



# Colorado Organic Producers Association Newsletter

[www.OrganicColorado.org](http://www.OrganicColorado.org)

**April 2009**

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## Spring Issue

Spring has sprung and we hope you have a wonderful season! We have a full issue for you that includes the latest information from CDA about liquid fertilizer use in organic systems, organic system plan application changes and deadlines, introductions of new board members, and much more.

The COPA Board

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## Welcome to Our New Members

We look forward to getting to know each of you and your organic interests!

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## President's Message

Claudia Ferrell

Greetings. With Adriane (Addy) Elliott as our new Executive Director and Matt Jones of Slow Food and Arna Caplan as new energetic and knowledgeable board members, COPA is moving forward in ways that I believe will truly benefit organic producers as well as consumers in Colorado. The Board clearly recognizes the diversity of producers in our state but also is very aware of the common needs. Thus, we are pursuing a grant proposal in conjunction with Rocky Mountain Farmers Union to develop our website and organizational services. Additionally, we are requesting funding to create a booth at the Produce Marketing Association conference (Anaheim, CA, Oct. 2-5, 2009) to offer an arena for Colorado Organic Producers to secure contracts. A fund raising Farm Dinner is in the planning stages for later this summer. We hope to use it as a forum to educate the public about the incredible diversity of organic production in Colorado.

As a COPA member, we value your ideas and welcome your input. Please feel free to contact me or any of our Board members with your suggestions or if you would like to participate more actively.

Claudia Ferrell [bpf@qwestoffice.net](mailto:bpf@qwestoffice.net)

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## COPA's New Executive Director

Addy Elliott

I am very excited to announce that the COPA Board hired me for part-time work as the Executive Director! Thank you for giving me the opportunity to work with such a great group of people and to further develop such an important organization.

After serving on COPA's Board for a year I have become familiar with the history, goals and mission of the organization. Many exciting ideas are developing and I hope to use my skills to bring them to fruition. Currently, I am working on a Colorado Department of Agriculture Specialty Crops Grant as mentioned by Claudia and redesigning and updating the COPA website. **If any of our members are interested in attending the Produce Marketing Association trade-show in October of 2009, please contact me as soon as possible.**

As the organic market continues to develop and grow I hope COPA can be a source of information for Colorado producers, processors, and consumers. We have a great opportunity to use our network to stay aware of issues and opportunities that affect each of us.

Please feel free to contact me with any ideas or questions that you have about COPA and your vision of how we can serve our members better.

To the Future!

Addy Elliott [adriane.elliott@colostate.edu](mailto:adriane.elliott@colostate.edu)

## New Form I-9 Delayed

Andrew Trexler

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has delayed the effective date for the new regulations for verifying employment eligibility of workers on the Form I-9. All employers must use the new Form I-9 for new hires as of April 3, 2009.

Employers using the old form or completing the new one improperly are subject to major civil fines, criminal prosecutions and other employer sanctions. In recent years, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has stepped up efforts to combat the unlawful employment of unauthorized workers. To protect your business, it's important that your hiring managers understand the new regulations.

In the most significant change to existing rules, an employer can no longer accept *any expired document* from a new hire. Previously, employers could accept many expired documents, including driver's licenses, passports or Permanent Resident cards. Requiring valid, unexpired documents also increases the likelihood that the documents have the latest security features, making them less vulnerable to counterfeiting.

Still, as long as an employee document is unexpired when the Form I-9 is completed, the employer will not generally need to see a new or renewed document. Employers must re-verify expiring documents if the employee is only temporarily authorized to work in the U.S.

Employers also will notice that the new Form I-9 contains four attestation boxes, separating the U.S. "citizen" and "national" designations. In practice, this matters little. Still, HR representatives should be aware of the distinction, since this new box may increase the possibility of error if a new employee does not read the form carefully. Ultimately, it is the employer's responsibility to ensure the I-9 is completed correctly.

Another significant change in the Form I-9 involves the requirements for accepting several "List A" documents, including the addition of the new U.S. Passport Card. Recent changes to international travel requirements resulted in a flood of applications for this new card, which looks similar to the first page of a U.S. passport. Nearly one million cards have been

issued to date, with thousands more issued daily, so employers will no doubt begin receiving these cards as proof of both identity and employment authorization.

