

The

# ORGANIC INTEGRITY QUARTERLY

June 2015 Newsletter

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

## **Building on Our Success: The National Organic Program 2015-2018 Strategic Plan**

In a nutshell, for an organization to succeed, it must remain focused on its mission, plan its work, work its plan, assess and repeat. This year, as in the past, the National Organic Program (NOP) of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) engaged in the process of looking back to assess performance then looking forward to develop a strategic plan.



The NOP Strategic Plan continues to support and align with the mission and goals of AMS. The mission of AMS is to facilitate the strategic marketing of U.S. agricultural products in domestic and international markets. The goals of AMS are:

1. Enhance Communication between Stakeholders and AMS Programs
2. Provide Market Information and Intelligence and Support the Development of New Markets
3. Provide Quality Claims and Analyses to Facilitate Agricultural Marketing
4. Provide Effective Oversight of Markets and Entities
5. Provide Premier Procurement and Technical Solutions to Identify and Fulfill the Needs for Agricultural, Food Assistance, and Other Programs
6. Sustain and Enrich a Diverse, Progressive, and Dynamic Organizational Environment

Aligning with AMS goals is natural for NOP given its vision and mission. For NOP, the vision is “Organic Integrity from Farm to Table, Consumers Trust the Organic Label” and the mission is “Ensure the Integrity of USDA Organic Products in the United States and throughout the World.” To fulfill our vision and mission, NOP establishes and communicates clear standards; ensures that USDA-accredited organic certifying agents are properly certifying and overseeing organic operations; takes appropriate enforcement actions if there are violations of the organic standards; and supports the development of new organic markets.

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## Building on Our Success: The National Organic Program 2015-2018 Strategic Plan

The NOP has taken many important actions in support of our mission. From October 2009, when the NOP first became an independent program within AMS, through October 2014, the NOP has:

1. Continued to level the playing field for organic farms and businesses, by publishing **several critical amendments to the USDA organic regulations**, including the “Access to Pasture” rule, the “Residue Testing” rule, and several materials-focused rules to amend the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances.
2. Guided USDA organic standards implementation and accessibility by initiating and now continuing to expand the **NOP Handbook**, with a definitive set of guidance, certifier instructions, and policy memos.
3. Increased transparency through the ongoing work of the **National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)** by hosting meetings twice a year around the country, improving the public comment process, regularly responding to Board recommendations, and increasing staff support and funding for Technical Reports.
4. Increased audit consistency and regularity by institutionalizing the process and checklists for conducting **initial, mid-term, and renewal accreditation audits** with organic certifiers around the world. Certifier compliance with accreditation criteria has exceeded 95 percent since 2013.
5. Supported organic trade by implementing **international organic equivalency arrangements** with Canada (2009), the European Union (2012), Japan (2014), and Korea (2014). These arrangements streamline certification requirements and provide new market opportunities for U.S. organic products.
6. Initiated an Age of Enforcement, establishing a complaint tracking database, and steadily increasing case closure rates for **complaint case investigations**. As a result, organic operators came into compliance, labels were corrected, and new operations became certified. We also initiated routine use of **civil penalties** for willful violations of the Organic Foods Production Act.
7. Reengineered the **appeals process**, to streamline case evaluation and increase alternative dispute resolution approaches. As a result, appeals are now resolved in an average of 140 days, far faster than the 294-day average in 2012.
8. Supported USDA’s development of the **Organic Literacy Initiative**, designed to increase USDA employee knowledge of the organic standards and certification process. More than 30,000 USDA employees have completed the training program since its launch allowing USDA employees to better serve current and prospective organic farmers.
9. Continued annual **face-to-face training for certifiers**, and conducted training in Spanish for Latin American certifiers.
10. Annually posted **lists of certified organic operations** for the public. Since 2010, the annual listing has improved in accuracy and data quality. In 2014, the NOP started developing the Organic Integrity Database to enable more frequent list updates.
11. Administered the National and Agricultural Management Assistance **organic certification cost share programs**, enabling thousands of organic operations across the country to recover certification-related expenses.
12. **Expanded outreach and communication** through the USDA Organic Insider, an email notification service with more than 19,000 subscribers; the Organic Integrity Newsletter; and a Organic 101 blog series to explain organic principles. NOP leaders also regularly speak at food and agriculture conferences.

Indeed, the NOP has accomplished much. But there still remains much to be done. So our goals for the next three years are as follows:

### Goal 1: Protect Organic Integrity

The NOP protects the integrity of the USDA organic seal through an effective compliance, enforcement, and appeals program; effective audits and program peer reviews; and integrity-focused policies.

Objectives:

- Operate effective and efficient enforcement and appeals programs, investigating all substantiated complaints and taking enforcement actions where appropriate
- Conduct effective audits to ensure certifier compliance with accreditation criteria
- Establish policies that increase consistency in the way regulations are enforced

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## Building on Our Success: The National Organic Program 2015-2018 Strategic Plan

### **Goal 2: Facilitate Market Access**

The NOP supports candidate and existing organic businesses through sound and sensible organic certification, international trade arrangements, and educational outreach programs.

