



# Pacific Agricultural Certification Society

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## Guide to the *Organic Plan - Crop*

### Introduction

Use this guide to assist in completing the **PACS *Organic Plan - Crop***. Numbers in this guide correspond to numbers in the Crop Plan form. Provide as much information as possible.

### You may or should use this form if:

- You are a new farm applicant to PACS (even if you are transferring from another Certification Body), or
- You are an existing PACS member, but you have made significant modifications to your enterprise (eg. significant increase in land base, or changes in organic management), or
- There has been a change to the standards and you must report new information for a determination of compliance, as directed by PACS, or
- You have purchased an organic operation from a PACS certified member, and you are not already a PACS certified member, or it is a new scope of operation for which you have not been certified before.

### Do not use this form if you:

- Are a renewing PACS member, with no significant enterprise changes and you have completed this initial application form within the last 5 years (unless there has been a change to the Standards).

### Consequences of inaccurate completion

- The Verification Officer will wait on your farm for you to fill out incomplete areas, increasing your inspection costs. If the VO doesn't catch the inaccuracies, you may be confronted with higher Certification Committee charges. Please fill out the forms as completely as possible, checking the maps, and reporting all significant details.

### How to complete the form:

*In efforts to reduce our ecological footprint and increase efficiency, PACS operates as a paperless office. We ask if possible, to submit ALL documents electronically (via email). We understand that this may not be possible for everyone. PACS will continue to accept documents by mail and fax, however, please note that these documents will be saved electronically and then destroyed*

This Plan is available in Microsoft Word and PDF format. **Do not complete using Google Docs.**

- To fill it in on the computer:
  - First: save the form to your hard drive. Fill it in then save the file again before you send it to PACS.
  - Type into the grey coloured areas: Use your mouse, arrows or tab keys to move around the form. If this form is not compatible with your computer system or you experience any problems, contact the PACS office for immediate assistance. If you need more space than is provided add additional sheets.
- **Note** – the charts expand when data is filled in, so the page numbers change from the original blank form as it is filled in. Therefore, **question** number references are given below, but page number references are not.
- **Note** – If you work with a Mac computer, you may have to print documents and fill them in manually.
- If you are unable to complete the form electronically, you may print the form, fill it in with black or blue ink and mail it to the PACS office. Be sure to keep a copy of the completed form. If you need more space than is provided, add additional sheets.

### Abbreviations used:

- **VO - Verification Officer** – an independent contractor who inspects your farm at the request of your Certification Body (CB). The VO makes a report to the Certification Committee of the CB. A copy of this report is sent to you along with the Certification Review Report. Remember, the VO does **not** certify your farm, nor set conditions for certification.

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- **CC - Certification Committee** - the group authorized by your Certification Body to make decisions. The PACS Certification Committee examines your Crop Plan/Renewal and the VO's report, then decides whether you qualify for certification. Sometimes the CC sets conditions which you must meet for certification. These are itemized in the "Certification Review Report" and have deadlines for your responses.
- **COR** – the standards, regulations and PSL which comprise the *Canada Organic Regime*.
- **COS** – [Canadian Organic Standards \(CAN/CGSB 32.310-2020\)](#).
- **PSL** – [Permitted Substance List \(CAN/CGSB 32.311-2020\)](#).
- **SFCR** – [Safe Food for Canadians Regulation, Part 13 – Organic Products](#)
- **CRR**: Certification Review Report. This is the annual report that is created when the PACS Certification Committee reviews your certification (inspection report, organic plan, renewal forms, etc.). It will be sent to you as part of your certification package and is intended to provide a "snapshot" of your operation.

## About this Guide:

This document highlights areas where there may be pitfalls, or confusion. Not every line is explained. If you have questions that are not covered in this guide, contact the PACS office.

**Name and descriptive information about your enterprise.** Please complete all sections.

## CERTIFICATION INFORMATION:

- #2: Past denials of certification, suspensions and revocations must be reported along with remedial measures taken by your enterprise to correct the adverse action. PACS must obtain permission from Ottawa to re-activate your certification.
- #3. Copies of the Canadian Organic Standards and the Permitted Substances Lists are posted on the CFIA website but are also available on the PACS website: [www.pacscertifiedorganic.ca](http://www.pacscertifiedorganic.ca)
- #4. Enter the list of crops or products as you would like them to appear on your certificate. Variety names for orchard fruits, grapes and major ground crops are generally required and would be mandatory if required to distinguish non-certified varieties from certified varieties.
- #6. A Split Operation form is required if **any** non-certified animals or plants are present (i.e. a home garden or chickens raised for your own consumption). Once it is on record, it need not be recorded again unless there is a significant change. **The Split Op form is particularly important if you have an organic and a non-organic income stream that the VO must be aware of.**

## ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW:

- #7. The information provided in this land base summary chart will be reflected in greater detail in the **Field Identification & Land Use History Sheet** at the end of the form.

**For each separate production unit, or site** submit:

- a **site map** identifying the fields
- a **farm map** (overview of the general locations of all sites in your land base)
- a **Field Identification Sheet & Land Use History Sheet** (at the end of the form)

Give every site a name. Give every separate field a number - don't duplicate the field numbers on different sites. Provide your best estimate of acreage.

