

## Compost and Vermicompost in OCal Production

### 1. Purpose

This guidance explains allowed compost and vermicompost composition, production, and use in OCal production and clarifies the certifying agent's role in permitting use of compost and vermicompost.

OCal 5006, Processed Animal Manures, explains how heat-processed animal manures may be used in OCal production.

### 2. OCal Regulations, Title 3 California Code of Regulations (3 CCR)

3 CCR § 10000. Definitions.

3 CCR § 10203. Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard.

### 3. Policy

#### 3.1. General

Certifying agents may allow the use of compost if they review the OCal system plan (OSP) and records and are assured that all production methods and source materials meet the requirements below and in § 10203 of the OCal regulations.

#### a. Compost Requirements

1. Made from allowed feedstock materials (either nonsynthetic substances not prohibited for use or synthetic substances approved for use as plant or soil amendments on the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List), title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (7 CFR) § 205.602.
2. Managed in accordance with § 10203(c)(2) of the OCal regulations.
3. The type and source of all feedstock materials, a log of the temperatures and timeframe, and practices used to achieve temperatures must be documented in the OSP.
4. Certifiers must ensure compliance with 1 through 3 during the site visit.

#### b. Vermicompost Requirements

1. Vermicompost must be made from allowed feedstock materials (either nonsynthetic substances not prohibited for use or synthetic substances approved for use as plant or soil amendments on the National List).
  2. Aerobic conditions must be maintained by regular additions of layers of organic matter, turning, or by employing forced air pipes such that moisture is maintained at 70-90 percent.
  3. The duration of vermicompost must be sufficient to produce a finished product that does not contribute to contamination of crops, soil, or water by plant nutrients, pathogenic organisms, heavy metals, or residues of prohibited substances.
  4. Certifiers must ensure compliance with 1 through 3 during the site visit.
- c. Compost and vermicompost production practices must be described in the operation's OSP, including the type and source of all feedstock materials, a log of the temperatures and timeframe, and practices used to achieve temperatures.
- d. Certified operations are encouraged to measure chemical composition and biological activity. These measurements may include testing feedstock materials and compost for one or more characteristics, including initial and final carbon to nitrogen ratios, stability (using ammonia/nitrate ratio, O<sub>2</sub> demand, CO<sub>2</sub> respiration rate, or other standard tests), pathogenic organisms, or contaminants.

### 3.2. Permitted Uses

Composts and vermicomposts containing animal materials that do not meet the requirements at 3.1 of this policy may be permitted subject to restrictions of § 10203(c)(1), similar to raw animal manure, provided all feedstocks are allowed materials (either nonsynthetic substances not prohibited at NOP regulations § 205.602, or synthetics approved for use as plant or soil amendments).

Compost and vermicompost made without animal materials as feedstock are not restricted in use, in accordance with the provision for uncomposted plant materials at § 10203(c)(3) of the OCal regulations, provided all feedstocks are allowed materials (either nonsynthetic substances not prohibited for use or synthetic substances approved for use as plant or soil amendments on the National List).

## 4. References

National Organic Program Regulations, Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations (7 CFR part 205)



7 CFR § 205.602. Nonsynthetic substances prohibited for use in organic crop production.

**OCal Handbook**

OCal 5006 Processed Animal Manures in OCal Production.