Objectives:

- Facilitate sound and sensible certification and outreach projects to help make organic certification more accessible, affordable, and attainable
- Negotiate and maintain international organic trade arrangements that open markets while maintaining organic integrity
- Present information about the USDA organic standards and certification to educate candidate farms and business about the organic option
- Support USDA and AMS projects that implement the Secretary's 2013 Guidance on Organic Agriculture, which ensures all USDA agencies and programs support the growing organic sector
- Respond to information requests from candidate, transitioning, and certified operations, and inquiries from the general public

### **Goal 3: Create and Implement Clear Standards**

Clear standards are core to our mission. Clear standards level the playing field for all organic farms and businesses.

Objectives:

- Engage in priority rulemaking projects
- Develop sound and sensible policies that support certifier and operation compliance, while also reducing recordkeeping burdens
- Support transparency and public engagement by supporting National Organic Standards Board work and deliberations
- Conduct auditor and certifier training to encourage consistent implementation of the organic standards

### **Goal 4: Build Technology that Advances Organic Integrity**

NOP continues to expand and deepen technology to support its mission areas. The 2014 Farm Bill provided funding to support these investments.

Objectives:

- Build and deploy the Organic Integrity Database, a modernized database of certified operations
- Enhance and integrate management tools to facilitate program tracking, workload management, analysis, and reporting

### **Goal 5: Develop the Team and Organization**

Our mission can only be realized through a strong and engaged team.

Objectives:

- Develop and engage a diverse team, and provide a management and technology infrastructure that supports employee success
- Recruit exceptional and diverse new team members to achieve these strategic goals
- Maintain and further develop the quality management system, to ensure effective processes and high quality, consistent deliverables

In the next three years, as we work our plan, we look to partner with and support the organic community, engaging stakeholders, setting and enforcing organic standards and creating market opportunities. We want to hear from you. A link to the full AMS-NOP Strategic Plan can be found on the NOP home page at [www.ams.usda.gov/nop](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop). If you have ideas or comments on the AMS-NOP Strategic Plan, please email me at Miles.McEvoy@ams.usda.gov. Together, I am confident we will continue to successfully advance NOP's vision, mission, and goals.

Thanks for the opportunity to serve the organic community.

Sincerely,

Miles V. McEvoy

NOP Deputy Administrator

# National List Update

## Recent Technical Reports

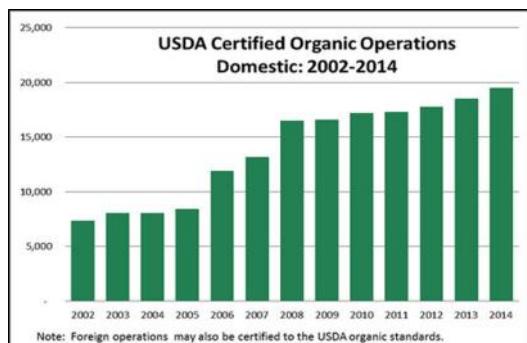
The following new technical reports have been posted on the NOP website and sent to the NOSB for review:

- Soaps – Herbicidal, § 205.601
- Soaps – Algicides, § 205.601
- Hydrogen peroxide, § 205.601
- Laminarin, petitioned to § 205.601
- Lime sulfur, § 205.601
- Potassium bicarbonate, § 205.601
- PGME, petitioned to § 205.601
- Nonylphenol ethoxylates (EPA List 4), §§ 205.601 and 205.603
- Vitamins B1, C and E, § 205.601
- Exhaust gas, petitioned to § 205.601
- Zinc sulfate, petitioned to § 205.603
- Ethanol, § 205.603
- Isopropanol, § 205.603
- Chlorhexidine, § 205.603
- Copper sulfate, § 205.603
- Excipients, § 205.603
- Electrolytes, § 205.603
- Hydrated lime, § 205.603
- Sodium bisulfate, petitioned to § 205.603
- Alginic acid, § 205.605
- Alginates, § 205.605
- Enzymes, § 205.605
- Citric acid and salts, § 205.605
- Lactic acid, sodium lactate, potassium lactate, § 205.605
- Glycerides (mono and di), § 205.605
- Triethyl citrate, petitioned to § 205.605
- Tocopherols, § 205.605
- Colors, § 205.606
- Fructooligosaccharides, § 205.606
- Inulin-oligofructose enriched, § 205.606
- Pectin (non-amidated), § 205.606
- Whey protein concentrate, § 205.606

## National List Petitions

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

- Squid and Squid byproducts, petitioned for addition to § 205.601
- Anaerobic Digestate – Food Waste, petitioned for addition to § 205.601
- Sulfuric acid – solubilizing agent, petitioned for addition to § 205.601
- Ash from Manure Burning, petitioned for annotation on § 205.602
- Bentonite, Acid-Activated, petitioned for addition to § 205.603
- Flavors, petitioned annotation change on § 205.605
- Allyl Isothiocyanate, petitioned to § 205.601
- Ammonium Hydroxide, petitioned to § 205.605
- Hypochlorous Acid, petitioned for addition to §§ 205.601 and 205.605



As of the end of 2014, 19,474 organic farms and processing facilities in the United States were certified to the USDA organic regulations.

Since the count began in 2002, the number of domestic organic operations has increased by over 250%.

## Organic Integrity Database Update: Release 1 Plans

The National Organic Program (NOP) is making fast progress in designing and building the **Organic Integrity Database**, a modernized information technology system that will replace the current annual list of certified operations. Funding for the project was provided in the 2014 Farm Bill, and we are planning for a first release in September.

