



May 2016 Newsletter

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Organic Integrity from Farm to Table, Consumers Trust the Organic Label.

Standards: The Groundwork Protecting Organic Integrity



With rising consumer interest and the sale of organic products topping double-digit growth, consumers look to the USDA for assurance that products labeled with its organic seal meet consistent, uniform standards. The National Organic Program (NOP), a regulatory program housed in the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), lays the groundwork providing that assurance. The NOP develops and updates regulations and policies for organically-produced agricultural products to create a level playing field for certified farms and businesses. These standards establish a foundation that allows AMS to meet its core mission of protecting organic integrity.

AMS continually improves standards that advance USDA’s organic agriculture goals and support consumer confidence. Over the past year, we have published a number of proposed rules, final rules, guidance documents, and handbook instructions that set the direction for organic farms and businesses.

Since April 2015, AMS has:

- Clarified organic standards, by publishing the National List Sunset 2015 Final Rule, a proposed rule to remove substances from National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List), the Origin of Livestock Proposed Rule, and most recently, the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices Proposed Rule.
- Worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to implement the Final Guidance on Natural Resource and Biodiversity Conservation and the NRCS Conservation Activity Plan for Organic System Plans.

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Standards: The Groundwork Protecting Organic Integrity, cont'd

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- Published Final Guidance on Substances Used in Post-Harvest Handling of Organic Products, Policy Memos on Electrolyzed Water and Nanotechnology, and updated guidelines for the National List Petition Process.
- Facilitated three public meetings of the National Organic Standards Board; accepted hundreds of public comments related to the development of the organic standards.
- Selected members for a task force on hydroponic and aquaponic production practices to help clarify standards in this production area.

This year, the AMS plans to publish proposed rules for aquaculture, pet food, and apiculture, as well as a Private Label Instruction, final guidance on the classification of materials and draft guidance on the use of treated lumber in organic production and pesticide drift.

AMS actively engages stakeholders to develop and revise the organic standards. To foster that community engagement and facilitate input from all parts of the organic community, the NOP works closely with the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), a federal advisory committee made up of 15 dedicated public volunteers and appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture. The NOSB meets twice per year, in a public forum, to discuss items on its work agenda, vote on proposals, hear public comments, and make recommendations to the

Secretary; the NOP uses these recommendations as the basis for creating clear standards.

Consumers and community stakeholders know the USDA stands behind the standards that its organic seal represents. Developing clear standards is the first step in building that confidence, establishing trust, and to protecting organic integrity.

The NOSB held its spring meeting April 25—27 in Washington, DC. This year's call for nominations to serve on the Board is now open. The NOP is seeking to fill five vacancies on the NOSB, including: an individual with expertise in areas of environmental protection and resource conservation; an organic producer who owns or operates an organic operation; an organic handler or processor who owns or operates an organic handling operation; a representative of a public or consumer interest group; and a scientist (toxicology, ecology or biochemistry). Applications will be accepted through June 3, 2016. For more information, visit <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/nosb/nomination-process>.

Sincerely,

Miles V. McEvoy
NOP Deputy Administrator



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Transitioning to Organic Certification



This article first appeared as a USDA blog by Betsy Rakola, Organic Policy Advisor.

Access the original blog: <http://blogs.usda.gov/2016/04/21/transitioning-to-organic-certification>.

More and more farmers are entering the organic market. Just last year, the number of certified operations in the U.S. grew by almost 12 percent – more than double the growth rate of 2014. So how do farmers, ranchers, and food processors make the transition to organic? We talked to one farming family about their experience, learning how they used USDA programs to help with the transition process.

Conner Voss got his family farm certified organic in 2015. Diggin' Roots Farm is a diversified fruit, vegetable, and livestock operation in Molalla, Oregon, midway between Portland and Salem. "We sell our product direct – through a CSA, at a local farmers market, and direct to restaurants – and our customers kept asking about our growing practices," said Conner. "We wholeheartedly believe in the practices and philosophy of organic production, and certification offers a quick and easy starting place for our conversations with our community. Beyond that, being certified is a way for our small farm to actively engage in the larger organic movement by helping define and shape what organic is."

