COMPARING ORGANIC & BIODYNAMIC®

HISTORY

Following Rudolf Steiner's agricultural lectures of 1924, Biodynamic farming took hold in Europe. In the 1940's, English Baron Lord Northbourne, agricultural professor at Oxford and Biodynamic farmer at his family's estate in Kent, coined the term "organic" from Steiner's view of "the farm as organism." In the 1950's, influenced by the rise of Biodynamic farming in Europe, the American J.I Rodale popularized the term organic in his publication "Organic Gardening." Because of their allied history, both methods shared a focus on soil health, condemned the use of synthetic chemicals, and encouraged the use of compost, cover crops, and holistic pest and weed management.

CERTIFICATION SYSTEM VERSUS REGULATORY PROGRAM

Demeter was formed in Europe soon after Steiner's lectures to promote Biodynamic agriculture in Europe through education and certification. In the US Demeter was founded in 1985 as a non-profit, and obtained the certification mark "Biodynamic®" soon after. In order for a farm or agriculturally based product to refer to itself as "Biodynamic" it must have obtained certification through Demeter. This certification system has maintained, as its underlying philosophy, Steiner's view of the farm as a living organism.

In 2002, with the growth of organic labeling in products across the country, the USDA ruled that a base market definition was needed, and launched the National Organic Program (NOP) to define organic standards and enforce them through federal law. There are national organic regulatory programs in Europe, Japan, Canada and other countries around the world.

KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NOP ORGANIC* AND DEMETER BIODYNAMIC®

History

-NOP established in US in 2002
-Demeter established in Europe in 1928, and in the US in 1985

Use of imported materials

-NOP permits unlimited imported organic fertilizers and pesticides
-Biodynamic® reduces imported materials by addressing its needs from within the farming system
Fertility delivered via a nutrient rich soil component, called humus, created by the:
-Integration of livestock
-Intensive use of green manure (cover crops grown to add nutrients to soil) and legumes
-Rotation of crops
-Application of field/compost sprays
Pest and Disease Control:
-Creation of biologically diverse habitat encourages balanced predator prey relationships
-Humus development contributes to insect and disease resistance
Water:
-Increased humus levels result in soil's ability to store water
-Preservation of riparian areas emphasized

Livestock feed source

-NOP allows for organic feed imported to the farm from anywhere in the world
-Biodynamic® requires 60% of livestock feed be grown on farm.

Biodiversity requirements

-No specific NOP requirement
-Biodynamic® requires ten percent of the total farm acreage be devoted to biodiversity

Farm certification

-NOP is crop focused and allows for a designated parcel to be certified
-Biodynamic® is farm focused and requires that the whole farm be certified

Product certification

-NOP processing standard is applied across product types and focuses primarily on ingredients used
-The Biodynamic® Processing Standard has 12 product specific sections developed to protect the quality of fruits and vegetable, nuts and seeds, wine, meat, herbs and spices, grains, bread, oils and fats, personal care products, textiles, etc. that require minimal manipulation so that the agricultural ingredients define the product

* We recognize that many organic farmers embrace many of these practices and exceed the NOP standard.

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