



October 4, 2018

Ms. Michelle Arsenault
National Organic Standards Board
USDA-AMS-NOP
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 2642-So., Ag Stop 0268
Washington, DC 20250-0268

Docket: AMS-NOP-18-0029

RE: Handling Subcommittee – Sodium chlorite for generation of chlorine dioxide gas (Proposal)

Dear Ms. Arsenault:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment on the Handling Subcommittee’s proposal on sodium chlorite for generation of chlorine dioxide gas, which has been petitioned for addition to §205.605(b) for use as an antimicrobial pesticide, sanitizer, and/or disinfectant for fruits and vegetables.

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 over 9,500 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.

Summary

- ✓ OTA does not take a position on whether this material should or should not be added to the National List.
- ✓ If the NOSB recommends adding the petitioned material to the National List, OTA suggests that the material is listed as “chlorine dioxide gas” with an annotation to identify any limitations on the precursors and activators.

We offer the following more detailed comments:

Background

Chlorine dioxide gas was petitioned for addition to §205.605(b) for use as an antimicrobial pesticide, sanitizer, and/or disinfectant for fruits and vegetables. The substance is applied as a dry pure gas in closed containment and is not intended to have any post-treatment rinse. Chlorine dioxide gas is made on-site by combining zeolite, which has been impregnated with sodium chlorite, with an acid activator, such as citric acid, to release gaseous chlorine dioxide. An unspecified buffer is used. Chlorine dioxide gas is applied as a dry pure gas in closed containment. Treatment is done over several hours until the substance is completely consumed.

At the request of the Handling Subcommittee, the petitioner revised the petition to seek listing of “sodium chlorite for the generation of chlorine dioxide gas” in lieu of “chlorine dioxide gas” so that the petition focuses on the main precursor used in the process of generating the final material.

No position on listing

The addition of the petitioned material to the National List may add another valuable food safety tool in an otherwise extremely limited toolbox of no-rinse antimicrobials, sanitizers and disinfectants allowed in organic processing. However, OTA did not receive any comments from members. Since we do not have a clear message from the organic industry that chlorine dioxide gas is necessary for organic handling, we do not take a position on whether it should be added to the National List.

If listed, identify “chlorine dioxide gas” as material on National List

As mentioned in previous comments from OTA and others in response to this petition, we question whether the Subcommittee’s decision to list “sodium chlorite for the generation of chlorine dioxide gas” is the best approach to take for this material. With such a listing, it is unclear how to review the other precursors and activators that are used in the generation of chlorine dioxide gas, other than sodium chlorite. If the NOSB recommends adding the petitioned material to the National List in in this manner, clarification will be needed from NOSB in the final recommendation regarding the intended allowances or prohibitions on the other precursors and activators used in the generation of chlorine dioxide gas.

OTA also questions the decision to list “sodium chlorite for the generation of chlorine dioxide gas” because it appears inconsistent with other similar materials on the National List. The listing of acidified sodium chlorite on §205.605(b) appears as the final substance used by the operator (“Acidified sodium chlorite”) with restrictions on the precursors and activators in the annotation “...Acidified with citric acid only.” There is also another listing of chlorine dioxide on §205.605(b) (the form reviewed and approved appears to be only the liquid form), and its listing appears as the final substance used by the operator (“Chlorine dioxide”), and there are no restriction on the precursors and activators in an annotation.

If NOSB recommends adding the petitioned material to the National List, OTA suggests that the material is listed as the final material used by the operator, “chlorine dioxide gas,” with any limitations on precursors or activators identified in the annotation, e.g. “generated from sodium chlorite.”

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

Respectfully submitted,



Johanna Miranda
Farm Policy Director
Organic Trade Association

cc: Laura Batcha
Executive Director/CEO
Organic Trade Association