



VOF Guidelines for the Production of Organic Mushrooms

Vermont Organic Farmers, LLC (VOF)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)

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The Vermont Organic Farmers LLC (VOF) policy on organic mushroom production must comply with the USDA National Organic Program Standards (7 CFR Part 205). This policy is drawn from the recommendations established by the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) and the VOF Review Committee.

INTRODUCTION

All organic producers must be familiar with the general requirements of the USDA National Organic Program (NOP). Please contact the VOF office if you do not have a copy of those standards or visit www.ams.usda.gov/nop. The following mushroom guidelines provide additional information for determining what practices are compliant with the national standards.

NOP Section 205.2 defines organic production as, "A production system that is managed in accordance with the Act and regulations in this part to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity."

BACKGROUND

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) Recommendation for organic mushroom production requires the use of organic spawn, except that non-organically produced spawn that have not been treated with a prohibited substance and have not been raised on GMO substrate may be used when organically produced spawn are not commercially available.

The Vermont Organic Farmers Review Committee (RC) met to clarify what defines organic spawn production, as the NOSB recommendation does not indicate what production methods are required for the certification of organic spawn.

During the meeting, the Review committee reviewed policies established by other accredited certification agencies as well as inspection reports and production methods of applicants producing organic mushrooms.

NOSB FINAL RECOMMENDATION ON MUSHROOM PRACTICE STANDARDS

205.208 Mushroom practice standard

(a) The producer must maintain a production environment that prevents contact between organically produced mushrooms and prohibited substances throughout the entire growing cycle, harvesting and post harvesting process. The producer must not use lumber treated with arsenate or other prohibited materials for new installations or replacement purposes in contact with the growth substrate.

(b) The producer must use organically produced spawn, Except, that non-organically produced spawn that have not been treated with a prohibited substance and have not been raised on GMO substrate may be used when organically produced spawn are not commercially available.

(c) Agricultural materials including grain and straw that are used in production substrate must be organically produced. Sawdust, logs or other materials derived from wood used as a growth substrate must originate from trees that have been grown in areas free of prohibited materials for at least three years, and must not have been treated with a prohibited substance after tree harvest. Producers may include non-synthetic, nonagricultural materials in substrate used to produce mushrooms.

(d) Manure and any nonorganic agricultural material used as a growth substrate must be composted. Compost used as a growth substrate must be produced in accordance with compost guidelines presented in 205.203(c)(2).

(e) Sanitizers and disinfectants not on the National List for such purpose may not be applied to crops or growing substrates.

VOF POLICY ON ORGANIC SPAWN PRODUCTION

To qualify as organic spawn, the culture and/or storage media on which the mushroom culture or mycelium grows must meet the following requirements.

- If the material is agricultural, it must be certified organic when commercially available - not limited to the materials found on the National List, section 205.606.
- If the material is not commercially available in organic form then it must not be genetically modified, irradiated, or produced with the use of sewage sludge.
- If the material is non-agricultural, it must be found on the National List, section 205.605 or non-synthetic.

Note:

VOF is committed to remaining practical about when to require documentation to verify that a material is produced without the use of GMO material, irradiation, and sewage sludge. VOF recognizes that there are instances where this documentation is unnecessary because the materials in question are not commercially available as GMO, irradiated or produced with the use of sewage sludge.