

## FALL 2016 National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) OTA's SUMMARY REPORT

On November 16-18, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) held its biannual public meeting in St. Louis, MO. Over the course of three days, NOSB, under the leadership of NOSB Chair Tracy Favre, voted or took action on 19 proposals and 15 Sunset 2018 inputs and evaluated 8 discussion documents or reports. NOSB received 2,789 written comments prior to the meeting and listened to oral testimony from approximately 200 commenters (over 13 hours of oral comments) on a wide range of issues.

The hot topic from this meeting included whether hydroponically grown crops align with organic production principles. NOSB decided to continue work on a proposal regarding these systems, but affirmed that they stand by the 2010 NOSB recommendation, which recommended prohibiting operations using entirely water-based substrates. NOSB also considered whether non-organic carrageenan should continue to be allowed in certified organic processed products and whether new GMO technologies such as gene editing and synthetic biology should be allowed in organic. Below are the results of the meeting including an at-a-glance summary of the major outcomes and charts detailing the vote of each decision.

**More Resources?** Live coverage of the meeting is provided on OTA's Twitter Account: <https://twitter.com/organictrade>. For additional background, read [OTA's Summary of all Proposals and Discussion Documents](#) or [download OTA's comprehensive Resource Booklet](#).

### At-A-Glance Meeting Highlights:

- **PETITIONS:** Consistent with the no-growth trend to the National List since 2008, NOSB denied 9 petitions to add new inputs to the National List due to lack of necessity or potential harm to the agro-ecosystem.
- **SUNSET 2018:** NOSB voted to relist all Sunset inputs with the exception of CARRAGEENAN. NOSB voted 11 yes, 3 no (1 absent) to remove Carrageenan as an allowed ingredient in organic food due to the availability of alternatives.
- **BIOPONICS:** The proposal to allow BIOPONICS (hydroponics, aquaponics, aeroponics) as consistent with organic production was sent back to subcommittee to refine definitions of these systems and consider them individually (10 yes, 3 no, 1 abstain, 1 absent). NOSB also passed a resolution (12 yes, 2 no, 1 absent) indicating their alignment with NOSB's prior 2010 recommendation on hydroponics. The resolution states that it is the majority of the current NOSB members' opinion to prohibit production systems that have entirely water-based substrate.

- **CONTAINER & GREENHOUSE PRODUCTION:** NOSB will continue to develop a proposal on standards for container and greenhouse production.
- **IVERMECTIN:** NOSB voted unanimously to remove Ivermectin from the National List due to the availability of alternatives and negative impact on dung beetles. Ivermectin is allowed only as an emergency use parasiticide in organic livestock production.
- **EXCLUDED METHODS:** NOSB voted unanimously to pass a recommendation on guidance that helps to clarify the technologies that are prohibited under the existing regulatory definition of excluded methods (GMOs). The recommendation includes definitions, principles and and a terminology chart that may be revised as needed over time.
- **PROPOSALS** on 2016 Research Priorities, Sunset Reorganization, and updates to the Policy and Procedures Manual (PPM) all passed unanimously. Proposals on Chlorine Dioxide Gas (petition) and Tocopherols were sent back to subcommittee for more work.
- **DISCUSSION DOCUMENTS:** Strengthening Organic Seed Usage, Excluded Methods Terminology and Marine Algae Listings were added to NOSB’s spring 2017 work plan for proposal development
- **NOSB OFFICER ELECTIONS:** Tom Chapman, Chair; Ashley Swaffar, Vice-Chair; Jesse Buie, Secretary
- **NEW NOSB APPOINTMENTS:** Joelle Mosso (Handler, CA); Sue Baird (Consumer Rep, MO); Asa Bradman (Environmentalist, CA); Steve Ela (Producer, CO); David Mortensen (Scientist, PA)
- **SPRING 2017 NOSB MEETING:** Denver, CO from April 19-21

## PRACTICE STANDARDS AND OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Use Area	Agenda Topic	Motion / Action	NOSB FINAL DECISION (Yes = Remove, No = Relist)
Handling	Tocopherols	Proposal to add a nonsynthetic form of tocopherols to the National List and revise the annotations on both listings (synthetic and Nonsynthetic) to read: Non-synthetic Tocopherols – derived from vegetable oil	<b>TABLED – Sent back to subcommittee for more work</b>
Materials	2016 Research Priorities	Motion to Adopt the 2016 Research Priorities	<b>PASSED UNANIMOUSLY</b> Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 1 absent
Materials	Excluded Methods	Motion to Accept all parts of the proposal (Definitions,	<b>PASSED UNANIMOUSLY</b>