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs provided Diggin' Roots with financial assistance for conservation practices during the transition to organic. "Through NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program's Organic Initiative, we established nitrogen-fixing cover crop mixes, developed a nutrient budget for using organic fertilizers, and built a high tunnel. Our current contract includes extensive perennial plantings for buffers

and beneficial insects. NRCS has really helped us fine tune our fertility and address a broad range of conservation concerns on our farm," said Conner. "In addition, we use the Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Organic Certification Cost Share program to defray the cost of organic certification. It can cover up to 75 percent of our certification fees each year. Our first year of certification cost us about \$300, which ended up being less than .5 percent of our gross sales- well worth it for the time it saved us in communicating our growing practices."

USDA's strategic plan set out a goal of helping farms like Diggin' Roots obtain organic certification, and Secretary Vilsack issued guidance to all USDA agencies affirming the department-wide commitment to the organic sector. AMS and NRCS have taken the lead on creating new education and outreach tools aimed at making certification more accessible, attainable, and affordable for small and beginning farmers. Recently, AMS developed a number of tools to help producers understand how to make the transition to organic certification. The [Sound & Sensible Certification](#) tools provide videos, fact sheets, and training curricula on organic agriculture, and the [Organic Educational Toolkit](#) provides webinars, posters, brochures, and in-depth guides to USDA programs for organic farmers, ranchers, and food processors. NRCS also developed a number of conservation tools, publishing an Organic Farming Handbook and hosting over 30 webinars on organic agriculture.

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Transitioning to Organic Certification, cont'd



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USDA's National Institute of Food & Agriculture, USDA's Risk Management Agency, and the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program have also funded numerous tools to help producers understand how to transition from conventional to organic production. Below are a few highlights.

- [Organic Transition: A Business Planner for Farmers, Ranchers, and Food Entrepreneurs](#) (University of Minnesota)
- [Making the Transition to Organic: Ten Farm Profiles](#) (University of Minnesota)
- [Organic Transition Course](#) – 15-hour online course (Rodale Institute)
- [Farm Transitions: Valuing Sustainable Practices—Organic Certification](#) (Land Stewardship Project)

Conner sums it up like this: "Farming is my intersection between purpose, family, and place. Growing food that makes people smile is my privilege. It is incredibly encouraging that the USDA is recognizing the value of our nation's organic farms. We feel fortunate to have been provided this assistance and actively promote these programs to our peers."

National List Updates

New Petitions

The following new petitions have been posted on the AMS website and sent to the NOSB for review:

- Sulfur, Livestock
- 1-MCP (update), Crops
- Ammonium citrate, Crops
- Ammonium glycinate, Crops
- Sodium Chlorite for the generation of chlorine dioxide gas, Handling

Ineligible Petitions

- Calcium chloride, Crops

New Technical Reports

- Acid-Activated Bentonite, Livestock
- Peracetic acid, Crops
- Peracetic acid, Handling
- Phosphates, Handling

View petitions and technical reports: www.ams.usda.gov/NOPNationalList



Compliance & Enforcement/Appeals Summary

Reporting Period: Fiscal Year (FY) 2016



COMPLIANCE & ENFORCEMENT: OVERALL SUMMARY

	Q1 (Oct 2015 - Dec 2015)	Q2 (Jan 2016 - May 2016)
Incoming Complaints	94	97
Completed Complaint Reviews and Investigations	82	93

APPEALS: OVERALL SUMMARY (Refer to [NOP 4011: Adverse Action Appeal Process](#) for more information)

	Q1 (Oct 2015 - Dec 2015)	Q2 (Jan 2016 - May 2016)
Number of Incoming Appeals by Disposition		
Decisions	4 (includes five received in FY15 and one received in FY16)	8
Dismissals	0	2
Closures	6 (includes four received in FY15 and two received in FY16)	3 (includes appeals received in FY15)

Note: Total reflects appeals closed in FY 2016 regardless of when cases were initiated.

