



Organic Operations Manual

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Introduction:

Community Through Colors operates La Finca de Hamberto, a small-scale USDA-certified organic farm in Vieques, Puerto Rico, and educational project AVES (Apoyo en Vieques para la Educación y la Sostentabilidad). We are a proud member of the Vieques Agricultural Collective. Vieques is a historically underserved community with a majority Spanish-speaking population.

La Finca operates as a learning farm, hosting educational seminars, assisting others with at-home farming and livestock rearing, and preparing for natural disasters through food security. Currently, 99% of food on Vieques is brought from mainland Puerto Rico by ferry, which is routinely unreliable in bad weather. Furthermore, the few existing farms on Vieques currently face resource insecurity and climatic challenges, making the work we do here extremely important. Consequently, the farm is built primarily from recycled materials, including shipping pallets otherwise destined for the landfill. La Finca de Hamberto is home to goats, sheep, pigs, chickens, ducks, geese, rabbits, and, of course, dogs and cats. The farm also produces a variety of vegetables, herbs, and specialty goods, including arugula, mustard, bok choy, radish, basil, microgreens, goat cheese, soap, canned vegetables, pesto, tostones, and more.

The purpose of this guide is to provide useful information and farm processes for organic food production we have developed at La Finca de Hamberto. This guide is intended to help the following farming populations: farmers in the Caribbean region; historically underrepresented/underserved farmers; socially disadvantaged farmers; and limited-resource farmers. ***NOTE: This document provides information on operations at Community Color's La Finca de Hamberto Farm and is not applicable to all farms or farming operations. Please feel free to use or adapt the information in this manual to best suit your needs.***

La Finca de Hamberto is a USDA certified organic farm. Therefore, certain protocols and procedures must be observed to remain in compliance. If a breach is identified, the farm will lose organic certification and must begin a three-year transition prior to using organic fields for crop production. This is a living document and will be updated as needed to reflect the most current processes at La Finca de Hamberto.

APPROVED CLEANERS and CHEMICAL DISPOSAL

- Approved cleaning products are listed below:
 - Diluted 1:2 bleach may be used on food contact surfaces
 - Diluted 1:2 vinegar may be used on food contact surfaces IF followed by a rinse
 - Fabuloso and other floor cleaners may be used **ONLY** on the floor
 - Chemical solutions **MUST** be disposed of in the toilet system
 - Chemical solutions **MAY NOT** be disposed of in any other plumbing system
- All other chemicals must be **approved** by the USDA organic resource prior to use **AND** recorded on the **organic input document**

SHOEWEAR

To clean contaminated shoes in an organic field, adhere to the following protocol to clean and disinfect shoes prior to entry:

1. Rinse
2. Disinfect with diluted 1% bleach

PEST CONTROL

Strong chemicals and repellents such as OFF or DEET **may not** be used. Alternative methods of pest control are listed below:

1. Citronella or lemongrass may be used to repel mosquitos
2. Fans or electricity may be used to repel mosquitos
3. Physical removal may be used in grow fields
4. Trap crops may be used in grow fields
5. Diatomaceous earth may be used for cockroaches
6. Organic coffee grounds may be used for ants

BUFFER ZONES

Organic fields must be bounded by sufficient buffer zones. Buffer zones may include fields, treelines, or diversion ditches.

- Prior to establishing a field as organic, ensure appropriate buffer zones for airborne and dissolved chemicals
- Prior to clearing a field, ensure the field is not acting as a buffer zone for an organic field

VEHICLES

Vehicles used on organic soils must be cleaned and maintained prior to and during use to prevent contamination to organic fields.

