



Public Listening Session USDA Activities & Priorities Related to Organic Agriculture & Markets

**Jefferson Auditorium, USDA South Building
1400 Independence Avenue SW | Washington, DC 20250
September 20, 2011 | 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/2011OrganicListening>**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is convening a public listening session to receive input concerning the Department's activities and priorities related to supporting organic agriculture production, handling and markets. This event is being hosted by the USDA Organic Working Group (a USDA internal communications network) and the USDA National Organic Program (responsible for regulating USDA organic products). The Public Listening Session is free and open to the public.

Purpose

The perspectives of stakeholders and other members of the public are important tools to help USDA programs examine and prioritize their activities and objectives in order to best serve the organic community.

Scope

The listening session will offer members of the public the opportunity to comment on USDA's activities and priorities in two general categories:

- 1. Activities and priorities of the USDA National Organic Program, other than those specific to the business and work plans of the National Organic Standards Board**

The USDA National Organic Program facilitates trade and ensures integrity of organic agricultural products by consistently implementing organic standards and enforcing compliance with the regulations throughout the world. The National Organic Program is specifically looking for public input on the prioritization of these activities. Comments related to allowed and prohibited substances and other topics on the National Organic Standards Board workplan are best addressed during the public comment sessions at the Board's biannual public meetings.

- 2. Activities and priorities of USDA agencies and programs beyond the USDA National Organic Program**

Multiple programs across USDA and other agencies are involved in organic agriculture. The USDA Organic Working Group facilitates inter-agency coordination and communication about organic policies, programs, data and research. The USDA is committed to supporting the growth of the organic sector. Specifically, the USDA Strategic Plan includes a performance objective to increase the number of certified

organic operations to over 20,000 by 2015¹. As the Department and its agencies face tightening budgets, it is important for USDA to gain a better understanding of the barriers to growth and how USDA can help overcome those barriers. This feedback will help USDA develop and prioritize future workplans related to organic agriculture and markets.

How to Participate

In person. Members of the public are invited to attend the listening session and register to provide oral comments. The morning and afternoon sessions will each include the two topics listed above. Learn more and register: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/2011OrganicListening>
Reminders:

- The listening session is free and open to the public
- Attendees must go through a security checkpoint, which may take 15-20 minutes during high-volume periods. A government-issued ID (driver's license or other state ID) is required
- Laptops are allowed, but wireless internet will not be provided
- Due to time constraints, each individual may only to come to the microphone once

In writing. Members of the public are invited to submit written comments via email before midnight ET on October 1, 2011. Submit comments: 2011OrganicListening@ams.usda.gov

Next steps. Soon after the meeting, the USDA will post a full transcript and other related resources at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/2011OrganicListening>. The USDA will use all written and oral public comments to help inform future planning related to organic agriculture and markets.

Questions?

Please contact Mark Lipson, Organic & Sustainable Agriculture Policy Advisor
2011OrganicListening@ams.usda.gov | (202) 720-4256

¹ The 2010-2015 USDA Strategic Plan establishes a target of 20,655 certified organic operations (U.S.) in 2015 from the 2009 baseline of 16,564, a 25% increase over that period. See <http://www.ocfo.usda.gov/usdasp/sp2010/sp2010.pdf>, p. 9-10.



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Agenda

8:30 a.m.	Opening Remarks <i>Mark Lipson, Organic & Sustainable Agriculture Policy Advisor</i>
9:00 a.m.	Welcome & Introductions <i>Kathleen A. Merrigan, Ph.D., Deputy Secretary of Agriculture;</i>
9:30 a.m.	Public Comments
10:45 a.m.	Break
11:00 a.m.	Public Comments
12:15 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 p.m.	Additional Introductions & Public Comments
2:30 p.m.	Break
2:45 p.m.	Public Comments
3:45 p.m.	Closing Remarks
4:00 p.m.	Adjourn

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