USDA Organic Policy Updates

National Organic Standards Board
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USDA Organic – Big Picture

- Dept.-wide integration, beyond NOP
- Congressional drivers
- 2010 Strategic Plan Goal (+25%)
- OSEC Policy Advisor
- USDA Organic Working Group
- USDA Organic Literacy Initiative
- Secretary’s Departmental Guidance
Secretary’s May 2013 Guidance

- Five areas of organic integration:
  - Regulatory reciprocity w/in USDA
  - Research
  - Data
  - Training and Outreach
  - Encouraging growth of sector

- Organic Working Group teams for each area.
Secretary’s May 2013 Guidance:
Reciprocity w/in USDA

- Focus is on coordination of NOP requirements with NRCS conservation program requirements.
Secretary’s May 2013 Guidance: Data Collection

- Master data inventory
- Support for expanded int’l trade codes
- Collation of stakeholder data needs
Secretary’s May 2013 Guidance: Training and Outreach

- New USDA Organic Topic Page
- Updated Organic Resource Guide
- Continue Organic Literacy Initiative
Organic Agriculture

USDA is committed to helping organic agriculture grow and thrive. To help meet Secretary Vilsack’s goal of increasing the number of certified organic operations, USDA is delivering results through its many programs which serve the growing organic sector. October 2012 marked the 10th anniversary of the USDA Organic Seal, and we are proud that it has become a leading global standard.

What is Organic Agriculture?

Organic agriculture produces products using methods that preserve the environment and avoid most synthetic materials, such as pesticides and antibiotics. USDA organic standards describe how farmers grow crops and raise livestock and which materials they may use.

Organic farmers, ranchers, and food processors follow a defined set of standards to produce organic food and fiber. Congress described general organic principles in the Organic Foods Production Act, and the USDA defines specific organic standards. These standards cover the product from farm to table.
Secretary’s May 2013 Guidance: Growth of Organic Sector

- On-line “town hall” discussion
- Collation of transition resources
Secretary’s May 2013 Guidance: Research

- Assessment by OWG of NOSB 2012/13 research priorities recommendations.
- Review of NOSB doc by NIFA, ARS, ERS and NRCS, with NOP’s Dr. Lisa Brines.
- Comments and recommendations of OWG team go to USDA research programs and also feed back to NOSB.
- Will be posted with minutes of this mtg.
OWG Research Team

Comments to NOSB: Highlights

- Whole farm systems, antibiotic alternatives, methionine alternatives, livestock herd health all continue to be prioritized by OREI. Strength of proposals is a concern.

- Board should provide more specific info on questions about aquaculture and GE vaccines.
2014 Farm Bill!

- Restores funding for Organic Research and Extension Initiative ($20M/yr)
- Restores and increases National Certification Cost-share ($11 Million/year)
- Restores Organic Data Initiative ($5M)
- Organic Crop Insurance mandate
- Organic Research and Promotion “Checkoff” exemptions and options
THANK YOU!

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