

USDA National Organic Program

Organic Certifier Training
Little Rock, Arkansas
February 10, 2015

Miles V. McEvoy, Deputy Administrator
USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
National Organic Program



NOP Training Agenda



This Morning

Accreditation and
Certification Update

Standards Update

Inspector

Qualifications

Grower Groups

This Afternoon

Who Needs to Be
Certified?

Database Update

Settlements

Reinstatements

Tomorrow

NASS and NRCS CAP 138

NOP Update



- Program overview and trends
- National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)
- Farm Bill and USDA organic initiatives
- NOP Initiatives

The National Organic Program (NOP)



- **Mission:**
Ensure the integrity of USDA organic products throughout the world
- **Vision:**
Organic Integrity from Farm to Table,
Consumers Trust the Organic Label
- **Core Role:**
Implement the Organic Foods Production Act and the USDA organic regulations

Quick Facts About USDA organics

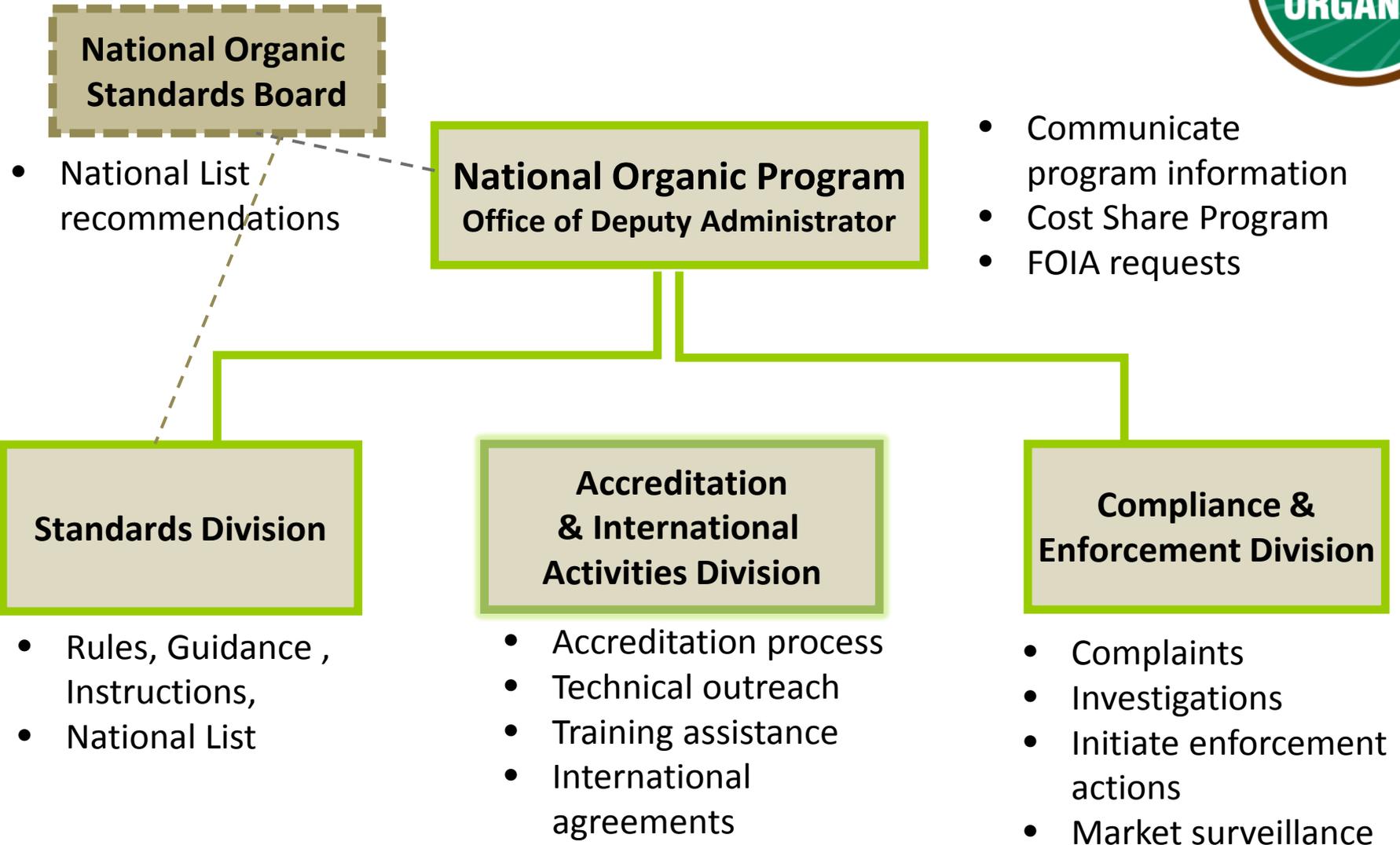


- **NOP Staffing:** 50 employees in three Divisions and the Office of the Deputy Administrator
- **NOP Budget:**
 - FY 2012: \$6.919 million
 - FY 2013: \$6.369 million
 - FY 2014: \$9.04 million
 - FY 2015: \$9 million

USDA Organic Leadership:

- Agricultural Marketing Service(AMS) Administrator Anne Alonzo
- USDA Organic Working Group – Dozens of USDA programs and staff that support Secretary Vilsack’s Guidance on Organic Agriculture
- Betsy Rakola, USDA Organic Policy Coordinator

NOP Organization and Activities



NOP Accredited Certifiers



- Accredited by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service National Organic Program to ensure the integrity of USDA organic products throughout the world
- Thousands of farmers and handlers, and millions of consumers depend upon the work that you do.
 - Evaluate applications for certification
 - Ensure continued compliance by certified operations
 - Inspect organic producers and handlers
 - Take enforcement action when appropriate
 - Collect and analyze samples
 - Ensure quality through personnel and processes

Thank you for your work!



- The USDA National Organic Program greatly appreciates the work carried out by certifiers.
- Certifiers are the front line in the investigation of complaints against certified operations.
