

Biodynamic Association & Demeter USA Unification Questions and Answers

As we [announced in June](#), the boards of directors of the Biodynamic Association (BDA) and Demeter USA have voted to initiate a process to bring our two organizations together into one new organization: the Biodynamic Demeter Association.

This page is intended to support a living conversation between members of the biodynamic community and the Biodynamic Association, Demeter USA, and the Council of Biodynamic Organizations as we align and integrate the major biodynamic organizations in the United States to strengthen our capacity to transform the food system.

If you have other questions that haven't been addressed below, please share them with us at www.biodynamics.com/unify and we will work to integrate them into this page.

What does this mean for Certified Licensees?

Many changes will emerge with the founding of the Biodynamic Demeter Association and there are many details that remain to be established. There is much work to do before the unification of the Biodynamic Association and Demeter USA is complete. The question may come up: what do these changes mean for Demeter certified operations? The task of Demeter Biodynamic certification now conducted by Demeter USA will be held within the Biodynamic Demeter Association. The legal structure remains to be worked out, but significant time and effort has and will be put into ensuring that the integrity of certification is maintained. The staffing and certification process will remain intact much as it is today.

Demeter USA had already been looking into ways to streamline and improve the process of Biodynamic certification and this task will continue during and after the unification. The most noticeable changes coming up may be from our effort to improve the efficiency of the certification process and the process changes we are making due to the pandemic. Our goal is always to improve the service received by the Demeter certified community while upholding the integrity of Biodynamic.

We look forward to a more unified approach to the educational, marketing and certification activities. There will be many benefits with bringing together the talents and expertise of each organization.

Why are the Biodynamic Association and Demeter USA planning to unify to become the Biodynamic Demeter Association?

Globally, humanity is experiencing breakdowns in our ecological, social, and economic realms. Topsoil is being lost at an alarming rate. Water and air are polluted. Weather is becoming more and more chaotic and unpredictable. Food is losing nutritional density as a result of decades of extractive industrial agriculture, and millions of people in the United States live day to day with no food security. We are likely to see even greater challenges to agriculture, the environment, and society as climate change progresses. The old reductionist, mechanistic, and exploitative ways of thinking and acting are becoming obsolete and cannot come to terms with the scale, scope, and complexity of the challenges before us. Transformational and regenerative insights and methodologies are needed to bring food and agriculture forward.

Biodynamic agriculture represents less than 1% of the agriculture practiced in the United States, yet there is tremendous opportunity for it to grow with an increasing positive impact.

Biodynamics as a sustainable and regenerative agricultural practice builds healthy living soils and brings more carbon into the living realm. Biodynamics generates nutritionally dense and flavorful food that nourishes bodies, souls, and spirits. Biodynamic agriculture holds the seeds of change, and can enable humans to build truly holistic and regenerative relationships with the land and each other, creating the conditions for people, families, communities, and the Earth to thrive.

In order for biodynamics to realize its potential and have greater impact in the agricultural and cultural landscape, we believe it is essential for the organizations working in the biodynamic field to be much more deeply integrated and aligned. Both the Biodynamic Association and Demeter USA, together with many other leaders and organizations in the biodynamic movement, believe that these two key organizations can be significantly more effective agents for change by coming together with shared strategy, shared staff and programs, and shared funding to strengthen and grow biodynamics across the United States, in collaboration with other national and regional organizations who share a common purpose. For the first time, the leadership of the two organizations and conditions within the movement are conducive to constructive unification towards more effectively serving and scaling the US biodynamic movement.

How did the idea to unify the Biodynamic Association and Demeter USA arise?

The idea to bring these two organizations together into one has emerged independently at many places and times, but the current unification effort was first imagined and proposed at an in-person retreat of the [Council of Biodynamic Organizations](#) in October 2019, which was convened with the purpose to creatively reimagine a healthy, associative, collaborative, integrated, transparent, accountable, and functional ecosystem of biodynamic organizations in the United States.

The proposal for the unification was also inspired by the [recent unification of Demeter International and the International Biodynamic Association to form the Biodynamic Federation-Demeter International](#). For more background on the work leading up to the unification proposal, see [Aligning and Integrating the Work of the Biodynamic Movement in the US](#).

What is the Council of Biodynamic Organizations?

