



Meeting Summary: NOSB in Providence, RI

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) held its public meeting October 15-18, 2012, in Providence, Rhode Island. At the beginning, the NOP provided an update on its activities, priorities, and NOSB's substance review process. Introductory presentations also highlighted the NOP's 10th anniversary and the Organic Literacy Initiative. Over the course of four days, the NOSB heard comments from approximately 80 members of the public on a wide range of issues. The NOSB discussed these and other suggested changes to their proposals from about 700 written public comments. A summary of the NOSB's subsequent votes is provided below. The final recommendations from the Providence meeting will be posted in the near future at www.ams.usda.gov/NOSBMeetings.

Note: NOSB is an advisory body to the Secretary of Agriculture. NOSB recommendations are not NOP policy unless the NOP issues final rules, final guidance, final instructions, or a policy memorandum that adopts the NOSB recommendations. They are not part of the USDA organic regulations unless such action is taken.

Petitioned Substances. The NOSB responded to several petitions to amend the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List). This section of the USDA organic regulations identifies exemptions to the following general rule: synthetic substances are prohibited unless specifically allowed and natural substances are allowed unless specifically prohibited. In organic processed products, all non-organic ingredients must be specifically allowed. "Motion failed" indicates that less than two thirds of the NOSB members voted to make the change in question, meaning that USDA does not have the authority to amend the USDA organic regulations for that substance.

Substance	Section	Action Considered by NOSB	NOSB Recommendation
Biodegradable Mulch Film	§ 205.601	Allow in organic crop production.	Allow in organic crop production with restrictions.
Ferric Phosphate	§ 205.601	Prohibit as slug/snail bait in organic crop production.	Motion failed.
Oxidized Lignite	§ 205.601	Allow as soil amendment in organic crop production.	Motion failed.
Propylene Glycol Monolaurate	§ 205.601	Allow as acaricide in organic crop production.	Motion failed.
Sulfuric Acid	§ 205.601	Allow as a stabilizer for digested poultry manure in organic crop production.	Motion failed.
Rotenone	§ 205.602	Prohibit in organic crop production. <i>Note: the NOSB took action on this substance without a petition to amend the National List.</i>	Prohibit in organic crop production effective January 1, 2016.
Nonanoic Acid	§ 205.603	Allow as insecticide in organic livestock production.	Motion failed.

Substance	Section	Action Considered by NOSB	NOSB Recommendation
Ascorbyl Palmitate	§ 205.605(b)	Allow as preservative in organic infant formula.	Motion failed.
Beta-Carotene	§ 205.605(b)	Allow the synthetic form in organic infant formula.	Motion failed.
L-Carnitine	§ 205.605(b)	Allow in organic infant formula.	Motion failed.
L-Methionine	§ 205.605(b)	Allow in infant formula made with soy-based protein.	Allow in infant formula made with soy-based protein.
Lutein	§ 205.606	Allow in organic infant formula, listed at § 205.605(b)	Motion failed.
Lycopene	§ 205.605(b)	Allow in organic infant formula.	Motion failed.
Nucleotides	§ 205.605(b)	Allow in organic infant formula.	Motion failed.
Taurine	§ 205.605(b)	Allow in organic infant formula.	Motion failed.

Inerts in Pesticides. The NOSB recommended a procedure for reviewing all EPA List 4 and 3 inerts used in organic-approved pesticide formulations. The procedure includes details on regulatory language changes for the listing of inerts on the National List, how NOSB review will proceed by group, what proposed groups have been identified so far, how technical reviews will be commissioned, and the anticipated timeline for this project. The procedure also states that, given the resources and time needed to complete these reviews, the NOSB will reassess the timeline after reviewing the first few groups of inerts.

2012 Research Priorities. The NOSB identified the top research priorities in organic agriculture, requesting that NOP coordinate with USDA research agencies to encourage funding awards in these areas.

NOSB Policy and Procedures Manual (PPM). The NOSB voted to change the public comment procedures in the PPM. The recommendation addresses the comment sign-up process, time allocation for comments, and how public comment delivery at the meeting should proceed. A second motion to amend the process by which the NOSB would receive public communication failed. A third proposal, addressing NOSB members' conflict of interest, was withdrawn at the meeting prior to a vote.

Discussion Documents. NOSB subcommittees published discussion documents with request for public comments:

Omnivore Diets. The USDA organic regulations currently prohibit feeding mammalian or poultry slaughter by-products to mammals or poultry. The discussion document outlines some of the pros (e.g., potential reduction in use of synthetic methionine in organic poultry) and cons (e.g., consumer perception) of amending the regulations to allow omnivore diets.

Other Ingredients. In November 2011, NOP requested that the NOSB clarify which "other ingredients" contained within handling materials on the National List are allowed. The discussion document outlines several approaches to meeting the NOP's request.

Percent Organic. Certifiers verify the percentage of organic content in multi-ingredient organic products, ensuring they meet all criteria for the specific labeling category. Certifiers were asked for information on how they make this determination, which challenges they face, and how this process could be clarified to increase consistency.

Biodiversity. In May 2009, the NOSB recommended addressing biodiversity in organic systems, which would affect materials review and organic system plans. The discussion document summarized progress to date and asked for feedback on other potential ways to conserve biodiversity.

GMOs + Seed Purity. The use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is prohibited in the production and handling of organic products, including seeds. The discussion document requests comments on seed purity standards, presence of GMOs in seed, and testing.