

What is NODPA and How Is It Organized?

By Ed Maltby

In the last few months we have had some questions about how NODPA was started; what is NODPA's purpose and what is NODPA's legal structure. Here are a few general answers.

The mission of NODPA is to **enable organic dairy family 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 price for their product at the wholesale level.
2. Promoting ethical, ecological and economically sustainable farming practices.
3. Developing networks with producers and processors of other organic commodities to strengthen the infrastructure within the industry.
4. Establishing open dialogue with organic dairy processors and retailers in order to better influence producer pay price and to contribute to marketing efforts.

NODPA started in February 2001, at a sum-

mit meeting of organic dairy producers in the Northeast after one processor arbitrarily lowered their farm gate price and farmers' future pay price was threatened. These producers came together to discuss critical issues within the organic dairy industry including: maintaining a sustainable milk price; the National Organic Program; alternative milk markets; and building effective communication lines between fellow producers in the Northeast and beyond.

NODPA was originally housed within NOFA VT, which acted as a fiscal agent and assisted with administration and fundraising while the organization grew. Initially, NODPA had a governing committee of state representatives made up of both organic dairy farmers and non-dairy supporters, with Lisa McCrory acting as a coordinator. A NODPA Board was set up in 2003 with By-laws *in progress*. In February 2004 Sarah Flack took over as coordinator, By-laws were finalized in July 2004, and planning started for an eventual separate legal entity, with discussions centering on developing some form of non-profit. Most of the funding for staff and activities in these early days came from the John Merck Fund with growing contributions coming in from the annual NODPA Field Days, membership contributions, and newsletter advertising. NOFA VT worked with the NODPA board

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and state representatives to plan the transition to an independent organization, and ensured there was a healthy bank balance. In February 2005, Ed Maltby took over from Sarah, and NODPA set up its own administration and became a separate entity.

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, Inc. is a Massachusetts non-profit corporation and is exempt from federal taxes under section 501 (c) (5) which provides exemptions for labor, agricultural or horticultural organizations. NODPA works very closely with Community Alliances of Interdependent Agriculture (CAIA) which is a 501 (c) (3) whose mission is to “enable people to create food and farming systems which improve and sustain ecological, economic and social health through systemic, community based, self-organizing governance.” By working closely with CAIA on different projects and activities, NODPA increases its ability to accept funds from foundations and supporters. The NODPA by laws define members in the following way:

Section 1: Voting Members: Voting members of the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers shall include any organic family dairy farm in the Northeast Region. Each farm shall have one (1) vote.

Section 2: Associate (non-voting) Members: Associate Members of the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance shall be any organization, group or individual that does not produce organic milk.

A fee shall be assessed for Associate Membership.

Associate members will not be able to vote on business of the Corporation.

The fee for associate membership has been assessed by the board as the cost of a subscription to the NODPA News.

NODPA has a board of eight members which is made up of the executive officers plus representatives from each state. The board is elected by the state representatives on an annual basis. NODPA doesn't yet have a process for appointing or electing representatives from the different states and we are continuously looking for farmers who are willing to commit some time to participate in the governance of NODPA as state representatives. All board members and state representatives must be voting members of NODPA in good standing which means they are certified organic dairy producers farming in the Northeast. NODPA also has provision for associate members who are not organically certified organic dairy farmers but wish to support the organization.

NODPA's tax returns are prepared by Boiselle, Morton & Associates, Hadley, MA.

For more information or to volunteer to be ♦ *a state repre-*

Nominations Sought for the NOSB

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is requesting nominations to fill four upcoming vacancies on the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The positions to be filled are: **Organic handler, scientist, consumer public interest, and an environmentalist.** The Secretary of Agriculture will appoint a person to each position to serve a 5-year term of office that will commence on January 24, 2007. USDA encourages eligible minorities, women, and persons with disabilities to apply for membership on the NOSB.

Dates: Written nominations, with cover letters and resumes, must be postmarked on or before July 14, 2006.

Addresses: Nominations should be sent to Ms. Katherine E. Benham, Advisory Board Specialist, USDA-AMS-TMP-NOP, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Room 4008-So., Ag Stop 0268, Washington, DC 20250.

For Further Information Contact: Ms. Katherine E. Benham, (202) 205-7806; E-mail: katherine.benham@usda.gov; Fax: (202) 205-7808.

The Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) of 1990 required the establishment of the NOSB--a 15-member board responsible for developing and recommending to the Secretary substances it believes should be allowed or prohibited for use in organic production and handling to be placed on the National List of Approved and Prohibited Substances. The NOSB also advises the Secretary on other aspects of the National Organic Program. ♦

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