



October 7, 2015

Ms. Michelle Arsenault
National Organic Standards Board
USDA-AMS-NOP
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 2648-So., Ag Stop 0268
Washington, DC 20250-0268

Docket: AMS-NOP-15-0037

RE: Handling Subcommittee – Proposals to reclassify Alginic Acid and Carnauba Wax

Dear Ms. Arsenault:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment on the Handling Subcommittee's Proposals to reclassify Alginic Acid and Carnauba Wax.

The Organic Trade Association is the membership-based business association for organic agriculture and products in North America. OTA is the leading voice for the organic trade in the United States, representing organic businesses across 50 states. Its members include growers, shippers, processors, certifiers, farmers' associations, distributors, importers, exporters, consultants, retailers and others. OTA's Board of Directors is democratically elected by its members. OTA's mission is to promote and protect the growth of organic trade to benefit the environment, farmers, the public and the economy.

This single comment addresses two separate proposals:

1. Alginic acid is allowed for use in products labeled "organic" and "made with organic X." It's used as a stabilizer in many products such as beverages, cheese and dressings, and is also used as a defoaming agent. The Handling Subcommittee is proposing to reclassify alginic acid from its current status as an allowed non-synthetic non-agricultural ingredient to a **synthetic** non-agricultural ingredient.
2. Carnauba wax is allowed for use in products labeled "organic" and "made with organic X." It is used to coat fruit, candies and as a base in chewing gum. The Handling Subcommittee is proposing to reclassify carnauba wax from its current status as a non-synthetic non-agricultural vegetable wax to an agricultural vegetable wax. This reclassification will require organic carnauba wax be used when it is commercially available.

Based on the information provided in the Technical Review for each material and NOP's Draft Guidance on Classification of Materials (NOP Guidance 5033), OTA concurs with NOSB's assessment. We agree that Alginic Acid should be classified as "synthetic" and Carnauba Wax should be classified as "agricultural." As a side note of caution, however, we're uncertain about the urgency to reclassify these materials at this time, and would like to point out the risk of making such a determination based on draft NOP guidance.



OTA recognizes that NOSB is actively and regularly making classification decisions and, in doing so, must use the best information available in a timely matter. In other words, NOSB cannot put its work on hold until NOP finalizes the guidance on classification of materials. NOSB must respond to petitions, sunset requirements and requests from NOP in a timely manner, and the use of NOP's draft guidance is appropriate. OTA acknowledges the good work the subcommittee has completed in drafting these two proposals, and we're not suggesting the proposals be tabled. We largely agree with NOP's draft classification of materials and, in the case of alginic acid and carnauba wax, we believe the classification decisions are fairly straight-forward. However, going forward we believe it would be prudent to hold off on NOSB initiated reclassification activity until final guidance is issued.

On behalf of our members across the supply chain and the country, OTA thanks the National Organic Standards Board for the opportunity to comment, and for your commitment to furthering organic agriculture.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gwendolyn V. Wyard".

Gwendolyn Wyard
Senior Director of Regulatory and Technical Affairs
Organic Trade Association

cc: Laura Batcha
Executive Director/CEO
Organic Trade Association