The Eco Alamo
By Joseph Still

Recently, some clients have been asking about the cost difference of organic fabrics…is the fabric really organic or is it just a lot of marketing designed to raise the price?

This article will highlight the standards, mechanisms and systems used by the Texas Organic Association to ensure that products and fabrics labeled as “organic” meet certain standards to use the label.

This article will focus on documentation and management requirements.

DOCUMENTATION

Land History

To receive a certification of "organic" the land must have passed a three year test of not using prohibited material. To be eligible for the certificate, farmer must submit an application for certification including a full and complete three-year farm history of agricultural use established from accurate, verifiable records. Farmers must also update of their farm plan annually.

Documentation includes production practices, harvest dates, yields, product inventory and sales. Inventory and use including application dates, rates, types of materials, and equipment used for application must also be noted and verifiable. Certified producers are subject to unannounced inspections.

2. Transition Status

Farmers who have satisfied all other requirements for certification except for the three year period limit may market their crops as "transitional". To be certified as transitional a part of the farm must have distinct, defined physical boundaries exist between fields under organic management and other non-organic fields. These boundaries should include a buffer zone separating organically managed soil from other cultivated agricultural land or non-agricultural land. Crops grown in buffer zone areas must be harvested separately and fully documented, including verification through weight and inventory records.

MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Soil Management

A main goal of organic soil management is increasing the soil's organic content through crop rotation. Soil conservation practices may include, but are not limited to, terracing, benching, land leveling, and planting practices. Mulches and surface crop residues to enhance soil and water conservation. Water conservation practices include irrigation scheduling, application rates and intervals, and soil and crop moisture utilization.

Weed Management

Use of any synthetic herbicides not included on the National List is prohibited. Weed management of both annual and perennial weeds should be based on a program of preventative management including crop rotation, cover cropping, mulching and smother cropping.

Insect Pest Management

Insect management should be based on integrated pest management best practices principles. These include planning production schedules, planting resistant varieties, planting dates, crop selection, rotation, trap cropping, pheromone traps, sticky traps, vacuuming and water jets, beneficial parasites, predators, and pathogens.

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