



Attract Beneficial Insects to Borders and Buffer Zones

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Beneficial insects can offer long term, inexpensive, biological pest control to your growing operation. A natural habitat for beneficials might be well suited for your buffer zones or as field and garden barriers. While commercial insectaries offer beneficials direct to farmers and growers, Dr. Robert Bugg at the University of California Davis, [suggests](#) organizing your farm or garden to include plants that attract beneficial insects and maintain their habitat. It's pretty hard to dispute insect knowledge from a guy named Dr. Bugg, don't you think?

Beneficials serve organic growers in three main ways: as pollinators, predators, and parasites. Pollinators serve to fertilize plants while predatory and parasitic insects work to eliminate unwanted pests. Predators help control detrimental pests by consuming natural prey while parasites infest and overwhelm their hosts.

Effective biological pest management requires growers to first identify the bad guys. This involves careful observation of when the pests are active, the sort of damage they are causing, and the extent of infestation. If you cannot identify the pest on your own, take a picture of it. Consult your local extension agency or perform your own research to determine which beneficials to introduce. You can also contact the [National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service](#) with questions.

Once you've identified the nuisance, determine which beneficials to invite. Ladybugs and lacewings enjoy munching on aphids and plant mites. Praying mantis and spiders are also happy consumers of unwanted scale insects. Seek out natural insect predators for your local region.

The next step is to create an environment that attracts the beneficials. In an informative [article](#), Susan Brackney suggests "parasitic wasps are typically drawn to flower heads comprised of multiple, smaller flowers. As such, growing herbs like dill, fennel, coriander, parsley and thyme should keep the tiny parasites from straying from your garden. Several good sources of nectar and pollen for ladybugs, lacewings and other beneficials include bee balm, calendula, clover, daisies, lobelia, sunflowers, asters and coreopsis". Biological control of insect nuisance may not be the quick-fix that commercially available insecticides offer. But keep in mind, while some pesticides and insecticides are approved for use in organic operations, those substances can't distinguish the good bugs from the bad ones. Such use results in widespread elimination of even the beneficial insects.

New Food Safety Rules Proposed

In 2011, President Obama signed into law the [Food Safety Modernization Act \(FSMA\)](#). As part of the implementation, the FDA recently proposed two new food safety rules:

- [Produce rule](#) – standards for growing, harvesting, storing and packaging fresh produce.
- [Preventive Controls for Human Food rule](#) – food safety measures for food processing facilities, including on-farm processing.

The public comment period on these proposed rules was recently extended to November 15, 2013. [Ecocert ICO](#) staff are participating on the Organic Trade Association (OTA) Food Safety Task Force to help determine how these two rules might impact certified organic operations and submit comments to the FDA.

The expected implementation timeline for the Standards for Produce Safety are outlined below:

January 2013: Notice of proposed rule
January – November: Public comment period
2014 (one year after comment period): Final Rule
2015: Anticipated effective date
Look for possible extensions for "small" and "very small" operations

The FSMA regulation has also prompted the FDA to propose new food safety rules related to imported food. The suggested [Foreign Supplier Verification Programs](#) and [Accreditation of Third-Party Auditors](#) rules provide more oversight on food imported for U.S. Consumers. The public comment period on these rules will close on November 26, 2013.

Miles McEvoy Discusses "Sound and Sensible" Initiative

Early in July, NOP Deputy Administrator Miles McEvoy joined staff at the [Ecocert ICO](#) office to share more insight into the "Sound and Sensible" program.

Miles highlighted 5 main goals of the new initiative:

1. Efficient processes
2. Streamline recordkeeping requirements
3. Practical plans
4. Fair and Focused enforcement
5. Integrity first

These goals are intended to help make organic certification "accessible, attainable, and affordable".

The NOP developed several new projects to help meet these goals including new technical assistance guidelines for certifiers and inspectors to clarify how they can help operators and an effort to identify and remove certification barriers especially for small businesses. You can read more about the Sound and Sensible initiative [here](#).

We thank Miles for taking time to visit with us, answer some questions from our staff, and share this helpful information!

Farm Bill Remains Stalled During August Recess

The federal Farm Bill remains in limbo as Congress recently adjourned for the August recess. Upon their return to Washington in September, legislators will have just nine days of scheduled legislative sessions to agree upon a new bill before the current Farm Bill extension expires on September 30.

The bleak outlook for this bill is complicated by a proposed cut, amounting to \$40 billion over the next ten years, to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the controversial carving out of an "agriculture-only" bill.

Additional disputes center around subsidies to agribusiness corporations and notably to cotton farmers.

For more information, you can access the House Committee of Agriculture website [here](#).



Ecocert ICO team

[Ecocert ICO](#) is proud to be working with IUPUI School of Public & Environmental Affairs Sustainability Fellowship Program.

We welcome Graduate Student Intern, Sara Miller Chonaiew this summer/fall.

See: SPEA Indianapolis, www.spea.iupui.edu/students/internships/email.php

Upcoming Events

August 27, 2013—Indianapolis, IN
Food Export Association of the Midwest and Food Export USA – Northeast

Find out what it takes to become export ready! For more information or to find events near you contact info@foodexport.org or visit www.foodexport.org.

September 7, 2013—Assumption, IL
Illinois Growers Association
Transitioning to organic corn and soybeans: A first-hand look
Intended for those considering making a transition to organic corn and soybean production, or just wanting to know more about what is involved. [Register here!](#)

September 25-28, 2013—Baltimore, MD
Natural Products Expo East

December 12-14, 2013—Springfield, IL
Acres U.S.A. Conference & Trade Show

Find out more about this year's conference by visiting the [Acres U.S.A.](#) website.

