Welcome to the second of three training modules on WSU’s Pesticide Policy. I’m Megan Miller and during this video I’ll go into more detail on how the policy applies to organic systems and those who work with organic pesticides. If you haven’t done so already, you should go through the overview training module, which provides some important basic background information.

Since personnel working in organic systems are used to looking for a separate set of rules that apply only to organic production, this video consolidates all of the information they need about the WSU Pesticide Policy in one place. If you are already very familiar with the policy, or have significant experience working with conventional pesticides, the difference can be summed up in one phrase: organic pesticides are regulated exactly the same as conventional pesticides in all respects by The United States Environmental Protection Agency or USEPA, and the Washington State Department of Agriculture or WSDA.

Before we go into the details, we need to make sure that everyone understands the legal definition of the terms “pesticide” and “pest”. A pesticide is defined as such by its use, not its physical or chemical components. It is any substance or mixture of substances that kills, repels or mitigates a pest (or acts as adjuvant, defoliant, and desiccant or plant regulator).

A pest is defined by its action...something that causes problems...not by its phylogeny. So don’t fall into the trap of thinking that the term “pesticide” only refers to conventional insecticides. The term covers both conventional and NOP-approved substances and all manner of pests. An organic example of material that is both NOP-approved and a pesticide is mustard meal when it’s incorporated into the soil to act as a fumigant.

The most common misstep that personnel make is to think that if a product is certified as organic that it somehow is automatically registered as a pesticide. Let’s compare and contrast the different regulatory systems for organic certification and pesticide registration.

For legal use in organic systems, a material must come from approved sources, as determined by the national organic program. When dealing with formulated products, the seller pays a USDA-approved certifying agency to review it and, if acceptable, issue approval. That approval is usually displayed as a graphic, or seal of approval on the package, for easy consumer recognition. These certification agencies are focused on the NOP regulations and are not approving material for pesticide registration.
Slide 7.  Pesticides are regulated by USEPA and WSDA using an entirely different set of regulations than organic regulations. Although USEPA has some categories of materials it doesn’t class as pesticides, WSDA has more stringent regulations. Examples of these include adjuvants and 25b products.

Slide 8.  Remember this rule of thumb: if a material claims to be a pesticide, by its uses, then it becomes a pesticide and must be registered as such.

Slide 9.  Our earlier example of mustard meal illustrated this concept very well. It is an allowable substance under NOP but is considered a pesticide by USEPA so it has to have a registration.

Slide 10.  Thank you for taking time to learn about WSU pesticide policies related to organic systems. This has been the first of three videos about organic systems. Please continue on for more information. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Dr. Catherine Daniels or WSPRS and we will be glad to help.

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[Updated contact information, January 2020: For assistance, please contact Lenora Jones, lenora.jones@wsu.edu, 253-445-4517, or visit the WSPRS website at https://extension.wsu.edu/wsprs/employees/.]