Organic News

Upcoming Programs

Tuesday, February 6 – Panhandle Crops Conference in Dalhart, Texas. Contact Dr. Dennis Coker at (806) 366-2081.

Wednesday, February 7 – Sandyland Crops Conference in Seminole, Texas. Contact Gaines Co. Extension at (432) 758-4006.

Thursday, February 8 – Fort Bend Co. Regional Vegetable Conference in Rosenberg, Texas. For more information contact Fort Bend Co. Extension at (281) 342-3034.

Friday, February 9 – Cameron County "Growing Herbs for Profit" nursery production-**Online Seminar!**. Good organic info too! Contact Jenn Herrera, CEA-Horticulture at 956.361.8236

Friday, February 16 – Comanche County CEU Program at the De Leon City Hall Building in De Leon, Texas. 9 am to 3 pm. Cost is $50 per person for 5 CEU credit with 3 in L&R and 2 in IPM. I am speaking on Organic certification rules and the commodities to grow organic in Central Texas and how.

Tuesday, February 20 – Spinach Field Day, Tiro Tres Farms/Espinaca Farms Organic, Crystal City, Texas. To attend go here: http://tinyurl.com/y2hss798

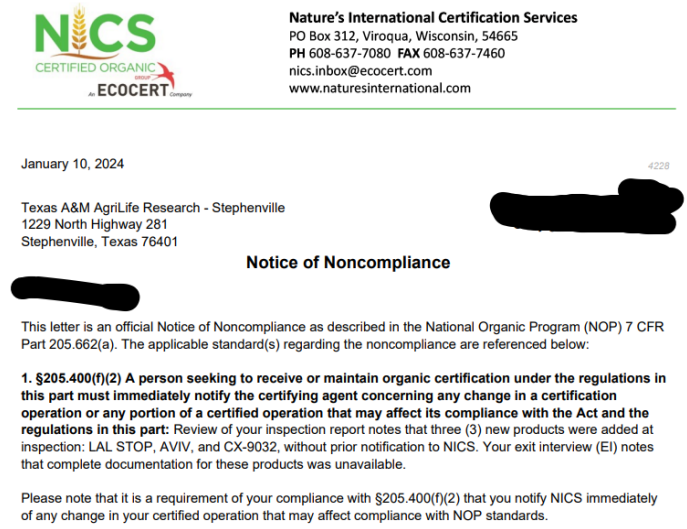
Thursday, February 22 – Managing Crop Nutrition in Dry Regions, Advancing Eco Agriculture workshop in Lubbock at the FiberMax Center. Cost is $125. For more information: http://tinyurl.com/37anfwkn

Tuesday, March 5th – TDA Organic Agricultural Industry Advisory Board meeting in Austin at the TDA offices, 1 pm to 3 pm. Public is invited to attend, and it will be offered online if interested.

What? We Got a Notice of Noncompliance?

I am sure as an Outstanding Organic Farmer you have never gotten one of these letters. If you have, then you know that the first thought running through your mind is that you are about to lose your certificate! Even though I know better it was still a thought that was at the front of my mind and the second thought was, "what will all my organic farmers think about me?"

Well, it is not the end of the world, and it certainly didn't kick our Organic Research Acres out of the "world of organics." We just messed up and Yisel with NICS had to take us to the "woodshed" for a little organic discipline. I hope you never have to go there but I did survive!



NICS CERTIFIED ORGANIC An ECOCERT Company

Nature's International Certification Services
PO Box 312, Viroqua, Wisconsin, 54665
PH 608-637-7080 **FAX** 608-637-7460
nics.inbox@ecocert.com
www.naturesinternational.com

January 10, 2024 4228

Texas A&M AgriLife Research - Stephenville
1229 North Highway 281
Stephenville, Texas 76401

[redacted]

Notice of Noncompliance

[redacted]

This letter is an official Notice of Noncompliance as described in the National Organic Program (NOP) 7 CFR Part 205.662(a). The applicable standard(s) regarding the noncompliance are referenced below:

1. §205.400(f)(2) A person seeking to receive or maintain organic certification under the regulations in this part must immediately notify the certifying agent concerning any change in a certification operation or any portion of a certified operation that may affect its compliance with the Act and the regulations in this part: Review of your inspection report notes that three (3) new products were added at inspection: LAL STOP, AVIV, and CX-9032, without prior notification to NICS. Your exit interview (EI) notes that complete documentation for these products was unavailable.

