



# The ORGANIC INTEGRITY QUARTERLY

October 2014  
Newsletter

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

## Table of Contents

- 1 **USDA Organic Leadership**
- 2 **U.S. and Korea Streamline Organic Trade**
- 3 **New Instruction: Organic in the Brand Name**
- 4 **New Cost Share Outreach Materials & New National List Rule**
- 5 **ANSI Peer Review of the NOP**
- 6 **National Organic Standards Board (NOSB): Working for the Organic Community**
- 7 **Introducing New NOSB Members**
- 8 **Sunset 2017: Technical Report Updates**
- 9 **Introducing Taco Bike, and NOSB Charter Update**
- 10 **Sound and Sensible Project Awards**
- 11-12 **Staff Updates**
- 13 **NOP Handbook and Web Updates**

## USDA's Organic Leadership

In May of 2013, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack laid out his vision and commitment to the organic industry in Department-wide Guidance on Organic Agriculture. Secretary Vilsack directed all his Agencies to work together and proactively look for ways to remove obstacles and assist the growing organic sector. He also tapped my boss, Anne Alonzo, Administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service to help guide this effort.



To implement Secretary Vilsack's directive, USDA's Organic Working Group (OWG) developed project action teams to work on the five major areas of the guidance: data, research, outreach, growing the sector, and reciprocity.

There has been much success by the OWG, notably the launching of the Organic Literacy Initiative, a training and research program with materials for producers, handlers, and service providers. Through training modules, a brief brochure, and a detailed resource guide, the Literacy Initiative provides a plain-language overview of what organic really means and how USDA supports it. The OWG promoted these materials to USDA staff, and today, we can proudly say that more than 30,000 USDA employees – around the country and even around the world – have completed our "Organic 101" online training. The OWG is in the process of updating the Literacy Initiative, and the revised materials will be published in 2015.

Other interesting OWG efforts have included a Google+ Hangout by the "Growing the Sector" team, to discuss barriers to certification. Farmers, researchers, and organic training specialists focused on the need for technical assistance. This will be a key focus area for the OWG in 2015.

The OWG will provide more opportunities for stakeholder input during the coming year, as well as to connect with more external partners to conduct education and outreach.



## Organic Leadership, continued

Leading the OWG is just one of the critical roles of the USDA's Organic Policy Advisor, who coordinates efforts USDA-wide. The policy advisor works with leaders across the department to achieve our shared goals on organic agriculture. This leadership is central to implementing the organic programs outlined in the Farm Bill, and to integrating organic agriculture within the broader mission of USDA agencies. Mark Lipson, who previously held this role, left USDA at the end of September. Mark was the USDA's first Organic Policy Advisor, and he began his service in 2010.

In Mark's place, we welcome **Betsy Rakola**, who has worked closely with Mark to facilitate and coordinate the USDA's Organic Working Group activities, particularly the Organic Literacy Initiative. Betsy brings diverse organic experiences to her new position, having served first as NOP's organic cost share manager and, more recently, as an NOP accreditation manager. Betsy holds a master's degree in agriculture and environmental policy from Tufts University. She will be a key part of our effort to integrate organic activities throughout USDA.



**As Administrator Alonzo continues to champion Secretary Vilsack's vision of integrating organic activities throughout USDA, Betsy will play a pivotal leadership and advisory role in making that vision a reality.**

Please join me in welcoming Betsy to her new role, acknowledging the accomplishments of USDA's Organic Working Group, and thanking Mark for his service to USDA and the organic community!

Sincerely,

Miles V. McEvoy  
NOP Deputy Administrator

## Trade Agreement with Korea

Effective July 1, 2014, organic processed products certified in the United States or Korea can now be labeled as organic in either country. This allows American organic farmers, processors, and businesses greater access to Korea's growing market for organic products.

Without this equivalency arrangement, organic farmers and businesses wanting to sell organic processed products in either country would have to obtain separate certifications to meet each country's organic standards. This typically has meant two sets of fees, inspections, and paperwork, and delays for U.S. farmers and businesses trying to export.

