

**Oral comments to National Organic Standards Board. April 18, 2023.**

I'm Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides, former NOSB member. Thank you for your service on the NOSB.

Beyond Pesticides, founded in 1981, bridges the interests of consumers, farmers, and environmentalists.

This meeting of the NOSB affirms the critical role of the board in engaging the public in a transparent process, governed by stakeholders, that is unique in the governmental regulatory system—unique by design—to think and operate holistically outside the silos of individual practices or exposure to individual chemicals.

NOSB authority establishes a credibility and integrity that is often lost in the typical governmental processes.

We must celebrate what has been achieved under the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA), and fiercely defend it as well. As members of the NOSB, you are not just fulfilling a role in a niche market, you are affirming and defending methods that are intended to establish integrity, incentivize innovation, challenge conventional wisdom, are cutting edge and establish public trust in the organic label.

With your statutory authority, you can advise the Secretary that any efforts to weaken this authority, limit the leadership role of this board, or fail to carry out National List decisions are an undermining of your authority and public trust.

You have our submitted comments on all the issues before you. I'd like to focus on the petition and Technical Review for potassium sorbate (KS) as both instructive and affirming of the critical role of the NOSB.

You have the authority to reject KS for the proposed uses. The TR clearly defines elements of review not addressed by the petition that are integral to organic systems — effects to health, environment—compatibility with organic, essentiality. Let's take soil. The discussion document states: "KS antimicrobial properties and characteristics could alter the microbiome in the soil. . .it is reasonable to expect that it would inhibit the growth of soil microorganisms, and a significant number of organisms regarded as beneficial are suppressed."

The authority vested in this board under OFPA to ensure soil management as part of a biological system that replaces dependency on petrochemical pesticides and fertilizers is a principle found nowhere under policies of other statutes governing acceptable levels of purposely added toxicants in agriculture, the food supply, and the management of land.

The petition process, the sunset review (as originally conceived by Congress), and the TR review put the NOSB in a key leadership position to take on the current existential health crises, biodiversity collapse, and the climate emergency— and ensure a livable future.

Organic must lead in how we manage the soil, sequester carbon, take petrochemical pesticides and fertilizers out of land management—and then, under continuous improvement— how we move to eliminate plastics, and adopt nonpolluting disinfection practices.

Without a strong OFPA and NOSB, we will continue to threaten the ecosystems that support life. Thank you.