Organic and the law

CASFS, Unit 1.1/9-10

- Organic production: production system that is managed in accordance with the Act (The Organic Foods Production Act [OFPA] of 1990, as amended in the NOP) to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity.
Further, it is a system of agriculture that encourages healthy soil and crops through such practices as nutrient and organic matter recycling, crop rotations, proper tillage, and the strict avoidance of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides for at least three years prior to certification.
2. Requirements for organic certification under the National Organic Program

- a) **Organic System Plan**: The NOP requires that all crop, wild crop, livestock, and handling operations requiring certification submit an organic system plan to their certifying agent and, where applicable, the State organic program (SOP)
• The organic system plan is a detailed description of how an operation will achieve, document, and sustain compliance with all applicable provisions in the OFPA/NOP. The certifying agent must concur that the proposed organic system plan fulfills the requirements. The organic system plan is the forum through which the producer or handler and certifying agent collaborate to define, on a site-specific basis, how to achieve and document compliance with the requirements of organic certification.
**b) Necessary components of an Organic System Plan**

i. The organic system plan must describe the practices and procedures used, including the frequency, in the certified operation.

ii. Second, it must list and characterize each substance used as a production input.

iii. Third, it must identify the monitoring techniques that will be used to verify that the organic plan is being implemented.

iv. Fourth, it must explain the record keeping system used to preserve the identity of organic products.
• v. Fifth, the organic system plan must describe the management practices and physical barriers established to prevent commingling of organic and non-organic products
• vi. Finally, the organic system plan must contain the additional information deemed necessary by the certifying agent to evaluate site-specific conditions relevant to compliance with these or applicable State program regulations.
3. Sustainable agriculture defined (see www.sarep.ucdavis.edu)

- Sustainable agriculture can be defined as an approach to agriculture where the aim is to create environmentally sound, economically viable, and socially just food and agricultural systems. Maximum reliance is placed on locally or farm-derived renewable resources and the management of self-regulating ecological and biological processes and interactions in order to provide acceptable levels of crop, livestock, and human nutrition, protection from pests and diseases, and an appropriate return to the human and other resources employed.
Reliance on external inputs, whether chemical or organic, is reduced as far as possible. The objective of long-term sustainability lies at the heart of organic farming and is one of the major factors determining the acceptability of specific production practices.
Sustainable agriculture is not just the conservation of non-renewable resources (soil, energy, minerals) used to produce food and fiber. Sustainable agriculture also encompasses maintenance or restoration of the environmental quality of surrounding landscapes; the economic viability for all involved in agricultural production; and more equitable distribution of agricultural products to assure that basic human needs are met.