

# USDA National Organic Program

National Organic Standards Board  
October 26, 2015

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USDA Agricultural Marketing Service  
National Organic Program



# Overview



- Agricultural Marketing Service's National Organic Program Strategic Plan
- Protecting Organic Integrity
- National Organic Standards Board
- Organic Integrity Database
- Sound and Sensible Certification

# Accomplishments



- Age of enforcement
- Pasture rule
- Residue testing rule
- NOP Handbook
- Increased accreditation audit consistency
- Implemented improvements based on 4 Office of Inspector General audits

# Accomplishments



- International equivalency arrangements
- Improvements to the Appeals process
- USDA Organic Literacy Initiative
- USDA Organic Insider
- List of certified organic operations
- Sound and Sensible Certification

# AMS-NOP Strategic Plan 2015-18



Protect  
Organic  
Integrity

Market Access:  
Local, Regional,  
International

Clear  
Standards

Build Technology that  
Advances Organic  
Integrity

Organizational  
Development

# Protecting Organic Integrity



# 10 Points of Organic Integrity



1. Clear/enforceable standards
2. Communication
3. Transparency
4. Certification
5. Complaints
6. Penalties
7. Market surveillance
8. Unannounced inspections
9. Periodic residue testing
10. Continual improvement

# How to File A Complaint



## Anyone Can File a Complaint

**If You Suspect a Violation...**  
gather as much information as possible

### Who?

Identify:

- Brand name
- Manufacturer
- Certifying agent
- Other useful information regarding the operation

### What?

Identify:

- Product lot numbers
- Product package or copy of the label
- Other identifying information
- Explanation of violation

### When & Where?

Provide details of:

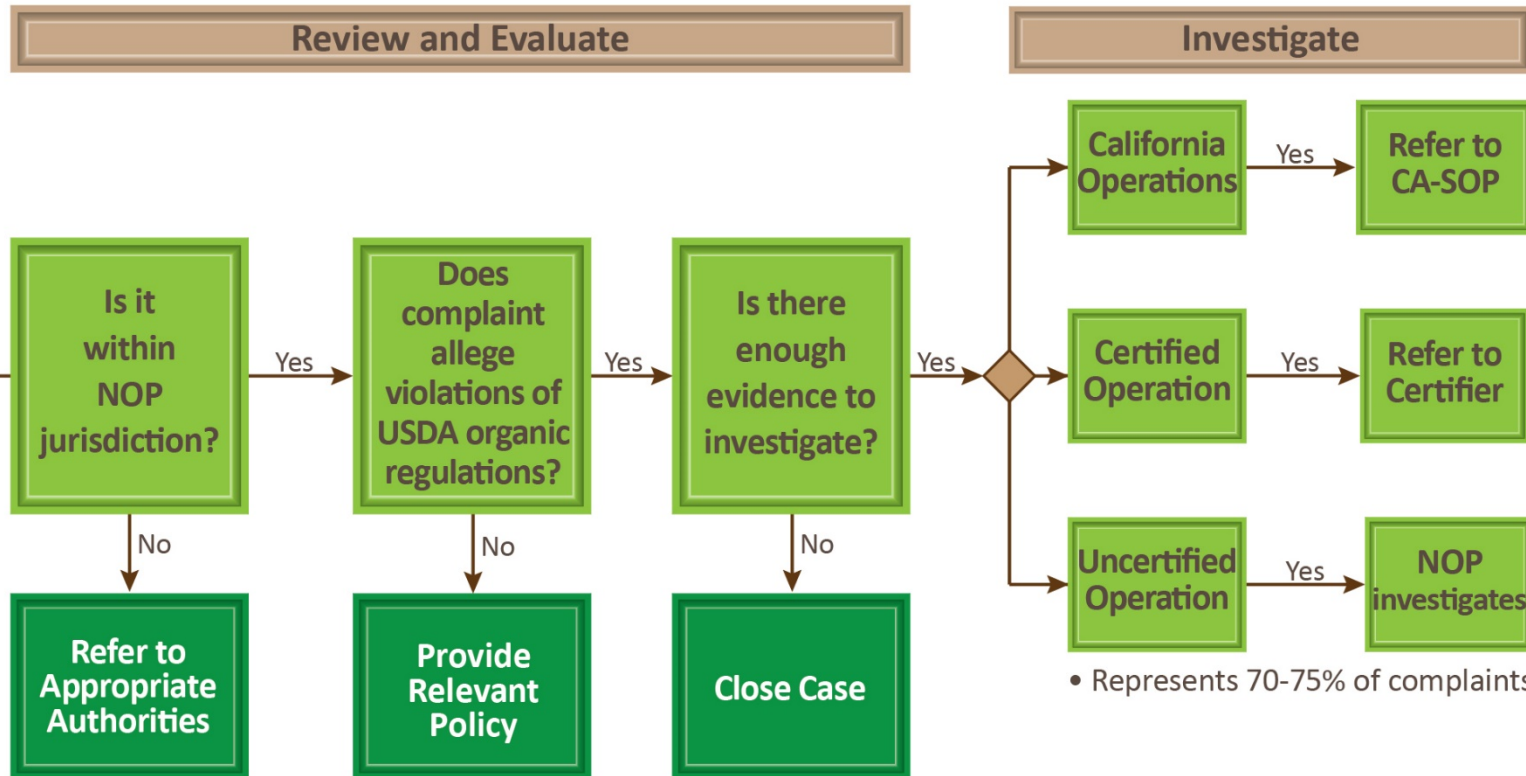
- When you observed the alleged violation
- The location it occurred