SUMMARY OF INITIAL ACTIONS TAKEN

	Q1 (Oct 2015 - Dec 2015)	Q2 (Jan 2016 - May 2016)
Cease & Desist Orders	8	6
Notices of Warning	22	32
Investigation Referrals	7	16

SUMMARY OF DISPOSITIONS (All NOP)

	Q1 (Oct 2015 - Dec 2015)	Q2 (Jan 2016 - May 2016)
Total Number of Settlement Agreements *	5	2
Total Number of Consent Decisions	1	0
Total Amount Civil Penalties Levied **	\$929,750	\$16,500

Notes:

* Not all settlement agreements include civil penalties and not all civil penalties were levied via settlement agreements.

** Total reflects the amount of penalties initially levied. Amounts may change during negotiation of settlements and individual penalty payments may be outstanding.

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PROPOSED RULE: Organic Livestock & Poultry Practices

Proposed changes to the organic regulations would address organic livestock & poultry living conditions, health care, handling & transport.

Proposed Provisions include:



Agricultural Marketing Service

National Organic Program

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Helping Organics Grow with Clear Livestock and Poultry Standards

The mission of the National Organic Program, part of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), is to protect the integrity of USDA organic products in our country and throughout the world. This means clearly defining what it means to be organic and enforcing those rules. Consumers look for and trust the organic seal because they know that USDA stands behind the standards that it represents.

In April, the USDA published a proposed rule regarding organic livestock and poultry practices (OLPP) and invited the public to comment. This was an important step toward strengthening consumer confidence in the label and ensuring that organic agriculture continues to provide economic opportunities for farmers, ranchers, and businesses around the country.

The proposal clarifies how organic producers and handlers must treat livestock and poultry to ensure their health and wellbeing throughout life, including transport and slaughter. It also clarifies existing USDA organic regulations and proposes to add new requirements for organic livestock and poultry living conditions, transport, and slaughter practices. For example, the proposed rule establishes minimum indoor and outdoor space requirements for organic poultry and clarifies that outdoor spaces must be soil-based.

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Livestock and Poultry Standards, cont'd

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This proposed rule is based on extensive input from the organic community and stakeholders about organic livestock production and handling. It's also consistent with direction from Congress in the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA), which directed the USDA to hold public hearings and develop detailed regulations to guide the implementation of the organic standards for livestock products. OFPA, the regulations that created the National Organic Program, also explained that USDA would develop species-specific guidelines and space requirements for organic animals. Furthermore, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), a 15-member advisory committee that represents all sectors of the organic community, has made a number of recommendations that were vital to the development of the rule. The large number of public comments submitted to the NOSB, as well as other communication with the USDA, tells us that most stakeholders strongly support rulemaking in this area.

The total retail market for organic products is now valued at more than \$39 billion in the United States. Last month, AMS announced that the organic sector grew by 12 percent from 2014 to 2015. USDA has strengthened programs that support organic operations over the past seven years, helping to make organic certification more accessible, attainable, and affordable through a "Sound and Sensible" approach. This initiative includes streamlining the certification process, focusing on enforcement and working with farmers and processors to correct small issues before they become larger ones.

USDA has also established a number of resources to help organics producers find technical and financial resources to help them grow domestically and abroad. The site www.usda.gov/organic creates a one-stop-shop for operators, and USDA has made market and pricing information for approximately 250 organic products available free of charge through USDA's Market News. In 2015, USDA made more than \$11.5 million available to assist organic operations with their certification costs.

USDA strongly supports organic agriculture and is committed to establishing a level playing field that protects all organic farms and businesses. Transparency and public participation are vital to USDA's work in organics. We encourage the organic community, consumers, industry, and other stakeholders to provide comments and feedback on the proposed rule. Here is the Federal Register link: <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/04/13/2016-08023/national-organic-program-organic-livestock-and-poultry-practices>.

OLPP Proposed Rule: Key resources available online

View Proposed Rule and Supporting Documents:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic-livestock-and-poultry-practices>

- Proposed Rule at the Federal Register
- Open Stakeholder Call Transcript - April 7, 2016
- April 15, 2016 Public Webinar Slides and Recording

Submit Comments:

Interested parties may submit written comments online or by mail.

