

Regenerative Organic Alliance Position on Remote Audits

During these uncertain times the Regenerative Organic Alliance (ROA) must adapt its plans for initial on-site audits in order to address the regional challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Our position is intended to keep everyone safe and healthy while also helping producers earn Regenerative Organic Certified™ (ROC™). The ROA is upholding the best practices of the most stringent of the certifications recognized under ROC. We will adapt to the remote audit policies put forth by the following organizations: Accredited Certifiers Association, the International Organic Inspectors Association, Fair for Life, Fair Trade International, Global Animal Partnership, and Animal Welfare Approved.

All operations must hold valid certifications recognized under ROC and have had an on-site audit within the last audit cycle. The ROA will perform a risk assessment to determine if an on-site ROC audit in 2020 can be performed in a safe and responsible manner. On-site audits will be performed in regions where there are local ROC trained inspectors who are able to access operations with minimal travel. All inspector travel must abide by local, regional, and national restrictions surrounding the global containment effort. Any on-site audit must follow the current best practices for ensuring health and safety. Should an on-site audit not be feasible at this time, the ROA will support the use of alternative methods to perform remote and/or records audits as necessary and when applicable. If a remote and/or records audit is performed without a site visit, an on-site audit will be required at a future time when it is safe to do so. In all instances, the inspector and the operation must agree on the audit plan.

The ROA will only accept applications for operations that have an existing social fairness certification for which an on-site audit took place within the last audit cycle. Ensuring fair and transparent social audits without the ability to do on-site audits poses a particular challenge. In order to ensure the accuracy and transparency of social fairness audits, the ROA will defer any application that does not have an existing social fairness certification until the operation is able to undergo an on-site social audit. Auditing the additional ROC social fairness criteria, by remote audit, will only occur after-applying a stringent risk-based approach and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The ROA will continue to assess and respond to the situation as it evolves. Our policy for on-site audits will be updated based off regional restrictions and auditor availability, with the utmost concern for the health and safety of all parties in mind.