Guideline n°2 NOP - Plant Production and Wild Crop

According to the USDA National Organic Program (NOP)

This guideline does not replace the current Regulation. It provides some explanations on main requirements for organic Plant production and Wild crop. To know the organic production requirements, it is necessary to download and read carefully the NOP Regulation available on the USDA website: http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/NOP
1. Introduction
This abstract summarizes the NOP requirements for plant production and wild crop harvesting. Further study of the standard is required for anyone involved in organic production.

As explained in the guideline NOP n°1 (part 2 – page 3), the Organic System Plan must include all information explaining how the NOP requirements will be met.

2. Prohibited practices (§ 205.105)

- The use of **genetically modify organisms (GMO)**
- The use of **ionizing radiation** and the application of **sewage sludge** are not allowed.
- **Burning** must not be used as a means of disposal for crop residues, except that, burning may be used to suppress the spread of disease or to stimulate seed germination.

3. Conversion period and land requirements (§ 205.202)

- Any field whose crops shall be certified organic must have had no prohibited substances applied to it for **a period of 3 years** immediately preceding harvest of the crop.
- **A verifiable field history of at least 36 months must be provided to ECOCERT.**
- The fields must also be managed in accordance with the part 205.203 and 205.206
- The fields must have distinct, defined **boundaries and buffer zones** to prevent or contact with prohibited substances applied to adjoining conventional land.

4. Soil Fertility and Crop Nutrient Management (§ 205.203)
A basic requirement of the NOP is that the natural resources of a certified organic operation, including soil and water quality, must be maintained or improved. The following practices are required:

- Cultivation and tillage that enhance biological condition of soil and minimize soil erosion;
- Rotations cover crops, and application of plant and animal material;
- The crop rotation may include sod, cover crops, green manure, etc. and provide for maintaining or improving soil organic matter content, pest management, managing deficient or excess plant nutrients, and erosion control.
- The NOP has specific requirements for use of raw and composted animal manure (see TS06_NOP
Further applications allowed are:

- Synthetic substances as allowed in the NOP (§205.601) for use in organic crop production
- Natural Substances not listed in the §205.602
- Mined substances (when in compliance with the conditions in the NOP)
- Ash from burning of plant or animal material (if not treated or combined with prohibited substances).

5. Seeds, vegetative propagating material, and seedlings (§ 205.204)

- Seeds, planting stock and seedlings must be organically produced (by preference certified organic).
- If these are not available on the market, non-organic seeds or planting stock may be used as long as they are untreated, or – if not available - only treated with materials listed in the NOP.

⇒ The operator has to proof his attempts to find organic seeds to ECOCERT (sheet available)

6. Control of pests, diseases and weeds (§ 205.206)

In order to prevent crop pests, weeds, and diseases, the operator shall apply appropriate measures like crop rotation, sanitation measures, and choice of appropriate varieties.

- Pests may be controlled by mechanical or physical methods like introduction of predators, lures, traps, and repellents.
- Weeds may be controlled by mulching, mowing, grazing, hand weeding, heat, mulches (to be removed at the end of growing or harvest season).
- Diseases may be controlled by management practices that suppress the spread of diseases or application of natural biological, botanical, or mineral input.
  
  Only if the practices mentioned above are insufficient, the producer may use materials as allowed by the NOP.

- The materials allowed by the NOP are either natural substance not listed in the § 205.602 or synthetic substance listed in the §205.601.

⇒ If operators use commercial inputs, ECOCERT has to check in detail all active and non-active ingredients in order to verify their compliance.
7. Collection of wild-crops (§ 205.207)

**WILD CROP** = any plant or portion of a plant that is collected or harvested from a site that is not maintained under cultivation or other agricultural.

- These are considered as organic if harvested from a designated area that has had no prohibited substance applied to it for a period of 3 years immediately preceding the harvest.
- Furthermore, the harvesting/gathering may not be destructive to the environment, and must sustain the growth and production of the wild crop.

⇒ *Relevant verifiable proofs about this history must be provided to ECOCERT.*

8. Post-harvest handling (§ 205.270 – 205.272)

- Harvest, transport, and storage of organic products must be done in a manner that avoids commingling with nonorganic products and protects organic products from contact with prohibited substances.
- Special care must be taken not to use or re-use (without thorough cleaning) packing materials that has been in contact with substances which might compromise the integrity of organic products.

You will find all information about the NOP on the USDA-NOP homepage: 
[http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/nop](http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/nop)

You can check yourself the compliance for using an input according the NOP on the OMRI homepage [www.omri.org](http://www.omri.org) (the Commercial Product list is in free access, the Generic Materials list must be submitted).

You will find more information on ECOCERT homepage: [www.ecocert.com](http://www.ecocert.com) (certification, certified inputs, other activities)

If you need further information, we are at your disposal for technical questions.

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