The Council of Biodynamic Organizations (CBO) emerged as a new group in 2019 to continue to carry the impulse initiated through the [Biodynamic Movement Visioning Process undertaken in 2018 by the major biodynamic organizations in the United States](#). The CBO is currently working together to creatively reimagine a healthy, associative, collaborative, integrated, transparent, accountable, and functional ecosystem of biodynamic organizations in this country. Through many video meetings and in-person and virtual retreats, we have begun to develop a prototype of a new way of holding the work of the movement and bringing biodynamics forward in the United States. Representatives from the following organizations are currently working together in the CBO: the [Agriculture Section of the School for Spiritual Science](#), [Anthroposophical Society in America](#), the [Biodynamic Association](#), [Demeter USA](#), the [Fellowship of Preparation Makers](#), the [Institute for Mindful Agriculture](#), the [Josephine Porter Institute](#), [RSF Social Finance](#), and [Yggdrasil Land Foundation](#). For more on the current members of the CBO, see [Aligning and Integrating the Work of the Biodynamic Movement in the US](#).

Who has been involved in the process of envisioning the unification of BDA and Demeter?

The members of the Council of Biodynamic Organizations worked together from October 2019 through April 2020 to develop and refine a proposal for the unification, bringing several iterations to board members and stakeholders of each of the represented organizations and integrating feedback into the proposal. The CBO's process was facilitated and supported by Katy Mamen, with funding from the Kalliopeia Foundation and RSF Social Finance.

The CBO's proposal was approved by the boards of directors of BDA and Demeter in April 2020. Once the proposal was approved by the boards of Demeter and BDA, a team of seven BDA and Demeter staff and board members was created to organize and carry forward the unification process, integrating the full staff and board of both organizations into conversations and decisions as appropriate. This "nucleus team" is made up of Daphne Amory (BDA and Demeter boards), Osiris Abrego (BDA board), Rudy Marchesi (Demeter board), Steffen Schneider (Demeter board), Thea Maria Carlson (BDA staff), Felicity Baxter (Demeter staff), and Anna McAvoy-Emrick (BDA staff). The nucleus team will be supported in designing and implementing the next phase of the unification process by a team from Eller Executive Education (EEE). There is a strong intention to maintain transparency about this process with the movement and include the many voices of stakeholders as we plan and develop this new organization. The exact communication mechanisms and timing of these intentions are in discussion and will evolve throughout the process as we continue to learn.

What are the benefits of joining BDA and Demeter into one entity?

As the Biodynamic Demeter Association, we will become one cohesive, aligned organism working to build the biodynamic movement with integrity through deeply coordinated and aligned work in education, certification, community-building, and marketplace development, strengthening our capacity to support greater numbers of farmers, gardeners, land stewards, businesses, and consumers to participate in and support the flourishing of the biodynamic food system.

The unified organization will offer one place for stakeholders to contact for resources on their questions regarding biodynamic principles and their practical application, certification, training, research, business development, and more. It will also act as a network builder to catalyze collaboration between organizations and individuals on the local, regional, and national levels to transform the practice and culture of agriculture.

Combining the two organizations will also create efficiencies in resource use and staffing; generate more financial stability throughout the year, as the BDA and Demeter have differing seasonal revenue-generating activities and related expenses; and create greater potential for sustainable and diversified funding streams to support continued deepening and growth of the biodynamic movement over time.

What are the potential risks of joining BDA and Demeter into one entity?

We are aware that, although collaboration could bring more energy, focus, and funding towards our work to strengthen the biodynamic movement, there are some potential risks involved. The Biodynamic Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and Demeter USA, though operating as an Oregon not-for-profit corporation, has not been granted federal 501(c)(3) status. We need to be conscious of the new organizational structure so that the charitable status of a merged organization is secure. There is a risk of a perceived or actual conflict of interest in bringing our two organizations together if there is not proper attention to how the holding of the certification

mark and certification activity is separated from education and marketplace development. There is also a risk that, in working to design and implement a merger, and bringing the structures, processes, and cultures of the staff and boards of two organizations into one, our energy and resources could become too inwardly focused and lead our outer programmatic work in the world to be neglected or delayed. We will take great care to mitigate these risks as we move forward with the unification (some specific measures we intend to implement are outlined in other questions below).

How does the unification of BDA and Demeter USA relate to the ecosystem of all organizations in the biodynamic movement?

Our vision for the Biodynamic Demeter Association is that it will serve as a backbone for a more fully networked biodynamic movement in the US, holding functions that are best met by a national organization while strengthening and supporting local and regional biodynamic work and the interconnection between individuals and organizations. The unified organization will work in deep collaboration with the other biodynamic organizations that are represented in the Council of Biodynamic Organizations, as well as local and regional organizations and groups. To support continued deeper integration across all the organizations, the CBO is currently putting a process in place to evolve its composition to become an even more inclusive and diverse wisdom circle and sensing body that will serve the current and future needs of the biodynamic ecosystem, concurrently with the new Biodynamic Demeter Association coming into being.

