CERES Policy

Organic Beekeeping Certification under the US National Organic Program (NOP)

1	Background	NOP has not yet defined specific rules for organic beekeeping. Certifiers are authorised, however, to apply the general NOP livestock standard to beekeeping. This is the purpose of the present Policy.
2	Normative framework	NOP § 205.236 through 205.239 define rules for organic livestock production, which also apply for beekeeping.
		The NOSB Apiculture taskforce developed a recommendation in 2001. An updated recommendation was published in October 2010.
		Among others, this recommendation includes the following provisions:
		§205.240(d): "*The producer must maintain colonies on land that is managed in accordance with the provisions in §205.202 through §205.207. All apiaries and transportation activities must be included in the OSP and approved prior to movement.*"
		(e): "*The producer must provide bees with water and organic feed by:*
		(1) managing the forage zone as certified organic (either as crop or wild harvest) under the provisions of §205.202 through §205.207."
3	Terms	§205.2 **Terms defined: "*Forage zone.*** *Land or bodies of water, within a 1.8 mile (3 km) radius of the edge of the apiary/bee yard which provides bees with water, nectar, honeydew, pollen and propolis.*"
		CERES understands this term only refers to places that are actually or potentially visited by bees, not e.g. to lawns that have neither flowering plants nor honeydew.
4	Policy	
4.1	Basic decision	As long as there is no official beekeeping standard under NOP, CERES will follow the NOSB recommendation from October 2010.
4.2	Forage zone	While most provisions in the NOSB recommendation are straight forward and very similar to Reg. (EC) 834/07, the above quoted rules for the forage zone are quite challenging for many beekeepers and require further implementation rules.
4.2.1	Options for forage zone certification	The following options exist for complying with these forage zone rules:

Forage zone	Procedure
Certified organic farm land	None additional
Natural vegetation	Must be certified as wild harvest area in the course of the beekeeping certification. For this purpose, the criteria established in the NOSB recommendation apply, while further conditions defined in the CERES wild collection policy are not applicable because beekeeping does not constitute a threat to biodiversity or habitat conservation.
Zero input farm land owned by the beekeeper	Provided the conditions of §205.202 through 205.207 are met, the land can be certified organic in the course of beekeeper certification. This includes use of organic seeds (if commercially available), soil conservation, crop

			rotation and non use of prohibited substances. CERES considers that composting require-ments for livestock manure are not relevant for beekeeping.
		Zero input farmland owned by others.	The beekeeper must sign subcontracts with land owners where land owners commit themselves to keeping the above mentioned rules of organic crop production, while the beekeeper is responsible for monitoring farming practices.
4.3	**Beekeeper group certification:**		
	Beekeeper group certification, using Internal Control Systems, is handled in an equivalent way as grower group certification. As long as the NOP does not adopt a final standard for group certification, the National Organic Standard Board (NOSB) recommendation from Nov. 2008, published at http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5074507&acct=nosb must be considered as the valid legal reference. Beekeeper groups must comply with the provisions in this recommendation. For further details, see the CERES Group Certification Policy.		
5	**Related documents**	• 3.2.4 Brief Information Beekeeping • 4.1.3 CERES Policy Organic Group Certification • 4.3.4 Organic Management Plan Beekeeping • 4.3.4.1 Organic Management Plan Beekeeping Groups • 7.4.8 Subcontract Farms for Beekeeping	