Prepared by
NSF International

Recommended for Adoption by
The Regenerative Organic Alliance Board

Revision History:

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<tr>
<td>Version 1 - For Pilot Use</td>
<td>January 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version 2 - For Pilot Use</td>
<td>April 2019</td>
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The Regenerative Organic Alliance (ROA) is responsible for the Participant Handbook and reserves the right to update this document at its sole discretion at any time. It is the user’s responsibility to ensure that they are using the most recent version of these requirements. The definitive version is maintained at [www.regenorganic.org](http://www.regenorganic.org).

Published by

NSF International
P.O. Box 130140, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48113-0140, USA

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## Resources

Once you decide to begin your journey to regenerative certification, the following resources can provide guidance. These documents are available at the Regenerative Organic Alliance website at [www.regenorganic.org](http://www.regenorganic.org). For additional questions, please contact [info@regenorganic.org](mailto:info@regenorganic.org).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROC Framework</td>
<td>The full framework and detailed requirements for the Regenerative Organic Certification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved Baseline Certifications</td>
<td>List of approved pillar-specific standards/certifications that meet the ROC baseline eligibility requirements, and the international organic standards recognized as NOP equivalent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equivalency Gap Analysis</td>
<td>Recognized standards and certifications that meet some requirements of the ROC standard. The equivalency analysis helps you understand how to leverage your existing certifications and identify gaps to meet the additional ROC requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Application Form (In Progress)</td>
<td>Complete this form when you are ready to apply for Regenerative Organic Certification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Approved Certification Bodies (In Progress)</td>
<td>Names and contact information for certification bodies approved to audit to ROC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil Sampling Guidelines</td>
<td>Details on the soil sampling requirements of the Soil Health pillar and guidance for finding a lab and conducting tests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain of Custody Requirements</td>
<td>Guidelines for maintaining and documenting appropriate chain of custody throughout the product supply chain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labeling Guidelines</td>
<td>Guidelines and requirements for product certification labelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication &amp; Marketing Guidelines (In Progress)</td>
<td>Guidance and requirements for communicating participation in ROC and farm or product certification status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant FAQs</td>
<td>Frequently asked questions regarding specific components of the framework, application process, auditing, and implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grievance Submittals Process (In Progress)</td>
<td>Process for submitting concerns, complaints, appeals, or reports of misuse of the ROC seal to the Regenerative Organic Alliance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.0 About the Regenerative Organic Alliance

The Regenerative Organic Alliance (ROA) is a coalition of like-minded farmers, ranchers, brands, non-profits, and other organizations who support the growth of regenerative agriculture and believe in the need for an add-on certification that leverages existing high-bar organic, animal welfare, and social fairness certifications, and includes additional regenerative requirements.

The ROA board is made up of experts in farming and ranching, land management, animal welfare, and worker fairness, and oversees the development, implementation, and maintenance of the Regenerative Organic Certification (ROC) program. View more details on the board members and ROC supporters at www.regenorganic.org.

1.2 Who is NSF International?

NSF International (NSF) serves as the Oversight Body for the ROC program and is responsible for approving Certification Bodies. Additionally, NSF serves as the scheme manager for the ROC program, which includes creating documentation, systems and processes to support the successful launch and implementation of the ROC program during the pilot phase and beyond.

2.0 About the Participant Handbook

This booklet provides potential Regenerative Organic Certification (ROC) participants with the tools to:

1) Determine if regenerative organic certification is right for you
2) Understand the requirements of the program and how to meet them
3) Get started on your journey to becoming certified

This guide is intended as an overview and introduction to the standard. Please find more information and detailed program guidelines at www.regenorganic.org. You can also contact info@regenorganic.org if you need further details.

For definitions and clarifications of key terms used by the framework, refer to the glossary at the end of this handbook.

What Is Regenerative Organic Agriculture?

Regenerative Organic (RO) farming practices support healthy soil, animals, and people to build resilient ecosystems and communities. By using RO practices like conservation tillage and cover cropping, RO farmers increase the organic matter in soils over time to replenish the land and sequester carbon from the atmosphere. On RO farms, animals are raised and slaughtered humanely, and workers are treated fairly and ethically.
3.0 What is the Regenerative Organic Certification?