Similar to previous U.S. equivalency arrangements with Canada, the European Union, and Japan, this arrangement with Korea eliminates significant barriers, especially for small and medium-sized organic businesses.

The arrangement covers organic condiments, cereal, baby food, frozen meals, milk, and other processed products. According to U.S. industry estimates, exports of organic processed products from the United States are valued at approximately \$35 million annually.

The United States and Korea are committed to ensuring that all traded organic processed products meet the terms of the arrangement, retaining their organic integrity from farm to market. Korea's National Agricultural Products Quality Management Service and the NOP have key oversight roles.

The United States and Korea will also continue to have regular discussions and review each other's programs periodically to be sure that the terms of the arrangement are being met.

AMS Administrator Anne Alonzo shared her praise for the agreement: "USDA has worked aggressively to expand markets for American organic products around the world. Opening the Korean organic market to American producers benefits the thriving organic sector and creates opportunities across the organic supply chain."

For additional details on this agreement, visit:  
[www.ams.usda.gov/NOPTradeKorea](http://www.ams.usda.gov/NOPTradeKorea).



Want to become an organic insider?  
Sign up to receive email updates from the NOP  
<http://bit.ly/NOPOrganicInsider>

# Instruction: Use of Brand or Company Names Containing the Word “Organic”

On August 14, 2014, the National Organic Program (NOP) issued an instruction clarifying the requirements for use of brand or company names containing the word “organic” on the labeling of agricultural products. On August 22, the NOP sent a letter to certifying agents to emphasize two aspects to consider when implementing this instruction.

These policy clarifications are needed to provide fairness and equity in label use throughout the organic industry and to satisfy consumer expectations for organic products. A number of recent NOP investigations indicate a need for greater consistency by certifiers when reviewing product labeling that displays company or brand names containing the term “organic” or its variants.

Any agricultural products certified as “100 percent organic” and “organic” may display brand or company names that contain the term “organic” anywhere on the labeling, in compliance with applicable labeling requirements. Otherwise, in general, agricultural products that are not “100 percent organic” or “organic” may display company names containing the term “organic” only as part of the manufacturer, packer or distributor statement required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on the information panel.

The labeling difference will allow consumers to easily distinguish between “100 percent organic” and “organic” products, certified products that are either labeled as “made with organic (specified ingredients or food groups),” and uncertified products.

This is not a new policy for the NOP. We have handled a number of complaints regarding the use of the word “organic” in the brand name or company name on the principal display panel. We have also taken enforcement actions against companies that have misrepresented products as organic when they don’t meet the USDA organic requirements. It is important for the organic community to understand the appropriate use of the word “organic” on labels for companies that have organic in their brand name, and for certifiers to know clearly how to evaluate and approve organic label claims.

The NOP’s August 22 letter to certifiers outlined two principles to follow when assessing the compliance of brand name use with the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) and the USDA organic regulations.

First, the “made with organic (specified ingredients or food groups)” labeling category has specific labeling provisions for which the NOP has provided guidance. As with products in the “100 percent organic” and “organic” labeling categories, these products must be certified by accredited certifiers, must list the certifier on the label, and must comply with relevant regulatory labeling requirements.

Second, labels that were previously approved by accredited certifiers are in good standing. Moving forward, we expect certifiers to review labels as part of the annual review process, and work with companies to ensure their labels align with the new instruction. We expect certifiers to use a sound and sensible approach and take into account the time and effort needed for certified operations to make label changes.

This Instruction offers several important benefits to the organic community. Clarifying these policies will improve consistency among organic product labels and assure consumers that organic labeling meets a reliable standard. They will also ensure a fair market for organic operations. Companies will find it more difficult to gain an advantage in the market by using the term “organic” in their brand or company name, unless their products are certified as “100 percent organic” or “organic” and allowed to use the organic seal.

## Reminder: How to File a Complaint

More than half of the complaints we receive at the NOP are about uncertified businesses representing or selling agricultural products as organic. This includes complaints about uncertified companies that use the word “organic” in their brand name and place it on labels.

