

NOP Guidance for Certifiers on Flavors  
February 16, 2007

In mid January the National Organic Program (NOP) sent out a statement to all Accredited Certifying Agents (ACAs) to clarify a question about flavors because the NOP was receiving a number of questions...whether or not flavors had to be certified organic and if not, petitioned to be placed on 205.606 if they are agricultural but not commercially available in organic supply. We thought this January 11<sup>th</sup> statement would help clear up some confusion, but like a lot of things in the NOP, apparently it didn't help sufficiently. And maybe for some folks it made things a bit more confusing. So let's try this again.

In 1995, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) reviewed the use of natural flavors and recognized that natural flavors are complex – that they are derived from natural sources and are compound substances derived from plants, herbs, spices and botanicals.

Natural flavors are used in very small amounts (approximately .05 to .40 percent) to boost the flavor profile in products which, because of functional or economic necessity, contain less than optimal amount of foodstuff necessary to give the finished products the required flavor profile. They are widely used in dairy products, baked goods and juice products, as well as in other foods. As a result, the NOSB recommended that flavors be placed on the National List and that's where they are – as natural, nonagricultural, non-synthetic substances on 205.605(a).

Flavors are also defined according to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and for our purposes what is important here is the purpose of a flavor as described by FDA – namely that a flavor does not provide any nutritional or caloric purpose in the final product. *Flavors do not need to be petitioned to be placed on 205.606 as long as they meet the definition of a flavor, according to FDA, and they are from nonsynthetic sources and are not produced using synthetic solvents and carrier systems or any artificial preservatives.*

We recognize that there are some ACAs certifying flavors...which contradicts the National List...if we have flavors listed as non-agricultural, non-synthetic, how can we at the same time be saying there are flavors out there able to meet NOP standards, eligible for certification? Well, we live in an imperfect world...and actually that is how markets grow and develop. Over time, there may be more sources of organic flavors...we hope that there will be; in fact, the NOSB anticipated that this would occur when they drafted their recommendation in 1995, over a decade ago. However, these flavors are more simplistic and may not deliver complex flavor profiles demanded by consumers. As technologies emerge, this might change. If it does, we expect the NOSB will recommend changes to the National List with respect to flavors. Until then, well, we live with the imperfect market we have. Flavors – non-synthetic, natural (non-agricultural), are on the National List and do not need to be petitioned as long as they meet the existing definitions.