Regenerative Organic Certification (ROC) is a holistic agriculture certification program that offers a practical solution to some of today’s biggest social and environmental problems. Regenerative agriculture provides a way to replenish soil and care for the animals and people that live and work on it.

The ROC consists of three pillars: Soil Health, Animal Welfare, and Social Fairness. Together, these pillars build upon and surpass the requirements of other certification programs in these areas by recognizing and promoting high-bar regenerative organic farming practices that support a healthy planet and a fair society.

- **Soil Health**
  - Builds Soil Organic Matter
  - Conservation Tillage
  - Cover Crops
  - Crop Rotations
  - No GMOs or Gene Editing
  - No Soilless Systems
  - No Synthetic Inputs
  - Promotes Biodiversity
  - Rotational Grazing

- **Animal Welfare**
  - Five Freedoms
    1. Freedom from discomfort
    2. Freedom from fear & distress
    3. Freedom from hunger
    4. Freedom from pain, injury or disease
    5. Freedom to express normal behavior
  - Grass-Fed / Pasture-Raised
  - Limited Transport
  - No CAFOs
  - Suitable Shelter

- **Social Fairness**
  - Capacity Building
  - Democratic Organizations
  - Fair Payments for Farmers
  - Freedom of Association
  - Good Working Conditions
  - Living Wages
  - Long Term Commitments
  - No Forced Labor
  - Transparency and Accountability

Additionally, the ROC program includes three levels (Bronze, Silver, and Gold) which allow participants to phase in more rigorous practices over time. Regenerative Organic Certified product claims are only allowed at the Silver and Gold levels. Refer to the ROC Framework for more detail on the specific practices required at each level.

- **The Bronze level** is the minimum certification for ROC. With fewer requirements than subsequent levels, ROC Bronze is the first step to help producers phase in more regenerative practices over time. The Bronze Level is not a seal, but a commitment to the journey to Regenerative.

- **Silver level certification** is the core level of ROC, demonstrating adoption of key regenerative practices.

- **Gold level represents** the highest bar for regenerative organic production across all three ROC pillars. Those who achieve ROC Gold are pioneering, model farmers.
4.0 Who can participate in the ROC Program?

4.1 Applicability

The ROC is a holistic standard that applies to producers of agricultural products—including plant or animal products for food, textile, or commodity use. Any company, regardless of size or geographic location, can participate in the program if they meet the eligibility requirements. *Certain growing methods, such as soilless practices, aquaponics/hydroponics, and container growing where crops are never integrated into a field are not eligible for ROC.*

Certification may be achieved by individual farms and ranches or by farm groups (e.g. co-ops) for all or a portion of their operations. Certain processors or manufacturers that handle certified product are subject to chain of custody and audit requirements. For products to be sold with the ROC Gold claim, certain processors may also be required to achieve ROC certification. However, for ROC Bronze and Silver levels only the farm or ranch is required to be certified to the ROC standard.

4.2 Baseline Requirements

The ROC framework requires participants to achieve certifications for each applicable ROC pillar as prerequisites for participation.

For the Soil Health pillar, a qualifying product must be certified organic consistent with the U.S. National Organic Program (NOP) or similar international standards. Therefore, any participating organization must hold a USDA Organic certificate (or an approved equivalent) as a prerequisite to applying for ROC.

In addition, an applicant must be certified in the Animal Welfare (if applicable) and Social Fairness pillars by an approved standard in order to be eligible to participate in the ROC program. An overview of recognized equivalent standards can be found in the Approved Baseline Requirements document and at [www.regenorganic.org](http://www.regenorganic.org).

Operations that do not raise animals for commercial use, or that do not intend to make ROC claims on commercial animal products, may not be required to hold an Animal Welfare certification. Consult the ROC Framework or contact ROA for additional details on applicability of Animal Welfare requirements.

For organizations currently transitioning to certified organic, it is recommended that you begin incorporating ROC-specific requirements during this process. As soon as all the prerequisites are in place, your operation can apply for regenerative organic certification and begin the audit process.

