

U.S.–CANADA ORGANIC EQUIVALENCY: A TIMELINE



2002

- National Organic Program (NOP) comes into force, under authority of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- U.S.-Japan recognition agreement allows NOP-compliant U.S. products access to Japanese market.

2005

- Two years of negotiations on equivalency break down between the U.S. and E.U.

2006

- Canada publishes draft Organic Products Regulations (OPR), under authority of Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

2007

- Organic Trade Association (OTA) urges USDA to begin negotiations with Canadian officials to establish trade equivalency agreements on the sales of organic products between the two countries.
- USDA begins preparations for discussions regarding equivalency between U.S. and Canadian organic programs.

2008

- Canadian sector completes significant update and revision to Canadian organic standards, in preparation for mandatory program.
- February: National Association of State Organic Programs (NASOP) writes Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer urging USDA to engage in equivalency negotiations with Canada.
- February: The first U.S.-Canada government-to-government meeting on organic equivalency takes place in Washington, D.C. Terms of reference are set.
- April: Canada's Organic Value Chain Roundtable releases whitepaper to government identifying equivalency as a priority for continued market access.
- April: The second U.S.-Canada government-to-government meeting on organic equivalency takes place in Ottawa. Variances are identified for further analysis.
- June: Canada begins equivalency talks with E.U. in Brussels.
- October: *The Organic Report* publishes story by Dr. Sophia Twarog, economist with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), advocating for a US-Canada organic equivalency agreement.
- December: Canadian government conducts consultation on equivalency.

2009 to date

- January: Canada's Technical Committee on Organic Agriculture at the Canadian General Standards Board reviews standards variances, makes recommendations to CFIA delegates regarding the ongoing equivalency negotiations.
- February: Organic Products Regulations (OPR) amended based on industry consultations; includes Canadian organic logo and language regarding possible future equivalency agreements.
- March: *Organic Processing Magazine* cover story by Matthew Holmes and Katherine DiMatteo investigates U.S.-Canada differences and discusses a scenario for equivalency.
- March: The third U.S.-Canada government-to-government meeting on organic equivalency is scheduled to discuss final variances and possible agreement. Both sides announce they are optimistic and will consider signing a letter of intent to reach equivalency.

Moving forward

- The two governments sign a letter of intent to reach an agreement on organic equivalency.
- Final equivalency agreement is ratified between the governments.
- June 30, 2009: Canada's OPR come into force, making the Canadian organic standards and CFIA-accredited certification mandatory for all imports not covered by equivalency.
- June 30, 2009: Two-year "stream of commerce" and enforcement period takes effect during transition to mandatory program.

Related Conference sessions during All Things Organic™

- Tuesday, June 16, 2009
1:30PM–3:00PM, Room E260 "Canadian Organic Regulations: Ready or not, here they come" with Kelly Monaghan & Matthew Holmes, moderated by Katherine DiMatteo (Wolf, Dimatteo + Associates)
- Tuesday, June 16, 2009
10:30AM -12:00PM , Room E259 "Organic Equivalency and Trade Update" with Kelly Strzelecki (USDA), Robert Anderson (Sustainable Strategies), moderated by Gunta Vitins (SunOpta Inc.)
- Wednesday, June 17, 2009
9:30AM – KEYNOTE ADDRESS
Kathleen Merrigan, USDA Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and long-time advocate of organic agriculture, will speak on directions at USDA that would impact the organic industry in the short and long term.
- Wednesday, June 17, 2009
3:30PM–4:30PM, Room E350 "State of the Organic Industry in North America" with Barbara Robinson (USDA-AMS), Christine Bushway (OTA) & Michel Saumur (CFIA-COO), moderated by Julia Sabin (Smucker Quality Beverages, Inc.)