The Organic Integrity Quarterly

November 2015 Newsletter

Organic Integrity from Farm to Table, Consumers Trust the Organic Label.

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Collaboration and Innovation: Keys to Organic Success...

For years, the organic industry has experienced enormous growth, defying expectations and creating exciting opportunities for producers and entrepreneurs around the world. 2014 was another record year for the organic community, with 19,474 certified organic operations in the United States and nearly 28,000 certified organic operations from more than 120 countries around the globe.

The retail market for organic products is now valued at more than $39 billion in the U.S. and over $75 billion worldwide. With its rapidly growing market and high consumer interest, USDA is focused on helping this area of agriculture achieve even greater success. In May 2013, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack issued guidance that identified organic priorities for the Department, including training and outreach, growing the organic sector, reducing paperwork, improving research, and gathering data.

USDA's Organic Working Group (OWG) has been working across USDA agencies to proactively implement the Secretary's vision. We've made great strides in just the last two years. Below are examples of the USDA's successes and our commitment to growing organic agriculture:

- **Organic Research**
  Over the last two years, USDA invested $81.5 million in research to support organic production, including efforts to develop sustainable nutrient management in organic grain cropping, livestock, and reduced-tillage systems, as well as projects to improve the productivity and success of organic agriculture.

- **Simplifying Certification**
  In 2014, AMS issued over 9,000 reimbursements totaling over $7 million to defray certification costs for organic producers and handlers.

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Keys to Organic Success, continued

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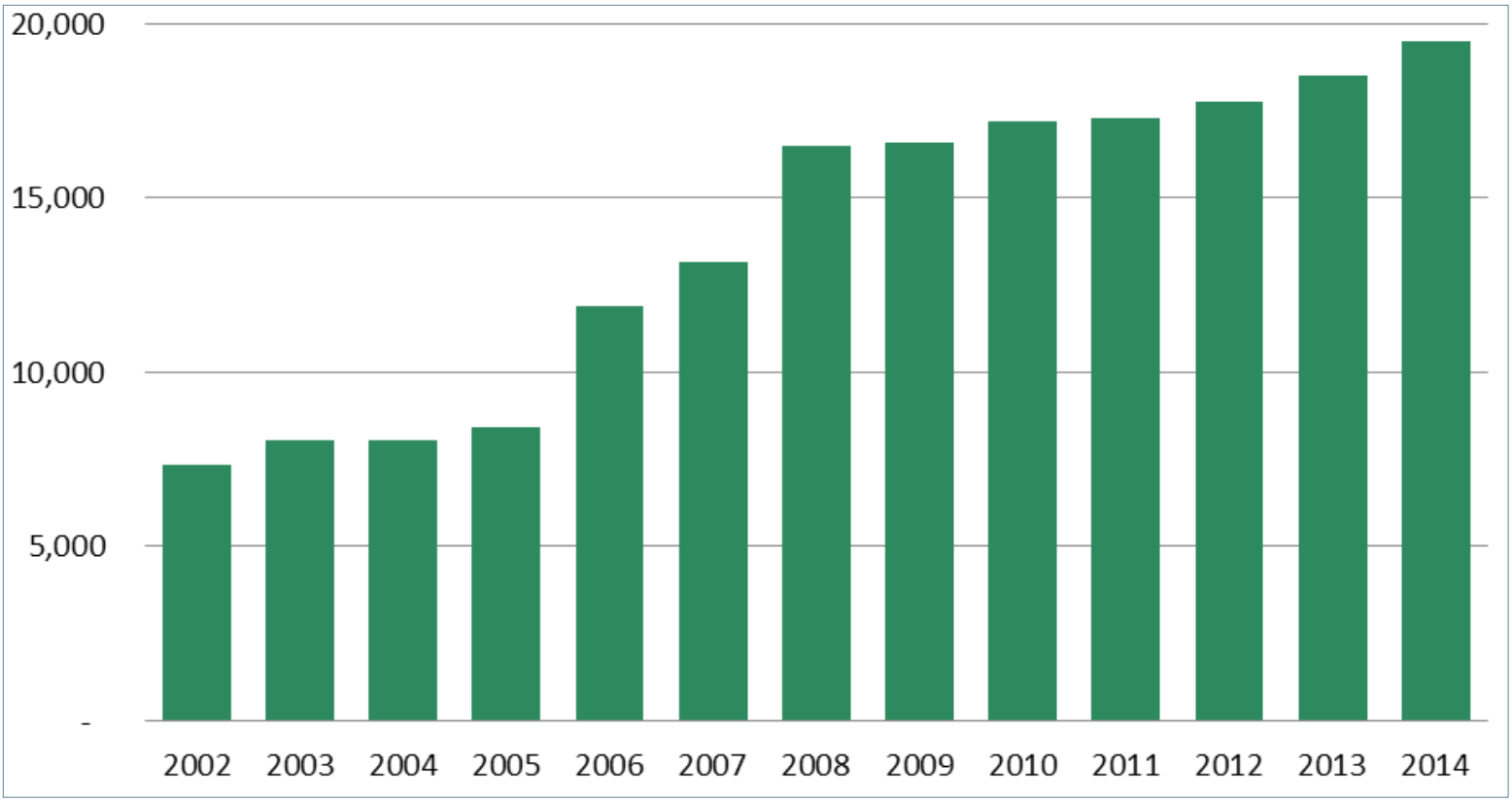

With 19,474 certified organic operations in the United States and nearly 28,000 certified organic operations from more than 120 countries around the globe, organic agriculture has seen enormous growth and success over the last two years. Note: Foreign operations may also be certified to the USDA organic standards.

- **Sound & Sensible Resources**
  Our Sound & Sensible initiative also awarded project contracts to create tools and resources that help make organic certification more accessible, attainable, and affordable.

- **Organic Education and Resources**
  In 2012, AMS sponsored the launch of the Organic Literacy Initiative training and outreach program to help USDA employees better understand and serve organic operators. Over 30,000 USDA staff members have taken the training.

  In 2013, the OWG established an online "one-stop-shop" at www.usda.gov/organic, which features USDA's full range of services for organic producers.

- **Streamlining Services**
  In the last two years, more than 1,100 farms have benefitted from $15 million in assistance through USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program Organic Initiative.

  NRCS also streamlined their conservation activity plans for producers who are transitioning to organic farming practices.

- **Serving Organic Markets**
  In the last two years, USDA Rural Development awarded $27 million in grants and loans to support organic producers and handlers.

  USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service released its third Organic Producer Survey, which will help us evaluate and establish organic crop insurance programs, in addition to providing timely and reliable information to the industry.