4.3 The Path to Regenerative Organic Certification

To achieve any level of Regenerative Organic Certification requires USDA Organic (or equivalent) certification, as well as demonstration of additional practices that go beyond USDA organic standards, particularly in the areas of soil health and land management, animal welfare, and farmer and worker fairness. An example path for chemical agriculture producers to achieve Regenerative Organic Certification is:

Chemical → Transitional → Certified Organic → ROC Bronze → ROC Silver → ROC Gold

Chemical and transitional producers (producers working towards organic certification) can start employing regenerative practices well before they are certified organic. The following roadmap highlights the earliest point that different types of producers can receive Regenerative Organic Certification. The roadmap assumes that producers have met the requirements under the Animal Welfare and Farmer and Worker Fairness modules.
### Example Paths toward ROC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chemical</td>
<td>• Begin transition to certified organic</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using regenerative organic practices</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using regenerative organic practices</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using regenerative organic practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discontinue use of prohibited substances</td>
<td>• Eligible for Regenerative Organic Certification if certified organic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Create a plan &amp; begin to incorporate regenerative organic practices, including soil health, animal welfare, &amp; farmer and worker fairness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using organic practices</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using regenerative organic practices</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using regenerative organic practices</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using regenerative organic practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Create a plan &amp; begin to incorporate regenerative organic practices, including soil health, animal welfare, &amp; farmer and worker fairness</td>
<td>• Eligible for Regenerative Organic Certification if certified organic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Eligible for Regenerative Organic Certification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic</td>
<td>• Begin to incorporate regenerative organic practices, including soil health, animal welfare, &amp; farmer and worker fairness</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using regenerative organic practices</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using regenerative organic practices</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using regenerative organic practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Eligible for Regenerative Organic Certification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regenerative Organic</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using regenerative organic practices</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using regenerative organic practices</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using regenerative organic practices</td>
<td>• Continue to manage land using regenerative organic practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Eligible for Regenerative Organic Certification</td>
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### 5.0 What are the benefits?

Industrial agriculture and factory farming are top contributors to climate change and other social and environmental problems both locally and globally. Regenerative agriculture creates a model of ecological and ethical agricultural production systems that improve the health and well-being of soil, animals, farmers, and workers globally.

#### 5.1 For Farmers

The Regenerative Organic Certification incorporates robust, high-bar standards that address next-level sustainable production requirements. By becoming certified to the ROC program, your operation will be meeting rigorous and comprehensive criteria for ecological and ethical production that go beyond existing certifications in the marketplace.

Regenerative practices have been proven to offer tangible benefits to improve the resilience and productivity of farm operations.

- Improved soil health and structure can **increase water infiltration and storage capacity** to bolster defense against both drought and flooding

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The agriculture sector contributes 10-12% of global greenhouse gas emissions, but also offers potential for cost-effective mitigation and sequestration through improved management practices. *(IPCC Assessment Report 5)*

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• Practices such as cover cropping and intercropping can reduce weed pressure, erosion, and evaporation while in some cases providing additional revenue streams
• Increased soil carbon, enhanced biodiversity, and regular crop rotations can offer improved pest management and nutrient cycling for better yields

As you increase organic matter in your soil, support climate change mitigation, and build a more ethical and sustainable operation, your customers will be assured of receiving a premium product that addresses the full suite of supply chain responsibility concerns.

What Differentiates ROC from Other Standards?
Because ROC uses USDA organic and international equivalent programs as a baseline, it sets a higher bar for explicit soil health requirements than many other standards with add-on requirements in the areas of soil health, animal welfare and social fairness. ROC offers a uniquely holistic certification to bring these key pillars under one program.

5.2 For Brands/Retailers
Organic food and other products have experienced exponential growth in recent decades, a trend largely driven by consumer demand. Building off the foundation of the organic movement, Regenerative Organic Certification captures additional aspirational values to ensure fairness and responsibility throughout the supply chain. Consumers are demanding products they can trust, and the ROC label proves that a product has been grown or raised with respect for the environment, animals, and workers.

As more and more companies take responsibility for their contributions to global climate change, mitigating supply chain emissions is a critical component of reducing overall company carbon footprint. Regenerative Organic practices help to reduce agricultural emissions and sequester carbon from the atmosphere, providing an opportunity to prevent the worst effects of climate change and build a more resilient supply chain.