The Organic Integrity Database will deter fraud by providing accurate and more timely information about operations certified to use the USDA organic seal. It will enable supply chain connections between buyers and sellers of organic goods, support international trading partner data needs, and strengthen NOP's oversight capabilities.

Here's what is planned for the September 2015 release:

- Certifiers will be able to login to the database at any time, and regularly update the list of the organic operations they certify
- As data are added over time, the system will maintain a record of each certified operation's change in certification status
- Industry and the public will be able to conduct searches more easily and with greater precision than with the current posted list
- The system will provide standard summary reports not previously available

- This release will begin the process of introducing a more structured listing of commodities and services, a significant improvement over the current listing

We are working closely with certifiers to define system needs, and to help with testing as the system is built. If you are a certifier representative interested in joining this group, please contact [Jennifer.Tucker@ams.usda.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Tucker@ams.usda.gov).



*NOP introduces the Organic Integrity Database development team! To build the system, NOP is working closely with AMS Information Technology Services, and with two contractors. Intact is an organic certification software firm that already works with many certifiers; and Harmonia is a information technology firm with extensive experience in building systems quickly for the Federal government.*

## Secretary Vilsack Kicks off USDA Farmers Market for 20th Season

On May 1, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack opened the 20th season of the USDA Farmers Market with a ribbon cutting ceremony. Secretary Vilsack has identified strengthening local food systems, including farmers markets, as one of the four pillars of USDA's commitment to rural economic development.

"For the past two decades, the USDA Farmers Market has shown us how farmers markets bring urban and rural communities together and expand access to locally grown fruit and vegetables," said Secretary Vilsack. "Like thousands of markets around the country, the USDA Farmers Market benefits local farmers and ranchers, small businesses, and consumers by creating economic opportunities and offering healthy, wholesome food."

AMS supports farmers markets through grants, technical assistance and applied research. This year, AMS is making available more than \$90 million in grant funding to support local food efforts through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program.



The USDA Farmers Market is one of many markets listed in USDA's Local Food Directories. Consumers can search the directories for locations, operating hours, and more details about farmers markets, food hubs, community-supported agriculture (CSA) operations and on-farm markets. For more information about USDA's Farmers Market and other markets across the country, go to [www.usda/localfooddirectories.com](http://www.usda/localfooddirectories.com). For an updated fact sheet entitled "Organic Labeling at Farmers Markets," visit the National Organic Program website at [www.ams.usda.gov/nop](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop) and click on Fact Sheets.

## USDA Funding to Assist with Organic Certification Costs

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is pleased to announce that approximately \$11.9 million is available for organic certification cost-share assistance, making certification more accessible for certified producers and handlers across the country.

"The organic industry saw record growth in 2014, accounting for over \$39 billion in retail sales in the United States alone," said AMS Administrator Anne Alonzo. "Support provided through the organic certification cost-share programs will help more organic producers and handlers succeed, supporting the economy in rural and urban communities."

The certification assistance is distributed through two programs. Through the National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program, approximately \$11 million is available to organic farmers and businesses nationwide and in participating U.S. territories. Through the Agricultural Management Assistance Organic Certification Cost-Share Program, an additional \$900,000 is available to organic producers (only crop and livestock operations) in Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

These programs provide cost-share assistance through participating states to producers and handlers certified to the USDA organic regulations for certification-related expenses. Payments cover up to 75 percent of an individual applicant's certification costs, up to a maximum of \$750 annually per certification scope: crops, livestock, wild crops and handling. Since there are 4 possible certification scopes, the maximum reimbursement amount is \$3,000. This would occur if the operator is certified for all 4 scopes and the overall allowable certification costs are equal to or greater than \$4000 (the 75 percent rule).

To receive cost-share assistance, certified organic producers and handlers should contact their state agencies. Each state will have their own guidelines and requirements for reimbursement, and the AMS NOP assists states as much as possible to successfully implement the programs.



The screenshot shows the USDA Organic Cost Share website. At the top, the USDA logo and "United States Department of Agriculture" are displayed. Below that, the title "USDA Organic Cost Share" and "Agricultural Marketing Service" are shown, along with the tagline "Making Organic Certification Affordable" and "You're Certified...Now Get Reimbursed!". To the right is a circular "USDA ORGANIC" seal. The main content area features three large numbered steps: "1 Contact Your State Agency", "2 Submit Information", and "3 Get Reimbursed". Step 1 shows a background image of various spices. Step 2 shows eggs. Step 3 shows a head of lettuce. At the bottom, a small note reads "USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider." and provides a link: "Learn more about the Organic Certification Cost Share Programs at <http://bit.ly/CostShareGen>".

State contact information can be found on the NOP Cost Share Website: [www.ams.usda.gov/NOPCostSharing](http://www.ams.usda.gov/NOPCostSharing)

In 2014, USDA issued nearly 10,000 reimbursements totaling over \$6 million, providing critical support to the organic community.

