



October 1, 2020

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

Docket: AMS-NOP-20-0041

RE: Crops Subcommittee – 2022 Sunset Reviews

Dear Ms. Arsenault:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) on its 2022 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 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.

OTA thanks NOSB for carefully considering each crop production material scheduled for review as part of the 2022 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 2022 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 has received 7 responses on our 2022 Crops Sunset Surveys (2 are new responses since the spring meeting). 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	# of responses	Summary of responses	Average rating of Necessity (from 1 to 5, with 1 being “unnecessary” and 5 being “critical /would leave organic without it”)
Soap-based algicide/demossers	0		
Ammonium carbonate	0		
Insecticidal soaps	3	<p>The material is necessary because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used by long-time organic growers of bananas, citrus, lettuce, specialty greens, etc. - It is used to help control pests including meal bugs, scale insects, fungus gnats, etc. - Used as needed in a rotational spray program; at time of year when insect/fly numbers reach a threshold <p>Alternative are not sufficient because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Natural oils have been used but they are not very effective and can cause phytotoxicity and leaf sunburn. Natural oils are used when seasonally appropriate. - There are limited tools available for organic production having options to use the most effective products with the least negative effect on the environment - Manual removal of the insects is not logistically possible at scale - No other alternative management practices available. <p>If the material were prohibited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insect populations can get out of control and damage the fruit. Insect damage can surpass 20-30 % making operation economically not viable. - Increase disease rates, lower yields - Potentially have to use products that may be more adverse to the environment - Food waste will increase representing a disposal problem at farms and packing plants 	4.5
Vitamin D3	1	<p>The material is necessary because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used for pest mitigation in dairy facilities. <p>Alternative are not sufficient because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (no response) <p>If the material were prohibited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Animal health would suffer 	4

Aquatic plant extracts	3	<p>Note: In addition to survey responses summarized here, please also see the separate comment submitted by the Organic Trade Association on this material.</p> <p>The material is necessary because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used by long-time organic growers to produce Fruits, Vegetables, Lettuce, Specialty Greens, Corn, Soy beans, Potatoes, Grains, Pastures, Orchards, and more - Controls pests, increases yield, improves soil, strengthens germination and root development, provides hundreds of macro- and micro-nutrients. - Used as fertilizer to support health and vigor of the crop - Used as a greening agent that provides vigor to baby leaf vegetables - Used every crop cycle / routinely in all spray and foliar applications, or as needed for stress relief <p>Alternative are not sufficient because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No other substance are suitable substitute - No other tools are as environmentally friendly with the same effects. <p>If the material were prohibited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less healthy crops, Decreased nutrients and overall health of soil and plants - Lower yields - Increase use of nitrogen fertilizers, risk of leaching and/or violating nitrogen reporting needs 	4
Lignin sulfonate	0		
Sodium silicate	0		
EPA List 4 inerts	0	<p>Note: Please also see the separate comment submitted by the Organic Trade Association on this material.</p>	

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

Substance	# of responses	Summary of responses
Arsenic	0	
Strychnine	0	

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,



Johanna Miranda
 Farm Policy Director
 Organic Trade Association

cc: Laura Batcha
 Executive Director/CEO
 Organic Trade Association

Appendix A – Sample Survey for Crop and Livestock Inputs

1. Please describe the types of organic products produced or handled on your operation:
2. How many states are your products sold in? Are they exported to other countries?
3. How many years has your operation been certified organic?
4. Which organic products do you use the substance on/for? (e.g., lettuces, fruit trees, broiler chickens)
5. What function does the substance provide and why is it necessary? (e.g., to control a specific pest or disease, sanitation, etc.)
6. With what frequency does your operation use the substance? (e.g., seldom, as needed when a certain condition arises, routinely, etc.)
7. Have you tried using any *natural substances* as an alternative to the substance? (e.g., natural oils instead of synthetic pesticides) If so, please describe the availability and efficacy of the alternative substances.
8. Are there any other *management practices* that would eliminate the need for the 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:
9. Describe the effects to your operation if you were to no longer be allowed to use this substance in organic production:
 - Agronomic effects (effects to health of crops or livestock):
 - Environmental effects (effects to environment if the substance was no longer allowed; effects to environment from potential alternatives):
 - Economic effects (effects to economic health of your operation):
10. On a scale from 1 to 5 stars, rate the overall necessity of this 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)
★	★	★