- Certifiers also provide valuable, general assistance, stemming from their knowledge of the industry and regional situations.
- The partnership between the NOP and certifiers in regard to investigation and enforcement is a continuing success.

Challenges



- Fraud happens and is frequently identified by:
 - Insider information
 - Competitors
 - Testing
- How can certifiers identify violations and prevent fraud?

Key factors



- More rigorous product in/product out audits
- Financial audits
- Unannounced inspections
- Residue testing
- Ensuring all operations are certified (NOP 4009) for a complete audit trail
- Ensure quality, comprehensive, rigorous and objective inspections

National Organic Standards Board



National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)



- The NOSB is a Federal Advisory Committee
- Assist and advise USDA
- NOSB, as a FACA, has:
 - a **charter** with established mission and duties
 - a Designated Federal Official (DFO)
 - Subcommittees and Chair
 - Opportunity for public participation



- The NOSB recommends substances on the National List by a 2/3 majority;
- NOSB members must use specific criteria from OFPA when considering the need for the substance and its impacts on human health and the environment;
- Relatively stable – few things added, few things removed over the last five years;
- The National List is not just comprised of synthetic materials
 - Natural nonagricultural ingredients
 - Agricultural ingredients that may not be commercially available in organic form

Sunset Provision of OFPA



- No exemption or prohibition contained in the National List shall be valid unless the **NOSB has reviewed** such exemption or prohibition as provided in this section **within 5 years** of such exemption or prohibition being adopted or reviewed and the **Secretary has renewed** such exemption or prohibition

Benefits of Revised Sunset Process



- **Thorough and transparent review process for all substances** - provides 2 public comment opportunities before the NOSB completes its review of each substance.
- Ensures that any change to the National List (petitioned or sunset) is supported by a 2/3 majority of the NOSB.
- Streamlines the administration of the National List by simplifying rulemaking.

