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-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

Pennsylvania Certified Organic to Host Organic Standards Meeting
Meeting provides producers opportunity for discussion on proposed policies from dehorning, disbudding, castration, to beekeeping and maple syrup production

Pennsylvania Certified Organic, a USDA-accredited organic certification agency, invites members and the public to the Winter Standards Meeting for presentations and discussion on proposed organic policies. PCO will also present an update on the development of our Periodic Residue Testing and Unannounced Inspections programs. The meeting will be held on February 1, 2013 from 10:00AM to 3:00PM at the Gap Family Center, located at 835 Houston Run Drive in Gap, PA.

The proposed policy revisions to be discussed include dehorning, disbudding, and castration procedures in accordance with the organic regulations that require producers to establish and maintain preventative livestock health care practices, including performance of physical alterations as needed to promote the animal's welfare and in a manner that minimizes pain and stress. The proposed policy includes accomplishing these procedures at the earliest possible age of the animal, the required use of approved pain management medication, and age restrictions for certain methods.

Also on the agenda is the PCO 100% Grass Fed Livestock Production Policy. This establishes production standards for an optional additional certification scope for PCO-certified ruminant livestock operators for 100% grass fed meat and dairy products. Operators will be allowed to use the PCO 100% grass fed seal on products that are certified to these standards by PCO. Given the protein and energy imbalances that can accrue from 100% forage diets, PCO is seeking feedback from membership to determine if, how much, and what non-forage feedstuffs should be allowed in a grass fed livestock production system.

PCO will also discuss certification of beekeeping operations as organic. More and more bee farmers are interested being certified for organic honey production, so the PCO Standards Committee is currently working with professionals in the field of apiculture and has adapted elements from a final recommendation from the National Organic Standards Board that was passed in 2009. However, this policy is not meant to require the use of organic bees for organic crop pollination.

Lastly, PCO is developing a policy to regulate the production and processing of organic maple syrup and other maple products. PCO has already certified several

organic maple production and processing operations using private standards established in 1999 by the Organic Trade Association. Whereas this private standard remains a useful resource for particular areas of production that are not specifically addressed in the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) regulations, the new PCO policy will include requirements for the management of trees to bring them into alignment with the NOP requirements.

Based on the feedback received by PCO membership, PCO may make minor revisions to the proposed policies. Ballots will be mailed to Supporting and certified members in February to cast your vote for the policies that will best assure the organic integrity of certified organic products in the marketplace, and each organization or operation is allowed one vote. Associate members, business members, PCO staff, and non-members are not eligible to vote for policy changes.

Please contact the Kathryn Tokarz at 814-422-0251 or email at kathryn@paorganic.org, or visit our website at www.paorganic.org/standardsmeeting to register for this free event. Lunch is included.

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 PCO or to apply for organic certification, call 814-422-0251 or visit our website at www.paorganic.org.