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Keys to Organic Success, continued

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USDA continues to expand markets for American organic products abroad, adding to the list of agreements that increase market access for U.S. producers. This Administration has secured trade arrangements with five countries so far: Canada, the European Union, Japan, Korea, and Switzerland.

AMS Market News provided market and pricing information for more than 250 organic products and developed plans to include even more data.

USDA's Risk Management Agency released several new options to provide effective insurance coverage for organic crops and better risk management tools for organic producers.

That's quite a list—and there is still more to come! Moving forward, we will continue to develop more comprehensive resources for organic stakeholders and incorporate critical organic research needs across USDA's programs. Our commitment to organic agriculture has been critical to the sector's growth, and I look forward to seeing what we can achieve in the coming years.

Sincerely,

Anne L. Alonzo
AMS Administrator

U.S. Marine Corps veteran Calvin Riggleman owns Bigg Riggs farm in Hampshire County, WV. Riggleman served in Iraq and serves his community farm fresh organic produce, and food products made by the Bigg Riggs Farm team.

National List Updates

New Petitions

The following new petitions have been posted on the NOP website and sent to the NOSB for review:

- Soy wax, petitioned to § 205.601
- Squid and squid byproducts, petitioned to § 205.601 (new addendum)
- Calcium chloride, petitioned for annotation change on § 205.602
- Sodium bisulfate, petitioned to § 205.603 (new addendum)
- Sodium dodecylbenzene sulfonate (SDBS), petitioned to § 205.605
- Sodium Bisulfate, petitioned for addition to § 205.603, petition addendum

Withdrawn Petitions

- Anaerobic digestate from food waste

View petitions and technical reports: www.ams.usda.gov/NOPNationalList

National Organic Program: End-of-Fiscal Year Accomplishments

In April 2015, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) National Organic Program (NOP) published its 2015-2018 Strategic Plan. The plan includes information about the AMS vision, mission, and strategic goals; the NOP organization and activities; a summary of successes over the past five years; and five strategic goals.

I am proud to recognize the great work that AMS NOP staff has contributed to advance the organic community and to make progress toward achieving these five goals. Our combined efforts to improve organic standards, oversee certifiers, and enforce the organic regulations have resulted in the successes we highlight today.

Goal 1: Protect Organic Integrity

- Reviewed or investigated 390 complaints alleging violations of the USDA organic regulations, supporting consumer confidence that the USDA is protecting the organic seal. This investigation count well exceeded last year's total of 286. The program also levied $1,872,815 in civil penalties to businesses knowingly violating organic rules.
- Conducted 34 audits of accredited certifiers to verify their ability to certify farms and businesses to the USDA organic standards. Certifiers are assessed every 2.5 years; these audits build consistency across certifiers. An analysis of audit results indicates that certifiers comply with 96% of USDA's requirements.
- Providing due process rights for certifiers and operations, AMS accepted 35 appeals this year; appeals cases closed in FY 2015 were completed in an average of 121 days; 95% of FY 2015 appeals were closed within 180 days.
- To further support consistency across certifiers, conducted in-person certifier training to address key issues in sound and sensible certification, enforcement, appeals, and mediation.

Goal 2: Facilitate Market Access

- As part of a multi-agency effort, negotiated and finalized an organic equivalency arrangement with Switzerland; the agreement went into effect on July 9, 2015, opening new markets for U.S. businesses and reducing duplicate certification requirements.
- Participated in Inter-American Commission on Organic Agriculture meetings and met with leaders of the European organic community in Brussels to support greater harmonization of organic standards and organic market development.
- To explore future market opportunities, successfully oversaw international peer reviews in Switzerland and in Mexico; and led discussions on potential organic equivalency arrangements with Mexico, Taiwan, Costa Rica, Peru, and Chile.
- Managed two organic cost share programs to help offset the costs of organic certification, particularly for small and mid-sized farmers; more than $7-million in certification expenses were reimbursed through this program this year.
- Sponsored organic community development of a new collection of certification-centered educational materials for both candidate and certified organic farmers and businesses, highlighting the path to certification and sound and sensible certification approach. This included technical assistance resources for traditionally underserved farmers in the Southeastern U.S. and Plain farmers (Amish, Mennonite communities).

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National Organic Program: End-of-Year Accomplishments, cont'd

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Goal 3: Create and Implement Clear Standards

- Continued to develop and clarify organic standards, by publishing the National List Sunset 2013 Final Rule and Origin of Livestock Proposed Rule. Published Draft Guidance on Natural Resource and Biodiversity Conservation in collaboration with NRCS, a Policy Memo on Nanotechnology, a Federal Register notice to renew 2015 sunset materials, and a Proposed Rule to remove substances from National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances.
- Facilitated two public meetings of the National Organic Standards Board; accepted hundreds of public comments related to the development of the organic standards.
- Worked on new standards to respond to market and consumer feedback, including the Draft Aquaculture Proposed Rule and an Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices Proposed Rule; neared completion of Proposed Rules for Pet Food and Apiculture.
- Selected members for a task force on hydroponic and aquaponic production practices; the task force will help clarify standards in this growing production area.
- Continued to build NOP's library of outreach and educational materials, including new fact sheets and regular Organic 101 blogs. Facilitated NOP representation at conferences and meetings, highlighting sound and sensible certification.

Goal 4: Build Technology that Advances Organic Integrity

- Developed the first release of the Organic Integrity Database, a modernized database of organic operations that will replace the annual list of certified operations. This included developing a new classification system for organic products and categories, which will ultimately support certification data quality and consistency across the organic industry.
- Conducted an electronic listening session and a number of webinars for the organic community to enhance transparency and communication with organic stakeholders.

Goal 5: Develop the Team and Organization

- Facilitated the onboarding and training of four new members to the National Organic Standards Board, and invited nominations for seats opening in January 2016.
- Oversaw NOP's implementation of corrective actions in response to a peer review by the American National Standards Institute and an Internal Audit. Revised eight instruction and policy documents and multiple internal procedures in response.
- Continued to build the NOP organization, hiring ten new employees to support mission activities; standing up an employee-led internal communications team; hosting developmental training sessions; and inviting guest speakers from across USDA to visit with NOP staff and exchange program information. Coordinated with other AMS Programs to provide joint staff training on a variety of technical topics.
- Expanded NOP's onboarding program; and started developing a comprehensive training program on the Organic Act and regulations. Program to be launched in Winter 2015.

I look forward to continued success for the organic community in the upcoming year!

