

Minutes

Montana Organic Commodity Advisory Council

Mansfield Center – Great Falls, Montana

December 10, 2024 4-5 pm

➤ Welcome & Introductions

In attendance: Ian Foley, Ed Evanson, Ed Tyanich, Mikayla Moore, Justin Vetch, Sam Schmidt, Randy Hinebauch

Sam Schmidt & Randy Hinebauch were the only Council members in attendance. Insufficient number to form a quorum.

➤ Minutes 2023 - Reviewed

➤ MDA Updates

Georgana retired, Ed Tyanich took her place, Justin Vetch hired on. Turnover Christy Clark now at FWP. Cort Jenson moved on. New Chief of Legal starting 1/6/25.

Trade missions – going to India January 3 – pulse market

Eliminate MOCAC. Reach goal of becoming successful – served its purpose. Executive committees must award grants or licenses, eliminating others. Regulatory programs typically don't have advisory boards. Will still work with MOA and producers for inputs and public comment. Went from red to black financially. Fees worked out.

➤ USDA NOP Updates

MTDA NONCS have been resolved.

Livestock capacity and lack of experience with current staff – currently have 2 staff inspectors and 2 contractors doing inspections. Issue for MTDA is the focus for USDA in livestock for fraud, stronger regulations

Intact Database – Will help with administrative capacity. Intact has a 20 year history in the industry, most certifiers use them, developed OID. Costs: \$150,000 start up, \$25,000 per year. Eliminate Sharepoint. Automatically updates into OID. Mobile app – photos easily uploaded. Maximizing efficiency for staff capacity.

SOE – Brokers must be certified. Fraud prevention. Organic industry struggling with changes. Loss of good service with private certifiers.

Imports/Exports – SOE has effected / strengthened– regulatory additions. MTDA not effected hugely by this at this time.

Application -Due to user errors, applications are changing to 2 forms. Refunds adding to administration burden.

Cessation of out of state clients is now complete – handed over to NOP to transition.

Costshare – Considering letting FSA handle. Advantage – FSA may be cumbersome for handlers and some producers. Administrated burden for MTDA, although MTDA gets 10%. 113 reimbursements last year to 299 applicants this year.

Inspection summary review, field staff great asset but minimal inspections, inspect remote areas, all field staff is trained to do inspections, possibility of a flat fee for inspections but not equitable. Producer in remote areas should not be penalized for being remote

Staff update – Justin based out of Shelby. Margaret Misner will return as a contract inspector – Chinook/Malta area. Chinook area is biggest area for organics in Montana.

Final reviews and final approvals are now done by Kelly Hill along with Ed. Tess Weigand will help with reviews of handlers and livestock.

Kelly Hill will attend NOP/ACA conference in Richmond VA in January 2025.

Budget Summary – Going to legislature to for spending authority approval. Expenditures were greater than Revenue this year.

Appreciation and thanks for the years of service. Will send out one last final review.

Open discussion – FSA acres changing, NOP growth pross + cons, disconnect from different government agencies, challenges experienced

Meeting Adjourned Motioned by Sam Schmidt , Seconded by Randy Hinebauch.

Meeting adjourned @5pm.