

OCTOBER 1990
CONGRESS PASSES ORGANIC
FOODS PRODUCTION ACT

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF
USDA ORGANIC

OCTOBER 1992
FIRST NATIONAL ORGANIC
STANDARDS BOARD MEETING

OCTOBER 2002
USDA ORGANIC
REGULATIONS GO LIVE

DECEMBER 2000
USDA ESTABLISHES NATIONAL
ORGANIC PROGRAM

OCTOBER 2012
USDA CELEBRATES 10 YEARS
OF USDA ORGANIC



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USDA ORGANIC CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

As we celebrate 10 years of USDA's oversight of organic products, we recognize the dedication of those involved in organic agriculture's origins, helping it flourish into a growing sector of the U.S. food system.

Late 1980s Early organic farmers—concerned about conflicting standards, dubious “organic” claims, fraud, and consumer confusion—request federal oversight of organic products.

Organic Foods Production Act of 1990: Setting the Foundation

October 1990 Congress passes Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA, Title XXI of the 1990 Farm Bill), setting the foundation for national standards covering the production and handling of “organic” products. OFPA also authorizes USDA to establish the National Organic Program (NOP) to administer these standards and the National Organic Standards Board to advise the NOP.

January 1992 Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan appoints the first members of the National Organic Standards Board, beginning almost 10 years of work to develop national organic standards.

December 1997 NOP publishes the first proposed rule for national organic standards, receiving more than 280,000 public comments. NOP receives the coveted Hammer Award from Vice-President Al Gore for its use of the Internet and other communication technology to manage comments.

USDA Organic Regulations: Implementation and Oversight

December 2000 NOP publishes final rule published in Federal Register, establishing national organic standards. Rule is effective 60 days after publication and is fully implemented 18 months after effective date.

April 2002 Certifying agents, accredited by the NOP, begin certifying organic farms and businesses.

August 2002 USDA announces the allocation of \$1 million for the first Organic Certification Cost Share program for 15 states, reimbursing certified operations in those states for up to 75 percent of their certification costs, up to a maximum of \$500.

October 2002 USDA organic regulations “go live” (are fully implemented).

November 2002 USDA announces Organic Cost Share Program for all 50 states, allocating \$5 million to reimburse certified operations for up to 75 percent of their certification expenses.

June 2005 The First Circuit Court rules on a number of critical questions related to organic handling, livestock transition, and the role of synthetic ingredients. Ruling helps further shape the USDA organic regulations.

USDA ORGANIC CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

- November 2005 Congress amends OFPA to allow approved synthetics in organic foods and address the transition of organic dairy herds and pasture to organic production.
- January 2006 The number of certified organic farms and businesses in the U.S. exceeds 10,000.
- April 2006 NOP hosts a symposium to discuss ruminant livestock's access to pasture.
- June 2008 Congress signs the 2008 Farm Bill, renewing support for certification expenses for thousands of farmers and businesses via the Organic Certification Cost Share Programs.
- April 2009 Kathleen Merrigan, a former Senator Leahy staffer that helped draft OFPA and former USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Administrator that signed the December 2000 final rule, is sworn in as Deputy Secretary of Agriculture.
- June 2009 Agricultural Marketing Service Deputy Administrator Barbara Robinson signs a first-of-its-kind organic equivalency arrangement between U.S. and Canada, creating new markets for organic operations.
- October 2009 The NOP is elevated to its own program within the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. Miles McEvoy becomes the first NOP Deputy Administrator.
- February 2010 NOP publishes final rules requiring that ruminant livestock graze on organic pasture during the grazing season and receive a significant portion of their diet from grazed forages. More than 100,000 public comments were received to help shape and revise this rule.
- November 2010 NOP sends the first NOP Organic Insider message, using this email newsletter to inform the organic community of activities related to NOP's oversight of organic products.
- January 2012 17,281 organic farms and processing facilities in the U.S. are certified to the USDA organic standards, fueling a \$31.4 billion U.S. organic industry. Worldwide, there are 28,386 USDA organic operations across 133 countries.
- February 2012 U.S. and the European Union sign an organic equivalency arrangement, streamlining trade and creating a partnership between the two largest organic markets in the world.
- June 2012 NOP civil penalties issued surpasses \$200,000.
- September 2012 USDA launches the Organic Literacy Initiative, a training program to help connect organic customers with appropriate USDA resources. A companion toolkit also helps prospective farms and businesses answer the question, *is organic an option for me?*
- October 2012 NOP marks 10 years of overseeing certified organic products.

Interested in hearing about future USDA organic milestones? Join the 15,000 individuals currently receiving NOP Organic Insider email updates at <http://bit.ly/NOPOrganicInsider>.