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2 **Certified Grass-Fed Organic Livestock Program¹©**

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4 **Standards for Dairy Animal Production and Dairy Product Handling Operations**
5 **VERSION 2.0**

6
7 **Introduction**

8
9 **The Program**

10
11 The “Certified Grass-Fed Organic Livestock Program” (“the Program” or “this
12 Program”) corresponds to, and supplements, the certification requirements of the National
13 Organic Program (“NOP”) for livestock.²

14
15 **This Standard**

16
17 This Certified Grass-Fed Organic Dairy Standard (“this Standard”) sets additional
18 requirements for organic dairy livestock production under which each certified operation
19 enlarges the duration of the animal’s grazing time to ensure its feed comes solely from foraging,
20 stored forages and minor amounts of additional plant-based materials and nutrient vitamins and
21 minerals. Handling and labeling of dairy products certified to this Standard are also covered.
22 Although organic certification is a mandatory precondition to certification to this Standard,
23 unlike the federal organic program, this Standard excludes grain and grain-derived feed and feed
24 products.

25
26 **I. Definitions**—Words have the same meaning as in the National Organic Program unless
27 specifically defined in Appendix A.

28
29 **II. Certification of Organic Grass-Fed Dairy Production and Handling Operations**

30
31 **A. Eligibility**--Any certified organic dairy livestock production operation or certified
32 organic dairy handling operation is eligible to apply for certification under this Standard.
33 Operations not previously certified as organic may simultaneously seek certification under
34 this Standard and the National Organic Program.

35
36 **B. General Certification Requirements**—Each Applicant shall,

- 37
38 1. Submit a complete Application in a form and upon a procedure set forth in this
39 Program’s Policy Manual that includes proof of current organic certification, or
40 simultaneously submit an Application for organic certification and an
41 Application for this Program;

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² See e.g. 7 CFR Part 205 “National Organic Program.”

2. Be inspected prior to the certification decision and annually thereafter, and successfully complete any requests for additional information or corrective actions.
3. Successfully complete a 90-day transition period for each certified organic dairy animal at the applicant operation or purchase animals from an operation presently certified to this standard; and
4. Provide Notice of any material change in the status of the operation or its animals to the certifying body during the certification cycle; and
5. Demonstrate all animals being milked at the operation, or at any single site of a multi-site operation are solely certified grass-fed organic.

C. Certification Term--Certification to this Standard shall be twelve months and is presumed to run concurrent with the operation's organic certification period unless the certifying body determines otherwise.

D. Certification Grant, Denial, Suspension, Revocation and Reinstatement and Animal Exclusions under this Standard

1. Certification under this Standard may be denied or granted and upon certification issuance may thereafter be renewed, suspended or revoked. Each of these actions is subject to written notice from the certifying body and an opportunity to respond on behalf of the applicant or certified operation, in accordance with the applicable procedures set forth in this program's Policy Manual.
2. Loss of Certified Status (Animals): An individual animal loses its certified status under this Standard if it is determined that during the applicable certification period the animal,
 - a) Was intentionally fed, or inadvertently received, more than a *de minimis* amount of non-compliant feed, feed product or received healthcare materials prohibited under the National Organic Program or requirements of this Standard; or
 - b) Failed otherwise to meet the requirements of organic certification or requirements of this Standard.

III. Source and Identity of Dairy Animals-- Any ruminant animal placed at an operation certified under this Standard shall be:

- A.** born at that operation or an operation certified to this Standard and maintained under this Standard throughout its life at that operation; or
- B.** purchased from an operation presently certified to this Standard; or
- C.** purchased from a certified organic operation only if an animal compliant with paragraphs III (A) or (B) of this section is commercially unavailable and the purchased organic animal completes a 90-day transition period under this Standard during which its milk is not eligible to be sold as "Grass-Fed Organic."

1 **D.** Confirmation--The certification body shall confirm the farm herd list meets the
2 requirements of 7 C.F.R. §205.236 (c) and shall also confirm to a reasonable certainty that
3 non-compliant animals are not sold or labeled as Grass-Fed Organic animals.
4

5 **IV. Mandatory Grazing Requirements for Animals Older than Six Months**-- To maintain
6 certification under this Standard, a certified operation shall,
7

8 **A.** Graze all animals throughout the entire grazing season, which shall be not less
9 than 150 days per calendar year. Due to weather, season, and/or climate the grazing
10 season may or may not be continuous; and

11 **B.** Provide not less than 60 percent of each animal’s dry matter intake (“DMI”) from
12 grazing, averaged throughout the grazing season.
13

14 **V. Livestock Diet—Allowed, Restricted, and Prohibited Feedstuffs**-- A weaned animal’s
15 diet shall consist solely of allowed and restricted feedstuffs.
16

17 *Allowed Feedstuffs*
18

19 **A.** Grazed forages comprised of annual and perennial grasses, legumes, forbs,
20 brassicas, and browse; and