Sincerely,
Miles V. McEvoy
NOP Deputy Administrator

Upcoming Events

MOSES Organic Farming Conference
Visit NOP's Booth!
February 25 – 27, 2016
MOSES Exhibit Hall, La Crosse Center
300 Harborview Plaza, La Crosse, WI
https://mosesorganic.org/conference

NOSB Spring 2016 Meeting

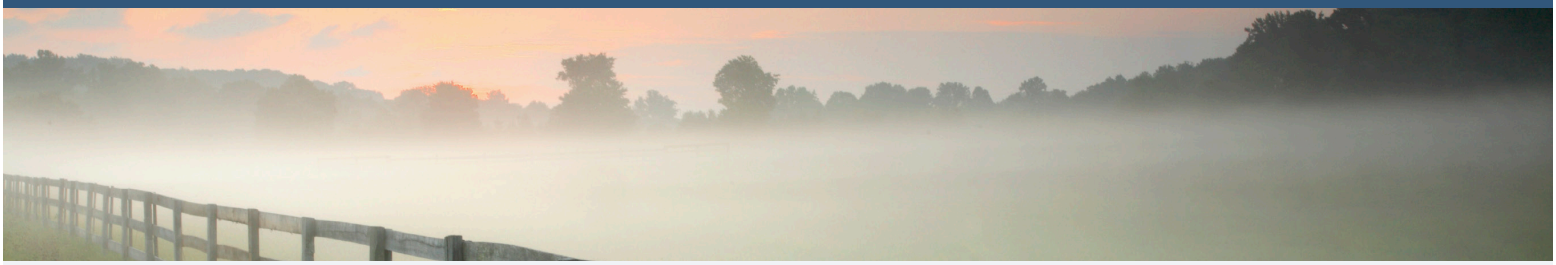
NOSB meetings, held twice a year, are an important forum for public comment, and support transparency in the organic standards development process.

Learn more at **www.ams.usda.gov/nosb**.

April 25 – 28, 2016 | 8:30 am to 5:00 pm daily
Omni Shoreham Hotel
2500 Calvert St NW, Washington, DC 20008

Compliance & Enforcement/Appeals Summary

Reporting Period: FY 2015



COMPLIANCE & ENFORCEMENT: OVERALL SUMMARY	
Incoming Complaints:	549
Completed Complaints:	390

APPEALS: OVERALL SUMMARY (Refer to NOP 4011: Adverse Action Appeal Process for more information)	
Number of Incoming:	36
Appeals by Disposition	
Decisions	15
Dismissals	8
Closures	4

Note: Total reflects appeals closed in FY 2015 regardless of when cases were initiated.

SUMMARY OF INITIAL ACTIONS TAKEN	
Cease & Desist Orders	36
Notices of Warning	121
Investigation Referrals	64

SUMMARY OF DISPOSITIONS (All NOP)	
Total Number of Settlement Agreements *	13
Total Amount Civil Penalties Levied **	$1,872,815

Notes:

* In FY15, not all settlement agreements include civil penalties and not all civil penalties were levied via settlement agreements.

** Total reflects the amount of penalties initially levied. Amounts may change during negotiation of settlements and individual penalty payments may be outstanding.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS NOTES

1. The NOP prevailed in a formal administrative complaint proceeding to suspend land owned by operation Ernest D. Miller, d/b/a Stoney-M Farm, from organic certification for a period of three years due to the application of a prohibited substance.
2. Through a consent decision and order, the NOP suspended the accreditation of certifying agent The Organic Food Chain for two years for willful violation of the USDA organic regulations.

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Supporting Organic Agriculture: Specialty Crop Block Grants

In Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15), the Transportation and Marketing Program of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service awarded more than $63 million in program grants to state departments of agriculture to support farmers growing fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, and nursery crops, also known as "specialty crops," through research, agricultural extension activities, and programs to increase demand and address the needs of America's specialty crop industry.

The fifty States, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. Territories were awarded FY15 funds to perform a total of 755 projects that benefit the specialty crop industry. At least 33 of the projects funded in 22 states and Puerto Rico supported organic agriculture. A small sample of organic projects supported are outlined below:

- **California Department of Food and Agriculture** partnered with Organic Seed Alliance to increase the quality, quantity, and diversity of organic specialty seed available in California by providing instruction for organic specialty seed producers in seed quality and seed business; increasing availability of the specialized tools required for efficient seed production, harvest, and processing; increasing market demand for California organically produced seed; and increasing information sharing between organic specialty crop seed producers.
- **Illinois Department of Agriculture** partnered with Southern Illinois University to support the expansion of organic strawberry production, which receive a premium on the market and thus have the potential to boost incomes, by studying and disseminating more effective crop management strategies, including more effective irrigation and disease mitigation techniques.
- **Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources** partnered with Northeast Organic Farming Association to improve approaches for revitalizing compost-based urban soils for more competitive specialty crop production through on-site educational sessions that will be open to a wide community of urban farmers in the Boston area, conference workshops that attract city farmers across the region, and a best practice informational resource to fill the stated need for more technical materials for city farmers.
- **Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce** partnered with Mississippi State University to increase the understanding of soil health and vegetable quality, provide strategies for implementing no-till production into conventional and organic systems, and provide valuable information about the benefits of cover crop use in vegetable production systems.
- **Ohio Department of Agriculture** partnered with the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association to increase the competitiveness of Ohio organic specialty crops by providing direct technical support and educational programming to help beginning and existing organic farmers improve organic production and marketing skills, help others transition to certified organic production, and work with farmers of all sizes and levels of experience on-farm to establish food safety plans and implement them.

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Specialty Crop Grants (cont'd)

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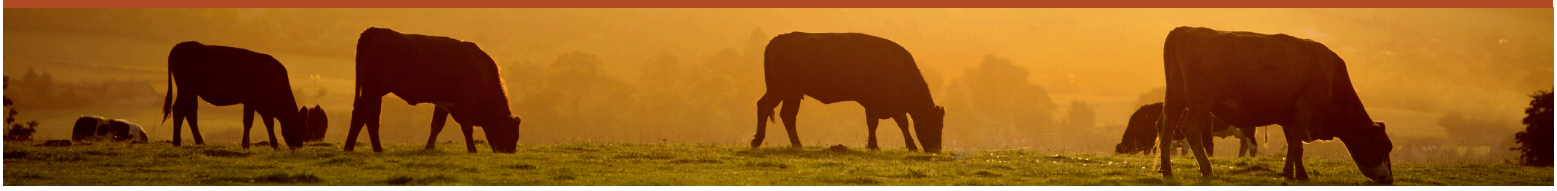
- **Oregon Department of Agriculture** partnered with Sauvie Island Organics Salem-Keizer Education Foundation to increase student knowledge and appreciation for Oregon specialty crops through a mobile Oregon fruit and vegetable education program for students without school gardens and to increase parent knowledge and appreciation through cooking, gardening and interactive events that reinforce the lessons in the classroom.
- **Vermont Agency of Agriculture** partnered with Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont to increase the viability of schools as a consistent market for Vermont specialty crops by building relationships between school food services and farmers to foster an environment for teachers and students to increase their knowledge about the fruits and vegetables which they consume.
- **Washington State Department of Agriculture** partnered with Tilth Producers of Washington to educate small-scale specialty crop growers on organic and/or sustainable practices to have direct impact on the success of their operation through specialty crop farm walks, workshops and farm tours.

