



## How do biodynamic farming practices *differ* from the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP)?

### Practical Differences

- ∞ A **farm is a self-contained organism**. An agricultural philosophy and practice which limits the amount of farm imports by creating all nutrient inputs for the farm on the farm. The intent is to maximize the energy flow coming into the farm by using the resources from the farm. For example, growing medicinal herbs for homeopathic applications, and maintaining livestock on the farm in order to supply compost production with manure.
- ∞ Maintaining a **highly defined ecosystem** by recycling all organic matter. For example all composting must happen on the farm. All imported manures and clippings must be composted on farm.
- ∞ Biodynamic farmers seek **nutrient self-sufficiency, soil husbandry; and use Biodynamic preparations to build soil health through enlivened compost**. These preventive measures increase soil fertility and build up populations of beneficial insects (insects who feed on bad bugs), therefore eliminating the use of any type of chemicals for pest control.
- ∞ The biodynamic practitioner's intent is to produce compost in such a way as to lose as few nutritional elements as possible, while incorporating various dynamic practices. Biodynamic farming looks upon the **soil as a living organism** and regards the maintenance and furtherance of soil life as fundamentally essential in order to preserve the soil's fertility for generations to come.
- ∞ **No animal rendered product** can be used in the field and/or for animal feed supplement, for example, bone, blood, hoof and horn meal are prohibited as fertilizers.
- ∞ **Crops for human use cannot be grown under high voltage power lines.**
- ∞ **Chilean nitrate (aka sodium nitrate) is prohibited**. Chilean nitrate is a mined source of highly soluble nitrogen. It is used in agricultural production systems as a fertilizer where traditional methods such as cover cropping, rotations, and composting are considered inadequate sources of nitrogen. Currently the NOP restricts its use to not more than twenty percent of the total nitrogen budget per cropping cycle.
- ∞ **No adulteration can be used to enhance yield and size of plants**; for example no plant hormones, such as gibberillic acid are used (typically used on grapes and a widely accepted input on the use of certified organic grapes).
- ∞ **Biological Practices** include very well known organic farming techniques that improve soil and plant health. These methods are **required** for certified biodynamic farms, they are not optional as they are with certified organic operations. The agricultural methods include composting, the use of cover crops, crop rotation, green manures, liquid manures, and the use of herbal tea extracts.
- ∞ The **Demeter Association, Inc.** certifies farms as Biodynamic®. Biodynamic agriculture is the oldest certified ecological farming system and has been an assurance of quality since 1928. Demeter Association, Inc. (the US branch) certified its first Biodynamic farm in 1982.

## Dynamic Differences

The Biodynamic movement originated in 1924 in a series of lectures by the Austrian scientist and philosopher, Dr. Rudolf Steiner. Steiner is the founder of the Anthroposophical movement. Anthroposophy, which means the wisdom of man, refers to what Steiner called "spiritual science." Anthroposophy articulates a broad spiritual view of the human being set within the context of man's past, present and future evolution. It encompasses a profound awareness and utmost respect for both the visible and invisible forces that continue to shape human life.

Biodynamics is a science of life-forces, a recognition of the basic principles at work in nature, and an approach to agriculture which takes these principles into account to bring about balance and healing.

Biodynamics is an ongoing path of knowledge rather than an assemblage of methods and techniques, or a mere substitution of synthetic materials for non-synthetic (organic) materials.

- ∞ The biodynamic farmer tends to be a **lifelong student** of Anthroposophy: The study of man and his spiritual relationship with the universe.
- ∞ The use of **cosmic rhythms**: The movement and presence of the sun, moon, planets and stars contributes to the life, growth and form of the plant. The movement or rhythm of each cosmic force can be incorporated in the timing of ground preparation, sowing, cultivation and harvest of a crop.
- ∞ The **use of herbal compost preparations** to control disease and pests. They are developed to help moderate and regulate biological processes as well as enhance and strengthen the life forces on the farm. Steiner provided indications for nine preparations for the purpose of enhancing soil quality and stimulating plant life. They consist of mineral, plant, or animal extracts, some are aged or fermented and applied in small proportions to compost piles, soil, or directly onto plants. An example of a homeopathic remedy for fungal diseases in plants is preparation 508, which is prepared from Silica-rich horsetail plant (*Equisetum arvense*). This is one of many examples of biodynamic herbal preparations which replace toxic synthetic/organic chemicals.
- ∞ The use of **homeopathic field sprays** to enhance plant fertility. A small amount of biodynamic preparations is diluted and used as soil or foliar sprays. An example of a field spray would be biodynamic preparations 500 or 501. Preparation 501 – horn silica is made from powdered quartz and cow horn; it is diluted into water and applied as a foliar spray. Water is the carrier therefore the energy which comes from the preparation is released when it is stirred into a water solution. This preparation stimulates and regulates plant growth.
- ∞ The use of the ancient practice, **farming with planetary rhythms**: Lunar and astrological cycles play a key role in timing biodynamic practices, such as the making of biodynamic preparations and planting and cultivation schedules. Recognition of celestial influences on plant growth are part of the biodynamic consciousness which recognizes that subtle energy forces affect biological systems. The most prominently known biodynamic agricultural calendar in the United States is Stella Natura – it contains daily and monthly astrological details, and lists suggested times for planting root, leaf, flowering, and fruiting crops.

***Ultimately, the goals of biodynamics is to bring...***

- ∞ ***The unique aspects of the farm to a point where it is recognized in the quality of the farm products that come out of it.***
- ∞ ***The vitality of the heavens to bear in food production, so that the consumers of biodynamic product are enlivened in both health and in spirit.***

To learn more about Marian Farms, Biodynamic farming and our Products see our website.

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