Overview

- Strategic Plan
- National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)
- USDA Organic Initiatives
- Standards Update
AMS - NOP Strategic Plan

Agricultural Marketing Service – National Organic Program Strategic Plan 2015-2018

Protecting Organic Integrity

– Reviewing the Past

– Planning for the Future
Accomplishments – 2009-2014

• Age of enforcement
• Access to pasture rule
• Residue testing rule
• NOP Handbook
• Ensured audit were conducted
• Increased audit consistency / regularity
• Responded to 4 Office of Inspector General audits
Accomplishments – 2009-2014

- International equivalency arrangements
- Improvements to the Appeals process
- Organic literacy initiative
- USDA Organic Insider
- List of certified organic operations
- Sound and Sensible Certification
Core Values

• Independence and Objectivity
• Customer Service
• Accountability
• Honesty and Integrity
• Diversity
Strategic Goals

- Protect Organic Integrity
- Market Access – Local, Regional, International
- Clear Standards
- Information Technology
- Organizational Development
Origin of Livestock Proposed Rule

- April 27, 2015 – On display
- April 28, 2015 – Published in Federal Register
- 90 day comment period
- AMS welcomes your comments
NOSB Recommendations


• More narrow allowance for transitioning as organic dairy industry grew

• Last recommendation – existing dairies could only use organic dairy animals and could not use any transitioned dairy animals
Purpose of Proposed Rule

• Support OFPA objectives of consistent standard
• Incorporate
  – NOSB recommendations
  – Other stakeholder input
    • Industry Origin of Livestock task force
    • NOP outreach
• OIG audit response - End the inconsistent interpretation of current rules
• Increase organic integrity
Origin of Livestock

• Narrow one-time transition
• Current regulations use “herd” as regulatory unit; undefined and inconsistently applied
• Proposal uses “producer” as regulatory unit
• Proposed narrow 1-time allowance in a single, continuous 12 month period; all animals must end transition at same time
Special Projects – Regulations

- Animal welfare standards
- Origin of Livestock
- Organic Aquaculture
- Organic Pet Food standards
- Organic Apiculture
- Organic Mushrooms
- Enhancing enforcement provisions
Special Projects - Policy

- Grower Groups
- Pesticide Drift
- Clarifying materials allowed in organic crop, livestock and handling
- Inspector Qualifications
- Private Labels
Special Projects – Market Development

• Implement sound and sensible certification through public-private partnerships

• Identify target countries for potential equivalency arrangements

• Support Latin American internal market development

• Implement Secretary’s guidance on organic agriculture
Special Projects – Infrastructure

• Modernize Organic Integrity Database
• Organic training and technical assistance
• NOP quality system
Organic Community

We envision one organic community, embracing all sizes of organizations and institutions – all committed to and working towards a common vision of organic agriculture.
Performance Measures

- Compliance with accreditation requirements
- Consumer trust
- Number of U.S. certified organic operations
- Sound and Sensible outreach
NOP Organization and Activities

**National Organic Standards Board**
- National List recommendations

**National Organic Program**
Office of Deputy Administrator
- Communication
- Administration
- Cost Share Program

**Standards Division**
- Rules, Guidance, Instructions,
- National List

**Accreditation & International Activities Division**
- Accreditation process
- Technical outreach
- International agreements

**Compliance & Enforcement Division**
- Complaints
- Investigations
- Initiate enforcement actions
- Market surveillance
The National Organic Standards Board or NOSB is a Federal Advisory Committee which assists and advises USDA. It has

– a **charter** with established mission and duties
– a Designated Federal Official (DFO)
– Subcommittees and Chair
– Opportunity for public participation
NOSB Budget

- $190,000 budget cap for direct NOSB support
  - Salary and Benefits for Advisory Board Specialist
  - Travel for Board Members
  - NOSB meeting facilities and A/V
- Additional NOSB related support
  - NOP technical staff support – Dr. Lisa Brines, National List Manager; Emily Brown Rosen, Standards staff
  - Technical Reports - $520,000 in FY14
NOSB Call for Nominations

• Five open positions
• Written nominations must include cover letter, resume, and a required form (available on USDA website)
• Applications must be postmarked on or before May 15, 2015
Recommendations on Hydroponics

• In 1995 the NOSB recommended that “Hydroponic production in soilless media to be labeled organically produced shall be allowed if all provisions of the OFPA have been met.”

• In NOSB 2010 greenhouse recommendation, the NOSB recommended that USDA shouldn’t allow organic crops to be produced using hydroponic methods.
Organic Hydroponics

- Some farms are currently producing organic crops through hydroponic methods.