To learn more about the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP), visit http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp. To view a brief description of all SCBGP funded projects, visit http://bit.ly/SCBGP-Awards.

If your organization is interested in the SCBGP, contact your state department of agriculture. The SCBGP state points of contact are at http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/state-contacts.

National Organic Program Handbook + Web Updates



Program Handbook. The National Organic Program Handbook provides a wide variety of policy materials and other resources to help organic farms and businesses comply with the USDA organic regulations. In the past several months, AMS has updated several of these resources, available at www.ams.usda.gov/NOPProgramHandbook.

Electrolyzed Water (PM 15-4, issued). On September 11, the NOP issued Policy Memo (PM) 15-4: Electrolyzed Water. This new policy memo updates the status of electrolyzed water under the USDA organic regulations. This memorandum replaces PM 14-3, which has been archived.

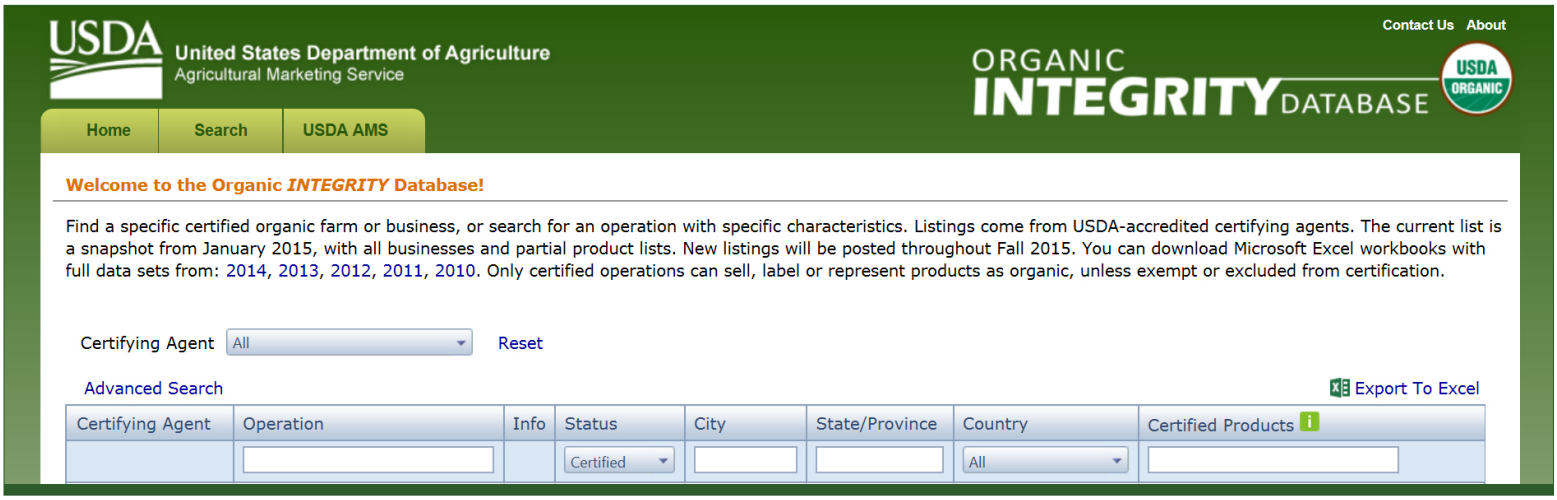
Accreditation Assessment Checklist (NOP 2005, updated). In late October, NOP published an updated Accreditation Assessment Checklist which outlines tasks that NOP follows when completing accreditation assessments.

Equivalence Determination Procedures (NOP 2100, updated). NOP released an updated version of NOP 2100: Equivalence Determination Procedures describing the steps the United States takes to determine if equivalency arrangements will be consistent with the USDA organic regulations.

Processing Requests for Temporary Variances (NOP 2606, updated). On November 20, NOP published an updated document describing the policies and procedures used to evaluate requests for temporary variances from the production and handling requirements of the USDA organic regulations submitted by certifying agents or State organic programs.

Sound & Sensible Resources. AMS-NOP launched a group of web pages featuring an array of resources to help simplify and streamline organic certification and compliance for farmers and businesses. Developed in conjunction with many partners across the country and around the globe, these Sound & Sensible resources will help to make organic certification more accessible, attainable, and affordable. Read more: http://www.ams.usda.gov/report-presentation/sound-sensible.

Building Technology that Supports Organic Integrity



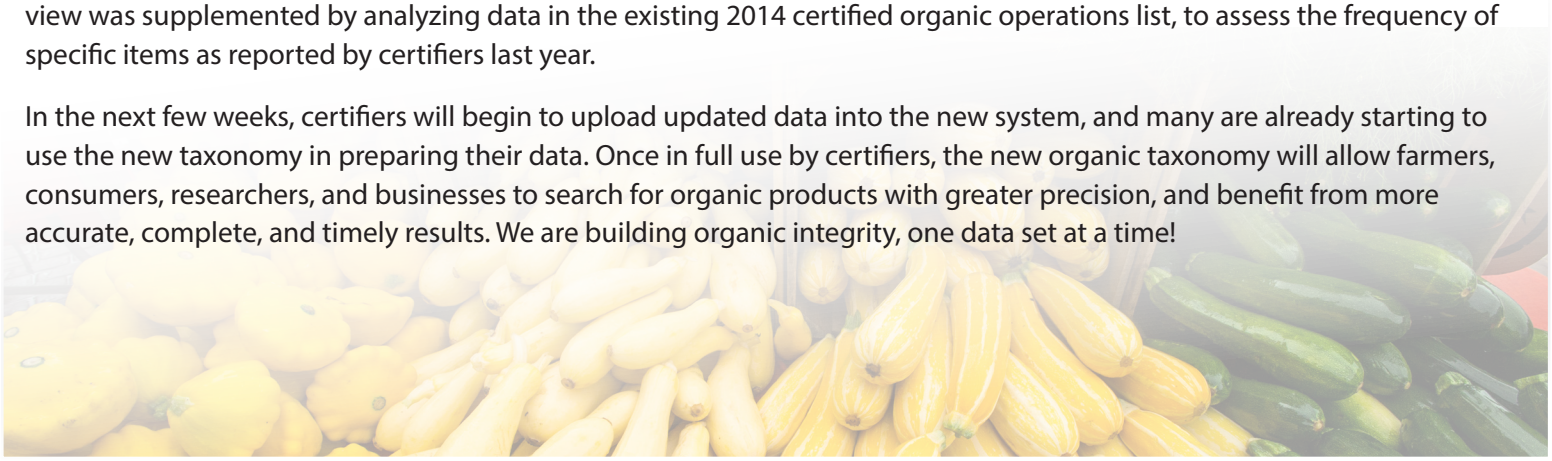
If you have accessed the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) list of certified organic operations recently, you may have noticed a new look to the site, and new ways to search for organic operations. These changes reflect an early release of the Organic INTEGRITY Database, a system funded by the 2014 Farm Bill and built by the AMS National Organic Program and Information Technology Service with support from Intact and Harmonia Holdings Group.