Please note that it is a requirement of your compliance with §205.400(f)(2) that you notify NICS immediately of any change in your certified operation that may affect compliance with NOP standards.

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nics.inbox@ecocert.com
www.naturesinternational.com

January 29, 2024 4228

Rmail -
Timber.darnell@ag.tamu.edu
bob.whitney@ag.tamu.edu

Texas A&M AgriLife Research - Stephenville
1229 North Highway 281
Stephenville, Texas 76401

Notice of Noncompliance Resolution

[redacted]

A Notice of Noncompliance letter, dated 1/10/2024, was sent to your operation, and was delivered on 1/10/2024. Your response to the Notice of Noncompliance was received in our office 1/24/2024.

This letter, pursuant to the National Organic Program (NOP) 7 CFR Part 205.662(b), is to inform you that you have resolved the Notice of Noncompliance dated 1/10/2024. NICS Certification Review staff has reviewed your response, and the following is noted as part of your resolution:

Organic Control of Field Bindweed?

In a Review Article written for Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems, authors Kathleen

Bob Whitney, Regents Fellow & Extension Organic Program Specialist • bob.whitney@ag.tamu.edu • (979) 571-2086 cell
Timber Darnell, Extension Organic Program Coordinator • timber.darnell@ag.tamu.edu • (254) 974-9444

Delate, Ben Heller and Jessia Shade looked at many issues related to organic cotton. This study started by surveying organic cotton producers and processors to document specific approaches and techniques used in organic cotton production and processing, the environmental impacts of those techniques and challenges facing organic cotton growers.

From this study and related to field bindweed, sixty percent of the respondent's noted weeds as the most critical pest management issue and 90% cited weed management within the three highest-ranked constraints. Among the weeds cited within organic cotton fields were (in order of abundance): bindweed, pigweed, lakeweed, Johnson grass, morningglory, nutgrass and crabgrass.

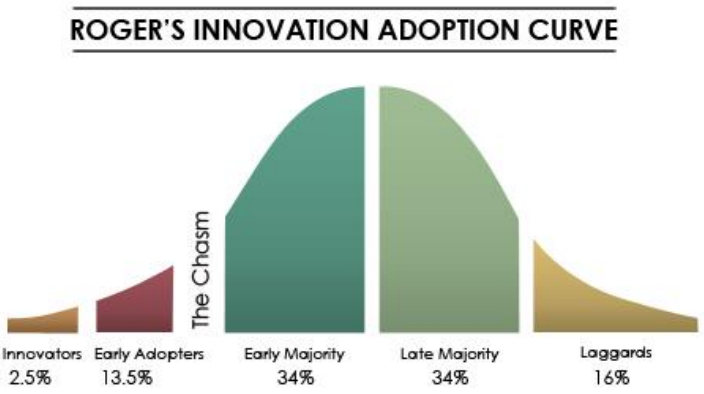
The most abundant and most difficult to control in organic cotton fields is field bindweed. I regularly get taken to fields to investigate the growing problem and discuss control options.

Since this issue keeps coming up I collected every bit of information on organic control measures and wrote about them in this blog post on the AgrilifeOrganic.org website. Here is the link to the post: http://tinyurl.com/2t5h9bxv

One very interesting control product I found was a research study that used Horsemint Oil and control of Field Bindweed was almost 100%. Check out the blog post, you should enjoy it if you ever dealt with bindweed in your field.

Rogers' Adoption Curve: Where do you fit?

In my career as an Extension professional (extension agent, researcher, specialist) I have had a lot of agriculture training, but I have also had a lot of training for training agriculturists which includes just about every group in agriculture today. One of the early lessons we learned was a simple theory about learning called the Rogers' Adoption Curve.



Trying to convince the mass of a new idea is *useless*. Convince *innovators* and *early adopters* first.

