



UNITED TO GROW FAMILY AGRICULTURE

August 3, 2017

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

While the U.S. farm economy continues to cause stress in rural America, one bright spot remains: organic agriculture. Due to year over year increases in consumer demand, organic agriculture has continued to grow. Organic farms can often achieve an added value that allows family farms to remain viable. Critical to the success of organic family farming is the integrity of the organic seal.

Recently, the integrity of the organic label has been publicly challenged. Two recent articles have highlighted issues in the organic supply chain in need of addressing. [One](#) highlighted longstanding concerns over Aurora Organic Dairy and its compliance with the Organic Access to Pasture rule.

The organic pasture rule stemmed from recommendations made by the representative National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). Its intent was to create clear and enforceable standards for organic livestock operations to demonstrate to consumers that organic dairy products come from cows raised on pasture. This rule attempted to create consistency across the standards applied to organic dairy operations both out of fairness to the organic producers and transparency to consumers. Unfortunately, a rule or regulation is only as good as its enforcement. In this instance, enforcement of the regulations for the largest organic milk producer failed. This is harmful not only to the reputation of the organic program, but also to the farmers who played by the rules.

[The second](#) article highlighted imports from Eastern Europe to the U.S. fraudulently sent as organic products. U.S. farmers have entered into organic production to capture added value on their farms using a management-intensive method of production. The fraudulent imports caused a drastic reduction in prices of organic grain and caused consumers to have suspicion in the veracity of the program. U.S. farmers cannot compete with these unfair trade practices.

National Farmers Union recognizes the challenges before the National Organic Program. Organic agriculture has exploded in popularity in recent years, and additional resources for auditing and enforcement have not been made available. However, NFU urges USDA to act swiftly and decisively to address both of these issues. Family farmers and ranchers depend on USDA and the accredited certifying agents to enforce the organic program's rigorous, NOSB-driven standards. NFU stands ready to assist USDA in maintaining the strong standards and enforcement associated with the National Organic Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Johnson", written in a cursive style.

Roger Johnson
President

CC: Deputy Administrator Miles McEvoy