The changes you see on the site are only a small part of the database development project. For example, underlying the new site is a brand new classification system (or taxonomy) for categorizing products that carry USDA organic certification. Previously, organic certifiers reporting farm and business information to USDA submitted a single text list of certified products for each operation. Certifiers reported data differently and there was no method to catch spelling or spacing problems. For example, one listing included the item "grapechickenapples." An interesting appetizer or, a big data quality problem!

The new classification system built into the Organic INTEGRITY Database provides standard categories and product lists for each of the scopes of organic certification (crops, livestock, wild crops, and handling). This structure is also flexible so existing data can be accepted from many different organic certification systems. For example, based on their existing systems, certifiers can report "Oranges" within the category of "Fruit – Citrus," or they can report "Citrus" in the category of "Fruit – Tropical." This flexibility was designed to encourage certifiers to adopt the taxonomy, while also providing much needed structure to the data. For certifiers wishing to provide even more detail, there is space allowed for varieties, such as "Romaine" within the category of "Leaf Vegetables" and the item "Lettuce."

The new organic product taxonomy was developed using both "top down" and "bottom up" approaches. For example, the development team reviewed 18 taxonomies from different entities, including the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), European Union, Global GAP, Retailer Standards, , and existing organic certifier systems. This top-down view was supplemented by analyzing data in the existing 2014 certified organic operations list, to assess the frequency of specific items as reported by certifiers last year.

In the next few weeks, certifiers will begin to upload updated data into the new system, and many are already starting to use the new taxonomy in preparing their data. Once in full use by certifiers, the new organic taxonomy will allow farmers, consumers, researchers, and businesses to search for organic products with greater precision, and benefit from more accurate, complete, and timely results. We are building organic integrity, one data set at a time!



Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza...Tips on How to Protect Your Flocks

Earlier this year, the United States experienced one of the largest outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (avian flu) in backyard and commercial poultry flocks, primarily along the migratory pathways of wild birds. More than 219 detections of avian flu in 69 counties in 21 states affected more than 48 million turkeys, layer chickens, pullet chickens and other birds. To protect the health of our nation's poultry, the USDA has plans in place, which include surveillance, reporting, biosecurity, and depopulation to control the spread and reduce the adverse impact of this disease.

For years, the USDA has been engaged in collaborative efforts with other government agencies as well as states and industry to prepare for and prevent outbreaks of the avian flu. As the influenza virus mutates easily, new strains can develop at any time within avian hosts. As a result, a mutation has the potential to cause disease in poultry flocks.* So, as long as mutations occur, seasons change, and wild birds migrate, we must all protect the health and safety of our poultry flocks.

A significant way to maximize the health of your poultry flock is through good biosecurity measures. Learn more about biosecurity measures, visit the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) website, http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov. You may also consult the National Poultry Improvement plan and other resources.

As indicated on APHIS' website, the following six steps,when consistently implemented, can help you keep poultry healthy:

- Keep your distance. Isolate birds from visitors and other birds.
- Keep it clean. Prevent germs from spreading by cleaning shoes, tools and equipment.
- Don't borrow disease from your neighbor. Avoid sharing tools and equipment with neighbors.
- Don't haul disease home. Also clean vehicles and cages.
- Know the warning signs of infectious bird diseases. Watch for early signs to prevent the spread of disease.
- Report sick birds. Report unusual signs of disease or unexpected deaths.

As part of efforts to reaffirm biosecurity measures, NOP reminds certifiers to consult Policy Memo 11-12: Confinement of Poultry Flocks Due to Avian Influenza, or Other Infectious Diseases. More recently, in April 2015 NOP shared through an Organic Insider message the above biosecurity measures and reminded producers of Policy Memo 11-12. Further, in June 2015, the NOP instructed certification agencies to refrain from conducting onsite inspections of poultry operations located in known counties of disease detection.

When APHIS detects influenza in a particular county, the county is added to the following list: Update on Avian Influenza Findings. Once counties are free from avian flu for 90 days since the last contaminated facility was cleaned, the county is released from temporary suspension of onsite inspections.

As a result of efforts by USDA and producers, the last detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza was reported on June 17, 2015. To help control it, report sick birds or unusual bird deaths immediately to state and/or federal officials either through your state veterinarian or by calling USDA at 1-866-536-7593. The NOP will notify organic certifiers as counties are added or released by APHIS to balance the needs for biosecurity and onsite inspections.

For more information on avian flu, visit the USDA Departmental page http://www.usda.gov/avianinfluenza or the USDA APHIS page Avian Influenza Disease.

* ***Although poultry is highly susceptible, risk to people from avian flu's H5 infections in wild birds or backyard and commercial flocks is low (no human infections have been detected).***

Update From National Organic Standards Board Meeting

Front Row: Tom Chapman, Ashley Swaffar, Zea Sonnabend, Jean Richardson, Carmela Beck, Francis Thicke, and Nick Maravell
Back Row: Mac Stone, Calvin Walker, Lisa de Lima, Colehour Bondera, Tracy Favre, Miles McEvoy (USDA National Organic Program)
On Screen: Harold Austin

On October 26-29, 2015, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) held its biannual public meeting in Stowe, Vermont. Over the course of four days, the NOSB, under the leadership of NOSB Chair Dr. Jean Richardson, evaluated proposals, discussion documents, and reports, and completed the review of 198 listings of Sunset 2017 materials. The Board heard oral testimony from members of the public on a wide range of issues. For the first time, the NOSB provided additional opportunities for the public to provide comments before the in-person meeting. On October 13 and 20, the NOSB held two public comment webinars. The Board also discussed and considered more than 750 written public comments that were submitted prior to the meeting.