“...Regenerative organic agriculture has the ability to restore the health of our soils while growing food that is healthier for us and the planet.”

Jeff Moyer
Executive Director, Rodale Institute

“The early USDA organic standard was just a starting point. The Regenerative Organic Certification standard gives us a guide and an incentive to raise the bar.”

David Vetter
CEO & Farmer, Grain Place Foods

“Regenerative organic agriculture is the number one thing humans can do to combat global warming.”

Yvon Chouinard
Founder, Patagonia

“The ROC provides recognition at point of sale for farmers’ commitment to best practices and continual improvement in agriculture.”

Michael Besancon
CEO, Besancon Group
6.0 Getting started towards certification

6.1 For Farmers

6.1.1 Certification Process

Once you have read and understood the standard, and met the baseline requirements, you are ready to begin the application process. If your existing Organic certification body is approved to audit to ROC, they may offer additional support in understanding the process. If your certification body is not an approved ROC certifier, speak to them about your interest in the program and refer them to the Certification Body Handbook for more information.

The Participant Application Form can be found at [www.regenorganic.org](http://www.regenorganic.org).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Meet ROC Baseline Certification Requirements</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obtain USDA Organic certification or approved equivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Note that transitional operations in the third year of transition may pursue ROC concurrently with Organic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obtain an approved baseline certification in Social Fairness and Animal Welfare (as applicable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; See list of Approved Baseline Standards for guidance on recognized prerequisites. Contact ROA with questions or for additional support for obtaining the mandatory baseline certifications.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepare</th>
<th>Review program requirements and training resources</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thoroughly review the <a href="http://www.regenorganic.org">Regenerative Organic Certification Framework</a> and required practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compile records and certification documents</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan for conducting soil sampling and testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact your current Certification Body(s) to see if they offer ROC, or select from the CB registry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consult this handbook and supporting resources for additional guidance and detailed information to help you prepare.</td>
</tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Complete and submit the Participant Application Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Receive initial assessment from ROA for individualized requirements and equivalency analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact CB(s) to schedule audit(s) and review your site-specific audit requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>See the list of Approved Certification Bodies to get started or connect with your certification body about becoming an approved ROC certifier.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audit</th>
<th>Work with your Certification Body(s) to complete document review and onsite audit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact your CB to understand your audit process and requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be aware that:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Audits for each ROC pillar may be conducted by a single or multiple Certification Bodies, in combination or separately from other certification audits (e.g. NOP Organic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Audits should be scheduled at a time appropriate for the farm and topic. For example: during the growing season, when the majority of workers are onsite, and/or during critical steps in animal processing (e.g. slaughter, shearing, identification)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Certification Body(s) conducts onsite audit(s), including document review, site inspection, and worker interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Receive feedback and provide additional information if necessary</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certify</th>
<th>Certification Body(s) record audit findings and issue pillar-specific certification decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Certification status for each pillar is housed in program registry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once all applicable pillars are certified, ROA issues final certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once certified, ROC farm and product claims can be made in accordance with the <a href="http://www.regenorganic.org">Labeling Guidelines</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If desired, engage with ROA for marketing and communication tools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1.2 Requirements and Equivalencies

Before beginning your application, be sure to read and understand the full requirements of the ROC Framework. ROC requires a high level of integrity and sustainability in agricultural practices, such as incorporating crop rotation and minimum tillage, meeting the Five Freedoms for animal welfare, and providing fair wages and working conditions to employees. The Soil Health Pillar also mandates a regular lab test to measure a defined set of soil health metrics. For more details on the soil testing requirements, refer to the Soil Sampling Guidelines.

To streamline the audit process and reduce costs, ROC allows you to leverage your existing certifications in soil health, animal welfare, and/or social fairness. The following matrix presents approved standards that include requirements equivalent to those contained in one or more pillars of the ROC standard. Because the ROC standard goes beyond most existing standards and encompasses a holistic view of sustainable agriculture, no single standard meets all the related ROC requirements. However, holding other certifications can lessen your audit burden and cost.

Prior to applying to ROC, review the Equivalency Gap Analysis to understand the additional practices you will need to incorporate into your operation to be eligible for ROC. Once you submit your application, ROA will provide an initial assessment of gaps and additional required practices based on your existing certifications. Prior to your onsite certification audit, your CB(s) should be able to provide additional details on the site-specific practices that must be implemented for certification.