USDA continually works to connect organic farmers and businesses with resources that ensure the continued growth of the organic industry domestically and abroad. During this Administration, USDA has signed four major organic trade arrangements and is also helping organic stakeholders access programs that support conservation, provide access to loans and grants, fund organic research and education, and mitigate pest emergencies. In addition to growth in domestic organic farms and businesses, U.S. businesses are also benefitting from sourcing counter-seasonal and exotic organic products and ingredients from the over 8,000 USDA organic operations overseas. Combined, these efforts have helped the U.S. organic sector grow to a record \$39 billion in retail sales in 2014.

For additional information contact

Rita Meade  
OCCSP Manager  
(202) 260-8636  
[Rita.Meade@ams.usda.gov](mailto:Rita.Meade@ams.usda.gov)



After a 14 month detail to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), Agricultural Affairs, Lisa Ahramjian has returned to NOP. Lisa, who previously served as NOP's Communications Specialist is now an Agricultural Marketing Specialist in the Standards Division. Among other duties while at USTR, Lisa worked with NOP and the Foreign Agricultural Service to help negotiate the organic equivalency arrangement with South Korea.

WELCOME BACK LISA

## The Organic Community

The USDA National Organic Program is a member of a large and growing community contributing to the advancement of organic farming at the local, regional, national and international levels. As our community is as diverse as it is dispersed, we feature below other community members in the United States and abroad to help increase awareness of the different work being done. With so many different members in different places, the purpose of the features is to share information, not to endorse the views, work or events of one community member over those of so many others.



### Organic Farming Research Foundation

For 25 years, the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) has served organic farmers by funding organic farming research and successfully advocating for public policy and public funding to advance organic science and increase organic production.

OFRF's focus is farmers, and their aim is to provide science-based solutions to help farmers overcome the challenges of organic production. Since 1990, OFRF has funded 315 organic farming research projects, and many of their research partners have leveraged cutting-edge initial studies into large-scale research projects that have transformed modern organic practices. OFRF is also an advocate for a fair share of public funding for organic farming research, and for official recognition of organic as a valid and economically-important sector of agriculture.

"We are committed to the expansion and improvement of organic farming systems, and we believe that modern organic farming requires a foundation of science and public investment," said OFRF Executive Director Brise Tencer. "We believe research will prove that organic can feed the world, sustainably, without damaging our agricultural lands, environment or human health."

OFRF has worked closely with USDA over the years as the agency's focus and investment in organic has grown and been strengthened. Through a grant from the USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture, OFRF is currently involved in a groundbreaking research effort to catalogue and evaluate organic farming research projects funded by the USDA through the Organic Agricultural Research and Extension Initiative and the Organic Transitions Program.

Over the decades, OFRF has also partnered with Land-Grant universities and extension services to fund research opportunities for faculty and students, and expand training options for incoming generations of farmers.

OFRF is committed to transparency, traditional systems of shared knowledge among farmers, and open-source science to support the success and widespread adoption of organic farming systems. Innovations that result from OFRF-funded research may not be licensed or patented. For more information, visit [www.ofrf.org](http://www.ofrf.org).

## IFOAM EU

IFOAM, EU is an independent regional group within the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM).

IFOAM EU is the European umbrella organization for organic food and farming. They fight for the adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems based on the principles of organic agriculture – health, ecology, fairness and care. With more than 160 member organizations their work spans the entire organic food chain and beyond: from farmers and processors, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy bodies.



The information above was pulled from [www.ifoam-eu.org](http://www.ifoam-eu.org) where you can learn more about the organization and the 9th European Organic Congress which they are co-organizing.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, in partnership with Oregon Tilth, is presenting a four-part webinar series on environmental benefits of organic systems.

The next webinar will be

### **Environmental Benefits of Organic Agriculture: Biodiversity**

Wednesday, June 17 at 2:00 p.m. EST

John Quinn, Assistant Professor of Biology, Furman University

Betsy Rakola, Organic Policy Advisor, USDA

To learn more and register, visit [www.conservationwebinars.net](http://www.conservationwebinars.net)



## **THE NOP TEAM IS GROWING . . .**

Since the beginning of the year, we have added six new member to our team - one in the Office of the Deputy Administrator; three in the Standards Division; and two in the Accreditation & International Activities Division. Below are brief biographies of our newest team members.

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**Bridget McElroy**

Bridget joined the NOP team in February as a Policy Analyst with the Standards Division. Most recently, she worked as a Program Specialist with a USAID contractor, implementing agricultural development projects overseas. Prior, she served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ecuador where she worked with an organic coffee farmers association. Bridget holds a BA in International Relations and a MS in Agriculture, Food and the Environment from Tufts University.



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**Devon Pattillo**



Devon joined the NOP team in March as a Materials Specialist with the Standards Division. Most recently, he worked with the organic certification agency CCOF for over 7 years, where he held a variety of positions, including Materials Manager and Livestock Certification Manager. Devon holds a BA in Biology from Reed College.

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**Edward Stoker**

Eddie joined the NOP team in April as a Communications Specialist with the Office of the Deputy Administrator. Most recently, he worked as a Public Affairs Specialist with USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education. Prior, he held a variety of positions in both the public and private sectors, marketing and managing outreach, partnership and education programs. Eddie holds a BS in Agronomy from Texas A&M University and a MS in Environmental Studies from Baylor University.



