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

3
4 **Standards for Meat Animal Production and 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 Meat Standard (“this Standard”) sets additional
18 requirements for organic meat 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 meat 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 Meat Production and Handling Operations**

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

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

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

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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; and
3. Provide Notice of any material change in the status of the operation or its animals to the certifying body during the certification cycle.

C. Certification Term--Certification to this Standard shall be twelve months and shall be presumed to be 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 or feed product(s) or received healthcare materials prohibited under the National Organic Program, or,
 - b) Failed otherwise to meet the requirements of organic certification or requirements of this Standard.

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

- A.** Compliant with 7 C.F.R. Section §205.236 and;
- B.** Born at that operation or an operation certified to this Standard and maintained under this Standard throughout its life, or;
- C.** Purchased from a certified Grass-Fed Organic meat or dairy operation, provided that a certified Grass-Fed dairy animal must meet the requirements of III (A) and (B) of this section to be an eligible meat animal under this Standard.
- D.** Confirmation---The certification body shall confirm the farm herd list meets the requirements of 7 C.F.R. §205.236 (c) and shall also confirm to a reasonable certainty that non-compliant animals are not sold or labeled as Grass-Fed Organic animals.

IV. Mandatory Grazing Requirements for Animals Older than Six Months-- To maintain certification under this Standard, in addition to compliance with all organic requirements a certified operation shall,

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

4 B. Provide not less than 60 percent of each animal’s dry matter intake (“DMI”) from
5 grazing, averaged throughout the grazing season.
6

7 **V. Livestock Diet—Allowed and Restricted Feedstuffs--** A weaned animal’s diet shall
8 consist solely of allowed and restricted feedstuffs.
9

10 *Allowed Feedstuffs*

11
12 A. Grazed forages comprised of annual and perennial grasses, legumes, forbs,
13 brassicas, and browse; and

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

16 C. Harvested forages and harvested vegetative-stage cereal grain crops (corn in a
17 pre-tassel stage, soybeans prior to bloom; small and cereal grains prior to boot stage).
18

19 *Allowed but Restricted Grain-Free Feedstuffs*

20
21 A weaned animal’s diet may be supplemented when necessary to maintain nutritional
22 stability and optimal rumen welfare with the following plant-based feedstuffs,
23

24 D. Stored forage in cube or pellet form with a daily limit of not more than .05% of an
25 animal’s body weight; and

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

29 F. Forage grown in fodder sprout systems, provided consumption is limited to 1.75%
30 of an animal’s body weight and not more than 20 lbs. per day, and removes sprout roots
31 prior to feeding and is fed solely during the non-grazing season.
32

33 *Allowed but Restricted Grain-Free Mineral and Vitamin Nutrients*

34
35 A weaned animal’s diet may be supplemented by nutrient vitamins and mineral materials
36 provided the material is:
37

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

39 H. Free of grains and grain carriers;

40 I. Permitted in organic production; and
41

42 *Limited Exceptions to this Standard’s Livestock Diet Composition Requirements*

43
44 J. Pre-Weaned Animals—Pre-weaned animals may be fed milk.
45

1 **K. All Animals--Temporary Health and Welfare Exception**—Upon a documented
2 determination that an animal’s health is compromised, an operation may temporarily
3 disregard the volume restrictions on Grain-Free supplemental feedstuffs described in the
4 “Allowed but Restricted Grain-Free Feedstuffs” section above until the animal’s health is
5 restored. This exception is subject to several restrictions and strict recordkeeping
6 requirements set forth in this Program’s Policy Manual.
7

8 ***Prohibited Feed, Feeding Practices—Disqualification of Animals***
9

10 **L. Grain Prohibition**--All grains and grain by-products (including but not limited to
11 corn, soybean, small grains and distillers grain), concentrates, meals, pelleted feed, and
12 any other non-forage based feedstuff not expressly allowed under this Program are
13 prohibited.

14 **M. Disqualification of Animals**--any animal intentionally fed disallowed feedstuffs or
15 that inadvertently receives more than *de minimis* amounts of prohibited feedstuffs or feed
16 products is permanently disqualified from this program.

