Job Title: Certification Specialist

Employee Status: 40 hrs./wk., Salaried; Exempt

Salary Range for Position: $47,000-$62,000

Summary Description: The Certification Specialist will verify the organic production practices of our organic producers. Major duties include reviewing organic system plans and inspection reports, assessing compliance to the organic regulations and VOF guidelines and assisting producers with the certification process. The Certification Specialist may work with organic producers across all production types and certification scopes, including crops, livestock, handling & processing, and maple.

Location: Richmond, VT Office (Mostly remote with some office time per week required)

Reports to: Operations Manager

Responsibilities include:

● Serve as primary contact for assigned certified and new producers across all production types and certification scopes, with a target assignment load of 180 producers.
● Review certification applications, inspection reports and supporting documentation and determine compliance status for certified and new producers in a timely manner.
● Review and track new applications to ensure timely review and communicate application status to producers.
● Conduct reviews of mid-year OSP updates such as review of new products, new labels, new inputs, new suppliers/ingredients, new fields, etc. and communicate the findings of the review to the producer.
● Provide written and verbal instructions to VOF producers regarding compliance to all applicable standards.
● Provide information to persons requesting organic certification and respond to producer requests for information regarding their certification.
● Make autonomous or semi-autonomous decisions about client compliance with USDA NOP and other organic standards and communicates those decisions to producers.
● Implement certification policies and procedures.
● Track and manage outstanding noncompliances and adverse actions for assigned certification files.
● Work with Operations Manager to respond to rebuttals and appeals of adverse certification decisions.
● Ensure that database records and server files are organized, consistent and current for assigned certification files.
● Support the development and maintenance of certification forms and documents including informational materials to aid producers with NOP compliance.
● Maintain an understanding of the USDA National Organic Program regulations, as well as VOF policy and procedures.
● Keep up to date with allowed and prohibited materials, and work with Material Review Specialist to identify and communicate material issues to producers.
● Communicate with inspectors as far as appropriate workload and scheduling of assignments for new and certified producers.
• Provide evaluative feedback on inspectors and the quality of inspection reports by conducting a minimum of 3 Inspection Report Evaluations for each inspector whom files are assigned to.
• Communicate with inspectors as necessary to resolve questions that arise as a result of Inspection Report review.
• Conduct on-site inspections of applicants requesting certification as needed.
• Assist with preparation for and attend Inspector Training.
• Assist with marketing of certified growers and VOF label in general when needed.
• Present certification information to producers and consumers when needed.
• Work with NOFA-VT’s and other partner’s technical assistance programs to help producers get through the certification process successfully and identify areas of need.
• Assist with residue testing and unannounced inspection assignments and review.
• Participate in VOF staff meetings.
• Assist with preparation for and attend VOF Annual Meeting as needed.
• Assist with Review Committee work and attend meetings, as needed.
• Any other task relevant to these duties or the mission of the organization as assigned by supervisor.

Additional Responsibilities:
• Attend bi-weekly NOFA-VT/VOF joint staff meetings
• Represent VOF at NOFA Winter Conference and assist in the organization and operations of the annual NOFA-VT Winter Conference as needed.
• Represent VOF at NOFA-VT Board Meetings when applicable
• Facilitate a minimum of 2 NOFA-VT events annually

Qualifications
Knowledge: Hands-on experience with diverse organic and sustainable agriculture; Knowledge of organic and sustainable farming in Vermont preferred; Knowledge of food science/food processing.

Education & Training: Bachelor’s degree or equivalent work experience; preferably in food science, agriculture or environmental science or related field; Familiarity with regulatory compliance; Knowledge of organic standards and regulations; Familiarity with certification procedures.

Skills: Analytical problem solving ability; Ability to manage multiple priorities and perform within deadlines; Excellent communication; writing and interpersonal skills; Computer proficiency: word processing; spreadsheets; internet research; databases (Salesforce experience a plus!); Excellent organizational skills; Exceptional attention to detail; One or more years experience in a professional office environment preferred; IOIA Organic Inspector training; auditor training for food quality production systems or similar field preferred; Experience with quality auditing or regulatory compliance auditing preferred.

Capabilities: Able to work with minimal supervision while understanding the necessity for communicating and coordinating work efforts with others; Must be able to develop a workplan and perform in a team environment; Understands and appreciates importance of extraordinary customer service; Strong interest in and commitment to promoting the goals of VOF.

Conditions: Minimal physical requirements other than occasional light lifting; Valid driver’s license; Moderate statewide and occasional out-of-state travel required.