	Terminology	Principles and Terminology Chart) to clarify the technologies that are not allowed the organic regulations.	<b>Vote:</b> 14 yes, 0 no, 1 absent
Crops	Hydroponics (Bioaponics)	Motion to allow Bioaponics (hydroponics, aeroponics, or aquaponics) as consistent with organic production under provisions & recommendations to be developed by NOSB in 2017.	<b>TABLED: Sent back to subcommittee for more work. NOSB also passed RESOLUTION* (see below)</b> <b>Vote:</b> 10 yes, 3 no, 1 abstain, 1 absent
Policy	Policy & Procedures Manual (PPM)	<b>Motion to accept 9/13/16 draft version of the PPM</b>	<b>PASSED UNANIMOUSLY</b> <b>Vote:</b> 14 yes, 0 no, 1 absent
Policy	Sunset Review: Efficient Workload Reorganization	<b>Motion to accept the proposal on sunset review reorganization</b> PASSED (6 yes, 0 no, 1 Absent)	<b>PASSED UNANIMOUSLY</b> <b>Vote:</b> 14 yes, 0 no, 1 absent
Livestock	Removal of Ivermectin	<b>Motion to remove Ivermectin from 205.603</b>	<b>PASSED UNANIMOUSLY - REMOVE</b> <b>Vote:</b> 14 yes, 0 no, 1 absent

**\*NOSB Resolution on Bioaponics:** NOSB respects the efforts of the former NOSB that led to their 2010 recommendation on terrestrial plants in greenhouses. The NOSB recognizes that the foundation of organic agriculture is based upon a systems approach to producing food in the natural environment, which respects the complex dynamic interaction between soil, water, air, sunlight and animals needed to produce a thriving agro-ecosystem. At the heart of the organic philosophy is the belief that our responsibilities of good stewardship go beyond production of healthy food and include protection of natural resources, biodiversity and the ecosystem services upon which we all depend. We encourage future NOSB to consider this wider perspective as the board undertakes the challenges of assessing and defining innovations in agriculture that may be compatible in a system of organic production. In the case of the hydroponic/aquaponic issue, it is the majority of the current members of the NOSB to prohibit hydroponic systems that have an entirely water based substrate. Although that was the original intent of the proposal before us today, the current proposal as structured does not achieve this objective. While the majority of NOSB does not believe that the liquid substrate systems should be sold under the USDA organic label, these growers deserve the chance to promote their very commendable qualities and objectives in their own right.

### PETITIONS TO ADD INPUTS TO THE NATIONAL LIST

Use Area	Petitioned Input	Subcommittee Motion	FINAL NOSB RECOMMENDATION
Handling	Sodium Chlorite for generation of Chlorine Dioxide Gas	<b>Classification:</b> Synthetic <b>Motion:</b> List on 205.605(b), chlorine materials	<b>TABLED</b> - Listing motion referred back to Subcommittee for more work

Handling	Oat Protein Concentrate	<b>Classification:</b> Agricultural <b>Motion:</b> List on 205.606 as a non-organic agricultural ingredient allowed in organic products only when organic forms are not available.	<b>FAILED– Input will remain prohibited</b> <b>Vote:</b> 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Crops	Aluminum Sulfate	<b>Classification:</b> Synthetic <b>Motion:</b> List on 205.601 for use in organic crop production	<b>FAILED – Input will remain prohibited</b> <b>Vote:</b> 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Crops	Soy Wax	<b>Classification:</b> Synthetic <b>Motion:</b> List on 205.601 as an allowed synthetic in organic mushroom production	<b>FAILED – Input will remain prohibited</b> <b>Vote:</b> 4 yes, 9 no, 1 abstain, 1 absent
Crops	1-Methylcyclopropene	<b>Classification:</b> Synthetic <b>Motion:</b> List on 205.601 as a post-harvest treatment for apples to delay fruit aging	<b>FAILED – Input will remain prohibited</b> <b>Vote:</b> 3 yes, 11 no, 1 absent
Crops	Ammonium Citrate	<b>Classification:</b> Synthetic <b>Motion:</b> List on 205.601 for use as a chelating agent	<b>FAILED – Input will remain prohibited</b> <b>Vote:</b> 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Crops	Ammonium Glycinate	<b>Classification:</b> Synthetic <b>Motion:</b> List on 205.601 as a chelating agent	<b>FAILED – Input will remain prohibited</b> <b>Vote:</b> 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Crops	Potassium Cellulose Glycolate	<b>Classification:</b> Synthetic <b>Motion:</b> List on 205.601 as a water filtration aid & in combination w/ liquid fertilizers & nutrients	<b>FAILED– Input will remain prohibited</b> <b>Vote:</b> 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Livestock	Aluminum Sulfate	<b>Classification:</b> Synthetic <b>Motion:</b> List on 205.603 as a litter treatment to reduce ammonia in poultry barns	<b>FAILED – Input will remain prohibited</b> <b>Vote:</b> 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Livestock	Sodium Bisulfate	<b>Classification:</b> Synthetic <b>Motion:</b> List on 205.603 as a litter treatment to reduce ammonia in poultry barns	<b>FAILED – Input will remain prohibited</b> <b>Vote:</b> 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Livestock	Acid Activated Bentonite	<b>Classification:</b> Synthetic <b>Motion:</b> List on 205.603 as a litter treatment to reduce ammonia in poultry barns	<b>FAILED – Input will remain prohibited</b> <b>Vote:</b> 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent

\*(National List References: 205.601=allowed synthetics for crops / 205.603=allowed synthetics for livestock / 205.603(b)=prohibited non-synthetic in livestock / Handling: 205.605(a)=allowed non-synthetics / 205.605(b) = allowed synthetics / 205.606=allowed non-OG agricultural ingredient when OG is not available)

**SUNSET REVIEW 2018** – NOSB must review every substance (input) on the National List every five years to confirm that it continues to meet all required criteria under the Organic Foods Production Act and USDA organic regulations. This review is called “sunset review.” Any substance they vote for removal moves forward for USDA approval and additional rulemaking.

Use Area	National List Input	Motion	NOSB FINAL RECOMMENDATION (Yes = Remove, No = Relist)
Handling	Agar-agar	<b>Motion: Remove from 205.605(a)</b> as an allowed nonsynthetic in organic processing	<b>RELIST</b> Vote: 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Handling	Animal Enzymes	<b>Motion: Remove from 205.605(a)</b> as an allowed nonsynthetic in organic processing	<b>RELIST</b> Vote: 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Handling	Calcium Sulfate	<b>Motion: Remove from 205.605(a)</b> as an allowed nonsynthetic in organic processing	<b>RELIST</b> Vote: 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Handling	Carrageenan	<b>Motion: Remove from 205.605(a)</b> as an allowed nonsynthetic in organic processing	<b>*REMOVE</b> Vote: 11 yes, 3 no, 1 absent
Handling	Glucono delta-lactone	<b>Motion: Remove from 205.605(a)</b> as an allowed nonsynthetic in organic processing	<b>RELIST</b> Vote: 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Handling	Tartaric acid—made from grape wine	<b>Motion: Remove from 205.605(a)</b> as an allowed nonsynthetic in organic processing	<b>RELIST</b> Vote: 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Handling	Cellulose	<b>Motion to Remove from 205.605(b)</b> as an allowed synthetic in organic processing	<b>RELIST</b> Vote: 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Handling	Potassium hydroxide	<b>Motion to Remove from 205.605(b)</b> as an allowed synthetic in organic processing	<b>RELIST</b> Vote: 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Handling	Silicon Dioxide	<b>Motion to Remove from 205.605(b)</b> as an allowed synthetic in organic processing	<b>RELIST</b> Vote: 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Handling	Beta-carotene extract color	<b>Motion to Remove from 205.606</b> as an allowed non-organic agricultural ingredient allowed in organic products only when organic forms are not available.	<b>RELIST</b> Vote: 6 yes, 8 no, 1 absent
Crops	Copper Sulfate	<b>Motion to Remove from 205.601</b> as an allowed synthetic in organic production	<b>RELIST</b> Vote: 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Crops	Ozone Gas	<b>Motion to Remove from 205.601</b> as an allowed synthetic in organic production	<b>RELIST</b> Vote: 1 yes, 12 no, 1 abstain, 1 absent

