



September 28, 2023

Ms. Michelle Arsenault  
National Organic Standards Board  
USDA-AMS-NOP

**Docket: AMS-NOP-23-0026**

**RE: Crops Subcommittee – 2025 Sunset Reviews**

Dear Ms. Arsenault:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) on its 2025 Sunset Review.

The Organic Trade Association (OTA) 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. Our members include growers, shippers, processors, certifiers, farmers' associations, distributors, importers, exporters, consultants, retailers and others. OTA's mission is to promote and protect organic with a unifying voice that serves and engages its diverse members from farm to marketplace.

OTA thanks NOSB for carefully considering each crop production material scheduled for review as part of the 2025 Sunset Review cycle. Materials placed on the National List for use in organic crop production should remain on the National List if: 1) they are consistent with organic farming; 2) they are still necessary to the production of the agricultural product because of the unavailability of wholly natural substitute products in organic production; and 3) no new information has been submitted demonstrating adverse impacts on humans or the environment (OFPA SEC. 2118 [7 U.S.C. 6517] National List). Furthermore, decisions must be transparent, non-arbitrary, and based on the best current information and in the interest of the organic sector and public at large. It's critical that NOSB hears from certified farmers on whether these inputs are consistent with and necessary for organic production, or whether there are other effective natural or organic alternatives available.

#### **About OTA Sunset Surveys**

OTA is submitting results to our Sunset Surveys created for each input under review as part of the 2025 Sunset Review cycle. These electronic surveys include about 10 questions addressing the **necessity (crop and livestock)** or **essentiality (handling)** of each input. See Appendix A for a sample survey. Our surveys do not address information regarding the impacts on human health or the environment.

The surveys are open to any NOP certified organic operation. The names of the companies submitting the information are confidential (not disclosed to OTA). To ensure wide distribution of the surveys beyond OTA membership, OTA worked with Accredited Certifying Agencies (ACAs) to

distribute the survey to all of their clients as well as to targeted clients they know are using the inputs under review. OTA also worked through its Farmers Advisory Council (ota.com/FAC) to help assist in distribution to NOP certified farmers.

**Results of OTA Sunset Surveys**

OTA received 12 responses on our 2025 Crops Sunset Surveys. Below is a summary of the feedback received via OTA’s Sunset Surveys to date.

**§205.601 – Synthetic substances allowed for use in organic crop production.**

Substance	Summary of Responses	Average rating of Necessity (from 1 to 5, with 1 being “unnecessary” and 5 being “critical /would leave organic without it”)
Ethanol	<p><b>2 responses</b> received from a certified organic crop producers</p> <p><b>Necessary for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Food contact surface cleaner and sanitizer. One of the few approved options we have.</li> <li>- Sanitation</li> </ul> <p><b>Frequency of application:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multiple times a day</li> <li>- Seldom</li> </ul> <p><b>Alternatives tried:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chlorine based solutions, but it requires clean and sanitize, when ethanol does both functions at the same time.</li> <li>- Chlorine, peracetic acid</li> </ul> <p><b>Are there other management practices that would eliminate the need for ethanol?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Different sanitizer efficacies could make this material use for sanitation limited.</li> </ul> <p><b>How would your organic production be impacted if ethanol was no longer allowed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cost of labor would be increased and will reduce our options for sanitizers.</li> <li>- Limited impact</li> </ul>	4 out of 5

