

Dear Organic Food Producer,

Previous action by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) threatens my trust in the organic food label, which I have come to depend on in the marketplace. I am happy to see more and more companies and increasing numbers of stores entering the organic market, and I would not like to see this growth hurt by the actions of USDA for whatever reasons it may have. The organic market is only as strong as consumer trust in the organic food label. **I'm writing to ask you to support me by telling USDA to put a moratorium on the dramatic changes announced in the September 16, 2013 Federal Register (78 FR 56811, National Organic Program-Sunset Process) and the subsequent USDA Organic Insider on March 6, 2014 and allow the public the opportunity to comment.**

I have trusted the organic label and it is important to me for a number health and environmental reasons. To summarize my concerns, I know that the standard-setting process was established by Congress in the *Organic Foods Production Act of 1990* as a stakeholder-driven process with a broad opportunity for public participation. Congress, in its wisdom, established the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) to represent the full range of organic interests, from producers to consumers. The NOSB effectively sets the national list of allowed and prohibited substances and scrutinizes the health and environmental effects of all substances used in organic production. A large part of my confidence in this process comes from the fact that Congress established a sunset provision for all synthetic materials on the national list, requiring two-thirds of the NOSB to vote every five years to relist these substances –just to make sure that the allowed synthetic substances have been reviewed with any new information on potential hazards and that they are really essential to production. This rigorous process has protected consumers and farmers and ensures, like any sunset clause, that serious consideration is given to a decision on the continued use of the allowed materials.

Organic was envisioned as a natural process of growing and processing food, to the extent possible, with synthetic materials being the exception. In fact, when Congress passed the law, the report language said, “Most consumers believe that absolutely no synthetic substances are used in organic production. For the most part, they are correct and this is the basic tenet of this legislation. But there are a few limited exceptions. . .” It is a tough standard and that is why it commands a higher price in the marketplace.

Please tell Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack that he should issue a moratorium on the announced changes to the NOSB procedures and invite public comment before putting these measures in place. A moratorium will provide critical time to consider issues related to the intent and spirit of the *Organic Foods Production Act*, the intended roles and responsibilities of the NOSB, enforcement of sunset as intended to require a re-listing decision by the Board, proper procedures and policies for public participation and transparency in decision making, and necessary steps to protect and grow consumer trust in the organic food label.

Organic is a growing market that is now in virtually all communities throughout the U.S. Let's keep organic growing and not undermine my and others' trust in the organic food label.

Sincerely,