I couldn't begin to tell you much about Rogers or his overall work as an educator, but I do know about this curve and in my career this "curve" has proven to be true over and over again. What you see in this picture is the classic "bell curve" representing the concept of knowledge or technology. People who adopt new knowledge or technologies are represented along the bottom axis and the progression is from left to right, i.e. the first to adopt are on the left and over time the others adopt the technology. So, looking at this we see that the first group to adopt the technology are innovators followed by early adopters and so on. This picture shows a break called "The Chasm" between early adopters and early majority. This chasm is difficult to cross and can represent a lot of time or even failure for the technology.

Organic farmers are mostly in the innovator/early adopter category. Organic agriculture is not easy and in general requires a good knowledge of agriculture systems before getting into the details of growing organic. As an extension educator I tend to try and find innovators

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and early adopters to work on demonstration or research projects because I know they are just as anxious to explore new technologies as I am.

That said, let me ask you where you are today? Occasionally we need to take a break and get away from it all because we are falling into the late majority or laggard category doing the same thing we always did. Don't lag too far behind because as you can tell from the "curve" there are a lot of people already on the downhill slide!

Allelopathy – What is it, what has it, and how do we use it?

Have you ever wondered how some plants manage to thrive while others struggle to survive nearby? The answer lies in a fascinating biological phenomenon called allelopathy. It's all about how certain plants release chemicals, known as allelochemicals, into their environment, impacting the growth and survival of neighboring organisms, especially other plants. This effect can be both a growth inhibitor and stimulator, but it's more commonly associated with inhibition. For those in organic agriculture, understanding these interactions is crucial for managing weeds, optimizing crop rotation, and fostering sustainable practices.

The Reasons Rye Makes a Great Cover Crop

Rye (Secale cereale) is a champion in the allelopathic world, especially when used as a cover crop. Rye releases chemicals that effectively suppress weed germination and growth. Significant research has delved into the specific compounds in rye (Secale cereale) that contribute to its allelopathic properties. The focus has been on identifying and understanding these compounds, their release into the environment, and their action mechanisms.

Key Allelochemicals in Rye: Nature's Weed Suppressants

1. Benzoxazinoids (BXDs): The primary allelochemicals in rye, like DIBOA, are known for their potent allelopathic effects. They inhibit the germination and growth of competing plants.
2. Phenolic Acids: Rye also produces various phenolic acids, such as ferulic, p-coumaric, and vanillic acids, contributing to its allelopathic effects, particularly in inhibiting weed growth.

How does it work. BXDs and phenolic acids in rye can affect cell division, root elongation, and nutrient uptake in target plants (weeds), disrupting their hormonal balance and interfering with key metabolic pathways.

Impact on Established Weed Root Growth

1. Allelochemicals in rye can inhibit root elongation in weed plants, reducing their ability to absorb nutrients and water effectively.
2. These compounds can interfere with the normal development of roots in weed plants, leading to reduced root mass and altered architecture.
3. Allelochemicals can also affect the formation of root hairs, critical for nutrient and water uptake.

What is the True Cost of Compost (or manure) in 2024?

I get regular questions about both the cost of compost and quality of composts (or manure) in my visits with organic producers and conventional producers or both. There seems to be this mystery about compost including, what is in the compost and how much it is worth? Almost any company that makes and/or sells a compost product will have an analysis for you to know what is in their product. Typically, they should be taking samples on a regular basis or at least as the supply source changes. Compost is generally made from manure and manure is made from feed that livestock eat. As a livestock producer changes what their animals eat

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Fertilizer costs - retail

$/ton		% Nutrient	lbs/dry ton	$/lb. nutrient
$ 550.00	Urea	0.46	920	$ 0.60
$ 820.00	DAP	0.46	920	$ 0.89
$ 580.00	Potash	0.6	1200	$ 0.48
$ 440.00	Sulphate	0.24	480	$ 0.92