The new regulations have resulted in several other changes to the Form I-9. Employers download the new Form I-9 from the Allott Immigration Law Firm by going to [www.allott.com](http://www.allott.com). To avoid employer sanctions, fines and other penalties, hiring managers may schedule an expert Form I-9 review or participate in a training seminar by calling (303) 797-8055 or visiting [www.allott.com](http://www.allott.com) for more information.

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## CDA Organic Advisory Board Meeting Update

Dennis Lamm

MARCH 25, 2009

**Plastic Mulch Issue** NOP has interpreted the rule such that those producers using plastic mulch must remove the mulch each year to avoid any possible incorporation of the material into the soil. The interpretation of the rules is left up to each certifier. Mitch Yergert, CDA organic program manager, will compile more information from other sources (producers using the products and from other certifiers) and prepare a position paper to submit to the NOP for further clarification of the Rule.

**High N Fertilizer Issue** The Feb. 20, 2009 memo from Barbara Robinson, Acting Director, NOP, was discussed. Discussions revolved around how to handle products which have been dropped from OMRI/WSDA lists. No guidelines were included in the NOP memo to help certifiers determine who a third party reviewer would be. More information is needed from NOP on 3rd party reviewers. It was thought that the producers should somehow be notified of products that are dropped by OMRI and that it is the producers' responsibilities to remove dropped products from their premises so that their organic certification is not compromised. Call Mitch before a purchase is made to make sure the product is approved. It is up to the certifier to make the determination whether a product is in compliance with the NOP rule. Regarding enforcement, when a product that was previously approved is found to be out of compliance, CDA will not go back and require a transition period. The product from that point in

time is then considered not an approved product and should not be used in organic production.

#### **Identifying Food Safety Issues During**

**Process/Handling Inspections** There were many recommendations discussed about different types of documentation which the inspector could collect at the time of the inspection in addition to visual observations in order to comply with the NOP requirement. In addition to Health Department certificates of inspection and FDA inspection (which may only be done every two years) some companies obtain additional audits, such as a Safe Quality Food audit, which would be more thorough in verifying the food safety aspect of the process. The determination of **organic** certification may be able to be delayed pending a satisfactory health department report or whatever report is deemed required for certification. A suggestion was made that more communication between the local, state and federal departments would be a welcome improvement for the industry.

**Upcoming Outreach Materials** Mitch reviewed upcoming publications and ways to get **organic** program information to the producers.

**New organic staff member** Casey Palmer was hired as an organic certification specialist and started work in mid April. Casey will be a great asset to the program. Casey will be involved in inspections, organic system plan review and overall program administration. Her phone number is 303-239-4143 and email is [casey.palmer@ag.state.co.us](mailto:casey.palmer@ag.state.co.us).

**Cost Share Funds Update** The USDA has provided cost share funding for organic certification costs. Growers and handlers can receive 75% of their certification costs (application and inspection fees) up to \$750. Funding is available for both 2008 and 2009 certification costs. Applications for the cost share funding is available on the CDA website. A W-9 also needs to be filled out and included with your application. This is available to all certified organic entities not just entities that are certified by CDA.

**Livestock Pasture Rules** The USDA National Organic Program (NOP) published a proposed Access to Pasture Rule in the Federal Register on October 24, 2008. The proposal contained changes to the regulations around access to pasture for ruminant livestock, requirements for sacrificial pastures, changes to feed requirements, and other clarifications on the organic livestock standards. It is expected that the final rule will not be published until late 2009 or early 2010. Sally Keefe gave an update. Apparently, USDA received 90,000 comments. 1,000 were from industry and 89,000 were from letters voicing pro and

non-pro pasture. The 1,000 from industry sited specific issues with the rules. The email comments have been reviewed and that was approximately half of the total received. Staff is now reviewing comments received by mail. She wasn't sure about the timeline. Some key appointments need to be made to positions in USDA which need to sign off on rule changes. Nothing definite on when those positions will be filled.

**Thanks** to Barbara Rosenbach for compiling these minutes.

**For more information**, contact Mitch Yergert at the Colorado Department of Agriculture at 303.239.4138 or [Mitchell.Yergert@ag.state.co.us](mailto:Mitchell.Yergert@ag.state.co.us)

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## COPA Annual Meeting Minutes

Elaine Granata

FEBRUARY 19, 2009

COPA President Claudia Ferrell called the meeting to order and there were about 35 people in attendance. Dennis Lamm, Board Treasurer, presented an award of appreciation to Jim Dyer, past Executive Director of COPA, to a standing ovation. Dyer expressed his hopes that COPA could continue on its path of revitalization.

