

BC Certified Organic Program

Kootenay Organic Growers Society

Guide to Organic Processing/Handling Plan Update

Introduction

This is a guide to assist you in completion of the Organic Processing/Handling Update Plan.

COABC Organic Production Management Standards require all organic food handlers to answer a questionnaire each year to solicit information about every relevant topic addressed in the COABC standards. A response must be detailed enough to indicate a reasonable level of knowledge about organic production, processing or handling practices and principles, as well as to reveal any problems or concerns in adhering to the standards. Provide as much information as possible. The Certification Committee (CC) will decide your certification status, but they will never see your operation. The more information you can give, the easier it will be for the CC to make their decision. COABC sections refer to specific section numbers in the British Columbia Certified Organic Management Standards.

Abbreviations used:

- CB is Certification Body (the people you got this application from.)
- VO is Verification Officer – an independent contractor who inspects your farm at the request of your certification body. The VO makes a report to the Certification Committee of the Certification Body. A copy of this report is sent to you, but the VO does not certify your farm.
- CC is Certification Committee the group your certification body authorizes to make decisions about certification. The Certification Committee examines your farm plan and the VO report and then decides whether you qualify for certification. Sometimes the CC sets conditions you must meet for certification.

How to use this guide: Use this guide to assist in completing the Processing / Handling Plan. Numbers in the guide correspond to numbers in the Processing Handling Plan and often give more details on what is being asked, or on why it is being asked.

Introduction to Update Plans. The form is made for updating you basic, initial Organic Plan in order to eliminate the need for duplication year after year. For this to work you refer **to your original or previous plan** and make sure you are reporting **all** changes in each **section**. Unfortunately, inaccuracies in updates cause delays in certification, and increased costs. You will see that the headings on this form mirror the ones on the original form. You must look at your answers to all those questions and report any changes. If there are many changes in a section the VO, or the CC may later ask you to update the whole page of your original plan. If you know there are many changes you might want to ask for a new Processing/Handling Plan form, instead of using the update.

The Verification Officer will verify that everything on the plan is being done and will outline any area that they believe may not comply with the Certified Organic Management Standards. Please do not write in the column at the right of the form. However, please do provide as much information as possible.

For all questions list any changes since your last application. Complete the Update with the original plan in front of you for reference.

Section A General Information

1. Please use legal name of company. The certificate will be issued in this name unless you state otherwise.
2. Date of application.
3. Person who has the authority to deal with the organic certification process. This person must have appropriate authority within the company.
4. Person with ultimate responsibility.
5. If you have a new contact person or phone numbers include them here.

6. List any new physical locations where organic production or storage will take place. If your mailing address has changed put your new one here.
7. The Standards do change – do you have the latest version, and have you read it?
8. If you have had changes in any of these areas since your last application describe them here. If you have started a whole different kind of business (eg retail, processing, brokerage) you will need a new Processing/Handling Plan.
9. List as exactly as you can, as information in your certificate will be based on this information, and your CB and VO have to know what they are verifying.
10. These were contained in a letter sent to you from your certification body as part of last year's certification process.
11. List changes you have made, records you have submitted, etc in response to the conditions. You must respond to conditions or your certification is in jeopardy.
12. Changes from what you reported on your application last year.
13. If you added any custom processing or contracting since last year provide the names of companies, certification information, and enough information for the VO and CC to understand what the situation is.
14. There is a greater risk to organic products if non-organic products are also in the same facility.
15. Please actually look at your copy of the facility diagrams AND flow charts as memory is bit tricky. If things have changed send in an updated version.

Personnel

16. The VO may need to talk to some of these people during verification visit.

Section B Organic Product Information

17. a. If your product line has changed from you reported in your last Plan (application) list the differences here. If you have added or dropped products line list them here (stating added or dropped). When you add a product you are supposed to send in an Organic Product Profile Sheet for the product and get the CB's approval. If you did not do that you better send one in now.
- b. Please check the Organic Product Profile Sheets against your current recipes and send in updated ones if anything has changed.
18. The CB and the VO need up to date information on products.
19. If you package combined product you are considered a processor.

Certification verification (COABC section 11.1, 11.3, 2.6)

20. You need organic certificates or transaction certificates and a tracking system to make sure they are up to date. This will be verified by the VO.

Section C Transportation – shipping, receiving, storage (COABC Section 11.1-11.4)

Incoming Transport

21. If you have changed any of these procedures explain the changes in detail. Include any changes in recordkeeping procedures. If you are using a new storage facility that is not certified organic you will have to submit an Independent Storage Facility form found at the end of this document.

In Process Transportation

22. Please explain any changes in detail.

Outgoing Product Transportation

23. Include any changes in recordkeeping procedures.

Storage and Post Harvest Treatments (COABC section 11.2, 4.8)

24. Explain any changes since your last application. If you are using a new storage facility as them to fill out Independent Storage Information Sheet and submit it to your CB. The storage facility may need to be inspected.
25. If there have been changes give complete details of what is done. List any products used. If you are using a different facility give us name and contact information. Is it certified organic?

Section D Pest Management (COABC Section 11.6)

26. List any new pests, or control methods. Rodenticides may not be used either in, or around the facility.
27. In certain cases, you may be able to use a particular practice if you remove organic materials first, subject to requirements of your CB.

Section E Sanitation (COABC section 11.4, 11.15)

28. List materials used since last application, and that you plan to use this year. You are expected to use the least environmentally harmful product that will be effective. Rinses or purges are required after use of sanitation materials.
29. If have changed procedures or are planning to describe the changes. If you have updated written procedures send them to the CB.

Section F Record Keeping (COABC section 11.1, 11.13, 2.6)

Any time an organic product is moved, cleaned, processed, packaged or changed in any form, a document must be generated to record the activity.

30. Explain any changes in the audit trail system
31. If the your audit trail flow chart you previously submitted is out of date, update it and send a revised copy with the application. You can use email or post.

Section G Packaging and Labelling (COABC sections 11.1,11.7 through 11.10)

32. This refers to any kind of packaging – not just retail. Include changes in contracts with another facility to do the packaging or have changes in procedures if you move items from one container to another.
33. The CB has to check all labels on which there is an organic claim.

Section H Waste Management (COABC 1.4, 11.4)

34. If you plan to sell any waste products as certified organic specify what they are and include an Organic Product Profile sheet for each product.

Section I Water and Steam (COABC 11.13, 11.15)

Water in direct contact with products or used for rinsing equipment must be potable.

35. If your water is not from a municipal source, and it contacts the organic product or is used to rinse equipment your certifying body may want you to test the water if you have not already done so.
36. Please give as much detail as possible. The verification officer will want to see the label, product information sheet, or MSDS sheet of any products used. Boiler additives can contaminate steam that in turn can contaminate the organic product if there is direct contact.

Section I Equipment (COABC section 11.4, 11.15)

37. If equipment is used for both non-organic and organic production it must be cleaned and rinsed or purged with organic product before the organic run.

Section J Quality Assurance (COABC section 11.1, 11.9)

38. Quality assurance programs can be modified to include organic assurance.
39. Indicate any changes in testing either ingredients or finished product. Testing is not a requirement in most cases.
40. If a problem with the organic integrity of the product is discovered, will you be able to recall it?
41. You can send attachments by email or mail. Diagrams, flow charts, and labels don't usually fax well. You may be able to scan labels and email them if the type and colours can be distinguished.