

Organic – Conservation Cross Training Schedule and Instructor Guide

Introduction

This schedule and instructor guide offers information on the schedule, presentations and activities used to deliver the multi-day cross-training sessions. We encourage others to use the website to access the resources developed for the training and create local adaptations of training materials and sessions. If you deliver training and make use of these resources, please let us know so we may continue to track the outcomes and impacts of this grant-funded project. Email chris@tilth.org

The training session schedule indicates the title and amount of time allocated to each section of the training (shown in black text).

Instructor guidance on relevant sections provides further context and detail on discussion questions, group activities and logistics (shown in green text).

When a section makes use of presentations, handouts and other materials available on the website, the applicable file names are provided (shown in blue text).

Creating Participant Teams

One of the goals of the cross-training sessions is to initiate dialogue and build a network between organic and conservation professionals. The training is structured in a way that recognizes the experience & expertise of the participants. It also encourages an exchange of knowledge & perspective among participants.

In advance of the training, teams of about 5-6 participants are established by the training instructors. The goal is to have a balanced mix of conservation and organic professionals on each team. To the extent possible, participants who regularly work together are separated to encourage new professional contacts and relationships. Each team will work together throughout the multi-day session. If possible, each team is also assigned a training instructor to act as a facilitator and ensure team activities stayed focused and on schedule.

DAY 1: 5:00PM – 8:15PM	
30 Minutes	Arrival and Registration
30 Minutes	Dinner To the extent possible, food served at meals uses regional and organic ingredients. Ask if the chef / cook wants to highlight some of the stories or suppliers providing the food served.
30 Minutes	Introductions All participants share names, professional affiliations and stories of first ag-related job. Good “ice-breaker” activity.
45 Minutes	Organic Trends in the Region (<i>presentation</i>) Presentation provides an overview of regional organic production trends, including growth in number of farms, acreage, crop/livestock types & sectors, and economic value. Organic Trends
1 Hour	Perspectives on Organic and Conservation Connections, <i>Video Compilation (facilitated discussion among teams)</i> Video offers responses to three questions posed to panel of guest speakers with varied professional background/perspective. Pause video after each of the 3 questions and set of panelist responses to that question. For each question, groups have 15 minutes to share “what you heard that resonates with your experience/perspective” and also “was anything you heard different from your experience/perspective.” Facilitators ensure all group members have chance to talk. Organics and Conservation – Growing Trends for Sustainable Agriculture video
	Adjourn

DAY 2: 8:00AM – 5:30PM	
15 Minutes	Cross-Training Project, Partners, and Objectives Instructor offers brief introduction and training overview. Share primary goals: • Initiate dialogue & build network/relationships • Improve coordination • Identify any discrepancies between standards & recommendations • Find solutions to conservation practices that pose challenges for organic certification • Benefit producers who navigate a maze of regulations to develop sustainable farms Discuss Team structure and purpose: • You are the experts; recognize knowledge in room • Activities will have you work together • Draw upon your unique expertise & tools • Exchange knowledge / perspective
15 Minutes	Participant Expectations for Training (<i>facilitated group discussion</i>) Instructor solicits from participants their expectations. What do they hope to learn? What do they want to discuss? Specific topics/issues of interest? Capture on flip chart to guide/inform training activities.
15 Minutes	Pre-test Two different tests, one for each professional audience (organic and conservation). Conservation Pre & Post Test (For organic professionals) Organic Pre & Post Test (For conservation professionals)
30 Minutes	NRCS and Organic Certification: Similarities & Differences Objective of this section is to compare USDA, NRCS and Organic Certification from perspective of history and structure of programs. Highlight varying missions with common goals and approaches. If there are not too many participants (3 teams maximum), then this section can be done as team activity, where each team gets different topic to address (10-15 minutes team discussion) and share summary with entire group (3-5 minutes each group). Differences & Similarities of Organic Certification and NRCS Programs (group activity handouts) If the training has a larger number of participants, then this section can also be done as a presentation, with two presenters, one with organic expertise and the other with NRCS expertise, sharing history and structure of respective programs. Presentation has slides which prompt group discussion. Organic & NRCS History of Differences and Similarities

