

# USDA Agricultural Marketing Service National Organic Program

## An Overview

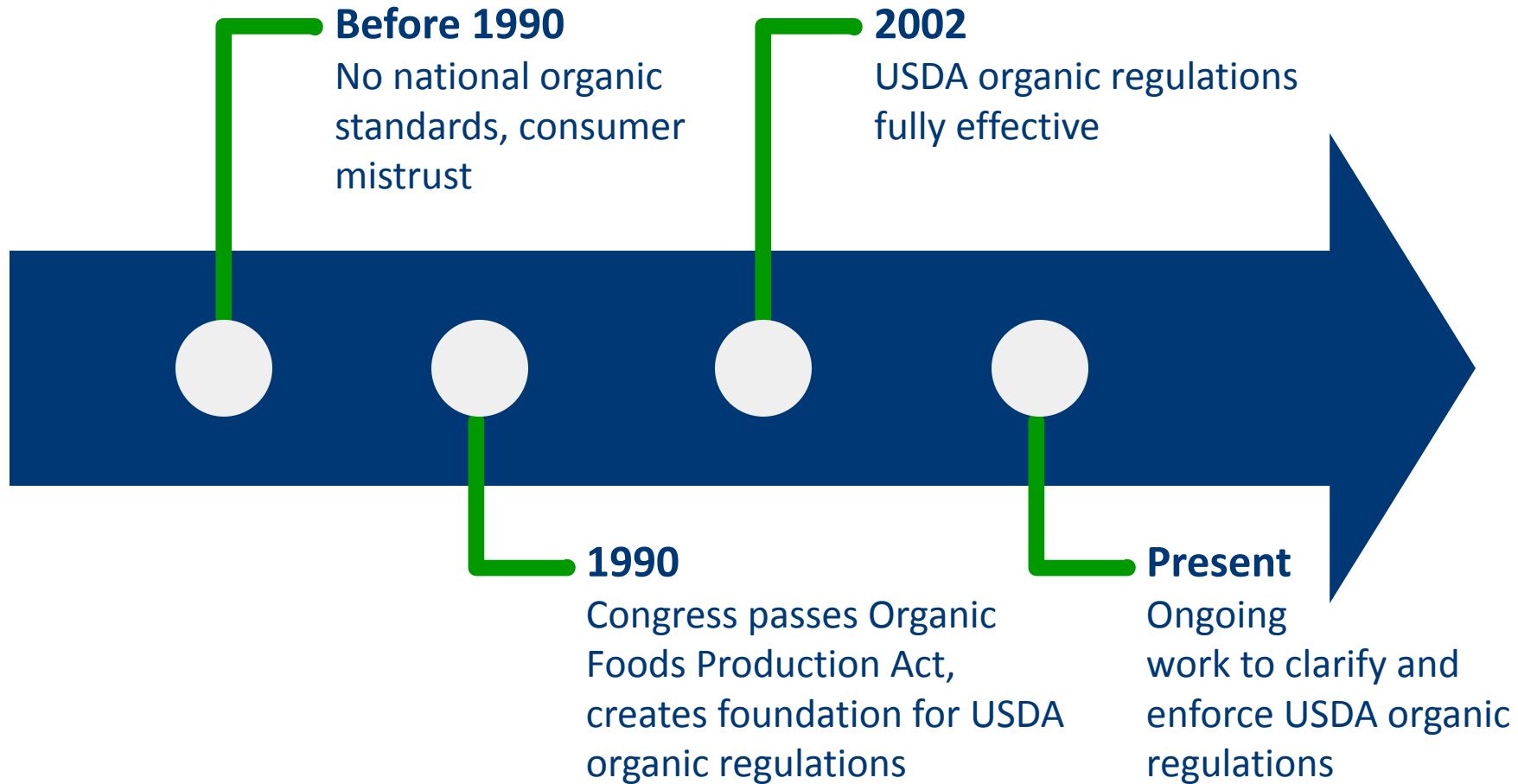


# The National Organic Program (NOP)



- **Mission:**  
Ensure the integrity of USDA organic products throughout the world
- **Vision:**  
Organic Integrity from Farm to Table,  
Consumers Trust the Organic Label
- **Core Role:**  
Implement the Organic Foods Production Act and the USDA organic regulations

# Organic in the U.S.: A Brief History



# Quick Facts About NOP



## Oversight Responsibility:

- 75+ certifying agents worldwide
- 30,000+ certified organic operations in over 120 countries
  - 21,600 in the United States at end of 2015
- Over \$39 billion in U.S. organic sales

