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March 19, 2013

Ms. Michelle Arsenault
National Organic Standards Board
USDA-AMS-NOP
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 2648-So, Ag Stop 0268
Washington, DC 20250-0268

Re: AMS-NOP-12-0070

Dear Ms. Arsenault:

Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) regarding the **Compliance, Accreditation and Certification Subcommittee's** proposal on **Calculating Percent of Organic Ingredients in Multi-ingredient Products**. PCO is a NOP-accredited certifying agent that certifies more than 700 operations, including around 165 crops operations, 385 livestock operations, 120 processor/handler operations and various combinations of these categories.

PCO appreciates the subcommittee's awareness of certifier inconsistency surrounding the percentage calculations of multi-ingredient certified products. PCO's method of calculating organic ingredients in multi-ingredient products is based on information provided by the NOP in a 2012 Training Module, available on the NOP website. To locate document, follow the link and click on the module labeled "Organic Labeling" under the heading, "NOP Training Modules – 2012":
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateN&topNav=NationalOrganicProgram&leftNav=NationalOrganicProgram&page=NOPTraining&description=NOP%20Training&acct=nopgeninfo>. Elements of the subcommittee's recommendation are not in complete alignment with PCO's current practice or the above-referenced NOP Training Module. If the recommendation is accepted by NOP, PCO will need to adjust our process of verification accordingly. PCO urges the subcommittee to take a sound and sensible approach to ingredient calculations.

1. Proposed Regulatory Change – PCO agrees with the proposed regulatory change to align with current practice and with the recommendation.

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2. *Self-Calculating Forms* – PCO disagrees with any requirement for all certifiers to use one specific type of self-calculating form because this is an overly prescriptive form of recordkeeping. Instead, PCO would welcome an example of this type of form to be provided by the NOP, and certifiers could choose to use it within their certification programs.

3. *Salt Excluded* – PCO agrees that sodium chloride is the only type of salt that may be excluded from percentage calculations. If salt contains non-organic additives, the additives should not be excluded, and the final product would not qualify for 100% organic labeling category.

4. *Water Excluded* – PCO welcomes further guidance from the NOP on the exclusion of water from the percentage calculation. PCO suggests that the guidance include examples for calculating various types of products.

5. *Processed Single Ingredients* – PCO agrees that specification sheets from suppliers should be an option for a certifier to verify organic content of a single organic ingredient. Specification sheets from suppliers most often provide the information needed to perform calculations according to PCO's method of calculation.

6. *Multi-ingredient Ingredients* – PCO does not require specific percentages for individual organic ingredients within a multi-ingredient product that is not being labeled as 100% organic. The NOP Training Module from which PCO's calculation method is adapted does not make any reference to percent organic content of individual ingredients. The approach is to simply consider that if all ingredients are certified to the "organic" category, then the final product is also eligible for the "organic" category.

7. *Organic Label versus Organic Content* – PCO agrees that the use of an approved non-organic processing aid that is not present in the final product should not preclude the final product being calculated as 100% organic content, even though the product would not qualify for the 100% organic label claim.

8. *Raw Agricultural and Single-ingredient Ingredients* – PCO agrees that certifiers can accept that raw agricultural and single ingredient products contain 100% organic content. In cases where additional verification is necessary, the certifier may verify the content with the certifier of that ingredient. Certificates issued by PCO do not list raw agricultural products as 100% organic, and we are happy provide additional verification to any certifier that inquires.

9. *NOP Guidance* – PCO welcomes further guidance and resources on this issue, and encourages the NOP to make this a priority in light of the current inconsistency among certifiers.

PCO appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and thanks the NOSB members for their careful consideration.

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Sincerely,

Johanna Miranda

Johanna Miranda
Policy Director