

## Mendocino Renegade Standards - 2003

The standards for the Mendocino Renegade (MR) label differ substantially from the USDA organic standards which have already been corrupted less than four months after adoption, making the term "organic", now under government control, meaningless. This we forecasted two years ago when we started, and we expect the continued degradation of organics that so many worked so long to establish.

Our standards are meant to be living documents that change periodically to reflect improving small farm practices by local organic and biodynamic farmers.

### ORGANIC PRACTICES

Organic farmers realize that the soil is a living entity and that organic practices feed the soil which in turn feed the plant. Organic farming is a management intensive, not a materials intensive, technology; materials are a supplementary tool in a balanced farm management program. Organic farmers attempt to understand and work in harmony with the natural biological systems on the farm, not to override them with chemicals (even naturally derived ones). They strive to develop cultural and biological means of crop nutrition and protection that are balanced, sustainable, and resilient.

#### Basic Concepts

The following are some of the concepts and practices that are fundamental to organic production and should be the backbone of a certified grower's farming system. Rotations and diversification are key principles in an ecological farming system.

In an annual cropping system:

- Legumes used as green manures, cover crops or permanent understory improve fertility;
- Allelopathic crops that exude toxins from their roots can suppress weeds and insect pests;
- Diversity of crops in both time and space prevents insect and disease buildups and gives a grower a hedge against poor market conditions for any one crop.

In a perennial or permaculture system:

- Cover crops are used to hold the soil, improve fertility and provide habitat for beneficial insects;
- A diversity of plants including polycultures, hedgerows and windbreaks help ensure that no one factor such as a pest or a weed can throw the system off balance.

Pest-free and weed-free fields are neither always possible nor economically and ecologically desirable. Learning the thresholds for tolerable levels of weeds, insects, birds and rodents takes time and experience and is an on-going process.

Varietal selection should look beyond maximum potential yield and consider insect and disease resistance, nutritional quality, flavor and positive response to lower inputs of nutrients and water.

Pest problems can be minimized by proper timing of plantings and the use of trap crops to attract pests and beneficials alike.

Materials are not used as the primary management strategy, but rather as an aid to resolving a specific problem until the farm system can be brought back into balance.

Livestock management is based on good nutrition, animal stress reduction, preventative medicine and other means not dependent on drugs or pesticides.

Livestock breeding selects for disease resistance.

### Recommended Practices

The following list offers guidance to growers interested in organic practices. It is not intended to be comprehensive.

- NITROGEN: Green manures and leguminous cover crops; composted animal manures; bacterial inoculants for soil, legumes and compost; soy, cottonseed and vegetable meal; fish or feather meal; and foliar sprays in conjunction with a soil building program.
- DISEASE MANAGEMENT: Resistant varieties; sanitation; cultural practices that favor the crop, hinder the pathogen, and create an environment unfavorable for disease development; biological control agents; and least toxic chemicals derived from natural sources.
- INSECT MANAGEMENT: Preventive management such as use of resistant varieties, timing to avoid cycles of pest emergence, intercropping, rotations, balanced plant nutrition, herbal sprays, rock powders, diatomaceous earth, dormant oils, parasitic nematodes, introduction of predators, habitat enhancement to encourage beneficial predators, sticky traps, microbial and viral diseases.
- PHOSPHORUS: Composted manures high in phosphorus (poultry, guano); colloidal, soft and hard rock phosphate; mycorrhizae to activate rock phosphate.
- POTASSIUM: Cover crops that activate potassium; mined granite, greensand, basalt, feldspar, langbeinite and potassium sulfate.
- SECONDARY MINERALS (Calcium Magnesium and Sulfur): Kelp and seaweed extracts and powders; dolomite, gypsum, keiserite, langbeinite, limestone, potassium sulfate and rock phosphate from mined sources; oyster, clam, lobster and crab shells; composts made from a variety of materials.
- MICRONUTRIENTS: Liquid or powdered seaweed extract, kelp meal, rock powders, chelates made with natural chelating agents.
- GROWTH PROMOTERS, ACTIVATORS AND INOCULANTS: Herbal preparations, seaweed extract, Rhizobial inoculants, Bio-dynamic preparations, blue-green algae, humates, naturally occurring microbes.
- WEED MANAGEMENT: Rotations with competitive cover crops, timely mowing or cultivation, mulching with organic materials, living mulches, weeder geese, grazing, careful sanitation to prevent introduction of weed seeds.
- VERTEBRATE MANAGEMENT: Traps, repellent crops, sound.
- POST-HARVEST HANDLING: Good sanitation, refrigeration, pheromone trapping.
- LIVESTOCK HEALTH: See Livestock Standards in Section 5.

- MECHANICAL AND CULTURAL CONTROLS: The following practices are considered mechanical and cultural, and are therefore allowed for use in MENDOCINO RENEGADE certified production. They must not be used in conjunction with prohibited materials.

