



**Consumer Reports Comments**  
To the National Organic Standards Board  
Fall 2015

October 8, 2015

Ms. Michelle Arsenault, Special Assistant  
National Organic Standards Board  
USDA-AMS-NOP  
1400 Independence Ave, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Re: National Organic Standards Board Spring 2015 Meeting – Docket No. AMS-NOP-15-0037

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on proposals and discussion documents posted for the Fall 2015 meeting of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) in Stowe, VT. These comments were prepared by Consumers Reports' Food Safety and Sustainability Center.

Since its founding in 1936 as an independent, non-profit organization, Consumer Reports has empowered consumers with the knowledge they need to make better and more informed choices—and has battled in the public and private sectors for safer products and fair market practices. Consumer Reports serves consumers through unbiased product testing and ratings, research, journalism, public education, and advocacy. Consumer Reports has over 8 million subscribers to its magazine, Website and other publications.

Consumer Reports Food Safety and Sustainability Center was launched in 2012 to fight for sweeping, systemic change and address the root causes of problems plaguing the food system. The Center focuses on issues including foodborne illness and antibiotic resistance; pesticide use; heavy metals (mercury, lead, arsenic); truth and transparency in labeling; and promoting more sustainable agricultural practices that advance the marketplace, such as improved animal welfare, organic farming, and fair trade. At the core of the Center's work is the principle that there is a clear intersection between how food is produced and the impact on public health.

We believe that “organic” offers consumers a meaningful alternative to a food system that relies on inputs that are often neither safe nor sustainable, and that the integrity of the organic label is worth protecting in order to maintain this safer, healthier and more sustainable alternative food system.

The value of the organic label lies in the strength of the organic law and regulations, which promise consumers a consistent standard for organically produced foods and create a meaningful process with strict limits for determining what can and cannot be used in organic food production. Given consumers expect organic foods to be free from synthetic ingredients, and that this expectation is rooted in the organic law and regulations, they have every right to expect that synthetic and non-organic materials that are used in organic farming and handling have been carefully reviewed to a consistent set of criteria – harmlessness to human health and the environment, essentiality for organic production, and consistency with organic farming and handling. Consumers also have a right to expect that organic farmers and handlers are using only synthetic and non-organic materials that meet **all** criteria in the law and that appear on the National List.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Approved active ingredients in pesticides can be mixed with synthetic “inerts” that have never been reviewed – and that may or may not meet the criteria in the law. Similarly, approved synthetic or non-organic ingredients can be mixed with other ingredients that have not been reviewed – and that may or may not meet the criteria in the law. Non-organic ingredients that fail to meet all criteria appear in organic foods, like fish oil and fructooligosaccharides that are by no means necessary for organic production. And nutrient additives that have been previously reviewed by the NOSB and explicitly rejected for use in organics nonetheless continue to appear in organic infant formula and baby foods, as recently reported in the *New York Times*.<sup>1</sup>

Several proposals on this meeting’s agenda give the NOSB a unique opportunity to address these issues, and in this comment we elaborate on how we believe the NOSB can fix some of these inconsistencies at this meeting – removing nutrient vitamins and minerals from the National List, properly reviewing ancillary substances to OFPA criteria, tabling the vote on the sunset review of three phosphate food additives, removing ingredients from 205.606 that are not essential, and implementing the 2012 NOSB recommendation to fully review inerts in a transparent way.

We also wish to voice our continued concern with the National Organic Program’s changes to the sunset review process, which undermine organic integrity and consumers’ expectations for organic.

Despite repeated calls from the organic community to demand that the NOP Sunset Notice be subject to due diligence with public notice and comment, and that corrections should be made to several provisions of the NOP Sunset Notice to reflect OFPA’s requirements, the NOP has remained persistent in its effort to enforce its misguided sunset standards and procedures. From the most egregious violations, such as changing the vote of the NOSB from two-thirds to renew a material’s inclusion on the National List to one requiring two-thirds to remove it, to prohibiting annotations to be added or changed at sunset, the result continues to be a convoluted sunset review that fails to subject exceptions to organic to repeated and necessary due diligence required under OFPA. The NOP has made it easier to maintain the use of synthetic, otherwise-

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<sup>1</sup> Molloy, A. 2015, October 7. What does “organic” mean for baby formula? *New York Times*. Available online: [http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/10/07/what-does-organic-mean-for-baby-formula/?\\_r=0](http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/10/07/what-does-organic-mean-for-baby-formula/?_r=0)

prohibited materials in organic production and to minimize the incentive to create organic alternatives. This is counter to consumer expectations.

