Curriculum
In Depth Organic Agriculture Training for Agriculture Service Providers

Planning team:
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Will Stevens, Golden Russet Farm, Shoreham, VT

Session One: Certification, Marketing, Business Management

Overall Learning Outcome:
• Participants have a clear understanding of the principles and practices of organic vegetable farming and can articulate these to clients and colleagues. They are able to plan and deliver programs, services, and/or projects (appropriate to their professional responsibilities) that meet the needs of established and aspiring organic vegetable farmers and/or agricultural service providers who may work with these farmers.

Learning Outcomes—Certification, Marketing, and Business Management

• Participants understand and can explain the organic certification process, the national organic standards, and the requirements of an organic farm plan. They are able to identify major certification issues or concerns on individual farms and are able to advise farmers on how to address them.
• Participants understand the marketing implications of organic certification or lack of certification. They are aware of the options available to farmers with regard to labeling and can advise farmers and colleagues on organic marketing issues.
• Participants can identify the major organizations involved with organic certification issues and understand their roles (NOP, OMRI, NOFA, MOFGA, etc.).
• Participants are aware of and can explain the trends and forces at work in the wholesale and retail organic marketplace.
• Participants understand and can explain strategies for transition to organic production.
• Participants are aware of a range of organic farming resources and can utilize these in their professional roles and steer clients and colleagues to them.

Location: Century House, Latham, NY

**Note:** Be sure to have warm clothes and boots for the mock farm inspection!

**February 28, 2005 Introduction and Organic Farm Plans**

**Arrival:** 12 PM, LUNCH- people will be trickling in during this time

**1 PM:** Welcome, Introductions, Program Review,
Introductions: 1-2 minutes from each participant, affiliation, their past work in organic, why here. Then review the training, including commitment, schedules for sessions, special assignments. Participants share goals statements, what they want to get out of training.
Q & A.

**2 PM:** History of Organic Farming, Steve Gilman, organic farmer, writer
Learning outcomes—What are the origins of organic farming? What were the philosophies and findings of some organic “pioneers”? What are the different directions in which organic faring has evolved?

**3 PM:** break

**3:30 PM:** Organic Certification: the NOP Rule and Process for Certification presenter—Eric Sideman, MOFGA
Learning outcomes—Lecture on NOP Standards- what, why, how? Emphasize that the standards outline good farming practices. Assume that all have reviewed basics of rule. Focus on prickly areas in the rule and how this is tied to this particular training (e.g. compost issues and compost session in soils training.) How do certifiers enforce the NOP, what happens when there is a problem? What sorts of things get you decertified as opposed to a slap on the wrist? Are certifiers different on this? Briefly discuss IFOAM to get an idea of what the international community is doing; a broader perspective.

**4:30 PM:** Record Keeping and paperwork for organic certification, including the organic farm plan –is it worth it?
Don Franczyk, Baystate Organic Certifiers, MA, Anu Rangarajan, Cornell
Learning outcomes—Understand the controversy within the organic movement as to NOP paperwork requirements for certification. How valuable are they to the farmer? Do they sit on the shelf all year until it’s time to submit the certification application? What are the alternatives to organic certification and...
what types of farms utilize them? Do the records that farmers really use fit into the organic farm plan?

How can we help farmers make working farm plans that help them reach their goals, and that can be periodically evaluated and updated?

6:00 PM: Break

6:30 PM: DINNER

8 PM: Why Organic? (Jean-Paul Courtens, Roxbury Farm, Deb Kavakos, Stoneledge Farm, Steffen (and Rachel?) Schneider, Hawthorne Valley Farm)

Farmer Panel: 2-3 organic farmers, include certified and non-certified farmers

- Review philosophy, history, and values
- Answer question: What do we need from extension and others attending this training?

9:00 PM ADJOURN

March 1, 2005 Organic Farm Plans and Inspections

On Bus: review the host farm prior to arrival

9-12 AM: Mock Organic Farm Inspection at Slack Hollow Farm, Seth Jacobs and Martha Johnson with Drew Stuckey, inspector – Learning outcomes—What happens in an organic farm inspection? What is looked at, what is the level of detail? Have Q & A period. Should be as real as possible, so that participants can see process as well as paperwork needed. Tie the farm plan to certification. The conceptual farm plan should also help tie all sessions together.

Participants will have a copy of the farm plan/materials records. Note, that all this information will be for educational purposes only and not for distribution.

1-4 PM: visit to Honest Weight Coop in Albany. Have lunch there, meet with produce buyer, Gayle Anderson

Learning outcomes—learn how organic produce is procured and presented. Labeling; customer desires/needs; price premiums (in the future too?); growth sectors in organic foods; local vs. distant sources. What is easy and what is hard? Competition from more conventional stores?

6:30 PM: DINNER

8:00 PM Informal discussion of the day’s issues; how are things going? Participants’ current and future projects with organic farmers (5 minutes each).
The group can support these by sharing resources, including knowledgeable people. What are participants going to do between now and next training? How do we keep the training flowing? How do we best use this training with our audiences?

March 2, 2005 Transition and Marketing

8:00 AM  Transition Strategies  Brian Caldwell
Learning outcomes—Review strategies and economics of transition, alternative markets, planning, crop rotation planning. What are the key obstacles? Lecture discussion format. Case Study—use Rob Johanson/Goranson’s farm; info from Bob Muth, NJ.

9:00 AM  Farmer Perspective, Jake Guest, VT
Learning outcomes—Strategy varies by grower- within marketing, soils, pests what were issues /obstacles/ challenges.

10:30 Break

11:00 AM  Open discussion of transition to organic methods and markets, including participants’ experiences. What are the obstacles, real and imagined?

12:00 PM LUNCH

1:00 PM- Direct marketing, value-added—Monika Roth; Rachel Schneider, Hawthorn Valley Farm.

Learning outcomes—
- Importance of direct markets for organic farmers
- Comparison of retail outlets for organic vs. conventional farmers—Farmers markets, CSA’s, restaurant sales, roadside markets, PYO
- Marketing and value-added production at a highly developed organic farm with both dairy and vegetable crops

2:30 PM  BREAK

3:00 PM  Wholesale markets—Dave Marchant, VT, buyer TBD

Learning outcomes—
- Certified or not under NOP—why or why not?
- NE supply of wholesale organic produce
- Has NOP affected market access or sourcing products?
- Retail vs. wholesale prices
- Grower marketing coops?
4:00 PM  Informal discussion on organic markets and marketing, Vern Grubinger, UVM Extension

6:30 PM: DINNER

7:30 PM  Social with Regional Fermented Organic Products

March 3, 2005 Crop Yields, Markets and Profits

8:00 AM Organic Crop Profitability
Learning outcomes—Yields and profitability- from NEON, Abby S’s Ecosystem Factors study, and other data. Crop budgets, academic and farm reality. What makes or breaks an organic farm? How important is the organic premium?

A farmer’s approach to crop budgets—Paul Arnold (tent)

9:30 AM Break

10:00—Organic Markets- Current and Future Prospects- Trends and Demographics- Cynthia Barstow

Learning outcomes—Market prospects/futures, detailed trends nationally and internationally. What is the future of organic? Fresh, wholesale, processed vegetables. Retail is strong and growing, wholesale tough- different set of players but same game. How is consolidation in marketing channels affecting organics?

11:30— Resources provided for this training

12:00 PM—Wrap up.

12:30  ADJOURN