- Online: Visit www.regulations.gov. Search for AMS-NOP-15-0012. Select the document link and follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- By mail, send comments to:
Paul Lewis Ph.D.
Director Standards Division
National Organic Program
USDA-AMS-NOP, Room 2646-So.
Ag Stop 0268, 1400 Independence Ave. SW.
Washington, DC 20250-0268
- Comments due: June 13, 2016

Market News: New Web Page Features Organic Prices



USDA Market News has a new web page featuring its organic commodity price reports. Now, producers can easily find the market price information important to their specific needs in one place on the AMS website. Market News also issues a consolidated market report each week highlighting numerous organic commodities from strawberries to whole fryers, carrots to feed corn, and milk to brown eggs. You can find the National Weekly Organic Summary and the new web page on the AMS Market News website.

To access the new web page, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/market-news/organic>. Links to the national summary report and AMS Market News website are: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/lswnos.pdf> and <https://www.ams.usda.gov/market-news>.

National Organic Program Staff Updates

The NOP is committed to developing its current staff and hiring new team members to strengthen our ongoing support for the organic community. We are pleased to welcome a new employee to NOP's Accreditation & International Activities Division. We also want to congratulate a long-term staff member on her retirement.

Accreditation & International Activities Division Hires New Accreditation Manager...

Rebecca Claypool



On April 4, Rebecca Claypool joined the Accreditation and International Activities Division (AIA). Rebecca Claypool joins AIA as an Accreditation Manager. Over the past ten years, she has participated in the organic farming community as a grower, farm owner, researcher, and organic inspector/certification reviewer for Midwest Organic Services Association (MOSA). MOSA is an accredited certifier located in Viroqua, Wisconsin. She has a Bachelor's degree in Biology from Bates College (Maine) and a Master's degree in Agroecology from the University of Wisconsin – Madison.

Congratulations on Your Retirement...

Kristen Nelson

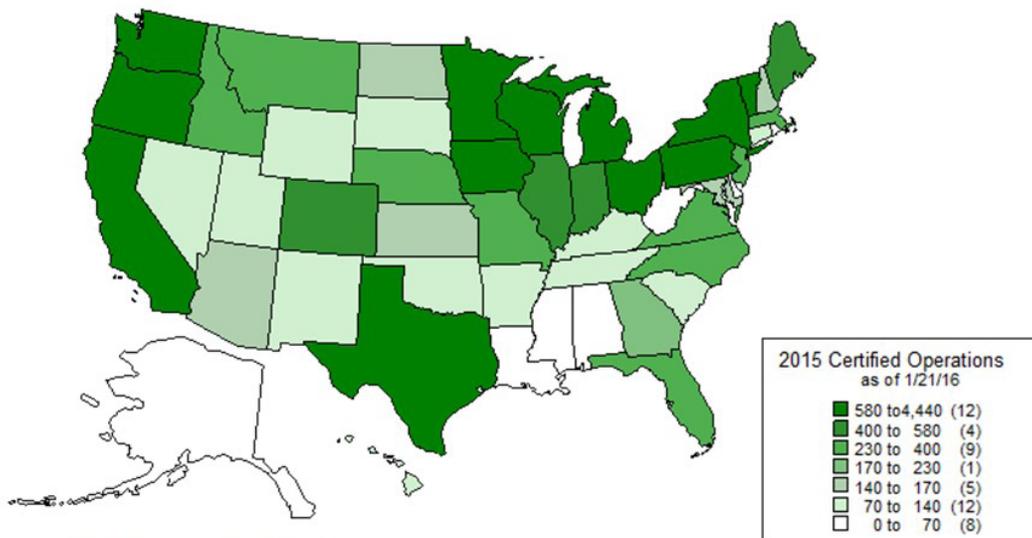
The NOP congratulates Kristen Nelson on her retirement. Kristen joined NOP in August 2014 as Chief of Staff. During her time here, Kristen played a vital role in managing the program's daily activities. Prior to joining our team, Kristen enjoyed a long career with other government agencies, including the USDA Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. NOP wishes her all the best for the future and thanks her for her service to USDA.

The Organic Industry Continues Double-Digit Growth with INTEGRITY



2015 United States Certified Organic Operations

Data as of 1/21/2016



For more information, visit <https://apps.ams.usda.gov/integrity>

In April, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) released data showing that there are now more than 21,000 certified organic operations in the United States, and more than 31,000 around the world. These numbers represent an increase of almost 12 percent between 2014 and 2015, continuing the trend of rapid growth in the organic sector as consumer demand grows.

