

N D P A

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance www.nodpa.com

Dear Fellow Producers,

I know this is a very busy time to spend reading a letter and taking action. Unfortunately, the National Organic Program just posted revised **rule language concerning dairy replacement livestock that does not close the door to conventional heifers continuously being brought into organic production** on some operations. This practice puts ethical farmers, raising all replacements organically from birth, at a competitive disadvantage. Only 15 days have been allowed for public **comment--due by May 12th**. That means we have to act quickly.

Please take a little time right now to fill out the enclosed letter and fax, e-mail, or mail it to the NOP. Between spending days of my time preparing for and going to the Pasture Symposium in April, and now this, I have bags of seed still sitting in the shed instead of in the ground and much other farm work undone. But pasture and replacements are two huge issues for organic dairy and they take precedence over my own farm. I hope you too will take a few minutes now to help secure a brighter future for your own organic dairy farm.

The very best thing to do is write an individual personal letter and I urge anyone willing to take the time, to please do so. Otherwise, use the enclosed letter, but please personalize it by adding at least a few words or sentences about how not closing the loophole that lets **conventional heifers** be brought **into the organic system hurts you and your farm**. Here are some possible talking points:

1. **Allowing conventional heifers to be continuously transitioned to organic damages the market for organic dairy stock.** If you have personal experience not being able to get a premium price for your organic animals or have sold organic youngstock into the conventional market because there was no interest from organic buyers, tell about that.
2. **Talk about how much it costs you to raise your calves on organic milk** versus how much it cheaper it is for conventional calves to be raised on milk replacer. And then there's the cost difference between **organic feed** and forage versus conventional feeds for those youngstock. Discuss how unfair this double standard is. Some of these farms are selling-off all their calves at birth and replacing them with conventionally raised yearling heifers.
3. A top **concern of organic consumers** is no use of antibiotics, yet conventionally raised yearlings could have been treated with antibiotics and other organically prohibited materials as well as fed milk replacer containing blood and plasma products and fed GMO feeds. Talk about how this is a consumer trust / integrity issue. Think of other points as well if you can.

Fax your letter to 202-205-7808 OR email it to Ed at emaltby@comcast.net (The USDA dis not publish an email address for their rule change but did publish NOP.Livestock@usda.gov for comment on the pasture rule change). You can get the letter online by downloading a 'Word' doc of the letter from www.nodpa.com OR if mail is your only option, send your letter ASAP to:

Mark Bradley, Associate Deputy Administrator
Transportation and Marketing Program, National Organic Program
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 4008--SO, Ag Stop 0268
Washington, DC 20250

Thank you,
Kathie Arnold, NODPA Policy Committee Chair