

Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers, Inc. represents organic pineapple producers and has an interest in the consideration by the NOSB of the use of ethylene to induce flowering of organic pineapples.

Pineapple producers had previously petitioned the NOSB to consider the use of calcium carbide to force the uniform flowering of pineapples. The NOSB recommended against the use of calcium carbide at its DC meeting last year. Calcium carbide is currently listed as a prohibited material by the OMRI. Although synthetic, ethylene gas is the only currently available material which enables pineapple producers to produce on a commercial scale. A ban on its use possibly would force growers to convert organic acreage to conventional or abandon the pineapple business altogether.

(FOG) urges the NOSB to consider carefully the use of ethylene to produce uniform pineapple flowering and ripening. Certainly the inclusion of any synthetic material on the national list should be carefully weighed. I am not aware of any other alternatives for even smaller scale growers. The concept of growth regulators are not out of the framework of an organic farm, for instance seaweed has been used. The allowance by the NOSB of ethylene for use in the post harvest ripening of other tropical fruits like bananas, papayas, and mangos would seem to be consistent with allowing a small amount of the product to be used to enable tropical pineapple production to take place. I have heard of the EEU position to allow the material with a phase out in the future and this may be a reasonable approach for the NOSB to consider as well. This would hopefully encourage someone to look into developing a natural source of the material which could be used.

Marty Mesh