

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD  
NEW JERSEY**

**TRANSITION TO ORGANIC PRODUCTION  
*INTERIM*  
Code 789**

**Definition**

Utilizing agricultural management strategies while transitioning from conventional to organic farming techniques.

**Purpose**

This interim practice is applied as part of a resource management system to support the following purpose:

- minimize negative impacts of agricultural production on soil resources, water resources, air resources, plant resources, animal resources and/or humans while transitioning to organic production, a production system that responds to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity.

**Conditions Where Practice Applies**

This practice applies where: (1) wherever the farming operation transitions to organic production; (2) all practice components necessary to make a complete system are specified; (3) natural resources are adequate to properly follow an organic production system; and (4) This standard does not apply to organic animal production. It does apply to lands on which these animals are raised.

**Criteria****General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes**

A transition to organic production plan shall be developed. This plan may be a component of an overall conservation plan or stand alone transition to organic agriculture plan to cover a period of 3 years. Farms must adhere to the National Organic Standards. This requirement includes operating under an organic system plan approved by an accredited certifying agent and using materials in accordance with the National List of Allowed Synthetic and Prohibited Non-organic Substances (National List). All methods of organic production must comply with Federal, State, and local regulations, including the Organic Food Production Act of 1990, as amended (7 U.S.C. 6501 et seq.), and regulations with the National Organic Program final rule (7 CFR Part 205).

Organically produced food cannot be produced using excluded methods, sewage sludge, or ionizing radiation.

Soil fertility and crop nutrients will be managed through tillage and cultivation practices, crop rotations and cover crops, supplemented with animal and crop waste materials and allowed synthetic materials.

Crop pests, weeds, and diseases will be controlled primarily through management practices including physical, mechanical, and biological controls. Substances approved for use on the National List may be used.

An appropriate set of mitigation techniques must be designed and implemented to reduce environmental risks of transition to organic production management activities in accordance with quality criteria in the local Field Office Technical Guide. Mitigation techniques include practices like filter strips and crop rotation, and management techniques like nutrient application method and timing.

All methods of transition to organic production must be integrated with other components of the conservation plan.

Cultural resources will be considered when planning this practice. This practice has the potential to adversely affect National Register listed or eligible (significant) cultural resources. Compliance with GM 420, Part 401 is required during planning, application and maintenance.

#### **Additional Criteria to Protect Soil Resources**

In conjunction with a conservation plan, the number, sequence and timing of tillage operations shall be managed to maintain soil quality and maintain soil loss at or below the soil loss tolerance (T) or any other planned soil loss objective.

Farms shall be encouraged to pay special attention to techniques that may impact soil quality especially those that increase

organic matter and maintain protective cover.

#### **Additional Criteria to Protect Water Resources**

The number, sequence and timing of tillage operations shall be managed in conjunction with other sediment control tactics and practices, in order to minimize sediment losses to nearby surface water bodies.

Livestock shall be managed to minimize impact to nearby surface water bodies.

#### **Additional Criteria to Protect Air Resources**

Farms shall be encouraged to pay special attention when using allowed synthetic substances for minimizing volatilization and drift that may impact non-target plants, animals and humans.

Farms shall be encouraged to pay special attention with transitional techniques to reduce the amount of dust and livestock odor that may impact the natural resources and surrounding community.

#### **Additional Criteria to Protect Plant Resources**

Farms shall be encouraged to pay special attention to substance label instructions including those directed at:

- Preventing misdirected pest management control measures that negatively impact plants.
- Appropriate climatic conditions, crop stage, soil moisture, pH and organic matter in order to protect plant health.
- Limiting substance residues in soil that can carry over and harm subsequent crops.

### **Additional Criteria to Protect Animal Resources**

Farms shall be encouraged to pay special attention to label instructions that minimize negative impacts on animals.

### **Additional Criteria to Protect Humans**

Farms shall be encouraged to pay special attention to substance label instructions that minimize negative impacts on humans.

### **Considerations**

The following methods and principles should be considered:

- Biological controls, such as insect predators and pathogens, can suppress pest populations
- Cultural controls, such as crop rotation, tillage and mowing, can make the environment less suitable for pest survival.
- Allowed synthetic substance controls should be used judiciously in order to minimize environmental risk and pest resistance.
- Livestock management systems such as rotational grazing, grass-based dairying, can reduce the need for synthetic substance controls and confinement based animal waste management systems.
- Select plant varieties that have resistance or tolerance to insects and disease to lessen the use of pesticide.
- Create habitats for beneficial insects by increasing plant diversity, planting flowering plants in the families Compositae (daisy), Labiatae (mint), and Umbelliferae (dill, Queen Anne's Lace), improving the spatial layout (increasing interspersions) of beneficial plants, and the planting of trap crops around the field perimeter.

### **Plans and Specifications**

The transition to organic production plan shall be prepared in accordance with the criteria of this standard and in keeping with standards for individual system components and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose.

As a minimum, the transition to organic production component of a conservation plan shall be no less than 3 years:

- Plan map and soil map of managed fields, if applicable (use RMS plan maps if available)
- List of all practices and procedures
- Organic materials used
- Monitoring procedures
- Comprehensive record keeping system
- Location of sensitive resources and setbacks, if applicable (use RMS plan maps if available)
- Environmental risk analysis, with approved tools and/or procedures, for probable pest management recommendations by crop (if applicable) and pest.
- Interpretation of the environmental risk analysis and identification of appropriate mitigation practices and techniques.
- Operation and maintenance requirements.

Design criteria for individual components shall be according to standards in the New Jersey Field Office Technical Guide.

### **Operation and Maintenance**

The transition to organic production component of a conservation plan shall include appropriate operation and maintenance items for the client. These may include:

- Review and update the plan periodically in order to incorporate new technology and follow the Organic Food Production Act of 1990, as amended (7 U.S.C. 6501 et seq.), and regulations with the National Organic Program final rule (7 CFR Part 205).
- Maintain mitigation techniques identified in the plan in order to ensure continued effectiveness.