



Organic Trade Association's Spring 2026 National Organic Standards Board Meeting Report HIGHLIGHTS, OUTCOMES, AND NEXT STEPS

On May 12-14, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) held its biannual public meeting in Omaha, NE. The primary purpose of NOSB meetings is to provide an opportunity for organic stakeholders to give input on proposed NOSB recommendations and discussion items. The meetings also allow NOSB to receive updates from USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) on issues pertaining to organic agriculture. The full agenda for the meeting, all proposals and discussion documents presented at the meeting, as well as full text of OTA's submitted written comments are available on the [OTA's NOSB Meeting Webpage](#).

INTRODUCTIONS, UPDATES, AND PRESENTATIONS

- **Welcoming remarks, NOSB Chair Report:** National Organic Program (NOP) Deputy Administrator Dr. Jennifer Tucker opened the meeting before passing to NOSB Chair Allison Johnson and the introductions of the ten NOSB members who are presently seated.
- **USDA/AMS/NOP Update:** Deputy Administrator Tucker and NOP Standards Division Director Erin Healy provided program updates and then opened the floor for questions from NOSB members. Dr. Tucker offered brief updates on USDA rulemaking (the program is drafting a rule to replace the expired reference to EPA-listed inert, and reviewing the Board's work in response to a petition regarding the compost listing) before offering more detailed updates on the topics below. Slides from the presentations and meeting transcripts will be posted to the [NOSB meeting page](#) in the coming weeks.
 - **Common Organic System Plan (OSP)**
 - Dr. Tucker highlighted the recent completion of a common organic system plan template, or Common OSP, which will serve as a common baseline and expectation for showing and assessing compliance across certifiers.
 - The common form is intended to support information sharing across certifiers and the NOP, reduce learning curves across inspectors and technical service providers, and better facilitate the transfer of operations to a new certifier.
 - Organic farming associations across the U.S. were invited to provide feedback and market signals are pointing to adoption, with 11 certifiers now using the Common OSP.
 - The templates will soon be posted to the NOP website, and the program will strongly encourage its use.
 - Beginning this summer, NOP will work with the Accredited Certifiers Association on a governance strategy and process to uniformly update the form.
 - Next up: a common inspection form



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- **Risk-Based, Sound and Sensible Certification and Accreditation**

