



BEYOND PESTICIDES

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March 30, 2017

Ms. Michelle Arsenault
National Organic Standards Board
USDA-AMS-NOP
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Room 2648-S, Mail Stop 0268
Washington, DC 20250-0268

Re. CS, LS, NOP: Moving forward on “inerts” review

These comments to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) on its Spring 2017 agenda are submitted on behalf of Beyond Pesticides. Founded in 1981 as a national, grassroots, membership organization that represents community-based organizations and a range of people seeking to bridge the interests of consumers, farmers and farmworkers, Beyond Pesticides advances improved protections from pesticides and alternative pest management strategies that reduce or eliminate a reliance on pesticides. Our membership and network span the 50 states and the world.

There continues to be an unconscionable delay in implementing existing NOSB recommendations for replacing the obsolete references to EPA List 3 and List 4 “inert” ingredients on the National List with listings of actual approved non-active ingredients in pesticide products. The board voted unanimously in 2012 to begin a review process of “inert” ingredients, identified the “inerts” requiring review, and established a measured process of review over 5 years. “Inert” ingredients frequently compose as much as 99% of pesticide products, and due to NOSB scrutiny of active ingredients they may be the most hazardous ingredients in pesticide products used in organic production. In these comments, we suggest a process for moving forward.

We enclose with these comments a Beyond Pesticides report that places the issue of “inert” ingredients into its historical and policy context, ending with a proposal for moving forward with the consideration of the use of “inerts” in organic production that is consistent with NOSB recommendations. In summary, the report covers:

- The definition of “inert” ingredients by the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA);
- The importance of “inerts” to environmental and health advocates, who point out that so-called “inert” ingredients are not inert, make up the largest part of a pesticide product, and are not disclosed to users or others who may be exposed;
- The history of EPA action on “inerts;”
- Why “inerts” matter;
- “Inert” ingredients in OFPA;

- NOSB efforts to review “inerts;”
- How the toxicity of “inerts” used in organic production compares with active ingredients used in organic production and “inerts” in products not allowed in organic production; and
- Steps for moving forward.

We urge the NOSB to insist that NOP move forward quickly with Implementation of the NOSB recommendations on “inert” ingredients, beginning with the MOU between USDA and EPA that establishes the responsibilities of NOP, EPA, and the NOSB. To allow the current lack of movement to persist raises serious compliance issues and threatens the integrity of the USDA organic label.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry Shistar". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Terry Shistar, Ph.D.
Board of Directors