### Submit to:

Email: [NOPCompliance@ams.usda.gov](mailto:NOPCompliance@ams.usda.gov)  
Phone: 202-720-3252 | Fax: 202-205-7808  
Mail: USDA Agricultural Marketing Service  
NOP Compliance and Enforcement Branch  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Room 2648-S; Stop 0268  
Washington, DC 20250-0268



# Complaint Review Process



• Represents 70-75% of complaints

Examples:

- Food Safety and Inspection Service
- Food and Drug Administration
- State Public Health Offices

# Compliance & Enforcement

## FY 2015 Administrative Proceedings



### Proceeding #1

**Type:** Formal administrative complaint proceeding

**Operation:** Ernest D. Miller, d/b/a Stoney-M Farm

**Concern:** Applied prohibited substance during organic processes

**Disposition:** Suspended land from organic certification for 3 years

### Proceeding # 2

**Type:** Consent decision and order

**Operation:** Organic Food Chain

**Concern:** Willful violation of USDA organic regulations

**Disposition:** Suspended accreditation for 2 years

# Compliance & Enforcement: Success Stories



## Story #1: Who Needs to Be Certified

### Background:

- “Who Needs to Be Certified” instruction published
- Number of complaints filed regarding uncertified auction barns handling

### Success:

- NOP initiated 11 complaint investigations
- Resulted in **6 certified** and **11 compliant** operations

# Compliance & Enforcement: Success Stories



## Story #2: Uncovering Serious Violations

### Background:

- Uncertified operation sells products as organic and offers organic certification consulting services
- In FY 2013, NOP initiates investigation
- State of Alabama identifies operation's criminal activity

### Success:

- State AG partners with NOP to investigate operation for securities fraud
- In FY 2015, owner accepts plea agreement; receives 15-year prison term and fines



# Compliance & Enforcement

## FY 2015 Successes



- Compliance & Enforcement: Overall Summary
  - Incoming Complaints: 549
  - Completed Complaints: 390
- Summary of Initial Actions Taken
  - Cease & Desist Orders: 36
  - Notices of Warning: 121
- Civil Penalties Issued via Settlement Agreements
  - Total Number: 8
  - Total Amount: \$1,872,875

# National Organic Standards Board



# National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)



The NOSB is a Federal Advisory Committee which assists and advises USDA. It has

- a **charter** with established mission and duties
- a Designated Federal Official (DFO)
- Subcommittees and Chair
- Opportunity for public participation

# NOSB Appointments



- Fifteen members appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture to five-year terms
- Six new appointments for January 2016
- Two who own or operate organic farms
- Two public interest or consumer interest representatives
- One certifier
- One with expertise in environmental protection and resource conservation – Nominations for this position are open through October 29



# NOSB Recommendations 1994-2014



- Practice Standards
  - 174 recommendations
  - Around 150 have been addressed
  - Outstanding recommendations include
    - Aquaculture (3)
    - Pet food
    - Apiculture
    - Mushrooms
    - Animal Welfare (multiple)

# NOSB Recommendations 1994-2014



- National List
  - 101 recommendations
  - 89 addressed
  - Outstanding recommendations are recent and in process
- Sunset
  - 129 reviews completed (previous sunset reviews bundled substances into one review recommendation)
  - Outstanding sodium nitrate

# NOSB Recommendations on Hydroponics



- 1995: NOSB recommended that “Hydroponic production in soilless media to be labeled organically produced shall be allowed if all provisions of the OFPA have been met.”
- 2004: NOSB reiterated its recommendation that “Hydroponic production in soilless media to be labeled organically produced shall be allowed if all provisions of the OFPA have been met.”
- 2005: NOP confirmed that hydroponic operations may be certified organic if produced in compliance with the regulations.
- In NOSB 2010 greenhouse recommendation, the NOSB recommended that USDA shouldn’t allow organic crops to be produced using hydroponic methods.