**Mitch Yergert of the Colorado Department of Agriculture** (CDA) then spoke. The highlights of his presentation were:

- CDA has regained the 100 or so operations that dropped their certification right after the NOP was implemented bringing CDA certified operations back to about 200
- CDA is working on getting its own re-accreditation approved by the NOP
- The Organic Certification Advisory Group has decided that there is a need for more education and is putting together a brochure on the basics of organic food production
- The Farm Bill has money for organic practices and the NRCS, administrator of the monies, has asked CDA what organic certification is so that they will understand what to fund; Yergert is meeting with them soon to educate them.
- Appreciation was expressed during the Q&A for the work that Yergert has done to improve the administration of the certification program

- In response to a question Yergert informed the group that the **new deadline for applications for certification is May 1** so it can be done in a timely manner. A Word fillable form is being developed to facilitate the application process and make possible the use of a previous year's application.
- As a requirement of their re-accreditation, CDA is developing more detailed questions on handling manure and compost, clarifying the process handler application, making minor changes to the livestock application and are adding NOP titles for easy reference
- Another question was about the training his staff receives and he informed us that the NOP does not provide such training and CDA continually searches for training opportunities. He suggested that collaboration with COPA would be possible since training for his staff would be useful training for COPA members.

**Wendy White of CDA Markets Division** then spoke of their work and covered the following:

- 61% of consumers recognize the Colorado Proud label and there are 1000 members
- In the next 2-3 weeks she will announce grants for marketing that will be available to COPA and others for which a 25% match, real or in-kind, is required.
- The Fruit and Vegetable Division is offering certification in GAP and GHP (Good Agriculture/Handling Processes)
- She discussed Market Maker, a partnership with CDA and CSU, for use of a web-based program developed by Illinois Extension. It's a one stop shopping place for producers, processors, chefs, schools, consumers, etc. All CDA publications will be rolled into it and it should be live in the next 2-3 months.
- In response to Q&A she said the Farm Fresh Directory will also remain in hard copy and that of the specialty crops monies, 50% will go to grants.

Ferrell conducted the business meeting in which both the previous year's minutes and the treasurer's report

were approved. Various Board members reported on board activities including:

- The Board's search for a replacement Executive Director (ED)
- The website upgrade
- Move toward an electronic newsletter
- A report of the farm tour from the day before
- A report on the plans for Extension to sponsor a CSA Conference in 2010 following the 4 regional conferences this year
- COPA's focus on helping producers transition to organics through a mentorship program

After a call for nominations from the floor, the following slate of board members for a 2 year term was approved with no dissenting votes after being moved by Tim Ferrell and seconded by Brad Wind:

Claudia Ferrell, Dennis Lamm, Arna Caplan, Matt Jones and Brad Wind; Dolores Tippet's resignation and service on the Board were acknowledged.

Elaine Granata led the membership in an exercise to provide input to the board on some of its major goals and objectives for 2009, including farm dinners, fundraising, COPA listserv, public farm tours, speakers bureau, website upgrade, and increasing membership. After about 20 minutes the following groups reported out their deliberations:

- Speakers Bureau group -- solicit audiences such as Lions Clubs, Kiwanis, statewide associations of public service organizations, 4-H, FFA, beginning farmers groups, water wise groups, rose society, FROG (Front Range Organic Gardeners), nurseries, churches; Lew Grant and Jim Holland volunteered to be speakers; solicit venues and speakers on our website and newsletter
- Membership group -- develop a brochure to distribute to farmers' markets, master gardeners and composters, FROG, CSA shareholders, Denver Botanic Gardens; explore more joint memberships such as one with Slow Foods; solicit from large commercial organizations (Sunflower, Whole Foods, Celestial Seasonings, Vitamin Cottage, etc); explore advertising on other listservs like Denver Urban Gardens (DUG), DINR (Denver Independent Network of

Restaurants), Colorado Proud; ask Wendy to put a star on those who are COPA members on the Colorado Proud list;

- Public tours and farm dinners group – Plan for mid-August and include outlying farms (Pueblo and Rocky Ford) and the western slope by having their products available/used at the dinner; announce it through PSAs, CSAs, and website; use Meadowlark operation to donate time and be the chef; price it so it's not so elite; farmers donate produce—meat, cheese, wines, veggies; Elaine Andrews, Lew Grant and John Ellis volunteered to help put it together
- Website: No one stood at this goal but Deb Schaffer did volunteer a brief amount of time to discuss design.