- **Land Use Declaration Form** (to be filled in by current/previous landowners or neighbours of land for which organic certification is being requested in order to verify the application of inputs and/or the maintenance of buffer zones of neighbouring land)

## Useful Definitions:

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- **Farm:** All property (production units) managed by applicant including leased property and non-organically farmed property.
- **Site:** A group of adjacent properties (legal lot description) managed by an applicant. Non-adjacent parcels will constitute separate sites. For future reference and recordkeeping, decide on a reference name for each site. Many farms have only one site.
- **Field:** A distinctive area within a site. A site may contain one or more fields. Records must be kept *per field*.

#9. PVC piping (ie hard PVC plastic: water lines, irrigation lines, etc.) is **not** a problem. Soft PVC plastic (which is sometimes used in plastic mulch, or plastic wrapping material) is prohibited for use in organic production areas.

#11. It is important for PACS to know if your water source is maintained by a public entity (municipality, irrigation district, etc) or is from a private source (well, creek, river, etc.). Irrigation water has quality control standards set by the provincial government; drinking water must meet potability standards and water used to wash organic produce must meet drinking water standards (required by the Canadian Organic Standards).

## **ORGANIC PLAN:**

#14. Recordkeeping is an integral part of organic certification. Your records must be comprehensive and **detailed**. If you *wonder* if you should keep a record of something, do it – **then** ask whether you need to continue doing it.

#18. The possibility of GE contamination rises with each new genetically engineered crop introduction (alfalfa and apples being recently added). The federal government mandates that farmers must develop a plan to prevent GE contamination. This matter will only become more urgent in future years.

## **LAND REQUIREMENTS and ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:**

#21. Parallel production requires scrutiny of both the organic and non-organic crops and the organic and non-organic income streams. Inspections must coincide with harvest time and both sets of financial records must be audited. Be sure to have everything ready for the VO.

#22 – 26. Protection from contamination and buffers zones: Neighbouring conventionally farmed properties are potential sources of contamination to organic farms. Conventional fertilizers and chemical sprays must not reach organic crops. Buffer zones, hedgerows, roadways and ditches help to halt the spread of these contaminants. Crops grown in buffer zones must be treated as conventional. Harvest, storage and sales must be segregated from organics. Harvest equipment must be cleaned prior to being used on organic crops. Neighbouring GE crops require more stringent methods and separations.

**FARM MANAGEMENT:** Farming activities and practices; long-term plans for building and maintaining soil fertility, maintaining and increasing productivity, reducing weeds, pests and diseases and increasing numbers of natural predators while promoting the health and diversity of native flora and fauna are part of the organic philosophy.

#29. With the growth of the organic sector, new sources of seeds and planting stock continually become available. Enterprises must show that they are constantly researching availability of organic sources to replace non-organic selections from previous years. The PACS Board has determined that a “reasonable” seed search constitutes contacting at least three credible seed sources that are known to carry organic seeds.

#33. Conventional perennial planting stock generally requires a 1 year transition to organic status, even if it is being planted into a land base that has achieved organic status. This is why the planting dates must be identified.

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#37. If your irrigation system is connected to a shared irrigation water source, you must investigate whether or not the water is treated with algicides or herbicides to kill aquatic weeds. You must also ensure that you avoid overwatering and resultant run-off into adjacent areas.

#40. Annual projected yields are compared in the following year with actual harvest amounts. In this manner, the VO is able to audit your output and build a historical record of results to compare with your own past and with other reference materials.

**CROP RESIDUES, COMPOST AND MANURE:** The national standards have rigorous documentation requirements for off-farm sourced manure. The PSL describes materials which are allowed as compost feedstocks.

#53 to 57: These questions apply ONLY FOR THOSE WHO USE **un-composted** FRESH OR AGED MANURE. A log book is required to document each imported load of off-farm manure recording the details described in this question. In addition, the possible presence of whole GMO corn, soy, canola or cotton seeds may need to be considered.

#57. Manure which is not composted according to the COS is treated as raw manure and application dates on crops for human consumption must comply with the requirements of the standards.

## **CROP, PEST, DISEASE and WEED MANAGEMENT**

**INPUTS:** Please be accurate and thorough. **ALL** inputs must be listed (including manure, compost, fertilizers, crop production aids, soil amendments, pesticides, mulches etc).

**HARVEST, PREPARATION AND TRANSPORT:** If another enterprise is responsible for the harvest of your crops (i.e. a winery), you need to declare that.

#66. If you conduct any on-farm product preparation or packaging (i.e. washing, bagging, drying, freezing, etc.) declare each individual kind of preparation in this question.

#69. All cleaning and sanitation products must be reviewed and approved by PACS. They must be declared on your application form and support documents (SDS sheets, ingredients lists, product spec sheets, etc.) must be in your organic records and in your PACS file.

#76. Identify your customers and the geographical locations where your goods are sold.

**NOTES and ATTACHMENTS:** Please identify ALL attachments.

**ORGANIC OPERATOR AFFIRMATION:** Don't forget to sign the form. **Be aware:** Any applicable transition period does not commence until all documentation comprising a **complete** application has been submitted to and reviewed by the PACS office.

**FIELD IDENTIFICATION & LAND USE HISTORY SHEET:** for new land applicants and for the addition of new production units to an existing organic program.

**LAND USE DECLARATIONS:** to be completed by landowners (current/previous) or neighbours of land for which organic certification has been requested. Please attach a separate page if more space is required.