After a prerecorded welcome message from Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont, Miles McEvoy, Deputy Administrator and NOSB's Designated Federal Officer, provided an update on the National Organic Program. In his presentation, Mr. McEvoy:

- outlined NOP's recent accomplishments relative to its strategic plan;
- detailed steps NOP takes to protect organic integrity, highlighting compliance and enforcement successes;
- announced there will be six appointments for new NOSB members in January 2016;
- explained the role of the new hydroponics/aquaponics task force;
- re-introduced the Organic INTEGRITY database; and
- discussed highlights of the new Sound and Sensible certification projects.

The National List Manager provided updates on the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances, as well as on outstanding petitions. Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy, Director of USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), provided information on research funding opportunities for the organic industry. Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont also welcomed the NOSB and attendees with a prerecorded welcome message. A summary of the NOSB's recommendations and actions is provided below. The final recommendations from the Stowe meeting will be posted at www.ams.usda.gov/NOSBMeetings.

Note: NOSB is an advisory body to the Secretary of Agriculture. NOSB recommendations are not NOP policy unless the NOP issues final rules, final guidance, final instructions, or a policy memorandum that adopts the NOSB recommendations. They are not part of the USDA organic regulations unless such action is taken.

Update From National Organic Standards Board Meeting, cont'd

Petitioned Substances. The NOSB reviewed several petitions to amend the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List). This section of the USDA organic regulations identifies the synthetic substances that may be used and the nonsynthetic substances that are prohibited in organic crop and livestock production. For organic processed products, the allowed non-organic ingredients are also included on the National List. If an NOSB proposal receives a decisive vote (2/3 majority) by Board members in favor of the proposed motion, it becomes a recommendation to the USDA, and is provided to the Secretary through the AMS National Organic Program.

Sunset 2017 Review. The NOSB must review every substance on the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances every five years to confirm that it continues to meet all required criteria under the Organic Foods Production Act and USDA organic regulations. This review is called "sunset review." At this meeting, the NOSB considered 198 listings as part of the Sunset 2017 review and recommended removal of eleven substances from the National List.

Other Recommendations

Research Priorities

The NOSB submitted a current list of research priorities that would support the organic sector. New priorities added to the 2015 list included prevention of GMO contamination, prevention and management of parasites for organic livestock, evaluation of methionine and a systems based approach for organic poultry, chlorine materials for handling, and alternatives to copper for disease and algae control.

Prevention Strategy Guidance for Excluded Methods

In response to a memo from the NOP dated April 24, 2015, the NOSB issued a recommendation on prevention strategy guidance for excluded methods. The recommendation includes best management practices for prevention of unintended GMO presence in organic products.

Other Business

Updates and Reports

The Policy Development Subcommittee provided a verbal report on revisions to the NOSB Policy and Procedures Manual. The Compliance, Accreditation and Certification Subcommittee also provided a verbal report on assessment of soil conservation practices.

NOSB Officer Elections

Tracy Favre was elected as the next Chair of the National Organic Standards Board. Tom Chapman was elected Vice-Chair and Lisa De Lima was elected Secretary.

For additional information about the meeting, please visit www.ams.usda.gov/NOSBMeetings.

Petitions

Use Area	Substance	Section	NOSB Final Recommendation
Crops	Laminarin - Motion to classify as nonsynthetic	N/A	Classify as nonsynthetic
Crops	Lignin Sulfonate - Motion to remove for use as a floating agent in postharvest handling	205.601(l)	N/A – removal recommended during Sunset 2017 review
Crops	Sulfuric Acid - Motion to list and motion to classify as synthetic	205.601	Not recommended for National List
Crops	Seaweed Extracts (aquatic plant extracts) - Motion to list and motion to classify as synthetic	205.601	Not recommended for National List
Handling	Flavors - Motion to revise the annotation	205.605(a)	Amend annotation to require use of organic flavors when commercially available
Handling	Sodium lactate and potassium lactate - Motion to list with annotation and motion to classify as synthetic	205.605(b)	Referred back to Subcommittee

Sunset 2017 Review

Action Considered: Motion to Remove | Outcome: Passed | Final NOSB Recommendation: See Below

Use Area	Substance	Section	NOSB Final Recommendation
Crops	Lignin sulfonate	205.601(l)(1)	Remove from National List as a floating agent in postharvest handling
Livestock	Furosemide	205.603(a)	Remove from National List
Handling	Magnesium carbonate	205.605(b)	Remove from National List
Handling	Chia (Salvia hispanica L.)	205.606	Remove from National List
Handling	Dillweed oil	205.606	Remove from National List
Handling	Galangal	205.606	Remove from National List
Handling	Inulin-oligofructose enriched	205.606	Remove from National List
Handling	Lemongrass	205.606	Remove from National List
Handling	Peppers (Chipotle chile)	205.606	Remove from National List
Handling	Turkish bay leaves	205.606	Remove from National List
Handling	Whey protein concentrate	205.606	Remove from National List

Sunset 2017 Review - Crops Subcommittee

Action Considered: Motion to Remove | Outcome: Failed | Status: Sunset Review Completed

Substance	Section	Substance	Section
Alcohols: Ethanol	205.601(a)	Hydrated lime	205.601(i)
Alcohols: Isopropanol	205.601(a)	Potassium bicarbonate	205.601(i)
Chlorine Materials: Calcium hypochlorite, Chlorine dioxide, Sodium hypochlorite	205.601(a)	Aquatic plant extracts	205.601(j)
Soap-based algicide/demossers	205.601(a)	Humic acids	205.601(j)
Hydrogen peroxide	205.601(a), (i)	Lignin sulfonate (chelating agent)	205.601(j)
Herbicides, soap-based	205.601(b)	Magnesium sulfate	205.601(j)
Newspaper or other recycled paper	205.601(b), (c)	Micronutrients: Soluble Boron Products, Sulfates, carbonates, oxides, or silicates of zinc, copper, iron, manganese, molybdenum, selenium, and cobalt	205.601(j)
Plastic mulch and covers (petroleum-based other than polyvinylchloride (PVC))	205.601(b)	Liquid fish products	205.601(j)
Soaps, ammonium	205.601(d)	Vitamin B1, C, E	205.601(j)
Ammonium carbonate	205.601(e)	Ethylene	205.601(k)
Boric acid	205.601(e)	Sodium silicate	205.601(l)
Elemental sulfur	205.601(e), (i), (j)	EPA List 4 - Inerts of Minimal Concern	205.601(m)
Lime sulfur	205.601(e), (i)	Microcrystalline cheesewax	205.601(o)
Oils, horticultural	205.601(e), (i)	Ash from manure burning	205.602(a)
Soaps, insecticidal	205.601(e)	Arsenic	205.602(b)
Sticky traps/barriers	205.601(e)	Lead salts	205.602(d)
Sucrose octanoate esters	205.601(e)	Potassium chloride	205.602(e)
Pheromones	205.601(f)	Sodium fluoaluminate (mined)	205.602(f)
Vitamin D3	205.601(g)	Strychnine	205.602(h)
Coppers, fixed	205.601(i)	Tobacco dust (nicotine sulfate)	205.602(i)
Copper sulfate	205.601(i)		

