

Date: January 11, 2013
Contact: Kathryn Tokarz
Phone: (814)- 422-0251
Fax: (814)- 422-0255
Emails: Kathryn@paorganic.org

-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

Pennsylvania Certified Organic to Host Annual Meeting on February 7, 2013

The Global Organic Community: A Celebration of Local and International Organic Agriculture

There is much to celebrate this year, such as the successful PCO-sponsored first annual Pennsylvania Organic FarmFest. In this spirit of new adventures PCO invites all members, supporters, and volunteers to the PCO 2013 Annual Meeting, to be held on Thursday, February 7, 2013. There is no fee for the PCO Annual Meeting. A reception, featuring local and organic foods, will begin at 2:30 PM, and the meeting will be held from 4:30 PM to 6:15 PM. The Annual Meeting, held in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture Farming for the Future Conference, will be at the Penn Stater Conference Center, located at 215 Innovation Boulevard in State College. The PCO Annual Meeting is a time for members, sponsors, volunteers, and staff (in fact, everyone who makes the PCO organization successful) to gather and reflect on this past year's successes, recognize outstanding supporters and volunteers, and elect new board members. Presiding over the meeting will be Phil Coles, PCO's Board President and Project Manager for Giorgi Mushroom Company. PCO staff members will offer a quick look at the highlights of what's been happening behind the scenes and how it impacts the organization as a whole.

From 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm, just prior to the reception and Annual Meeting, Johanna Mirenda, PCO Policy Director, and the Standards Committee will present a Standards Update, where several new and revised standards policies that will be voted on by the PCO membership. Policies to be voted on include: Dehorning and Castration, Apiculture (Bee Product) Production, Maple Production, and 100% Grass Fed Livestock Production. During the Standards Update, PCO staff will also present new developments in the expansion of our Period Residue Testing and Unannounced Inspection Programs. For an additional opportunity to discuss these topics, please attend The PCO Annual Standards Meeting on February 1st in Gap, PA. Contact PCO for more information.

Highlighting this year's Annual Meeting is a special presentation on Organic Agriculture Innovations in China, where PCO Executive Director Leslie Zuck will walk members and guests through an inspirational and educational journey abroad and share experiences from her 2012 OTA trip to China. Leslie was accompanied on the trip by co-presenters Jim Pierce of Oregon Tilth Certified Organic and Bob Anderson of Sustainable Strategies. The organic mission to Beijing and Shanghai was sponsored by the Organic Trade Association and the US Foreign Agriculture Service. Leslie came away with the clear impression that the organic community is indeed a global community, with many of the same opportunities and barriers, and many opportunities to share cultural and agricultural experiences.

The PCO community would not be nearly as successful as it is without the commitment of enthusiastic individuals, such as farmers, sponsors, and educators, who make up the cadre of PCO volunteers and partners. This year PCO staff will celebrate those who have given so much of their time and talent through awards such as Outstanding New Organic Farmer, Research and Education Award, Inspector's Choice Award, Sustainability Award, Outstanding Organic Producer, Outstanding Volunteer, and the Hall of Fame Award. Following the Annual Meeting, PASA Conference events will begin in earnest, including the Thursday dinner buffet and live music entertainment. The PCO Annual Meeting and the PASA Conference are separate events, so interested members are encouraged to register for the meal with their PASA Conference registration by contacting PASA at <http://www.pasafarming.org/events/conference> or by calling 814-349-9856.

The PCO Annual Meeting is a free event, but registration is requested by January 25 to assist us with planning. You can register for the Annual Meeting online at <http://www.paorganic.org/annualmeeting> or by calling Kathryn Tokarz at 814-422-0251. Walk-ins are always welcome. This year's reception includes an assortment of local and organic foods, so if your farm would like to contribute food for the reception, or if you or your organization is interested in exhibiting and/or sponsoring our Annual Meeting or contributing products for our goodie bags, please contact Kathryn Tokarz for more information at 814-422-0251 or kathryn@paorganic.org.

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.