New members needed
2 organic farmers, 2
public interest, certifier



Farm Bill and USDA Organic Initiatives



Farm Bill – Key Organic Provisions



1. \$100 million for organic research, extension and education;
2. \$5 million for the Organic Data Initiatives;
3. Expanded options for organic crop insurance
4. Expanded exemptions for organic producers who are paying into commodity “check off” programs, AND authorizes USDA to consider application for the organic sector to establish its own check off
5. Improved enforcement authority for the NOP to conduct investigations.
6. \$5 million for a technology upgrade of the National Organic Program;
7. \$11.5 million annually for certification cost-share assistance

Cost Share Continues in 2015



- Organic cost share helps defray organic certification costs for producers and handlers
- Two programs in 2014 Farm Bill:
 - Agricultural Management Assistance Organic Certification Cost Share Program (AMA)
 - National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (National)
- Nearly \$13 million available in FY 2015
 - Farm Bill funding levels enable all certified operators to participate

Please Spread the Word!



Increasing Cost Share Participation Is a Key Goal!

- 2015 Target: Increase cost share use by 10%

Please get the word out to your certified operations.

- Share information about cost share programs
- Strive for timely processing of certification documentation

Reimbursement is a key benefit to participants!

Cost share programs provide reimbursements of up to 75 percent of annual certification costs.

Cost Share Resources



Cost Share Webpage: <http://bit.ly/OrganicCostShareInfo>

Cost Share Mailbox: CostShare@ams.usda.gov

Outreach Materials on NOP Website (mailer, fact sheet)

The flyer features the USDA logo and text: "USDA 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 contains images of organic products: spices, eggs, and a head of cabbage. A small USDA Organic logo is also present on the right side of the flyer. At the bottom, it says "Learn more about the Organic Certification Cost Share Programs at <http://bit.ly/CostShareGen>".



Secretary Vilsack's May 2013 departmental guidance on organic agriculture:

- Training and outreach
- Supporting transition to organic
- Regulatory reciprocity (reducing paperwork)
- Research
- Data