Sunset Review - Handling Subcommittee

Action Considered: Motion to Remove | Outcome: Failed | Status: Sunset Review Completed

Substance	Section	Substance	Section
Acid, Alginic	205.605(a)	Potassium acid tartrate	205.605(b)
Acid, Citric & lactic	205.605(a)	Potassium carbonate	205.605(b)
Attapulgite	205.605(a)	Potassium citrate	205.605(b)
Bentonite	205.605(a)	Potassium phosphate	205.605(b)
Diatomaceous earth	205.605(a)	Sodium citrate	205.605(b)
Kaolin	205.605(a)	Sodium hydroxide	205.605(b)
Perlite	205.605(a)	Sodium phosphates	205.605(b)
Calcium carbonate	205.605(a)	Sulfur dioxide	205.605(b)
Calcium chloride	205.605(a)	Tocopherols	205.605(b)
Dairy cultures	205.605(a)	Xanthan gum	205.605(b)
Enzymes	205.605(a)	Casings	205.606
Flavors	205.605(a)	Celery powder	205.606
Magnesium sulfate	205.605(a)	Colors: Beet juice extract color	205.606
Nitrogen	205.605(a)	Colors: Black currant juice color	205.606
Oxygen	205.605(a)	Colors: Pumpkin juice color	205.606
Potassium chloride	205.605(a)	Colors: Red cabbage extract color	205.606
Potassium iodide	205.605(a)	Colors: Black/Purple carrot juice color	205.606
Sodium bicarbonate	205.605(a)	Colors: Blueberry juice color	205.606
Sodium carbonate	205.605(a)	Colors: Carrot juice color	205.606
Waxes: Carnauba Wax	205.605(a)	Colors: Cherry juice color	205.606
Waxes: Wood rosin	205.605(a)	Colors: Chokeberry—Aronia juice color	205.606
Yeast	205.605(a)	Colors: Elderberry juice color	205.606
Acidified sodium chlorite	205.605(b)	Colors: Grape juice color	205.606
Alginates	205.605(b)	Colors: Grape skin extract color	205.606
Ammonium bicarbonate	205.605(b)	Colors: Paprika color	205.606
Ammonium carbonate	205.605(b)	Colors: Purple potato juice	205.606
Ascorbic acid	205.605(b)	Colors: Red radish extract color	205.606
Calcium citrate	205.605(b)	Colors: Saffron extract color	205.606
Calcium hydroxide	205.605(b)	Colors: Turmeric extract color	205.606
Calcium phosphates: monobasic, dibasic, tribasic	205.605(b)	Fish oil	205.606
Carbon dioxide	205.605(b)	Fructooligosaccharides	205.606
Chlorine Materials: Calcium hypochlorite, Chlorine dioxide, Sodium hypochlorite	205.605(b)	Gelatin	205.606
Ethylene	205.605(b)	Gums: Arabic, Carob bean, Guar, Locust bean	205.606
Ferrous sulfate	205.605(b)	Kelp	205.606
Glycerides, mono and di	205.605(b)	Konjac flour	205.606
Glycerin	205.605(b)	Lecithin—de-oiled	205.606
Hydrogen peroxide	205.605(b)	Orange pulp, dried	205.606
Magnesium chloride	205.605(b)	Orange Shellac - unbleached	205.606
Magnesium stearate	205.605(b)	Pectin (non-amidated forms only)	205.606
Nutrient vitamins and minerals	205.605(b)	Seaweed, Pacific kombu	205.606
Ozone	205.605(b)	Starches, Cornstarch (native), Sweet potato	205.606
Phosphoric acid	205.605(b)	Wakame seaweed (Undaria pinnatifida)	205.606

NOSB Meeting Update: Sunset 2017 Review and Other Recommendations, cont'd

Sunset Review - Livestock Subcommittee

Action Considered: Motion to Remove | Outcome: Failed | Status: Sunset Review Completed

Substance	Section	Substance	Section
Alcohols: Ethanol, Isopropanol	205.603(a)	Parasiticides: Moxidectin	205.603(a)
Aspirin	205.603(a)	Peroxyacetic/Peracetic acid	205.603(a)
Atropine	205.603(a)	Phosphoric acid	205.603(a)
Biologics, Vaccines	205.603(a)	Poloxalene	205.603(a)
Butorphanol	205.603(a)	Tolazoline	205.603(a)
Chlorhexidine	205.603(a)	Xylazine	205.603(a)
Chlorine Materials: Calcium hypochlorite, Chlorine dioxide, Sodium hypochlorite	205.603(a)	Copper sulfate	205.603(b)
Electrolytes	205.603(a)	Formic Acid	205.603(b)
Flunixin	205.603(a)	Lidocaine	205.603(b)
Glucose	205.603(a)	Lime, hydrated	205.603(b)
Glycerin	205.603(a)	Mineral oil	205.603(b)
Hydrogen peroxide	205.603(a)	Procaine	205.603(b)
Iodine	205.603(a), 205.603(b),	Sucrose octanoate esters	205.603(b)
Magnesium hydroxide	205.603(a)	Methionine	205.603(d)
Magnesium sulfate	205.603(a)	Trace minerals	205.603(d)
Oxytocin	205.603(a)	Vitamins	205.603(d)
Parasiticides: Fenbendazole	205.603(a)	Excipients	205.603(f)
Parasiticides: Ivermectin	205.603(a)	Strychnine	205.604(a)

Other Recommendations

Use Area	Substance	Section	NOSB Final Recommendation
Crops Livestock	EPA List 4 Inert Ingredients	205.601(m) and 205.603(e)	Update and amend listings
Crops	Micronutrients - Motion to change the annotation	205.601(j)	Amend annotation
Handling	Alginic acid - Motion to reclassify	205.605(a)	Reclassify as synthetic and move to section 205.605(b)
Handling	Carnauba wax - Motion to reclassify	205.605(a)	Reclassify as agricultural and move to section 205.606
Handling	Ancillary substances proposals for microorganisms, pectin, and yeast - Motion to approve the functional classes	205.605	Referred back to Subcommittee



Introduction to Organic Practices

The USDA organic regulations describe organic agriculture as the application of a set of cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that support the cycling of on-farm resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity. These include maintaining or enhancing soil and water quality; conserving wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife; and avoiding use of synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, irradiation, and genetic engineering.

