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Organic Home Page

www.ams.usda.gov/nop

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The USDA National Organic Program (NOP) Home Page on the Internet's World Wide Web is your connection to the organic community throughout the world. Visit the NOP Home Page at www.ams.usda.gov/nop where information on organic agriculture is just a keystroke away.

- Fact Sheets and Background
- National Organic Standards Board Proceedings and Recommendations
- State and Private Organic Certifiers
- Technical Advisory Panel Reviews
- Instructional and Regulatory Information
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Whether you are a producer, processor, distributor, educator, researcher, or concerned consumer, the NOP Home Page is your source for up-to-date information on the activities and available resources in the field of agricultural organic production.

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National Organic Program*

*Serving Organic Agricultural Producers, Processors,
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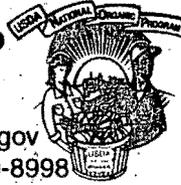
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February 2000



Questions and Answers About the National Organic Program Revised Proposed Rule

Is this the final word on National organic standards?

No. This is only a proposed rule. It is important that you take the time to read it carefully and write to USDA to give us your recommendations, being as specific as you can. Your comments are due by 90 days after date of publication in the Federal Register.

Your comments do matter. On December 16, 1997, the first proposed rule was published in the *Federal Register*, and 275,603 people wrote to us to explain why and how the rule should be rewritten, the largest public response to a proposed rule in USDA history. Then, in the October 24, 1998 *Federal Register*, we asked for public comment on issues concerning livestock confinement, medications, and the authority of certifying agents, and 10,817 people wrote to us. As you read through this document, you will get a sense of what these comments said because in each section we briefly summarize the relevant comments and provide our response to them.

We expect to publish a final rule later this year, once we know what you think about this proposal. The final rule will have, as proposed here, an implementation phase-in period so farmers and processors won't have to change overnight.

Has there been citizen input on this proposal beyond public comments?

Yes. The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is a 15-member citizen board that advises the Secretary on all aspects of the National Organic Program and has special responsibility for development of the National List. Established by law in 1990, the NOSB includes 3 environmental representatives, 3 consumer representatives, 4 organic farmers/ranchers, 2 organic processors, 1 retailer, 1 scientist, and 1 certifying agent. Currently, the NOSB comprises 14 members. The 15th member, an accredited certifying agent, would be appointed after certifying agents are accredited by the Secretary. Since the first NOSB was appointed in 1993, the Board has held 19 public meetings, including one public teleconference, crisscrossing the country to hear from the public before making recommendations to the Secretary on national standards. The vast majority of commenters on the first proposed rule urged the Secretary to rewrite the proposal in line with NOSB recommendations--and this is what we have done. More information on NOSB members, meeting minutes, and a side-by-side comparison of this proposal with NOSB recommendations can be found at www.ams.nop.gov.

In addition, to be consistent with OMB Circular No. A-119, which directs agencies to use voluntary consensus standards, USDA considered adoption of the *American Organic Standards, Guidelines for the Organic Industry* as a voluntary consensus standard for use in the National Organic Program. In October 1999, the Organic Trade Association published the American Organic Standards (AOS). The AOS standards were developed over several months with two opportunities for comment from interested parties. The introduction states that the

standards are written as an up-to-date compilation and codification of organic standards and certification procedures, as they are understood and applies in the United States. Organic Trade Association members are expected to follow the guidelines.

USDA has determined that it would be impractical to use the American Organic Standards in lieu of USDA developed standards for the following reasons: 1) not all participants in the organic industry elected to participate in developing the AOS; 2) the AOS are new to the industry so there has not been sufficient time for the industry to assess their effectiveness, and 3) some certifying agents disagree with portions of the AOS.

Why do we need national standards for organic food?

National standards for organic food production are designed to bring about greater uniformity in the production, manufacture, and marketing of organic products. In the absence of a national standard, 49 State and private organizations have established individual programs and standards for certifying organic agricultural products. The lack of consistency between these standards has created problems for farmers and handlers of organic products, particularly if they want to sell their products in multiple States with different standards. Lack of a nationwide standard has also created confusion for consumers, who may be uncertain what it really means when a food product is called "organic."

With a national standard, consumers across the country can go into any store and have full confidence that any food product labeled "organic" meets a strict, consistent standard no matter where it was made. Use of the word, "organic," on the label of any product that does not meet the standard is strictly prohibited.

Consumers will have that confidence, because this proposal requires for the first time that all organic operations be certified by USDA-approved certifying agents. Up to now, certification has been optional; some farmers choose not to be certified at all, and others are certified by State or private certifiers using different standards. It can be hard for consumers to know if a product has been certified, or, if it has, to what standard. Under this proposal, all organic operations, except for the very smallest, would be certified to the same standard. And all products labeled as "organic" would have to comply with the production and handling standards in this rule.

Consumers can also look for the USDA organic seal, which can only be used on products that have been certified by USDA-approved certifying agents. This seal assures consumers that the maker of the product is part of a rigorous certification program and has been thoroughly reviewed by professional inspectors trained in organic agriculture.

National standards will also bring greater predictability for producers of organic foods. There will be no confusion about whether a product satisfies the particular standard of any State, for example, because all organic foods will meet the same standards.

Finally, a national standard for organic food will help our farmers and manufacturers sell organic products in other countries. The lack of a consistent national organic program has limited access to important markets in other countries because of the confusion created by multiple, independent standards. A strong national standard will help to ensure buyers in other countries that all U.S. organic products meet the same standards.

How can I tell how much organic food is in a product?

This proposal sets strict labeling standards based on the percentage of organic content. If a product is 100 percent organic, it can, of course, be labeled as such. A product that is at least 95 percent organic can be described as, for example, "organic cereal." If a cereal, for example, contains between 50 and 95 percent organic content, it can be described as "cereal made with organic ingredients," and up to three organic ingredients can be listed. Finally, if the food contains less than 50 percent organic content, the term, "organic," may only appear on the ingredient information panel. These four new labeling categories will provide consumers with much greater information than they have today. [Labeling is covered in subpart D.]

What is the National List?

The National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (known as the National List) identifies specific substances that may or may not be used in organic production and handling operations. The National List is developed by the NOSB, through consultation with outside experts, and forwarded to the Secretary for approval. The list identifies those synthetic substances, which would otherwise be prohibited, that may be used in organic production based on the recommendations of the NOSB. Only those synthetic substances found on the National List may be used. The National List also identifies those natural substances that may not be used in organic production, as determined by the Secretary based on the NOSB recommendations.

The first proposal included some substances on the National List that were not recommended by the NOSB. This proposal contains no substances on the approved list that were not found in the NOSB recommendations.

This proposal also includes restrictions or other conditions on the use of allowed substances, also known as "annotations," as recommended by the NOSB. Such annotations have been used by existing State and private certification programs to further ensure that allowed substances are used in a manner that is consistent with organic production. [The National List is covered in subpart G, sections 205.600 through 205.607.]

Does this proposal prohibit use of genetic engineering in organic production?

Yes. This proposal prohibits the use of genetic engineering (included in the broad definition of "excluded methods" in this proposal, based on the definition recommended by the National Organic Standards Board) in the production of all foods and ingredients that carry the organic label.

275,603 commenters on the first proposal nearly universally opposed the use of this technology in organic production systems. Based on this overwhelming public opposition, this proposal prohibits its use in the production of all organic foods even though there is no current scientific evidence that use of excluded methods presents unacceptable risks to the environment or human health. While these methods have been approved for use in general agricultural production and may offer certain benefits for the environment and human health, consumers have made clear their strong opposition to their use in organically grown food. Since the use of excluded methods in the production of organic foods runs counter to consumer expectations, foods produced with these methods will not be permitted to carry the organic label. [Excluded methods are defined in subpart A and discussed further under Production and Handling (subpart C), Labeling (subpart D), and the National List (subpart G).]

Will genetic engineering be allowed in the production of foods that contain both organic and nonorganic ingredients?

No. For products with mostly organic content—those products where more than half of the ingredients are organic and that have the word, “organic,” on the main product label—excluded methods must not be used in the production of any ingredients. Only those products, in which fewer than half of the ingredients are organic and in which the organic ingredients are only identified on the ingredient panel, could contain nonorganic ingredients produced through excluded methods.

We believe consumers have expressed a clear expectation that these methods should not be used in the production of any ingredients contained in mostly organic products. Because prominent use of the word, “organic,” on the label of such products reinforces that expectation, we have chosen to prohibit use of excluded methods in production of both the organic and nonorganic ingredients.