2 Hours 45 Minutes (including 15-minute break)	This section is the only time during the training that participants are separated by area of professional expertise / experience (organic or conservation). The concurrent presentations provide an overview of the basic process and standards involved with NRCS program delivery and organic certification. Organic professionals will learn about the conservation planning process, evaluation tools and standards. Conservation professionals will learn about the organic certification process, standards and organic management practices.	
	Organic Professional Track (<i>presentations</i>) - Steps 1-6 Planning Process - Conservation Planning - Cropland Inventory Short Course - Conservation Planning RUSLE2 Basic - Conservation Planning WIN PST - SVAP Presentation - F&W Inventories	Conservation Professional Track (<i>presentations</i>) - Organic Certification: History, Roles, & Process, - Organic Production: Principles, Standards, and Practices
30 Minutes	Organic and Conservation Jeopardy Review (<i>entire group game</i>) After completing concurrent professional track presentations, participants are placed back into teams to compete in a game of Jeopardy that reviews topics covered. Depending on the Jeopardy category, different members of the team are eligible to provide answers. Conservation professionals may answer for categories “Certification Standards and Process” and “Organic Management Practices.” Organic professionals may answer for categories “SWAPA” (Soil, Water, Air, Plants, Animals) and “Conservation Standards & Process.” All team members may answer in the “Soil Management” category. Jeopardy.ppt	
45 Minutes	Lunch	
30 Minutes	Orientation to In-Field Assessment Activities Instructors explain objectives of first day in the field and review the handouts associated with in-field assessment activities while visiting host farm. Teams will work together to answer questions about the organic management practices and how they comply with USDA organic standards. Teams will also conduct an initial natural resource inventory and assessment.	
15 Minutes	Quick Break and Load Bus	

30 Minutes	Travel to Host Farm (<i>transportation provided</i>)
1 Hour	Farm Tour Farm owner/manager provides a tour of the farm site. Topics discussed include farm overview (acres/crops/livestock), crop nutrient management, pest management (weeds, insects, disease), contamination avoidance as well as marketing and economic considerations. Participants are invited to ask questions during the tour to assist with assessment activities and objectives.
1 Hour 15 minutes	In-Field Assessments: Organic and Conservation Perspectives Following the tour, teams continue in-field assessment activities. Each team visits different parts of the farm, ideally showcasing different production aspects and natural resources. Working in their teams, participants are asked to complete two handouts with as much information as possible. NRCS Farm Evaluation and Resource Inventory Checklist Organic System Plan Questionnaire Participants are provided with the following resources and references to assist with in-field assessment activities: NRCS Custom Soil Resource Report for host farm site/fields (including site map) National Organic Program Summary Organic Practice Guide NCAT NRCS-NOP Correlation Chart
15 Minutes	Meet Up to Report Findings (<i>Entire group</i>) Before loading bus to return to class site, teams discuss with entire group their findings from field assessments. Some questions to prompt discussion include: - What did conservation professionals notice and identify? - What did organic professionals notice and identify? - What were common elements of organic compliance assessment and natural resource inventory and evaluation? - What were differences between the two assessment perspectives?
30 Minutes	Return to in-class training site (<i>transportation provided</i>)
	Adjourn - <i>Evening Free</i>