We acknowledge that the NOSB has little control or influence over the NOP's decisions concerning the changes to sunset, but the Board does have the ability to raise concerns and demand change—both verbally and through its actions. The Board also has the ability to hold the NOP to the very standards and procedures of its own creation.

We urge all of the subcommittees and NOSB as a whole to demand that the NOP's Sunset Notice be subjected to notice and comment.

Finally, as the NOSB performs its sunset review of hundreds of materials during this meeting, we also urge the board to ensure that each and every substance on the National List meets all of the National List criteria. Too often in the past, the requirement that handling materials be “necessary” has been ignored or downplayed, and the meaning of the word “necessary” has been distorted. A material is not necessary if just one manufacturer currently uses it – yet that seems too often to be the standard used by the NOSB for determining essentiality. A material is not necessary if it is helpful, convenient, or good for marketing purposes. Yeast should be considered essential – organic bread could not be made without it. Fish oil should not be considered essential – there is no need for fish in the production of organic milk, organic yogurt and even organic gummy bears. For all sunset reviews, we urge the NOSB to seriously consider whether the material is necessary, and remove from the National List those that fail to meet this important requirement in the law. And if proper review cannot be conducted, the material should not be allowed for use.

At Consumer Reports, we provide unbiased information to consumers to empower them to make informed decisions in the marketplace and contribute to positive change with their purchasing decisions. We have an obligation to consumers to inform them of inconsistencies between what they expect and what they get when they buy organic. The NOSB and the USDA can restore and maintain consumer trust in the label by fixing the problems that are causing inconsistencies in the standard, and we urge you to do so at this meeting.

## **Handling Subcommittee**

### **Nutrient Vitamins and Minerals – Remove**

The long list of synthetic and non-organic nutrient additives currently found in some organic foods, especially organic infant formula and baby foods, create a major disconnect between what consumers are promised and what they find in organic foods on the market. According to the organic law and regulations, only synthetic and non-organic (otherwise-prohibited) additives that have been reviewed and approved should be added to organic foods. Unfortunately, many organic foods appear on store shelves containing synthetic and non-organic nutrient additives, as well as synthetic additives to preserve those non-organic nutrients, that have not been approved for use in organic foods and do not appear on the National List. Nutrient additives that do not fall under the categorical “nutrient vitamins and minerals” listing (because they are not vitamins or minerals and do not appear on the list of nutrients referenced in the annotation) nevertheless

appear in organic foods. Many of these nutrient additives have even been reviewed by the NOSB and were rejected.

For a more complete background on this issue, please refer to our spring 2015 comments in the appendix. The New York Times also reported on this disconnect on October 7, 2015.

The NOSB has the opportunity at this meeting to address this problem by voting to remove the “nutrient vitamins and minerals” from the National List. By removing this inappropriate categorical listing, it creates an incentive for manufacturers to petition individual nutrient additives that are necessary to the production of organic foods. Consumers expect every synthetic or non-organic ingredient in organic foods to be organic or approved, and this pathway – removing “nutrient vitamins and minerals” and encouraging individual petitions – would ensure that the organic label requires and meets a consistent standard and meets consumer expectations.

Individual review of nutrients can also help ensure that the requirement for materials to be necessary and essential will apply to nutrient additives. Only synthetic and non-organic nutrient additives that are required by FDA to be added to a specific food should be considered necessary in the production of an organic version of that food. While OFPA does not consider the burden of petitioning and reviewing petitions for additions to the National List, many synthetic nutrients already appear individually on the National List, and only a handful that would be considered essential would need to be petitioned and reviewed.

The organic law promises to assure consumers that organically produced products meet a consistent standard. Consumers have every right to expect that organic foods, including organic infant formula and organic baby food, contain only ingredients that are either organically produced or carefully reviewed and approved. This is not the case, as even nutrient additives that were voted on by the NOSB and rejected continue to appear in organic baby foods. In addition to fixing the problem by removing “nutrient vitamins and minerals” from the National List and inviting manufacturers to petition individual and essential nutrient additives, we also urge the NOSB to direct the NOP to take immediate enforcement action to ensure that the materials that were rejected by the NOSB are removed from organic foods (Consumer Reports’ complaint is attached below).