21 **B.** Grazed vegetative-stage cereal grain plants (corn in a pre-tassel stage, soybeans
22 prior to bloom; small and cereal grains pre-boot stage); and

23 **C.** Harvested forages and harvested vegetative-stage cereal grain crops (corn in a
24 pre-tassel stage, soybeans prior to bloom; small and cereal grains pre-boot stage).
25

26 *Allowed but Restricted Grain-Free Feedstuffs*
27

28 A weaned animal’s diet may be supplemented when necessary to maintain nutritional
29 stability and optimal rumen welfare with the following plant-based feedstuffs,
30

31 **D.** Stored forage in cube or pellet form with a daily limit of not more than .5% of an
32 animal’s body weight; and

33 **E.** Certified organic kelp, beet and citrus pulp, certified organic sugar cane in liquid
34 molasses and dry form provided it is strictly limited to supplemental amounts as set forth
35 in this Program’s Policy Manual; and

36 **F.** Forage grown in fodder sprout systems, provided consumption is limited to 1.75%
37 of an animal’s body weight and not more than 20 lbs. per day, and removes sprout roots
38 prior to feeding and is fed solely during the non-grazing season.
39

40 *Allowed but Restricted Grain-Free Mineral and Vitamin Nutrients*
41

42 A weaned animal’s diet may be supplemented by allowed nutrient vitamins and mineral
43 materials provided the material is:
44

45 **G.** Required to maintain animal, rumen and nutritional health;

46 **H.** Free of grains and grain carriers;

1 I. Permitted in organic production.

2
3 *Limited Exceptions to this Standard's Livestock Diet Composition Requirements*

4
5 J. Pre-Weaned Animals—Pre-weaned ruminant animals may be fed milk.

6 K. Weaned Animals--Temporary Grain Allowance--Weaned animals under six
7 months of age may be fed grain on a non-routine basis until December 31, 2020, provided
8 that a certified operation has not been previously certified to this Standard or another
9 grass-fed standard and maintains a written plan for how grain feeding will be terminated.

10 L. All Animals--Temporary Health and Welfare Exception— Upon a documented
11 determination that an animal's health is compromised, an operation may temporarily
12 disregard the volume restrictions on Grain-Free supplemental feedstuffs described in the
13 "Allowed but Restricted Grain-Free Feedstuffs" section, above until the animal's health is
14 restored. This exception is subject to several restrictions and strict recordkeeping
15 requirements set forth in this Program's Policy Manual.

16
17 *Prohibited Feed, Feeding Practices—Disqualification of Animals*

18
19 M. Grain Prohibition--All grains and grain by-products (including but not limited to
20 corn, soybean, small grains and distillers grain), concentrates, meals, pelleted feed, and
21 any other non-forage based feedstuff not expressly allowed under this Program are
22 prohibited.

23 N. Disqualification of Animals--any animal intentionally fed disallowed feedstuffs or
24 that inadvertently receives more than *de minimis* amounts of prohibited feedstuffs or feed
25 products is permanently disqualified from this program.

26 O. Notice of Disqualification—If an animal receives disqualifying feed a certified
27 operation has 10 calendar days to provide notice to the certifying body.

28 P. National Organic Program Variances—Any variances from the grazing
29 requirements of the National Organic Program may be relied upon by a certified operation
30 under this standard and certified operations may petition this Program for variances on
31 grounds specified in this Program's Policy Manual.

32
33 VI. **Exclusion of Milk from Disqualified Animals**--A disqualified animal and its milk may
34 not be sold, labeled or represented as certified under this Program; and

35
36 A. *Record of Disposition of Excluded Milk*—the operation shall document measures
37 to ensure that a disqualified animal's milk does not enter the stream of commerce under
38 this Program, on terms set forth more fully in this Program's Policy Manual.

39
40 VII. **Livestock Healthcare Requirements**-- To maintain certification under this Standard, a
41 certified operation shall,

42
43 A. Comply with all applicable livestock healthcare and living conditions
44 requirements of the National Organic Program; and

1 **B.** Participate in an animal welfare verified program that includes on-site inspections
2 and that is approved by this Program in accordance terms more fully set forth in this
3 Program’s Policy Manual.

4 **C.** Prohibited Healthcare Practices—A certified operation shall never withhold
5 prohibited or restricted feed sources, or prohibited or restricted medications, to maintain
6 certification status of an animal under this Program.

7
8 **VIII. Livestock Living Conditions**—To maintain certification under this Standard, an
9 operation shall provide living conditions in accord with its certification under the National
10 Organic Program, provided that, in no case shall bedding include prohibited feed products under
11 this Standard.

12
13 **IX. Pasture Management Plan**—Each operation certified to this Standard must submit and
14 maintain a Pasture Management Plan that meets all applicable requirements of the National
15 Organic Program and includes practices that;

16
17 **A.** Complies with part IV of this standard,

18 **B.** Allows for pasture rest and regrowth, and

19 **C.** Prevents overgrazing.