17 **N. Notice of Disqualification**—If an animal receives disqualifying feed a certified
18 operation has 10 calendar days to provide notice to the certifying body.
19

20 **O. National Organic Program Variances**—Any variances from the grazing
21 requirements of the National Organic Program may be relied upon by a certified
22 operation under this standard and certified operations may petition this Program for
23 variances on grounds specified in this Program’s Policy Manual.
24

25 **VI. Exclusion of Meat from Disqualified Animals**--A disqualified animal may not be sold,
26 labeled or represented as certified under this Program; and
27

28 **A. *Record of Disposition of Meat from Excluded Animal***—the operation shall
29 document measures to ensure that meat from a disqualified animal does not enter the
30 stream of commerce under this Program, on terms set forth more fully in this Program’s
31 Policy Manual.
32

33 **VII. Livestock Healthcare Requirements**-- To maintain certification under this Standard, a
34 certified operation shall,
35

36 **A.** Comply with all applicable livestock healthcare and living conditions
37 requirements of the National Organic Program; and

38 **B.** Participate in an animal welfare verified program that includes on-site inspections
39 and that is approved by this Program beginning in 2020.

40 **C. Prohibited Healthcare Practices**—A certified operation shall never withhold
41 prohibited or restricted feed sources, or prohibited or restricted medications, to maintain
42 the certification status of an animal under this Program.
43

44 **VIII. Livestock Living Conditions**—To maintain certification under this Standard, an
45 operation shall provide living conditions in compliance with its certification under the National

1 Organic Program, provided that, in no case shall bedding include prohibited feed products under
2 this Standard.

3
4 **IX. Pasture Management Plan**---Each operation certified to this Standard must submit and
5 maintain a Pasture Management Plan that meets all applicable requirements of the National
6 Organic Program. A Pasture Management Plan must include practices that:

- 7
8 A. Complies with part IV of this standard;
9 B. Allows for pasture rest and regrowth, and
10 C. Prevents overgrazing.

11
12 **X. Recordkeeping—Production and Handling Operations**

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14 A. *A certified livestock production operation* must maintain and possess current
15 records demonstrating the production, harvesting and handling of products that are
16 intended to be sold, labeled or represented as certified Grass-Fed organic are in full
17 compliance with this Standard. The specific provisions governing recordkeeping are
18 more fully set forth in this Program’s Policy Manual.

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

24
25 **XI. Handling of Certified Products**--Any handling operation, or portion thereof, that
26 handles agricultural products certified under this Standard shall maintain a Handling System Plan
27 with practice standards by which products certified to this Standard are properly handled,
28 segregated and not commingled with products that are not certified to this Standard.

29
30 **XII. Composition and Labeling of Certified Products**--Agricultural products certified to
31 this Standard shall be labeled “Certified Grass-Fed Organic [product class] and in general accord
32 with the compositional percentages and labeling requirements of the National Organic Program
33 described in 7 CFR Part 205, Subpart D, and the labeling guidance set forth in this Program’s
34 Policy Manual, provided that,

- 35 A. Composition of Multi-Ingredient Products (Prohibition on Mixing) --In no case
36 shall a multi-ingredient product combine “Certified Grass-Fed Organic [product class]”
37 ingredients and non- grass fed certified forms of the same ingredient.

38
39 **XIII. Mandatory Use of This Program’s Seal**--Agricultural products in packages described in
40 the National Organic Program at 7 CFR §205.301 and §205.307 shall bear the seal of this
41 Program and may bear the seal of the applicable accredited certifying body, or otherwise identify
42 the certifying body, and in accord with the terms set forth in this Program’s Policy Manual.

- 43
44 A. A fee for use of the seal shall be assessed and collected from each certified
45 operation that uses the seal on product packaging, labeling or point of sale information,
46 except, certified operations selling less than \$15,000 per annum of combined products

1 certified to this program's meat or dairy standard shall be excepted from the assessment
2 and collection of a seal-use fee.
3
4

5 **XIV. Administrative Matters—Certifying Body Accreditation, Compliance Matters,**
6 **Complaints, Appeals, and Petitions**
7

8 **A.** The following subjects are treated in full in this Program's Policy Manual-
9

- 10 1. Compliance, Complaints and Appeals of adverse actions;
- 11 2. Accreditation of Certifying Bodies;
- 12 3. Petitions for Variances or Amendments to Existing Standards—
 - 13 a) Any certified operation may petition the Program to accept a variance on
14 a case by case basis, or petition for an amendment to an existing
15 standard, or petition for adoption of a new standard.
 - 16 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. *Meat livestock production operation.* An operation that raises certified Grass-Fed Organic livestock under the requirements of this Standard.
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.
9. *Grass(es).* Graminoids, monocotyledonous plants with narrow leaves growing from the base.
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.