If you want to submit a complaint, please send us the details (e.g., photos and website) to the Compliance and Enforcement Team: **NOPCompliance@ams.usda.gov**.

## New National List Rule

On September 30, 2014, a final rule was published to amend the U. S. Department of Agriculture's National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List). Based on recommendations from the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), one substance will be added to the National List, and two expired substances will be removed. This action results in the following:

- (1) Biodegradable biobased mulch film will be allowed in organic crop production; and
- (2) Expired listings for nonorganic hops (*Humulus lupulus*) and unmodified rice starch will be removed from the National List.

This final rule becomes effective October 30, 2014.

In addition, two nonorganic agricultural ingredients (curry leaves and *Citrus hystrix* leaves and fruit) that were presented in the proposed rule will not be added to the National List through this action.

## New Cost Share Outreach Materials

AMS continues to develop materials to encourage certified organic farmers and handlers to apply for cost share reimbursements from participating States. Visit our USDA Organic 101 blog post, Online Frequently Asked Questions, and Cost Share Fact Sheet! We have also created the postcard below and are sending out mailers with State contacts.



The postcard features the USDA logo and text: "United States Department of Agriculture", "USDA Organic Cost Share", "Agricultural Marketing Service", "Making Organic Certification Affordable", and "You're Certified...Now Get Reimbursed!". It includes a three-step process: 1. Contact Your State Agency, 2. Submit Information, and 3. Get Reimbursed. The bottom section shows images of spices, eggs, and a head of cabbage. A small USDA Organic logo is in the top right. At the bottom, it says "Learn more about the Organic Certification Cost Share Programs at <http://bit.ly/CostShareGen>". A small disclaimer at the bottom right reads "USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider."

USDA  
United States Department of Agriculture

### USDA Organic Cost Share

Agricultural Marketing Service  
Making Organic Certification Affordable  
You're Certified...Now Get Reimbursed!

**1** Contact Your State Agency

**2** Submit Information

**3** Get Reimbursed

USDA ORGANIC

USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Learn more about the Organic Certification Cost Share Programs at <http://bit.ly/CostShareGen>

# Peer Review: The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Assesses the NOP

A critical part of the National Organic Program's (NOP) mission is to accredit and oversee the work of third party accredited certifying agents (certifiers). The USDA organic regulations and NOP's quality system requires periodic peer reviews to assess NOP's accreditation program and to see how well it aligns with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011 (which describes standards for accreditation programs).

In 2014, the NOP contracted with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) to conduct its peer review. ANSI reviewed all phases of NOP accreditation from initial application through final decision, NOP's ongoing surveillance and renewal activities, and management system. ANSI's onsite review included: reviewing public and internal documents, interviewing personnel, reviewing certifying agent and auditor records, and reviewing NOP's management system.

## Opportunities for Improvement

The 2014 ANSI peer review identified 14 opportunities for improvement, which included evidence that some NOP procedures need revisions or do not exist. As a result, the NOP will be taking the actions listed below.

- The NOP will ensure that the qualification for personnel performing internal audits includes knowledge in ISO/IEC 17011 and auditing skills per ISO 19011. In August 2014, several new and current staff members underwent a three-day training on the international standards governing the NOP's accreditation process.
- The NOP is committed to maintaining impartiality by both staff members and certifiers, and will continue to address its importance in its policy documents.
- The NOP will schedule an internal audit pursuant to current NOP policies and procedures.
- The NOP will continue to improve its quality management system by updating and revising its internal and external procedural documents to accurately reflect the NOP's policies and procedures.