### **Ancillary Substances – Proper Review is Needed**

Some approved synthetics and non-organic materials on the National List are mixed with or manufactured using materials that are not organic and not on the National List. All ingredients that end up in organic foods should be organic or reviewed and approved.

During this sunset review of several listings that contain other ingredients (“ancillary substances”), the Handling Subcommittee has requested and received information about ancillary substances. This is a step in the right direction as it improves transparency regarding all ingredients and processing aids that are used to produce organic processed foods. Unfortunately, the Handling Subcommittee appears to grant a blanket approval to all substances currently in

use, rather than review to OFPA criteria as promised. This blanket approval seems to extend even to ingredients that are not identified but fall under an identified category.

We are concerned that some of the ancillary substances that the HS proposes to approve, without apparent review, would fail to meet the criteria in OFPA. For example, for yeast production, the HS proposes to approve formaldehyde (an IARC List 1 carcinogen - “known to be carcinogenic to humans”), the preservatives BHA and BHT (an IARC 2B carcinogen - “likely to be carcinogenic to humans”) and petroleum hydrocarbons. The Handling Subcommittee proposes to approve many others that would likely fail OFPA criteria if they were properly reviewed.

We disagree strongly with the Handling Subcommittee’s assessment that the use of these materials is consistent and compatible with organic handling practices.

Consumers who buy organic foods are promised that their purchases support a food system that avoids substances that are harmful to human health, including the health of workers in the food system, and the environment. According to a 2014 survey conducted by the Consumer Reports National Research Center, consumers think that organic foods should be produced without artificial ingredients (89%) and without artificial processing aids (91%). The Handling Subcommittee’s blanket approval of all substances currently in use, including substances listed as IARC List 1 and List 2B carcinogens, reinforces the importance of revisiting the ancillary substances policy.

If an organic handler believes that a material on the National List cannot be sourced without a particular synthetic and unapproved “other ingredient,” then that ingredient should be petitioned to be added to the National List with an annotation restricting its use to the materials for which it is needed.

This approach:

- Respects OFPA and the requirement for *all ingredients* to be organic or on the National List.
- Is in line with OFPA’s specification that substances on the National List shall be listed “by specific use or application.” The NOSB can recommend that a synthetic ingredient be approved only for the particular ingredient for which its use is petitioned.
- Addresses the difficulties raised by the fact that other ingredients may vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. If a particular manufacturer, or an organic handler who uses the ingredient, knows that a particular “other ingredient” is used and believes its use is necessary, that particular ingredient can be petitioned by the manufacturer or organic handler.
- Increases transparency by requiring handlers and manufacturers to disclose the unapproved “other ingredients” that are used.

- Preserves consumer trust in the organic label and the process. The public has a right to know *all* ingredients used in the production of organic foods.

This approach would be in line with OFPA, which requires that *all* ingredients in certified organic foods must either be produced in accordance with the federal organic standards or must appear on the National List of Approved and Prohibited Substances.

***SEC. 2111. [7 U.S.C. 6510] HANDLING.***

*(a) IN GENERAL.—For a handling operation to be certified under this title, each person on such handling operation shall not, with respect to any agricultural product covered by this title—*

*(1) add any synthetic ingredient not appearing on the National List during the processing or any postharvest handling*

OFPA does not distinguish between “ingredients” and “other ingredients” or “ancillary ingredients.” Quite simply: any synthetic ingredient not appearing on the National List shall not be added to organic products during processing or any post harvest handling.

OFPA also specifies that the National List “shall contain an itemization, by specific use or application, of each synthetic substance permitted” (Sec. 2118 [7 USC 6517]).

The National List is for single substances, not formulated multi-ingredient products. All non-organic ingredients and substances used in organic production must be on the National List.

All ingredients added to organic foods should be either organic or on the National List. Any ingredients considered essential as components of materials on the National List should be petitioned for that particular purpose, with an annotation specifying the approved use. We oppose the Handling Subcommittee’s three proposals for ancillary substances and urge the NOSB to protect organic integrity by properly reviewing these materials.

