



Conservation Easement Option For Land Preservation

Inside This issue

- *Conservation Easement Option*
- *Looking Ahead To 2014*
- *Label Approvals*
- *ECOCERT SA and IMO Partnership*
- *UTZ Certification*
- *NOP Updates*

According to the [Land Trust Alliance](#), “Every day over 5,000 acres of land are developed in the United States.” Concerns over the conservation of our land resources, especially organic farmland, have inspired some land owners to consider conservation easements as a way to thwart future development.

“The most traditional tool for conserving private land, a ‘conservation easement’ (also known as a conservation restriction) is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values” (via [landtrustalliance.org](#)).

A conservation easement allows the land owner to continue use of the land for stated purposes, like farming, for example but may restrict other uses including certain constructions. The rights and limitations set forth in the easement provisions apply to the land even when passed down to future generations.

One of the important considerations for landowners is the impact an easement might have on the potential estate taxes. Because the land would not be eligible for development, it would lower the market value and may significantly impact the management of the land by the next generation. This feature makes a conservation easement an attractive option for some landowners.

Conservation easements can help preserve biodiversity by protecting wildlife habitat, tree canopies, and wetlands. In these easement arrangements, a designated land trust is responsible for the protection and stewardship of the land. The National Land Trust Census indicates land trusts have been successful in securing over 37 million acres of land for public benefit (via [landtrustalliance.org](#)).

Looking ahead to 2014...to better serve you!

As the calendar year 2013 is winding down, we’re busy planning and gearing up for exciting changes for 2014! We are listening to your input and making changes to ease some of the paperwork burdens.

Organic System Plan and documents

We have been working on changes to the Organic System Plan (OSP) forms. For our new clients, the entire form must be completed in order to be considered for certification. However, for our renewal clients, you may not need to submit an entire OSP for 2014. Read on!

The OSP is now divided into separate modules that you can customize according to the needs of your operation.

Most of the sections of the OSP only need to be completed when changes have occurred for your operation or if you are planning to add new crops, livestock, or products to your existing operation.

We have created an **Organic System Plan Guide** to help you determine which modules may be relevant to you. As always, we are happy to help you select which modules you need to complete.

New submission deadlines for OSP

We have established new submission deadlines for Organic System Plans (OSP) for our renewal clients.

Crop and Livestock OSP
Submission deadline is March 1st

Handler/Processor OSP
Submission deadline is May 1st

Operators with multiple scopes (for instance, crops and processing) must submit the renewal OSP by March 1st.

Late fees of \$50 **per month** will be applied to any renewal OSP submitted after these deadlines.

We will strictly enforce these submission deadlines and the assessment of late fees in 2014.

Label Approvals

As an accredited certification organization, ECOCERT ICO is responsible for the accuracy of the labels our clients are using for their products. During our review process, we often find oversights or omissions on the label proposed for use.

One very common error we see producers make is the omission of the word “organic” to identify ingredients. Another frequent error involves the placement of the required language “Certified organic by ECOCERT ICO”.

Our clients use great care and creativity in their labeling efforts. We are here to support that work but also to verify all of the label information complies with the organic standards.

Keep in mind, preapproval from ECOCERT ICO is mandatory.

Please be sure you are submitting all of your labels for approval before going to market with your product.

If you have any questions about the readiness of your labels, please contact our office.



Referrals for 2014

Serving you, our clients, has been a sincere pleasure this year.

We are grateful for your business and we look forward to continuing our relationships with you in 2014.

We know the best advertisement for our business comes from you.

If someone you know is interested in organic certification, please mention our name and number.

A credit of \$75 per referral will apply to your account.

We appreciate your support!

Upcoming Events

January 21/23, 2014—Indianapolis, IN : Indiana Horticultural Congress

The [Indiana Horticultural Congress](#) is an educational meeting designed to meet the needs of fruit, vegetable, wine, organics, and specialty crop growers and marketers in Indiana and surrounding states.

January 22/23 2014— San Francisco, CA: Sustainable Foods Summit

The Sustainable Foods Summit is a series of international summits that focuses on the leading issues the food industry faces concerning sustainability and eco-labels, such as Organic, Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance, UTZ Certified, etc.

February 20/22, 2014—Danville, IN : Indiana Small Farm Conference

Educational conference focused on Indiana's small and alternative farmers.

February 27/March 1, 2014—La Crosse, WI : Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service (MOSES).

The [MOSES Conference](#) is the largest event in the U.S. about organic and sustainable farming.

March 6/9, 2014— Anaheim, CA: Natural Products Expo West

Rated as one of the top 200 trade shows in the US , [Expo West](#) continues to be the leading trade show in the natural, organic and healthy products industry, attracting over 60,000 industry professionals and 3,000 exhibits.