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**Jason Lopez**



Jason joined the NOP team in March as an Agricultural Marketing Specialist with the Accreditation & International Activities Division. Most recently, he worked with USDA's Risk Management Agency for over 10 years reviewing reinsurance policies for the crop insurance program. Prior, he worked in the livestock industry enforcing the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921. Jason holds a BS in Agricultural Economics and a MS in Agricultural Business from New Mexico State University and is pursuing a PhD in Agricultural Economics from Oklahoma State University.

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**. . . TO BETTER SERVE YOU!**

## THE NOP TEAM IS GROWING TO BETTER SERVE YOU

**Jessica Walden**

Jessica joined the NOP team in March as a Materials Review Specialist with the Standards Division. Most recently, she worked with Quality Assurance International (QAI) for over 10 years where she held a variety of positions, including Reviewer Supervisor and Senior Technical Reviewer. She has also served on the Processor Advisory Council and the Processor Review Panel for OMRI. Prior, she was an Organic Inspector and Certification Officer for National Association for Sustainable Agriculture in Australia. Jessica holds a bachelor's in Environmental Studies, Agroecology and Sustainable Agriculture from the University of California, Santa Cruz and a graduate degree in Environmental Studies from Adelaide University in Australia.



**Penny Zuck**

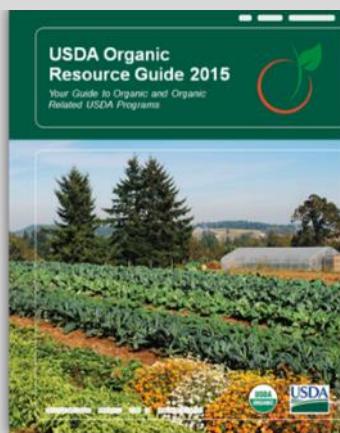
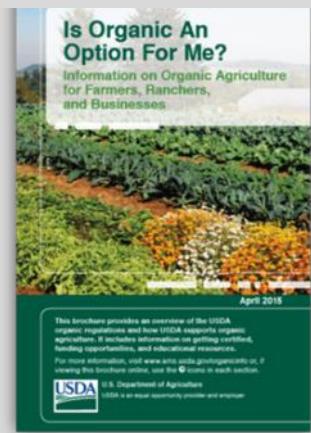


Penny joined the NOP team in March 2015 as an Agricultural Marketing Specialist with the Accreditation and International Activities Division. Most recently, she worked with Pennsylvania Certified Organic for over 14 years where she held a variety of positions, including Certification Director, Certification Specialist, Administrative Director, and Training Coordinator. She also assisted the Gluten-Free Certification Organization (GFCO) by performing gluten-free on-site audits and testing. She is certified as an organic inspector through the International Organic Inspector's Association (IOIA) for all scopes of organic inspections.

With its larger staff with expertise in organic agriculture; policy analysis and development; accreditation; materials, compliance and enforcement; auditing; and public sector management, the NOP will continue to effectively serve the organic community with a commitment to the following values: Independence and Objectivity; Customer Service; Accountability; Honesty and Integrity; and Diversity.

### UPDATED RESOURCES

The National Organic Program (NOP), as part of its Organic Literacy Initiative, has updated two resources – “Is Organic An Option for Me?” and “USDA Organic Resource Guide 2015.” PDF versions of these resources can be downloaded by clicking on the Organic Literacy Initiative link near the bottom of the NOP homepage at [www.ams.usda.gov/NOP](http://www.ams.usda.gov/NOP)



### ORIGIN OF LIVESTOCK PROPOSED RULE

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service proposes to amend the origin of livestock requirements for dairy animals under the USDA organic regulations. Comments are welcomed and must be received by July 27, 2015.

To comment,  
go to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)  
and enter AMS-NOP-11-0009-0001  
in the search box.



## Update From National Organic Standards Board Meeting

NOSB members in photo from left to right: Francis Thicke; Tom Chapman; Jennifer Taylor; Lisa de Lima; Nick Maravell; Ashley Swaffar Jean Richardson (NOSB Chair); Tracy Favre (NOSB Vice Chair); Mac Stone; Zea Sonnabend; C. Reuben Walker; Carmela Beck; and Colehour Bondera. Not present in photo: Harold Austin (NOSB Secretary); and Paula Daniels.

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is a U.S. Department of Agriculture Federal Advisory Board, comprised of dedicated public volunteers from the organic community. The NOSB provides recommendations on a wide range of matters related to the implementation of the Organic Food Production Act and USDA organic regulations.

The NOSB held its biannual public meeting April 27-30, 2015, in La Jolla, California. Over the course of four days, the NOSB evaluated 23 proposals, discussion documents, and reports, and reviewed 198 material listings due to sunset in 2017. The NOSB received 1,248 written comments prior to the meeting and heard oral testimony from 128 members of the public on a wide range of issues.

Miles McEvoy, Deputy Administrator of the National Organic Program (NOP), presented the Agricultural Marketing Services – National Organic Program Strategic Plan that included the NOP's strategic priorities, updates on the USDA Organic Initiatives, and a status update on prior NOSB recommendations.

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.

Clive Davies, Chief of the Safer Choice Program at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) gave a presentation on the Safer Choice program. The Safer Choice program is a voluntary labeling program that promotes the use of safer chemicals and may be of assistance to the NOSB in their review of inert ingredients used in pesticides for organic production.

