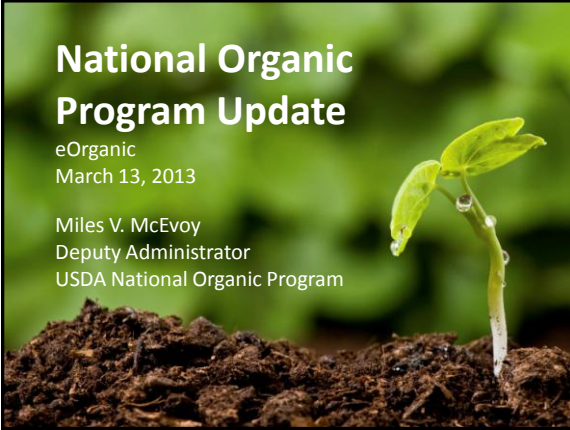


National Organic Program Update

eOrganic
March 13, 2013

Miles V. McEvoy
Deputy Administrator
USDA National Organic Program



Why Organic?

- Environmentally sound farming systems
- Biodiversity

- Animal welfare
- Less toxic inputs
- Rural development
- Economic opportunity

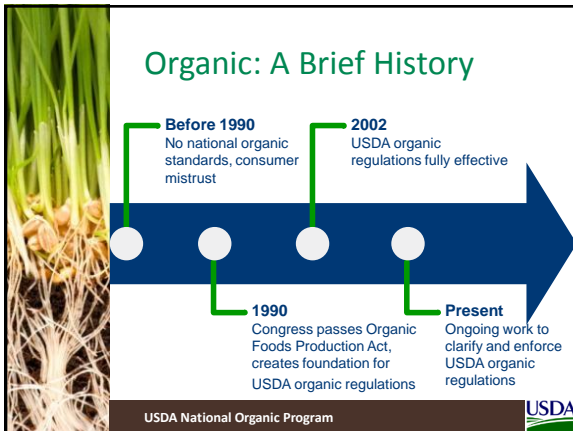


Veterans Sustainable Agriculture Training

- Helps combat veterans transition to civilian life
- Teaches veterans how to grow organic hydroponic crops, seed to market











What Can Be Certified?

- Crops
 - Wheat, cotton, pasture
- Wild crops
 - Mushrooms, kelp, berries
- Livestock
 - Beef, eggs, milk
- Processed/multi-ingredient products
 - Juice, soup, bread, yogurt

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Organic Certification:

- Ensures products were produced without prohibited methods/substances, such as:
 - GMOs, arsenic, synthetic fertilizers, prohibited pesticides
 - Note: Natural substances allowed unless specifically prohibited, synthetic substances prohibited unless specifically allowed.
- Is scale-neutral: all operations must meet same requirements

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Is My Land Eligible?

- No prohibited substances on land for three years
- Before three year waiting period:
 - No use of USDA organic seal
 - No selling, labeling, representing product as organic

 Technical and Financial Assistance - NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Open to organic and transitioning farmers

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What are the Requirements?

- Specific requirements for each certification category (e.g. crops, livestock, wild crops, processing)
 - Labeling
 - Record-keeping
- Violators subject to compliance and enforcement actions:
 - Loss of certification, financial penalties

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How Much Does Certification Cost?

- Depends on size/scope of operation
- Few hundred – several thousand dollars
- Annual recertification costs

 Financial Assistance – Cost Share
 2013 - Available in 16 states (CT, DE, HI, ME, MD, MA, NV, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, UT, VT, WV, WY)
 Open to certified organic farmers and handlers
 Reimburses up to 75% organic certification costs
 Contact state department of agriculture

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Who Would Certify My Farm or Business?

- A third-party certifying agent
- Accredited by the USDA National Organic Program
- Can be:
 - State department of agriculture
 - Non-governmental accredited certifying agent

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How Do I Get Certified?

1. You submit application to certifying agent, including:
 - Description of operation
 - Substances used in past 3 years
 - Products grown, raised, or processed
 - Written Organic System Plan, including practices and substances to be used
2. Certifying agent reviews application

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How Do I Get Certified?

3. Qualified organic inspector conducts inspection, writes report
4. Certifying agent reviews report
5. If you are in compliance, you receive organic certificate.