Contact us! Ecocert ICO LLC

70 East Main Street, Suite B
Greenwood, IN 46143

Phone: 317-865-9700
Toll-free 888-337-8246
Fax: 317-865-9707
Email: info.ecocertico@ecocert.com

Website: www.ecocertico.com

 <https://www.facebook.com/icolle3914>

 <https://twitter.com/ICOLLCC>

 [linkedin.com/pub/ecocert-ico/27/9b2/966](https://www.linkedin.com/pub/ecocert-ico/27/9b2/966)

ECOCERT SA and IMO Create Strategic Partnership



Earlier this quarter, ECOCERT SA announced the acquisition of IMOsuisse AG (Switzerland) and IMO Institut für Marktökologie GmbH (Germany). This exciting development, involving two key players in the international organic certification industry, highlights the core values on organic agriculture, environmental protection and sustainability shared by the two organizations.

IMOsuisse AG awards certification worldwide to projects in organic farming, organic textiles, aquaculture, responsible forest management (FSC and PEFC), with about 60 staff members in Switzerland and many international experts. It is also the only certification body accredited for the “Fair for Life Social and Fair Trade Programme” and the “AquaGAP Standard for Good Aquaculture Practices”; both standards remain owned by the Bio-Foundation Switzerland. IMO Institut für Marktökologie GmbH (“IMO GmbH”) is one of the largest organic certification bodies in Germany, with about 50 experts and a long established client base with 2.800 producers, processors and importers.

ECOCERT and IMO wish to enhance the existing synergies between their organizations: “We want to maintain the existing companies and protect their brands on the market. This is a challenge to all of us, we have to find the best solution together with the staff and the authorities to reach this objective”, declared Philippe Thomazo, COO of ECOCERT SA.

Please click [here](#) to read the full press release.

UTZ Certification Available

ECOCERT Group can provide you UTZ certification through IMO. IMO provides UTZ certification for farms as well as for producer groups and production units in both origin as well as destination countries of the commodities.

UTZ CERTIFIED is a worldwide certification program that sets the standard for responsible commodity production and sourcing. UTZ means “good” in a Mayan language. Currently UTZ standards exist for Cocoa, Coffee and Tea.

The UTZ CERTIFIED Code of Conduct is an internationally recognized set of economic, social and environmental criteria for responsible commodity production. Producers (estates as well as smallholder groups), may seek certification as being compliant with the UTZ CERTIFIED Code of Conduct.

UTZ covers the critical areas from record keeping and pesticide management, through worker health and safety, environmental and social issues and an efficient farm management. Particular emphasis has been placed on developing meaningful, implementable guidelines that work for both, large estates and smallholder groups. The code enables producers to ensure that their product meets the requirements of the global retail market.



For more information on UTZ please visit the UTZ website (<https://www.utzcertified.org>) or contact UTZ in Switzerland (utzcertified@imo.ch) or your local subsidiary (info.ecocertico@ecocert.com) for more information and application documents.

NOP Updates from Dave DeCou

I sincerely hope that all of you have had a great year as organic producers and processors. We are deep into the process of preparing for the 2014 certification year. Much of our preparation is an attempt to make your renewals as easy as possible.

You will see our new renewal packets are hopefully easier to work with and do not ask you to fill out as many lines of information as you have in the past.

One of the issues which has proven to be particularly frustrating that each of you can help us with in 2014 is keeping us informed of your contact information and any changes to it. If you change the personnel you would like us to contact, if you change your telephone number, or if you change your mailing (or emailing) address, we need to know. We do not contact you too often during the year but things stop if we cannot make contact with you when we need to.

Periodically the USDA NOP provides us with updated regulations and policy changes. This past summer and fall there have not been many changes which effect you operators but there are some points which have been brought out by the NOP which you should note.

- As of March 4, 2014 any kelp which is fed to organic livestock or organically managed livestock must be organic. This policy was stated Back in February of 2013 but the full implementation date is coming early next year.
- Residue Testing/Sampling has been occurring this past year and will be an ongoing program of all certifiers. Do not be surprised if one of our inspectors stops by to take a sample from your operation. We choose our sampling based upon both risk analysis and random choice so do not feel that we have any other reasons to be visiting your operation.
- NOP recently clarified in a policy (NOP 2615) the changes to your operations which you are required to notify your certifier of.
Their examples included:
 - * Application of a prohibited substance to any field, production unit, product or site involved in organic production or handling, regardless of whether it was a direct application or drift from a neighboring area, and regardless of whether or not it was intentional. The operation must notify the certifier immediately of any such events;
 - * Addition of acreage, a new field, product line, production facility, animal herd, or animal facility to organic production;
 - * Removal of a field or portion thereof from organic production;
 - * Development of a new retail label for the operation's organic products;
 - * New processing or handling of organic products not already specified in the OSP; and
 - * Any change in the operation's practice, input, or procedure that may affect compliance with the regulations.
- Additionally NOP clarified that "If the operation plans to add a new field, facility, production line, unique production equipment, animal herd, or animal facility to its certification, then the certifier will conduct an additional inspection before issuing an updated certificate."
This is not a change of policy but just a restatement. Keep this in mind as you plan your year, if you have new additions to your operation in the planning, work with us so that we can get your addition inspected during your regular inspection. This will keep your costs and our costs down.
- Finally, Humic acid may be extracted with alkali substances including Potassium hydroxide and Ammonium hydroxide (aqueous ammonia), but any humic acid product which appears to be fortified by any synthetic extractant is prohibited.

Dave DeCou
Certification Manager