

Organic



I S S U E

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This newsletter is published by the Organic Trade Association, the North American trade association committed to the promotion of organic products in the marketplace, and the protection of the integrity of organic standards. Its membership includes more than 1,600 producers, processors, distributors and retailers of organic foods, fibers, farm and garden supplies, and health and beauty products. OTA is your leading resource for information about this industry.

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INFORMATION FLIER – A PUBLICATION OF THE ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION

OTA launches HowToGoOrganic™.com web site



Because consumer demand in North America for organic products exceeds the rate of organic production, OTA has launched HowToGoOrganic™.com, a web site for producers and processors transitioning to organic. Designed as a clearinghouse of North American resources for farmers and businesses interested in becoming organic or in creating new organic enterprises, the site will help encourage further domestic organic production.

The URL for the web site is <http://www.HowToGoOrganic.com>.

The site features two “Pathways for Organic,” one for farmers and one for processors, as well as a regional directory for the United States, and a searchable North American organic directory. The “Pathways” provide basic information on the process of going organic with links to key resources throughout North America. This unique resource is

primarily designed for conventional farmers and processors who want to get started or who are navigating the transition to organic production, but also provides valuable information for established organic farmers, producers, and processors.

The web site’s regional directories showcase transition resources unique to specific regions and states. Resource listings in the North American directory can be searched by topic and subtopic, by type of resource, or by state. The site also features profiles of farmers and businesses that have successfully become certified organic or that are working through the process.

To create the new web site, OTA contracted with Chris Hill Media (principals Chris Hill and Glenn Hughes), known in agricultural circles for its work on the NewFarm.org and the Organic Seed Alliance web pages. ❖

Q & A concerning recent USDA Interim Final Rule

The Organic Trade Association (OTA) has prepared the following Q&A to help explain the recent interim final rule published June 27 in the *Federal Register* by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) concerning adding 38 non-organic agricultural ingredients to the National List. For other documents that help clarify this issue, go to http://www.ota.com/Non_Ag_Ingredients.html, <http://www.ota.com/pics/documents>

[/ACacommentary.pdf](#), and <http://www.ota.com/news/HowMediaMissed.html>.

How can consumers know the organic content of food and beverages they purchase?

National organic standards provide for a number of different labeling categories for organic products. One category is “100 percent organic,” allowed only for products that have been exclusively

produced using organic methods. A second category, “Organic,” signifies that at least 95 percent of the ingredients (by weight, excluding water and salt) in a processed product have been organically produced. The remaining content can only be ingredients recommended by the National Organic Standards Board and allowed on the National List.

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Interim Final Rule — Continued from Page 1

Why are any non-organic agricultural ingredients allowed in organic food products?



The national organic standards became effective in late October 2002 and since that time, more and more ingredients have become available in their certified organic form. However, in the five years since the rule was implemented, a few minor ingredients essential for particular products are still not yet available in sufficient quantity, quality or form.

Does this mean any non-organic agricultural ingredient can be used in an organic product?

No, there are strict regulatory requirements for determining whether a non-organic agricultural ingredient may be used. First, there is a process for the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) to review and recommend ingredients. Then, organic certifiers must determine



if that particular ingredient is unavailable in the organic form, quality and quantity. Only if a non-organic agricultural ingredient is on the National List and is unavailable as organic can it be used as a minor ingredient in the 5 percent portion of a product labeled “Organic.”

Won't this new rule prevent the production of organic ingredients?

No, in fact the evidence shows the opposite effect. Allowing non-organic “minor ingredients” was what drove the boom in organic spices in the 1990s—companies would try out new organic products, and if they succeeded, organic farmers rushed to produce those items that were required to be used if they were available. Cinnamon is the usual example of an ingredient that was at one point unobtainable as organic, but thanks to the commercial availability clause, is now a thriving organic spice.

What new ingredients would be used in organic products as a result of this Interim Final Rule?

None. The 38 agricultural ingredients in the Interim Final Rule were already in use in organic products that are at least 95% organic. This is actually fewer non-organic agricultural ingredients than were in use before June 9, 2007.

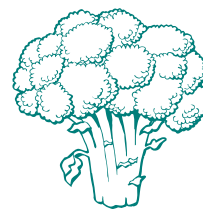


What are these agricultural ingredients?

The 38 ingredients covered by the interim final rule for inclusion on the list include 19 food colorings, two starches, casings for sausages, hops, fish oil, chipotle chili pepper, gelatin, celery powder, dill weed oil, frozen lemongrass, and fructooligosaccharides (a sweetener that also acts as a bulking agent).