**Essentiality of Non-Organic Agricultural Materials**

The requirement that materials should be approved only when they are necessary to the production of organic foods has been ignored during some past votes, and certain materials that are not essential appear on the National List. This has created another disconnect between what consumers expect and the reality of what appears in organic foods.

It is important for the NOSB to consider the difference between materials that are necessary to the production of an organic product, and materials that are convenient or useful for marketing purposes. Materials such as yeast and microorganisms can be considered essential, since making organic bread or organic yogurt without them would pose serious challenges. It is entirely possible to make organic foods without fish oil and fructooligosaccharides. Consumers expect organic foods to contain organic ingredients. If those non-organic ingredients are necessary to producing the food, then at the very least they should meet all OFPA criteria. Non-organic ingredients like fish oil and fructooligosaccharides, which are not necessary to making organic foods, should be removed from the National List.

## **Fish oil**

Since the sole reason for adding non-organic fish oil to organic foods is to allow for a health claim on the label, it is worth reviewing whether those health claims are scientifically supported. In our Spring 2015 comment, we referenced a New York Times article titled “Fish oil claims not supported by research.” Two recent meta-analysis studies have concluded that there is no association between fish oil supplementation and health benefits.<sup>2-3</sup> These findings were reported in a New York *Times* article titled “Fish oil claims not supported by research.”<sup>4</sup> There is also a disconnect between the studies showing a benefit from eating fish and the benefits of omega-3 supplementation. The TR cited mainly studies that explored dietary patterns with high fish consumption, rather than fish oil supplementation.

Health benefit controversy aside, fish oil is not a necessary ingredient in organic foods. Consumers who wish to consume fish oil for its purported health benefits can purchase fish oil separately. It is misleading to consumers, and creates inconsistency to the organic label, to add non-organic and non-essential ingredients to organic foods.

## **FOS**

We urge the NOSB to remove fructooligosaccharides (FOS) from the National List. Like fish oil, FOS is not necessary to the production of an organic food. FOS specifically is added to allow manufacturers to make certain health claims related to the perceived health benefits of highly isolated fibers and sugars. We noted in our Spring 2015 comment that FOS, along with inulin, present a case study for how OFPA criteria have been ignored during review of 606 materials.

## **Colors**

We support the HS in its proposal to remove 13 colors from the National List. We are pleased that the HS acknowledges the public comments expressing concern that these colors fail the OFPA criteria of compatibility with organic farming and handling. However, we disagree with the Handling Subcommittee’s proposal to keep 4 colors on the National List, as this creates a serious inconsistency. How can 4 conventional colors meet the requirements when 13 conventional colors fail to meet them? The Handling Subcommittee gives the following reason: “other public comment indicates that most of the colors are now available in organic form with the possible exception of the following 4 colors: beet juice extract color, blackcurrant juice color, pumpkin juice color, and red cabbage extract.” However, as we detailed in our spring 2015

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<sup>2</sup> Grey, A. and Bolland, M. 2014. Clinical Trial Evidence and Use of Fish Oil Supplements. *JAMA Intern Med.* 174(3):460-462. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2013.12765

<sup>3</sup> Omega-3 supplements do not improve cognitive performance in children, adults or the elderly. Jiao, J., Li, Q., Chu, J., Zeng, W., Yang, M. and Zhu, S. 2014. Effect of omega-3 supplementation on cognitive function throughout the life span from infancy to old age: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 100(6):1422-36. doi: 10.3945/ajcn.114.095315.

<sup>4</sup> O’Connor, A. 2015, March 30. Fish oil claims not supported by research. New York Times. Available online: [http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/03/30/fish-oil-claims-not-supported-by-research/?\\_r=0](http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/03/30/fish-oil-claims-not-supported-by-research/?_r=0)

comment, “commercial availability” does not replace the requirements in OFPA. Each and every substance on the National List is required to consistently meet *all* of the National List criteria.

The continued use of four colors from conventional crops that are commonly found as organic, such as pumpkins and beets, creates inconsistency in the standard. If fresh and frozen organic pumpkins, beets and red cabbages are readily available in the produce aisle, consumers should be able to expect colors from these organic crops to be used in organic processed foods as well.

Removing these materials from the National List will create the demand and incentive for all organic foods on the marketplace to contain organic colors.