## Staffing:

- 45 employees in three Divisions and the Office of the Deputy Administrator
- Mostly based in Washington DC

## Budget:

FY 2012: \$6.919 million

FY 2013: \$6.369 million

FY 2014, 2015 and 2016: \$9 million

# What Does the Program Do?



- Develop and maintain organic standards
- Accredite and oversee third party organic certifying agents, who review, inspect, and approve organic producers and handlers
- Implement international organic trade agreements
- Investigate complaints of violations (example: uncertified farmer selling food as organic, selling conventional food as organic)
- Support the work of the National Organic Standards Board

# NOP Organization and Activities



## National Organic Standards Board

- National List recommendations

## National Organic Program Office of Deputy Administrator Miles McEvoy

- Communication
- Administration

## Standards Division

- Rules, Guidance, Instructions,
- National List

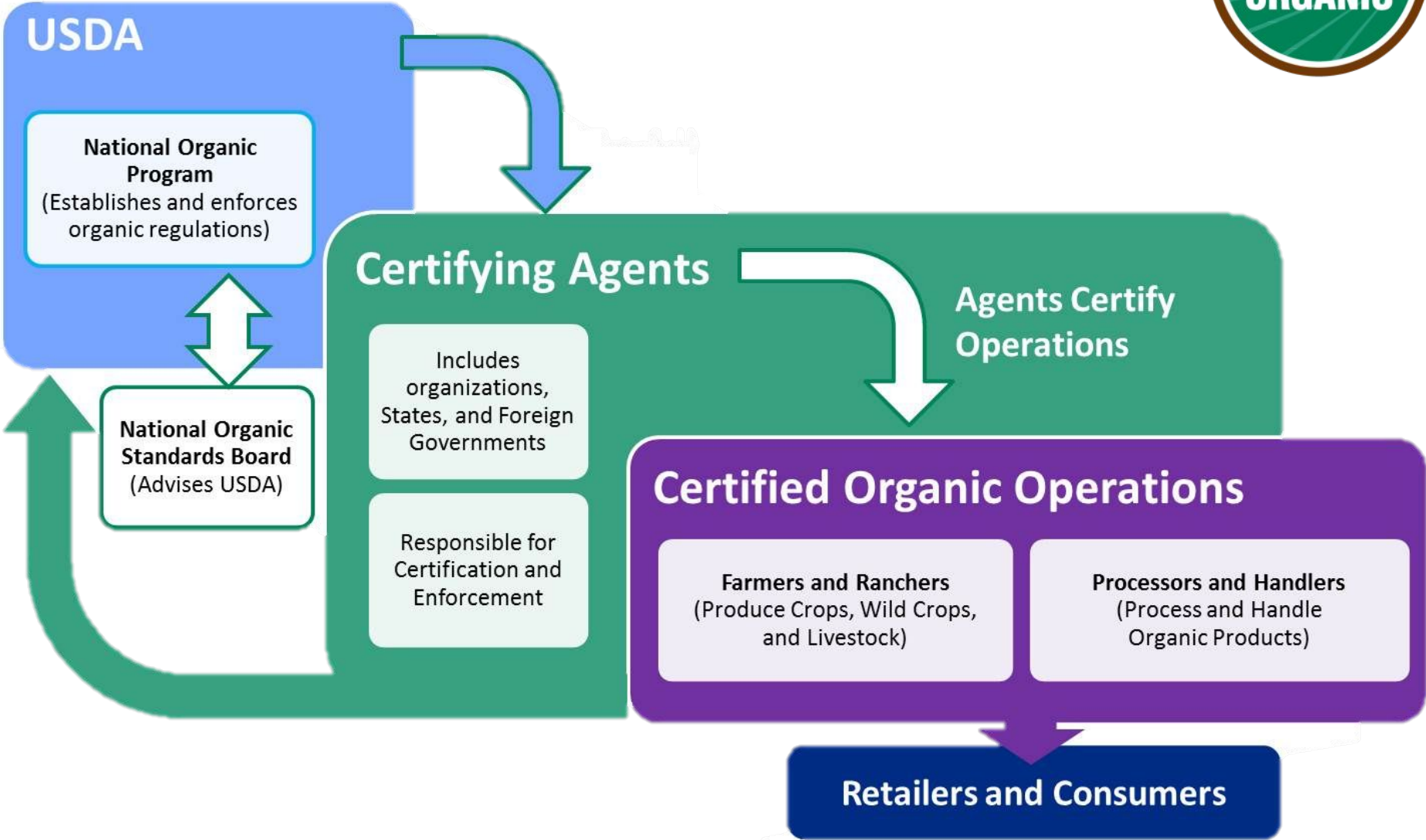
## Accreditation & International Activities Division

