

Introduction

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 205

[Docket Number: TMD-00-02-FR]

RIN: 0581-AA40

National Organic Program

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Final Rule with request for comments.

SUMMARY: This final rule establishes the National Organic Program (NOP or program) under the direction of the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), an arm of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This national program will facilitate domestic and international marketing of fresh and processed food that is organically produced and assure consumers that such products meet consistent, uniform standards. This program establishes national standards for the production and handling of organically produced products, including a National List of substances approved for and prohibited from use in organic production and handling. This final rule establishes a national-level accreditation program to be administered by AMS for State officials and private persons who want to be accredited as certifying agents. Under the program, certifying agents will certify production and handling operations in compliance with the requirements of this regulation and initiate compliance actions to enforce program requirements. The final rule includes requirements for labeling products as organic and containing organic ingredients. This final rule also provides for importation of organic agricultural products from foreign programs determined to have equivalent organic program requirements. This program is authorized under the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, as amended.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This rule becomes effective [60 days after publication in the Federal Register].

Comments: Comments on specified aspects of the final regulations must be submitted on or before [90 days after publication in the Federal Register].

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit written comments on specified aspects of the final regulation to: Keith Jones, Program Manager, National Organic Program, USDA-AMS-TMP-NOP, Room 2945-So., Ag Stop 0275, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090-6456. Comments may also be filed via the Internet through the National Organic Program's homepage at: www.ams.usda.gov/nop. Written comments on specified aspects of the final regulations should be identified with the docket number TMD-00-02-FR. To facilitate the timely scanning and posting of comments to the NOP homepage, multiple-page comments submitted by regular mail should not be stapled or clipped.

It is our intention to have all comments to this final rule, whether mailed or submitted via the Internet, available for viewing on the NOP homepage in a timely manner. Comments submitted in response to this final rule will be available for viewing at USDA-AMS,

Transportation and Marketing Programs, Room 2945-South Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday (except for official Federal holidays). Persons wanting to visit the USDA South Building to view comments received in response to this final rule are requested to make an appointment in advance by calling (202) 720-3252.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Richard Mathews, Senior Agricultural Marketing Specialist, USDA-AMS-TMP-NOP, Room 2510-So., P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090-6456; Telephone: (202) 205-7806; Fax: (202) 205-7808.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Prior Documents in this Proceeding

This final rule is issued pursuant to the Organic Food Production Act of 1990 (Act or OFPA), as amended (7 U.S.C. 6501 et seq.). This final rule replaces the proposed rule published in the Federal Register March 13, 2000. The public submitted 40,774 comments on the proposed rule. Comments to the proposed rule were considered in the preparation of this final rule.

The following notices related to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) and the development of this proposed regulation have been published in the Federal Register. Six notices of nominations for membership on the NOSB were published between April 1991 and June 2000 (56 FR 15323, 59 FR 43807, 60 FR 40153, 61 FR 33897, 64 FR 33240, 65 FR 35317). Two notices of extension of time for submitting nominations were published on September 22, 1995, and September 23, 1996 (60 FR 49246, 61 FR 49725). Twenty notices of meetings of the NOSB were published between March 1992 and November 2000 (57 FR 7094, 57 FR 27017, 57 FR 36974, 58 FR 85, 58 FR 105, 58 FR 171, 59 FR 58, 59 FR 26186, 59 FR 49385, 60 FR 51980, 60 FR 15532, 61 FR 43520, 63 FR 7389, 63 FR 64451, 64 FR 3675, 64 FR 28154, 64 FR 54858, 65 FR 11758, 65 FR 33802, 65 FR 64657). One notice of public hearings on organic livestock and livestock products was published on December 30, 1993 (58 FR 69315). Two notices specifying a procedure for submitting names of substances for inclusion on or removal from the National List of Approved and Prohibited Substances were published on March 27, 1995 (60 FR 15744), and July 13, 2000 (65 FR 43259). A rule proposing the NOP was published on December 16, 1997 (62 FR 65850). An extension of the time period for submitting comments to the proposed rule was published on February 9, 1998 (63 FR 6498). One request for comments on Issue Papers was published on October 28, 1998 (63 FR 57624). A notice of a program to assess organic certifying agencies was published on June 9, 1999 (64 FR 30861). A rule proposing the NOP was published on March 13, 2000 (65 FR 13512). A notice of public meeting and request for comments on organic production and handling of aquatic animals to be labeled as organic was published on March 23, 2000 (65 FR 15579). One advance notice of proposed rulemaking and request for comments on reasonable security for private certifying agents was published on August 9, 2000 (65 FR 48642).

This preamble includes a discussion of the final rule and supplementary information,

including the Regulatory Impact Assessment, Unfunded Mandates Reform Act Statement, Regulatory Flexibility Act Analysis, Federalism Impact Statement, and Civil Justice Impact Statement. The Civil Rights Impact Analysis is not included as an attachment but may be obtained by writing to the address provided above or via the Internet through the National Organic Program's homepage at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop>.

Approval of Paperwork Reduction Act Requirements for this Final Rule

The reporting requirements and recordkeeping burden imposed by this rule were published in the March 13, 2000, Federal Register for public comment. The Agency addressed these comments in the final rule to ensure that the least amount of the burden is placed on the public. The information collection and recordkeeping requirements have been reviewed and approved by the Office of Management and Budget under OMB Number 0581-0191, National Organic Program.