

From: wobblywo1@yahoo.com
Sent: Monday, May 01, 2006 12:43 PM
To: Frances, Valerie
Subject: Strengthen the Organic Milk label--Docket #TM-05-14

May 1, 2006

Ms. Valerie Frances

Dear Ms. Frances,

I am writing to voice my concern over the delay in setting enforceable pasture standards for organic livestock animals and in response to the advanced notice of proposed rulemaking on Access to Pasture in Organic Milk Production (Docket #TM-05-14). I believe that at the very least, the USDA should adopt the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) Draft Recommendations of Nov. 17, 2005 into the regulations for the National Organic Program. This recommendation will at least provide a minimum standard that animals should have access to pasture for no less than 120 days in a year so that companies who are not providing any pasture will not be able to sell their milk as organic.

As a consumer who pays a premium price for organic milk, I expect that milk to come from animals that grazed outdoors for most of their lives and were not confined indoors. Those practices are associated with sustainable agriculture systems and healthier animals, which I support when I pay a premium for organic products. I am dismayed to learn that I may not know that the organic milk I buy comes from animals that may have been confined and not provided adequate access to pasture. If this loophole is not corrected soon, I will not pay a premium for organic milk and meat products that do not guarantee pasture access was provided. My sentiments are well reflected in a recent nationwide survey of 1485 U. S. online adults conducted by Consumers Union that showed that:

--More than two-thirds of those surveyed and 75% of women believe that the national organic standards should require that animals graze outdoors.

--Few consumers (only 14%) would continue to pay a premium for organic milk that came from cows that were confined indoors and did not graze outdoors (have access to pasture)

Without enforceable standards in place, the market for organic milk and meat products will be in jeopardy. Please take steps to ensure that my trust in organic foods can remain as high as possible and adopt the National Organic Standards Board November 2005 recommendation into the regulations.

Sincerely,

Mr. Ted Goodnight

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