- The NOP's internal procedures will specify a timeframe for updating all internal and external documents.
- The NOP is continually improving its quality management system, and will continue to review the system to remove outdated documents and determine when document revisions are necessary.
- The NOP has developed a procedure for record retention and file disposition, but has been seeking AMS approval for the last year. In the meantime, the NOP follows National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) record retention policies, but will continue to work on finalizing its own procedure.
- The NOP will revise its Terms of Accreditation to require certifiers to notify the NOP of any changes to scope or other activities that would affect their accreditation.
- The NOP will revise its procedures to identify which NOP personnel are responsible for reviewing applications for accreditation.
- The NOP is developing a procedure for extending its activities.
- The NOP will develop a procedure for addressing complaints related to the NOP's operations and what actions are needed when the complaint requires the NOP to make changes.
- The NOP will revise its procedures to clarify the steps to be performed to extend a certifier's scope of accreditation.
- The NOP will revise its procedures to clarify which NOP Division is responsible for actions related to suspension, withdrawal and reduction of accreditation when the decision is made by the Accreditation and International Activities (AIA) Division.
- The NOP is revising its procedures to clarify renewal assessment processes. AIA staff will be trained on this procedure at a future AIA staff meeting.

Peer reviews evaluate NOP's accreditation process and provide information for continual improvement to the NOP accreditation system. We look forward to reporting our progress on the activities above, and thank ANSI for its work on this peer review project.

**See NOP's Website's "About Us and Reports" Page for an Executive Summary of the ANSI Peer Review and the Full Report**

# The National Organic Standards Board: Working for the Organic Community

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is a group of dedicated public volunteers appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. Established by the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA) and governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), the Board is made up of 15 members, representing various sectors of the organic community. The Board meets twice a year in a public forum to discuss issues and vote on their final recommendations.

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is committed to supporting the NOSB. The NOSB provides important recommendations on many aspects of the organic standards and has specific authority regarding the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances. The NOSB makes recommendations regarding adding, removing and changing substances on the National List. USDA may not add synthetic substances to the National List without a NOSB recommendation.

Since 2009, when the National Organic Program was established as a distinct program within AMS, the following initiatives have been implemented to support the NOSB:

1. The NOP has clarified and reaffirmed the NOSB's authority in reviewing all synthetic substances used in organic production and handling. In April 2010, the NOP requested that the NOSB consider which specific nutrient vitamins and minerals should be allowed in organic production and handling. In November 2011, the NOP requested that the NOSB clarify which "other ingredients" (now referred to as ancillary substances) should be allowed in processed organic products. In June 2014, the NOP requested that the NOSB review

- sodium lactate and potassium lactate, that had been allowed as combinations of allowed substances.
2. Technical support staff is provided to each NOSB subcommittee to assist with their work.
3. The NOP provides technical reports for petitions and sunset reviews as well as technical experts who provide expert testimony at board meetings.
4. Starting in 2010, the NOSB meeting has been held around the country to facilitate public input from every region of the United States. NOSB meetings have been held in California, Wisconsin, Washington, Georgia, Rhode Island, Oregon and Texas.
5. The NOP has implemented many NOSB recommendations, such as commercial availability of seeds, classification of materials, National List recommendations, chlorine annotation changes, compost, unannounced inspections, and organic certificates.
6. The NOP has collaborated with the NOSB to redesign the NOSB meeting format to facilitate public input. The NOP provides official responses to all NOSB recommendations so the board and the public know how AMS will address the recommendations. These initiatives support the NOSB, public engagement, and excellent organic standards. The NOP will continue to collaborate with the NOSB, support public input, and implement the NOSB recommendations.

NOSB members serve the organic community by listening to public input, analyzing technical reports and making recommendations to USDA concerning organic standards. We appreciate their service to the organic community in supporting organic agriculture and the integrity of the USDA organic seal.

## Upcoming NOSB Meetings

NOSB meetings, held twice a year, are an important forum for public comment, and support transparency in the organic standards development process. Visit [www.ams.usda.gov/nosbmeetings](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nosbmeetings) to learn more about upcoming meetings.

### Fall 2014:

October 28 - 30, 2014 | 8:30 am to 5:30 pm daily  
Galt House Hotel, 140 North Fourth St. Louisville, KY 40202

### Spring 2015:

Week of April 28, 2015 | La Jolla, California

# Welcome New National Organic Standards Board Members!

On September 19, the USDA announced the appointment of four new members to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The 15-member advisory board is comprised of representatives from across the organic community. The new members will begin their five year terms on January 24, 2015.