We recognize that this policy will place additional burdens on organic food processors and certifying agents because the ability to meet these requirements will depend largely on practices used in conventional agricultural markets. For organic food processors, it may be harder to find sources of nonorganic ingredients that are produced without use of excluded methods. Similarly, certifying agents may face greater difficulty because they will be required to ensure that handlers have complied with this requirement. However, we believe that the need to meet strong consumer expectations outweighs these concerns. Furthermore, we anticipate that as marketplace practices or standards evolve, these practices will be the basis for implementing this provision, providing handlers and certifying agents recognize criteria with which to evaluate sources of nonorganic ingredients in products containing both organic and nonorganic ingredients.

Does this proposal prohibit use of irradiation in organic production?

Yes. This proposal prohibits the use of irradiation in the production of all foods and ingredients that carry the organic label. 275,603 commenters on the first proposal almost universally opposed the use of this technology in organic production systems. Based on this overwhelming public opposition, this proposal prohibits its use in the production of all organic foods even

though there is no current scientific evidence that use of irradiation presents unacceptable risks to the environment or human health and may, in fact, offer certain benefits. Because this rule is a marketing standard and consumers have expressed a clear expectation that irradiation should not be used in the production of organic foods, foods produced with this technology will not be permitted to carry the organic label.

The prohibition on irradiation extends to nonorganic ingredients used in mostly organic ingredients—those products where more than half of the ingredients are organic and that have the word, “organic,” on the main product label. Only those products, in which fewer than half of the ingredients are organic and in which the organic ingredients are only identified on the ingredient panel, could contain irradiated nonorganic ingredients. We do not believe that this prohibition on irradiation in nonorganic ingredients will place undue burden on either handlers or certifiers because of current labeling requirements for irradiated products.

Does this proposal prohibit use of sewage sludge in organic production?

Yes. This proposal prohibits the use of sewage sludge in the production of all foods and ingredients that carry the organic label. This prohibition extends to nonorganic ingredients used in the production of mostly organic foods—those products in which more than half of the ingredients are organic and that have the word, “organic,” on the main product label. Only those products, in which fewer than half of the ingredients are organic and which the organic ingredients are only identified on the ingredient panel, could contain nonorganic ingredients produced using sewage sludge.

275,603 commenters on the first proposal almost universally opposed the use of this technology in organic production systems. Based on this overwhelming public opposition, this proposal prohibits its use in the production of all organic foods, even though there is no current scientific evidence that use of sewage sludge in the production of foods presents unacceptable risks to the environment or human health. We believe consumers have expressed a clear expectation that sewage sludge should not be used in the production of any ingredients contained in mostly organic products. Because prominent use of the word, “organic,” on the label of such products reinforces that expectation, we have chosen to prohibit use of sewage sludge in production of both the organic and nonorganic ingredients. We recognize that this policy may place additional burdens on organic food processors and certifying agents. However, we believe that the need to meet strong consumer expectations outweighs these concerns.

Does this proposal set standards for livestock production?

Yes. The proposal sets the first comprehensive standards for production of organic animals and meat products. Under this proposal, use of antibiotics would be prohibited in organic livestock production. The standards also prohibit the routine confinement of animals and require that ruminant animals have access to outdoor land and pasture, although temporary confinement would be allowed under certain, limited circumstances. Animals under organic

management must also receive 100-percent organically grown feed. [Organic livestock management issues are discussed in greater detail under subpart C, sections 205.236 through 205.239.]

Does this proposal prohibit "ecolabeling"?

No. This proposal only regulates use of the term, "organic," on product labels. Other labels would be allowed as long as they are truthful and not misleading and meet general food labeling requirements. The labeling requirements of this proposal are intended to assure that the term, "organic," and other similar terms or phrases are not used in a way that misleads consumers. Should we find that terms or phrases are being used to represent "organic" when the products are not produced to the requirements of this regulation, we would proceed to restrict their use. [Labeling is covered in subpart D.]

Are organic foods pesticide-free?

No. Organic farmers can use natural pesticides to control weeds and insects and maintain the high quality of organic products that consumers have come to expect. Use of synthetic chemical pesticides, however, is prohibited unless specifically allowed on the National List as recommended by the National Organic Standards Board and approved by the Secretary. [The National List is covered in subpart G, sections 205.600 through 205.607.]

Who needs to be certified?

As a general rule, all organic production and handling operations must be certified. The Act and this proposal, however, do provide for some exceptions. For example, organic operations with less than \$5,000 in annual sales of organic products do not require certification. Similarly, organic operations that handle only those products with less than 50 percent organic content or that restrict labeling of organic ingredients to the ingredient information panel do not require certification. Finally, we are not requiring certification of most grocery stores and restaurants (referred to in this proposal as "retail food establishments") at this time.

Even where operations do not require certification, however, all organic food products must meet the national standards as described in this proposal. In that way, consumers can be confident that all products labeled as "organic" meet the national standards, even if they did not require certification under the NOP. [Certification is covered in subpart E; the exceptions from certification are found in subpart B.]

Will organic farmers have to pay fees?

Organic farmers and other organic operations will have to pay fees for organic certification but will not be charged any fees by USDA. Fees for certification services will be set by the private or State certifying agents. The proposal also requires that certifying agents make their schedule of fees publicly available so that organic operations can plan appropriately and so that they can make informed choices where multiple certifying agents are available. USDA will also review fees charged by certifying agents to ensure that they are reasonable and that they are being

applied fairly to all organic operations. Under this proposal, USDA would only charge fees for reviewing ("accrediting") certifying agents. These fees will primarily be based on the actual costs of the accreditation work done by USDA staff so that certifying agents with smaller and less complex programs will pay lower fees. The proposal also provides for a reduction in the accreditation fees during the first 18 months of the program to provide an incentive for certifying agents to become accredited under the new national program as soon as possible. [Fees are covered in subpart G, sections 205.640 through 205.642.]

How do I become an accredited certifying agent?

All certifying agents must be accredited by USDA. Certifying agents may apply for accreditation effective with publication of the final rule and are encouraged to apply as soon after publication of the final rule as possible. USDA will provide additional information on applying for accreditation on or about the date of publication of the final rule. This information will be available on the NOP website and by mail upon request.

Applications for accreditation will be handled on a first-come-first-served basis. Those that apply within the first 6 months following publication of the final rule and are determined by the Administrator to meet the requirements for accreditation will be notified of their status in writing on or about 12 months after publication of the final rule. This approach is being taken because of the market advantage that could be realized by accredited certifying agents if USDA did not announce the accreditations simultaneously. [Accreditation is covered in subpart F.]

What are the roles and responsibilities of certifying agents in the National Organic Program?

Certifying agents are the "front line" representatives of USDA and play a critical role in the oversight and enforcement of the national organic standards program. Once accredited by USDA, certifying agents are empowered to make key decisions regarding the status of organic operations. Certifying agents review the organic plans of organic operations and are authorized to grant certification to those operations that meet the strict national organic standards. Certifying agents are also responsible for the continuing oversight of organic operations-- reviewing annual updates of organic plans, conducting residue analyses, and conducting other monitoring activities.

In cases in which a certifying agent finds that an organic operation does not meet the national standards, the agent is empowered to issue notices of noncompliance and to initiate suspension or revocation of certification. Organic operations can appeal such decisions to USDA but unless the organic operation appeals the certifying agent's decision or can correct the problems identified by the certifying agent, the agent's decision will stand. [Accreditation is covered in subpart F; Compliance is covered in subpart G, sections 205.660 through 205.668; and Appeals are covered in subpart G, section 205.680 through 205.681.]

How will USDA ensure that the National standards are applied fairly and consistently by all certifying agents?

Because this proposal gives certifying agents such an important role in enforcing the national standards, USDA oversight of those certifying agents is particularly important. Under this proposal, all certifying agents, both private and in State organic programs, would have to be accredited by USDA before they could begin to certify organic operations. It is this accreditation process, in which USDA reviews all certifying agents to make sure they understand and can accurately apply the national organic standards, that is USDA's main tool to ensure that the standards are applied fairly and consistently by all certifying agents.

The accreditation process is really one of ongoing oversight by USDA. Accreditation must be renewed every 5 years so that we can be sure certifying agents continue to meet the program standards. USDA will conduct one or more site visits of certifying agents during the period of accreditation as another mechanism of monitoring their compliance. Finally, certified operations may file complaints with USDA if they believe they have been treated unfairly or if a certifying agent is otherwise not following the program requirements. We will investigate these complaints for possible enforcement action.

Can States have organic standards that are more strict than the National standard?

Yes. Some States may have unique environmental or other concerns that they believe require extra conditions above the national standard. In those cases, States would apply to USDA to have their special State program approved by the Secretary.

However, no State would be allowed to set up a program that does not at least meet the national standard. And States would not be allowed to use their programs to keep out or otherwise discriminate against organic products made in another State. [State Programs are covered in subpart G, sections 205.620 through 205.622.]