The NOSB also hosted a 4-member panel of experts on Seed Purity. The panel and Board members discussed the challenges faced by the organic seed industry in trying to protect organic germplasm from genetically engineered crops.

Following is a summary of the NOSB's recommendations and actions regarding the topics listed below.

- Petitioned Substances
- 2016 Sunset Substance Review
- 2017 Sunset Substance Review
- Other Recommendations
- Other Business
- Updates and Reports

The NOP thanks and recognizes the NOSB for its hard work and contributions to organic food production. For additional information about the meeting, please visit [www.ams.usda.gov/NOSBMeetings](http://www.ams.usda.gov/NOSBMeetings). The final recommendations from the meeting will be posted at this location in the near future.

*Note: NOSB is an advisory body to the Secretary of Agriculture. An NOSB recommendation does not become policy unless the NOP issues final rules, final guidance, final instructions, or a policy memorandum that adopts the recommendation. Unless such action is taken, NOSB recommendations are not part of the USDA organic regulations.*

**THE NOSB RECOMMENDS REMOVAL OF 5 MATERIALS FROM THE NATIONAL LIST,  
AND VOTES AGAINST ADDING 6 NEW MATERIALS**

**Petitioned Substances.** The NOSB reviewed ten petitions to amend the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List). This section of the USDA organic regulations includes synthetic substances allowed in crop and livestock production, nonsynthetic substances prohibited in crop and livestock production, and all substances allowed in handling of organic products. All motions require a 2/3 majority to pass.

| Substance  | Section     | Action Considered by NOSB  | NOSB Recommendation                          |
|--|-------------|--|--|
| Whole Algal Flour  | §205.606    | Motion to add to the National List at 205.605(a) as a nonsynthetic substance   | The motion failed                            |
| Glycerin produced by hydrolysis of fats and oils   | §205.605(b) | Motion to remove from the National List  | The motion passed                            |
| Glycerin, when derived from agricultural source material and processed using biological or mechanical/physical methods described under §205.270(a) | 205.606     | Motion to add to the National List at 205.606 as an agricultural substance   | The motion passed                            |
| Polyalkylene Glycol Monobutyl Ether (PGME)   | §205.605    | Motion to add to the National List   | Classified as synthetic<br>The motion failed |
| Triethyl Citrate   | §205.605    | Motion to add to the National List   | Classified as synthetic<br>The motion failed |
| (Carbon Monoxide) Exhaust Gas  | §205.601    | Motion to add to the National List   | Classified as synthetic<br>The motion failed |
| Calcium Sulfate, as petitioned   | §205.601    | Motion to add to the National List   | Classified as synthetic<br>The motion failed |
| 3-decene-2-one   | §205.601    | Motion to add to the National List   | Classified as synthetic<br>The motion failed |
| Acidified Sodium Chlorite (ASC) (CAS # 7758-19-2 (sodium chlorite) and CAS # 14998-27-7 (chlorous acid))   | §205.603(a) | Motion to add to the National List with the following annotation: allowed for use on organic livestock as a pre and post teat dip treatment.   | Classified as synthetic<br>The motion passed |
| Zinc Sulfate   | §205.603(b) | Motion to add to the National List for use as a foot or hoof treatment only  | Classified as synthetic<br>The motion passed |
| DL-Methionine, DL-Methionine—hydroxy analog, and DL—Methionine—hydroxy analog calcium (CAS #'s 59-51-8, 583-91-5, 4857-44-7, and 922-50-9) -       | §205.603(d) | Motion to amend the listing for methionine as follows: for use only in organic poultry production at the following maximum average pounds per ton of 100 percent synthetic methionine in the diet over the life of the flock: Laying chickens – 2 pounds; Broiler chickens – 2.5 pounds; Turkeys and all other poultry – 3 pounds.<br>Motion to adopt the following resolution:<br>Resolution: The National Organic Standards Board is committed to the phase-out of synthetic methionine for organic poultry production, and encourages aggressive industry and independent research on natural alternative sources of methionine, breeding poultry that perform well on less methionine, and management practices for improved poultry animal welfare. | The motions passed                           |

## 2016 Sunset Substance Review

| Substance                        | Section     | Action Considered by NOSB               | NOSB Recommendation   |
|----------------------------------|-------------|---|---|
| Ferric Phosphate                 | §205.601(h) | Motion to remove from the National List | The motion failed<br>The NOSB completed its sunset review   |
| Hydrogen Chloride                | §205.601(n) | Motion to remove from the National List | The motion failed<br>The NOSB completed its sunset review   |
| Egg White Lysozyme               | §205.605(a) | Motion to remove from the National List | The motion passed<br>The NOSB recommended removal from the National List as a result of its sunset review |
| L-Malic Acid                     | §205.605(a) | Motion to remove from the National List | The motion failed<br>The NOSB completed its sunset review   |
| Microorganisms                   | §205.605(a) | Motion to remove from the National List | The motion failed<br>The NOSB completed its sunset review   |
| Activated Charcoal               | §205.605(b) | Motion to remove from the National List | The motion failed<br>The NOSB completed its sunset review   |
| Peracetic Acid                   | §205.605(b) | Motion to remove from the National List | The motion failed<br>The NOSB completed its sunset review   |
| Cyclohexylamine                  | §205.605(b) | Motion to remove from the National List | The motion passed<br>The NOSB recommended removal from the National List as a result of its sunset review |
| Diethylaminoethanol              | §205.605(b) | Motion to remove from the National List | The motion passed<br>The NOSB recommended removal from the National List as a result of its sunset review |
| Octadecylamine                   | §205.605(b) | Motion to remove from the National List | The motion passed<br>The NOSB recommended removal from the National List as a result of its sunset review |
| Sodium Acid Pyrophosphate (SAPP) | §205.605(b) | Motion to remove from the National List | The motion failed<br>The NOSB completed its sunset review   |
| Tetrasodium Pyrophosphate (TSPP) | §205.605(b) | Motion to remove from the National List | The motion passed<br>The NOSB recommended removal from the National List as a result of its sunset review |