	<p><b>Should there be an annotation requiring organically produced ethanol if sufficient quantities are available for organic production? (this question is from the NOSB Spring 2023 Packet)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No</li> <li>- Weary of this requirement limiting access to a sanitizer used in significant volumes.</li> </ul>	
<b>Isopropanol</b>	<p><b>1 response</b> from a certified organic crop operation.</p> <p><b>Necessary for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sanitation</li> </ul> <p><b>Frequency of application:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not currently used</li> </ul> <p><b>Alternatives tried:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chlorine and peracetic acid</li> </ul> <p><b>Are there other management practices that would eliminate the need for isopropanol?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No</li> </ul> <p><b>How would your organic production be impacted if isopropanol was no longer allowed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reduction in sanitation materials</li> </ul>	<b>3 out of 5</b>
<b>Sodium carbonate peroxyhydrate</b>	No survey responses submitted.	
<b>Newspaper or other recycled paper, without glossy or colored inks</b>	No survey responses submitted.	
<b>Plastic mulch and covers</b>	<p><b>2 responses</b> from a certified organic produce operation and a certified vegetable, strawberry, and melon producer.</p> <p><b>Necessary for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This is the most effective method of controlling weeds for our farmer members. This helps reduce tillage &amp; cultivation as well. It is also an effective method to improve soil moisture and temperature.</li> <li>- Weed block and temperature control</li> <li>-</li> </ul> <p><b>Frequency of application:</b></p>	<b>5 out of 5 (Critical / would leave organic without it)</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This is an annual practice</li> <li>- Routinely</li> </ul> <p><b>Alternatives tried:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Straw mulch, cardboard, sawdust, but these are not as effective at controlling weeds especially at a larger scale. Biobased films have not been fully explored by our membership.</li> </ul> <p><b>Are there other management practices that would eliminate the need for plastic mulch &amp; covers?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are management practices that can be effective for weed control, but require a significant amount of time, labor, and resources to achieve the same goal as plastic mulch.</li> <li>- No</li> </ul> <p><b>How would your organic production be impacted if plastic mulch &amp; covers were no longer allowed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It would greatly negatively impact our produce farms and their production capacity. It would effect quality, cost of production, and farm viability.</li> <li>- Less crops will be grown no budget for weeding</li> </ul> <p><b>Please describe in detail how this listing for plastic mulches is being applied in conjunction with the § 205.206(c)(6) requirement for removal [from the field at the end of the growing or harvest season], and specifically, how the provision being applied in all areas of organic cropping systems? (this question is from the NOSB Spring 2023 Packet)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Our producers ensure to remove this at the end of the growing season, which is verified by the organic certifier/inspector.</li> <li>- Removed from field after crop season.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Aqueous potassium silicate</b></p>	<p>No survey responses submitted.</p>	
<p><b>Elemental sulfur</b></p>	<p><b>1 response</b> from a producer of certified organic grapefruit and oranges.</p> <p><b>Necessary for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Controls of mites and other insect pests as well control of fungal diseases</li> </ul> <p><b>Frequency of application:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sulfur is common treatment product used in a system’s approach when needed</li> </ul> <p><b>Alternatives tried:</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5 out of 5          (Critical /          would leave          organic without          it)</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We also use diatomaceous earth and lime sulfur, although not as effective as sulfur</li> </ul> <p><b>Are there other management practices that would eliminate the need for elemental sulfur?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No</li> </ul> <p><b>How would your organic production be impacted if elemental sulfur was no longer allowed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sulfur is the best product to control our #1 economical pest, rust mites. Without sulfur we would have a larger percentage of our fruit not make fresh quality requirements resulting in more fruit to go for processing causing economic losses.</li> </ul>	
<b>Lime sulfur</b>	<p><b>1 response</b> from a certified organic operation using lime sulfur to produce citrus.</p> <p><b>Function and necessity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lime sulfur has proven effective on certain citrus pests and provides alternating of products to maintain broad spectrum control.</li> </ul> <p><b>Frequency of use:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When conditions arise where certain pests need control.</li> </ul> <p><b>Alternatives tried:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No, lime sulfur is very effective on most pests</li> </ul> <p><b>Are there any management practices that would eliminate the need for lime sulfur?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No</li> </ul> <p><b>How would your organic production be impacted if lime sulfur was no longer allowed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lime sulfur is another tool in the toolbox, we need various options of products to alternate for a balanced spray program.</li> </ul>	<p>5 out of 5          (Critical /          would leave          organic without          it)</p>
<b>Hydrated lime</b>	No survey responses submitted.	
<b>Liquid fish products</b>	<p><b>4 responses</b> from certified operations using liquid fish products to produce baby leaf, lettuces, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, peas, beans, citrus, onions, and a broad array of organic fruits &amp; vegetables.</p> <p><b>Function and necessity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plant growth</li> </ul>	<p>4.5 out of 5</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Source of nutrition for both soil and foliar applications</li> <li>- Fertility/soil amendment (nitrogen based)</li> <li>- Fertilizer</li> </ul> <p><b>Frequency of use:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Routinely</li> <li>- As needed to maintain plant health and vigor</li> <li>- Multiple times annually, both in seedlings and in field.</li> <li>- Routinely</li> </ul> <p><b>Alternatives tried:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes (3)</li> <li>- No (1)</li> <li>- This material is one of a few different types of fertility products that have different uses based on timing of available nutrition to the crop. Liquid fish converts differently than pellets and compost.</li> <li>- Compost (manure-based &amp; teas) can be used similarly. Liquid fish products provide better nitrogen fertility and are lower in phosphorus.</li> <li>- Pelleted chicken manure.</li> </ul> <p><b>Are there any management practices that would eliminate the need for liquid fish products?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes (2)</li> <li>- Continued use of cover crops and crop residues can reduce the need for off farm inputs.</li> <li>- Cover cropping is a practice that can improve fertility, but not at the level that liquid fish products provides.</li> <li>- No (2)</li> </ul> <p><b>How would your organic production be impacted if liquid fish products were no longer allowed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Liquid fish provides a balance of nutrients and natural growth hormones to feed and maintain the health of plants. Without fish we would see a loss of an essential companion in our nutrient program.</li> <li>- This would greatly negatively impact our producers. Produce quality, production yields, and fertility rates would be jeopardized.</li> <li>- Economic effects and product quality possibly</li> </ul>	
<b>Sulfurous acid</b>	<b>1 response</b> from a certified organic operation using sulfurous acid.	<b>3 out of 5</b>

