

WHAT DOES IT REPRESENT?



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INTRODUCTION and UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY

The farm as a living organism

Biodynamic farming is free of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers in the same manner as certified organic farming. In order to qualify for Demeter® Biodynamic status a farm must first meet the same 3 year transition requirement that NOP certified organic farming requires. The farm must also actively manage the farm according to the Demeter standards for a minimum of 2 years. Demeter also requires a careful examination and eventual reduction of the volume of imported materials necessary to sustain the life of the farm.

What distinguishes a Demeter certified Biodynamic farm from a certified organic farm is that, in its entirety, a Demeter Biodynamic farm is managed as a living organism. This is the fundamental principal of the Biodynamic farming method. The special body of knowledge which underlies Biodynamic agriculture, insofar as this knowledge extends beyond previous practical and scientific experiences, is derived from Rudolf Steiner's "Agricultural Course", and the spiritual context of Anthroposophy, within which this Course was originally held.

The Biodynamic method dates back to 1924 and is one of the original approaches to organized organic farming worldwide. In day to day practice Biodynamic farming involves managing a farm within the context of the principles of a living organism. A concise model of a living organism ideal would be a wilderness forest. In such a system there is a high degree of self-sufficiency in all of the realms of biological survival. Fertility and feed arises out of the recycling of the organic material the system generates. Avoidance of pest species is based on biological vigor and its intrinsic biological and genetic diversity. Water is efficiently cycled through the system.

While agriculture immediately takes nature to a state that is one step removed from wilderness, the wisdom of humanity that steers its course can to a large degree mimic these ancient principles of sustainability based on a careful observation of nature as a whole. Demeter/Aurora certification requires a documented evolution towards this ideal. In the realm of day-to-day practice this requires a farming system that is minimally dependant on imported inputs for its survival. It requires holistic farm management where inputs that otherwise would need to be imported from outside arise from within the living dynamics of the farm

itself. Demeter/Aurora certification requires that as much as possible a farm be **regenerative** rather than **degenerative**. Consider carefully materials that are imported onto the modern day organic farm. Where do they come from? Often they can be tracked back to a natural resource provided by the earth. Examples of such inputs include petroleum to move materials around, ancient mineral deposits, by-products of unsustainable agriculture-related industry, and the life of the seas and water ways. An important social value of Biodynamic farming is that it does not depend on the mining of the earth's natural resource base. Instead it emphasizes contributing to it.

Looked at in its widest view, the scale of this farm organism extends beyond the fence line of the farm and includes the tangible and intangible forces that work through it. Examples of such "forces" include the climate, inherent wildlife of the earth (above and below the ground), the light and warmth from the sun and the focusing of even more distant cosmic influences through the other planetary members of our sun's solar system.

The Biodynamic method of farming attempts to align all of the factors that stream through a living farm system in a harmonious manner. The food that results is very true to its essence and in this manner provides deeply penetrating nutrition that is medicinal to an increasingly unstable human existence.

Concerning the mechanics of certification for such self-contained entities, it is not possible to apply required threshold levels to the spectrum of all farms involved with Demeter certification. Instead Demeter certification approaches each farm as a unique individuality with its own beginning point and inherited environmental and social conditions. What is critical to Demeter Biodynamic certification is that a farm evolves towards its maximum potential as a **self-contained individuality**, given its own unique set of circumstances. Some applicants may enter this program very close to this maximum potential. Others will require an evolution towards it. While Demeter is here to provide an assurance that the standards that follow are being met, it is also here to nurture willing farmers and their systems towards this ideal. There is a purpose greater than providing market niches to this project.

I. AGRONOMIC GUIDELINES

1) **Necessary Elements of the Farm Organism**

1a) **Biological diversity within the farm landscape**

(1a1) Any given Demeter certified farm must have a minimum of 10% of its total effective land base acting as a biodiversity reserve. The function of this is to preserve wild life diversity, endangered species habitat and provide an over all reserve of diverse life forms to inoculate and inhabit the farm organism.

If the farm borders wild areas that are clearly protected such bordering activity can be considered but in such situations there also needs to be botanical corridors through the farm that allows for migration of beneficial life forms from the periphery into the center of the farming system. This can be area that is not intensively cropped or area that is intentionally developed, such as hedgerows, wetlands, insectory strips etc. . Environmentally

beneficial grazing techniques [in compliance with section 5e] and low impact wild harvest can occur in such areas but such situations will be handled on a case by case basis. Naturally occurring on farm realties such as fence lines, wetlands, forests, grass lands etc. also count towards this 10%.

(1a2) In situations where there is no potential biodiversity reserve occurring naturally it is expected that such areas are created with in the landscape. Some examples of this include insectory plantings, hedgerows, flowering cover crops, bird boxes, perennial plantings along fence lines and roadways, and wildlife corridors.)

1b) Diversity in crop rotation or perennial planting schemes

(1b1) Tillable acreage can not be planted only to a monoculture. Botanical species diversity needs to be maintained via the crop rotation strategies utilized.

(1b2) In annual crop rotations a given harvested commodity can not be planted in the same field for more than 2 years in succession. Close attention needs to be paid to the nutrient export associated with each harvested commodity. The crop should not return to a given field until there has been adequate time to return exported nutrients in a manner consistent with these standards.

1c) Land base needs to maintain adequate green cover

Bare tillage year round is prohibited. Soil must be adequately protected from the degradation of soil erosion and soil structure degradation during periods of the year when it is vulnerable to such degradation. Adequate crop residue and, at a minimum, volunteer vegetative cover must protect any and all fields of cultivation during these periods (for example winter months, rainy seasons, etc.).

1d) The foundation of the fertility system needs to be based on strategies that emphasize generating fertility from within the life of the farm.

It needs to be demonstrated that the following fertility management techniques are utilized to their maximum potential, when applicable, for a given site **before** a farm can import allowed fertility materials. There are also limitations on the amount of fertility that can be imported (see Soil Fertility Management section 2):

- A) Integrating livestock
- B) Green manure
- C) Legumes/nutrient catch crops in rotation.
- D) Use of Biodynamic preparations
- E) Careful crop rotation

1e) The foundation of disease and insect control needs to be based on strategies that emphasize prevention located within the life of the farm itself (see Pest Control section 4a).

It needs to be demonstrated that the following pest control techniques, when applicable, are utilized to their maximum potential **before** allowed pest control materials can be imported:

- A) Botanical species diversity
- B) Predator habitat,
- C) Biological antagonism,
- D) Balanced crop nutrition
- E) Attention to light penetration and airflow
- F) Conscious use of the Biodynamic preparations
- G) Crop rotation

1f) The foundation of weed control needs to be based on strategies that emphasize prevention located within the life of the farm itself (see Weed Control section 4b)

It needs to be demonstrated that the following weed control techniques, when applicable, are utilized to their maximum potential before allowed weed control materials (including petroleum to run tractors) can be imported:

- A) Timing of planting
- B) Understanding of weed species life cycle
- C) Adjusting fertility conditions that promote certain weed species
- D) Shade/crop canopy
- E) Mulching
- F) Crop rotation
- G) Identifying and avoiding the spread of invasive weed species

1g) The foundation of irrigation needs has to be based on strategies that emphasize water conservation

It needs to be demonstrated that the following water conservation measures are utilized to their maximum potential.

- A) Development of soil organic matter.
- B) Mulching , in instances where mulching can be practically applied.
- C) Efficient irrigation delivery systems where such systems can be practically applied.

1h) Demeter certified livestock need to be fed with farm-produced Biodynamic feed (see Livestock)

80 % of a certified livestock's feed ration must be produced on the certified farm they inhabit.