What is the timeframe for implementation?

The final rule in this rulemaking process will establish a procedure and a timeframe for implementing the NOP. We expect that the interim period between publication of the final rule in this rulemaking process and the effective date of the program (actual implementation of regulations) will be 18 months. The following is a preliminary list of several administrative and program issues that must be implemented during that period. Certifying agent applications will be evaluated and accreditation granted. Certifying agents will, in turn, certify production and handling operations to the requirements of these regulations. Equivalency discussions will be held with foreign governments and foreign certifying agents. Guidelines and practice standards on production and handling practices must be finalized and distributed by the NOP. A petition process for recommending amendments to the National List must be developed and distributed. The NOSB will continue to review materials for the National List. State programs may have to make adjustments in their organic certification programs for consistency with the standards of this program. Producers should use the interim period to prepare their production operations to comply with the relevant requirements of this program. Handlers should use the interim period to prepare for necessary changes in the labeling of their products.



National Organic Program Revised Proposed Rule

National Organic Program Background

The Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) of 1990, adopted as part of the 1990 Farm Bill, requires USDA to develop national standards and regulations for organically produced agricultural products to assure consumers that agricultural products marketed as organic comply with these standards. The OFPA and the National Organic Program (NOP) require that agricultural products labeled organic originate from farms or handling operations certified by a State or private agency that has been accredited by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The OFPA and proposed regulations do not address food safety or nutrition. The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, the part of USDA that sets marketing standards, is charged with implementing the NOP.

How the National Organic Program was developed

The OFPA requires USDA to develop national organic standards and establish an organic certification program based on recommendations of a 15-member National Organic Standards Board (NOSB).

In addition to NOSB recommendations, USDA reviewed State, private and foreign organic certification programs to help formulate the NOP. The proposed regulations are similar to most of the standards organic producers and handlers currently use, and are intended to be flexible enough to accommodate the wide range of operations and products grown and raised in every region of the United States.

In December 1997, USDA published a proposed rule and received 275,603 public comments, explaining why and how the rule should be rewritten. As a result, we have revised the rule to reflect these comments.

The public will be able to submit comments on this revised proposed rule in both written and electronic form for 90 days after it is published in the *Federal Register*. USDA will then review and categorize the comments, make any necessary revisions to the proposed rule, and submit a final rule for publication in the *Federal Register*. Discussion of public comments will be included in the final rule.

What's in the proposed rule?

The new proposed regulation will prohibit the use of genetic engineering (included in excluded methods) irradiation, and sewer sludge for fertilization. It will include the following:

- ◆ Production and handling requirements, which address organic crop production, wild crop harvesting, organic livestock management, and processing and handling of organic agricultural products. The National List of Allowed Synthetic and Prohibited Non-Synthetic Substances is also included.
- ◆ Labeling requirements for organic products, along with compliance, testing, fee, and State program approval requirements.
- ◆ Certification requirements, the certification procedure, and recordkeeping requirements.
- ◆ Accreditation requirements for receiving and maintaining accreditation, as well as requirements for foreign accreditation.
- ◆ Other administrative functions of the NOP, which include evaluation of foreign organic certification programs, the State program approval process, and user fees.
- ◆ Steps to implement the NOP.

Implementation of the program, starting with the first round of certifier accreditations, can begin when the final rule is published. During the first 18 months of implementation, all clients of certifiers are considered USDA-certified immediately upon USDA accreditation of their certifier. Certified operations must then comply with the national standards and will be assessed by their certifier on the anniversary of their original certification. Farms and handling operations that sell less than \$5,000 worth per year of organic agricultural products are exempt from certification. These producers and handlers must still abide by the national standards for organic products and may label their products as organic.

March 2000



National Organic Program Revised Proposed Rule

Organic Production and Handling Standards

The National Organic Program (NOP) proposed rule contains regulations that would ensure that organically labeled products meet consistent national standards.

What agricultural operations are affected by the proposed standards?

Any farm, wild crop harvesting, or handling operation that wants to sell an agricultural product as organically produced will be affected by the proposed national organic standards. Handling operations include processors, manufacturers, and repackers of organic products. Once the NOP is implemented, production and handling operations will have to comply with all applicable standards. These requirements include operating under an organic system plan approved by an accredited certifying agent and using materials in accordance with the National List of Allowed Synthetic and Prohibited Non-Synthetic Substances. Operations that sell less than \$5,000 a year in organic products are exempted from certification and preparing an organic system plan, but they must operate in compliance with these regulations and may label products as organic. Retail food establishments that sell organically produced agricultural products but do not process them are also exempt from certification.

Standards apply to production process

The proposed national organic standards address the methods, practices, and substances used in producing and handling crops, livestock, and processed agricultural products. The requirements apply to the way the product is created, not to measurable properties of the product itself. Although specific practices and materials used by organic operations may vary, the proposed standards require every aspect of organic production and handling to comply with the provisions of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA).

Crop standards

The proposed organic crop production standards say that:

- ◆ Land would have no prohibited substances applied to it for at least 3 years before the harvest of an organic crop.
- ◆ Crop rotation would be implemented.
- ◆ The use of genetic engineering (included in excluded methods), irradiation and sewage sludge is prohibited.
- ◆ Soil fertility and crop nutrients would be managed through tillage and cultivation practices, supplemented with animal and crop waste materials and allowed synthetic materials.

- ◆ Preference would be given to the use of organic seeds and other planting stock, but a farmer could use non-organic seeds and planting stock under certain specified conditions.
- ◆ Crop pests, weeds, and diseases would be controlled primarily through management practices including physical, mechanical and biological controls. When these practices are not sufficient, a biological, botanical, or allowed synthetic substance may be used.

Livestock standards

These standards apply to animals used for meat, milk, eggs, and other animal products represented as organically produced.

The proposed livestock standards say that:

- ◆ Animals for slaughter must be raised on an organic operation from birth, or no later than the second day of life for poultry.
- ◆ Producers would be required to feed 100 percent organically produced feeds to livestock but could also provide allowed vitamin and mineral supplements.
- ◆ Organically raised animals could not be given hormones or antibiotics.
- ◆ Preventive management practices, including the use of vaccines, would be used to keep animals healthy. Producers would be prohibited from withholding treatment from a sick or injured animal; however, animals treated with a prohibited medication would be removed from the organic operation.
- ◆ All organically raised animals would have to have access to the outdoors, including access to pasture for ruminants. They could be temporarily confined only for reasons of health, safety, or to protect soil or water quality.

Handling standards

The proposed handling standards say that:

- ◆ All non-agricultural ingredients, whether synthetic or non-synthetic, must be included on the National List of Allowed Synthetic and Prohibited Non-Synthetic Substances.
- ◆ Handlers must prevent the commingling of organic with non-organic products and protect organic products from contact with prohibited substances.

March 2000



National Organic Program Revised Proposed Rule Labeling and Marketing Information

The Organic Foods Production Act and the National Organic Program (NOP) are intended to assure consumers that the organic foods they purchase are produced, processed, and certified to consistent national organic standards. The labeling requirements of the new program apply to raw, fresh produce and processed foods that contain organic ingredients. Foods that are sold, labeled, or represented as organic will have to be produced and processed in accordance with the proposed National Organic Program standards.

Under the NOP, farm and processing operations that grow and process organic foods must be certified by USDA-accredited certifying agents. A certified operation may label its products or ingredients as organic and may use the "USDA Certified Organic" seal.

Labeling requirements are based on the percentage of organic ingredients in a product.

Foods labeled 100 percent organic and organic

- ◆ Products labeled as 100 percent organic must contain (excluding water and salt) only organically produced raw or processed products.
- ◆ Products labeled organic must consist of at least 95 percent organically produced ingredients (excluding water and salt). Any remaining product ingredients must consist of nonagricultural substances or non-organically produced agricultural products approved in the National List.
- ◆ Products meeting the requirements to be labeled 100 percent organic and organic may display these terms on their principal display panel.
- ◆ The USDA seal and the seal or mark of involved certifying agents may appear on product packages and in advertisements.

Processed products labeled "made with organic (specified ingredients)"

- ◆ Products that contain 50-95 percent organic ingredients can use the phrase "made with organic (specified ingredients)" and list up to three of the organic ingredients on the principal display panel. For example organic beef stew can be labeled stew, "made with organic beef, potatoes, and carrots."
- ◆ The certifying agent seal or mark may be used on the package. However, the USDA seal cannot be used anywhere on the package.

Processed products that contain less than 50 percent organic ingredients

- ◆ These products cannot make any organic labeling claim other than on the information panel, and in doing so, designate specific ingredients that are organically produced.

