

**Minutes of NOSB Crops Committee Conference Call  
April 6, 2001**

Members participating: Owusu Bandele (chair), Marvin Hollen, Bill Welsh, Becky Goldberg, and Rose Koenig

NOP representative: Mark Keating

Owusu Bandele stated that the Crops Committee placed standards for greenhouse and mushroom production on the agenda for the June NOSB meeting. He expressed the Committee's interest in reviewing the drafts that NOP was preparing on these production systems. Mark Keating discussed the NOP's work on draft standards for mushroom, greenhouse, and hydroponic operations. He stated that the NOP is working on a draft based on the 1995 NOSB recommendations and public comment received on the proposed rules. Once finalized, it will be published as a proposed rule for public comment. He stated that he would inquire if it would be possible to share the draft standards with the Crops Committee.

The Committee discussed the public comment received at the NOSB Buena Park meeting on standards for the production of spirulina. Committee members discussed the restriction on using sodium nitrate in the final rule (20% of crop's total nitrogen requirement) and its relevance to hydroponic systems. The Committee asked if it would be possible to certify a hydroponic system under the final rule and Mark Keating stated that the NOP intended to have a hydroponic standard in place prior to the rule's implementation. The Committee discussed using a TAP review to evaluate the proposed use of sodium nitrate but questioned whether a TAP review could adequately address alternative nutrient sources for these systems. The Committee requested that Mark Keating maintain contact with the individuals who raised this subject at Buena Park.

The Committee discussed the FDA's "Guidance for Industry on Reducing Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Sprouted Seeds" and its impact on organic certification of sprouts. The final rule does not allow the chlorine treatments recommended in the guidance and producers following the FDA guidance could not label treated sprouts as organically produced. The Committee requested more information on the status of alternative treatments and data on chlorine residues in treated sprouts.

The Committee discussed developing a recommendation on the use of compost tea as requested by NOP in the final rule. The Committee agreed that such a recommendation will require significant consideration. The Committee also discussed the best approach for providing NOP with additional recommendations on compost production and nutrient management. Rosalie Koenig stated that she would be able to take the lead on the consideration of vermiculture after the June meeting.

The Committee discussed developing a partial list of natural materials allowed in organic crop production. This list would identify natural materials that could be used in crop production without the burden of conducting a full TAP review. Producers and certifying agents will need to know which materials are allowed and the list, while not designed to be exhaustive, could identify many of the most commonly used materials that the Committee finds to be natural.

The Committee discussed the issue of transitional labeling without reaching a conclusion.

The Committee agreed to schedule another conference call prior to the June meeting.