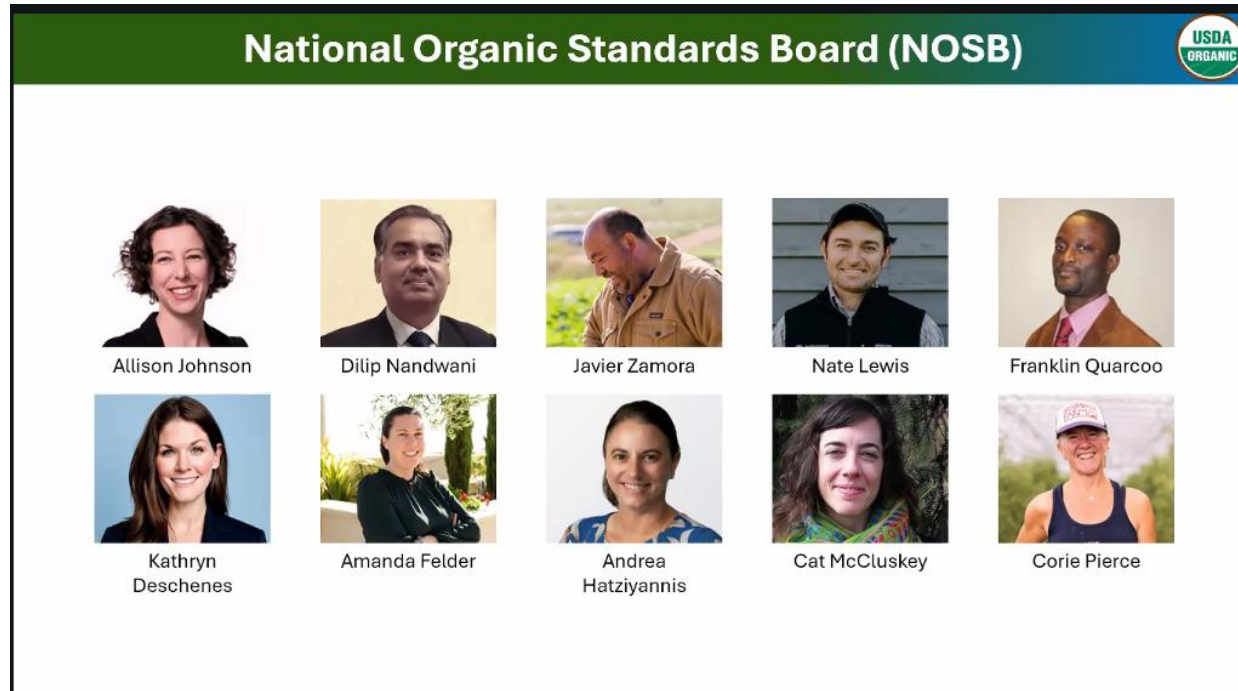
- Dr. Tucker provided some insight into NOP's emerging risk-based approach, and has begun incorporating this concept into its own accreditation audits.
- NOP is conducting witness audits to determine certifier abilities, looking for fluidity and an open, evaluative approach vs. simply ticking checkboxes.
- In reviewing certifier accreditation updates and annual reports, NOP is looking at the streamlining measures certifiers are incorporating into their own risk-based approaches.
- Dr. Tucker acknowledged that certifiers need criteria to apply a risk-based approach, and the program would rather see a 4-hour inspection that finds fraud vs. an 8-hour one that does not, highlighting that streamlined processes can benefit organic integrity.
- Dr. Tucker also noted it is time to reconsider how we train inspectors, and empower them to make sound decisions on the ground, with a shift in focus from simply being the "eyes and ears" of the certifier to capitalizing on their expertise in the field.
- Finally, it is important to consider the feedback from farmers and other organic operations as this streamlining, risk-based work progresses to help improve the systems that serve the organic industry.

- **How Stakeholders Shape Organic Policy**

- Standards Division Director Erin Healy provided an overview of the comment and rule process, the accessibility of the process and decision makers to the public, and how to make an effective public comment to the Board and NOP.
- The overview included the process to petition a substance for inclusion on the National List.

NOSB MEMBERS

This 15-person citizen advisory board brings together volunteers from around the United States. It is made up of 4 farmers/growers, 2 handlers/processors, 1 retailer, 1 scientist, 3 consumer/public interest advocates, 3 environmentalists, and 1 USDA accredited certifying agent. At this time only [10 members are currently serving](#), with 5 seats awaiting appointments from the USDA Secretary.



MEETING OUTCOMES

PROPOSALS: 8 proposals were considered by the NOSB, of which 7 passed and one was referred back to subcommittee for further consideration. Successful NOSB proposals are referred to USDA for approval and implementation and do not become effective until accepted by the USDA and implemented through rulemaking.

- **Chlorine Materials – Annotation Change (LIVESTOCK) Passed (10 yes, 0 no, 0 absent)** – In response to a petition seeking clarity on the chlorine materials listing, the Board passed an annotation amendment to explicitly allow the treatment of livestock drinking water with chlorine. The Board and NOP staff addressed stakeholder concern that because the annotation also limits chlorine levels to those allowed under the Safe Drinking Water Act, this may lead to additional testing requirements for organic producers. NOP staff clarified they do not anticipate this would be an outcome and would consider this during rulemaking.
- **Residue Testing for a Global Supply Chain: Regulation Review (\$205.670 and UREC definition) (CACS) Motion to return to Subcommittee (10**



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yes, 0 no, 1 absent) – Proposal aims to conclude the Board’s significant work on residues and testing, and suggests the following four areas of revision to the regulation at § 205.670, as well as an update to NOP Instruction 2613 *Responding to Results from Pesticide Residue Testing*.