AMS established a hydroponic-aquaponic task force to report on the compatibility of these systems with the USDA organic regulations and the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA).

The task force will provide a report to the NOSB on

- (i) current hydroponic and aquaponic production methods used in organic production, and
- (ii) whether these practices align with OFPA and the USDA organic regulations.

# Hydroponics/Aquaponics Task Force



NOSB liaisons –

- Jean Richardson and
- Zea Sonnebend
  
- Will Allen, Milwaukee, Wis.;
- Colin Archipley, Escondido, Calif.;
- John Biernbaum, Ph.D., East Lansing, Mich.;
- Angela Caporelli, Frankfort, Ky.;
- Dave Chapman, East Thetford, Vt.;
- Marianne Cufone J.D., New Orleans, La.;
- Amy Lamendella, Santa Cruz, Calif.;
  
- Richard Shultz, Lethbridge, AB, Canada;
- Eric Sideman, PhD., Strafford, N.H.;
- Pierre Sleiman, Encinitas, Calif.;
- Stacy Tollefson, Ph.D., Tucson, Ariz.;
- Jose Edgardo Torres, Sahuarita, Ariz.;
- Jessica Vaughan, Freedom, Calif.;
- Jeffry Evard, Plainfield, Ind.;
- Sam Welsch, Lincoln, Neb.;
- Theresa Lam, East Brunswick, N.J.

# Organic Integrity Database



# Vision: The Organic *INTEGRITY* Database



**The NOP is responsible for the integrity of the USDA organic seal.**

The Organic *INTEGRITY* Database is a modernized certified organic operations database that will:

- Contain up-to-date and accurate information, deterring fraud
- Increase supply chain transparency
- Promote market visibility for organic operations



**Accredited certifying agents have been highly involved and continue to play a critical role in the INTEGRITY development process**

- **A full quarter of our certifiers are participating in the user group**
- **Over 31,000 operations are listed in the database (certified, suspended, revoked, surrendered)**
- **Over 175,000 products are listed in the 2014 data provided by certifiers**



# Release 1 Capabilities



Certifier User  
Account  
Management

New Data Fields

Scope/Product  
Taxonomy

Data Upload &  
Download  
(Excel, User  
Interface)

