

# Aquaponics Inspection Guidelines

## Please read this now to ensure your certification remains in good standing.

- You are responsible for making the arrangements to have your farm inspected (no one else will set them up for you). However, if you need assistance finding an inspector or finding out if an inspector is valid, we are here to help.
- Inspections shall be conducted annually (4-month grace period) ideally by different qualified inspectors each year.
- Visit the CNG map online at [Farms and Apiaries](#) to see which CNG producers are near you.
- No Trading: To avoid a conflict of interest, there is no trading inspections within two consecutive years. If Farmer A inspects Farmer B's farm, then Farmer B should not inspect Farmer A's farm until
  - At least 24 months have passed, or
  - Farmer A has been inspected by someone other than Farmer B.
- Do not repeatedly rely on the same inspector when there are other CNG producers nearby. Doing so risks compromising the integrity of the program, shortchanges you by not giving you diverse perspectives on your operation, and puts you at risk of having your inspection report be considered invalid. Repeating the same inspector two years in a row requires an Observer (see [Include An Observer](#)).
- You may be de-listed from the CNG program if you do not arrange an inspection for your farm in a timely manner.
- You may be de-listed from the CNG program if you do not conduct an inspection of another CNG aquaponics farm when there is one within an hour's drive that needs an inspection. If there is not another CNG aquaponics producer within an hour's drive who needs an inspection, the work requirement may be fulfilled by reviewing the inspection documents from another aquaponic operation seeking certification, provided by CNG staff. If no inspection reports require reviewing, the work requirement may be waived for that year.
- Inspections by family members, employees and interns are not considered valid.

## Types of Inspectors

- Another Aquaponic Producer: If possible, have your inspection done by another aquaponics producer in your area whose operation is CNG or certified organic. Alternatively, you may rely on a non-certified aquaponic producer. Remember the rules on trading and repeating inspectors above. Most CNG aquaponics producers will likely be located great distances from one another, at least in the first few years, so as an alternative you may rely on one of the other inspectors listed below. Please note, we don't expect anyone to drive more than an hour in order to conduct an inspection of another CNG operation.
- Aquaponics Instructors/Educators: If there isn't another aquaponics producer in your area, see if you can find an instructor of aquaponics who would be available to conduct your inspection. Your local university may be a good resource.
- Hydroponics Producer: This is another option, though someone with experience in aquaponics production is preferable if available.
- Produce farmer who is using natural practices: If there are no inspectors of the above types within an hour's drive who are able to conduct an inspection, producers may rely on a soil-based Produce farmer to serve as an inspector provided that the farmer is a) approved in advance by CNG staff and b) reviews an informational document provided by CNG prior to the inspection. Additionally, once the inspection materials are submitted, they will be reviewed by an aquaponics producer or review committee. This review may turn up questions or concerns that must be addressed before the inspection requirement is considered to have been fulfilled.
- Customers (3 or more): This option is only to be used by members who have had at least two inspections conducted by one of the options listed above. Invite 3 customers to visit at the same time, when things are interesting and active (and you'll be able to spare a couple hours). One customer will complete the inspection forms while the other two should be given a blank page to write down their notes. They will all sign the Summary Page and share their contact information on the following pages. The inspection forms are designed to walk people who don't know a lot about farming through a meaningful inspection process.

## Tips for success

Look at the Map online at [Farms and Apiaries](#) to find CNG members near you. Search by zip code!

Use the telephone! Email is fine for initial outreach, but a follow up phone call will get much better results.

Follow up! If your inspector made vague plans to come by, but never did, go ahead and give them another call. A friendly reminder is usually all that's needed to get the job done. Or, if necessary, find someone else to inspect.