It's not just the numbers themselves that are exciting, though. The announcement also marks the first time we released the data through the recently launched Organic Integrity Database, a modernized system for tracking certified organic operations. In the past, AMS's National Organic Program (NOP) published the number of certified organic operations once a year, using data submitted annually by accredited organic certifying agencies.

With the new database – funded by the 2014 Farm Bill – organic certifiers can add new operations and report changes to existing operations at any time, allowing us to report updated counts of certified organic operations throughout the year.

The Organic Integrity Database, called INTEGRITY, makes it easy for anyone to search for organic farms and businesses by name, certification status, state, country, products, and other factors. By providing updated and accurate information about all certified operations, INTEGRITY will deter fraud, provide data for market research, enable stakeholders to identify market opportunities and make supply chain connections, support the data needs of international trading partners, and establish technology connections with certifiers to share more accurate and timely data.

This project is a great example of how technology investments and strong partnerships support organic integrity and market development. The system was built in less than 10 months with input and feedback from an engaged group of organic certifying agents and other stakeholders.

Moving forward, we'll continue to refine the database and develop additional modules informed by ongoing stakeholder involvement. With this collaborative and inclusive approach, we'll continue to protect organic integrity and increase access to information about the organic market.

Access the Organic Integrity Database, see our new reports, and download the full dataset: <http://apps.ams.usda.gov/integrity>.

Organic Integrity Database Updates: Release Summary and Upcoming Plans



Photo: The INTEGRITY Team recently celebrated its first anniversary; it was a year ago in March 2015 that the AMS, Harmonia, and Intact team held its kickoff meeting for database design and development.

The Organic Integrity Database (INTEGRITY) has officially launched, and based on feedback so far, all appears to be operating smoothly! This article summarizes the INTEGRITY releases made to date, and outlines our upcoming plans. Have some feedback? Contact the team at: INTEGRITY@ams.usda.gov.

- **Version 1.0 - October 2, 2015:** AMS launched the first release of INTEGRITY. This first release provided advanced search functionality for the public, industry, and Federal government to determine the certification status of an organic operation or a specific product.
- **Version 1.0.1 and 1.0.2 October 13 and November 2, 2015:** Improved system performance and introduced user interface changes to the INTEGRITY public website.
- **Version 1.1 - December 8, 2015:** Launched the certifier section of INTEGRITY, allowing certifiers to enter and update information about certified farms and businesses, including the name and address of organic operation, certification status, and list of certified products. As soon as certifiers publish data, it is immediately available to the public.
- **Version 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 - December 29, 2015 and January 11, 2016:** Corrected and clarified site text based on user feedback; fixed issues reported by system users; and improved functionality, error messaging, and data visibility.
- **Version 2.0 – January 21, 2016:** Launched new features for INTEGRITY: a new Reports tab with monthly data history snapshots, historical annual operation lists, and common reports on certified operation counts by Country, US State/Territory, and Certifier; a new “search” button and the ability to search by scope; and usability improvements.
- **Version 2.0.1 and 2.0.2 – February 10 and 24, 2016:** Introduced text updates to Home, About and Search pages to improve user experience; added support for very long addresses (up to 256 characters); and fixed several issues reported by users.

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Organic Integrity Database Updates: Release Summary and Upcoming Plans

The screenshot shows the USDA Organic Integrity Database homepage. At the top left is the USDA logo and the text 'United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service'. At the top right are links for 'Contact Us' and 'About', and a 'USDA ORGANIC' logo. Below the header is a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Search', and 'Reports' buttons. A 'Log In' and 'Register' link is also present. The main content area features a welcome message: 'Welcome to the Organic INTEGRITY Database!' followed by a paragraph explaining the database's purpose. Below this is a search filter for 'Certifier' with a dropdown menu set to 'All' and a 'Reset' button. An 'Advanced Search' section includes a table with columns: Certifier, Operation, Info, Status, City, State/Province, Country, and Certified Products. Each column has a corresponding input field or dropdown menu. An 'Export To Excel' button is located to the right of the table. The table header row is highlighted in blue.

