



National Organic Program Update

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USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

National Organic Program

Overview



- Accomplishments
- National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)
- Sound and Sensible
- AMS-NOP Strategic Plan
- International Market Access
- Accredited Certifier Topics

Accomplishments – 2009-2014



- Critical amendments to USDA organic regulations: Pasture Rule, Residue Testing Rule, National List Rules
- Published NOP Handbook and have continued to refine and expand
- Implemented Age of Enforcement, increasing civil penalty use and improving complaint handling processing procedures and timeframes
- Increased accreditation audit consistency, and ensured all audits were conducted
- Responded to audits

Accomplishments – 2009-2014



- Implemented 5 international equivalency arrangements
- Reengineered and streamlined Appeals process while ensuring due process
- Published Organic Literacy Initiative materials
- Initiated USDA Organic Insider – now with >20,000 subscribers
- Modernizing list of certified organic operations
- Initiated Sound and Sensible Certification initiative

National Organic Standards Board



NOSB Recommendations 1994-2014



- Practice Standards
 - 174 recommendations
 - 138 addressed
 - 36 Outstanding recommendations include
 - Aquaculture (3)
 - Pet food
 - Apiculture
 - Pesticide Drift, fumigation (2)
 - Mushrooms
 - Organic livestock practices

NOSB Recommendations 1994-2014



- National List
 - 101 recommendations
 - 89 addressed
 - Outstanding are recent and in process
- Sunset
 - 129 reviews completed
 - Outstanding sodium nitrate

Sound and Sensible



Sound and Sensible Certification Projects



- In 2014, AMS funded 14 year-long projects that will make organic certification more accessible, attainable, and affordable.
- Project teams (certifier, State organic programs, non-profits) helped >2,000 farm and businesses learn about the path to organic certification.
- Educational resources – videos, tip sheets, and workshop materials – will reach thousands of new farms and businesses.

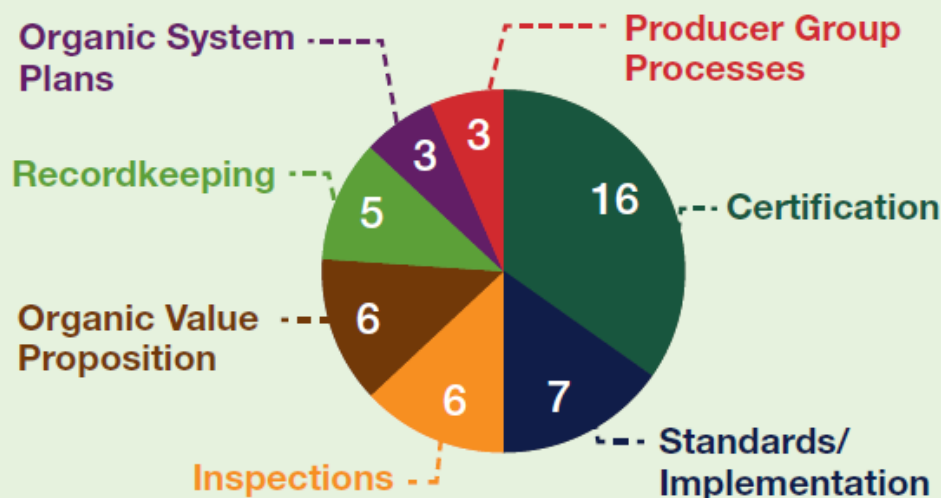
About the Projects Awarded



Sound & Sensible

- **Awards:** 14 projects were awarded to 13 organizations
- **Geographic coverage of projects:** Southeast/Gulf States; New England; Northwest; California; Mid-Atlantic

Product Topic Areas



Types of Products



75

tip sheets /
fact sheets



16

training
workshops &
curricula



15

informative
videos



- November 2015: Launch 1: The Organic Value Proposition: Why Go Organic, and Where to Start
- January 6, 2016: Launch 2: The Organic Standards and Certification: How-To Resources
- End of January 2016: Launch 3: Teaching Others: Outreach and Education for Candidate Farmers
- March: Spanish Blog – Organic Sound and Sensible Resources for Spanish Speaking Audiences
- March/April 2016: Launch 4: Sound and Sensible Certifier Resources

What's Next?



