

Processing Recommendations -- 1998-99

NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS BOARD
INTERDISCIPLINARY TASKFORCE ON PROCESSING PRINCIPLES
WASHINGTON, D.C. JULY 23, 1998

At its meeting in Washington, D.C. on July 23, 1998, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) endorsed the following proposal of its Interdisciplinary Taskforce on Processing Principles.

I. The organic rule needs to include a clear statement reflecting a systems approach, of the principles that regulate organic processing, just as it contains a clear statement of the principles regulating organic production.

II. Where processed organic products are concerned, separate standards should be developed for (a) processing practices and (b) criteria for accepting synthetic substances for placement on the national list, in four categories: (1) Food additives; (2) Adjuvants and processing aids; (3) Cleansers, sanitizers and disinfectants; and (4) Pest control materials.

III. Regarding processing practices, the NOSB has considered a variety of previously proposed principles from the Texas Department of Agriculture, the Organic Food Producers Association of

North America (currently the Organic Trade Association), and other groups who have addressed this issue and will work to develop criteria defining "acceptable" processes.

IV. Because the Organic Food Production Act of 1990 (OFPA) technically bars the use of synthetic substances in organic food processing, no criteria for permitting them are set out in the OFPA. The criterion in the NOSB's recommendations, namely that the substance is "essential" to the manufacture of a product, would be a difficult concept to defend as a sole criterion. Therefore, the Taskforce will develop a set of criteria to determine which synthetic substances should be allowed.

V. The principles underlying organic production are ecological integrity and resource conservation. Some such principles should also underlie the handling of organic foods after harvest -- that is, there should be stated goals directed toward minimizing the waste of non-renewable natural resources in processing and packaging of organic foods. The Taskforce is currently addressing this issue.

The Committee would appreciate comments from any interested party on any of the above proposals by October 23, 1998.

Please mail your comment to the following address:

USDA/AMS/T&M/NOP
Interdisciplinary Taskforce on Processing Principles
P.O. Box 96456 Room 2510-South Bldg.
Washington, DC 20090-6456.