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- **Version 2.1 – March 23, 2016:** Launched several new features, including: new Operation History tab on the Operation Profile that shows operation and scope status change history; new Certifier Profile page; new data upload web services for certifiers; ability to upload .xlsm files and additional virus scanning for file uploads; and new updates to text and navigability to improve user experience.

Here's a look at what is coming next in 2016!

- **Continued Performance Improvements:** We continue to monitor the speeds of data uploads for certifiers, and are responding with server upgrades and other adjustments.
- **"Find a Certifier" Search and Certifier Profiles:** Replacing the current multi-page static PDF files on the website, users will be able to search for a certifier based on their headquarters or other office locations, and easily obtain contact information. Accreditation documents will also be linked to the new Profiles. Certifiers will be able to add their office locations.
- **Reinstatement Tracking:** Will ensure that suspended operations are not certified without going through a reinstatement process with NOP.
- **Flat File Data Exports:** In response to popular demand, this feature will provide all operation, scope, and item/product info on a single spreadsheet.
- **Improved Search:** Category, item name, and item varieties will all be searchable and displayed in search results and exports (for items/products with certified status); search by operation status effective date (for instance, find newly certified operations in the past 3 months); adding exact word product/item search (so users can find gelatin instead of gelatinized); and adding AND and OR radio buttons to product search interface, so users can find a single place to buy their organic peaches and basil.
- **Continued Emphasis on Data Update Frequency and Quality:** INTEGRITY will ultimately only be as good as the data within it. As such, we will continue to work with certifiers to encourage them to complete frequent data updates, and to improve and expand on the data they submit for each operation.

Keep an eye on the Organic Insider for information about a June 1 webinar about upcoming database developments!



Front Row (L to R): Zea Sonnabend, Lisa de Lima, Harriet Behar, Jean Richardson, Ashley Swaffar, Carmela Beck, Jesse Buie, Tracy Favre
Back Row (L to R): Tom Chapman, Emily Oakley, Scott Rice, Dan Seitz, A-dae Briones, Harold Austin, Francis Thicke

Update From National Organic Standards Board Meeting

On April 25-27, 2016, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) held its biannual public meeting in Washington, DC. Over the course of three days, the NOSB, under the leadership of NOSB Chair Ms. Tracy Favre, evaluated 21 proposals, discussion documents, and reports, and began its review of 15 Sunset 2018 materials. The Board also heard oral testimony from members of the public on a wide range of issues. The NOSB received over 3,000 written public comments before the meeting, and heard oral testimony from 134 members of the public on a wide range of issues.

The meeting began with introductions by each Board member, including six newly appointed members, and acceptance of the Fall 2015 meeting minutes. The Board then heard introductory remarks from Elanor Starmer, Administrator of the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), who welcomed the Board and stakeholders to DC. Miles McEvoy, Deputy Administrator of the National Organic Program (NOP), presented an update on the National Organic Program and Betsy Rakola, AMS Organic Policy Advisor, provided an update on the USDA's Organic Working Group. Dr. Lisa Brines, NOP National List Manager, provided an update about materials under sunset review, and petitions for changes to the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances. During the meeting, the NOSB heard an update from the Hydroponics Task Force and hosted a four-member panel of experts on Emerging Techniques in Agricultural Biotechnology. The panel and Board members discussed the challenges associated with emerging techniques and excluded methods terminology. A summary of the NOSB's recommendations and actions is provided below. The final recommendations from the April 2016 meeting will be posted at www.ams.usda.gov/NOSBMeetings.

Note: The NOSB is an advisory body to the Secretary of Agriculture. NOSB recommendations are not policy unless AMS issues final rules, final guidance, final instructions, or a policy memorandum that adopts the NOSB recommendations. They are not part of the USDA organic regulations unless such action is taken.

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Photos: (Left) Meeting attendees; (Center) Deputy Administrator Miles McEvoy presents NOP Update; (Right) Emerging Techniques Panelists



Update From National Organic Standards Board Meeting, cont'd

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Petitioned Substances. The NOSB reviewed several petitions to amend the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List). This section of the USDA organic regulations identifies the synthetic substances that may be used and the nonsynthetic substances that are prohibited in organic crop and livestock production. For organic processed products, the allowed non-organic ingredients are also included on the National List. If an NOSB proposal receives a decisive vote (2/3 majority) by Board members in favor of the proposed motion, it becomes a recommendation to the USDA, and is provided to the Secretary through the AMS National Organic Program.