Other labeling provisions

- ◆ The package information panel of any product labeled as organic must state the actual percentage of organic ingredients and use the word "organic" to modify each organically produced ingredient.
- ◆ The name and address of the certifying agent of the final product must be displayed on the information panel.
- ◆ There are no restrictions on use of truthful labeling claims such as "pesticide free," "no drugs or growth hormones used," or "sustainably harvested."

Penalties for misuse of labels

A civil penalty of up to \$10,000 can be levied on any person who knowingly sells or labels as organic a product that is not produced and handled in accordance with the National Organic Program's regulations.

After the new regulations are finalized, organic farmers and handlers will be given a sufficient period of time to adjust their growing and processing operations and revise their labels to conform to the new standards.

March 2000



National Organic Program Revised Proposed Rule

Certifier Accreditation and Equivalency of Imported Products

The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA) empowers the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to accredit certifying agents so they can certify that producers and handlers representing their products as organic have complied with USDA regulations.

The proposed USDA accreditation program establishes requirements an applicant must meet in order to become an accredited organic certifying agent, and procedures and requirements to maintain accredited status. The program is designed to ensure that all organic certifiers act consistently and impartially. There are nearly 50 private and State organic certification programs in the United States, some of which have existed for 20 years or more. Most are expected to apply for USDA certifier status.

Applicants for accreditation must:

- ◆ Employ personnel, including inspectors, who have sufficient experience and training in organic production and handling to carry out certification activities.
- ◆ Demonstrate their ability to certify organic producers or handlers; maintain proper records; adequately communicate with producers, handlers, and the public; and communicate with USDA about decisions made.
- ◆ Prevent conflicts of interest and maintain strict confidentiality.

Applicants granted accreditation would conduct annual performance appraisals of their inspectors and have an annual program evaluation of their certification activities conducted to maintain accreditation.

Accreditation process

Certifying agents will apply for accreditation to the Administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service. Applicants will sign and return a statement of agreement prepared by the Administrator. USDA will evaluate the application to ensure that the certifying agent can comply with the NOP requirements, including a site evaluation at the applicant's place of business. The site evaluator's report will be reviewed by USDA staff and a peer review panel with expertise in organic production or handling. Accreditation will be for 5 years. Applications for renewal of accreditation are due 6 months prior to expiration of the accreditation. Certifying agents will submit to USDA

annual updates on their certification activities. USDA will conduct one or more site evaluations during the period of accreditation to determine compliance with the OFPA and regulations.

Equivalency of imported products

The OFPA requires USDA to review the certification programs under which imported organic products are produced to ensure that they meet the requirements of the National Organic Program (NOP). Certifying agents operating in foreign countries may apply for USDA accreditation. Foreign applicants would be evaluated based on the same criteria as domestic certifying agents.

In lieu of USDA accreditation, a foreign certifying agent may:

- ◆ Receive accreditation when USDA has determined, upon the request of a foreign government, that the foreign certifying agent's government authority is able to assess and accredit certifying agents as meeting the requirements of the NOP, or
- ◆ Receive recognition as meeting requirements equivalent to the requirements of the NOP under an equivalency agreement negotiated between the United States and the foreign government.

Once accreditation or equivalency is granted, organic product produced under the oversight of the certifying agent or foreign government would be eligible to be imported into this country and labeled as "organic."

March 2000



National Organic Program Revised Proposed Rule

Certification

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will accredit State, private, and foreign organizations or persons to become "certifying agents." Certifying agents will certify that production and handling practices meet the national standards.

Who needs to be certified?

- ◆ Operations or portions of operations that produce or handle agricultural products that are intended to be sold, labeled, or represented as "100 percent organic," "organic," or "made with organic (specified ingredients)."

Who does NOT need to be certified?

- ◆ Farms and handling operations that sell less than \$5,000 a year in organic agricultural products. Although exempt from certification, these producers and handlers must abide by the national standards for organic products and may label their products as organic.
- ◆ Handlers, including final retailers, that do not process or repackage products, and processors that only handle products with less than 50 percent organic ingredients.
- ◆ A handling operation or portion of an operation that is a retail food establishment that processes or prepares, on the premises of the establishment, raw and ready-to-eat food labeled "organic."
- ◆ A handling operation that handles agricultural products that contain at least 50 percent organic ingredients that chooses to use the word "organic" only on the information panel.
- ◆ A handling operation that handles products that are packaged or otherwise enclosed in a container prior to being received by the operation and remains in the same package.

How would farmers and handlers become certified?

An applicant would submit specific information to an accredited certifying agent. Information would include:

- ◆ Type of operation.
- ◆ History of substances applied to land for the previous 3 years.
- ◆ Organic products being grown, raised, or processed.
- ◆ Applicant's organic plan, which includes practices and substances used in production. The organic plan also would describe the monitoring practices to be performed to verify that the plan is effectively implemented, the record-keeping system, and the practices to prevent commingling of organic and nonorganic products and to prevent contact of products with prohibited substances.

Applicants for certification also would have to keep accurate post-certification records for 5

years concerning the production, harvesting, and handling of agricultural products that are to be sold as "organic."

These records should document that the operation is in compliance with the regulations, and verify the information provided to the certifying agent. Access to these records would be provided to authorized representatives of USDA, including the certifying agent.

Inspection and certification process

Certifying agents would review applications for certification eligibility. A qualified inspector would conduct an on-site inspection of the applicant's operation. Inspections would be scheduled when the inspector could observe the practices used to produce or handle organic products and talk to someone knowledgeable about the operation.

The certifying agent would review the information submitted by the applicant and the inspector's report. If this information showed that the applicant was complying with the relevant standards and requirements, the certifier would approve the application and issue a certificate. Certification would remain in effect until terminated, either voluntarily or through the enforcement process.

Annual inspections would be conducted of each certified operation, and updates of information would be provided annually to the certifying agent in advance of conducting these inspections. Certifiers also would be notified by a producer immediately of any changes affecting an operation's compliance with the regulations, such as application of a prohibited pesticide to a field.

Compliance review and enforcement measures

The proposed rule would permit USDA or the certifier to conduct unannounced inspections at any time to adequately enforce the regulations. The Organic Foods Production Act also requires that residue tests be performed to help in enforcement of the regulations. Certifying agents and USDA would conduct residue tests of organically produced products when there is reason to believe that they have been contaminated with prohibited substances. If any detectable residues were present, an investigation would be conducted to determine their source.

March 2000



National Organic Program Revised Proposed Rule

USDA Multi-Program Approach to Organic Agriculture

Regulating the use of the term "organic" is just one way USDA is helping facilitate the growth of the organic industry. In addition to the proposed rule, Secretary Glickman is announcing four initiatives that help bring organic agriculture into the mainstream of USDA programs.

Federal Marketing Order Research Project

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is working with the University of California at Davis and the Organic Research Foundation to research organic production and the marketing of organic fruits and vegetables under USDA marketing order programs. The increase in organic production has raised some questions about where organic commodities fit into the system, and how marketing orders can better serve organic producers and handlers. The project will provide a forum for producers of organic and traditionally produced fruit and vegetables to decide the direction of marketing and production research for specific marketing order commodities.

There are 36 fruit, vegetable, and specialty crop marketing order programs in 33 States designed and initiated by farmers to help stabilize markets. Marketing orders help to maintain the high quality of produce, standardize packs or containers, establish reserve pools, and authorize advertising, research, and market development.

Crop Insurance Pilot Project

Under current rules, farmers must grow crops using "traditional good farming practices" in order to receive full Federal crop insurance protection. Generally speaking, organic farming practices are not recognized under these rules.

The Risk Management Agency is developing a crop insurance project which would pave the way for organic farmers to get full coverage. The pilot project will only be conducted in areas that have State or private organic certification systems in place; crop production and marketing information; and producer interest.

SARE Organic Farming Projects

The President's budget request for fiscal year 2001 asks for \$5 million for organic research, marketing, and education projects to be carried out by USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program of Cooperative State Research.

Education and Extension Service (CSREES). The request also includes \$1 million for a new Organic Transitions Program, which will support the development and implementation of biologically based pest management practices that mitigate the ecological, agronomic, and economic risks associated with a transition to organic production.

SARE funds research and education projects (usually collaborations among researchers, farmers, and other partners), producer grants (where farmers test their own innovations and share the results with their neighbors), and professional development grants (which provide educational opportunities for USDA and other agricultural professionals).

Market News for Organic Fruit and Vegetables

USDA's Fruit and Vegetable Market News Service recognizes the growth and increased importance over the last few years of organically grown produce. As a result, the President's fiscal year 2001 budget contains a request for funds which will allow the Market News Service to begin reporting price and volume of organically grown fruits and vegetables in the United States.

The report would be issued from the Fruit and Vegetable Market News Service, Customer Service Center in Fresno, California. The National Organic Fruit and Vegetable Report would consist of F.O.B. (free on board) shipping point prices, volumes, and wholesale market prices.