20
21 **X. Recordkeeping—Production and Handling Operations**

22
23 **A.** *A certified livestock production operation* must maintain and possess current
24 records demonstrating the production, harvesting and handling of products that are
25 intended to be sold, labeled or represented as certified Grass-Fed organic are in full
26 compliance with this Standard. The specific provisions governing recordkeeping are more
27 fully explained in this Program’s Policy Manual.

28 **B.** *A certified handling operation* must maintain and possess current records
29 demonstrating the handling of certified products that are intended to be sold, labeled or
30 represented as certified Grass-Fed organic are in full compliance with this Standard. The
31 specific provisions governing recordkeeping are more fully set forth in this Program’s
32 Policy Manual.

33
34 **XI. Handling of Certified Products**—Any handling operation, or portion thereof, that
35 handles agricultural products certified under this Standard shall maintain a Handling System Plan
36 and a Standard Operating Procedure that sets forth the practice standards by which products
37 certified to this Standard are properly handled, segregated and not commingled with products not
38 certified to this Standard.

39
40 **XII. Composition and Labeling of Certified Products**—Dairy products certified to this
41 Standard shall be labeled “Certified Grass-Fed Organic Dairy [product]” and in general accord
42 with the compositional percentages and labeling requirements of the National Organic Program
43 described in 7 CFR Part 205, Subpart D, and any additional labeling guidance set forth in this
44 Program’s Policy Manual, provided that,

1 **A.** Composition of Multi-Ingredient Products (prohibition on mixing)--Mixing
2 “Certified Grass-Fed Organic” dairy ingredients in a multi-ingredient product with dairy
3 ingredients not certified to this Standard is prohibited.
4

5 **XIII. Mandatory Use of This Program’s Seal**--Agricultural products in packages described in
6 the National Organic Program at 7 CFR §205.301 and §205.307 shall bear the seal of this
7 Program and may bear the seal of the applicable accredited certifying body, or otherwise identify
8 the certifying body, and in accord with the terms set forth in this Program’s Policy Manual.
9

10 **A.** A fee for use of the seal shall be assessed and collected from each certified
11 operation that uses the seal on product packaging, labeling or point of sale information,
12 except, certified operations selling less than \$15,000 per annum of combined products
13 certified to this program’s meat or dairy standard shall be excepted from the assessment
14 and collection of a seal-use fee.
15

16 **XIV. Administrative Matters—Certifying Body Accreditation, Compliance Matters,**
17 **Complaints, Appeals, Petitions**
18

19 **A.** The following subjects are treated in full in this Program’s Policy Manual-

- 20
- 21 1. Compliance, Complaints and Appeals of adverse actions;
- 22 2. Accreditation of Certifying Bodies;
- 23 3. Petitions for Variances or Amendments to Existing Standards—
 - 24 a) Any certified operation may petition the Program to accept a variance on
25 a case by case basis, or petition for an amendment to an existing
26 standard, or petition for adoption of a new standard.
 - 27 b) Procedures for petitioning are set forth in this Program’s Policy Manual.
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APPENDIX A-DEFINITIONS

1. *Boot stage.* Part of the flowering phase of plant growth, defined as the time when the seedhead emerges from the sheath of the flag leaf.
2. *Brassicas.* A genus of plants in the mustard family (Brassicaceae). The members of the genus are informally known as cruciferous vegetables, cabbages, or mustard plants.
3. *Browse.* Leaf and twig growth of shrubs, woody vines, trees, cacti, and other non-herbaceous vegetation available for animal consumption.
4. *Commercially unavailable.* A grass-fed organic dairy animal is commercially unavailable for purchase whenever an operation certified to this Standard demonstrates to the certifying agent that it cannot timely obtain an animal with the operation’s animal attributes.
5. *Dairy livestock production operation.* A certified grass-fed organic operation with a milking parlor where a least one lactating animal is milked.
6. *De Minimis.* An amount or action that is below the threshold of programmatic concern.
7. *Farm Herd List.* A list of all ruminant animals at the certified operation that is routinely updated by the certified operation.
8. *Forage cubes or pellets.* Dessicated and compressed forages *Forbs.* Flowering plants that are not grasses or sedges. Some examples include clovers, alfalfa, and milkweed.
9. *Grass(es).* Graminoids, monocotyledonous plants with narrow leaves growing from the base *Legumes.* Plants of the pea or pulse family, many of which are recognized for their ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen in the soil.
10. *Operation’s animal attributes.* A list of attributes of the animals at the operation that are set forth in the Application and may include but is not limited to, breed, age, health, replacement transport time, body score, disease/illness profile, source location, performance history, etc.
11. *Small grains/cereal.* A cultivated plant that produces seeds that come from grasses such as wheat, millet, rice, barley, oats, rye, triticale, flax and sorghum.