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Other News...

Incorporating Biodiversity Management into OSP

In their guidance document for farmers, the Wild Farm Alliance reminds us all that “Assessing biodiversity resources on the farm is critical. As a steward of two-thirds of the nation’s continental land area, you must have knowledge of native species and ecosystems in order to manage your land for the protection of highest priority species and habitats.”

The [Organic Farmer’s guide](#) provides extensive help for farmers who still need to assess their operation and develop biodiversity management plans within the Organic System Plan (OSP).

All certified crop and livestock operations should consider how natural woods, watersheds, native plants and animal habitats will be maintained or nurtured on their farms and include a biodiversity management plan in the OSP.

Unannounced Residue Testing and Inspections Underway

We want to thank all our clients who have already received a knock on the door, a cell phone call, or message that an [Ecocert ICO](#) representative has arrived unannounced in accordance with new NOP guidance.

Each of our clients have been accepting of the situation and very cooperative.

Organic Tomato Grafting Project Seeks Farmer Participation

We recently received communication from Dr. Matt Kleinhenz at The Ohio State University informing [Ecocert ICO](#) about a project that seeks “to assist organic tomato growers in deriving maximum value for their investments in grafted tomato plants.”

The project team is seeking grower participation to nominate rootstock and scion varieties for inclusion in the study.

Dr. Kleinhenz invites our clients to contact him directly or complete a short “variety nomination” form online.

You can read more about the project at <http://hcs.osu.edu/vpslab/organic-grafted-tomato-variety-nominations> or contact:

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ECOCERT FAIR TRADE STANDARD CHANGES!

The ECOCERT ESR standard “Fairness, Solidarity, Responsibility” for organic fair trade products has changed! It now answers to new issues and integrates **two major innovations since it entered into force in 15 June 2013**:

- It **encourages fair and local relationships** between North-based growers/producers and processors.
- It **evaluates both the responsible and ethical commitment** of companies and organizations in the whole supply chain.

External communication rules on ESR compliance give the opportunity to promote both domestic fair trade products further (North/North fair trade) and to advertise a “responsible” corporate outlook.

ECOCERT can now provide various distinctive certification schemes via the updated ESR standard:



“**Ecocert Fair trade**” for fair trade products, originating from Southern or Northern supply chains.

“**Ecocert Responsible**” is for organizations promoting an ethical outlook and operating businesses in compliance with basic human and environmental rights. The standard is based on the **seven ISO 26000 guidelines**, related to **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**. Fair Trade criteria revolve around these themes.



NOP Updates from Dave DeCou

Dear clients,

I hope the year is treating all of you well. I know the weather has seldom been “normal” for most of you.

For those of you who actually farm I suspect you often have questions the answers to which might both effect your production but also your certification status.

We want you to know we can answer most questions for you - perhaps not all, but most. The organic regulations require us to provide information you need in order to meet the standards yet the regulations prohibit us from “consulting” with you.

So what is the difference between consulting and providing you with enough information to meet the regulations? Here are a few simple guidelines:

- We can answer any question that has a yes or no answer. Examples: “Is product XYZ compliant for use as a fertilizer?”, “May I use this cleaner in my milking equipment?”, or “May I use treated seeds?”
- You may ask us about the content of the NOP regulations or Policies.
- We can tell you about well-known options for addressing issues.
- You can ask about anything you have heard us discuss at a public presentation.

We will not be able to answer questions about whether you should use Product A or Product B. We cannot tell you how to overcome a barrier to certification but we can (and should) explain the nature of the barrier. The more specific advice we give you, the closer we get to the consulting line. The information you put into your operating plan needs to reflect your own decisions.

Keep in mind that we are available to answer your questions during regular business hours. There are times when we are already talking with someone else but do not hesitate to call. Your inspector can answer your questions as well as office staff. Although each of us has our own knowledge and none of us can answer all questions, we will find the answer you need and get back to you.

Best Regards

Dave DeCou, Certification Manager ECOCERT ICO

Regulation and Policy Changes

So what has changed in the USDA NOP's Regulations and Policies recently. NOP has primarily completed work on issues pertaining to certifiers and how we operate internally. One thing they clarified concerned how we provide technical assistance most of which results in the information earlier in the article. Additionally NOP clarified how Material Review work can be done by certifiers and material review organizations such as OMRI. Their recent update also detailed how conflicting decisions by those of us who do material review work will be resolved by NOP. The rest of those changes concern very internal aspects of how we operate – personnel matters.

The following changes were made to the National List:

- Peracetic acid listing in 205.601 (Crop materials) was clarified and expanded to allow it to be used in combination with hydrogen peroxide at no more than 6% concentration as indicated on the pesticide label. It can now be used for:
 - Disinfecting equipment, seed and asexually propagated planting material
 - For plant disease control as a fire blight control
 - In combination with hydrogen peroxide at less than 6% concentration for any disease control.
- Potassium Hydroxide may now be used in Processing except not for Lye peeling of fruits and vegetable except that it is allowed for lye peeling of peaches.
- Silicon Dioxide in Processing - permitted as a defoamer. Allowed for other uses when organic rice hulls are not commercially available.
- Processing - 205.606(d)(3) is modified to read to read Beta-Carotene extract color – derived from carrots or algae (pigment CAS# 7235-40-7).
- Processing - Removes Annatto extract color from 205.606(d)(1) and renumbers the remaining items.