

USDA National Organic Program

National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) Meeting

April 27, 2015

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USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
National Organic Program



Overview



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



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



- 1994, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2006
- 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



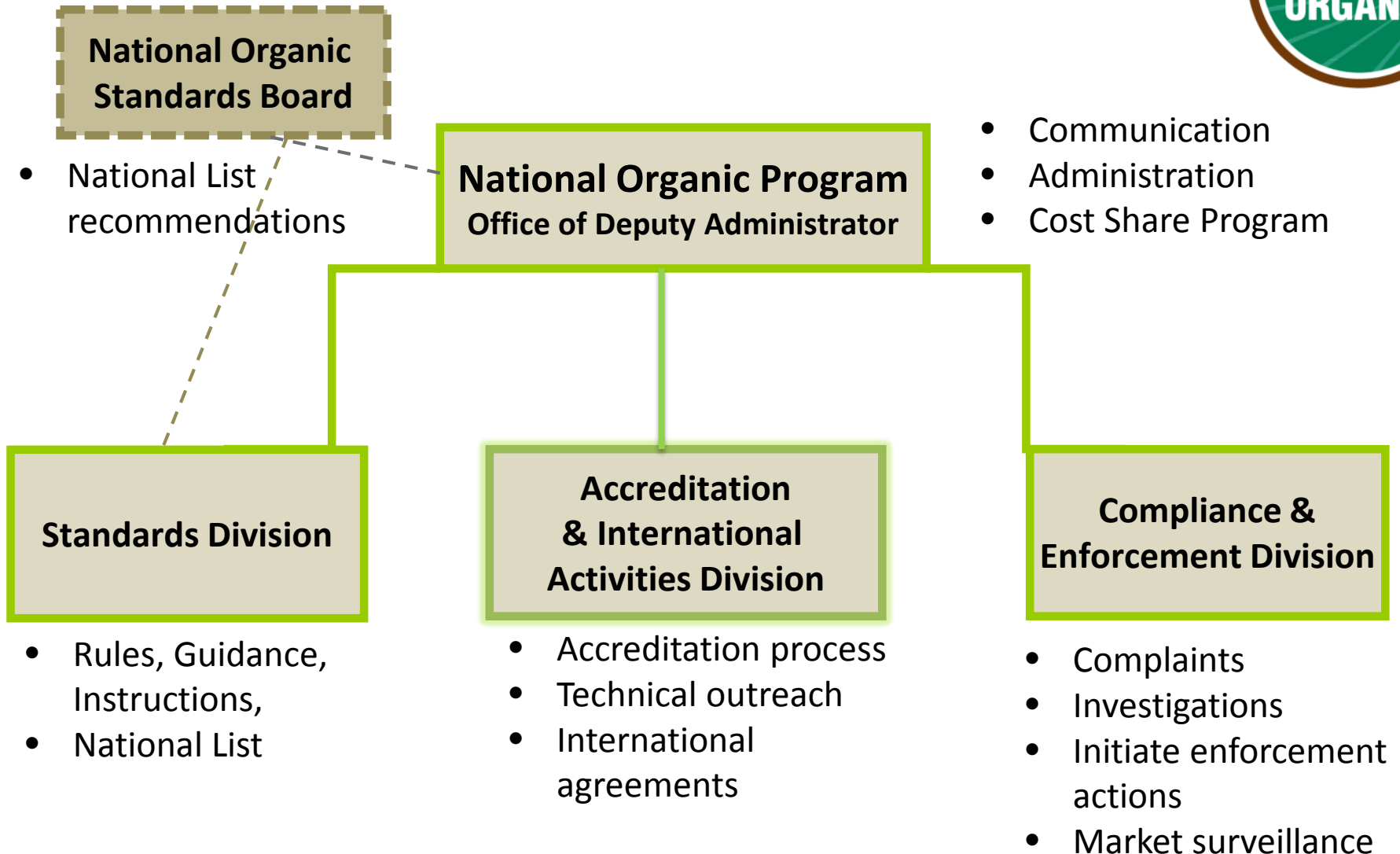
We envision one organic community, embracing all sizes of organizations and institutions – all committed to and working towards a common vision of organic agriculture.