DAY 3: 8:15AM – 8:15PM (with 2-hour late-afternoon break)	
15 Minutes	Meet at in-class training site (<i>Load bus</i>)
30 Minutes	Travel to Host Farm (<i>transportation provided</i>)
1 Hour 45 minutes	Soil Quality Indicators: Principles and Field Activities (<i>presentation, followed by team activity</i>) Presentation and interactive discussion with entire group in the field on soil quality. Topics include soil functions, disturbance (chemical and physical), nutrient cycling (nitrogen, phosphorous) in different types of soils, roles of living plants with respect to soils, and Soil Organic Matter. Teams are then sent to different sections of farm site, ideally with different soil quality, to conduct in-field soil quality evaluation activities. Groups are provided with necessary tools and equipment to conduct soil quality evaluations. They must record observations and findings from following activities: <u>Dig trench</u> – soil life, soil colors (horizons), compaction layers, organic matter <u>Soil probe</u> – how deep can you go? evidence of compaction layer? <u>Soil infiltration rings</u> – time how quickly water is infiltrated / absorbed <u>Aggregate stability</u> – what happens to soil clod when gently placed in cup of water?
1 Hour 15 Minutes	Management Scenarios: In-field observations (<i>team activity</i>) Each team is provided with a sheet of “management scenarios” that present a series of site-specific, inquiry-based scenarios that require participants to draw upon their collective knowledge to evaluate options. Teams gather in-field observations and data relative to the various management scenarios presented to them for use in developing recommendations to address each scenario. Management scenarios are designed to highlight the balance between achieving farm production objectives, conserving natural resources and maintaining organic certification compliance. Management Scenarios (different handouts for each farm and crop system)
30 Minutes	Return to in-class training site (<i>transportation provided</i>)

45 Minutes	Lunch
15 Minutes	Orientation to Resource CD Instructor demonstrates electronic resource CD that compiles electronic files and web-based links from appropriate agencies and organizations on relevant conservation and organic resources. When installed in a computer, the electronic resource CD can be used to easily create bookmarks, grouped by topic, in the user's internet browser, thereby providing a mechanism for easy reference and use of resources. CD contents page on website
1 hour 30 minutes <i>(including 15-minute break)</i>	Scenarios: Classroom work to develop recommendations using available tools and information (<i>team activity</i>) Teams work independently to develop proposed recommendations in response to the various management scenarios they were presented. NRCS employees may choose to use evaluation tools such as RUSLE2 and WIN_PST to inform recommendations. As a team, they develop "best practice" options taking into consideration their observations in the field, organic standards compliance, natural resource quality criteria and their collective professional experience.
1 Hour 15 Minutes	Team Reports on Soil Quality Findings and Scenario Solutions Each team is given 15-20 minutes to present to the entire group the results of their soil quality evaluation activities, describing where on the farm site the soil evaluation was conducted. The teams also share some of the management scenarios they considered and the recommendations for solutions to the scenarios presented.
2-hour Break	Break — <i>Free until dinner</i>
45 Minutes	Dinner
1 Hour 15 Minutes	Producer Panel: Farmers' experiences with organic and conservation practices Assemble a panel of 3-4 local organic producers, ideally representing different types of production as well as size/scale, typical for the region. Producers are each given about 10-15 minutes to provide an overview of their farm operation. Encourage producers to bring photos (slides, digital) to show the audience. Then producers answer three questions (which they received in advance of panel to prepare responses) about organic production and natural resource conservation. Allow 15-20 minutes discussion for each of the three questions. Instructor facilitates discussion and Q&A with audience. Producer Panel Questions Adjourn

DAY 4: 8:00AM – 11:00AM	
1 Hour 30 Minutes	Specialized topic (<i>presentation</i>) A specialized presentation that directly relates to the organic production system observed at the host farm visited during the training. Following are examples of the presentations given at each of the four different organic production systems highlighted in the 2009 cross-training series. Dairy topic: Managed intensive grazing and livestock nutrition from pasture Grain topic: Organic weed management Tree Fruit topic: Integrated Plant Protection Strategies and Organic Systems Annual Vegetable topic: Integrated Plant Protection Strategies and Organic Systems
15 Minutes	Revisit Participant Expectations for Training Instructor goes through list of expectations identified on morning of Day 2. Brief discussion and review of how presentations and team activities addressed expectations.
45 Minutes	Cross-Training for Change: Take-Home Strategies for Conservation and Organic Professionals (<i>facilitated discussion among teams</i>) Each team member shares their answer to the following questions: What was your “ah-ha” moment in the training? How will you apply the new information and resources you’ve learned? How will you share what you’ve learned with your colleagues and clients? Facilitators ensure all group members have chance to talk.
15 Minutes	Post-test Distribute the same two tests taken at beginning of training, one for each professional audience (organic and conservation). Conservation Pre & Post Test (For organic professionals) Organic Pre & Post Test (For conservation professionals)
15 Minutes	Training evaluations and Participant Feedback Adjourn