- Inspect the vehicle for oil, fluid, or chemical leakage. If the vehicle is leaking, resolve the issue prior to entering the organic field
- If the vehicle was exposed to high risk contamination (i.e. parked next to field sprayer or on recently sprayed grass) the vehicle must be cleaned prior to reentry on farm property

CONTAMINATION

- Contamination of personnel or equipment must be reported to the farm manager and the following steps taken to decontaminate prior to use on organic equipment
 - Rinse contaminated equipment off farm or in a contained area
 - Any fields or produce which may have been contaminated must be marked and removed from any organic storage, organic rotations, or organic markets

TREATED WOOD

- Treated wood MAY NOT be used to replace, repair, or build new constructions
- Treated wood already in use may remain in use
- Pallet wood may be used to bound organic plant fields with at minimum 5 foot buffer

COMPOSTING and BIOGAS

- Compost piles should be mixed or managed to a minimum of 131°F for at least 3 days
- The C:N ratio should be at least 15:1 and at most 60:1 with a target of 30:1
- Processed manure materials must be heated to 150°F for minimum of 1 hour AND dried to a moisture level of maximum 12% OR processed through an equivalent heating and drying process to prevent Salmonella contamination

RECORDKEEPING

Recordkeeping is incredibly important for the maintenance of organic practices and management of farm activities. The following activities and respective recordkeeping documentation templates are provided in the next section. Note that there are many ways to keep records, with paper records, spreadsheets, invoices and receipts, online software, and field notebooks. The following is only one example of how to approach this responsibility. It might be useful to contact an Organic Certifier in the region to ensure compliance with their software and recording tools.

- Inputs documentation
- Planting and harvest schedule
- Yield
- Crop rotation
- Seed source
- Organic production audit
- Cleaning protocols (schedule, logs, and transport)
- Composting
- Neighbor notification records and signage
- Contamination, complaint, or noncompliance events

Table I. Approved inputs at La Finca de Hamberto ONLY for specified use in accordance with documented protocols

Input	Manufacturer	Program	Restriction	Status
Compressed Cocopeat Block	Terramix PR	NOP Crop		Allowed
Dr. Bronner's Pure Castile Soaps (all varieties)	Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps	NOP Crop	205.206(e)	Restricted
Lambert LM-ORG Professional Growing Media LM-18 ORG	Lambert Peat Moss, Inc.	NOP Crop		Allowed
Manure	Pig, Cow, Sheep, Goat, Rabbit On-farm Manure	NOP Crop	205.203(c)(1)	Restricted
On-Farm Compost		NOP Crop		Restricted

Table II. La Finca de Hamberto inputs activity record

Reference Number	Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Concentration	Location(s) of Use	Initials

ORGANIC PRODUCTION AUDIT CHECKLIST

- Organic certification for each seed variety OR proof that seed variety is not commercially available
- Records of on-farm handling and equipment cleaning prior to use
- Map of growing location, including buffers
- Records of field inputs
- Records of harvest and yield
- Records of post-harvest processing
 - Equipment cleaning logs
 - Food handling protocols
 - Sanitizers/cleaners used
 - Storage containers
- Records of sale

Table III. La Finca de Hamberto equipment cleaning record

Cleaner Used	Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Concentration	Organic and/or Conventional	Rinse (y/n)	Location(s) of Use	Initials

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Table IV. La Finca de Hamberto organic transport record

From	To	Container/ Vehicle	Organic and/or Conventional	Cleaned (y/n)	Method of cleaning	Initials

Table V. La Finca de Hamberto compost temperature record

Date	Temperature	Hold	Action	Bay	Previous activity	Initials

NEIGHBOR NOTIFICATION LETTER

(Date)

(Name and address)

Dear (Name):

I am currently growing produce in compliance with USDA regulations, certified by _(certifying body)___ organic standards. Since you are an adjoining property owner, I would like to ask for your help in maintaining chemical free fields. If you plan to use synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and/or genetically engineered crops on land that adjoins my fields, please take precautions when transporting and spraying to prevent drift or run-off onto my farm. If chemical drift or runoff is found on my organic crops or fields, I may be required to wait up to three years before using these fields for organic production.

If you would like to know more about my organic certification or have any other questions, please call.

Thanks for your help,

Sincerely

(Signature of organic farmer)

NO CHEMICAL
SPRAYING

ORGANIC FARM

Table VI. La Finca de Hamberto complaint, contamination, or noncompliance events

Date	Complaint	Source	Resolution	Date of Resolution	QCS Informed (y/s)	Initials