![NOTE: To achieve Regenerative Organic Certification, your organization must meet the minimum requirements for all three pillars (as applicable). For example, if your farm meets the standard’s requirements for Soil Health and Animal Welfare but not for Social Fairness, you are not eligible to claim Regenerative Organic Certification.](image)

Can I combine audits with other certifications?

ROC is designed to leverage your existing certifications to reduce audit burden. If you hold relevant up-to-date certifications, the auditor need only verify the additional requirements for ROC. Where appropriate, your accredited Certification Body may be able to conduct the ROC audit in combination with an audit for another certification program. If qualified, a single CB may certify to all three pillars, or you may require multiple CBs and ROC audits to achieve full certification.

6.1.3 Ongoing Requirements

After the initial certification audit and soil test, your organization must be re-certified every year to maintain ROC status. Onsite audits are conducted annually, and soil tests must be conducted every three years following the baseline measurement. For organizations at the Bronze or Silver levels that wish to make public claims about their regenerative organic certification status, additional requirements apply:

- Operations at the Bronze level must advance to Silver within three years to continue making public claims
- Organizations at the Silver level must have at least 75% of their fiber-or-food producing land certified within 5 years of reaching Silver certification status.

If these milestones are not achieved, neither the farm nor product may carry ROC claims until the applicable requirement is met. Organizations certified at the Gold level are not subject to additional requirements beyond the certification criteria.
6.2 For Brands/Retailers

Brands that would like to produce and/or source ROC-certified product are encouraged to engage with their suppliers and to contact info@regenorganic.org for additional guidance. The ROA’s website at www.regenorganic.org also provides additional resources for brands to connect with certified farms.

Brands should fully review and understand the Chain of Custody Guidelines and Labeling Guidelines for claiming ROC certified material in a product, and work with both producers and processors in the supply chain to understand what changes are required for the transition to ROC. Brands that wish to publicly communicate commitment or participation in ROC should review the Communication & Marketing Guidelines for guidance.

7.0 Glossary

The following key terms include important practices and definitions that are referred to in the Regenerative Organic Certification framework and guiding pillars. For chemical and transitional producers, familiarity with these practices and terms serves as an important step towards incorporating regenerative practices into operations.

AGROFORESTRY
The practice of incorporating cultivation and conservation of trees as part of an agricultural operation.

BIODIVERSITY
Biodiversity, or biological diversity, is the diversity of life existing at three levels: genetic, species, and ecosystem. Biodiversity includes variety in all forms of life, from bacteria and fungi to grasses, ferns, trees, insects, and mammals. It encompasses the diversity found at all levels of organization, from genetic differences between individuals and populations (groups of related individuals) to the types of natural communities (groups of interacting species) found in a particular area. Biodiversity also includes the full range of natural processes upon which life depends, such as nutrient cycling, carbon and nitrogen fixation, predation, symbiosis and natural succession.

BODY CONDITION SCORE
A system of measuring how thin or fat an animal is by reference to a standardized scale.

CAPACITY BUILDING
The process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes, and resources to improve the social and economic position of farmers and workers.

CARBON SEQUESTRATION
The process by which atmospheric carbon dioxide is taken up by trees, grasses, and other plants through photosynthesis and stored as carbon in biomass (trunks, branches, foliage, and roots) and soils. For agricultural operations, increased carbon sequestration may be achieved through, for example, no-till or low-till practices, agroforestry, reforestation, or the use of biomass-containing amendments.

CARRYING CAPACITY
The average number of animals that can be rotationally grazed on a given area of pasture for a year without harming it. It is a measure of a pasture’s ability to produce enough forage to meet the requirements of grazing animals.

CHAIN OF CUSTODY
The set of practices and documentation required to ensure that certified product (i.e. ROC plant or animal products) is segregated, identifiable, and traceable throughout the supply chain. Post-farm processors and handlers must maintain the proper chain of custody standards in order for a final consumer product to carry ROC claims.

