

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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www.organicmilk.org

NODPA



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NODPA Mission Statement and Goals:

To enable organic family dairy farmers, situated across an extensive area, to have informed discussion about matters critical to the well being of the organic dairy industry as a whole with particular emphasis on:

- 1) *Establishing a fair and sustainable floor price for their product at the wholesale level*
- 2) *Promoting ethical, ecological and economically sustainable farming practices (e.g. strict pasture requirements for organic livestock)*
- 3) *Developing networks with producers and processors of other organic commodities to strengthen infrastructure within the industry (e.g. grain growers, meat packers, etc.)*
- 4) *Establishing open dialogue with organic dairy processor/retailers to better affect producer pay price and contribute to marketing efforts.*

NODPA Public Statement

In light of the current effort being waged to amend OFPA—the law that authorized the National Organic Program—a public statement was issued on October 21 from the NODPA Board of Directors. Representatives of the Board have been meeting with other dairy producers and their representatives for the last four months to discuss these and other issues and felt that the time was right to re-state the position of NODPA on these issues. NODPA is also conducting a representative phone survey of the membership to reassess member positions on these issues.

The Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA) supports strong organic dairy standards. We are dedicated to bringing a superior product to the market for the benefit of consumers. The NODPA Board reaffirms our commitment to supplying organic dairy products produced by cows on quality pasture during the growing season, our commitment to requiring that all organic dairy replacement animals be organic from the last third of gestation (last three months of the mother's pregnancy), and our commitment that any animals with life threatening conditions must be treated with antibiotics or other prohibited medications but then be removed from organic production. We are mindful of consumer's willingness to pay a premium price for our products and we are willing to uphold and follow the strong standards that they desire.

As an organization of organic family dairy farmers, we know first hand about the learning curve involved in being able to manage our animals and farms so that we have healthy herds that don't need to rely on antibiotics. Many organic dairy producers have been doing so for a number of years. We know it is possible, and there is much networking among producers to share the knowledge gained over the years. We realize that learning to manage without the use of antibiotics and other conventional medications can be a challenge to transitioning and newer organic producers and occasionally to long time producers. But rather than see current standards weakened, NODPA encourages more education of both organic dairy producers and veterinarians on alternative health care, more research to establish efficacy of alternative health care methods, and encouragement and utilization of best management practices that lead to healthy herds. Allowing replacement dairy animals to only be under organic management for one year before milk production instead of from last third of gestation, as a few certifiers are doing and as may happen

because of the fallout from the Harvey Court Ruling, is a shortcut that allows use of animal drugs, GMO feeds, and animal based feeds in the first year of life. Once a farm has transitioned to organic, we believe that the organic circle should be kept closed and all animals should be organically managed through their full life cycle.

While NODPA is disappointed that the recent Harvey Court Ruling requires the loss of the 80/20 dairy herd transition clause that gave dairy farms consideration in making the financially challenging transition to organic production, we do support the language being proposed to allow the animals to transition along with the farm's crops and land. We realize this will be financially more difficult for farms, and we encourage all efforts to find and provide cost share or financial compensation for farms making the transition.

NODPA continues to assist dairy producers in the U.S. make the transition to organic production to help meet the continually growing demand for organic dairy products in our region and country. We do not, however, want to see the standards watered down in order to more easily meet that demand. We believe organic standards should remain at least as strict as they are currently, and in some areas stricter, and that weakening them will compromise the integrity of our products. We encourage increasing assistance, both educational and financial, so that more farms can transition to meet the demand, rather than lowering standards.

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The purpose of the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance is to enable organic dairy family farms, situated across an extensive area, to maintain the sustainability of organic dairy farming in the Northeast Region.