## 2017 Sunset Substance Review

The NOSB provided an overview and received public comment on [198 material listings due for sunset review by 2017](#) (click the link to see the complete list of materials).

## **Other Recommendations**

### *Peer Review proposal*

The NOSB passed a recommendation for the National Organic Program Accreditation Peer Review Process.

### *Ancillary Substances listed for use with Microorganisms.*

The NOSB considered a proposal on Ancillary Substances listed for use with Microorganisms. Based on public comments, this document was returned to the Handling Subcommittee for further work.

## **Other Business**

### *Discussion Documents*

The Materials Subcommittee presented two discussion documents: Excluded Methods Terminology and; Prevention Strategy Guidance for Excluded Methods in Crops and Handling.

### *Updates & Reports*

Contamination Issues in Farm Inputs. The Crops Subcommittee presented a report to the NOSB on Contamination Issues in Farm Inputs.

Aquaculture Legacy Document. The Livestock Subcommittee presented a report to the NOSB on the history of the review of aquaculture petitions.

The NOP 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 NOP THANKS THE MEMBERS OF THE NOSB FOR THEIR DEDICATION AND SERVICE TO THE ORGANIC COMMUNITY**

### **USDA Extends Deadline to Submit Proposals on New Organic Promotion Order to July 20, 2015**

WASHINGTON, June 3, 2015 — The United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is extending a deadline by 30 days to allow members of the public to submit alternative proposals or partial proposals on a new industry-funded promotion, research and information order for organic products. The new order would be developed under the Commodity Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 1996 (1996 Act).

AMS received a number of requests from organic stakeholders for additional time and will accept proposals or partial proposals until July 20, 2015. AMS originally announced that it would accept proposals until June 19, 2015.

The agency will consider submissions before publishing a proposed Organic Promotion, Research and Information Order that would create an industry-funded research and promotion program for organic products under the 1996 Act.

Proposals may be submitted to Organic Promotion, Research, and Information Order; Room 3071-S, STOP 0201; Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW.; Washington, D.C. 20250-0201; telephone number (202) 720-5115. AMS is only seeking proposals or partial proposals. Comments on the submitted proposal or any other aspect of an organic research and promotion program will not be considered. Interested parties will have full opportunity to submit comments when AMS publishes a proposed order.

**USDA'S NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS BOARD  
CALL FOR NOMINATIONS EXTENDED**



(Extended Deadline: June 17, 2015)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is accepting nominees to serve on the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The NOSB was established under the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA), and in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), to assist in developing standards for substances used in organic production and to advise the Secretary on aspects of the National Organic Program (NOP).

The NOSB is composed of 15 members and seven specified categories:

- Four farmers/growers
- Three environmentalists/resource conservationists
- Three consumer/public interest advocates
- Two handlers/processors
- One retailer
- One scientist (toxicology, ecology, or biochemistry)
- One USDA accredited certifying agent

USDA is seeking nominations for the following five (5) positions on the NOSB:

- Two (2) organic farmers/producers
- Two (2) public or consumer interest group representatives
- One (1) USDA accredited certifying agent

For the above five referenced positions, the Secretary of Agriculture will appoint persons to serve a five year term that will commence on January 2016 and end January 2021.

Committee member duties include:

- Attending committee meetings (travel paid by USDA)\*
- Participating in bi-monthly subcommittee conference calls
- Reviewing materials and/or recommend changes to the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances
- Advising the Secretary on other aspects of the USDA organic regulations

Criteria used to consider nominees include:

- A general understanding of organic principles, and practical experience in the organic community, particularly in the sector for which the person is applying
- Demonstrated experience in the development of public policy such as participation on public or private advisory boards, boards of directors or other comparable organizations
- Participation in standards development and/or involvement in educational outreach activities
- A commitment to the integrity and growth of the organic food and fiber industry
- The ability to evaluate technical information and to fully participate in Board deliberation and recommendations
- The willingness to commit the time and energy necessary to assume Board duties
- Not be currently serving (or have been elected to serve) on another USDA advisory committee or research and promotions council/board during your term
- Not registered as a lobbyist\*\* with the federal or state government

Written nominations, with cover letter, resume, and a required form (available on the USDA website), must be postmarked on or before June 17, 2015. For more information, visit:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/NOSBNominationProcess>

\*Members of the Committee are reimbursed by the USDA for approved travel and associated lodging expenses as determined by official federal government guidelines and regulations.