COMMERCIAL LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION
Animals are raised with the primary purpose of generating a profit. Non-commercial animals are those that generally have functions outside of or alongside profit, such as draught power, transport, manure production, or for educational purposes. Contact the ROA for additional guidance on determining if your livestock operation is considered commercial under the ROC.

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COMPOST
Compost, when properly managed, results in a high-quality soil amendment. Compost may increase the water holding capacity of the soil, helping farmers to produce a good crop even in years of low rain. Compost improves soil structure and stability, recycles nutrients, stabilizes volatile nitrogen, converts wastes into resources and suppresses soil-borne diseases. The composting process destroys weed seeds and pathogenic microorganisms, while beneficial microorganisms grow and multiply in great numbers. Synthetic amendments can provide soluble nutrients for plant growth, but do not build the soil’s long-term biological reserves as well as compost does, and therefore are not permitted under Regenerative Organic Certification.

CONCENTRATED ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATION (CAFO)
Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), as defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are agricultural operations where animals are kept and raised in confined situations. A CAFO is a lot or facility (other than an aquatic animal production facility) where animals have been, are, or will be stabled or confined and fed or maintained for a total of 45 days or more in any 12-month period, and crops, vegetation, forage growth, or post-harvest residues are not sustained in the normal growing season over any portion of the lot or facility. The EPA provides specific thresholds by animal sector for small, medium, and large CAFOs. For example, a large CAFO for cattle is defined as 1,000 or more “animal units” confined for over 45 days a year.

COVER CROPPING
A cover crop is a crop planted primarily to reduce soil erosion and prevent desiccation of soil microbial communities, resulting from soil left exposed. Cover crops may suppress weeds, recycle nutrients back to the soil, increase soil organic matter, sequester carbon in the soil, and reduce erosion.

CROP ROTATION
A systematic approach where producers rotate crop varieties and locations from one year to the next. The goals of crop rotation are to help manage organic soil fertility and also to help avoid or reduce problems with soil-borne diseases and some soil-dwelling insects, such as corn rootworms.

DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATIONS (INTERNATIONAL)
The ability for small-scale farmers to be democratically organized in order to be able to compete globally.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
The policy of treating job applicants or employees equally without regard to the person’s race, color, gender, pregnancy, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, age, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin, or other personal characteristics.

FAIR PAYMENTS
Payment sufficient to cover cost of production including living wages for any workers and equivalent income to farmers, plus reinvestment in farm.

FIVE FREEDOMS
The Animal Welfare module leverages the five freedoms for animal welfare, which include:

1. Freedom from hunger or thirst by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor.
2. Freedom from discomfort by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. Freedom from pain, injury, and disease by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. Freedom to express normal behaviors by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal’s own kind.
5. Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions and treatment that avoid mental suffering.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
The method whereby representatives of workers (unions) and producers (farmers/ranchers) negotiate the conditions of employment, often resulting in a written contract setting forth the wages, hours, and other conditions to be observed for a stipulated period. Collective bargaining should be conducted in good faith.
HANDLING (OF ANIMALS)
The handling of animals covers the general treatment of animals during the various tasks performed and requirements of an operation. To minimize stress, pain, and suffering to an animal, Regenerative Organic Certification prohibits certain practices, such as prodding (jabbing of animal with instrument), hot / cold branding, wattling (cutting chunks out of an animal's hide to hang under the animal's neck), and disbudding (removal of horn buds).

INVASIVE SPECIES
Invasive plants and animals that are non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Invasive species can be plants, animals, and other organisms (e.g. microbes). Human actions are the primary means of invasive species introductions.

LIVING WAGE
The remuneration received for a standard work week by a worker in a particular place sufficient to afford a decent standard of living for the worker and her or his family. Elements of a decent standard of living include food, water, housing, education, health care, transport, clothing, and other essential needs including provision for unexpected events.

MOBILE HARVESTING UNIT
A mobile harvest unit, or mobile slaughterhouse, enables livestock and poultry farmers to slaughter their animals humanely on-site. This decreases the exposure of animals to stressful and inhumane treatment at large scale slaughter facilities.

MONOGASTRICS
Monogastic animals have a simple single-chambered stomach and include dogs, pigs, horses, and rabbits. Their ability to extract energy from cellulose digestion is less efficient than in ruminants, and therefore are permitted to feed on grains.

