

AN INSIDE LOOK AT JACOB'S FARM



Recordkeeping Case Study: Keeping Records for a Crop Audit

CROP AUDIT TRAIL: RECOUNTING A CROP'S "STORY"

Organic inspectors are required to conduct at least one complete crop audit at each inspection. An audit trail is a recordkeeping system by which a crop may be traced from field to storage to sale. This includes verification of acceptable organic management practices, inputs and products that were used at every point along the way. In short, it tells the "story" of a crop's lifecycle.

Oregon Tilth organic inspector, Andrew Black, maintains that an organic farmer should always try to create a recordkeeping system with this in mind. A good start is outlining all activities for each crop and then creating an ordered list of what records provide verifiable accounting of sound organic practices at every point of the crop's story.

Jacob's Farm in Freedom, California, specializes in growing over 30 varieties of culinary herbs year-round. The farm's production cycle is different from classic crop farm operations; they may plant up to 25 successions of a single variety in multiple farm locations over the course of a year. "Activities that occur only during specific seasons on other farms - like planting and harvesting - we do multiple times a day," says Brenden, director of farming operations. With multiple staff responsible for reporting different records for each succession, the farm compartmentalizes their recordkeeping system. Each succession is broken into steps (planting, growing, harvest, and post harvest), with each step having its own set of activities and records.

COMPONENTS OF A RECORDKEEPING SYSTEM:

Documents
RECORDS RECEIVED
FROM OTHERS SUCH AS
RECEIPTS, PACKAGE LABELS,
INVOICES, CERTIFICATES,
AFFIDAVITS, ETC.

AND

Data
RECORDS THAT
LOG PRODUCTION
ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING
DATES, LOCATIONS,
QUANTITIES, ETC.

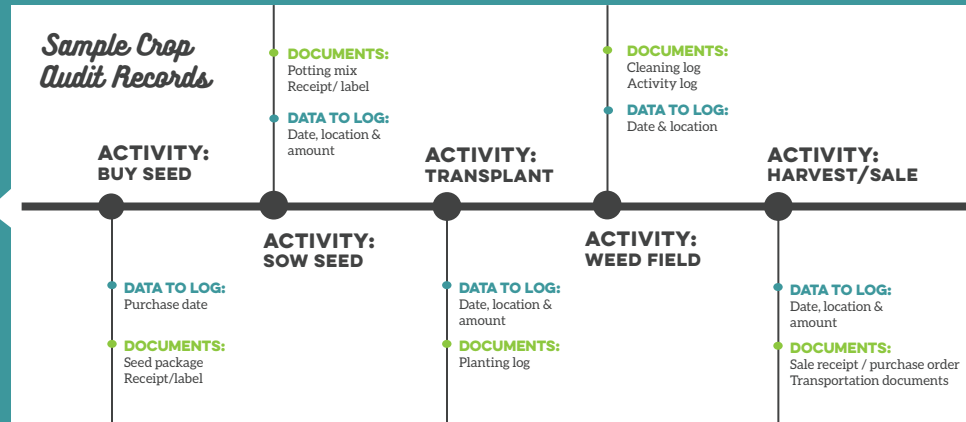
Harvest Log

2015

JACOB'S FARM - CALIFORNIA

DATE	CROP	FIELD	HARVEST
1/2/15	BASIL	3	400 lbs
1/2/15	SAGE	3	50 lbs.
1/5/15	MINT	5	50 lbs.
1/5/15	THYME	3	100lbs.

JACOB'S FARM BEST PRACTICES FOR RECORDKEEPING SYSTEMS



DEVELOP *your PROCEDURE*

Jacob's Farm uses a free online program where records can be uploaded, viewed and updated by any staff member. If using paper records, journals and forms may be strategically placed around the farm to make it convenient for staff to log and access records quickly.



CREATE *your SYSTEM*

Standardize your recordkeeping forms for all crops. "Standardized forms with clear instructions on how to record information ensures that regardless of how many crops you have, or the number of staff that are keeping records, all records will be kept the same way," says Brenden.



WORK *with YOUR TEAM*

Create a job description that gives equal weight to recordkeeping as other farm tasks to help develop a sense of ownership over documentation duties. Conduct trainings and promote a culture that incentivizes good recordkeeping habits.



REVIEW *your RECORDS*

Check your recordkeeping system to account for all steps of an audit. When creating recordkeeping templates or forms, double check that all critical information is collected. See the infographic above for more information on what records to keep for a crop audit.

RESOURCES:

USDA Documentation Forms for Crop Producers (free pdf download)
<https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/summaries/summary.php?pub=358>



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