User Interface  
and Web Based  
Forms

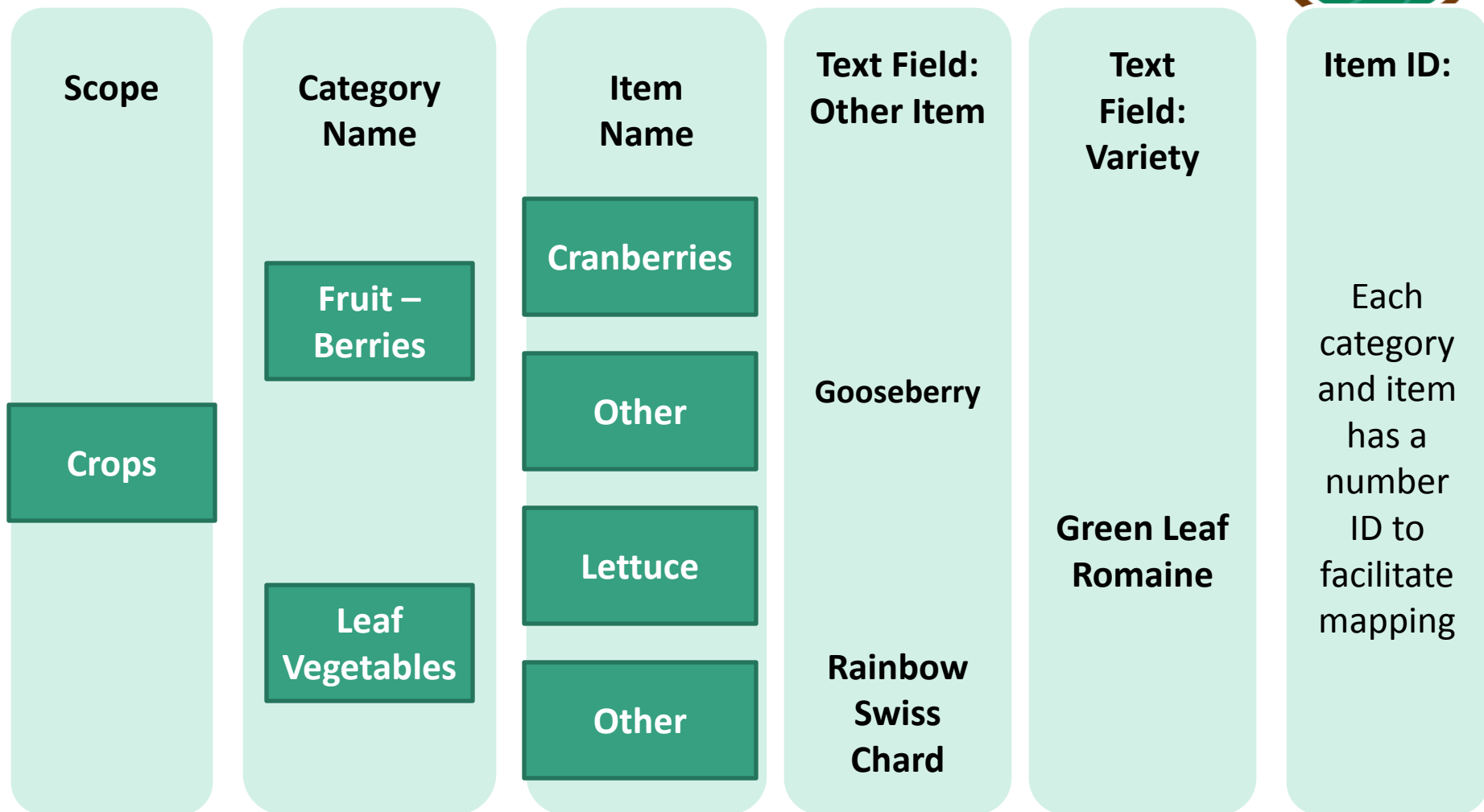
Public Search and  
Reports

# New Data Submission Template



Operation ID	Operation Name	Other/Former Names	Client ID	Contact First Name	Contact Last Name	Operation Certification Status	Effective Date of Operation Status	NOP Anniversary Date	CROPS Certification Status	Effective Date of CROPS Status
Required	Required	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Required	Required	Optional	Optional	Optional
<i>NOP's 10-digit unique ID for operation. First 3 numbers are certifier ID (see Certifier IDs tab); last 7 numbers are assigned by the certifier.</i>	<i>Operation's business name</i>	<i>Other names that the operation is doing or has done business as</i>	<i>Client ID issued by certifier. This can be any identifier that the Certifier uses to identify the operation. No constraints on format.</i>			<i>Certified/ Surrendered/ Suspended/ Revoked / Denied Certification/ Withdrew with NONC</i>	<i>Date the selected Operation Certification Status became effective.</i>	<i>Date of annual update for certificate, at operation level. May include renewal, inspection, or verification.</i>	<i>Certified/ Surrendered/ Suspended/ Transitioning /Denied Certification/ Withdrew with NONC/Not Certified</i>	
1234567890	Jenny's farm	JT's Farm	ABD-gh-56	Jenny	Tucker	Certified	12/13/2011	1/23/2014	Certified	1/8/2014
1236543210	John's Farm		A-123-anb	John	Smith	Certified	7/1/2009	1/23/2014	Certified	7/1/2009

# New Flexible Taxonomy



# Public Interfaces (Basic Search)



**United States Department of Agriculture**  
 Agricultural Marketing Service

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## Welcome to the Organic INTEGRITY Database!

Find a specific certified organic farm or business, or search for an operation with specific characteristics. Listings come from USDA-accredited certifying agents. The current list is a snapshot from January 2015, with all businesses and partial product lists. New listings will be posted throughout Fall 2015. You can download Microsoft Excel workbooks with full data sets from: [2014](#), [2013](#), [2012](#), [2011](#), [2010](#). Only certified operations can sell, label or represent products as organic, unless exempt or excluded from certification.

