



July 11, 2002

To Whom It May Concern:

Congratulations to the Natural Foods Industry for coming together on this landmark event that will take place on October 21st. Credibility has always been an issue the organic skeptics have held in the forefront of their crusade against us. Now, with the new U.S.D.A. standards about to take effect, their rumblings should be quieted.

Reflecting on the last fifteen years spent in the organic industry, I have seen tremendous maturing, massive growth, and many successes. I take pride in all the good we have accomplished. We have taken organic produce to new levels. We have bridged the gap between conventional and organics. You are now able to find organics in almost every conventional grocery store in America. We have taken the perception of organics with the "worm in the apple" and turned it around. In fact, in the case of our company, some mainstream chain stores are replacing major produce items and are going with organic produce exclusively. We have held ourselves to such a high standard that we are actually raising the bar of quality with our conventional counterparts.

Years ago in Watsonville, I remember sitting down with some of the founding fathers of this industry and discussing what we needed to do to take this business to the next level. I clearly recall the number one response was quality, consistency, and year round supply. All three of these goals are in jeopardy by totally banning sodium nitrate.

As a marketer and sales person in this industry I find myself very concerned with the decision to ban sodium nitrate from our list of optional organic production materials. The thought of what lettuce might look like in January, or the lack there of, without sodium nitrate is very unsettling to our customers and us. By banning this product we will be taking a large step backwards as an industry and will be doing a disservice to the consumer. We know that we will not be able to provide what they expect and demand without some use of this product. The quick and immediate response of sodium nitrate can be the difference between having a crop or not.

Cal-Organic Vegetable Company
a wholly owned subsidiary of
Grimmway Enterprises Inc.
12000 Main St. • Lamont, California 93241
Tel: (661) 845-3758 • Fax: (661) 845-3888



We have painstakingly overcome hurdles of supply by going to the southern deserts of California and Arizona to farm in the winter months to satisfy the demand and the expectations of the natural foods consumer. We have seen that the conditions there don't always lend themselves to success without some help.

As someone who is responsible for feeding of thousands of people organic produce everyday, I feel it is my obligation to defend their right of supply by supporting the limited use of sodium nitrate. Countless people, young and old, depend on this food, people with health problems like cancer and allergies, mothers concerned about what their children ingest and people interested in a healthy alternative. How do we explain the decision to ban this naturally occurring product when we have nothing to offer them on the produce shelf? Is the reasoning because it is stripped mined like gypsum, marble, or oil? Oil is exactly like sodium nitrate; it is a finite natural resource. Are we going to stop using tractors or trucks to get our food to market? Are we concerned about the views of Europe and Japan? Do we explain to our consumers it is because of foreign concerns that the American consumer will suffer? Please help me find the right explanation.

Completely eliminating the use of sodium nitrate will increase crop failure and force more produce to come from Mexico. There is very limited ability to monitor growing and harvesting practices in Mexico, not to mention the lack of support for the American farm worker. We are so worried about food from foreign countries that we now want country of origin labeling on it.

The American consumer's concern for product safety and a desire for a healthy alternative has been the catalyst that has skyrocketed this industry's growth. Produce is the backbone to natural food industry. It is what has paved the way for the growth of our entire industry.

We have built this business by servicing a very unique and special group of people who have grown to appreciate who we are and what we do for them. We have built friendships, partnerships, and success stories all because of food. Simple, pure, natural food. We have tackled and overcome many obstacles and hurdles that we have faced. I think that we can surmount this one too. I believe that banning sodium nitrate runs the risk of undermining all the growth and success that we have accomplished over the years.

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Give us the tools to succeed, to grow and reach new heights. Don't send us back to the "worm in the apple" image. We need to keep the momentum moving forward in this industry. We don't need to dampen it by not having supply or quality.

Respectfully yours,

Todd Linsky
Director of Organics
Grimmway Farms/
Cal-Organic Vegetable Co.

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RANDY DORN

August 3, 2002

Richard Matthews
Program Manager
USDA-AMS-TMS-NOP
Room 4008-
So. Building
1400 Independence Ave.SW
Washington,D.C. 20250-0020

Dear Richard,

I am writing this letter to express my opinion regarding Chilean Nitrate's use in the organic program. I tried to e'mail but I could get no result from the web address in the letter sent to me on June 14th. It is my opinion that I would like to not only see it's use allowed but see efforts to lobby the International program to allow it's use. It is a naturally occurring substance that is of great benefit, that if used in conjunction with a soil building program brings great results for a reasonable cost. Why so many seem to be so against it's use is perplexing considering that one can use dead animal feathers and the blood from dead animals(bloodmeal). When I purchased my home about a dozen years ago my Hispanic friend who advised me in vineyard care told me to just tear out the vines because they were so weak, or else don't even think of trying to farm organically. I persisted, and along with all my compost, lime, covercrops, and micronutrients added, the two times that I have added Chilean Nitrate have been very rewarding in helping my grape crop. My output has increased from 2-3 tons of grapes for my 2 acres, to 6-8 tons. My friend is admiring of the progress I have made. Being a very small farmer,(not a full time vocation), who spends a lot of money trying to make my grapes profitable it would be a definite step backwards in my ability to produce a product that is profitable.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,



Randy Dorn