NON-AMBULATORY ANIMALS
Animals that cannot rise from a recumbent position or that cannot walk, including, but not limited to, those with broken appendages, severed tendons or ligaments, nerve paralysis, fractured vertebral column, or metabolic conditions.

PASTURE
A land use type having vegetation cover comprised primarily of native or introduced forage species that is used for livestock grazing.

PERENNIAL CROPS
Crops which are alive year-round and are harvested multiple times before dying. Apples and alfalfa are examples of perennials that are already commercially grown and harvested. Perennial plants develop much greater root mass than annual crops and protect the soil year-round, leaving fields less vulnerable to wind, water, and soil erosion.

PRODUCER
The farm or ranch that grows or raises crops and/or animals to be used for a food or textile product. The first stage in the raw material supply chain.

PROCESSOR
Any stage in the supply chain where raw materials (i.e. plant or animal products) from the producer are modified. Processing may include activities such as slaughter, milling, cooking, or mixing and packaging raw materials into a final product. Processing may occur at a separate facility or on-farm, in which case the farm or ranch is both producer and processor.

REGENERATIVE ORGANIC
The term used to represent a set of holistic agricultural practices that support the health of soil, animals, and workers. Regenerative farming aims to not only sustain but regenerate and rebuild soil health over time.
RIPARIAN AREAS
Plant communities contiguous to and affected by surface and subsurface hydrologic features of perennial or intermittent moving and standing water bodies (e.g. rivers, streams, lakes, or drainage ways). Riparian areas have one or both of the following characteristics: 1) distinctly different vegetative species than adjacent areas, and 2) species similar to adjacent areas but exhibiting more vigorous or robust growth forms. Riparian areas are usually transitional between wetland and upland.

ROTATIONAL GRAZING
Rotational grazing is a livestock production system where livestock graze in one portion (a paddock) of a pasture that has been divided into several paddocks. Livestock are systematically moved from paddock to paddock based on the stage of growth of the forages and on the objectives of the grazing system. While one paddock is being grazed, the rest of the pasture rests. This rest and recovery time maintains forage plants and builds soil organic matter.

ROUTINE WORKPLACE AUDITS
Routine third-party audits should assess that producers minimize exposure to disease, ensure access to safe inputs, provide clean facilities, document identification procedures, record use of treatment products, and properly train workers on the operation's protocols.

RUMINANTS
Ruminant species include cud-chewing animals such as cows, goats, bison, and sheep. Ruminants are designed to eat fibrous grasses, plants, and shrubs. A high-grain diet may cause physical problems for ruminants. Additionally, when ruminants are switched from pasture to grain, they can become afflicted with numerous disorders, including a common but painful condition called “subacute acidosis.”

SILVOPASTURE
The practice of combining forestry and grazing of animals in a mutually beneficial way. A properly managed silvopasture operation enhances soil protection and increases long-term income due to the simultaneous production of trees and grazing animals.

SOIL HEALTH
Improving soil health is one of the key targets of Regenerative Organic Certification. Soil health is measured by various factors, from the amount of nutrients in the soil (i.e. nitrogen), soil organic matter, humic acid (the component of soil that sequesters carbon over the long term), and biological life (among other metrics described in detail below).

SMALLHOLDER
Small farming operations where land and labor productivity are comparatively low due to limited resources. Smallholder farmers often rely on farming as a primary means of livelihood and are at greater risk of vulnerability in the supply chain. Smallholders rely primarily on family labor for farm operations. Smallholder size may vary by farm type and commodity; however, some certifications set thresholds so confirm with your certification program, if applicable. Most smallholders are organized by Internal Control System (ICS) for certification purposes. Contact the ROA for additional guidance on determining if your operation is considered a smallholder under the ROC.

TILLAGE
Preparation of soil by mechanical agitation of various types, such as digging, stirring, and overturning. Regenerative Organic Certification aims to minimize tilling. Biological principles and mechanical cover crops may reduce or eliminate the need for tilling.

TRAFFICKED LABOR
Any work performed by a person who has been recruited, transported, harbored or obtained by means of the use of threat, force, coercion or deception for the purpose of exploitation.
Contact

If you have any questions, please reach out to us.

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