Organic producers use natural processes and materials when developing farming systems—these contribute to soil, crop and livestock nutrition, pest and weed management, attainment of production goals, and conservation of biological diversity.

This factsheet provides an overview of some common practices that organic producers and handlers use to ensure organic integrity and operation sustainability.

Organic Crop Production Practices

Soil Fertility: Crops more easily resist disease, survive drought, and tolerate insects when grown in good soil. Organic crop producers build soil quality by adding compost, animal manures, or green manures. As soil organisms break down these inputs, they convert nutrients into forms plants can absorb and create humus that sustains soil quality. Organic producers must not apply sewage sludge or biosolids to soil. Additionally, organic crop producers use cover crops to protect the soil from wind and water erosion. Soil-conserving practices include the use of cover crops, mulches, conservation tillage, contour plowing, and strip cropping.

Seeds and Planting Stock: Organic crop producers use organic seeds and planting stocks to protect the integrity of their crops. Organic growers may use conventionally grown seeds when an equivalent organic variety is not commercially available, but only if the seeds have not been genetically modified or treated with prohibited substances, such as fungicides.

Crop Rotation: Organic crop producers practice crop rotation (rotating the crops they grow in a field or planting bed over time) to interrupt insect life cycles, suppress soil borne plant diseases, prevent soil erosion, build organic matter, fix nitrogen, and increase farm biodiversity. To effectively reduce insect and disease levels, farmers typically follow one crop with another from a different crop family, then wait a number of years before replanting the initial crop. While crop rotation is also practiced by many conventional farmers, organic producers are required to implement the practice by the USDA organic regulations.

Managing Pests, Weeds, and Diseases: Pest management on organic farms relies on the 'PAMS' strategy: prevention, avoidance, monitoring and suppression. Prevention and avoidance are the first line of defense against pests, weeds, and diseases. If pest or weed suppression becomes necessary, producers often use mechanical and physical practices, such as releasing predatory insects to reduce pest populations or laying down a thick layer of mulch to smother weeds. As a last resort, producers may work with their organic certifier to use an approved pesticide, such as naturally occurring microorganisms, insecticides naturally derived from plants, or one of a few approved synthetic substances.

Maintaining Identity and Integrity of Organic Crops: Organic crop producers are responsible for preventing contact between organic and conventionally-grown crops, as well as contact with prohibited pesticides or fertilizers. Split operations (farms that raise both organic and conventional crops) must make sure that organic crops don't contact prohibited substances through accidental sprays of conventional agrochemicals, spray drift, or residues on equipment from non-organic fields. Fields from which organic

crops are harvested must have defined boundaries and buffer zones, such as hedgerows or crops, separating them from conventional crops and roadways. Prohibited materials cannot be applied to land used for organic cultivation for 36 months prior to harvest of organic crops.

Organic Livestock Production Practices

Livestock Living Conditions and Facilities: Organic livestock producers provide living areas that encourage the health and natural behavior of their animals. Organic practices reflect concerns for animal welfare and a desire to balance productivity with both animal well-being and environmental quality. Organic livestock must have access to outdoor areas, shade, shelter, space for exercise, fresh air, clean drinking water, and direct sunlight. Livestock shelters should give animals protection from extreme temperatures, adequate air circulation and ventilation, and space to exercise.

Grazing: Organic producers must give ruminant animals (e.g., cattle, sheep, and goats) access to pasture during the grazing season. Livestock may not be continuously confined. However, temporary confinement is allowed under specific circumstances, mostly regarding the health and safety of the animal. By providing access to the outdoors, organic livestock producers convert forage, legumes and grasses into meat, milk, wool, and other products. Grazing livestock also provide producers with manure, a very important source of fertility in organic farming systems and an excellent means of recycling nutrients. Rotational grazing may improve forage quantity and quality, while preventing over-grazing.

Animal Health: Organic animal health, like organic crop health, relies on preventative practices and systems. Good genetics are important, as organic livestock producers should select breeds that are well adapted to their particular environment. Balanced nutrition, exercise, and a low-stress environment also contribute to building strong immune systems in animals. Vaccination and other preventative measures are common; antibiotics and growth hormones are prohibited. Organic livestock producers work to manage exposure to disease and parasites through grazing management, proper sanitation, and preventing the introduction of disease agents.

Organic Feed: Organic livestock must eat certified organic feed. Organic feed must be grown and processed by certified organic operations. Similarly, any pastures, forages, and plant -based bedding (such as hay) accessible to livestock must be certified as organically grown and processed. Certain additives, such as vitamins and minerals not produced organically, can be fed to organic livestock in trace amounts, but others, including hormones used to promote growth, are strictly prohibited.

Animal Origin: Organic livestock generally must be raised organically since the last third of gestation. Birds used for poultry or egg production, may come from any source, but must be raised organically beginning the second day of life.

Organic Processing Practices

Organic Ingredients: Under USDA organic regulations, organic processors must use certified organic ingredients (for a minimum of 95% of the product) and only approved non-organic ingredient in products that are labeled organic. Products labeled as "made with organic" specified ingredients may include up to 30% non-organic agricultural ingredients, but all other additives must be approved for organic use. No ingredients or products may be produced using genetic engineering, sewage sludge, or ionizing radiation.

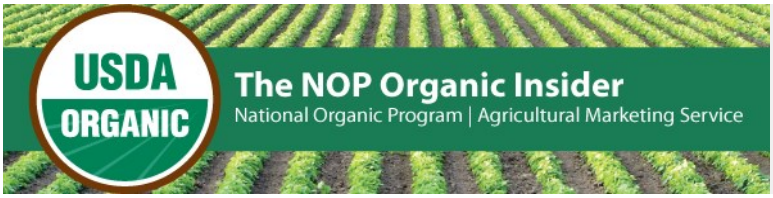
Commingling and Contact: To preserve the integrity of organic ingredients and products, organic processors must:

- Prevent commingling (i.e. mixing) with non-organic ingredients and products throughout processing
- Prevent contact between organic ingredients and non-organic substances, including prohibited sanitizers
- Clean and sanitize processing equipment when changing from non-organic to organic products.; many processors run organic products first, after their cleaning with approved materials

Managing Pests: Similar to pest management on organic farms, organic processing facilities must emphasize prevention over treatment. Organic processors may use approved synthetic substances if all other approaches have failed but must ensure that these substances do not come in contact with the organic products they handle.

Additional Information

For more information on organic practices, visit USDA's Organic Agriculture page at www.usda.gov/organic or the Agricultural Marketing Service, National Organic Program's "Is Organic an Option for Me?" page at www.ams.usda.gov/organicinfo.



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