



Notification: 1905
Date: 10th December 2019
Category: Certification Body and Certified Operator Guidance
Title: Fire retardant chemicals and organic certification

Background

The summer of 2019 has seen bushfires in many areas of Australia. Fire-fighting efforts are facilitated by the use of a range of fire retardant chemicals. Many of these chemicals are prohibited inputs according to the Australian Certified Organic Standard 2019, and the National Standard for Organic and Bio-dynamic Produce 3.7.

The intentional application of prohibited inputs on to certified organic land areas can lead to total loss of certification, and standard timeframes for conversion of land back to certified organic status normally apply. However, in some instances, timeframes for re-certification can be reduced, as detailed below.

Relevant sections of the Standards

Section 4.7.24 of the Australian Certified Organic Standard 2019 states: In the case of environmental and unforeseen contamination of lands, or in instances of mandatory treatment via government mandated regulation, minimum time periods for recertification shall be 12 months, combined with residue testing that assures no contaminants remain in the areas so affected. The switching of lands in and out of certification on an ongoing basis shall not be allowed as outlined in 3.1.17, except in cases of state or government mandated requirements.”

The National Standard for Organic and Bio-Dynamic Produce (3.7) also states:

1.1.18: In case of reasonable suspicion of land and / or product contamination, the certified operator shall advise their certification organisation and provide all factual evidence to support this.

1.1.9: Where product has been contaminated with non-permitted substances as a result of factors beyond the control of the certified operator, then:





-chemical residue tests of the product must register below 10% of the Maximum Residue Limit before the product can be sold as in- conversion, organic or bio-dynamic...”

What to do if you think your land or produce have been affected.

If a Certified In Conversion, or Certified Organic operator is aware that a certified area of their land may have been treated with a chemical fire retardant, notification should be made to their certification body.

Decertification of a crop, livestock, or land area and/or chemical residue testing may be required, at the discretion of your certifier.

While such action may impact negatively on operators already potentially devastated by fire, the integrity of our organic produce, and protection of our consumers, and our industry is paramount. We are confident that Australian Organic Limited’s licensed certification bodies will process such voluntarily notified unavoidable departures from certification requirements with utmost compassion, whilst ensuring integrity of produce is upheld.

We remind affected operators that all decisions made by certification bodies can be appealed, follow the certification bodies documented appeals processes, and furthermore that should any such appeal processes or outcomes not meet the satisfaction of the operator, that an appeal may also be made to the Scheme Owner – Australian Organic Ltd.

END