Annual certification renewal

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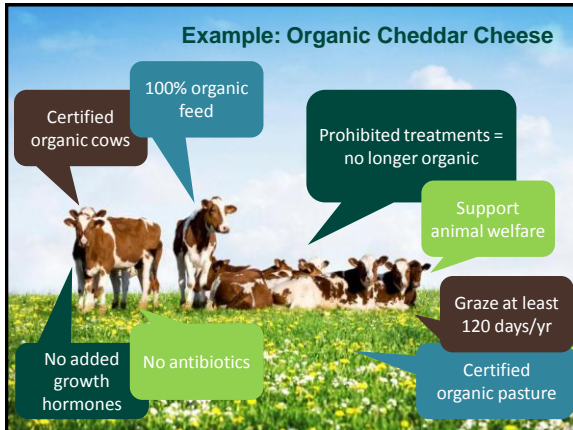



Who Doesn't Need to Be Certified?

- Small organic farms and businesses
Gross agricultural income from organic sales \$5,000 per year or less
- Some brokers, distributors, and traders
- Retail food establishments

These operations must still meet specific requirements.


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Summary: Dairy Farm


- Inspected each year, certification renewed
- Organic System Plan addresses:
 - Pasture management
 - Animal health
 - Water/soil management


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Making of Cheddar


- Organic milk transported in clean truck
- Arrives at certified organic processing facility
- Rennet added
 - Example of allowed non-agricultural substance
 - Allowed as type of animal enzyme

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Summary: Cheese Processing Facility

- Inspected each year, certification renewed
- Organic System Plan addresses:
 - Equipment cleaning
 - Ingredient sourcing
 - Avoiding commingling with non-organic cheese

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10 Years of USDA Organic

- 85 accredited certifying agents
- Over 25,000 certified operations across 133 countries
- \$31 billion in U.S. organic sales
- Tens of thousands of inspections, reviews, and certification decisions



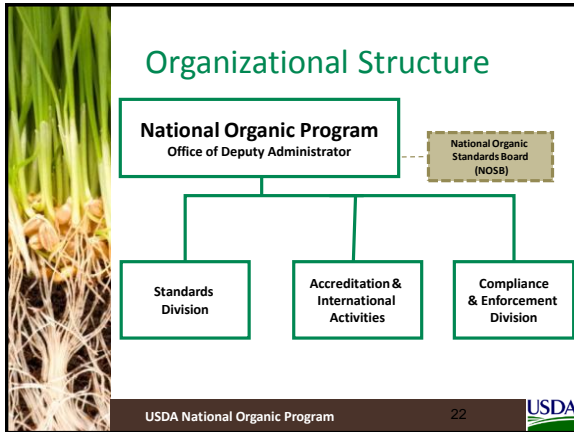
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Framework of National Organic Program

- USDA Organic Regulations
- Accreditation and Oversight
- Certification – Inspections, Sampling and Auditing
- Compliance and Enforcement

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Compliance and Enforcement

- Ensure consistent application of the NOP regulations.
 - Complaint handling
 - Investigations
 - Civil penalties, penalty matrix
 - Reinstatements of suspended operations
 - Appeals, hearings, due process

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National Organic Standards Board

- FACA board, two meetings per year
- Proposals, public comment, final recommendation
- National List and other recommendations
- Membership
 - 4 Producers
 - 3 Environmentalists
 - 3 Consumer/Public Interest
 - 2 Handlers
 - 1 Retailer, 1 Scientist, 1 Certifier

**5
YEAR
TERMS**

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2012 Highlights

- **Successful NOSB meetings**
New Mexico and Rhode Island
- **Rulemaking**
Final residue rule, National List substances, policy documents
- **Compliance and Enforcement**
Doubled case closures, complex cases
- **Certifying Agent Oversight**
~50 certifier audits, new checklists, streamlined audit review/response to corrective actions.