- There are some USDA-accredited certifiers that certify organic hydroponic operations, using the USDA organic regulation crop standards.

- This certification is allowed, as long as the certifier can demonstrate its process for certifying in a way that is compliant.

- Certifiers known to certify hydroponic operations in the U.S. include CCOF, QAI, QCS, Midwest Organic Services Association, A Bee Organic, Oregon Tilth, and Bay State Certifiers.
AMS is establishing a hydroponic-aquaponic task force to report on the compatibility of these systems with the USDA organic regulations and the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA).

The task force will report to the NOSB on

- (i) current hydroponic and aquaponic production methods used in organic production, and
- (ii) whether these practices align with OFPA and the USDA organic regulations.
Hydroponics/Aquaponics Task Force

• Nominations open until May 7
• Task Force established summer 2015
• Report to NOSB in Spring 2016
USDA Organic Initiatives
Secretary Vilsack’s May 2013 departmental guidance on organic agriculture

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

USDA Organic 101
What Does the Organic Label Mean?
How Does USDA Support It?

Is Organic An Option For Me?
Information on Organic Agriculture for Farmers, Ranchers, and Businesses

Your Guide to Organic and Organic Related USDA Programs

USDA Organic 201
A Closer Look at the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Organic Regulations
USDA NRCS Conservation Activity Plans for Organic Producers

• USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service created a conservation activity plan that mirrors an Organic System Plan

• Important tool for transitioning producers: helps with paperwork and conservation practices

• First step for EQIP: financial assistance up to $20,000 per year
Cost Share Resources

Cost Share Mailbox:  [CostShare@ams.usda.gov](mailto:CostShare@ams.usda.gov)
Outreach Materials on NOP Website (mailer, fact sheet)
Standards Update
Draft Guidance: Natural Resources & Biodiversity Conservation

Purpose:

– To address NOSB Biodiversity Recommendations

– To inform organic operators of specific production practices that demonstrate compliance with the general conservation requirement at Section 205.200

– To clarify the role of the certifier and the inspector in verifying operator compliance

– To reduce paperwork burdens for operators participating in NRCS and NOP programs
NRCS assistance may be available

- Adding organic matter to the soil to increase soil organism diversity
- Conserving woodland, wetlands
- Vegetative covers
- Water conservation techniques
- Plant diversity
- Conserving wildlife corridors
- Controlling invasive species
Key Elements

Roles

– Operator must select, record and carry out production practices that “maintain or improve the natural resources...”

– Certifier must review the Organic System Plan for the production practices and ensure the inspector is qualified to assess this regulatory element

– Inspector must observe and evaluate the practices already underway, those that are planned, and note any exceptions
205.602 – Sodium Nitrate

• AMS has not renewed sodium nitrate on 205.602; Therefore, its listing is invalid and no longer enforceable

• Use of sodium nitrate must meet soil fertility and crop nutrient standard; natural resource standard

• September 11, 2012 notice provides information
Biodegradable Mulch

Biodegradable bio-based mulch film allowed

- Compostable
- Biodegradable
- Bio-based – polymer feed stocks consist of biological products or renewable agricultural or forestry products

Based on NOSB recommendation

NOP Policy 15-1 – Certifiers must verify that all polymer feed stocks are bio-based in order to allow a biodegradable bio-based mulch film
Nanotechnology Policy

• NOP Policy Memo 15-2 states that engineered nanomaterials are prohibited in organic production and handling

• Based on October 2010 NOSB Recommendation on Engineered Nanomaterials

• NOSB considered nanomaterials to be synthetic and prohibited substances under the organic regulations

• Many engineered nanomaterials would not be considered synthetic under the Organic Foods Production Act

• The policy memo clarifies that engineered nanomaterials are prohibited and the NOSB has authority over these substances
Electrolyzed Water

• On June 9, 2014, NOP issued a policy memo on electrolyzed water (PM 14-3) which addressed a difference in interpretation among certifiers on the allowance of this substance.
• Electrolyzed water contains the active ingredient hypochlorous acid (HOCl) and is generated from the electrolysis of salt (sodium chloride) in water. Hypochlorous acid and electrolyzed water are not on NOP’s National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances.
• Some stakeholders have asked NOP to rescind the policy memo asserting that hypochlorous acid is equivalent to other chlorine materials on the National List and should be allowed for use.
• NOP encourages parties interested in further consideration of electrolyzed water to submit a petition according to the current National List petition guidelines published in the Federal Register.
Thank You

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

www.ams.usda.gov/nop