\*\*Executive Order No. 13490, 18 June 2010, prohibits an individual who is registered with the federal government or with a state government as a lobbyist from serving on a federal advisory committee.

# Enhance Your Profits Generate Renewable Energy



Jeff and Sheila Koester's family-owned, certified organic dairy farm in northern Illinois used a Rural Energy for America (REAP) grant to install a 10.75 kW photovoltaic solar system. The power generated from those panels will be used to power operations on the farm, offsetting about 49 percent of their annual farm energy consumption and cutting their electric bill.

REAP funding is available to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to reduce energy consumption or install renewable energy systems. Guaranteed loan and grant packages are available for energy efficiency improvements, with grants up to 25 percent of total project costs (up to a maximum of \$250,000), and loans up to 75 percent (maximum \$25 million). REAP financing of up to 75 percent is available for solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, hydrogen or anaerobic digester systems, with grants of 25 percent, with a maximum of \$500,000.

Contact your local USDA Rural Development office for more information and assistance with an application, or go to [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP\\_Reap.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_Reap.html).



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

**Rural Development**

**Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)**

## MORE GOOD NEWS

The European Commission informed USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, National Organic Program (NOP) that it reviewed the operation of the European Union-United States organic equivalence arrangement established in 2012 and found that the arrangement has been instrumental in increasing market access for producers, expanding consumer choices, and facilitating regulatory cooperation.

A PDF copy of the letter received can be found on the International Trade Policies, European Union page of the NOP web site — [www.ams.usda.gov/NOPTradeEuropeanUnion](http://www.ams.usda.gov/NOPTradeEuropeanUnion)

Congratulations to the Foreign Agricultural Service, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and the NOP Accreditation & International Activities Division for negotiating an equivalency arrangement that upholds the principles of organic integrity.

## UPCOMING NOSB MEETING

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is a 15-member Federal advisory committee which provides advice, clarification, and guidance to the Secretary of Agriculture concerning the National Organic Program (NOP). Among other activities, the NOSB helps develop and update regulations and policies by providing formal recommendations to USDA. NOSB meetings, which are held twice per year, are important forums for public comment, and support transparency in the organic standards development process.

**The fall 2015 NOSB Meeting will be October 26-29 at**

**Stoweflake Conference Center  
1746 Mountain Road  
Stowe, Vermont 05672**

Visit [www.ams.usda.gov/nosbmeetings](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nosbmeetings) to learn more about past and upcoming meetings.

## National Organic Programs Handbook + Web Updates

### Program Handbook

The National Organic Program (NOP) 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, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has added new documents and updated several existing resources, which are available at [www.ams.usda.gov/NOPProgramHandbook](http://www.ams.usda.gov/NOPProgramHandbook).

- **Resource Inventory Supplements for Producers Participating in USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) 138 (NOP 2616).** On April 22, 2015, NOP and NRCS provided producers working with NRCS on a CAP 138 with a new tool, "NOP 2616: Resource Inventory Supplements." The Resource Inventory Supplements complement the CAP 138. To learn more about NRCS support for producers transitioning to organic certification, contact your local NRCS office.
- **Organic System Plan (OSP) Templates.** On April 16, 2015, NOP updated our 3 existing optional OSP templates to Word document format to give producers more flexibility to describe their operations without the restrictions associated with fillable PDF forms.
- **Policy Memo on Nanotechnology (PM 15-2).** On March 24, 2015, NOP issued a policy memorandum to certifying agents and material evaluation programs to provide clarification on the use of nanotechnology in organic production and handling.
- **Reinstating Suspended Operations (NOP 2605).** On February 17, 2015, NOP updated "NOP 2605: Instruction on Reinstating Suspended Operations." The updated instruction describes procedures that certifiers and operations follow when requesting certification reinstatement, and provides the decision-making criteria that NOP uses to evaluate reinstatement requests.
- **Policy Memo on Biodegradable Biobased Mulch Film (PM 15-1).** On October 30, 2014, USDA organic regulations were amended to allow the use of biodegradable biobased mulch film in organic crop production (79 FR 58655). On January 22, 2015, a policy memorandum clarified how certifying agents and material evaluation programs should review the biobased requirement for these products.
- **Enforcement of the USDA Organic Regulations: Penalty Matrix (NOP 4002).** On January 20, 2015, NOP finalized its Instruction to accredited certifiers and State Organic Programs for taking enforcement actions against certified operations that violate the USDA organic regulations.
- **Adverse Action Appeal Process (NOP 4011, Updated).** On January 8, 2015, NOP published an updated Adverse Action Appeals Process document (original issued December 23, 2014). The document explains the adverse action appeal process; clarifies the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the adverse action appeal process; and describes possible appeal outcomes.
- **Program Handbook Available in Spanish.** On December 17, 2014, NOP provided the Spanish version of the USDA organic regulations and program handbook. The Spanish version will make it easier for Spanish speaking farmers, handlers and certifiers to understand and comply with USDA organic regulations.

### Compliance Update

In FY14, the Compliance and Enforcement Division of the National Organic Program:

- Issued nine civil penalties, totaling \$81,500, for willful violations of the USDA organic regulations
- Closed 285 complaint investigations
- Published 13 fraudulent organic certificates on the NOP webpage



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<http://bit.ly/NOPOrganicInsider>