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-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

### **Winter Organic Standards Meeting Highlights Policy Changes for 2014**

Pennsylvania Certified Organic invites members and prospective members to its annual Winter Standards Meeting on February 13, 2014 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, including a lunch from noon to 1:00 pm, at the Bird in Hand Village Inn in Bird in Hand, PA. The winter standards meeting provides certified members the opportunity to get crucial information on changes to organic standards and information on how to maintain compliance, and is designed to help organic producers manage changes in the policy arena. Participants will be provided up to date information on organic standards including presentation and discussion about new developments in organic regulations and PCO policy, including NOP updates such as new guidance and instruction documents, changes to the national list, and new international trade arrangements.

This year's meeting will offer participants to learn about, and discuss, livestock living conditions, notably outdoor access areas and spacing requirements. "Providing living conditions for livestock that promote animal welfare is a responsibility of every organic livestock producer," says Johanna Mirenda, PCO's Policy Director, "but there are so many different ways to achieve that goal. Every livestock producer should want to be at this meeting to share their own experiences and help shape future PCO policy!"

The PCO Standards Committee will use feedback from the PCO membership to guide the development of policies to implement the livestock living conditions requirements of the NOP Regulations.

Also on the docket is residue testing and unannounced inspections, where we will take a look back at how these new requirements went in our first year. Learn about the new PCO 100% Grassfed certification, developed in response to member and industry demand for third-party verified meat and milk products. The new standards were developed through research of existing private certification programs, consultations with members and industry professionals, and information from the scientific community. The new program establishes an optional additional certification for organic ruminant livestock operations certified by PCO.

Lastly, participants will get a chance to learn about and comment on PCO's Ginseng Verification, a new program currently in progress.

Sponsorships for the Winter Standards meeting are available, and businesses that serve Pennsylvania's organic community are invited to register for an exhibit booth. Business representatives will interact with organic farmers and processors in an informal environment. For more information on sponsorship opportunities contact Diana Underwood [diana@paorganic.org](mailto:diana@paorganic.org) or call 814-422-0251.

The Winter Standards Meeting promises to be useful and informative, and is a must for organic producers looking for detailed information on changes to the National Organic Program regulations. Participants should contact Diana Underwood at [diana@paorganic.org](mailto:diana@paorganic.org) or call 814-422-0251 to register for the meeting by January 30, 2013.

Pennsylvania Certified Organic is a non-profit organization that educates and certifies organic growers and handlers in Pennsylvania and the surrounding region. PCO certifies more than 500 farming and food production operations, including produce, field crops, herbs, wild crops, dairy products, poultry products, value-added products, livestock, mushrooms, maple, snack foods, coffee, tea, cosmetics, and more. To learn more about Pennsylvania Certified Organic, or to apply for organic certification, call 814-422-0251 or visit our website at [www.paorganic.org](http://www.paorganic.org).

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