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





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



- \$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



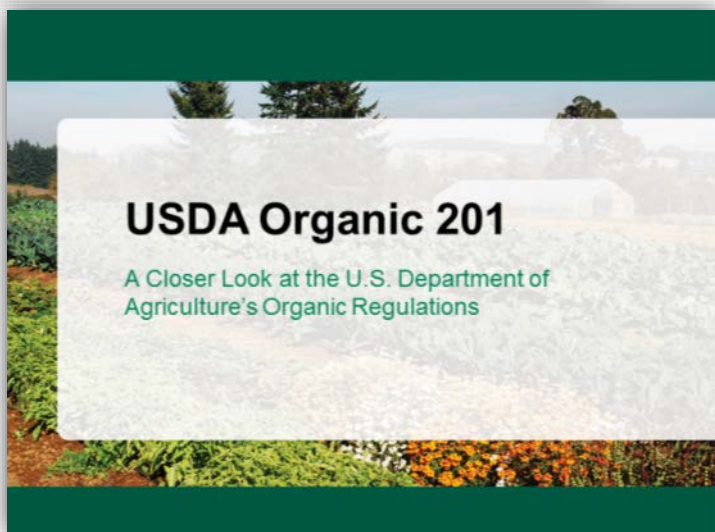
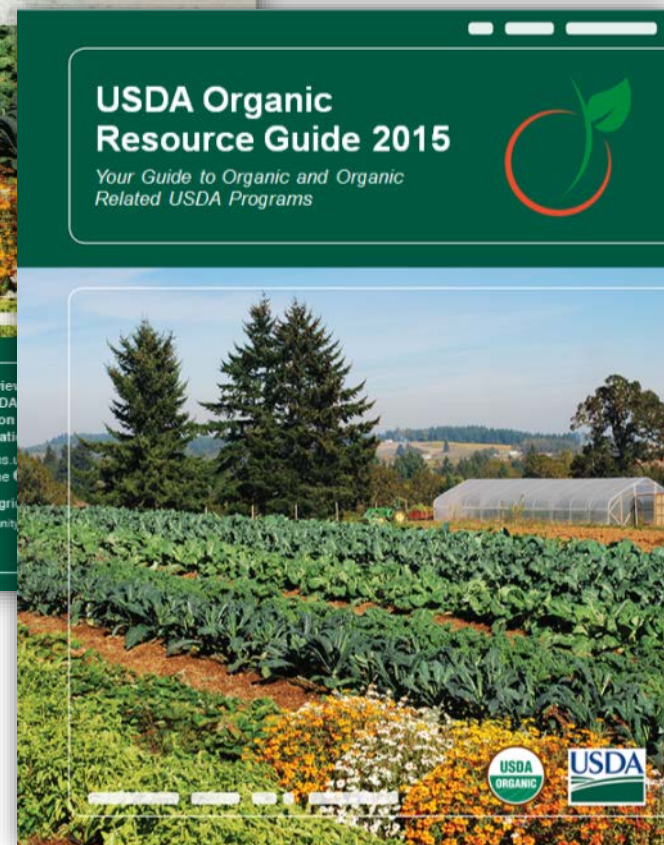
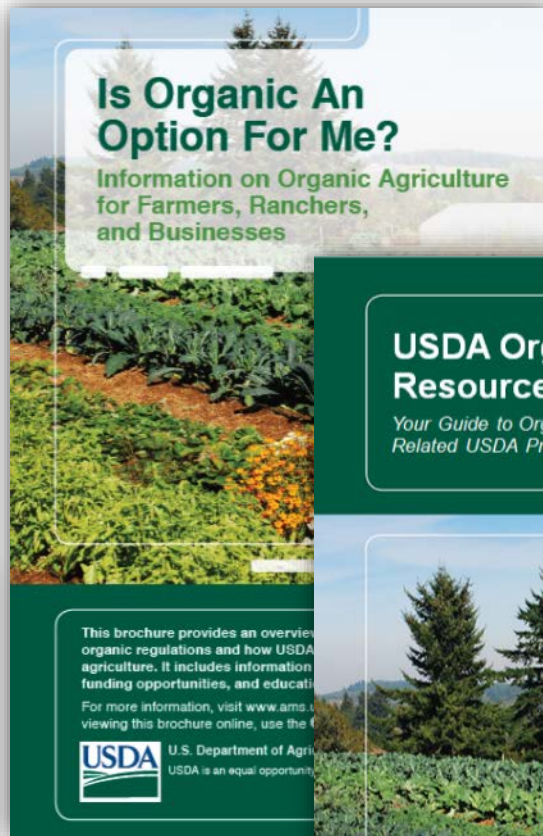
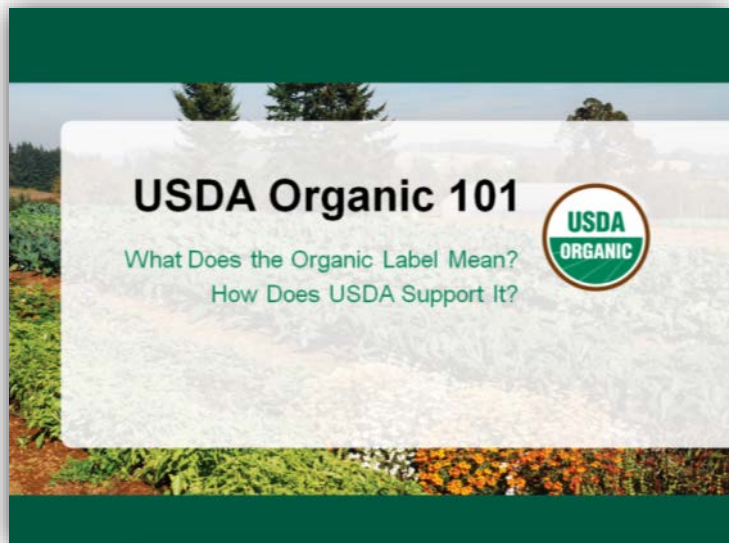


Secretary Vilsack's May 2013 departmental guidance on organic agriculture

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



Organic Literacy Initiative





USDA 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 Webpage: <http://bit.ly/OrganicCostShareInfo>

Cost Share Mailbox: CostShare@ams.usda.gov

Outreach Materials on NOP Website (mailer, fact sheet)

The graphic is a vertical banner with a brown top section containing the USDA logo and "United States Department of Agriculture". Below this, the text reads "USDA Organic Cost Share", "Agricultural Marketing Service", "Making Organic Certification Affordable", and "You're Certified...Now Get Reimbursed!". A small USDA Organic logo is on the right. The middle section features three numbered steps: "1 Contact Your State Agency" (blue background), "2 Submit Information" (brown background), and "3 Get Reimbursed" (green background). The bottom section shows three images: spices in white bags, a basket of brown eggs, and a head of green cabbage. At the bottom, it says "Learn more about the Organic Certification Cost Share Programs at <http://bit.ly/CostShareGen>". A small disclaimer "USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider." is visible near the bottom right.

Standards Update





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



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



- 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