	<p><b>Function and necessity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- pH adjustment of water to control soil pH</li> </ul> <p><b>Frequency of use:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seldom</li> </ul> <p><b>Alternatives tried:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Soil amendments for pH control</li> </ul> <p><b>Are there any management practices that would eliminate the need for sulfurous acid products?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Different soil pH adjusters, however timing of effectiveness is what gives this material utility.</li> </ul> <p><b>How would your organic production be impacted if sulfurous acid were no longer allowed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited impact to our operations, but impacts to berry growers who are rotational partners with our crop types.</li> </ul>	
<b>Ethylene gas</b>	No survey responses submitted.	
<b>Microcrystalline cheesewax</b>	No survey responses submitted.	

**§205.602 – Non-synthetic substances prohibited for use in organic crop production.**

Substance	Summary of responses
<b>Potassium chloride</b>	No survey responses submitted.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Scott Rice  
Regulatory Director  
Organic Trade Association

cc: Tom Chapman, CEO  
Organic Trade Association



**Appendix A – Sample Survey for Crop and Livestock Inputs**

1. **Is your operation certified organic?** Yes / No
2. **Is [SUBSTANCE] included in your organic system plan?** Yes / No
3. **Which types of organic crops or livestock products do you use [SUBSTANCE] on/for?** (e.g., lettuces, fruit trees, broiler chickens)
4. **What function does [SUBSTANCE] provide and why is it necessary?** (e.g., to control a specific pest or disease, sanitation, etc.)
5. **With what frequency does your operation use [SUBSTANCE]?** (e.g., seldom, as needed when a certain condition arises, routinely, etc.)
6. **Have you tried using any *other substances* as an alternative to [SUBSTANCE]?** (e.g., other substances that are on the National List and/or other natural substances.)  
If yes, please describe which substances you've tried and whether it was effective to fulfill the required function:
7. **Are there any other *management practices* that would eliminate the need for [SUBSTANCE]?** (e.g., hand weeding instead of using an herbicide; or using a particular harvesting practice to avoid a disease instead of using a fungicide).  
If so, please describe the efficacy of the alternative management practices:
8. **How would your organic production be impacted if [SUBSTANCE] was no longer allowed?** (describe the agronomic, environmental or human health effects, product quality, economic effects)
9. [If applicable - Insert specific questions from NOSB Subcommittee about the necessity of the substances and the availability of alternatives]
10. **On a scale from 1 to 5 stars, rate the overall necessity of [SUBSTANCE] for your organic operation**

Unnecessary (don't  
need it at all)

Neutral (nice to have  
but could live without it)

Critical (would leave  
organic without it)