March 2000



National Organic Program Revised Proposed Rule State Organic Certification Programs

The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA) authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to approve State organic certification programs that are consistent with the national organic standards and regulations established under the OFPA. Under USDA's proposed National Organic Program (NOP), a State government may request the Secretary to approve its State organic certification program. Once a State's requested organic requirements are approved by the Secretary, those requirements become the NOP requirements for organic producers, handlers, and certifying agents operating in the State.

What criteria must a State organic certification program meet to be approved by the Secretary?

Under the proposed NOP, a State's organic requirements cannot be less restrictive than NOP requirements. More restrictive organic requirements will be approved by the Secretary only if those requirements are needed to protect particular environmental condition or cultural practices in the State or a particular area of the State. For instance, a State may request approval of additional restrictions to protect a sensitive watershed or aquifer. A State's more restrictive standards will not be applied to production and handling activities outside the State. Finally, a State's organic program requirements may not be used to discriminate against organic products produced in other States.

Must a State assume responsibilities for administration of its State organic certification program?

Yes. The governing State official of a State organic certification program must agree to administer the NOP program, including any approved more restrictive State requirements. The State's organic program will oversee certified organic producers and handlers in the State to assure that they are operating in compliance with the NOP. Working with State and private certifying agents, as well as any accredited foreign certifying agents, the State organic program will oversee enforcement and appeal procedures to make sure all certified organic operations are in compliance with NOP and State requirements. The State organic program will not exercise compliance authority over accredited certifying agents operating in the State--an authority delegated only to the Secretary of Agriculture.

A State organic certification program may have other State-sponsored organic projects, such as research and promotion programs, tax incentives, or transition assistance for organic producers within the State. Such projects will not be subject to the Secretary's approval, provided they do not conflict with the OFPA.

What happens if a State doesn't have a State organic certification program or doesn't want one?

The organic requirements of the NOP will be effective in the State and will be administered by the NOP office in USDA. USDA will monitor State government, private, and foreign certifying agent activities in the State to assure compliance with the national program.

What steps are followed to implement a State organic certification program?

States with current organic programs and States who intend to establish a new organic program may submit their programs to the Secretary for approval after the final rule in this rulemaking process is published. The request for approval must explain any additional, more restrictive State organic requirements needed in the State. The State also must agree to administer the State and NOP organic requirements in the State. Existing and new State organic certification programs should be approved and operating when the NOP becomes effective, approximately 18 months after publication of the final rule. The Secretary will review requests to amend an approved State program. The Secretary will review the State's oversight of its organic certification program every 5 years.

What options does a State have under the NOP ?

A State with an existing organic certification program may either:

- ◆ Request the Secretary's approval of the unique requirements of the State's organic program and assume responsibility for administration of the NOP program in the State, or
- ◆ Initiate steps to terminate or dissolve the State organic program and turn over administration of the NOP to USDA.

A State without an organic certification program may:

- ◆ Develop a proposed State organic program with administrative oversight responsibilities and request the Secretary's approval of that proposed program for the State, or
- ◆ Do nothing and allow USDA to administer NOP in the State.

March 2000

Release No. 0456.96

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GLICKMAN LAUDS FARMERS' MARKETS FOR CONSUMERS AND FARMERS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23, 1996 -- Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman today hosted a farmers' market at the U.S. Department of Agriculture telling the gathered farmers, area workers and other visitors that such local farmers markets are a growing trend throughout the nation and farmers can increase their income significantly by participating.

As part of National Farmers' Market Week, Glickman released a new USDA survey of farmers' markets which found that nearly a million consumers visit farmers' markets across the country each week and that direct marketing sales of fruits and vegetables total approximately \$1.1 billion annually. In addition, the number of farmers' markets has increased nearly 40 percent since 1994.

"The growth in the number of farmers' markets across the nation illustrates the importance of the bridge between farmers and consumers," said Glickman. "Farmers -- especially small and limited resource farmers -- continue to look for new, innovative marketing opportunities to increase income and combat an ever increasing lack of competition in U.S. agriculture. Consumers, conscious of the nutritional benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables, also are supporting farmers' markets in record numbers."

More than 20 farmers from Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia stocked the market with fresh peaches, tomatoes, corn, and other produce to sell to employees and visitors on the Mall.

In addition to the USDA's "Farmers' Markets Survey Report," Glickman today released the 1996 edition of the "National Farmers' Market Directory," a state-by-state listing of nearly 2,500 farmers' markets across the country.

"Farmers' markets bring the bounty of American agriculture -- nutritious fruits and vegetables -- to people in urban and suburban locations who otherwise might not have access to farm-fresh produce," Glickman said.

The Clinton Administration has several efforts underway to support the development and promotion of farmers' markets. The Agricultural Marketing Service provides technical assistance and seed-money for community groups to study the feasibility of and develop marketing plans for new farmers' markets. Annually, more than \$140 million in food stamp and WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program benefits are redeemed at authorized farmers markets. And, the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program funds alternative marketing projects, including direct farmer-to-consumer marketing.

To request a copy of the "Farmers' Markets Survey Report," contact Denny N. Johnson, Wholesale and Alternative Markets Program, TMD, AMS, USDA, Rm. 2642, South Building, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090-6456; telephone (202) 690-0531. Limited copies of the "1996 Farmers' Market Directory" are available from the same address. The directory may be accessed via the Internet at <http://www.usda.gov/ams/states.htm>.

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NOTE: USDA news releases and media advisories are available on the Internet. Access the USDA Home Page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.usda.gov>

USDA KICKS OFF 1997 FARMERS MARKET SEASON

Release No. 0206.97

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USDA KICKS OFF 1997 FARMERS MARKET SEASON

WASHINGTON, June 27, 1997--Agricultural Secretary Dan Glickman opened the season's first USDA-sponsored farmers market today welcoming local farmers, employees, and area residents. Energy Secretary Federico Peña, Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater, and D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton joined Glickman at the market's opening.

Glickman said the five USDA-sponsored farmers markets held last year were so popular with the farmers and with consumers that USDA will host farmers markets every other Friday through October, with a special "pre-Thanksgivi

"USDA is proud to be a part of what has become a true community event," Glickman said. "This year we will more than quadruple the number of USDA farmers markets held last year. And, with the Departments of Energy and Transportation participating, small- to medium-size area farmers will have expanded options for marketing their products while District residents, tourists and employees will have easy access to a variety of fresh produce and baked goods every Friday."

Beginning July 18, the U.S. Department of Energy will host markets on alternate Fridays to the USDA markets. And, the U.S. Department of Transportation will begin hosting markets later this summer.

Twenty-two farmers participated in today's farmers market, offering farm fresh vegetables, fruit, cheese, herbs, trout, baked goods and more. They came from Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and South Carolina. Eleven of the farmers are members of minority groups.

At the market's close, the farmers donated unsold produce and other foods to the D.C. Central Kitchen, a local food recovery organization. Last year, USDA's farmers markets donated 3,300 pounds of food to the D.C. Central Kitchen for the hungry in the city.

"With the increased number of markets, our gleaning activity from these events should be quite substantial this year," said Glickman, the leader of the Clinton Administration's effort to expand gleaning and food recovery activities.

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Farmers' Market Activities

Release No. 0359.97

Backgrounder

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Farmers' Market Activities

Farmers' market activities in the U.S. Department of Agriculture have three clear goals:

- Improving market access for small- to medium-sized farmers
- Promoting regional economic growth
- Providing inner city residents greater access to a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Several USDA agencies work together to accomplish these goals. The Agricultural Marketing Service conducts research and provides technical assistance to state and municipal organizations to enhance marketing, handling, and distribution of agricultural products. Delivery systems also are analyzed to expand marketing opportunities to traditionally under-served customers. The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service provides grant money to help communities become more self-sufficient in food and nutrition. The Food and Consumer Service assists communities in post-market Nutritional Program which allows WIC vouchers to be exchanged for fresh produce.

USDA Farmers' Market Support Activities:

- Published the National Farmers' Market Directory in 1994 and 1996. The 1994 edition listed 1,755 markets; the 1996 edition listed over 2,400.
- Published the Farmers' Market Survey Report in 1996, based on responses from 805 markets.
- In cooperation with the California Federation of Farmers' Markets a prototype web site is being developed to inform consumers of farmers' markets activities over the Internet.
- In cooperation with the University of Delaware, a prototype survey document is being developed to determine the "most likely users" of farmers' markets in order to determine what programs can be used to attract more consumers.