## **Flavors**

We urge the NOSB to remove flavors from the National List. 7 CFR 205.600(b)(4) states that substances should not be added to the National List if their primary use is to recreate or improve flavors. Recreating or improving flavors seems to be the only purpose of flavors. The petition by the Organic Trade Association to change the annotation shows that many organic flavors are already commercially available.

## **Phosphate food additives (sodium phosphate, calcium phosphate and potassium phosphate)**

We appreciate the Handling Subcommittee’s request of a new technical review (TR) to better understand the recent scientific studies that raise concerns regarding public health impacts of phosphate food additives. We urge the NOSB to table the vote until the TR is available.

High intake of phosphorus in the diet, a rising concern as the use of readily absorbed phosphate food additives becomes more widespread, is associated with negative impacts on bone health, kidney health and heart health.<sup>5</sup>

Phosphorus homeostasis appears to be regulated by a complex endocrine feedback system,<sup>6</sup> and recent science has identified specific hormones that are involved in phosphorus homeostasis. These findings have shed light on the different mechanisms by which high phosphorus intake can lead to negative health impacts, and are especially relevant to the discussion of phosphate food additives.

Phosphate food additives are more readily absorbed during digestion than naturally occurring phosphorus in foods, and can lead to a higher phosphorus load.<sup>7-8</sup> Due to the popularity of

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<sup>5</sup> Guterrez OM. 2013. The connection between dietary phosphorus, cardiovascular disease, and mortality: where we stand and what we need to know. *Adv. Nutr.* 4: 723–729; doi:10.3945/an.113.004812.

<sup>6</sup> Ritz E, Hahn K, Ketteler M, Kuhlmann MK, Mann J. 2012. Phosphate additives in food—a health risk. *Dtsch Arztebl Int* 109(4): 49–55; doi: 10.3238/arztebl.2012.0049 . Page 50.

<sup>7</sup> 40%-60% absorption for naturally occurring phosphorus vs. 70-100% absorption for phosphates

<sup>8</sup> Ritz E, Hahn K, Ketteler M, Kuhlmann MK, Mann J. 2012. Phosphate additives in food—a health risk. *Dtsch Arztebl Int* 109(4): 49–55; doi: 10.3238/arztebl.2012.0049. Page 53.



phosphate food additives in the processed foods industry, levels of phosphorus intake and phosphorus load are believed to have increased dramatically in recent years.

In our Spring 2015 comment, we noted that the first scientific study on the newly identified hormone involved in regulating serum phosphorus concentrations was published in 2001,<sup>9</sup> and pointed to the need for a review of new scientific information. We appreciate the Handling Subcommittee's request for a new TR to better understand the human health impacts from cumulative use in the food supply and increased exposure.

We also continue to question whether the phosphate additives under review are essential to organic food processing. We appreciate the Handling Subcommittee addressing the question of essentiality in its proposal for sodium phosphate: "There appear to be a number of alternatives that could be used such as lecithin, agar, alginic acid, pectins and gums."<sup>10</sup> We identified several organic processed foods that contain phosphate food additives, and identical products by other manufacturers that do not contain these additives. For example, Horizon's mac 'n cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt in tubes and egg whites all contain phosphate food additives while identical products by other manufacturers, such as Stonyfield and Organic Valley, do not contain them. This suggests that the NOSB should seriously consider whether these additives are essential to organic handling.

Rather than proceed with a vote at this meeting, we urge that the proposals be tabled until the Board has a more thorough understanding of these ingredients' essentiality and impacts on public health.

### **Petition: Sodium lactate and potassium lactate**

We agree that ingredients that are formulated from materials on the National List should not be automatically allowed and should be reviewed separately. We have searched for organic products containing these ingredients, including products from Applegate Farms which was the original petitioner, and have been unable to locate any organic deli meats containing sodium lactate or potassium lactate. These ingredients do not appear to be essential to organic handling and should not be added to the National List.

### **Celery Powder**

Since organic standards prohibit synthetic processing aids, celery powder is one type of a natural source of nitrates and nitrites used to cure organic meats. Yet, when cured with celery powder,

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Anderson JJ. 2013. Potential health concerns of dietary phosphorus: cancer, obesity, and hypertension Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci. 1301 (2013) 1-8. page 1.

Chang AR et al. 2014. High dietary phosphorus intake is associated with all-cause mortality: results from NHANES III. Am J Clin Nutr 2014;99:320-7.