- Accreditation process
- Technical outreach
- International agreements

## Compliance & Enforcement Division

- Complaints
- Investigations
- Initiate enforcement actions
- Market surveillance

# The Organic Stakeholder Community



# Definition of “organic” – USDA regulation



A production system, managed in accordance with the USDA Regulation, to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve bio-diversity.



# Scope of USDA Organic Standards



The USDA organic standards cover the product from farm to table, including soil and water quality, pest control, livestock practices, and rules for food additives.

Organic farms and processors:

- Preserve natural resources and biodiversity
- Maintain or improve soil organic matter and minimize soil erosion
- Support animal health and welfare
- Only use approved materials
- Do not use genetically modified ingredients
- Receive annual onsite inspections
- Separate organic food from non-organic food

# Requirements for Organic Crops



- Governed by site-specific **Organic System Plan**
- Maintain **buffer zones** to prevent prohibited substances from impacting organic areas
- **MUST NOT** use prohibited substances, sewage sludge, irradiation, or genetic engineering
- **MUST** use organic seeds and organic seedlings when commercially available
- **MUST** document pest and weed management
- **MUST** use practices that maintain or improve soil conditions and minimize erosion
- **MAY** use natural inputs and/or USDA-approved synthetic substances



# Requirements for Livestock Operations



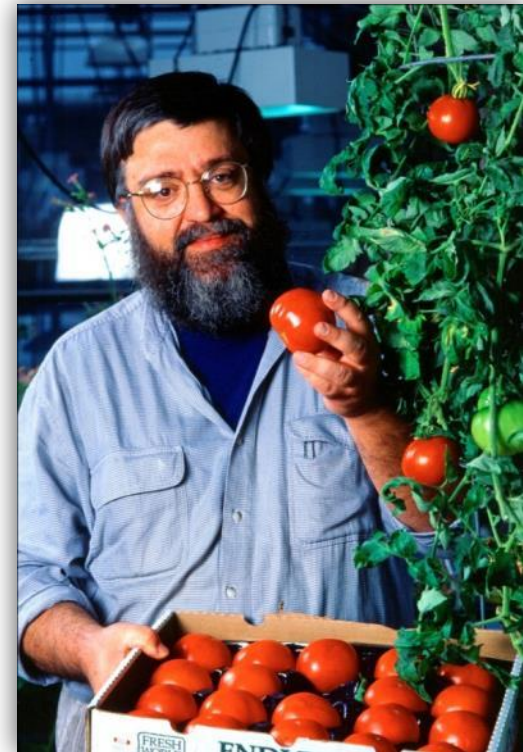
- Governed by **Organic System Plan**
- Provide **access to the outdoors** and good living conditions year-round
- Use 100% **organic feed**
- Antibiotics, growth hormones, slaughter byproducts, and genetic engineering not allowed
- **Document** the organic status of all animals
- Ruminants must have **access to pasture** during the grazing season: 30% of the animal's dry matter intake must come from pasture; grazing season must be at least 120 days



# Requirements for Processors and Handlers



- Governed by an **Organic System Plan**
- Prevent the **commingling or contamination** of organic products by non-organic products during processing
- **Prevent pests** using only approved practices
- Use **certified organic agricultural ingredients** in organically-labeled products
- Use only **approved label claims**
- Not use **irradiation or genetic engineering**



# Allowed and Prohibited Substances



- The **National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances** is part of the **organic regulations**.
- The National List includes **synthetic** substances which are **allowed** and **natural** substances which are **prohibited**.
- The National List has separate sections for **crops, livestock, and handling/food processing**.
- All substances are reviewed by the **National Organic Standards Board**. The Board makes recommendations on substances to the USDA.



