh Organic Farms	12	Guayaki SRP, Inc	11
McCutcheon Enterprises	15	Cline Farms	12	Chiechi Farms	11
Beckner Farms	14	Kraft Family Farm	12	Nelson, Dan	11
Hugh's Gardens	14	Stroh, Brent	12	Little Big Man Organic Farm	10
Organic Kaul Farms	14	Owen Trangsrud Farm	12	Wiest, Vivien	10
Organic Springs Farm	14	Brush Creek Organic	12	Double S Processing	10
D & D Living Trust	14	Eberl Farms	11	Hasse, Roger	10
Swiss Imports	14	Alan Krenzel Farms, Inc.	11	Klipfel, Thomas	10
Rockwell, Lynda	13	Mueller Seed Farm, Inc.	11	North Dakota Mill	10
Dahlgren & Company, Inc	13	National Raisin Co.	11	Huber, Marvin	10
Stengel Seed & Grain Co.	13	Maple Highland Farm	11	Zundel, Richard	10
Prairie Road Organic Farm	13	Dammel Ranch	11	5th Generation Farm	10
Dry Creek Ranch	13	Klipfel, Mike	11	Kleven Stock Farm	10
Pihl Ranch	13	US Cold Storage (Fresno)	11	Schmaltz Family Farm	10
Dufner, Don	13	Dockter, Maynerd & Scott	11	SK Food Specialty Processing	10
Dakota Organic Beef	13	Meyer Farm	11	Bjur Organic Farm	10
D.W. J. R. Ranch Inc.	13	Sran Brothers Farming, Inc.	11	Carlson Farms	10
Seibold, Lewis	13	Kramlich, Raymond	11		
Johnson Farms	13	Boghosian Raisin Packing	11		

Welcome to the Family!

ICS welcomes two new additions to our staff:

Jessica Williams:

Jessica Williams started working with International Certification Services on February 19, 2008. Jessica is our new Customer Care Specialist and will be responsible for assisting her list of clients through the certification process.

Jessica has an Associates of Science Degree from Bismarck State College and has several years of customer service experience. During and after college, Jessica worked at jobs where she met all different kinds of people and learned that she needs to be able to relate to every one of them.

Jessica also has farm/grain experience: her father has worked and managed the Grain Elevator in Streeter all Jessica's life, and her grandfather and uncles are all grain

farmers. She is happy to be back in her home town of Streeter. "I love the small town life!" she informed us.

Jessica has a 7 month old little boy, 3 dogs and 4 horses and is planning on getting cattle this spring. Although between work and her family, her spare time is limited, Jessica likes to spend this precious time riding horse, playing golf, or just hanging out outdoors when the weather is nice. She also enjoys spending time with her siblings and parents. "Most of all, I love watching my little boy grow up," Jessica told me.

We're glad to have you here with us Jessica and look forward to many years of working with you!

Debra Clark:

Debra Clark began working with International Certification Services on February 19, 2008 as well. Debra is our Certification Team/Database Coordinator—a new job position within our company. Debra is responsible for data entry and working with our Database Administrator in upkeep of e-Cert—our new database system.

Debra spent 5 years with the Canadian Corps of Commissioners, working for the Department of National Defense in security and emergency systems & databases. Her experience has more then prepared her for her position here.

Originally from Canada, Debra now resides on a farm near Woodworth, North Dakota with her husband and son. She also has two grown daughters in Canada.

During her free-time, Debra enjoys interior decorating, reading, traveling, and working on her computer.

It's great to have you a part of the ICS team, Debra and we look forward to working with you and getting to know you better!

New Certifications

FVO Certifications:

Burch Organics, Family Farm
Taylor Farms, Family Farm

NOP Certifications:

Abbondanza Organic Seed & Produce, Commercial Farm
Arapahoe Ranch, Commercial Farm
Paige Brummond, Family Farm

ICS welcomes the following organizations to our family of certified clients. We're proud to have you with us.

Mark & Susan Hollenbeck, Family Farm
Odermann Cattle Company, Family Farm
Ortenblad Seed Service, Family Farm
Pine Hill Goat Farm, Family Farm
Country Life, LLC, Handler
Olle Svensson, Processor/Mfg.
Pan-O-Gold Baking Co., Processor/Mfg.