1. Mandated testing of a minimum of 5% of operations annually by certifiers

Recommends certifiers use a risk-based approach to sampling and testing vs. the current allowance to select operations at random.

2. Certifiers conducting all testing at their own expense

Recommends allowing certifiers to charge operations tested when the test is part of a credible complaint or investigation, and when contamination is determined to be caused by an intentional application of a prohibited substance or when it fails to adhere to its Organic System Plan.

3. Public access to residue testing results

Recommends linking the two sections of the regulation that address making results available to the public to provide clarity regarding this access. Encourages the use of a central database as a means of compiling and providing access to these results.

4. Downstream notification of noncompliant organic product to buyers

Recommends revision to the regulation that would require downstream notification of positive residue findings to remove noncompliant products from the market, but only when residues exceed action thresholds, e.g., >5% of EPA tolerances, or a willful violation has occurred. Subcommittee recommends the NOP use the Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) process to draw further stakeholder feedback and determine feasibility of this recommendation.

5. Unavoidable residual environmental contamination (UREC)

Encourages NOP implement NOSB’s Spring 2025 recommendation to update NOP Instruction 2613 *Responding to Results from Pesticide Residue Testing* to provide certifiers clearer direction when residues are detected for which there is no EPA tolerance or FDA action level, and when contamination is the result of indirect, unintentional applications of unknown origin.

While there was generally wide support from stakeholders and Board members for the proposal, concerns were voiced that the downstream notification portion of the proposal could use greater clarity to ensure fair and consistent implementation. Additionally, any update to responding to positive residue findings as a result of UREC must account for findings resulting from allowed processing steps. In response to these concerns, the Board referred the proposal back to the subcommittee for refinement and will bring it back to the Fall meeting for consideration.

- **e-Commerce Organic Labeling Requirements (CACCS) Passed (10 yes, 0 no, 0 absent)** – Proposal is a recommendation in response to a petition to the NOP to amend the USDA organic regulations to require online retailers/resellers to provide a visible image of a packaged organic product’s information panel or a statement identifying the organic certifier of the product on the seller’s webpage. The recommendation acknowledges and supports the broad public comment received noting that before making any regulatory change to what is required in the digital marketplace, NOP wait for or align with FDA to finalize any action to avoid conflicting regulations.

The proposal recommends NOP should issue guidance on e-commerce labeling practices to provide clear and consistent expectations for how organic claims are made on digital platforms. Any guidance should:

- Outline recommended best practices for displaying the USDA Organic seal and core labeling elements on product listings, including



ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION

displaying images of full product labels with the “Certified organic by * * *” statement where possible