People were thanked for their participation and the meeting was adjourned.

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## Welcome New Board Members!

### Arna Caplan

I have been an organic gardener and an advocate of well-produced food all of my adult life. In addition, I have also done the following:

- ✓ Established a school and community garden at Westridge Elementary School, where I was a teacher
- ✓ From 2004 to 2008, directed the Slow Food Seed-to-Table garden program at Fairmont Elementary School. The program involves every student in planting and harvesting, works with teachers in the classroom to bring in producers and to use our garden produce in cooking experiences, and for the past three summers, conducted a summer program for middle school youth, including gardening and running a weekly Youth Farmers Market for the community, with fund from Live Well Colorado.
- ✓ Facilitated a Slow Food discussion group using Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, which led to several contacts with local producers. Since then I have actively sought out local sources for our household food, participating in three CSA's.

I welcome the opportunity to put my interests and passions to work in a wider arena.

### Matt Jones

Matt Jones grew up with a big table in the kitchen and a garden in his back yard. A geologist's concern for the environment and a lifetime love of good, clean and fair food led him to Slow Food. Matt is the regional Governor for the Rocky Mountain (CO, UT, WY, and MT) of Slow Food USA. Matt co-chaired the Education Committee for Slow Foods USA after his work in establishing a Seed to Table school gardening program in Denver. He continues to work on national issues primarily focused on sustainable meat production.

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## Soil Quality from Long-term Organic Management Nearly Doubles Flavonoids in Organic Tomatoes

For more than ten years, scientists at U.C. Davis in California have conducted a Long-Term Research on Agricultural Systems project (LTRAS). The impacts of conventional and organic management on tomato production and tomato nutrient concentrations have been a major focus of this effort.

On June 23, 2007, the American Chemical Society's Journal of Food and Agricultural Chemistry published compelling results from the LTRAS (Mitchell et al., 2007). The team found that the level of quercetin, the most common flavonoid in the human diet and the major flavonoid in tomatoes, increased 79 percent as a result of organic management, and kaempferol levels rose 97 percent. In addition, and significantly, the longer a field was managed organically, the bigger the margin in flavonoid levels between organic and conventional plots. The level of quercetin in the organic plots increased about 5 milligrams per gram of dried tomato per year, with the largest increases coming after seven years of organic management. In the conventional plots, quercetin levels increased only 2 mg/gram per year. This finding supports the need for a three-year transition period before a field is eligible to grow certified organic crops, and also helps explain the relatively smaller percentage increases in antioxidant levels typically found in university studies that entail just a few years of organic management.

The team points out that a number of factors can trigger the biosynthetic pathway in plants that produces flavonoids - nutrient deficiency, pest attack, wounding, pathogens, and UV radiation (sunlight).

This study is unique because of its long duration and the careful accounting of production and nutrient inputs and nitrogen availability. The scientists focused on the long-run impacts of well-defined, typical organic and conventional cropping systems using the same tomato cultivar, rather than the impacts of individual practices and inputs. Tomato yields did not vary significantly between the conventional and organic plots, although the variation in yields was lower in the organic plots. The ability of soils under organic management to take in and store water more effectively than conventionally managed soils likely accounts for this finding.

Another unique aspect of this study is the ability to link changes in the nutrient content of tomatoes to the impacts of organic management on soil quality. The authors report significantly higher soil organic matter (SOM) levels in the organic plots. SOM levels rose through 1998 in the LTRAS, and reached a steady-state in 1998-1999, at which point the team reduced dramatically the applications of compost. The reduction in total nitrogen applied to the organic system did not reduce yields, and was accompanied

by increased flavonoid levels. The authors concluded that - "Flavonoid content in tomatoes seems to be related to available N. Plants with limited N accumulate more flavonoids than those that are well-supplied...overfertilization (conventional or organic) might reduce the health benefits from tomatoes"

This study provides powerful, new evidence in support of a nutrient "dilution effect" triggered by high levels of nitrogen and rapid plant growth, especially in the absence of pest pressure.

