

October 26, 2016

National Organic Standards Board
USDA-AMS
1400 Independent Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20250
Re: AMS-NOP-16-0049

Docket # AMS-NOP-16-0049

Dear National Organic Standards Board Members:

The following comments are submitted to you on behalf of The Cornucopia Institute, whose mission is to support economic justice for family scale farming.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

Policy and Procedures Manual Revisions

SUMMARY

The Cornucopia Institute **supports the official comments of Beyond Pesticides (BP) regarding the proposed changes to the Policy and Procedures Manual.**

Overall, we agree that the Policy Development Subcommittee should have offered background information on these proposed changes for better understanding by the NOSB and public alike. These proposals for changes to the PPM did not follow the procedures in the PPM for presenting proposals. In the future any proposals should include background explanations for the changes.

In particular, we would like to address and support BP's comments on the following proposals:

Recordkeeping Provisions

Since this proposal (citing General Records Schedule 6.2) places requirements on NOP in handling records, we support BP's request that the PPM include a provision requiring NOP to report annually on its compliance with this provision. As stated in FACA 10(b), records should be available to the public before committee meetings where they apply. In general, the timeline for document availability is very poor. Curing this delay should be supported by PPM provisions.

Voting Records and Meeting Documents

Cornucopia supports these proposed changes to the PPM and BP's comments. The official meeting record should include any documents provided the Board and a summary of the

voting record. Cornucopia supports the record including which votes were made by which NOSB member. This is necessary for transparency, accountability, and a complete public record of NOSB actions.

Petitions and Proposals

Cornucopia supports BP's comments regarding the revised sections on petitions and proposals to allow the NOSB to remove National List items by adding a proposal to remove to the work agenda. We support this proposal. The NOSB should have the power to remove items from the National List, because new science and information may become available to the NOSB, suggesting such removal is appropriate without a public petition — provided that full public notice and comment take place.

Clarified Election of Officers to Require Majority Voting

Cornucopia supports BP's comments regarding the proposed changes to section VIII. F. There is not enough evidence to support this change.

Communications policy

Cornucopia supports BP's comments regarding the proposed changes to Appendix 2 and the "open docket" issue. A clear record of notes, documents, and other materials from subcommittee meetings should be communicated to the public promptly. We agree with BP that these materials should be more "complete" and contain details about deliberations, including the perspectives of specific named subcommittee members. Public dialogue should be encouraged, as organic stakeholders are a valuable and necessary voice in the process. We also support opening the NOSB meeting dockets early, though this would not satisfy the NOSB recommendation for an open docket.

NOSB Member Status

Cornucopia agrees and supports BP's comments regarding the status of NOSB members. NOSB members are not special government employees, and the PPM should reflect that fact. The current policy muddies the NOSB's role and does a disservice to the public.

CONCLUSION

Overall, Cornucopia supports the totality of BP's comments regarding the proposed changes to the PPM and the application of other rules to NOSB members. We hope that you will take these comments into account, both now and in the future.