- NOP is designing a one-hour interactive, scenario-based, on-line training for certifiers and inspectors
- Will focus on how to conduct Sound and Sensible inspections and record reviews
- Will include examples of real-world interactions: on-site inspections, records reviews, closing meeting
- An exercise later today will invite your input to help us develop content!
- Expected launch: August/September 2016

AMS-NOP Strategic Plan 2015-18



Protect Organic
Integrity

Enhance Market Access

Set Clear
Standards

Build Technology that
Advances Organic Integrity

Organizational
Development

International Market Access



Organic trade



- Organic trade expanding
- Many governments have established organic standards and control systems
- Import requirements may be barriers for farmers/suppliers to access export organic markets

Organic trade challenges



- Different organic standards
- Cost of certification to multiple standards
- Record keeping costs to maintain certification to multiple standards



- **European Union**
 - India, Israel, New Zealand, Australia, United States, Argentina, Costa Rica, Canada, Switzerland, Tunisia, Japan, South Korea
- **United States**
 - New Zealand, India, Israel, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Switzerland, European Union
- **Canada**
 - United States, European Union, Switzerland, Costa Rica, Japan



Benefits

- Reduce barriers, increase market access
- Reduce costs of duplicative certification, inspections

Costs

- On-site audits
- Technical Working Group meetings
- Increasingly complex to manage multiple bilateral arrangements

Plurilateral Agreements



- **Plurilateral Agreement:** Multi-national trade agreement between countries that involves more than two countries.
- **Potential Benefits:**
 - Streamline organic trade
 - Ensure organic integrity in the market
 - Maintain/build consumer confidence in organic seal.
 - Increase efficiencies while maintaining integrity:
Improve use of public resources to establish and monitor organic equivalence arrangements (staff hours and travel funds)

Conditions for Participation



- Ensure that partners have enforceable organic standards, robust oversight controls and an effective compliance and enforcement program.
- The arrangement should not have lower standards that would not be supported by industry, consumers and other stakeholders.
- The arrangement must be supported by sufficient resources to conceptualize, negotiate, implement, manage and enforce a multi-country arrangement.

Accredited Certifier Topics





- Background:
 - A private label company is a company that does not produce or handle products, but has organic products packed and labeled for them under contract. Certification is mandatory for the co-packers that PLCs contract to pack/label their products.
 - Challenges with organic integrity, traceability, and consumer confusion.
 - 2001 and 2006 NOSB Recommendations
 - Policy Memo 11-7 (2011)

Private Label Certification



- Clarifying Policy:
 - To address ongoing challenges, the NOP is developing a clarification of the requirements for private label certification to replace Policy Memo 11-7.
 - Request for information from ACAs, September 2015.
 - Comments from 26 certifiers in three key areas:
 - Who needs to be certified
 - Labeling requirements
 - Private label policies, procedures, and responsibilities.
 - Next steps: NOP is currently reviewing certifier comments, and considering NOSB recommendations and the regulations to develop a sound and sensible approach to organic certification for private label products.

Performance Evaluations



- Performance Evaluations – Field Evaluation component
- To address input received and potential options, the NOP is developing a revision of NOP 2027 Personnel Performance Evaluation

Guidance and Instructions



- Guidance is designed to assist organic operations in complying with the USDA organic regulations. They are not legally binding but represent the program's current thinking on the particular topic. Notification of draft and final guidance is done through an Federal Register notice and comments are received through [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).
- Instructions are directed towards accredited certifying agents under AMS authority to direct certifiers to comply with conditions deemed necessary by the Administrator (7 CFR 205.501(a)(21). In the future, we plan to issue Interim Instructions that are effective upon issuance with opportunity for public comment. Public comments would be sent to an email address.
- Similar process for Policy Memos – Issue as Interim Policy with opportunity for public comment.

Thank You

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

www.ams.usda.gov/nop