"Ten-Year Comparison of the Influences of Organic and Conventional Crop Management Practices on the Content of Flavonoids in Tomatoes"

**Authors:** A.E. Mitchell, Y.J.Hong, E. Koh, D. M. Barrett, D.E. Bryant, R. F. Denison, and S. Kaffka.

**Journal of Food and Agricultural Chemistry, published online June 23, 2007.**

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## *Earthworms Deliver Major Benefits in Plant Disease Suppression*

Organic farmers have understood for years that the density of earthworms is one of the most reliable indicators of soil health, but they have not known why. Research carried out at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station has provided compelling evidence that the humble earthworm plays a significant role in suppressing several common soil-borne plant pathogens.

A greenhouse study was carried out with asparagus, eggplant, and tomatoes grown in pots infected with common *Fusarium* and *Verticillium* species known to cause serious plant diseases in these crops. In the pots that also contained earthworms, plant weights increased 60% to 80%, and estimates of disease severity declined 50% to 70%.

The author speculates that the disease-suppressive benefits of earthworms are brought about by their impact on soil microbiological activity, and that "...strategies to increase earthworm densities in soil should suppress soilborne diseases."

**Source:** Wade H. Elmer, "Influence of Earthworm Activity on Soil Microbes and Soilborne Diseases of Vegetables," *Plant Disease*, Vol. 93: 175-179, February 2009.

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## OMRI Disallows Two Fertilizers; NOP Issues Warning

OMRI welcomes the move by the NOP to step up oversight of fertilizer manufacturers that make products for organic use. In light of the recent [NOP statement](#) to Accredited Certifying Agencies, OMRI released this [press release](#) about the product prohibitions and significant new requirements for organic fertilizers manufacturers, organic certifiers, and recognized materials review organizations. OMRI acknowledges the need to rebuild customer confidence in organic fertilizers and organic food in general. OMRI plans to fully comply with the requirements for recognized materials review organizations and we will hold our clients to the NOP's heightened expectations for all liquid nitrogen fertilizers should not continue to be used on organic farms. OMRI recently concluded our own investigation of Marizyme 4-2-2 E.F. and Agrolizer™ and found them prohibited, effective February 17, 2009.

In addition, over the last ten days, OMRI also removed or prohibited the following products:

- Balance EFA™ by ProfitPro, LLC in Livestock Feed Ingredients was Dropped

- Balance MRE™ by ProfitPro, LLC in Livestock Management Tools and Production Aids was Dropped
- Balance OME™ by ProfitPro, LLC in Crop Fertilizers and Soil Amendments was Dropped
- Balance LEB™ by ProfitPro, LLC in Crop Fertilizers and Soil Amendments was Dropped
- Balance ME™ by ProfitPro, LLC in Crop Fertilizers and Soil Amendments was Dropped
- Alaska® Fish Fertilizer 5-1-1 by Lilly Miller Brands in Crop Fertilizers and Soil Amendments was found Prohibited
- Marizyme 4-2-2 E.F. by Port Organic Products in Crop Fertilizers and Soil Amendments was found Prohibited
- Agrolizer™ by AgroMar, Inc. in Crop Fertilizers and Soil Amendments was found Prohibited
- Catalyst Fish Meal by The Catalyst Product Group in Crop Fertilizers and Soil Amendments was Dropped
- Jersey Greensand by The Fertrell® Company in Crop Fertilizers and Soil Amendments was Dropped

OMRI 'drops' products when the companies voluntarily request their products be removed from our program or they fail to comply with the organization's policies. OMRI prohibits products only when conclusive evidence is on file to demonstrate a non-compliance with the NOP Rule.

Miguel Guerrero  
OMRI Marketing & Communications Director

## RECIPE – Kale Chips

Rinse kale, tear it into pieces, toss in olive oil, top with salt and sesame seeds, and bake at 350 for 8-10 minutes until crunchy.  
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## Earth Friendly COPA Newsletter

In an attempt to minimize paper use and costs, COPA would like to offer the option of receiving our newsletter via email to all of our members. If you are interested in receiving your newsletter electronically instead of through the mail, then please notify Addy at [Adriane.Elliott@ColoState.edu](mailto:Adriane.Elliott@ColoState.edu). Thank you for doing your part to minimize resource use.

## JOIN COPA TODAY

To join COPA and become more involved in what's happening in organic agriculture in CO visit our website <http://www.organiccolorado.org/>

If you have news for the next edition of the COPA newsletter, please email it to Addy Elliott at [Adriane.Elliott@ColoState.edu](mailto:Adriane.Elliott@ColoState.edu)

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