Washington Farmers' Market:

For the past two years, USDA has hosted a farmers' market at its headquarters. Compared to 1996, in 1997 efforts were significantly expanded:

- Extended duration of the markets to the entire growing season; from 3 months in 1996 to 5 months in 1997
- Vendor participation increased from 84 to 165 vendors
- Increased the number of states supplying farmers from 5 to 7
- Increased minority vendor participation from 1 to 6 in 1997 included an herb vendor, bakers, and fruit and vegetable growers
- Enabled a greater percentage of the local community to acquire products at the markets by permitting use of Food Stamps and WIC Food Coupons.

Highlights of USDA's food gleaning program, which has been incorporated into the Washington Farmers' Market include:

- Over 8,000 pounds of food and food products donated to the D.C. Central Kitchen during the 1997 season
- Over 2,600 pounds of tomatoes gleaned from the Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, Md., and distributed to the Capital Area Food Bank

-- About 800 hours of community service donated to the Food Bank's efforts to distribute food to soup kitchens and shelters in the Metro area.

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NOTE: USDA news releases and media advisories are available on the Internet. Access the USDA Home Page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.usda.gov>

USDA AWARDS EIGHT GRANTS FOR AGRICULTURAL MARKETING, RESEARCH

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USDA AWARDS EIGHT GRANTS FOR AGRICULTURAL MARKETING, RESEARCH

WASHINGTON, June 16, 1998--Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman today announced \$500,000 in grants to seven states to develop a wide range of projects for improving the marketing and distribution of agricultural products.

"These grants will encourage the development of innovative approaches to the marketing of agricultural products," said Glickman. "They will nurture innovative partnerships to help boost diverse agricultural sales -- from creating two new farmers markets in Rhode Island to establishing a North Dakota-based website for marketing farm products.

"Today, smart marketing strategies are playing a bigger role in ensuring the success of small and family farms," he said. "These grants for marketing research and assistance will help smaller agricultural producers compete effectively in domestic and international marketplaces."

The USDA grants include --

Montana--A \$90,000 grant to the Montana Department of Agriculture will be used to investigate the market potential for flour and products made from Indian ricegrass, providing the Great Plains region with a new, high value grain crop.

New Jersey--A \$85,300 grant to Rutgers University will fund research to help expand market opportunities for small, organic farms in the Northeast.

North Dakota--A \$60,000 grant to the North Dakota Department of Agriculture will be used to boost the growing and marketing of new crops for domestic and international markets. An additional \$25,000 grant will assist in the creation of an Internet "marketing mall," a website that will help agricultural businesses market products via the Internet.

Rhode Island--A \$60,000 grant to the Rhode Island Division of Agriculture will help establish two new farmers markets, one at an inner-city location and one at a state park. Guidelines for other states or organizations wishing to start farmers markets in state parks will also be developed.

Tennessee--A \$54,685 grant awarded to the University of Tennessee, in cooperation with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, will be used to survey the state agricultural sector on the effectiveness of state and federal marketing assistance programs, such as the Federal-State Market News Service.

Texas--A \$68,161 grant to the Texas Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with Texas A&M University, will fund an assessment of current marketing bottlenecks and opportunities for cooperation among small Texas meat processing plants in order to expand the processed meat market.

Wisconsin--A \$70,300 grant to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin, will be used to identify marketing opportunities for alternative red meats, including farm-raised deer, elk, bison, and ratite (emu and ostrich) in the natural, health, and gourmet food marketplace.

Today's grants will be matched by the states receiving them. They are the first of more than \$1.2 million in grants to be awarded this fiscal year through USDA's Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program. A second round of grants will be released in August.

Applications for second round consideration must be received by June 19. Information on applying for FSMIP grants can be obtained on the Internet at "<http://www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/fsmip97.htm>", or by contacting Larry V. Summers in writing at T&M, AMS, USDA, PO Box 96456, Rm. 4006-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456,

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GLICKMAN AWARDS \$500,000 TO HELP IMPROVE MARKETS FOR U.S.
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

Release No. 0204.99

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GLICKMAN AWARDS \$500,000 TO HELP IMPROVE MARKETS FOR U.S.
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

WASHINGTON, May 11, 1999--Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman today awarded \$500,000 to nine states to improve markets for American agricultural products.

"These grants will help small agricultural enterprises develop the innovative techniques they need to compete effectively in the 21st century by building strong, beneficial partnerships between farmers and consumers," said Glickman.

The USDA grants, which will be matched by the states receiving them, include:

California--\$50,000 for the California Department of Food and Agriculture with the California Salmon Council, to identify alternative market opportunities for salmon and to develop innovative marketing strategies for small, independent fish and dockside seafood buyers.

Kentucky--\$90,000 for the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the University of Kentucky and Partners for Family Farms, to research and establish meat processing and marketing systems geared to family farms.

Massachusetts--\$45,500 for the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture working with the University of Massachusetts, to devise data collection methods and market performance measures to improve market planning among small New England farms. An additional \$20,250 grant from the state's Department of Food and Agriculture will be used in cooperation with Friends of the Public Market, to assess consumer demand for locally produced foods and specialty products through development of an indoor market in Boston.

New Hampshire--\$34,375 grant to the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food, in cooperation with the Vermont Department of Agriculture and the Great River Market Cooperative, to explore and develop buyer-producer connections in the Connecticut River Valley, building on its designation as an American Heritage Riverway.

New York--\$42,500 grant to the New York Department of Agriculture and Markets which will partner with the Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship to assist small farms in Central New York in marketing specialty meat and poultry including the establishment of a producers' marketing association.

Pennsylvania--\$75,000 for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Maryland Department of Agriculture and the Dairy Network Partnership, to demonstrate and evaluate market potential for non-regulatory, consumer-funded incentives for farmers to offset the cost of adopting or continuing the use of environmentally-sensitive production practices.

Tennessee--\$75,000 for the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the University of Tennessee's Agricultural Development Center, to prepare case studies, conduct market research, and assist limited resource farmers and agribusinesses in marketing value-added agricultural products.

Vermont--\$28,000 for the Vermont Department of Agriculture, Food and Markets

cooperation with other Northeast States and organizations, to develop an infrastructure for collecting and marketing high quality genetics for sheep and goats in domestic international markets.

Washington--\$39,000 for the Washington Department of Agriculture to assist Washington State Farmers Market Association in expanding services to the growing number of markets in the state and to the farmers who supply them.

A second round of Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program grants will be announced in August. Information on applying for FSMIP grants can be obtained online at www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/fsmip.htm or by contacting Larry V. Summers at (202) 720-27

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GLICKMAN ANNOUNCES NATIONAL FARMERS MARKET WEEK

WASHINGTON, August 20, 1999--Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman today proclaimed August 21-28, 1999 as National Farmers Market Week.

"Farmers markets and roadside stands have always been a way for Americans to stay in touch with our heritage and our roots," said Glickman. "Today, farmers markets are also critical to the success of American agriculture by allowing small farmers to sell their fresh produce directly to consumers. At USDA, we work hard to increase awareness among farmers and consumers about the convenience and value of farmers markets."

USDA works closely with State departments of agriculture encouraging the increased development of farmers markets to assist the small grower. Particular emphasis is placed on minority farmers and providing access to fresh fruits and vegetables to the urban, under-served consumer. One way USDA is accomplishing these goals is through USDA-operated farmers markets.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service works with States to encourage market growth, while the Food and Nutrition Service helps needy families gain access to healthy produce. Food stamp recipients can use their benefits at most farmers markets, as can many participants in the Women, Infants, and Children program.

The number of farmers markets in the United States has grown dramatically in recent years. USDA's 1998 farmers market directory lists 2,746 farmers markets, up from 2,410 in 1996 and 1,755 in 1994, when USDA began collecting the data. Sales at farmers markets will total \$1 billion this year, with most of the money going directly to small family farmers.

Information on farmers markets, including the *National Directory of Farmers Markets*, can be obtained on the web at www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets or by calling 800-384-8704.

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NEWS RELEASE

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Release No.0381.99

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USDA AWARDS 15 GRANTS FOR MARKETING IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

WASHINGTON, Sept. 28, 1999--Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman today awarded \$700,000 under the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program to support market research and demonstration projects to improve marketing systems for food and agricultural products or to identify new market opportunities for farm products.

“The projects USDA is funding will especially benefit small, limited-resource, family farmers by helping them identify and build new markets for their farm products,” said Glickman.

USDA awarded today’s grants to the following states:

- Alabama--\$48,000 to the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries to provide training and technical assistance for small, limited-resource farmers as they use improved technology for fruit and vegetable production.
- Alaska--\$49,870 to the Alaska Division of Agriculture, in cooperation with the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, to assist farmers in marketing Alaska vegetables and potatoes.
- Colorado--\$32,000 to the Colorado Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Montrose/Delta Agricultural Development Program, to study potential growth of the “natural/organic” meat industry.
- Connecticut--\$75,000 to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with five other New England States and the New England MacIntosh Growers Association, to evaluate innovative technologies for packing, shipping, and marketing fresh apples in domestic and international markets.
- Florida--\$57,000 to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, in cooperation with the University of Florida, to investigate the market for fresh and frozen shrimp products and to identify direct marketing alternatives for shrimp grown on small farms.