How many agricultural ingredients are listed now as acceptable for up to 5% in a 95% or more organic product?



Only five non-organic agricultural items are currently on the National List and allowed in up to 5% of products labeled as “Organic”. They are corn starch, water-extracted gums, kelp, unbleached lecithin, and pectin.

Are these ingredients “synthetic”?

No, all of the proposed ingredients are from agricultural sources.

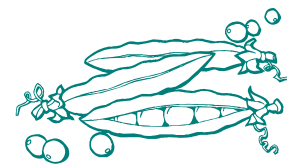
What process was used to review and propose these 38 ingredients?

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is a citizen advisory body made up of experts from every aspect of the organic spectrum, including consumers. After USDA agreed that the ingredients allowed for up to 5 % of an organic product should be significantly tightened up, processors and ingredient suppliers who were concerned that organic versions of a small number of minor agricultural products might be short supply because of form, quality or quantity filed petitions for consideration for these ingredients.



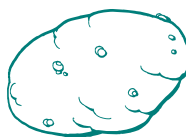
Then the NOSB reviewed the petitions, listed the petitions on its public web site as part of the agenda for its upcoming meeting, and held a public meeting at which each petition was publicly discussed. During those public meetings, NOSB recommended only 38 non-organic agricultural ingredients for use. Next, USDA took the NOSB recommended list and issued a proposed rule listing these 38 ingredients in the *Federal Register* for public comment. The NOSB did not recommend all the ingredients that were petitioned.

In fact, according to USDA, the National Organic Program (NOP) and NOSB received approximately 99 petitions to add more than 600 non-organic agricultural ingredients and substances to Section 205.606. After program review, 79 petitions to add 52 substances were forwarded through the petition review process to NOSB's Materials and Handling Committees for review and evaluation against the Organic Food Production Act criteria and NOP regulations. Prior to the public NOSB meetings, 52 draft recommendations from the NOSB committees were posted on NOP's web site for review and public comment. Of the 52 petition ingredients, NOSB, for its March 2007 meeting, requested, received and reviewed public comments on the petitioned ingredients, and voted to add 38 to Section 205.606 of the National List.



How do I know these non-organic agricultural ingredients are safe and of high quality?

Even the ingredients in the 5 percent allowance of “Organic” products are subject to restrictions in how they were grown. Like all other ingredients, they also must meet local, state and federal food safety requirements. Consumers have come to recognize that organic businesses have high standards for all their ingredients. ❖





Organic news

- Findings from the *Organic Trade Association's (OTA's) 2007 Manufacturer Survey* conducted by Packaged Facts show U.S. organic food sales totaled \$16.7 billion in 2006, representing 2.8 percent of all retail sales of food and beverages. According to survey results, sales of organic foods grew by 20.5 percent in 2006, from \$13.831 billion in 2005.
- Nearly 31 million hectares were certified as organic in 2005, with the global market for organic products reaching 25.5 billion Euros, according to *The World of Agriculture: Statistics and Emerging Trends 2007* released in February at BioFach 2007 by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and the Foundation for Ecology and Farming (SÖL). Leading markets are in North America and Europe.
- Using the Woodbury County, IA, plan to provide tax abatement for producers transitioning to organic farming, Iowa State University economists have released study results that show the potential regional economic impact of organic crop production exceeds that of conventional crop production. Funded by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, the study found organic rotation farming produced 52 percent more gross sales revenue, 110 percent more value-added income, and 182 percent more labor income than from the same 1,000 acres farmed using convention corn-soybean rotations. See www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/marketing_files/woodbury.htm.
- A large-scale shift to organic agriculture could help fight world hunger and bring environmental improvements, researchers said at "Organic Agriculture and Food Security," a United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization conference in Rome in May. To read the presentations from the conference, go to http://www.fao.org/organicag/ofs/presentations_en.htm.
- The Minnesota Department of Agriculture report, "The Status of Organic Agriculture in Minnesota—A Report to the Legislature," says there were more than 525 certified organic farms in the state in 2006, and slightly more than 129,000 certified organic acres as of 2005. The state is number one for organic corn and soybean acres, and seventh for organic dairy cows.
- Certified organic acres in Washington state rose to 64,325 in 2006, up from 46,181 acres in 2005, according to a report by David Granatstein and Elizabeth Kirby of Washington State University. The number of certified organic producers grew to 554, from 529 in 2005, with organic farm sales growing to \$101.5 million, from \$77.5 million.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) now issues several organic price reports on a regular basis. See www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/nw_gr113.txt

and www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/GX_GR120.txt.