**Ashley Swaffer**, Fayetteville, Arkansas

Ms. Swaffer will fill the open producer seat on the Board. Swaffer currently serves as the Director of Special Projects at Arkansas Egg Company. Swaffer has been involved in all aspects of organic egg production at Arkansas Egg Company, including managing organic certification, managing all aspects of operations, and plant food safety audits. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Poultry Science from the University of Arkansas.



**Tom Chapman**, Belmont, California

Mr. Chapman will fill the open handler seat on the Board. Chapman currently serves as the Sourcing Manager for Ingredients for Clif Bar & Company in Belmont, California. Chapman has worked in the organic industry for 12 years, and has demonstrated a robust working knowledge of the organic standards and principles. He has a Political Science degree from the University of California, San Diego.



**Lisa de Lima**, Gaithersburg, Maryland

Ms. de Lima will fill the open retailer seat on the Board. de Lima currently serves as the Vice President of Grocery for MOM's Organic Market, which sells only 100 percent organic produce. She has 16 years of experience in the organic retail foods industry. She holds a Master of Business Administration Degree from Johns Hopkins University, and a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies and Political Science from the University of Vermont.



**Paula Daniels**, Los Angeles, California

Ms. Daniels will fill the environmental protection and resource conservation seat on the Board. Daniels serves as the Senior Advisor on Food Policy for Los Angeles, California, but she is currently on sabbatical to write and teach in the area of food policy. Previously, Daniels was a commissioner with the California Coastal Commission, served on the governing board of the California Bay-Delta Authority, taught food policy at the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, and founded the Los Angeles Food Policy Council. Daniels hold a Juris Doctor Degree from Southwestern University School of Law, and a Bachelor's Degree in Broadcast Journalism from the University of Southern California.

***USDA thanks Joe Dickson, Jay Feldman, John Foster and Wendy Fulwider, whose terms will end in 2015, for their expertise and service to the organic community.***



## Sunset 2017: Technical Report Update

As 2014 nears its close, the National Organic Program (NOP) and National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) are already planning ahead for 2017.

The NOSB must review all substances on the National List every five years under the Sunset Process. Since the majority of materials on the National List were added when the regulations went into effect in 2002, most materials are scheduled for Sunset Review in five year increments from this date. As a result, a large number of substances are scheduled for sunset review in 2017.

To support this review, NOP has been working with the NOSB to determine which materials may need updated technical information.

In the past three months, the NOP has dedicated more than \$330,000 to technical report development, which fund Technical Reports related to petitions and high priority requests for the Sunset 2017 review.

The following reports are in development and will be available to the public in advance of the Spring 2015 NOSB meeting.

### **Crop Materials:**

- Ethanol
- Isopropanol
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Lime sulfur
- Potassium bicarbonate
- Soaps (algicide/demossers)
- Soaps (herbicidal)
- Vitamin B1, C, E
- EPA List 4 – limited to nonylphenol ethoxylates

### **Livestock Materials:**

- Ethanol
- Isopropanol
- Chlorhexidine
- Iodine
- Copper sulfate
- Parasiticides (Fenbendazole, Ivermectin, Moxidectin)
- Hydrated lime
- Mineral oil
- Excipients
- Electrolytes
- Vitamins

### **Handling Materials:**

- Alginic acid
- Alginates
- Citric acid
- Calcium citrate
- Potassium citrate
- Sodium citrate
- Lactic acid
- Enzymes
- Pectin
- Fish oil
- Tocopherols
- Nutrient vitamins and minerals (including potassium iodide, ferrous sulfate)
- Glycerides (mono and di)
- Colors
- Fructooligosaccharides
- Inulin – oligofructose enriched
- Whey protein concentrate

The NOSB will review the Sunset 2017 substances at their Spring and Fall 2015 public meetings. New technical reports will be posted on NOP's website as they are approved by Subcommittees, starting in early 2015.



## On the Path to Organic Certification: Taco Bike

Food trucks and food carts have become common sights on urban streets and sidewalks, but a new kind of mobile dining experience has hit the streets of Nashville, Tennessee. Cayla Mackey, Taco Bike's founder, was taking some time off from her magazine business, when she found a new passion:

I really started Taco Bike as a way to promote organic foods and sustainable, humane agricultural practices.