Petitions			
Use Area	Substance	Section	NOSB Recommendation
Crops	Hypochlorous acid	205.601	Classified as synthetic; add to section 205.601, with annotation.
Crops	Soy wax	205.601	Classified as synthetic; listing motion referred back to Subcommittee.
Crops	Squid and squid byproducts (pH adjusted with acids)	205.601	Classified as synthetic; add "squid byproducts" to section 205.601, with annotation.
Crops	Ash from manure burning	205.602	Motion to amend listing failed. Substance will remain prohibited for organic crop production.
Livestock	Hypochlorous acid	205.603	Classified as synthetic; add to section 205.603, with annotation.
Handling	Hypochlorous acid	205.605(b)	Classified as synthetic; add to section 205.605(b), with annotation.
Handling	Sodium dodecylbenzene sulfonate (SDBS)	205.605(b)	Referred back to Subcommittee.
Handling	Sodium lactate and potassium lactate	205.605(b)	Classified as synthetic; add to section 205.605, with annotations.
Handling	Oat beta-glucan	205.606	Classified as agricultural; not recommended for National List.

Other National List Recommendations			
Use Area	Substance	Section	NOSB Recommendation
Livestock	Lidocaine	205.603	Annotation change recommended to reduce withdrawal periods.
Livestock	Procaine	205.603	Annotation change recommended to reduce withdrawal periods.
Livestock	Parasiticides	205.603	Annotation changes recommended for sections 205.238 and 205.603.
Handling	Ancillary substances proposal	205.605	Recommended a definition, criteria for compliance, and procedure for the review of ancillary substances. Recommendation passed.

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Update From National Organic Standards Board Meeting, cont'd

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Sunset 2018 Review. The NOSB must review every substance on the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances every five years to confirm that it continues to meet all required criteria under the Organic Foods Production Act and USDA organic regulations. This review is called “sunset review.” At this meeting, the NOSB began its review of 15 listings as part of the Sunset 2018 review. Proposals to remove any of these substances will be considered at the Fall 2016 NOSB meeting.

Sunset 2018 Review

No Action. Summary Posted for Public Comment

Use Area	Substance	National List Section
Crops	Copper sulfate	205.601(a) 205.601(e)
Crops	Ozone gas	205.601(a)
Crops	Peracetic Acid	205.601(a) 205.601(i)
Crops	EPA List 3 Inerts	205.601(m)
Crops	Calcium chloride	205.602(c)
Handling	Agar-agar	205.605(a)
Handling	Animal enzymes	205.605(a)
Handling	Calcium sulfate-mined	205.605(a)
Handling	Carrageenan	205.605(a)
Handling	Glucono delta-lactone	205.605(a)
Handling	Tartaric acid	205.605(a)
Handling	Cellulose	205.605(b)
Handling	Potassium hydroxide	205.605(b)
Handling	Silicon dioxide	205.605(b)
Handling	Colors: Beta-carotene extract	205.606

Other Recommendations

Policy and Procedure Manual Revisions

The NOSB issued a recommendation to update the NOSB Policy and Procedures Manual. The objective of the recommendation is to revise the manual to reflect the current procedures for the collaborative and productive functioning of the NOSB.

Other Business

Hydroponics Task Force Update

Two members of the Hydroponic and Aquaponic Task Force attended the NOSB meeting to provide an update on their work in preparing a report to the Board. Their presentation highlighted the two key perspectives that will be presented in the task force’s report. The first perspective distinguished “bioponic” systems from traditional hydroponic systems, and described how bioponic production can align with the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) and the USDA organic regulations. According to some task force members, bioponic production is unique because these systems use the same inputs, processes, and principles as organic soil-based growing. Under this perspective, the key characteristic that makes bioponics compliant with organic production standards is that plants derive nutrients from plant and animal materials in water, which are released by the same biological processes as those which occur in soil.