<sup>9</sup> Guterrez OM. 2013. Fibroblast growth factor 23, Klotho and disordered mineral metabolism in chronic kidney disease: unraveling the intricate tapestry of events and implications for therapy. J Ren Nutr. 23(3): 250-254. doi:10.1053/j.jrn.2013.01.024.

<sup>10</sup> Page 154

the USDA requires that the meat be labeled “uncured.” Regardless of this misleading labeling requirement, we believe that celery powder for organic meat should come from organic celery.

When celery powder was petitioned for 205.606 in 2007, the petitioner wrote: “Celery Powder serves a dual purpose in the formulation of meat products. In addition to flavor, its primary function is as a natural source of nitrate which cures meat without relying on synthetic nitrates and nitrites. This is ancient technology dating back thousands of years.”

Manufacturers have argued that organic celery powder is not suitable for curing meat. It may very well be the case that conventional celery powder has higher nitrate levels compared with organic celery powder. A 2015 study shows that nitrate levels in conventional vegetables have higher levels of nitrates than their organic counterparts, with the highest levels found in conventional spinach.<sup>11</sup> Ironically, if levels in conventional celery powder are higher, it may well be due to the higher rate of nitrate intake from synthetic fertilizer use.

Yet for thousands of years, celery would have been grown using organic methods, without synthetic fertilizer. So the question is why organic celery powder is suddenly no longer suitable.

The petitioner also stated in 2007: “There is nothing in the growth or manufacture of this ingredient that would prevent it from being grown and processed as certified organic.”<sup>12</sup>

We therefore question why organic celery powder is not suitable, and removing celery powder from the National List will create incentives for the industry to use organic celery powder. Taking advantage of a prohibited process to make a conventional ingredient acceptable does not comport with organic and diminishes the integrity of the label.

### **Support for removal from 205.606**

We support the Handling Subcommittee’s proposals to remove the following from 205.606: chia seed, colors, dillweed oil, frozen galangal, inulin, konjac flour, lemongrass, orange pulp, chipotle peppers, turkish bay leaves and whey protein concentrate.

We urge the NOSB to remove these materials from the National List.

## **Crops Subcommittee**

### **Inerts**

We believe that the NOSB should review “inerts” in a transparent manner and according to OFPA criteria. We disagree with the Crops Subcommittee’s proposal to replace NOSB review of

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<sup>11</sup> Nuñez de González, M.T., Osburn, W.N., Hardin, M.D., Longnecker, M., Garg, H.K., Bryan, N.S., Keeton, J.T. 2015. A survey of nitrate and nitrite concentrations in conventional and organic-labeled raw vegetables at retail. *Journal of Food Science* 80(5): C942-9. doi: 10.1111/1750-3841.12858.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/Celery%20Powder%20Petition.pdf>

“inerts” with the requirement that the inerts are on EPA’s Safer Chemical Ingredient List (SCIL), removing any independent NOSB review of decisions to list these synthetic materials. It is the statutory job of the NOSB to review all synthetic inputs in organic farming and handling. We believe maintaining the integrity of that process is critical.

We urge the NOSB to immediately implement the recommendation it adopted unanimously in 2012 to review synthetic materials identified as “inert” or “other ingredients” in pesticide products used in organic production in a transparent fashion.

We support the proposal to remove nonylphenol ethoxylates (alklyphenol ethoxylates) or NPEs/APEs from the list of “inerts” allowed in organic production because of their toxic and endocrine-disrupting effects.

## **Livestock Subcommittee**

### **Antibiotic Use in Poultry Hatcheries**

Consumers expect organic foods to be produced without antibiotics. Our 2014 national survey shows that 81% of consumers believe that the organic label should mean that antibiotics are only used to treat sick animals and 73% think that no antibiotics should ever be used. Currently, antibiotics can be administered in the egg and the first day of life to poultry that will be raised and sold as “organic.”

In December 2013 and again in June 2015, we wrote to Secretary Vilsack requesting that the agency address this inconsistency in the meaning of the organic label. Secretary Vilsack responded in August 2015 that the NOP will be requesting that the NOSB provide a recommendation on management practices for day-old chicks. We urge the NOSB Livestock Subcommittee to place this issue on its workplan.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Urvashi Rangan, Ph.D.  
Director, Food Safety and Sustainability

Charlotte Vallaeys  
Senior Policy Analyst, Food Safety and Sustainability