Mackey's desire is to build Taco Bike into a certified organic, certified carbon neutral, and certified humane taco shop. It began with an interest in gardening and eating healthier foods, and then progressed to

working on a couple of organic farms. Mackey found herself gravitating towards the outdoors, and learned as much as she could about sustainability and humane food production. Already an avid biker, Mackey experienced the popular breakfast taco culture in Austin, Texas, and devised the Taco Bike concept to marry the two interests.

Taco Bike's breakfast tacos are made from locally sourced organic ingredients. A recent Kickstarter campaign has helped Taco Bike reach its goal for funding. Now Mackey can get to work on getting her organic certification. She is already creating a positive influence for organic practices. She notes that when she started preparing breakfast tacos in a shared commercial kitchen, her colleagues kept telling her that operating a certified organic food service venue was impossible – it was too difficult and expensive. Now, thanks to Mackey's influence, they are seeing that operating an environmentally responsible business is not that difficult or that expensive after all. Mackey's goal for Taco Bike is "changing the world, one taco at a time." She is off to a great start!



## National Organic Standards Board Charter Update

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) recently announced the posting of an amended charter for the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The "Termination" section of the amended charter clarifies that the NOSB's Committee charter will expire 2 years after the date of filing, rather than the Committee itself expiring after 2 years. This change reaffirms the "Duration" section of the charter, which notes that the Committee is a continuing committee.

The USDA will continue to renew the NOSB charter every 2 years. This charter renewal will ensure that the NOSB continues to operate, as established in the Organic Food Production Act (OFPA), without pause in operations. The amended charter has been filed with the General Services Administration, and is posted on the National Organic Program website; the effective date remains the same as the original version.

See [www.ams.usda.gov/nosb](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nosb) for NOSB charter.

# New Sound and Sensible Initiative Projects

Making organic certification accessible, attainable, and affordable involves collaboration with many partners across the country and around the globe. To advance this work, USDA supports a diverse community of organic stakeholders.

Nonprofits, businesses, universities, state governments and other organizations lead a range of technical assistance, training, outreach and certification programs for organic farms and businesses. These organizations provide the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), with valuable feedback about how to keep organic certification sound and sensible and how to meet the needs of new and transitioning organic farmers.

***To support their work, USDA has awarded project contracts to 13 organizations that will advance the NOP's Sound and Sensible initiative by identifying and removing barriers to certification and streamlining the certification process.***

Here's a summary of the project awards being made under the Sound and Sensible Certification program:

The **Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA)** will use a blended teaching approach to help farmers understand the alignment between organic practices and food safety requirements.

**California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)** will conduct focus groups to explore barriers to certification with disadvantaged groups, develop a "10 Steps to Certification" reference guide and self-assessment, and conduct outreach sessions to candidate organic businesses.

**Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers** will produce videos for producers to outline the steps to organic certification.

The **International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA)** will produce a range of materials to support organic inspectors and farmers, including training modules integrating sound and sensible principles into organic inspections and certification activities.

**Massachusetts Independent Certification Inc.**, associated with Baystate Organic Certifiers, will develop training videos to dispel certification myths, an organic system plan consultant pilot program, training workbooks and information sheets, and a set of model organic system plans.

**National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT)** will lead two projects. The first will focus on technical assistance support for organic farmers and will include a workshop series. The second project will result in a streamlined organic system plan template for organic farms, a compliance checklist and model inspection report, and tip sheets related to organic transition.

**Northeast Organic Farmers Association – Vermont (NOFA-VT)** will develop an organic mentoring program, provide technical assistance, and implement outreach activities.

**Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA)** will share materials and approaches that address the unique cultural and communication needs of Plain and Amish farmers seeking organic certification.

**Oregon Tilth Certified Organic (OTCO)** will develop a pocket guide for organic certification and develop and implement an organic outreach and education program.

**Organic Services** will work with the NOP to develop guidelines for setting up, administering, and managing an internal control system for grower groups engaged in organic certification.

**Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO)** will engage in a technology project to develop a standardized tool for capturing the key elements of an organic system plan.

**WILL Interactive, partnering with the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association**, will develop an interactive scenario-based video training program to help farmers navigate the elements of organic certification.

**Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA)** will develop videos to illustrate the organic certification process for small and direct marketing farmers.

Projects will be completed by September 2015, and final materials will be available through each organization's website, via other organic partner sites and from the National Organic Program. Organic certification ensures the integrity of organic products around the world. These projects will help ensure the organic certification process is accessible, attainable and affordable for all.

## Staff Updates: Accreditation and International Activities

The NOP Accreditation and International Activities (AIA) Division reviews and accredits organic certification agencies in accordance with the Organic Food Production Act and the USDA organic regulations. We are pleased to announce a recent promotion in AIA, and we introduce three new staff members.

In May, 2014, **Renee Mann** was selected to serve as the AIA Assistant Division Director, a new NOP position. Renee has been with the NOP since 2010, having worked in the Compliance and Enforcement and AIA Divisions. She earned a degree in Molecular Environmental Biology from the University of California Berkeley and worked for the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) before coming to the NOP. Congratulations, Renee!

### ***The Accreditation and International Activities Division has three new Accreditation Managers:***

**Janna Howley** comes to us from the University of Maryland Extension where she worked as an Agricultural Marketing Specialist, navigating complex legislative, regulatory, and food safety issues for various Maryland growers and processors. She has a Master's Degree in Food Studies & Agricultural Systems from New York University and a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and Political Science from Towson University.

**Renee Gebault King** comes to us from the University of Wyoming where she completed her Ph.D. in Soil Science. She has a Master's Degree in Meat Science and Human Nutrition and a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science/Livestock Production, both also from the University of Wyoming. She worked as a Meat and Food Science Instructor at Northern Wyoming Community College, and as an organic inspector for Montana Department of Ag, OneCert, Inc., and International Certification Services.

**Robert Yang** comes to us from Pennsylvania Certified Organic where he was the Director of Quality and Certification Program Development. He has also worked in South Korea as an organic processing consultant, helping develop organic management and record-keeping systems to assist companies in gaining organic certification. From 2005 to 2009 he was the International Programs Manager at Doalnara Certified Organic in South Korea, where he helped develop an IFOAM certification program and quality system. Robert has a Bachelor's Degree in Landscape Design from Woosuk University, South Korea.



### ***NOP's AIA Division***

*From left to right:*

*Renee Gebault-King, Renee Mann,  
Robert Yang, Cheri Courtney, Mario  
Essig, Janna Howley, and Lars Crail.  
Missing: Mary Lou Croisetiere*

## Staff Updates, continued

The NOP also welcomes new team members in the Office of the Deputy Administrator and the Compliance and Enforcement Division.

**Kristen Nelson, NOP Chief of Staff**, comes to the NOP from the USDA Forest Service. In her most recent role, Kristen was a National Program Manager with the Forest Service's Interpretive Services and Tourism Program. She has been with USDA in a variety of leadership roles since 2000. Before that, she was a Branch Chief with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. She started her career with the National Park Service, and holds a B.S. in Wildlife Biology, an M.S. in Management, and a Professional Certificate in Sustainability.

**Desiree Lee, Secretary**, comes to NOP from active duty in the U.S. Air Force. She brings a wide range of experiences in providing administrative support and document management services in a host of environments.

**Karen Sussman, Management Analyst**, joins NOP from the AMS Livestock, Poultry and Seed Program in Gastonia, North Carolina. Prior to that, Karen worked for Wyeth, Fort Dodge Animal Health, and the USDA Agricultural Research Service. She holds a degree in Business Information.

### ***The Compliance and Enforcement Division has two new Enforcement Officers:***

**Karin French** comes to us from the National Institutes of Health. She earned her Bachelor of Science degrees in animal science and cell and molecular biology and genetics from the University of Maryland, where she was also a research assistant in the dairy science extension program. She was an Associate Staff Scientist for FASEB's Life Sciences Research Office before returning to the University of Maryland to earn a Master of Science degree.

