

Consumer trust in organic relies on strong and regularly updated standards that are verified and enforced by the USDA National Organic Program (NOP). It's been 20 years since the organic regulations went into effect and despite growing consumer demand and industry consensus on nearly two dozen updates the standards have remained static, with only one update (the 2010 pasture rule for livestock) having been implemented in the last two decades.

A broken federal regulatory apparatus is stifling innovation and preventing the organic industry from delivering on its promise to the consumer to reflect the latest understandings on soil, climate, health, animal welfare, and more.

The Continuous Improvement and Accountability in Organic Standards Act (CIAO) will restore trust in the public-private partnership between USDA and stakeholders and ensure government moves at the speed of industry innovation and evolving consumer expectations by

- **Requiring USDA to issue an Organic Improvement Action Plan** to clear the significant backlog of National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) recommendations that have not yet been implemented. The plan must include detailed timelines, prioritization, and implementation plans for dealing with each recommendation.
- **Building a new framework for advancing federal organic standards** by ensuring that government keeps pace with the strong standards that businesses and consumers expect. Under this framework, USDA will be required to issue a final rule implementing a recommendation within one year of NOSB passage (when the recommendation is supported by 2/3 of the board).
- **Improving oversight and ensuring consistent enforcement** by including the specific evaluation of how USDA accredited third-party certifiers are interpreting and implementing new regulations and updates to the standards and reporting annually to Congress.



89%

of consumers say that the USDA should review and update the organic standards periodically.



87%

of consumers expect organic standards to be updated to reflect evolving understandings about soil, climate, toxicology, animal welfare, etc.



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THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN
ORGANIC STANDARDS ACT**

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EXPANDING CIAO IN THE NEXT FARM BILL TO SECURE ORGANIC'S FUTURE

STRUCTURE OF THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

Organic is a voluntary regulatory program that depends upon a clear market distinction backed by a trusted, verified and enforced claim. The next farm bill must include support and adequate funding for the USDA National Organic Program (NOP). The NOP currently operates on an annual budget of \$20 million and serves several functions including the accreditation and oversight of third-party certifiers, carrying out compliance, oversight and enforcement of the U.S. organic regulations in the U.S. and abroad, and setting uniform standards for organic certification.

- ✓ **Authorize funding for the NOP to keep pace with organic industry growth and direct specific resources towards standards development**
- ✓ **Update the structure of the NOP to allow for prioritizing standards and market development along with maintaining strong compliance and enforcement**

ENFORCEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

Although progress has been made in recent farm bills to provide NOP with more resources, authority and tools to increase enforcement and prevent fraud in the marketplace, there are still loopholes that remain. USDA's scope of authority must be expanded to combat the improper use of the term organic in industries such as personal care, textiles, dietary supplements and businesses such as grocery stores, dry cleaners and restaurants. The fraudulent use of the term organic misleads consumers and hurts the USDA organic label and brand. The NOP's accreditation function should also be updated to align with best practices in third-party certification systems and auditing.

- ✓ **Require NOP to accredit third-party material review organizations that review agricultural inputs for compliance with the organic standards**
- ✓ **Grant NOP the authority to take enforcement actions against false organic claims on non-food products**
- ✓ **Improve and strengthen the external oversight of the NOP and increase consistency in certification**

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Continuous improvement is the bedrock of organic but it is not expressly required by the law or regulations. USDA must collaborate with accredited certifiers to advance the outcomes on farms, ranches, and facilities certified to the organic standards. Research also shows that consumers are confused about what the organic label means and look for additional marketing claims such as non-GMO, natural, regenerative and certified humane. This has led to organic businesses and farms having to apply for additional certifications and labels for attributes that are already covered in their organic certification.

- ✓ **Modernize the USDA organic seal to clearly communicate to consumers the benefits of organic**
- ✓ **Set a statutory requirement for USDA to review and update organic practice standards beyond just the National List to ensure continuous improvement**