- Idaho--\$24,989 to the Idaho Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the University of Idaho and the Idaho Hay Association, to identify alternative market opportunities for forages and the feasibility of establishing hay marketing associations or cooperatives.
- Illinois--\$80,000 to the Illinois Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the University of Illinois, to develop a system for collecting and distributing information on the compositional characteristics of corn and soybeans products, and the associated price differentials.
- Maine--\$42,000 to the Maine Department of Agriculture to establish a database of market information for producers and buyers of Maine agricultural products and to develop alternative mechanisms to exchange market information.
- Massachusetts--\$23,214 to the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture, in cooperation with the Berkshire Regional Food and Land Council, for a variety of outreach and educational programs for producers and buyers under the "Berkshire Grown" marketing initiative.
- Minnesota--\$45,000 to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Organic Alliance, to develop educational materials that explain organic farming and provide for better informed consumer food choices.
- New Jersey--\$43,131 to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture to evaluate potential direct marketing opportunities and impediments in connection with farm-based educational and recreational activities.
- New York--\$42,000 to the New York Department of Agriculture and Markets, in cooperation with the Farmers Market Federation of New York, to develop a system that allows food stamp recipients to use part of their electronic benefits transfer allowances to shop at open-air farmers markets.
- Oregon--\$63,000 to the Oregon Raspberry and Blackberry Commission to monitor and evaluate current caneberry nutraceutical and health-related research and identify additional opportunities for product development.
- Tennessee--\$37,000 to the University of Tennessee, Agricultural Experiment Station, to identify and develop ways to reduce barriers that confront small-volume producers of fresh produce and processed foods in the food distribution system.
- Washington--\$38,031 to Washington State University, Agricultural Experiment Station, to assess consumers' willingness to pay for sustainable agricultural food products and evaluate market opportunities for producers.

USDA selected these projects from over 30 proposals state departments of agriculture and other eligible state agencies recommended. Information on FSMIP grants can be obtained on the web at www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/fsmip.htm or by contacting Larry V. Summers at (202) 720-

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AMS NEWS RELEASE

AMS Release No. 296-99

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SMALL FARMERS FIND SUCCESS IN MARKETING TO SCHOOLS

WASHINGTON, Nov. 30, 1999-The U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued four "Small Farmer Success Story" bulletins which outline the experiences of the New North Florida Cooperative. The bulletins describe how a group of growers with limited resources in the northern Florida area formed a cooperative to market fresh produce to local school districts.

"An important part of USDA's small farm initiative is to encourage farmers to develop innovative marketing strategies for value-added products," said Kathleen A. Merrigan, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. "We hope that pilot projects like this cooperative serve as models for small farmers in other regions of the country."

The small farm operators organized to concentrate on local school districts as a market. To provide fresh, high-quality products, the cooperative developed a postharvest handling system including a packing shed, refrigerated storage, a rinsing system, a chopping system, packaging procedures, and transportation practices.

The cooperative worked with the Gadsden and Jackson County school districts to provide leafy green vegetables on a schedule that would meet the menu plans of the school food-service directors. They produced, processed, packaged, and delivered an average of 2,000 pounds of leafy greens every two weeks. They also produced strawberries and blackberries that were sold to the schools for desserts and as additions to the School Breakfast Program.

The project received support from AMS, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the West Florida Resource Conservation and Development Council, and the Small Farmer Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Project of Florida A&M University.

For more information or to obtain a copy of the bulletins, contact Dan Schofer, USDA, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, STOP 0266, Washington, DC 20250-0266, tel. (202) 690-1170, fax (202) 690-3616, or e-mail dan.schofer@usda.gov.

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NEWS RELEASE

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GLICKMAN AWARDS \$600,000 FOR MARKETING PROJECTS

WASHINGTON, July 25, 2000 - Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman today awarded 14 matching grants totaling \$600,000 to support agriculture market research and demonstration projects. The grants, provided under the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program, will be used to improve marketing systems for food and agricultural products or to identify new market opportunities for farm products.

"The proposals selected today reflect the Administration's continuing commitment to help small farms thrive. These research and development projects will help small farmers and ranchers find new, innovative marketing approaches that can help them connect with more consumers. Finding alternatives to traditional retail systems strengthens the chances for small-scale producers to survive in markets that are growing increasingly concentrated and competitive," Glickman said.

USDA awarded the following grants:

- Arizona - A \$42,000 grant to the Arizona Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with Arizona State University, for an evaluation of the tourism industry as an alternative marketing channel for Arizona agricultural products.
- Indiana - A \$78,000 grant to Purdue University to assist in developing a unique production and marketing system to enhance the profitability and sustainability of small to midsize beef producers and processors in the Eastern Corn Belt region.
- Iowa - A \$55,000 grant to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to expand local food systems through direct marketing to Iowa institutions.
- Kansas - A \$55,000 grant to Kansas State University, in cooperation with the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing, to identify market opportunities for new varieties of hard white wheat and to assess alternative business structures for producers.
- Massachusetts - A \$55,000 grant to the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture, in concert with Connecticut, Vermont, and New York, to develop innovative marketing approaches for small-farm livestock producers in the Northeast.
- Michigan - A \$40,000 grant to the Michigan Department of Agriculture for a cooperative

project with Michigan State University and the Midwest Nut Producers Council to develop product quality criteria for marketing Midwest-grown edible chestnuts.

- Missouri - A \$27,500 grant to the Missouri Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with University of Missouri Outreach and Extension, to increase direct market access and communication by connecting producers and consumers.
- Montana - A \$48,000 grant to the Montana Department of Agriculture, with Montana State University and others, to assess market opportunities and strategic directions for specialty herbs and essential oils crops in western Montana.
- North Carolina - A \$20,000 grant to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture to help evaluate the competitive position of the Fraser Fir Christmas tree industry and formulate a marketing plan for growers in and around western North Carolina.
- North Dakota - A \$35,000 grant to the North Dakota Department of Agriculture to explore the feasibility of creating a central order fulfillment capability to further develop the Internet Shopping Mall for North Dakota products.
- Pennsylvania - A \$31,000 grant to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, to develop and implement a business plan for a community farmers market on Pittsburgh's south side.
- South Dakota - A \$24,000 grant to the South Dakota Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Mid-U.S. Honey Producers Marketing Association, to determine the market potential for locally produced honey mead.
- Vermont - A \$31,000 grant to the Vermont Department of Agriculture, Food and Markets, in cooperation with other northeastern states, to further develop an infrastructure for collecting and marketing high quality sheep and goat genetic material.
- Washington - A \$60,000 grant to the Washington State Department of Agriculture, in partnership with the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association, for market research and development of an interactive data base that will allow oyster farmers to more easily form cooperative networks and develop strategies for business success.

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FARMERS MARKETS ON THE RISE

WASHINGTON, Aug. 1, 2000 - Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman today announced that a record number of farmers markets are operating in the United States - a total of 2,863 seasonal or year-round markets, reflecting a 63 percent increase from 1994 to 2000. Sales are estimated to exceed \$1 billion annually, with most of the money going directly to small family farmers.

Glickman also released the newly published 2000 edition of USDA's *National Directory of Farmers Markets*. The 272-page directory is an informative resource for farmers, operators, consumers, and the general public. The directory provides a listing of farmers markets nationwide, arranged by states, with locations, hours of operation, and contact information, and points out markets that accept food stamps and other food assistance coupons.

USDA reported 1,755 farmers markets across the nation in 1994. This number grew to 2,410 in 1996 and to 2,746 in 1998.

"Farmers markets and roadside stands have always been a way for Americans to stay in touch with our heritage and our roots," said Glickman. "Today, farmers markets are also critical to the success of American agriculture, allowing small farmers to sell their fresh produce directly to consumers and keep a larger share of the consumer dollar."

The directory is published every two years and updated continually on the Web. The new directory and information on farmers markets is available at www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets, or by calling 1-800-384-8704, or writing to USDA, AMS-T&M-W&AM, Room 2642-S, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-0267.

To recognize the many benefits farmers markets bring to both farmers and consumers, the Secretary also has issued a proclamation declaring the week of July 30 - Aug. 5 "National Farmers Market Week."

USDA and state commissioners of agriculture work together to promote farmers markets to assist small farms and meet community needs. In the last decade, USDA has emphasized a critical need to help minority farmers and to provide under-served urban consumers access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service works with states to encourage market growth, while its Food and Nutrition Service helps needy families gain access to healthy produce. Food stamp recipients can use their benefits at most farmers markets, as can many participants in the federal Women, Infants, and Children assistance program.

