



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

JUN 17 2009

Ms. Christine Bushway
Executive Director
Organic Trade Association
Post Office Box 547
Greenfield, Massachusetts 01302

Dear Ms. Bushway:

Thank you for your letter, dated April 23, 2009, acknowledging the role that the National Organic Program (NOP) has had in supporting and fostering the growth of the organic industry, and maintaining the integrity of the organic label.

The NOP continues to do its best to serve the needs of organic producers and consumers. With increased funding, provided by the 2009 Omnibus spending bill, we have bolstered enforcement efforts by hiring additional staff and stepping up audits of certifying agents and increasing our monitoring of foreign agreements. We have also increased transparency of the program by revamping the NOP Web site to include a reading room where all information that can be published, is published. Consistent with the President's pledge to encourage organic agriculture, the 2010 Budget includes an increase of \$2.8 million to enhance outreach and education by the NOP. This increase of almost 75 percent will also help the Program effectively monitor program compliance, conduct enforcement activities, and ensure the integrity of the USDA organic seal.

The Department of Agriculture values the high level of participation and input it receives from the Organic Trade Association and its members and considers them and the rest of the organic community partners in moving the Program and the industry forward.

Thank you again for your support of the NOP, and your continued desire to work with us to keep this vital segment of agriculture energized and growing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Wilsack", written over a horizontal line.

Thomas J. Wilsack
Secretary