

Issues to Resolve: Suggested Questions to Certifiers

Certifier: Baystate Organic Certifiers
Roundtable Participant: Eric Hanson
Main Contact Person (if different): Eric Hanson
Phone: 401-835-2210 / ehanson@baystateorganic.org
Website: <https://baystateorganic.org/>
Farm application packet: <https://baystateorganic.org/certification/for-growers/for-growers-forms/>
Handler application packet: <https://baystateorganic.org/certification/for-processors/for-processors-forms/>

1. How does confidentiality and information sharing work between NJDA and new agency?
NJDA has indicated they will not share additional information with other ACA's. They have shared limited contact information, but referred ACAs to the OID.
2. Fees- How transparent is certifier's Fee Schedule?
Our fee sheet is available on our website and also attached to this questionnaire.
3. Fees – Are they flat or is there a relationship to size of operation, time spent on review?
Our fees are based on the gross organic sales per years of each operation. The fee is fixed, based on the gross value of products produced. One fee and done... no gouging, or hidden fees, no surprises.
4. Fees – Does the fee schedule include inspection costs and are those charges flat or does it depend on inspector time on site, hotel costs, miles driven etc.?
Baystate does not charge inspection fees.
5. Do you have other clients in NJ? Can you provide their names as references?
We currently certify approximately 50 operations in NJ, and as of 1/26/22 we have an additional 6 new applications in process with more coming.
6. Inspectors – Does certifier have some relatively local to NJ?
Yes, we have inspectors throughout NJ, PA, MD, and the entire northeast which will provide folks with locally knowledgeable inspectors. However, remember, we do not charge for our inspections, so operations do not pay any travel costs for inspections.
7. Is the agency non-profit, for profit or a state agency?
Baystate is a non-profit.
8. What kind of client services do you provide: Will each client have a specific person to deal with or can anyone on your staff provide service/answer questions for anyone?
Both! Typically, our operations will have a familiar face that typically reviews their OSPs, renewals, updates, etc. However, all employees are available at all times, so operation can always reach someone as needed.

9. What is your Materials Review Process (i.e. – rely on OMRI or WSDA?, Use OMRI & also publish own list, own list, shared list w/ other certifiers)?

Baystate utilizes a number of materials lists from OMRI, WSDA, PCO, NOFA-MA Bulk Order, CA Dept of Ag, etc. However, we also have a materials review scientist on staff who heads a materials team to review new materials for our operations, free of charge.

10. How do you disseminate information on successfully reviewed materials?

Only the OMRI and WSDA lists are public at this time. PCO and Ca Dept of Ag requires a purchase contact that does not permit us to disseminate their lists. Our operations feel comfortable calling or emailing us about a materials question, and receiving an immediate response.

11. Is your annual update a long form, a summary of changes or editing of existing OSP?

Editing of existing OSP. Renewal packets are sent to our operations 90-days prior to their renewal deadline. Operations make any necessary changes and send them back. We then start the renewal process automatically.

12. Are there initial testing requirements of new clients such as soil & water and if so, who bears the cost?

Nope.

13. Electronic Capabilities – are there minimum software requirements? Are handwritten paper submissions OK?

We do not mandate specific software. We cater to our operations' preferences on how to submit documents and information. Most operations use email or a free file sharing service such as DropBox, but we welcome whatever is easiest for the operation.

14. If you have software requirements, does your staff provide support services during initial application process and beyond?

We do not mandate specific software or platforms, but we will help however necessary.

15. Do you offer add-on certification services such as Certified Humane, Regenerative etc.?

100% Grass-Fed Certification

16. Do you offer International Certification Services?

We offer review and approval of exports based on all current international equivalency arrangements, or otherwise. We do not perform certification services to operations located outside of the United States.

17. Any other information you would like potential clients to know about your agency.

-instant/ongoing access to Baystate staff with immediate replies and attention

-no secretaries, phone trees, automated responses, or answering services

-straight-forward, easy to decipher, and simple fee structure... one annual fee and done

-no inspection costs, no additional review costs (new product, new labels, materials, etc.)

-free applications, forms, review documents, etc.