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Update From National Organic Standards Board Meeting, cont'd

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The opposing perspective illustrated how hydroponic and bioptic systems do not align with the regulations or the founding principles of organic agriculture. According to this perspective, good soil management and soil health should be the principal source of fertility for plants, and various requirements in the regulations make this clear.

The task force plans to submit its report to the NOSB in June 2016. The NOSB will use this report to make an additional recommendation to AMS. Based on NOSB's recommendation, AMS will determine how to move forward to establish a clear policy on the issue.

Panel on Emerging Technologies

The NOSB invited a panel of experts to provide their perspectives on the efforts of the Materials Subcommittee to better define what is meant by "excluded methods" in 7 CFR 205.2; Terms Defined. All of the panelists articulated that the subcommittee had gone a long way towards identifying the genetic engineering (GE) technologies that would be incompatible with organic agriculture. While everyone agreed that most of the proposed definitions and criteria were inclusive enough to capture a wide range of species beyond plants, some minor adjustments were offered. The panel also highlighted the high costs associated with detecting the use of some GE technologies, and discussed questions about who should ultimately pay for that. The subcommittee responded that more research was needed to delineate where the greatest risk of contamination existed (seed, pollination, or post-harvest handling). All of the panelists were willing to work directly with the Materials Subcommittee to continue to refine the definitions and subcommittee proposals.

Updates and Reports

Emily Brown Rosen from the NOP Standards Division provided an update to the NOSB about the Inerts Working Group and its ongoing work to develop a process for review of inert substances in pesticide formulations.

The Compliance, Accreditation and Certification Subcommittee provided a verbal report on assessment of soil conservation practices.

The Materials Subcommittee presented two discussion documents: Excluded methods terminology and seed purity. A separate proposal on excluded methods terminology was also referred back to the Subcommittee for additional work. The Handling Subcommittee provided a discussion document on an annotation change to the listing of nutrient vitamins and minerals on the National List. The Policy Development Subcommittee presented a discussion document on the reorganization of the sunset review timeline. The Crops Subcommittee presented a discussion document proposing an annotation change to prohibit nonylphenol ethoxylates (NPEs) as inert ingredients in pesticide formulations.

For additional information about the meeting, please visit www.ams.usda.gov/NOSBMeetings.

Upcoming Meetings: National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)

NOSB meetings, held twice a year, are an important forum for public comment, and support transparency in the organic standards development process. Learn more at www.ams.usda.gov/nosb.

Fall 2016 Meeting

November 16 – 18, 2016
8:30 am to 6:00 pm daily
Chase Park Plaza Hotel
212 N. Kingshighway Blvd
St. Louis, Missouri 63108

Spring 2017 Meeting

April 19 – 21, 2017
8:30 am to 6:00 pm daily
Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel
1550 Court Pl
Denver, Colorado 80202



National Organic Program Handbook + Web Updates

Program Handbook. The National Organic Program Handbook is a compilation of guidance documents, policy memos, and instructions intended to clarify policies and assist those who own, manage, or certify organic operations in complying with the USDA organic regulations. AMS has updated several of these resource documents since our last newsletter. Updated documents are linked below and available online at www.ams.usda.gov/NOPProgramHandbook.

- USDA NRCS Conservation Activity Plan 138 for Organic System Plans and Requirements for Certifying Agent Technical Service Providers ([NOP 2617, updated](#))
- National List Petition Guidelines ([NOP 3011, updated](#))
- Personnel Performance Evaluations ([NOP 2027, updated](#))

Rulemaking

- [Proposed Rule](#): Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices

Sound & Sensible Resources. AMS-NOP hosts a group of web pages featuring an array of resources to help simplify and streamline organic certification and compliance for farmers and businesses. Developed in conjunction with many partners across the country, these Sound & Sensible resources are making organic certification more accessible, attainable, and affordable. Read more: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/report-presentation/sound-sensible>.

- Sound & Sensible, Launch 4: Spanish Resources -- [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- Sound & Sensible, [Overview Video](#)

Other Resource Materials

- Memo to the NOSB: [Response to the National Organic Standards Board \(October 2015\)](#)
- [Lists of Accredited Certifying Agents](#)
- [Quarterly Compliance & Enforcement/Appeals Summary](#)
- [Enforcement Documents](#) (see Enforcement Actions)