Crops	Peracetic Acid	<b>Motion to Remove from 205.601</b> as an allowed synthetic in organic production	<b>RELIST</b> <b>Vote:</b> 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Crops	EPA List 3 – Inerts of Unknown Toxicity	<b>Motion to Remove from 205.601</b> as an allowed synthetic in organic production	<b>RELIST</b> <b>Vote:</b> 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent
Crops	Calcium Chloride	<b>Motion to Remove from 205.601</b> as an allowed synthetic in organic production	<b>RELIST</b> <b>Vote:</b> 0 yes, 14 no, 1 absent

\*(National List References: 205.601=allowed synthetics for crops / 205.603=allowed synthetics for livestock / 205.603(b)=prohibited non-synthetic in livestock / Handling: 205.605(a)=allowed non-synthetics / 205.605(b) = allowed synthetics / 205.606=allowed non-OG agricultural ingredient when OG is not available)

### DISCUSSION TOPICS ONLY (NO VOTE)

Use Area	Agenda Topic	DISCUSSION	NEXT STEPS
Handling	Cumulative impact of phosphates in organic processed foods.	NOSB collected information to determine the range and extent of use of phosphates in organic processed foods, the extent to which they are really necessary and if there is any new information on accumulative health impacts.	<b>NOSB added this topic to its 2016 Research Priorities. Comments did not indicate the need for a proposal.</b>
Handling	Marine algae listings on the National List	NOSB collected information to decide whether the naming conventions of the marine plant/algae listings on the National List be consolidated and/or clarified & whether they should be written to clarify specific uses, or harvesting guidelines & whether NOP guidance is needed. Comments were generally supportive of more work in this area.	<b>NOSB will continue its work on this topic; added to the 2017 Spring Work Plan</b>
Handling	Xanthan Gum Clarification	NOSB collected information to decide whether xanthan gum is synthetic or Nonsynthetic. Public comments encouraged NOSB to continue its work since nonsynthetic forms appear to be available.	<b>NOSB will continue its work on this topic; added to the 2017 Spring Work Plan. NOSB explained they need the final guidance on Classification of Materials to assist this effort.</b>
Crops	Strengthen and clarify the requirements for use in organic seed	NOSB collected comments on ways to strengthen the organic seed use provisions in the rule and the related NOP Guidance 5029 for the use of organic seed. Comments were all in favor of NOSB's work on this topic.	<b>NOSB will continue its work on this topic; added to the 2017 Spring Work Plan</b>
Materials	Excluded Methods	The goal of the discussion document is to have concrete	<b>NOSB will continue its work on this topic;</b>

	Terminology	determinations on GMO technologies as “excluded methods” for NOP, Accredited Certifying Agencies, and organic producers to use in keeping GMOs out of organic food and farms. It is similar to the proposal that was passed only it consists of technologies that need more discussion. Public commenters support NOSB’s work in this area.	<b>added to the 2017 Spring Work Plan</b>
Certification & Accreditation	Evaluation of Inspectors	Certifiers and inspectors must meet the requirements of an NOP instruction document on annual inspector evaluations. NOSB requested comments from the public to help provide NOP with feedback on whether the NOP instruction document is reasonable.	<b>NOSB will forward feedback on to NOP. No further action by NOSB was noted.</b>

### NOSB Officer Elections and Outgoing Board Members

Officer elections were held at the end of the four-day meeting. Tom Chapman (Handler Seat) was elected to serve as the new Chair, Ashley Swaffar (Producer Seat) was elected to serve as the new Vice-Chair, and Jesse Buie (Producer Seat) was elected to serve as the new Secretary. OTA thanks Tracy Favre for her excellent leadership as Chair of the last two NOSB meetings, and we extend our thanks to outgoing Board members Zea Sonnabend (Scientist Seat), Harold Austin (Handler Seat), Jean Richardson (Consumer Interest Seat) and Carmela Beck (Producer Seat) for their five years of service and dedication to the organic sector.

**Plan to attend the spring 2017 NOSB meeting!** The next NOSB meeting will take place April 19-21, 2017, in Denver, Colorado. Mark your calendar and stay tuned for more information to come!

**Organic Trade Association’s NOSB Report:** As a service to its members, OTA attends National Organic Standards Board 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. OTA members are alerted to steps in rule-making through OTA's *News Flash* or other member communications.

OTA’s [NOSB Report archives](#) are available on [OTA’s website](#). Please contact [Gwendolyn Wyard](#), OTA’s Vice President of Regulatory and Technical Affairs or [Nathaniel Lewis](#), OTA’s Farm Policy Director, for more information.