

NOP and NOSB Collaboration on Grower Group Certifications

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TO: All USDA Certifying Agents
FROM: Barbara C. Robinson, Deputy Administrator

After speaking with the Chair of the NOSB, Andrea Caroe, about grower groups, we have come to the following determination in the National Organic Program, effective immediately:

1. NOP will do rulemaking to address the concerns that we have in the Program, but
2. NOP will also collaborate with the Board about this – this will be a topic on the fall meeting agenda for the NOSB.
3. In the interim, we have the 2002 NOSB recommendation on grower group certification (PDF). We will re-publish this on the website under "Today's News." ACAs are reminded that as long as they use the NOSB recommendation for interim guidance, no enforcement action will be taken by the Program related to grower group certification. The NOSB recommendation is quite detailed in scope.

As discussed, there may be some areas of the NOP regulations which might be amended, or suggested for amendment, which would require public input through notice and comment rulemaking. NOP will consult with the Board on these areas, prior to drafting rulemaking, but certainly during the rulemaking period.