

OVERVIEW OF OFARM ACTIVITIES WHICH HAVE LED TO DIRECT BENEFITS TO THE MEMBERSHIP

A bit of historical perspective. (A Timeline of our activities, led by our then Executive Director, John Bobbe, is attached for further reference)

The long awaited Standard for Organic Enforcement (SOE) is finally in place which will serve to seriously curb the infractions of import fraud, most of which occurred and was first brought to light by our own OFARM marketers. Our dogged determination to expose the depth of the problem has brought about meaning full change.

David Glasgow, Assistant Deputy Administrator of the National Organic Program (NOP), was present at our 2023 Annual meeting again, applauding the efforts OFARM in bringing about the changes to implement real enforcement opportunities. We did not accomplish it alone but certainly were leading the fight. With our ongoing collaboration with the National Organic Coalition - (NOC), Organic Farmers Association - (OFA), The Cornucopia Institute, and others we can certainly claim a good deal of credit for the outcome.

Essentially, we set the stage for getting new rules drafted, were highly involved in the content elements, and proposed meaningful changes and additions during the comment period, many of which were included in the final rule. At our very first meeting with NOP leadership, it was reported that the total NOP staff was a measly eight people with only one tasked with enforcement.

At the February 2023 annual meeting Mr. Glasgow reported they now a staff of 83 permanent staff with 17 in the enforcement team. The many others are working in the area of organic integrity, generally, development of the Organic Integrity Data Base and overseeing the operations of the 62 certification agencies registered with the NOP. This was made possible by the increased funding authorized by Congress after the need was made apparent by our collective advocacy.

Mr. Glasgow also reported that there are now developed and active relationships with other agencies involved in importation, such as Customs and Border Protection - (CBP), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – (APHIS), and the Office of the Inspector General – (OIG). With this collaboration there is now the power to stop shipments when improprieties are uncovered and civil penalties can be initiated and served. This will become a huge deterrent to fraud.

The most meaningful element of the SOE is the requirement that all ‘handlers’ involved in organic trade will now need to become certified with a NOP accredited certifier. Thus, everyone who touches and organic transaction will need to be able provide their portion of the audit trail from farm to final sale. There is also now, requirement for the issuance of Import Certificates which clearly identify shipments as organic fully filed before the shipment reaches destination. These translate to a high degree of enforcement elements which have been sparse to non-existent prior to the enactment of the SOE with a final deadline of full effect by March of 2024.

The result has been that many steps that have already been taking and have resulted in a significant decrease in questionable imports and have been directly responsible for the high prices, particularly in soybeans and to a lesser degree prices for feed grains, primarily corn. The benefit to you as a grain producer has to obvious and your support of OFARM has become a significant benefit to your potential profitability.