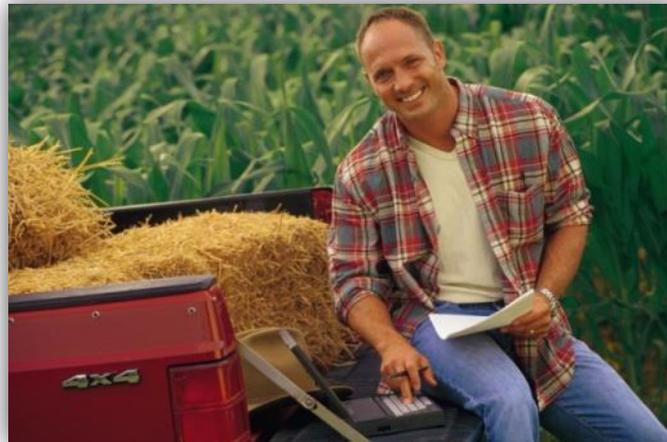


OWG Themes: Training and Outreach

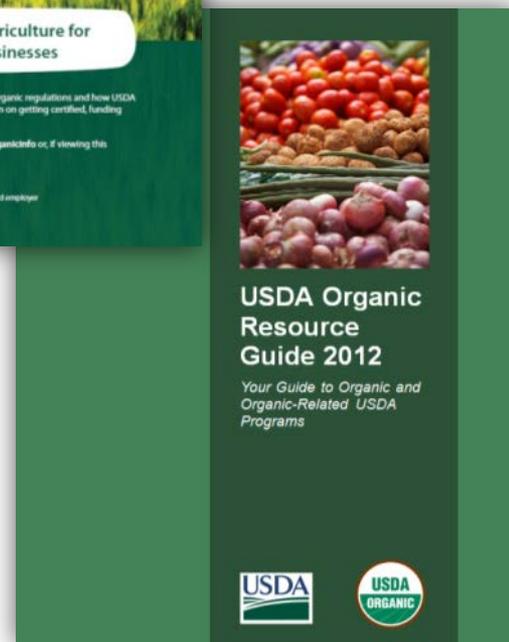
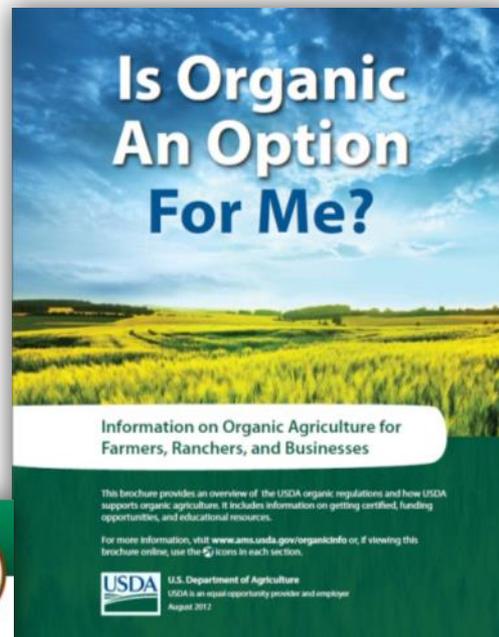
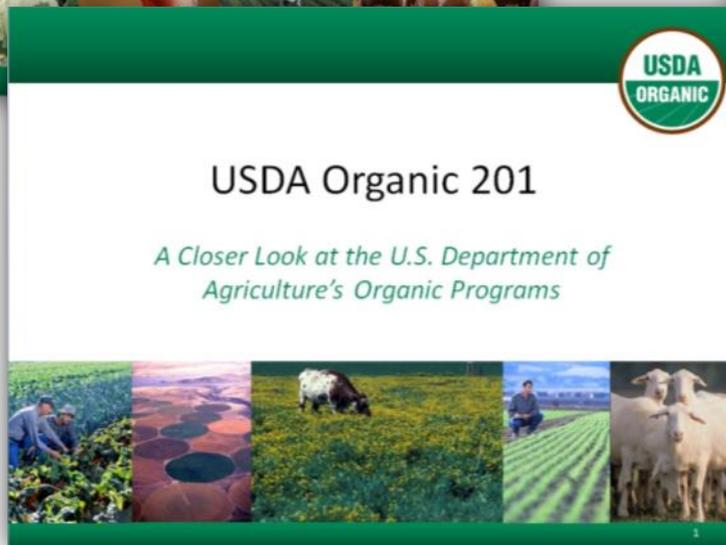


Training and outreach team goals

1. Update and republish the Organic Literacy Initiative
2. Work with external partners to distribute organic resources beyond the USDA



Organic Literacy Initiative



Organic Literacy Toolkit



Tool	Description
<u>Organic 101 & 201 Training Modules</u>	Online, self-guided training modules with information on USDA organic. Also available in USDA AgLearn (for USDA employees only).
<u>National Organic Program Website</u>	USDA website with policy information, lists of certifying agents, and more
<u>Printable Resources</u>	Posters and brochures on USDA programs and services for organic farmers, ranchers, and handlers
<u>USDA Organic Resource Guide</u>	Detailed information on key USDA programs and services for organic producers and handlers
<u>USDA Organic Portal</u>	Website with resources from across USDA for organic producers and handlers

www.ams.usda.gov/OrganicInfo
usda.gov/organic



Transition to organic Goals:

1. Assess technical and financial resources for organic transition at USDA
2. Create websites and fact sheets explaining resources for farmers and processors to transition to organic

OWG Themes: Reciprocity



Reciprocity team goals

1. Conservation - ongoing: Natural Resources Conservation Service and National Organic Program (NOP) are coordinating conservation program requirements and organic system plans.
2. Non-GE label claims – complete: Food Safety and Inspection Service streamlined procedures for certified organic meat and poultry processors
3. Crop insurance - new: Risk Management Agency and NOP will conduct a needs assessment for crop insurance documentation.