- California Certified Organic Farmers has certified the Patty James Cooking School and Nutrition Center in Sebastopol, CA, as the first certified organic cooking school in the United States.
 - Organic Valley Family of Farms' farmers in the Pacific Northwest donated a starter herd of 20 organic dairy cows to California State University at Chico, which has just transitioned to an all-organic dairy program. The school is the first university on the West Coast to become a member of the farmer-owned co-op.
 - New Jersey has become the 17th state to gain USDA accreditation to offer in-state organic certification services to farmers and processors through its Department of Agriculture.
 - Offering loans to family farmers and artisan products to supply food to its 22 stores in the Midwest, Whole Foods Market, Inc., has linked up with Chicago-based Sustain to process applications for the program.
 - New York Governor Eliot Spitzer in May signed an executive order establishing a New York State Council on Food Policy. The council will look at ways to increase sales of New York agricultural products to New York consumers, with a special emphasis on expanding the consumer market for organic food.
 - Omni Hotels, which operates 40 hotels and resorts across North America, has announced a new program, "The Art of Breakfast," which includes organic shade-grown coffee and organic cereals.
 - Consumer interest in organic milk has burgeoned, according to a new report entitled *Retail and Consumer Aspects of the Organic Milk Market*, posted online by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (ERS). See <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/LDP/2007/05May/LDPM15501/ldpm15501.pdf>.
- ## Research updates
- A research team at the University of California at Davis has found organic kiwi fruit had much higher levels of total polyphenol content than conventional kiwi fruit, resulting in higher antioxidant activity than their conventional counterparts. Study results, published online March 27 in the peer-reviewed *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, also showed that organic kiwi fruit had higher levels of vitamin C.

Quote of Note

"Organic farming systems significantly reduce the fossil energy inputs in production and also improve several aspects of agriculture's environmental performance compared with conventional farming systems."

—*Impacts of Organic Farming on the Efficiency of Energy Use in Agriculture*, by David Pimentel, State of Science Review, The Organic Center

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Sowing the Seeds
See Page 1.

To view this issue electronically, go to <http://www.ota.com/news/whatsnews.html>

World of News — Continued from Page 3

- Research findings presented at the Parkinson's Disease Environmental Research meeting in April showed mounting evidence that pesticides can cause Parkinson's disease, according to a *Reuters* article written by Maggie Fox. Among the findings cited: farm workers using the common weed killer paraquat had two to three times the normal risk of Parkinson's, animals exposed to paraquat have a build-up in their brains of a protein (alpha-synuclein) linked to Parkinson's, and this protein build-up kills the same brain cells affected in Parkinson's.
- A *State of the Science Review: Taste of Organic Food* posted on the www.organic-center.org web site notes that organic fruits and vegetables tend to score higher in taste because they are sweeter than their non-organic counterparts, due to being smaller in size and higher in nutrient density.
- Research published in the May 2007 issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives* found an association between pre-natal organophosphate pesticide exposure and adverse effects on mental and pervasive development in young Mexican-American children from farmworker families living in the Salinas Valley of California.
- Research led by Alyson Mitchell (University of California-Davis) has shown that levels of flavonoids increase over time in tomatoes grown in organically farmed fields. Study results, which found organic tomatoes contain on average 79 and 97 percent more quercetin and kaempferol aglycones (beneficial flavonoids) than their conventionally grown counterparts, are published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, posted online June 23.

- A nine-year study by USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) researchers at Beltsville, MD, has shown that organic farming can build up soil organic matter better than conventional no-till farming can, according to results published in the July 2007 issue of *Agricultural Research* magazine. To read the article, "No Shortcuts in Checking Soil Health," go to <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/AR/archive/jul07/soil0707.htm?pf=1>.
- An article, "Pesticides reduce symbiotic efficiency of nitrogen-fixing rhizobia and host plants," published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 104, No. 24 (June 12, 2007), found that the use of pesticides and other contaminants reduces plant yield by one-third as a result of impaired symbiotic nitrogen fixation.
- Organic farming can yield up to three times as much food as conventional farming on the same amount of land, according to researchers from the University of Michigan. In addition to equal or greater yields, the authors found those yields could be accomplished using existing quantities of organic fertilizers and without putting more farmland into production. Their article, entitled "Organic agriculture and the global food supply," appears in *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* (2007) 22: 86-108.
- The Long-Term Agricultural Research (LTAR) initiative funded by the Leopold Center in Iowa has shown greater yield, increased profitability, and steadily improved soil quality in organic over conventional rotations in grain-based cropping systems, according to an article in the Summer 2007 *Leopold Letter*. See <http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/nwl/2007/2007-2-leoletter.pdf>. ❖