**Josh Ayers** comes to NOP from the Office of Special Counsel, where he investigated violations of the Hatch Act. Prior to that, he served as an environmental investigator and compliance inspector for the Coast Guard. Josh holds an M.S. in Environmental Policy and is a 2015 Juris Doctorate candidate at the UDC David A. Clarke School of Law.



***New Office of Deputy Administrator Staff.*** From left to right: Karen Sussman, Desiree Lee, and Kristen Nelson



**Patricia Atkins** is new to the Compliance and Enforcement Team as a program Analyst and Complaint Intake Coordinator. Patricia has been with the NOP for several years, recently returning from a 1.5 year deployment to the Pentagon.

***New Compliance and Enforcement Division Staff.*** From left to right: Karin French, Josh Ayers, and Patricia Atkins.



**Program Handbook.** The National Organic Program Handbook provides a wide variety of policy materials and other resources to help organic farms and businesses comply with the USDA organic regulations. In the past several months, AMS has updated several of these resources, available at [www.ams.usda.gov/NOPProgramHandbook](http://www.ams.usda.gov/NOPProgramHandbook).

**Information Submission Requirements for Certifying Agents.** On May 29, 2014, we updated the Instruction NOP 2024 to describe the information that certifiers must submit to the National Organic Program (NOP) Accreditation and International Activities (AIA) Division or Appeals Team to maintain accreditation.

### AIA Checklists

**Review Audit Checklist.** On May 29, 2014, we issued NOP 2005-6. The review audit checklist is intended to be used in conjunction with the Accreditation Assessment Checklist.

**Accreditation Assessment Checklist.** On June 19, 2014, NOP issued a revised NOP Accreditation Assessment Checklist (NOP 2005). The checklist provides a standard format for auditors to record evidence of compliance during on-site assessments.

**Revised Witness Audit Checklists.** On August 25, 2014, the NOP issued a revision to two audit checklists - the Witness Audit Checklist, NOP 2005-4, and the Witness Audit Checklist for Grower Groups, NOP 2005-5.

**Electrolyzed Water.** On June 9, 2014, we issued a policy memo on electrolyzed water. This memo (PM 14-3) resolves a conflict in interpretation among certifying agents (certifiers) and material evaluation programs by clarifying that electrolyzed water is not currently permitted by the USDA organic regulations.

**Synthetic Algicides, Disinfectants, and Sanitizers Allowed in Organic Crop Production.** On June 9, 2014, we issued a policy memo (PM 13-3) to provide clarification to all certifying agents and material evaluation programs about the status of algicides, sanitizers, and disinfectants allowed in organic crop production.

**Certifying Agents Approved to Issue TM-11 Export Certificates under an Export Arrangement between the USDA and a Foreign Government.** On June 24, 2014, we issued an updated list of entities that can issue TM-11 organic export certificates. When exported to Japan and Taiwan, USDA organic products must be accompanied by an organic export certificate (TM-11). The TM-11 verifies that the product complies with the terms of the trade partnership.

**Chlorine Use in Egg Breaking Facilities.** On August 5, 2014, we issued a policy memo (PM 14-2) that clarifies requirements for the use of chlorine in egg breaking facilities. It more closely aligns NOP policy on the use of chlorine materials allowed in organic production and handling with Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) regulations regarding sanitizing of eggs that are further processed.

**Use of Brand or Company Names Containing the Word "Organic".** On August 14, 2014, we released an instruction (NOP 4012) on the use of brand or company names containing the word "organic." It clarifies the statutory and regulatory requirements regarding the use of brand or company names that contain the word "organic" or its variants on the labeling of agricultural products. The policy clarification is needed to provide fairness and equity in label use throughout the organic industry and to satisfy consumer expectations for organic products.

**Fact Sheets.** AMS recently published three new fact sheets. In May 2014, we published new fact sheets on the sunset review process and organic labeling at farmer's markets. In September 2014, we published a new fact sheet on the organic cost share programs. These fact sheets are available on the NOP website: <http://bit.ly/NOPFactSheets>.