# Standards Division: Key Activities



- **Key Activities**

- Develop new rules and coordinate clearance
- Develop and maintain Regulatory Priorities Agenda
- Draft new and updated guidance and policy memos based on NOSB recommendations, Office of Inspector General findings, certifier and community questions, and priority needs
- Develop materials to support rollout of new standards, respond to letters and questions about standards
- Maintain National List, including petition intake and response, and list management activities
- Support the National Organic Standards Board

# Accreditation Activities



- NOP oversees the work of certifiers, which certify over 30,000 certified organic operations.
  - audits,
  - audit report reviews,
  - notices of noncompliance,
  - corrective action reviews,
  - responding to questions.

# International Trade



- The United States has trade arrangements with several nations to facilitate the exchange of organic products and provide market opportunities for organic producers.
- **Equivalency Agreements:**
  - U.S.-Canada – Launched in 2009
  - U.S.-European Union – Launched in June 2012
  - Japan – Effective in January 2014
  - Korea - Effective July 2014
  - Switzerland – 2015
- **Recognition Agreements:**
  - India, Israel, New Zealand



# Global Organic Food Market in 2014



According to findings in *The World of Organic Agriculture: Statistics & Emerging Trends 2016* by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and IFOAM—Organics International:

- Global sales of organic food reached \$80 billion in 2014
- US was the largest market at \$35.9 billion
- Germany was the second largest market, followed by France and China
- There were more than 2.3 million organic producers from 172 countries
- A total of 43.7 million hectares were organically managed
- 87 countries in the world had organic regulations



## Key Activities:

- Investigate complaints, work with operations to achieve compliance where possible and take enforcement actions as appropriate
- Represent the NOP in appeals of adverse actions
- Work with certifiers, State Programs and Federal partners on enforcement of the OFPA and the USDA organic regulations
- Lead enforcement-related policy development and outreach efforts

# Purposes of Enforcement

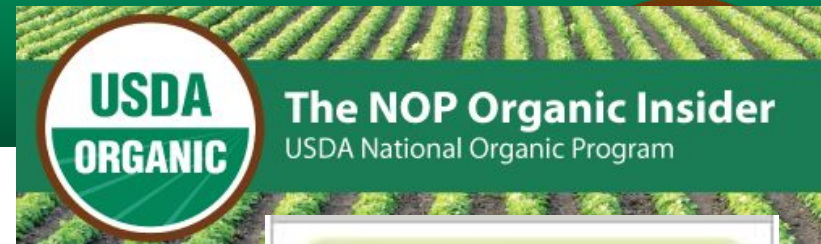


**Purpose:** To protect the integrity of the organic standards so as to facilitate commerce

- Protect consumers
- Ensure a fair market for the great majority of organic operations that operate in compliance with the law

# NOP Communications

- Email notification service
- Quarterly Newsletter “Organic Integrity”
- “Hot Topics” Website Postings
- Fact Sheets, Questions and Answers
- Briefings, Talking Points
- Teleconferences and Webinars with Organic Community
- National Organic Standards Board Public Meetings
- Conference Presentations and Listening Sessions
- Certifying Agent/Body Training



# Organic Literacy Initiative



USDA ORGANIC

## USDA Organic 101

*What Does the Organic Label Mean?*

## Is Organic An Option For Me?

Information on Organic Agriculture for Farmers, Ranchers, and Businesses

This brochure provides an overview of the USDA organic regulations and how USDA supports organic agriculture. It includes information on getting certified, funding opportunities, and educational resources.

For more information, visit [www.ams.usda.gov/organicinfo](http://www.ams.usda.gov/organicinfo) or, if viewing this brochure online, use the icons in each section.

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## USDA Organic 201

*A Closer Look at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Organic Programs*

## USDA Organic Resource Guide 2012

*Your Guide to Organic and Organic-Related USDA Programs*

# National Organic Standards Board



# National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)



- 15 member board governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)
- Assist in the development of standards for substances to be used in organic production and advise USDA on other aspects of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA)
- Meets twice annually - provides opportunity for public participation, both at meeting and in writing
- NOSB has:
  - a **charter** with established mission and duties
  - a Designated Federal Official (DFO)
  - Subcommittees and Chair





# National List



- The NOSB recommends substances on the National List by a 2/3 majority;
- NOSB members must use specific criteria from OFPA when considering the need for the substance and its impacts on human health and the environment;
- Relatively stable – few things added, few things removed over the last five years;
- The National List is not just comprised of synthetic materials
  - Natural nonagricultural ingredients
  - Agricultural ingredients that may not be commercially available in organic form

# Thank You

Organic Integrity from  
Farm to Table,  
Consumers Trust the  
Organic Label

[www.ams.usda.gov/nop](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop)

