

National Organic Program Cloning and Organic Livestock Production

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- Since the Dec. 2006 announcement of FDA's approval to conduct a risk assessment, questions have been raised about cloning and clones related to organic production and their allowance under the National Organic Program (NOP) regulations.
- Public statements against cloning in organic production have been issued by the Organic Trade Association, Organic Valley, Organic Consumers Association, and the Center for Food Safety.
- On Jan. 31, 2007, USDA's NOP issued a statement on its web site that cloning as a production method is incompatible with the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) and is prohibited under the NOP regulations. Q&A's on cloning in connection with organic programs were published along with the statement on the NOP website.
- Although not specifically identified, the basis for excluding cloning technology from organic production stems from the definition of an excluded method in the NOP regulations:

*“Excluded methods. A variety of methods used to genetically modify organisms **or influence their growth and development by means that are not possible under natural conditions or processes** and are not considered compatible with organic production. Such methods include cell fusion, microencapsulation and macroencapsulation, and recombinant DNA technology (including gene deletion, gene doubling, introducing a foreign gene, and changing the positions of genes when achieved by recombinant DNA technology). Such methods do not include the use of traditional breeding, conjugation, fermentation, hybridization, in vitro fertilization, or tissue culture.”*
[Emphasis added.]

- The prohibition on the progeny of clones is less clear. The NOP asked its advisory committee, the National Organic Standards Board, to discuss the issue at their March 2007 meeting. After discussion and public comment, on March 29, 2007, the Board voted to accept the following Livestock Committee recommendation:

“To strengthen and clarify existing rules, the National Organic Standards Board Livestock Committee recommends that the NOP amend the regulations to add animal cloning technology to the definition of ‘Excluded Methods’ and that the NOP update other sections of the rule to ensure that animal cloning technology is excluded, including all generations of progeny of cloned animals.” [Emphasis added.]

- Work has been initiated on a National Organic Program origin of livestock public rulemaking that will encompass the National Organic Standards Board's recommendation regarding cloning and the progeny of clones.