- Encourage accurate and timely updates by retailers and platforms
- Reinforce expectations for truthful organic claims across digital channels
- **Pear Ester – Petitioned Substance (CROPS) Passed (10 yes, 0 no, 0 absent)** – Proposal is a response to a petition to add pear ester as an insect management substance. Pear ester has been in use in organic production as an allowed pest management tool in orchard crops (apple, pear, walnut) to control codling moth and was previously grouped with pheromones, a group of allowed synthetic substances already listed at § 205.601. However, grouping pear ester with pheromones was found to be incorrect, and the proper classification of this substance is as a kairomone, a substance with similar function. The Board referred a previous proposal back to subcommittee in response to concerns expressed regarding microencapsulation formulations, which disperse the substance broadly in tiny plastic capsules. The recommendation was passed with an annotation restricting the use of microencapsulation formulas, a restriction supported by producers that will not affect the predominant formulations and applications in organic production.
- **Research Priorities 2026 (MATERIALS) Passed (10 yes, 0 no, 0 absent)** – Proposal details the Board’s annual list of research priorities, which includes an effort to categorize and differentiate highest priority topics from the ongoing list. In response to stakeholder comments received at a previous meeting emphasizing the need for research across multiple topics, a new category, “interdisciplinary,” was included which incorporates topics previously grouped under “general.”
- **Policy & Procedures Manual (PPM) Updates (POLICY DEVELOPMENT) Passed (10 yes, 0 no, 0 absent)** – Proposal recommends updates to the PPM to address actions the Board can take when Board members do not participate in Board activities. Also included are three updates to improve trust and transparency when evaluating substances for inclusion on the National List, both for sunset review and initial review of petitioned substances.
- **Chitosan – Petitioned Substance (HANDLING) Failed (10 no, 0 yes, 0 absent)** – Proposal in response to a petition to classify chitosan, as derived from fungi, as a nonsynthetic and add to the National List at § 205.605(b) as a nonagricultural (nonorganic) allowed substance. The petition focused on use as a processing aid in winemaking as a clarifier, filter, to remove volatile aromas, and provide microbial stability. After its review, and as illustrated in the Technical Report, the Handling Subcommittee found the chemical deacetylation methods used in the production and processing of chitosan deem it be classified as synthetic according to the Decision Tree for Classification of Materials as Synthetic or Nonsynthetic (NOP 5033-1).
Further, the Board found sulfur dioxide, a substance currently listed as allowed, sufficiently meets the needs for which chitosan is petitioned, and an alternative is not essential to organic production.
- **Sodium bicarbonate Classification (HANDLING) Passed (10 yes, 0 no, 0 absent)** – Proposal comes in response to the Handling Subcommittee’s



ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION

finding that the current nonsynthetic classification does not accurately reflect the commercially available forms of sodium bicarbonate in use today. The recommendation adds a listing for synthetic sodium bicarbonate to § 205.605(b), but limits this listing solely to sodium bicarbonate produced via the trona process.

VERBAL UPDATES | EXPERT PANEL: NOSB presented **4** verbal updates at this meeting, which offered insight into the Board’s thinking on several issues. Some of these served to conclude the Board’s deliberations on a topic, while others pointed toward where the Board was moving toward the development of a discussion document to be presented at a future meeting. Should the Board move toward a discussion document, the usual process is to bring the discussion document to the full Board, incorporate public comments and board discussion, and then bring them to a subsequent meeting as a proposal for a full board vote. The Board convened **1** expert panel on organic seed use.

- **Verbal Update: Sunset Review Efficiency (POLICY DEVELOPMENT)** – The Board offered an update on its consideration of options last year to increase the efficiency of the NOSB’s statutory requirement to review National List substances scheduled to sunset, a process that occupies significant time at each Fall meeting. The Board considered a consent agenda for each subcommittee to group substances which had received unanimous votes to relist and for which there was no new information available regarding the required review criteria. The process was trialed last year but did not yield any significant savings in time, while creating some concern from stakeholders that a degree of transparency would be lost in the process. The Board has opted not to move forward with the concept, but did implement some efficiencies in the process, such as grouping the listed chlorine materials together for presentation and review, while also keeping oral presentations of sunset materials brief during in-person meetings. It is important to note that each substance and listing will still undergo an individual vote in the Fall when the Board completes the sunset review process.
- **Verbal Update: Integrating Livestock and Agroforestry Crops (LIVESTOCK)** – The Board provided an update on its efforts to understand how the current regulations present challenges with the practice of integrating grazing of livestock in perennial cropping systems such as nuts and fruits. Key to the discussion is how these systems meet the 90/120 day raw manure application interval required in the USDA organic regulations, and the distinction—or lack thereof—between a mechanical manure “application” and a manure “deposit” from a livestock animal. Farmers can be in compliance with FSMA/food safety regulations while not meeting the requirements of the organic regulations. The Livestock Subcommittee outlined comments from stakeholders which point to a possible solution of defining an application vs. a deposit in the regulation, in conjunction with an addition to the soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard specifically addressing “deposits” of grazing animals in perennial systems. The Livestock Committee intends to bring a discussion document to the Fall meeting for consideration.
- **Expert Panel: Organic Seed Use (MATERIALS, CACS)** – As the Board considers the compatibility of induced mutagenesis with organic production, as well as how to increase the use organic seed in organic production, an expert panel of three researchers was convened. Dr. James Myers, Oregon State University, addressed the ways in which mutations are introduced in plant breeding; Dr. Thomas Lübberstedt, Iowa State University, took a deep dive into doubled haploid technology; and Dr. Julia Dawson, University of Madison – Wisconsin, offered background on intellectual property rights and organic plant breeding. At the Fall meeting, the Materials Subcommittee will bring a proposal on induced mutagenesis, and



ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION

CACS will return with a discussion document on consistency in organic seed use.

- **Verbal Update: Consistency in Organic Seed Use (CACS)** – The Subcommittee indicated it would like to bring a discussion document to the Fall meeting with a more concrete plan to move this issue forward. Discussion included interest in ways to implement continuous improvement in the adoption of organic seed, especially centering the handler in a lead role in the search for and use of organic seed as it is often the handler dictating via contract with the grower the particular seeds that must be used. Some members continue to point to the need for a regulatory change, while others noted the market rewards for using organic seed are absent. Also highlighted was the potential for a centralized resource for growers to find seed information and sourcing to meet their needs. A discussion document on consistency in organic seed use is expected in the Fall.
- **Verbal Update: Induced Mutagenesis (MATERIALS)** – As noted above regarding the expert panel, the Board continues to explore the technology, both natural and chemical, used in induced mutagenesis breeding as it deliberates on whether this technology aligns with a system or organic production. A proposal is expected in the Fall.

SUNSET REVIEWS: NOSB discussed the following substances on the National List that are currently under sunset review and scheduled to sunset in 2028.

IMPORTANT: Votes to determine whether these substances remain on the National List will take place at the Fall 2026 meeting. This means there is still time to provide feedback to the Board and inform their decision. OTA has compiled Sunset Summaries for [Livestock](#), [Crop](#), and [Handling](#) substances, which for each substance include:

- The substance's use in organic production
- OTA position on whether the substance continues to meet the criteria for continued listing
- Public comments from last sunset review and any updates to these from the Spring meeting (note these updates are underway)
- NOSB vote at last sunset review (**unanimous vote to renew**, **majority vote to renew**, or **significant vote to remove/vote to remove**)
- Subcommittee questions to the community

Please consider these summaries, the OTA position, the importance of the substance to your business, and reach out to us with feedback. To expedite the feedback process, reference the [OTA At-A-Glance summary](#), which includes a listing of all sunset substances up for review, and links that open an email directly to the OTA regulatory team prepopulated with questions posed by the Board. We'll use this feedback to inform our position and advocate on your behalf.

The following substances received particular attention from the Board and would especially benefit from additional stakeholder feedback.