Inspection Season (Cont)

by Amy Griner

(Continued from page 1)

Plan. If they don't, the inspector is going to ask for copies, or to take the label; there's nothing wrong with just getting it ready ahead of time. Once again, keep seed bags. The inspector will ask to see them.

And, while we're at it, yes, inspectors want to see the equipment, will open planter boxes (especially if you're in split production, we need to know if the boxes are coated with Captan or something else that would be prohibited), and will look at the general repair of the equipment. Now, that doesn't mean we don't understand that tractors can and do drip. We just want to know if there's leaking causing puddles.

Okay, we're still in the farm yard, so, let's check out the storage areas. Are the bins in good repair? Are they swept out (and again, this is really important if you're in split production)? Are the numbers still legible, or did last summer's sun and this winter's blowing snow wipe out all traces of them? Same with identifying dedicated organic bins. There might have been a green "O" on it for organic, but you need to check if that's faded, too. If you can't see the numbers, the inspector can't either. Is there a cooler for storage? If it's not dedicated organic, are the shelves labeled?

Let's move on to the fields. Yes, pretty much anything out here can't be changed, fixed, or otherwise prepared specifically for an inspection. But look with an inspector's eyes, and try to think of what they'll look for. Are buffers harvested or perma-

nent? If they're harvested, this should be the reminder to get buffer harvest/sales records together. If they're not harvested, take a look at what the neighbor is doing in their field. Is the risk any greater this year than last? Is their conventional corn adjoining your organic corn field? This lets you know ahead of time that you'll likely have some pretty strictly worded conditions regarding appropriate buffer distance. Is a former conventionally cropped field seeded down for hay? Does this change buffer concerns?

While out here, of course you'll want to take a look at the crops. Yes, it's early, but what is your estimated yield this year? Up from last year? Down? Be sure to be honest in these estimates. I know some folks always estimate low, as they're sure that if they don't they're just asking for hail. I can understand this thinking, but it really doesn't give your inspector good information.

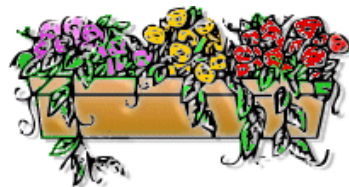
Check your soil. Is there any evidence of biological activity? How does it smell? A good inspector should be out of the vehicle when in the fields, and be taking this close a look, too. Really, for me, this is my favorite part of the inspection. The chance to be out in the field, and to really look at the results of the hard work organic farmers do. It's right there, in that soil. I can't imagine inspecting a farm, and not having the opportunity to dig my fingers into good, healthy, clean soil. Yes, I know the paper part of the inspection needs to be done. And the bins and the equipment need to be checked. But the fields, the soil, well, they're the heart and soul of what organic

farmers do.

Okay, now you've gone through a quick version of what the inspector will do. Except of course, the Exit Interview. And since you've gotten all additional information together already, and because you've looked over the whole farm, there won't be any surprises in the exit.

The only thing left is for the inspector to say thank you for your time, your energy, and for the work that you do. This final thanks is, in so many ways, one of the most important parts of the inspection. I know that the farms I inspect open their homes to me, let me sit at the kitchen table with paperwork spread from hither all the way over to yon. I know the farmers take precious hours out of their full days to ensure I have the opportunity to visit every corner of the farm.

This organic inspection process is really quite different than just about any other inspection a farm could have. I've worked with young people who thought they wanted to be an organic inspector, but gave up with a cry of "I had no idea how intrusive this whole process is! I can't do this!" Because it *is* intrusive. And organic farmers handle this intrusion with not just dignity and grace, but also with laughter and genuine openness and a willingness to share what they do. And I am humbled by your invitation to me to be a part of it. Thank you.



NOP § 205.606

There is a new website that has just started to help buyers and certifiers check for commercial availability of the organic ingredients listed on NOP § 205.606. This website allows suppliers of these ingredients to register their products. The purpose of this site is to "save everyone time and money while providing a consistent method of determining commercial availability." Please visit the 606 Organic website: <http://606organic.com/>

Canada Regulations

ICS clients located in Canada, or those exporting to Canada, please continue to watch your email/mail for information from International Certification Services, Inc concerning the Canada Organic Regime, whose standards are scheduled to go into effect in December of 2008.

If you did not receive notice already about this from ICS, please contact your Customer Care Specialist.

Compost This: Earth Day 2008

Earth Day will be celebrated globally on April 22, a day for us to focus on taking care of the planet's environment. Here are some facts regarding this important day.

