



Farm Views



Computerized Financial Recordkeeping

Reminder...It is not too late to register for the **Computerized Financial Recordkeeping** workshop series. This program was described, in detail, in the January NebLine. Briefly, the workshop is presented in two parts, a beginning-level workshop which assumes no prior experience with computerized recordkeeping and an advanced workshop to build on the topics presented in the first workshop. The initial-level workshop will be held on March 13 and the advanced-level workshop on March 20. Both workshops will be held in the computer lab at the UNL Animal Science Building on East Campus in Lincoln.

The concepts taught are applicable to any of several inexpensive computerized recordkeeping programs, with slight modifications in procedure. These workshops will be taught hands-on using Quicken

2001 Basic™ in the classroom. Step-by-step hand-out materials covering each topic have been developed and are included in the registration fee.

Registration will be limited, due to space and computer availability, on a first-come, first-serve basis. If you are interested, please contact the extension office and ask to have a brochure and registration form sent to you. Each workshop will begin promptly at 9 a.m. and end at 4:30 p.m. Lunch and refreshments will be served. Participants will receive a conference parking pass. The registration fee for each workshop is \$30 for one person, \$37 for two people sharing one computer with two meals and one set of handouts, and \$45 for two people at one computer with two meals and two sets of handouts. Registration must be received at the extension office with payment in order to hold a place in the workshop. (TD)

New EPA Regulations

On December 15 the EPA released two new proposals that may increase the regulations on CAFO's (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation). Currently, CAFO's are basically confinement operations consisting of 1000 or greater animal units. (Animal Units [AU] do not automatically equal the number of head in the operation. These can be figured using a simple ratio which is different for every species. For example beef cattle are a 1 head to 1 AU, dairy cattle are a .7 head to 1 AU, and swine are a 2.5 head to 1 AU [over 55 pounds]; 10 head to 1 AU [under 55 pounds].)

According to the EPA, 40% of the nations surveyed waters are not suitable for fishing and swimming and 60% of this pollution is caused by agricultural sources. These statistics have caused the EPA to consider these new proposals and possibly implement several changes that may effect almost 39,000 animal operations across the nation. In my opinion, there are four major changes they are proposing.

1. Size definition of CAFO – The only real difference between the two proposals is the size definitions of CAFO's. One proposal would include all livestock operations that are 300 AU or greater. The other proposal defines a CAFO as 500 AU or greater. This may not

seem like a major issue but consider that a dairy of 210 animals would possibly be classified as CAFO and thus have to abide by the Clean Water Act rules and regulations.

2. Elimination of the 25-year, 24-hour storm water permit exemption – All livestock operations would be required to prevent all discharges from their waste storage pits and lagoons where wastes are collected at all times.

3. Possibility of abolishing certain state permits and standards – This would possibly require CAFO's to re-apply (and pay for) a new permit to certify they are following the Clean Water Act rules and regulations.

4. Land application of manure – The land application area will be included in the CAFO definition. This will require CAFO's to prepare and implement site-specific permits that identify the nutrients generated at the facility, amount of nutrients needed by the land, and the rates of manure application. Secondly, the storm water exemption to land application will apply only when the manure is applied by EPA standards. Finally, recipients of the manure will either a) certify they are applying at proper organic rates, or b) no certification, but the CAFO must maintain records of

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What is Organic? Now We Know

This December, the USDA has announced it's National Organic Program "Final Rule" which ensures that organically labeled products meet consistent national standards. This final rule has set national standards that must be met by producers trying to produce and label organic products. The Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) of 1990, adopted as part of the 1990 Farm Bill, requires USDA to develop national standards for organically produced agricultural products to assure consumers that agricultural products marketed as "organic" meet consistent, uniform standards. The OFPA and the National Organic Program (NOP) require that agricultural products labeled as "organic" originate from farms or handling operations certified by a state or private agency that has been accredited by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The NOP is a marketing program housed within the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, the agency that sets marketing standards.

National Standards

The following are the standards set by the National Organic Program (NOP) final rule. This final rule contains regulations that will ensure that organically labeled products meet consistent national standards.

What agricultural operations are affected by the standards?