Certifying Agent:  [Reset](#)

Advanced Search

[Export To Excel](#)

Certifying Agent	Operation	Status	City	State/Province	Country	Certified Products
[ABO] A Bee Organic	2424062 Ontario Limited	Certified	Sault Ste. Marie	Michigan	United States of America	<b>Handling:</b> Chia Seed, Goji Berry, Hemp Seed, Raw Cacao Nibs, ... <a href="#">More</a>
[ABO] A Bee Organic	Alaska Coffee Roasting-Fairbanks	Certified	Fairbanks	Alaska	United States of America	<b>Handling:</b> Coffee
[ABO] A Bee Organic	Aqualand Farms				United States of America	<b>Crops:</b> Basil, Cucumber, Kat Soi, Komatsuna, Lettuce, Pac... <a href="#">More</a>
[ABO] A Bee Organic	Bee Organic LLC				United States of America	<b>Handling:</b> Body care, candles
[ABO] A Bee Organic	Beeyard Farm				Serbia	
[ABO] A Bee Organic	Beeyard Farm				United States of America	<b>Handling:</b> Honey
[ABO] A Bee Organic	Big Willy's Farm LLC	Certified	Loveland	Colorado	United States of America	<b>Crops:</b> Cucumber, Tomato
[ABO] A Bee Organic	Bonsall Farms	Certified	Oceanside	California	United States of America	<b>Crops:</b> Beans, Cucumbers, Peppers, Squash, Tomatoes
[ABO] A Bee Organic	Brothers Farm	Certified	Diamond Bar	California	United States of America	<b>Crops:</b> Amaranth, Bitter Melon, Cantaloupe, Chives, Pac C... <a href="#">More</a>
[ABO] A Bee Organic	California Garlic Company Inc.	Certified	San Diego	California	United States of America	<b>Handling:</b> Asparagus, Blackberries, Broccoll, Cabbage, Caull... <a href="#">More</a>

**Operation Details**

**Contact Name:** Amanda Piszczek  
**Address:** 440 W. Drahrer Rd, Oxford, MI 48371  
**Phone:** 248 783-6450  
**Email:** sales@beeorganic.net  
**Web URL:**  
**Operation ID:** 9090026576

# Release 2 and Beyond



## Planned Development Over the Next Year

- **Advanced Search Enhancements**
- **Automated Connections (web services)**
- **Certifier Profile**
- **Operation History**
- **Adverse Action Document Management**
- **Operation Certificate Module**

# Sound and Sensible



# Sound and Sensible Certification Projects



- In 2014, AMS funded 14 projects that support accessible, attainable, and affordable organic certification more.
- The projects helped >2,000 farm and businesses learn about the path to organic certification.
- Educational resources – videos, tip sheets, and workshop materials – will reach thousands of new farms and businesses.

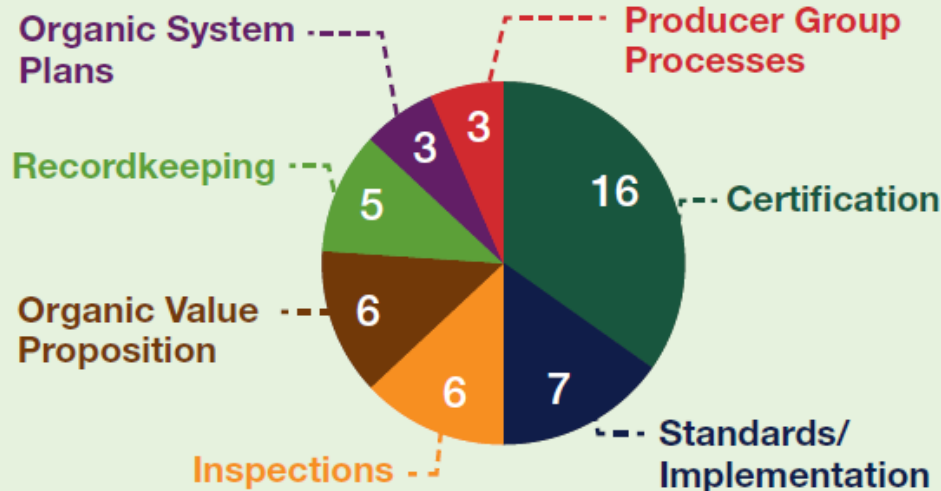
# About the Projects Awarded



## Sound & Sensible

- **Awards:** 14 projects were awarded to 13 organizations
- **Geographic coverage of projects:** Southeast/Gulf States; New England; Northwest; California; Mid-Atlantic

Product Topic Areas



Types of Products



**75**  
tip sheets /  
fact sheets



**16**  
training  
workshops &  
curricula



**15**  
informative  
videos



# Let's Watch!



- NOFA-VT created 5 videos communicating the organic value proposition as part of its Sound and Sensible project with AMS. Here's a preview!



# Thank You

Organic Integrity from  
Farm to Table,

Consumers Trust the  
Organic Label

[www.ams.usda.gov/nop](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop)