- Founded by U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson of Clear Lake, Wisconsin in 1970.
- The first Earth Day was recognized by 20 million people across America.
- It was launched internationally in 1990 when 200 million people in 141 countries participated.
- Today, 500 million people in over 164 countries continue to celebrate International Earth Day
- Earth Day has also been celebrated long before 1970, and was usually (and in some areas still is) celebrated on March 21st.
- General Earth Day events include tree plantings, planting native gardens, neighborhood clean-ups, workshops and seminars, concerts, eco-fairs, parades, cultural events, waste reduction projects, the implementation/expansion of environmental programs, wildlife conservation projects, and much more.

New Study Confirms Benefit of Organic Produce

Organic is better, but how much better? Until recently, there was a noticeable lack of quantifiable data to support such claims. Now a new report by the Organic Center has come up with real numbers, stating that there would be a 97 percent reduction of health risks if all of the nation's crop land were converted to organic farming methods. Although less than three percent of U.S. crop land is used for farming fruits and vegetables, the report estimates that these crops account for most of the health risks from dietary exposure to pesticides. And though the report by the Boulder, Colo.-based Organic Center estimates a 97 percent reduction in this risk by converting US farm land to organic, it also points out that consumers would need to choose organic imported produce as well to maintain the lower degree of risk.

Other findings in the report include:

– An analysis of the significantly greater pesticide risks linked to consumption of imported conventionally grown fruits and vegetables, compared with domestic conven-

tional produce.

- Rankings of dietary risk levels in select conventionally grown fruits and vegetables, arranged to help guide consumers seeking to minimize pesticide risks.
 - Suggestions on how to meet dietary guidelines for fruit and vegetable intake in the winter, while also reducing pesticide exposures.
 - An overview of pesticide residues found in milk.
- The estimates are based on current pesticide residue data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Environmental Protection Agency's current methods for estimating pesticide dietary risks. The Organic Center is a non-profit organization devoted to promoting organic agriculture with peer-reviewed scientific research. The report, titled "Simplifying the Pesticide Risk Equation: The Organic Option," is available for free download on the Organic Center's website at <http://www.organic-center.org>.

Article from: <http://209.10.202.16/NFNPortal/article.aspx?aid=2182>



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Organic farming has been shown to provide major benefits for wildlife and the wider environment. The best that can be said about genetically engineered crops is that they will now be monitored to see how much damage they cause. (Prince Charles)

CC Corner: Verifying Your Seed- What You Need to Do

We are always looking for ways to both simplify and improve the credibility of our certification. Some relatively easy changes about the seed you are using will accomplish both of these goals.

Organic standards require you to use organic seed whenever possible, and in all cases seed that is non-gmo and has not been treated with prohibited materials. Often when we see a gap in the necessary information to verify you meet this part of the standards, certification gets delayed. We want to eliminate this inconvenience for both your sake and ours.

Recent discussions among our inspection and certification staff have lead us to request the following from you as part of your inspection this cycle. Having these things ready at inspection to show to the inspector will greatly help facilitate this aspect of our certification decision:

- If the seed is organic: Your file should have some form of verification that the seed is indeed certified organic. Most seed bags' labeling shows the organic status, the certifier, and a lot number. However, bulk loads might not always have such indications. In these cases a copy of the supplier's organic certificate and/or a transaction certificate for the organic lot in question is necessary. Note: If you can't easily get this type of information one way or the other, that is a red flag! Also, have copies of purchase receipts; these should state that the seed is organic. **REMEMBER!** – You are required to use organic seed whenever possible. ICS certifies several excellent purveyors of organic seed. They rightfully deserve your patronage for the good service they are providing.
- If the seed is not organic: **Keep the seed bag tag and/or bag, and a sam-**

ple of the seed to show the inspector, so that you can prove the seed was not treated.

· If any varieties of seed or inoculants are potentially a GMO, your file needs to have a non-GMO statement for each variety in question. If the seed is organic, proof as described above that the goods were certified organic fulfills this; nothing further is needed in such cases.

ICS intends to make the request for this information more explicit in our next revisions to Module 7 of the Production Plan.

We always like to hear from our clients. If you have any questions or suggestions, please let us know. We greatly appreciate your efforts and ongoing participation with us. It is rewarding to be associated with such a fine pool of farmers.

Best wishes for a very productive season!