1. Allelopathic Crops. Balloons.
2. Barriers.
3. Bird Traps and Netting. Cover Crops.
4. Crop Rotation. Cultivation. Dogs and Other Guard Animals. Dust Suppression.
5. Electrical Devices. Explosive Devices.
6. Flaming. Grazing. Green Manures.
7. Guns (Lead Shot Discouraged). Hand Removal of Insects. Intercropping.
8. Light.
9. Nitrogen Fixing Crops. Noise.
10. Orchard Heaters. Predators.
11. Resistant Varieties. Rodent Traps. Row Covers. Sanitary Practices. Smother Crops. Solarization. Thermal Weed Control. Traps.
12. Trap Crops.
13. Weeder Geese and Other Fowl.
14. Wind Machines.

#### DRIFT POLICY

Drift is the movement of a material from the intended target. Drift may occur by air, water, soil movement or by other mechanisms.

Standard. MENDOCINO RENEGADE may require an inspection and residue analysis based on allegations of drift contamination. MENDOCINO RENEGADE does not automatically decertify land or crop for drift contamination. However, MENDOCINO RENEGADE may decertify a crop based on the results of a drift investigation.

Notification. It is the MENDOCINO RENEGADE grower's responsibility to notify the Review Committee certification chair or the statewide office as soon as s/he or anyone under his/her management is aware of prohibited material drift on to any acreage or crop in the MENDOCINO RENEGADE certification program. MENDOCINO RENEGADE's intention is to meet state and federal laws regarding drift contamination, to protect the grower from false allegations of contaminated product, and to support the grower in principle should s/he seek restitution from an offending party.

Required Information: In cases of potential drift contamination, MENDOCINO RENEGADE seeks the following information: identification of the affected crop, the projected date(s) of harvest, a description of the exact area affected, the time and date of material application, identification of the substance, identification of the material applicator, whether the grower wants confidential treatment of this incident, a list of who, such as the agricultural commissioner or buyer of the product, has been informed about the incident. This information as well as any residue testing results and inspection report information may be held confidential by MENDOCINO RENEGADE.

#### BOUNDARIES AND BUFFER ZONES

The boundaries of land in the certification program must be clearly and unambiguously marked by permanent physical objects (e.g., roads, fences, streams, hedgerows, etc.). The boundaries must also be explicitly described on the map of the parcel. Clearly marked boundaries are necessary so that there is no doubt by MENDOCINO RENEGADE certification personnel, neighbors, farm employees, contractors, government officials, and the farmer where the certified acreage begins and ends.

Buffer zones are sometimes necessary to protect certified crops from being contaminated. Given the widespread use of toxic substances, prevention of contamination from sources beyond the farmer's control may not always be possible. In view of this, buffer zones must be determined as appropriate and practical in the specific situation. In cases where there is any concern about the possibility of contamination from adjacent areas, a minimum buffer zone of 25 feet is required from the dripline of the crop in the program to the potentially contaminated adjacent area. This zone should be planted in some type of windbreak, or with a "trap crop" that is not sold as MENDOCINO RENEGADE Certified. This minimum buffer applies also to irrigation rights-of-way passing through certified lands. Larger distances may be required by the Review Committee. It is the grower's responsibility to demonstrate with harvest/sales records that buffer zone crops were not sold as certified organic unless the Review Committee granted the operation a specific exemption to this requirement in writing.

MENDOCINO RENEGADE recommends that growers with land in the program adjacent to land where neighbors apply MENDOCINO RENEGADE prohibited materials inform their neighbors in writing that their land is in the MENDOCINO RENEGADE certification program .

#### SEEDS AND TRANSPLANTS

The California Organic Foods Act requires the use of untreated seeds but permits the use of fungicide treated seed when untreated is not available. MENDOCINO RENEGADE's policy is that treated seed is permitted only when untreated seed is not available. If alternative sources of untreated seed are available, these should be used. Treated seed must be reported. Potato eyes are considered seeds. Seeds for sprouting must be organically grown.

All transplanted seedlings of annual crops must be organically grown. If the operation is not producing all of its own seedlings, the source of transplants must be documented and verified to be organically grown. It is the grower's responsibility to have seedling documentation available (either an affidavit or proof of certification from the seedling producer). MENDOCINO RENEGADE requires that growers using purchased MENDOCINO RENEGADE certified organic transplants provide a properly labeled invoice including the transplant grower's name, and a reference to MENDOCINO RENEGADE certification. Sweet potato slips are considered transplants. Growth promoters and vitamins used in seedling production must not be synthetically compounded. All annual transplants must be certified organic.

Transplants of perennial crops must be grown according to MENDOCINO RENEGADE growing standards for at least 12 months prior to the appearance of flower buds in order that the crop may be sold as "organic." Review Committees may require adherence to organic standards for a period longer than 12 months.