Research team goals

1. Review and respond to NOSB research priorities.
2. Conduct a stakeholder needs assessment of organic research priorities and develop a white paper on critical research needs.



Organic Research & Extension Initiative research highlights

- Public corn breeding to increase cultivar access
- Natural strategies to alleviate enteric pathogens in poultry
- Cover cropping and no till in organic systems
- Assessing organic agriculture's impact on climate change mitigation



Data team goals

1. Publish an inventory of data regarding organic and non-genetically engineered agriculture at USDA
2. Improve trade codes for better tracking of exports and imports



Other data highlights

- Organic special tabulation, 2012 census
[www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/
Online Resources/Special Organics Tabulation/or
ganictab.txt](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/OnlineResources/SpecialOrganicsTabulation/organictab.txt)
- Organic producer survey – publishing in 2015
 - Data is key to developing new tools for organic producers. Please help us spread the word!

NOP Initiatives



Farm Bill – NOP provisions



- Subpoena authority
- Organic Integrity Database
- Certification Cost Share

Sound and Sensible Certification



Affordable, Accessible and Attainable for all operations

- **Affordable** – reasonable fees, reasonable compliance costs
- **Accessible** – certifiers and technical assistance available locally
- **Attainable** – Clear and understandable standards, plain language, reasonable record keeping requirements

Sound and Sensible Certification Projects



- **Purpose:** Encourage the initiation and roll-out of new organic certification approaches, training, technical assistance, and outreach programs and materials.
- **Projects completed for this initiative will:**
 - Help USDA and all certifiers develop and implement sound and sensible organic certification processes
 - Provide training modules, technical assistance, or outreach programs concerning different aspects of organic agriculture or organic certification

About the Projects Awarded



- **Awards:** 14 projects were awarded to 13 organizations
- **Total value of awarded projects:** \$1,516,562
- **Geographic coverage of projects:** Southeast/Gulf States; New England; Northwest; California; Mid-Atlantic
- **Awards have a lot of diversity:** certification tools (producers and inspectors), training and outreach, technology development, technical assistance, inspector mentoring
- **Timing:** Projects will be completed between now and September 2015; work products will be available through NOP website and other public websites for use by all.

FY 2015 Priorities – Standards Division



- Origin of Livestock Proposed Rule
- Aquaculture Proposed Rule
- Pet Food Proposed Rule
- Other rules in progress: Apiculture, Animal Welfare
- Guidance: Materials Classification Guidance, Substances in Post-Harvesting Handling
- Material Clarifications for Certifiers
- National List Management, including Technical Report contract management
- Provide support for National Organic Standards Board subcommittees

FY 2015 Priorities – Accreditation and International Activities Division



- Switzerland equivalency arrangement
- Negotiations with Mexico to continue organic trade and enhance compliance/protect organic integrity
- Support robust organic control systems, internal markets and harmonized organic standards in Latin America through the Inter-American Commission on Organic Agriculture (CIAO)
- Expand capacity of Division with new staff – 5 new auditors/accreditation managers
- Organic Integrity Database
- Consistent application of certification
- Rigorous accreditation audits focused on compliance with NOP 4009.



- Continue to improve efficiency in handling complaint investigations and closures
- Work closely with USDA-OGC to pursue complaints for hearing against violators, as appropriate
- Contribute to policy and training development to improve compliance by operations and consistency among certifiers
- Continue to implement Farm Bill provisions related to enforcement

The Future of Certification



- Common rules of practice for who is certified
- Current searchable database of certified organic products
- Turbo Organic System Plans
- Reciprocity with food safety certification, conservation programs
- Transitional Certification
- Highly qualified certification personnel – licensed and consistent protocols

Thank You

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

www.ams.usda.gov/nop