Chicken Manure $78 per ton and 47.92% DM

	% Avail	Ton	lbs/dry ton	$/lb. nutrient	lbs/ton	N from P	N from S	total lbs. N left			$/ton based on Nutrients
N	2.68%	2000	26	$ 0.60	26	5.00	2.73	18.27	18.27	0.60	$ 10.96
P2O5	2.89%	2000	28	$ 0.89	28				28	0.89	$ 24.92
K2O	0.40%	2000	4	$ 0.48	4				4	0.48	$ 1.92
S	1.37%	2000	13	$ 0.92	13				13	0.92	$ 11.96
										Nutrients $ per wet ton	$ 49.76

Chicken product $165 per ton and 95% DM

	% Avail	Ton	lbs/dry ton	$/lb. nutrient	lbs/ton	N from P	N from S	total lbs. N left	95% DM		$/ton based on Nutrients
N	3.50%	2000	70	$ 0.60	70	14.40	8.4	47.20	44.84	0.60	$ 26.90
P2O5	4.00%	2000	80	$ 0.89	80				76.00	0.89	$ 67.64
K2O	5.00%	2000	100	$ 0.48	100				95.00	0.48	$ 45.60
S	2.00%	2000	40	$ 0.92	40				38.00	0.92	$ 34.96
										Nutrients $ per wet ton	$ 175.10

Chicken manure $100 per ton and 85% DM

	% Avail	Ton	lbs/dry ton	$/lb. nutrient	lbs/ton	N from P	N from S	total lbs. N left			$/ton based on Nutrients
N	3.20%	2000	64	$ 0.60	64	4.50	4.2	55.30	55.30	0.60	$ 33.18
P2O5	2.20%	2000	44	$ 0.89	44				44.00	0.89	$ 39.16
K2O	2.50%	2000	50	$ 0.48	50				50.00	0.48	$ 24.00
S	0.75%	2000	15	$ 0.92	15				15.00	0.92	$ 13.80
										Nutrients $ per wet ton	$ 110.14

Potassium from K2O and Sulphur from Ammonium Sulphate. You can see the current cost of those nutrients is based on commercial fertilizer prices so that we get a value to compare composts to each other. In this can drastically influence what nutrients end up in the manure and ultimately the compost.

If you get an analysis, then the first thing to look at is the moisture% in the compost. A recent analysis sent to me showed the compost to be 52.08% moisture. So, one ton of compost would be about 50% compost and 50% water. This is not unusual, but it does make a difference in the analysis and so the price. This analysis showed 53.6 lbs. of nitrogen per ton but in the fine print you are told to convert the pounds of nutrient/ton as received by multiplying pounds of nutrients as reported by (100-moisture%)/100. So, 53.6(100-52.08)/100 or 53.6 * 0.4792 = 25.685 lbs. of nitrogen per ton of compost! Now this compost doesn't look as good as it did for nitrogen or any other nutrient on the analysis. What we really want is an analysis based on dry matter not with water added so we can compare it with commercial fertilizer costs. This gives us a compost value or even a way to compare one compost to another. This picture of my spreadsheet is an analysis of the cost of ingredients based solely on Nitrogen, Phosphorus from P2O5, Potassium from K2O and Sulphur from Ammonium Sulphate. You can see the current cost of those nutrients is based on commercial fertilizer prices so that we get a value to compare composts to each other. In the top example, the $78 compost seems to be a bargain even though the nutrients are less than the other examples. But the water (%moisture) lowers the actual value down significantly to $49.76 per ton. This example is meant to show that you could pay about $50 per ton for the top example and feel good that you didn't pay more than the current price of conventional fertilizer. And, in the second example when you pay $165 you are getting more conventional fertilizer nutrients than you should, and you get lots of micronutrients, organic matter and microbes and the third example is even better. The point is to do a little comparison shopping before you just look at price per ton, there are a lot of things in that ton you may have never thought about before! Lastly, the benefits of the carbon in compost, which is the food source for microbes, add tremendous value. We still don't know what that value might be, but we do know it is more valuable than we thought!

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Texas TOPP

Texas Organic Farmer's and Gardener's Conference

Texas TOPP has been on the move from workshops to conferences telling all who will hear about the Organic Movement in the State of Texas. Texas TOPP had a booth and a workshop session at the TOFGA conference recently held at the end of January.

