



# CCOF

Organic Certification Trade Association Education & Outreach Political Advocacy

For Immediate Release

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## **CCOF Emphasizes Natural Resource Conservation in New Grower Organic System Plan**

**(May 21, 2010) Santa Cruz, CA** – CCOF, one of the nation’s oldest and largest organic certification agencies, is encouraging organic growers to improve their tracking of natural resource conservation efforts with the introduction of a new “Natural Resources” section to CCOF’s Organic System Plan (OSP). The OSP addition was designed to assist organic farmers with documenting on-farm practices that support biodiversity, maintain native ecological systems, and conserve natural resources.

The National Organic Program (NOP) defines Natural Resources as “the physical, hydrological, and biological features of an operation, including soil, water, wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife”. The NOP rules require farmers to use production practices that maintain or improve the natural resources of their operation.

CCOF mailed the new forms to all its certified organic growers, requesting they update their OSP to describe areas on their farm where they are actively maintaining or improving natural resources. The new section features primary conservation practices such as water management, wildlife habitat preservation and development, invasive species control, and natural resource planning and monitoring to better assist farmers in identifying their on-farm efforts.

“CCOF has always monitored natural resource management as part of the certification process,” says Robin Allan, CCOF Director of Grower and Livestock Certification. “The introduction of the new Natural Resource section will help farmers to give us more information on the specific methods they are using to preserve biodiversity on their land and will allow CCOF to assess their farm’s activities in this important area of organic production.”

The development of the new Natural Resources OSP section was greatly informed by a two-year CCOF inspection initiative that focused specifically on the issue of biodiversity. Through this initiative, CCOF inspectors ask certified operations a number of questions to help them identify and describe the riparian areas or other sensitive ecosystems, or wildlife habitats on their land and their activities to maintain and improve these natural resources.

These initiatives may also help farmers to save money. Beneficial insects, insectivorous birds and bats, raptors, and carnivorous predators thrive in wild ecosystems and help save billions of dollars nationwide that would otherwise be spent on damaging and expensive pest control methods.

To further aid growers in their efforts to document conservation practices, CCOF also sent to all growers a Biodiversity brochure developed by the Wild Farm Alliance (WFA) in partnership with the Community Alliance for Family Farms (CAFF). This is not the first time that CCOF and WFA have collaborated on a conservation initiative for organic producers. CCOF and WFA previously partnered to develop and test on-farm organic and biodiversity strategies as well as promote conservation guidelines for organic farming. Under this project, WFA developed biodiversity booklets for organic farmers and organic certification agencies in the United States, which provided guidelines and tools on how to implement biodiversity practices into ongoing organic activities. Subsequently, the WFA biodiversity guidelines were accepted by the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) and integrated into their model organic certification application.

“Organic agriculture aims to provide biologically diverse habitats that foster pollination and pest control; protect water quality; and support native animals and plants,” explains Jake Lewin, CCOF Chief Certification Officer. “CCOF’s goal is to be at the forefront of improvements and developments in support of natural resource conservation best practices in organic agriculture. CCOF is taking this opportunity to tackle this complicated subject and move the implementation of these concepts forward in the organic certification process. The work of the Wild Farm Alliance was instrumental in encouraging CCOF and providing valuable resources to make this possible.”

For more information on the new Natural Resources Section of the OSP, visit [www.ccof.org/biodiversity.php](http://www.ccof.org/biodiversity.php)

#### About CCOF

*CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers), a nonprofit organization, was founded in 1973 and is one of the nation’s oldest and largest third-party organic certifying agencies. CCOF certifies, educates, advocates and promotes organic through:*

- *A premier organic certification program for growers, processors, handlers, and retailers.*
- *Programs to increase awareness of and demand for certified organic products and to expand public support for organic agriculture.*
- *Advocacy for governmental policies that protect and encourage organic agriculture.*

For further information on CCOF visit: [www.ccof.org](http://www.ccof.org)

#### About the Wild Farm Alliance

*The Wild Farm Alliance was established by a national group of wildlands proponents and ecological farming advocates who share a concern for the land and its wild and human inhabitants. Their mission is to promote a healthy, viable agriculture that helps protect and restore wild Nature. WFA is working to educate growers and certifiers on biodiversity issues on organic farms and have these issues integrated into US National Organic Standards. For more information on the Wild Farm Alliance visit: [www.wildfarmalliance.org](http://www.wildfarmalliance.org)*