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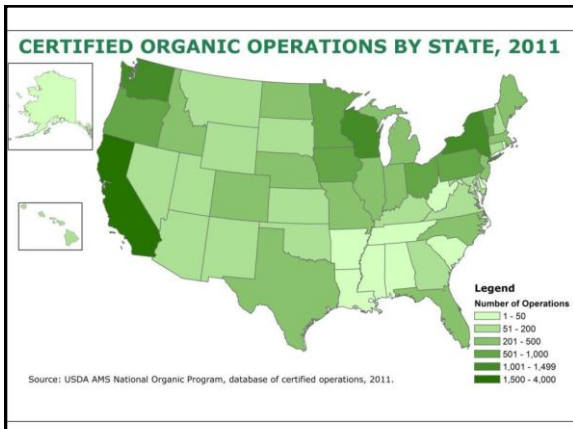



2012 Highlights

- Office of Inspector General “No findings report”**
Competent oversight of National List and NOSB appointments.
- International Market Access**
U.S. – EU Organic Equivalency Arrangement.
- Cost Share**
Reimbursed thousands of producers + handlers
- Communications**
Organic Literacy Initiative, NOP Organic Insider, and Organic Integrity Quarterly



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National Organic Program Current Initiatives

Clear
Standards


Consumer
Protection

Market
Access

Information
Technology



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Clear Standards

➔

Fairness and Transparency

To level the playing field:

- Publish clear standards
- Address gray areas
- Continue to collaborate with National Organic Standards Board
- Increase transparency

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Market Access

➔

Economic Opportunity

To increase organic agriculture in the U.S.:

- Enhance local and regional connections
- Promote USDA technical and financial assistance
- Provide access to additional foreign markets
- Ensure uniform application of standards

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Consumer Protection

➔

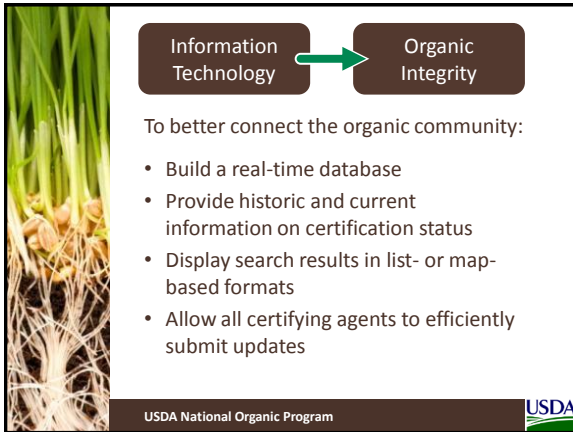
Consumer Confidence

To protect the integrity of organic products:

- Continue rigorous investigations
- Conduct more audits
- Initiate market surveillance program
- Enhance enforcement actions
- Ensure terms of trade partnerships are being met

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Information Technology → Organic Integrity

To better connect the organic community:

- Build a real-time database
- Provide historic and current information on certification status
- Display search results in list- or map-based formats
- Allow all certifying agents to efficiently submit updates

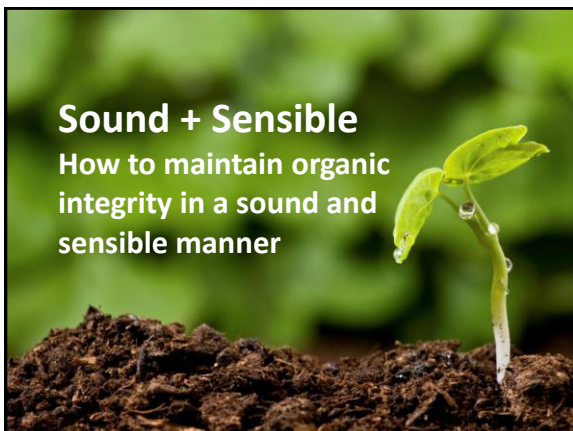
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Clear Standards
Consumer Protection
Market Access
Information Technology

Level the playing field
Protect organic integrity
Increase number of organic farms and businesses
Connect organic community via INTEGRITY

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Sound + Sensible
How to maintain organic integrity in a sound and sensible manner



"Sound and Sensible" Certification Initiative

Maintaining organic integrity in a sound and sensible manner

Current Landscape

- Ten years of NOP implementation
- Complex regulatory scheme
- Strict process-based oversight

