NMDA Grower Group Certification Policy

“Grower Group” refers to the organic certification of a collective of producers whose farms and methods are uniform in most ways, and who are organized under one management and marketing system. Grower Group certifications have historically been used for the certification of cooperatives located in remote areas in geographical proximity and whose crops are marketed collectively. Crops produced by Grower Groups have historically included coffee, cocoa, tea, spices, and tropical fruits.

The Grower Group is overseen by one Manager who is responsible for keeping all Group records as well as ensuring that all members conform to the Group’s Organic System Plan (OSP). This means there is little room for individual Group members to experiment or deviate from the OSP unless it is reported to the Manager and approved by the Organic Certifier.

Unauthorized deviation by one Group member may threaten the organic integrity of the entire Group’s crops/products and therefore also threaten the organic certification of the entire Group.

A Group member is not individually certified organic and therefore may not market their crops as “organic” if selling outside of the Group.

NMDA Organic Program is not currently offering organic certification for Grower Groups until our forms, policies and procedures are updated and in compliance with USDA/National Organic Program guidance. This is scheduled for completion in 2016.

The NOP is drafting guidance regarding certification of Grower Groups. In the interim, refer to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) recommendations of October, 2002 and November, 2008.

**NOSB Recommendations; October 20, 2002, “Criteria for Certification of Grower Groups”**
http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3104550

**November 19, 2008, “Certifying Operations with Multiple Production Units, Sites, and Facilities under the National Organic Program”**
http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5074507&acct=nosb

4/17/15