

Certification Recommendations -- 1995

NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS BOARD FINAL RECOMMENDATION ADDENDUM NUMBER 7 ORGANIC GOOD MANUFACTURING PRACTICES

Date adopted: April 25, 1995
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COMMENTARY

Section 6510 of the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA) outlines some general standards for certified organic handling operations. In addition, Section 6512 of the OFPA, states: "If a production or handling practice is not prohibited or otherwise restricted under this chapter, such practices shall be permitted unless it is determined that such practice would be inconsistent with the applicable organic certification program." The NOSB thinks that it is in the best interest of those affected by the National Organic Program to have more specific guidelines established for organic handling operations and to more clearly define those handling practices that are "inconsistent with the applicable organic certification program."

The NOSB recognizes that all organic handling operations must comply with all federal, state, and local food handling regulations. In addition, many organic handling operations must comply with the current good manufacturing practices outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations, Volume 21, Chapter 1, Part 110. These current regulations form the basis for organic good manufacturing and handling standards.

While complying with current food handling regulations, organic handling operations must prevent the "loss of organic integrity" of the organic food and feed. "Loss of organic integrity" includes commingling organic food or feed with conventional food or feed; contamination of organic food or feed with substances that are not included on the National List of allowed synthetic materials or that are on the list of prohibited naturals; or the use of prohibited handling practices as described in the OFPA and this document.

ORGANIC GOOD MANUFACTURING PRACTICES

GOOD MANUFACTURING PRACTICE IN PROCESSING, PACKING, OR HOLDING ORGANICALLY PRODUCED HUMAN FOOD AND ANIMAL FEED

I. Definitions (refer to 21 CFR Part 110.3)

The following definitions shall be effective for the processing, packing, or holding organically produced human food and animal feed by a certified organic handler.

1. "Loss of Organic Integrity" means the contamination of an organically produced raw agricultural product or an organic processed food by commingling with non-organically produced food or by contact with substances that are not included on the National list of allowed materials.
2. "Critical Control Point" means a point in a food process used by a certified organic handler where there is a high probability that improper control may cause, allow, or contribute to a hazard, a loss of organic integrity of the food, or to filth in the final food or decomposition of the final food.

3. "Quality Control Operation" means a planned and systematic procedure for taking all actions necessary to prevent an organic food from being adulterated within the meaning of the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act and to prevent the loss of organic integrity of the food.

4. "Sanitize" means to adequately treat food-contact surfaces by a process that is effective in destroying vegetative cells of microorganisms of public health significance, and in substantially reducing numbers of other undesirable microorganisms, but without adversely affecting the product or its safety for the consumer or causing the loss of organic integrity of the organic food.

II. Requirements of Certified Organic Handlers

1. All certified organic handlers must comply with the current good manufacturing practices specified in the Code of Federal Regulations, Volume 21, Chapter 1, Part 110. In addition, certified organic handlers must comply with all other federal, state, and local food handling regulations.

2. All certified organic handlers must comply with the following additional requirements for the processing, packing, or holding of organically produced human food.

a) Cleanliness [refer to 21 CFR Part 110 (b) (9)]

Necessary precautions must be taken to protect against contamination of food, food-contact surfaces, or food-packaging materials with microorganisms or foreign substances including, but not limited to, perspiration, hair, cosmetics, tobacco, chemicals, substances that are not included on the National list of allowed materials, and medicines applied to the skin.

b) Education and Training [refer to 21 CFR Part 110.10 (c)]

Food handlers and supervisors should receive appropriate training in proper food handling techniques, proper organic food handling techniques, and food-protection principles and should be informed of the danger of poor personal hygiene and insanitary practices.

c) Plant Construction/Design [refer to 21 CFR Part 110.20 (b) (2)]

Plant construction and design must permit the taking of proper precautions to reduce the potential for contamination of food, food-contact surfaces, or food-packaging materials with pests, microorganisms, chemicals, substances that are not included on the National list of allowed materials, filth, or other extraneous material.

d) Pest Control [refer to 21 CFR Part 110.35 (c)]

Pest control substances that are not included on the National List of allowed materials or that appear on the National List of prohibited natural materials shall not be used during the processing, packing, or holding of organically produced human food and animal feed. Should the use of prohibited pest control substances be required to control an infestation, all organic food and feed must be removed from the facility before and during the application of the prohibited pest control substance. Organic food and feed may be brought back into the facility when there is no danger of contamination of the organic food with the prohibited pest control substance.

e) Sanitation/Food Contact Surfaces [refer to 21 CFR Part 110.35 (d)]

In organic handling operations, treatment of food contact surfaces, including utensils and food-contact surfaces of equipment, with cleaning compounds and sanitizers must be done in such a way as to prevent the loss of organic integrity of the food.

f) Processing Aids [refer to 21 CFR Part 170.3 (o) (24)]

For the purposes of labeling organic foods or foods purporting to contain organic ingredients, an "ingredient" is defined as any substance used in the preparation of the food product that is still present in the final product as consumed, even if in modified form.

g) Boiler Water Additives [refer to 21 CFR Part 173.310 (a)]

Residues of boiler water additives must be prevented from contacting organically produced food by the use of steam without entrained water, steam filtering, or other means.

3. Certified organic handlers may not use any of the following prohibited practices for the processing, packing, or holding of organically produced human food.

a) Chemicals Used in Washing/Peeling [refer to 21 CFR Part 173.315]

Substances that are not included on the National list of allowed materials shall not be used to wash, peel, or otherwise prepare organically produced raw agricultural products or organic food.

b) Water Used in Handling

Water that contacts conventionally produced raw agricultural products during handling operations such as washing, floating, rinsing, or cooling must not be used for handling of organically produced raw agricultural products. If State or local water conservation laws prevent compliance with this provision, then organically produced raw agricultural products that come in contact with water used to handle conventionally produced raw agricultural products must receive a thorough final clean water rinse before further handling.

c) Ionizing Radiation [refer to 21 CFR Part 179.26]

Ionizing radiation for the purpose of killing insects or microorganisms in the food (21 CFR 179.26) may not be used in the handling of organic food. Use of radiation (X-rays) for inspection of organic food is allowed (21 CFR 179.21).

d) Recombinant DNA Technology

Organisms that are created through the use of recombinant DNA technology, or products of such organisms, shall not be used as ingredients or processing aids in the handling of organic food unless they appear on the National List as "allowed synthetics."

III. Requirements of Certifying Agents

During the inspection of certified organic handling operations, the certifying agent shall assess compliance with the good manufacturing practices for processing, packing, or holding organically produced human food outlined in this document.