

Eileen S. Stommes, Deputy Administrator  
USDA-AMS-TM-NOP  
Docket #TMD-94-00-2  
Room 4007-South  
Ag Stop 0275  
PO Box 96456  
Washington DC 20090-6456

Dear Eileen S. Stommes,

I have recently become aware of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's attempt to redefine standards for Organic foods. Strong and healthy national standards for organic foods are a fundamental right of every citizen of this country. The safety guaranteed by the word "Organic" is being threatened by the proposal released on December 16, 1997. The definition of "Organic" food is that the food is: free of toxic metals, pesticides and other chemicals; free of radioactive contamination; free of inhumane treatment of animals; and grown from naturally occurring seed. When I choose food that is labeled "Organic", I am currently being assured a pure product, grown or prepared in a wholesome manner with concern for the highest level of safety. The U.S.D.A.'s definition destroys these safety standards, and I absolutely oppose it. I urge that federal organic standard be modeled after California's stringent code which does NOT include:

- Genetic Engineering-Using genetic engineering to produce foods
- Factory Farming-Using inhumane, intensive confinement, factory farm style production methods on farm animals
- Animal Cannibalism-Feeding back diseased and waste animal body parts, offal and blood to farm animals, the practice that had led to Mad Cow Disease in Europe.
- Food Irradiation-Using radioactive nuclear wastes to "kill bacteria" in order to prolong the shelf life of food products which destroys some of its nutritive value

The current "Organic" codes of 17 U.S. states, 33 private certifying agencies, and Europe's "biological" food label clearly restrict all of the above practices and consider them non-organic and non-biological. I consider the U.S.D.A.'s proposal blatantly misleading to consumers. It represents an "open season" for corporate agribusiness, chemical-biotech corporations and giant supermarket chains. It amounts to nothing less than a hostile takeover of the success of the organic industry by industrialized agriculture interests hoping for short term monetary gain. The proposed rule makes the concept of "Organic" essentially meaningless, and assures that greed and environmental degradation will continue to triumph over intelligent and sustainable use of our land and care for our bodies.

This proposal removes my ability to control the substances that go into my body from the food I eat. With greatly escalating incidents of cancer and other illnesses in this country due to ingestion of pesticides and other pollutants - this proposal removes my ability to protect my own body. It is totally unacceptable for the U.S.D.A. to impose such a thing. It amounts to nothing less than forced poisoning.

I also oppose the new U.S.D.A. rules that would deny states and localities from setting tougher organic food standards without first being approved by the U.S.D.A.. I agree with many industry experts who are skeptical that the U.S.D.A. would allow stricter local standards, since stricter