How do regional biodynamic groups fit into or interact with the model of this unified organization?

The vision for the Biodynamic Demeter Association within the ecosystem of organizations is that the unified organization will be a central hub, holding key functions that make most sense to exist on a national level (including convening, facilitating, support for local/regional work, communications, education/training, fundraising/resource development, foodshed/marketplace development, certification, and research coordination). At the same time, the Biodynamic Demeter Association will support local and regional organizations in holding functions that are best held in a distributed, on-the ground manner (including the making and distributing of biodynamic preparations, field research, farmer outreach, advisory service, and hands-on education). We have initiated and will continue a dialogue with regional biodynamic groups to determine how the Biodynamic Demeter Association can best support the local on-the-ground work in a collaborative and mutually beneficial way.

Will the new organization's structure be influenced by or modeled on Rudolf Steiner's ideas on the economic, spiritual, and social spheres, and/or anthroposophy?

Yes, core to the vision for the unification is that social threefolding will inform and inspire the structure and function of the Biodynamic Demeter Association. A number of members of the current boards and staffs of Demeter and BDA have studied and are steeped in anthroposophy, which in turn influences the decision-making process throughout the unification development and planning. We are considering ways to bring the study of Steiner's ideas into the planning and development of the new organization, to further support co-creating an organization that embodies these principles and values. Working groups will specifically focus on the business plan and organizational structure in coming months, which will include consideration of threefolding and Steiner's other ideas in these realms.

What is the vision for the economic sphere of the new organization?

The vision for the economic sphere is to support Biodynamic/Demeter farms, businesses, and products in becoming nationally recognized and branded, locally/regionally grounded, and functioning with associative principles (equal voice of all stakeholders). Because of the unification, the thinking can be about how resources are generated for the whole movement, rather than for each organization for itself, reducing the likelihood of unnecessary competition for limited resources. The value of supporting the development and growth of biodynamic enterprises will accrue not only to the entrepreneur, but also to the movement at large, with the attendant public benefit.

How will the new organization maintain and attend to integrity of Biodynamic® certification while marketplace development activities are also held within the same organization?

The vision for the Biodynamic Demeter Association is that it maintains the integrity of each sphere of work needed to nurture and grow biodynamic agriculture in the US while enabling interconnected aspects of the biodynamic work to support each other. We recognize that the value to farms and businesses of becoming certified is influenced by how well the concept and brand of Biodynamic/Demeter products are promoted in the marketplace: strengthened consumer demand and awareness will be an essential driver of economic success for Biodynamic farms and businesses. At the same time, it is absolutely essential that the standards for certification and individual certification decisions are not influenced by economic factors. The Biodynamic Demeter Association will continue to align the US certification standards with the Demeter International standards, which are collaboratively and democratically managed by the Biodynamic Federation-Demeter International. Certification staff will not overlap with staff carrying other functions in the organization, and certification functions and decisions will be overseen by an independent certification advisory board.

Who will hold the Biodynamic and Demeter trademarks and certification marks?

The trademarks and certification marks currently held by Demeter USA will be held by the unified Biodynamic Demeter Association. We will communicate and collaborate with the Biodynamic Federation-Demeter International in protecting these marks.

What is the leadership model of the new organization?

The CBO's proposal recommended that the work of the Biodynamic Demeter Association be organized into five spheres (Culture, Rights, Economy, Operations, and Development/Community), implemented through a phased evolution, and that the current staffing structures of the two organizations evolve towards an even more collaborative leadership model. The exact structure of the organization, staffing, and leadership will be determined over the coming months by the boards and staffs of BDA and Demeter with support from the nucleus team and consultants from EEE with expertise in organizational development.

How will the board of the new organization be chosen?

The CBO's proposal recommended that initially, the board of the new organization be comprised of the combined current boards of Demeter and BDA. The CBO has also recommended that a democratic election process is put in place for selecting some or all future board members, which attends to diversity, equity, and inclusion in terms of, at minimum, race, gender, relationship to and experience in biodynamics, and geography. The exact governance and board selection process for the Biodynamic Demeter Association will be determined over the coming months by the boards of BDA and Demeter with support from the nucleus team and consultants from EEE with expertise in organizational development and nonprofit law.

What is the mission of the new organization?

Development of a mission statement will be among the first priorities in Phase 1 of our engagement with EEE. A working group composed of current BDA and Demeter board and staff, supported by EEE, will work on the development of this statement alongside other critical components of the organizational identity and values. The mission statement will then help guide and inform the further development of the unified organization.