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| MATERIAL (SUBCOMMITTEE) | QUESTIONS | DISCUSSION/REQUESTS |
|--|---|--|
| Nutritive Supplements (LIVESTOCK) | Do the current restrictions on injectable nutritive supplements pose any challenges to producers in accessing the therapies they need to treat their livestock? | <p>The Board noted a Technical Report has been ordered for injectable formulations to determine if an update to the listing is needed.</p> <p>Also highlighted was a stakeholder comment that the Board should consider amending the annotation that restricts administration by a licensed vet with the rationale that vets are in short supply and operations have the knowledge and ability to administer themselves.</p> |
| Copper sulfate (CROPS) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do certifiers verify compliance with this annotation? 2. Are there practical alternatives for algae and tadpole shrimp management in paddy rice? 3. Are there practical methods to remediate high soil copper levels? 4. What are common organic rice rotations? Is rice ever grown in successive years? 5. If so, is copper sulfate allowed to be applied to rice in successive years, alternating control of algae and tadpole shrimp? | <p>The Board discussed public comment pointing to the value of the annotation as it pertains to testing. Comments pointed to copper sulfate levels moving up and down over time and are not necessarily indicative of soil build up. Additionally, commenters felt the limitation of one application per 24-month period is arbitrary and not necessarily based on test findings or how copper sulfate is used.</p> <p>Via a separate annotation amendment proposal, the Board is considering the value of striking all but the limitation on use to treatment of tadpole shrimp and as an algicide in rice production.</p> |
| Agar-agar (HANDLING) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What form(s) (nonsynthetic or synthetic) of agar-agar are currently in use in organic products? 2. Is agar-agar commonly used in organic products? | <p>Discussion focused on the classification of agar-agar and noted that while it is currently listed as nonsynthetic, the recent Technical Report clarifies that it is made with an alkali process that deems it synthetic. While the nonsynthetic form is also in use, availability is limited and not sufficient to meet demand.</p> <p>The Board is considering a parallel proposal that would add the synthetic form of agar-agar to the National List.</p> |
| Animal enzymes (HANDLING) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the feasibility of producing animal enzymes from organic livestock? What would be barriers? 2. Are there any concerns regarding source materials from non-organic sources? 3. What challenges do certifiers encounter when verifying the origin and compliance of animal derived enzymes? 4. What is the environmental impact of animal derived enzymes vs. microbial/fermentation-based alternatives? 5. Are all of the animal enzymes listed necessary and being used in organic production? | <p>The Board discussed whether enzymes could be produced from organic animals, however research and public comments suggest limited availability does not justify removing these from the National List. Additionally, it was noted several of the listed enzymes—catalase, pancreatin, trypsin—may not be in use.</p> <p>The Board would benefit from public comment to help determine if all listed enzymes—rennet, catalase, animal lipase, pancreatin, pepsin, trypsin—are in use.</p> |




| MATERIAL (SUBCOMMITTEE) | QUESTIONS | DISCUSSION/REQUESTS |
|---|---|---|
| Carrageenan (HANDLING) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Which organic products and uses currently rely on carrageenan? 2. What type of carrageenan (semi-refined / refined) and forms (kappa-, iota-, or lambda-) are being used in organic products? 3. Are carrageenan alternatives available to replace all uses? 4. Are there feasible methods to produce carrageenan as a non-synthetic (according to NOP 5033-1)? 5. Are there any concerns about ancillary ingredients used with carrageenan? 6. What restrictions or annotations might be appropriate for carrageenan? What new science on the safety or human health effects has emerged? | <p>Discussion referenced the past deliberations and public comment, noting this primarily focused on the potential human health effects of consuming carrageenan. The recent Technical Report notes some health effects, including digestive fate, toxicology, impurities, inflammation, and ulceration. Discussion also weighed losing a very specific-use substance like carrageenan and the products formulated with it against replacement by conventional counterparts that may include or be produced with additional synthetic inputs.</p> <p>The Board will continue to deliberate and consider any further comments received prior to the Fall meeting.</p> |
| Glucono delta-lactone (HANDLING) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How widespread is the use of GDL in organic applications? 2. Is there evidence that GDL being used in organic applications may derive from genetic modification of any kind? 3. Have alternatives to GDL emerged in recent years that deliver the same product quality and functionality? 4. Is the lack of international acceptance significant? 5. How is organic silken tofu produced in the EU, Japan, etc. without the use of GDL? | <p>Discussion referenced public comments noting there are numerous methods of gluconic acid synthesis other than bromine water, which may warrant amending the annotation to further limit allowed production methods. Alternatively, or in addition to this point, the Board is considering whether all forms should be listed as synthetic.</p> <p>The Board would benefit from further public comments specific to whether there is production of silken tofu without Glucono delta-lactone, as well as whether there are other applications of use in organic production.</p> |
| Silicon dioxide (HANDLING) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your understanding of the current listing of silicon dioxide in regards to engineered nanomaterials? Does the current listing allow silicon dioxide as an engineered nanomaterial since the substance is synthetic and their prohibition is not specified in the annotation? Or are they prohibited? Explain your rationale. 2. Should the Subcommittee consider annotating to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Only allowed synthetic amorphous silica (SAS)? b. Only require the use of organic rice hulls when commercially available for products labeled “organic” and not for products labeled as “made with organic?” 3. The 2025 TR lists several alternatives (both nonagricultural, nonsynthetic and organic agricultural). Do you have experience in using any of these alternatives to silicon dioxide? If so, please explain the alternative used and specific function. | <p>Discussion centered on the annotation that allows silicon dioxide for uses other than as a defoamer when organic rice hulls are not commercially available. However, because rice hulls are not a 1:1 replacement in all applications, there is concern that the annotation is not working as intended. The Board also discussed concerns that some available forms might consist of nanomaterials and noted health concerns associated with these substances. Additionally, the Board noted that certifiers may currently only be applying the commercial availability requirement to “organic” products, and not “made with organic...” products.</p> <p>The Board seeks stakeholder input on the above concerns to determine whether the annotation merits revision to better reflect how the substance is used in organic production.</p> |