Agriculture enthusiasts from all over the state gathered at the Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (TOFGA) convention in San Antonio this week to learn, share ideas, and connect with like-minded individuals.

With over 200 people in attendance, our booth was the HOT hub throughout the convention. Attendees were eager to learn about certification programs as well as the services that Texas TOPP provides farmers.

The workshop group of farmers was passionate about sharing their knowledge and helping others succeed in the world of organic farming. We discussed topics such as soil health, crop rotation, and pest management, and even offered hands-on demonstrations to showcase their techniques.

SOE is right around the corner

Full compliance of the Strengthening Organic Enforcement begins on March 19, 2024. This affects everyone in the organic supply chain. Operations that buy, sell, trade, or facilitate the sale/trade of organic goods must be certified under SOE by March 19, 2024.

Certifiers will be reporting lots of data to the Organic Integrity Database is going to increase, meaning that the data in the system is going to be more accurate and reliable. Certifiers must inspect each of their certified operations once per calendar year. Certifiers will have 5% of their clientele receiving unannounced inspections or records requests because certifiers are required to assess and assign risk to operations based on complexity and a variety of other factors. Know someone who needs to be certified or help send them our way!

On TOPP of Organic

Don't forget to listen to our organic podcast! We release new episodes every other Wednesday. Join Timber Darnell and Bob Whitney as we interview organic farmers about their experiences with

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organic farming. Our latest podcast features a special guest, Henk Postmus, who talks about his passion for organic farming. You can find our podcast on **Apple** and **Spotify**!

No Son, You can't have THAT candy!

If you remember when you were little you had to ask your parents for a piece of candy. They were either going to say yes or no. But you had to ask. If you didn't, Mom would usually get a little upset and deal with a crazy kid in the aftermath. This week at the conference I felt this analogy come to my mind. You know how sometimes it feels like we're drowning in the requirements from the NOP to maintain our Organic Certification?

Well, I came to realize that maybe if we simplify and streamline, it's not as bad as it seems. All we need to do is create an OSP, add the products to our material lists, include the prospective seeds on the plan, and avoid using anything synthetic on our property. Easy-peasy, right? And if we want to add something new to our plan, we just need to ask for permission first. They're not going to yell at us or spank us just for asking. Our certifiers are just like that, they won't get mad or punish us for asking, but it's important to keep them informed about any changes to our organic system plan. So that we are not going against any of the rules, that may surrender the certification. The key here is communication, so let's keep the conversation flowing!

TDA Resilient Good Systems Infrastructure Grant

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS),entered into a cooperative agreement with the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) to work in partnership to make competitive subawards in the form of grants to eligible entities to support infrastructure and equipment needs along the middle of the food supply chain across the state.

For projects that support the expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food products including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry.

Applicants must submit one complete, electronically signed application through the TDA-GO system by TDA 11:59 p.m. CT on Thursday, February 15, 2024. http://tinyurl.com/nsxwcsz6

USDA Rural Development

Committed to the future of rural communities.

Value Added Producer Grant

The USDA Rural development has a Value-Added Producer Grant program is designed to assist agricultural producers in engaging in value-added activities related to processing or marketing bio-based, value-added products. This program aims to generate new products, create expanding marketing opportunities, and increase producers' income. The program has approximately $31 million in total funding. Eligible for this program are independent producers, agricultural producer groups, farmers and rancher cooperatives, and majority-controlled producers.

The deadline for submitting applications is April 16, 2024. http://tinyurl.com/2s49b62u

Apply for the Grants

I know applying for the grants may seem like a headache, but you're not the only one that feels this way. But imagine if you were one of the 21 who applied for the grant, and they gave out 21 grants. Everyone else feels the same way but **BE DIFFERENT and APPLY**! You never know unless you try!

Come Grow Organic with US!

The organic movement in Texas has been growing at an unprecedented rate, and there's no better time to be a part of it. Whether you're just starting out or well into organic transition, there are a wealth of opportunities for you to **Come Grow Organic with Texas TOPP!**

Timber Darnell

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