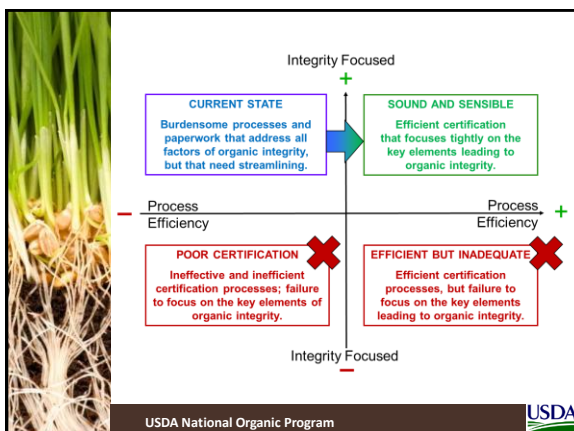
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Issues

- Inconsistent certification process
- Recordkeeping focus and burden
- Expense of certification
- Burden of time that is involved in inspections and maintaining paperwork
- Some farms that comply with organic standards avoid certification.

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Goal: Make Organic Certification:

Affordable, Accessible and Attainable for all operations

- **Affordable** – reasonable fees, reasonable compliance costs
- **Accessible** – certifiers and technical assistance available locally
- **Attainable** – Clear and understandable standards, plain language, reasonable record keeping requirements

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Current Initiatives

- **Organic Certification Business Process Survey**
 - Conducting an assessment to identify key certification barriers for small businesses
 - Identify ways to reduce paperwork burden
- **NOSB Continuous Improvement Initiative**
 - How to certifying the practices rather than the paperwork
- **Ideas from Certifying Agents**

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NOP Sound and Sensible Certification Ideas

1. **Accreditation Audits**
How can we emphasize verification of practices instead of paperwork?
2. **Record-keeping requirements**
Can we provide a definitive list of required records?
3. **Common set of OSPs**
Can we establish a common set of adequate OSPs?
4. **Organic Systems Plan**
Reexamine how can we maximize the value of the OSP while minimizing recordkeeping burdens?
5. **Inspector qualifications**
How can we incorporate training and guidelines for inspectors?


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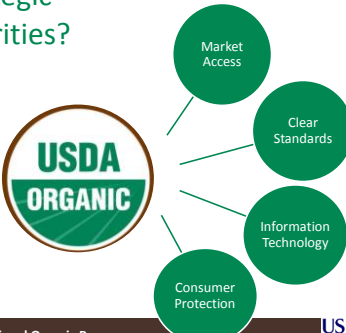
NOP Sound and Sensible Certification Ideas


6. **Cost share alternatives?**
Could FSA micro-loans (<\$25,000) be used to help beginning organic farmers cover the cost of certification?
7. **Level playing field for direct marketers**
How can we ensure that direct organic marketers comply with certification requirements?
8. **Technical assistance**
How can we collaborate with NRCS to better provide technical assistance to organic and transitional farmers?
9. **Outreach**
How can we help beginning farmers and direct marketing operations understand certification?

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How Does This Fit Into NOP's Strategic Priorities?




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2013 Preview


What's Next?




2013 Focus Areas

 **Sunset 2013**

- National List rulemaking (sodium nitrate, etc.)
- Origin of livestock, pet food, aquaculture
- Implementation of residue testing requirements, unannounced inspections
- Guidance documents, including:
 - Organic seeds, grower groups
 - Inspector qualifications
 - Handling unpackaged organic products
- Classification of materials / permitted substances

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2013 Focus Areas (cont.)

- Finalize corrective actions for OIG milk audit
- Verify international trade partnerships
- Increase international market access
- Reduce the certification burden on diversified, direct marketing operations
- Post additional audits/compliance info
- Support and coordinate the NOSB
- Improve accreditation process

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Where Can I Learn More?

USDA National Organic Program

www.ams.usda.gov/nop

 Organic Integrity from Farm to Table,
Consumers Trust the Organic Label



Learn How USDA Supports Organic Agriculture

Information on Organic Agriculture for Farmers, Ranchers, and Businesses

USDA www.ams.usda.gov/organicinfo
U.S. Department of Agriculture



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Receive email updates on:

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Thank You

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