Any farm, wild crop harvesting, or handling operation that wants to sell an agricultural product as organically produced, must adhere to the national organic standards. Handling operations include processors, manufacturers, and repackers of organic products. These requirements include operating under an organic system plan approved by an accredited certifying agent and using materials in accordance with the National List of Allowed Synthetic and Prohibited Non-Synthetic Substances. Operations that sell less than \$5,000 a year in organic agricultural products are exempted from certification and preparing an organic system plan, but they must operate in compliance with these regulations and may label products as "organic." Retail food establishments that sell organically produced agricultural products, but do not process them, are also exempt from certification.

Certification

To sell organically labeled products, producers who sell less than \$5,000 in organic agricultural products must follow the national standards that will be described shortly. For those producers who sell more than \$5,000 of product, they must become certified. The certification process involves an application to an accredited certifying agent. This will include the type of operation, the organic plan, and five years of post-certification records. It will also require an on-site inspection of the operation during the production cycle to

observe the practices of the operation. In Nebraska the only certifying agent is Alan Mitchell at the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. To contact Alan, call 1-800-442-6692.

Standards apply to production process

The national organic standards address the methods, practices, and substances used in producing and handling crops, livestock, and processed agricultural products. The requirements apply to the way the product is



created, not to measurable properties of the product itself. Although specific practices and materials used by organic operations may vary, the standards require every aspect of organic production and handling to comply with the provisions of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA). Organically produced food cannot be produced using excluded methods, sewage sludge, or ionizing radiation.

Crop standards

The organic crop production standards say that:

Land will have no prohibited substances applied to it for at least three years before the harvest of an organic crop. The use of genetic engineering, ionizing radiation, and sewage sludge is prohibited. Soil fertility and crop nutrients will be managed through tillage and cultivation practices, crop rotations, and cover crops, supplemented with animal and crop waste materials and allowed synthetic materials.

Preference will be given to the use of organic seeds and other planting stock, but a farmer may use non-organic seeds and planting stock under specified conditions. Crop pests, weeds, and diseases will be controlled primarily through management practices including physical, mechanical, and biological controls. When these practices are not sufficient, a biological, botanical, or synthetic substance approved for use on the National List may be used.

Livestock standards

These standards apply to animals used for meat, milk, eggs, and other animal products represented as organically produced.

The livestock standards say that:

Animals for slaughter must be raised under organic management from the last third of gestation, or no later than the second day of life for poultry. Producers are required to feed livestock agricultural feed products that are 100 percent

organic, but may also provide allowed vitamin and mineral supplements. Animal producers may convert an entire, distinct dairy herd to organic production by providing 80 percent organically produced feed for nine months, followed by three months of 100 percent organically produced feed. Organically raised animals may not be given hormones to promote growth, or antibiotics for any reason. Preventive management practices, including the use of

vaccines, will be used to keep animals healthy. Producers are prohibited from withholding treatment from a sick or injured animal; however, animals treated with a prohibited medication may not be sold as organic. All organically raised animals must have access to the outdoors, including access to pasture for ruminants. They may be temporarily confined only for reasons of health, safety, the animal's stage of production, or to protect soil or water quality.

Handling standards

The handling standards say that:

All non-agricultural ingredients, whether synthetic or non-synthetic, must be included on the National List of Allowed Synthetic and Prohibited Non-Synthetic Substances. Handlers must prevent the commingling of organic with non-organic products and protect organic products from contact with prohibited substances. In a processed product labeled as "organic," all agricultural ingredients must be organically produced, unless the ingredient(s) is not commercially available in organic form.

If you can meet these standards easily, organic food production may be a viable and inventive way to increase farm and ranch profitability. Also, an excellent way to learn about the marketing of your organic crop would be to attend the *Adding Value: Challenges and Opportunities*, workshop to be held February 20, 2001, at the Kearney Holiday Inn. At this workshop, participants will hear grocers, restaurateurs, and Nebraska food industry representatives address the challenges and opportunities for supplying value-added food products to their establishments. Participants can expect to learn about alternative markets, product introductions, supply channels, distribution, and what these alternative markets are looking for. For more information on the National Organic Program, including proper labeling and marketing of your organic product and the *Adding Value: Challenges and Opportunities*, you can contact Lance Cummins-Brown, extension educator, 402-441-7180 or visit the USDA NOP website at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/>. (LCB)

Source: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, National Organic Program <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/nop2000/Final%20Rule/nopfinal.pdf>