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OTHER TOPICS AND CLOSING REMARKS

The Board closed the meeting with a review of the tentative agenda for the Fall, below, with the caveat there may be the addition of proposed annotation changes for substances discussed at this Spring meeting. The full NOSB Work Agenda can be found on the [NOSB's website](#).

| Current NOSB Work Agenda  | | | |
|--|---|---------------|-----------------|
| Subcommittee | Item | NL Section | Doc Type |
| Crops | Petition: Chitosan (classify as natural) | n/a | Proposal |
| | Petition: Chitosan (classify as synthetic & add to NL) | \$205.601 | Proposal |
| | 2028 Crops Sunset Substances* <i>next slide</i> | \$205.601-602 | Proposal |
| Livestock | Integrating livestock and agroforestry crops | n/a | Discussion |
| | 2028 Livestock Sunset Substances* <i>next slide</i> | \$205.603-604 | Proposal |
| Handling | Petition: Sea Silt (cosmetics) | \$205.605 | Discussion |
| | Petition: Potassium Polyaspartate (wine) | \$205.605 | Discussion |
| | 2028 Handling Sunset Substances* <i>next slide</i> | \$205.605-606 | Proposal |
| Materials | Excluded Methods (Induced Mutagenesis) | n/a | Proposal |
| | 2027 Research Priorities | n/a | Discussion |
| Certification, Accreditation, and Compliance | Residue Testing for a Global Supply Chain: Regulation Review (\$205.670 and UREC) | n/a | Proposal |
| | Consistency in organic seed use | n/a | Discussion |
| Policy Development | None | n/a | n/a |

*next slide & online in NOSB Work Agenda (pdf): <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/nosb>
 USDA Agricultural Marketing Service | National Organic Program 203

FALL 2026 MEETING

The Fall 2026 NOSB Meeting has not been scheduled, however Deputy Director Dr. Tucker noted the meeting will be held virtually. OTA will update our [NOSB resource page](#) once meeting details are available.

About the Organic Trade Association's NOSB Report: As a service to its members, OTA attends NOSB meetings. The NOSB Report, a member publication, summarizes the meeting and provides an overview of the agenda topics, public commentary, and key decisions made by NOSB. The items included in this report represent recommendations that NOSB developed and reviewed at its meetings. If accepted by the Board, recommendations pass to the National Organic Program, which determines the final form of the NOSB recommendations. Our members are alerted to steps in rulemaking through our News Flash or other member communications. Archives of our NOSB Report are available on our website. Please contact [Scott Rice](#), OTA's Senior Director, Regulatory Affairs, for more information.