



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN ORGANIC STANDARDS ACT

Organic is a voluntary regulatory program for farmers and businesses who choose to meet a strict federal standard and market their products under the USDA organic seal. In fact, the very purpose of the Organic Foods Production Act is to “establish national standards” and “assure consumers that organically produced products meet a consistent standard,” overseen by the USDA National Organic Program. (1)

However, the federal regulatory apparatus has stifled innovation and continuous improvement within the industry. In the past 10 years, industry has advanced 20 consensus recommendations for improvements to the organic standards, yet USDA has not completed rulemaking on a single one of them. Congress should work with industry to repair the public-private partnership and advance organic standards.

Timespan for USDA-NOP Rulemaking*

Organic Standards

18 years and counting



ORIGIN OF LIVESTOCK

12 years and counting



AQUACULTURE

12 years and counting



PET FOOD

11 years and counting



ANIMAL WELFARE

11 years and counting



PERSONAL CARE

10 years and counting



GREENHOUSE PRODUCTION

5 years and counting



INERT PEST CONTROL INGREDIENTS

*USDA must work with the organic sector to prioritize rulemakings for final action to clear the backlog of **20** National Organic Standards Board recommendations that have yet to be acted upon.



Continuous Improvement and Accountability in Organic Standards Act

CLEAR THE BACKLOG

- Requires USDA to issue an Organic Improvement Action Plan comprised of the backlog of NOSB recommendations that have not been implemented. The plan must include detailed timelines, prioritization, and implementation plans for dealing with each recommendation.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Establishes a new framework for advancing federal organic standards to keep up with the marketplace and ensures the credibility of the USDA Organic seal.

- When the National Organic Standards Board passes a recommendation that is supported by the majority of the board (2/3 affirmative vote), requires USDA to issue a final rule implementing the recommendation within one year.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Improves oversight and ensures consistent enforcement of USDA accredited third-party certification agents by including the specific evaluation of how certifiers are interpreting and implementing new regulations and updates to the standards.

- Requires USDA to report annually to Congress on whether certifiers have implemented new rules and guidance and identify if there are any inconsistencies found.

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THE CONTINUOUS
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BACKGROUND

Industry, environmental, scientific and public stakeholders collaborate and reach consensus on developments to organic standards through deliberation at the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The NOSB is a federal advisory committee that meets twice a year and provides USDA with recommendations to advance the standards.

(1) The Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA), enacted under Title 21 of the 1990 Farm Bill