APPENDIX S1: THE ORGANIC AUDIT IN PRACTICE

In addition to interviewing farmers and inspectors, I also attended several organic inspections. The following exchange epitomized the way in which farmers and inspectors worked together to negotiate an imperfect certification procedure, while remaining loyal to their shared moral economy.

"Some of these people I've visited for ten years," the inspector told me, wanting to give some context for the audit I was about to witness. "They're my family. I want to know how the kids are. I want to know the dog died."

The inspector showed me one of his forms, explaining that there wasn't enough space for all the fields the farmer had requested, since he’d had to separate out organic from first and second-year transition fields, border strips, and conventional plantings - and designate a different "field" for each crop. "So I'll make a list and append it as an attachment and before that I'll get [farmer] to sign the form, trusting me to get that right," the inspector told me. He wasn't going to sweat small acreages, particularly unplanned ones, the inspector told me. "If he ran out of wheat seed and seeded three acres of barley, I don't bother writing that down," he said. "It's too cumbersome."

"He doesn't have any idea how many acres he has," the inspector said of the farmer, sympathetically. "The truth is, I don't care." But the certifying body did care – they wanted two-decimal-point accuracy, in fact. Getting the numbers right meant several hours of extra work for the inspector, which would be charged to the farmer. "Yep," the farmer said, when the inspector apologetically told him about the additional cost. "That's just part of the program."

The inspector diligently completed these acreage calculations to ensure his superiors didn’t audit *him*, but he wasn't genuinely concerned that the grower might be misrepresenting his operation or trying to get away with something. "Organic farmers can't wait to tell you if they did something wrong," the inspector told me. "It's just incredible how honest they are. In thirteen years, I've only been asked to do two forensic audits." Indeed, the farmer got a little too candid at one point, offhandedly remarking that his sainfoin field was actually being leased to a neighbor. "I don't want to know," the inspector said. "Then you have to document cleaning of the equipment."

"The organic industry believes documentation is more important than how good the job gets done," the inspector said to me. "A great example is the cleaning of the equipment. It's more important that [the farmer] writes it down than that he does it."

The farmer chimed in. "The extra paperwork and extra hassle …"

"… is worthless," the inspector said, finishing the sentence.

The inspector proceeded to ask several compliance questions, speaking responses into a digital recorder for later transcription onto official forms.

Inspector: “Now you've said your irrigation district is managed by [water company]. Do they use Magnacide to kill algae in ditches?"

Farmer: “I have no idea.”

Inspector: "That almost killed the organic industry in Canada. It's an absolute natural product, but the government got into it, even thought you can drink it after 48 hours."

Farmer: "The answer to your question is no.”

Inspector (into recorder): "There are no chemical treatments used in this irrigation district."

Inspector: "You have to have a buffer next to your transition field. The rule in NOP is ‘adequate width.’ If you have a twelve foot combine and in your opinion that's enough, OK."

Farmer: "I will cut a buffer and put it in the non-organic bin."

Inspector (into recorder): "Buffers will be cut, placed in designated buffer bin."

Inspector (into recorder): "The malting barley and feed barley are distinguishable to the experienced eye."

Inspector to me: I'm not sure I could.

Inspector (into the recorder): "The combines will be cleaned with compressed air and vacuums prior to harvesting any organic crop."

Inspector: "Do you have a sprayer?"

Farmer: "I do, but I haven't been using it."

Inspector (into recorder): "Client does not have a sprayer."

When they got to the soil-building section of the audit (which is a relatively new category for the NOP), the farmer began educating his inspector:

Inspector: "What are the radishes and turnips for, if not nitrogen?"

Farmer: "They all feed different microbes and prevent soil erosion"

Inspector (into recorder): "For soil health."

Inspector: Now, how about this azomite [a soil amendment with which he was unfamiliar]. What the hell's that for?

Farmer: Trace minerals

Inspector (into recorder): "For trace minerals."

Aware that the support he can personally provide in exchange for his inspection fee is limited, the inspector nonetheless felt it was his responsibility to reciprocate. "I make $100,000 a year out of the organic industry," he told me. You need to give back. One way you can, is by going to organic association meetings, paying the full admission fee, and supporting the membership."