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

NATIONAL FARMERS MARKET WEEK
July 30 - August 5, 2000

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, thousands of farmers markets across the country offer farm-fresh fruits and vegetables, cheeses, herbs, fish, flowers, baked goods, meats, and more;

WHEREAS, farmers markets provide an outstanding venue for farmers to market directly to consumers, generate substantial income for family farmers, and bring consumers face to face with farmers, heightening their appreciation for farmers' service;

WHEREAS, farmers markets support communities by bringing the ambience of the farm to the city, by making fresh and nutritious food readily available, and by giving consumers the ability to purchase locally grown produce with ease;

WHEREAS, many farmers markets redeem vouchers under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and coupons under the Food Stamp Program, providing access for participants in these programs to fresh, nutritious food;

WHEREAS, an increasing number of farmers markets across America are fighting hunger by taking part in food recovery programs, whereby farmers donate part of the unsold food to anti-hunger organizations;

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture continues to expand the development of farmers markets and to promote and increase farmers markets held on Federal property;

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture fully supports local efforts to facilitate direct farm product sales for our Nation's small farms through the establishment and support of farmers markets;

NOW, THEREFORE, to advance the expansion and greater appreciation of farmers and public markets, I, Dan Glickman, Secretary of Agriculture of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week of July 30-August 5, 2000, National Farmers Market Week and call upon all Americans to celebrate the benefits of these markets with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 20th day of July 2000, the two hundred twenty-fifth year of the Independence of the United States of America.

DAN GLICKMAN
Secretary



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GLICKMAN ANNOUNCES GRANTS FOR MARKETING IMPROVEMENT

WASHINGTON, Sept. 25, 2000--Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman today awarded 12 matching grants totaling nearly \$600,000 to support agriculture market research and demonstration projects. The grants will be used to improve marketing systems for food and agricultural products or to identify new market opportunities for farm products.

"These projects reflect our continued commitment to help small farmers and ranchers find new, innovative approaches to marketing that will help them better connect with consumers," said Glickman. "Finding alternatives to traditional retail distribution strengthens the chances for smaller producers to survive in markets that are growing increasingly concentrated and competitive."

USDA awarded the following grants:

Arkansas - \$59,600 to the Economic Development of Arkansas Fund Commission, in cooperation with the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, to help farmers in the Eastern Arkansas Delta market specialty and value-added farm products in nearby urban centers.

Colorado - \$40,000 to the Colorado Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with Colorado State University, to identify an appropriate organizational model for transporting fresh produce between local farmers markets and restaurants.

Hawaii - \$64,000 to the Hawaii Department of Agriculture to develop a comprehensive market information system for Hawaiian-grown products for small farmers, processors, and handlers.

Idaho - \$65,000 to the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the University of Idaho, to study the economic viability of establishing a commercial rebaling system to convert large bales of hay grass to small bales to serve a market niche.

Illinois - \$58,000 to the Illinois Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with Southern Illinois University, to identify the specific product preferences of organic grain processors and end-users.

Louisiana - \$65,300 to the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, in cooperation with Louisiana State University and Southern University, to study an electronic traceback system to help small producers adjust breeding programs.

Missouri - \$25,000 to the Missouri Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with Southwest Missouri State University, to assess the market potential for locally manufactured fruit brandy and port products.

Nebraska - \$33,000 to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture to conduct export seminars at major destination ports in South America and Asia for Nebraska farm commodities.

Ohio - \$60,000 to the Ohio Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with Bowling Green State University and Ohio State University, to develop a pricing system for supplying the market with animals that meet strict genetic and management history standards.

Oklahoma - \$80,000 to the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with Oklahoma State University and the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, to evaluate factors that impede or contribute to the financial success of farmers markets.

Washington - \$17,800 to Washington State University to identify which factors appear to contribute most significantly to the success or failure of Internet-based marketing ventures launched by small farm operations.

Wisconsin - \$30,800 to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin, to help small producers of hormone-free, antibiotic-free, or pasture-fed meat items improve how they market their specialty meat products to wholesale/retail customers.

More information is available on the web at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/index.htm>.

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AMS Release No. 303-00

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USDA RELEASES REPORT ON FARM-TO-SCHOOL ALLIANCES

WASHINGTON, Nov. 6, 2000-The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced the release of an on-line publication summarizing the highlights of the USDA Small Farm/School Meals Initiative Southeast Regional Workshop held May 1 in Georgetown, Ky. The report, *How Local Farmers and School Food Service Buyers Are Building Alliances*, can be viewed on USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) website at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/mta/publications.htm>.

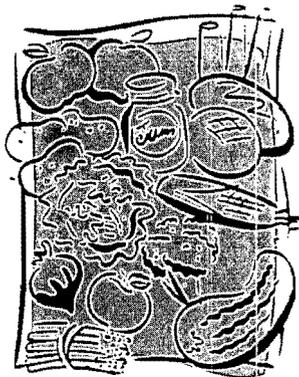
"Ninety-four percent of all farms in the United States are small or limited-resource farms, grossing less than \$250,000 in annual receipts," said AMS administrator, Kathleen A. Merrigan. "To enhance the earning potential of these farm operations, AMS has assumed a prominent role in facilitating direct marketing initiatives between small and limited-resource agricultural producers and local school districts."

The workshop, aimed at boosting the use of locally produced fresh food in school feeding programs, attracted more than 180 school food service directors, state and federal officials, extension agents, members of farm cooperatives, and agricultural marketing specialists. Attendees were able to network with small agricultural producers and/or school food service buyers in their local area; learn about existing programs that give preferences to small and/or local vendors in school feeding programs; discover new and emerging trends in school meal purchasing; share the experiences of successful direct marketing relationships; and learn about marketing assistance available to small farmers.

While the report's focus is on the experience of a handful of small farmers and school food service directors in Kentucky, North Carolina, the Florida Panhandle, and Southern California, many of the experiences outlined in the report may be adaptable to other regions of the country. The report addresses: the importance and benefits of farm-to-school marketing; product preferences of the school food service buyer; factors that influence a school food service buyer's choice of vendor; potential barriers to entry faced by the small producer; recommended approaches for breaking into the school food service market; and case studies of successful farm-to-school marketing initiatives.

For additional information, contact Debra Tropp at USDA-AMS-TMP-MTA, Room 4006-S, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250; tel. 202-720-2704; fax 202-690-4948; or e-mail Debra.Tropp@usda.gov.

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Farmers Markets

Farmers markets have quickly become a major sales outlet for agricultural producers nationwide. USDA's 1996 *National Farmers Market Directory* lists 2,411 farmers markets, 656 more than in 1994. This upward trend is continuing, based on information collected for the upcoming 1998 directory, which indicates a 10 percent increase in the number of farmers markets since 1996. Farmers markets are definitely meeting the needs of a growing number of farmers with small- to medium-sized operations.

Who benefits from farmers markets?

- Small farm operators: Those with less than \$250,000 in annual receipts who work and manage their own operations meet this definition (94 percent of all farms).
- Farmers and consumers: Farmers have direct access to markets to increase farm income. Consumers have access to locally grown, farm-fresh produce.
- The community: Urban communities where fresh, nutritious foods are scarce gain easy access to food. Farmers markets also help to promote nutrition education, wholesome eating habits, and better food preparation, as well as boosting the community's economy.

Statistics indicate:

- Farmers markets are an important source of revenue. In a 1995 USDA survey of 772 farmers markets, over 6,000 farmers said they sell their products only at farmers markets.
- Customer acceptance of farmers markets continues to rise as consumers search for fresh farm products. A 1996 survey of New Jersey farmers market customers revealed that they have greatly increased their consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables in the past five years. Consumers said they went to farmers markets for fresh food and direct contact with farmers.
- Farmers markets increase opportunities, help farmers to develop business skills, and improve the quality of life for farm families. A New York farmers market study showed that 86 percent of vendors surveyed either had no business before they started selling at farmers markets or had started a business on a small scale at home.

WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program

USDA's Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers Market Nutrition Program was established in 1992 to provide fresh, nutritious, unprepared foods, such as fruit and vegetables, from farmers markets to women, infants, and children who are nutritionally at risk and to expand the awareness and use of farmers markets by consumers. Federal funding for the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program for this year has doubled nationwide to \$12 million (with an increase to \$15 million requested for next year). Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi join the program this year, while 24 States will greatly expand existing programs.

Food stamps

The use of food stamps at farmers markets nationwide is huge--estimates range from \$75 million to \$100 million annually.

School meals

Sales from farmers markets to school meals programs are being promoted by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, Rural Development, and Food and Nutrition Service in California, Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina.

USDA supports farmers markets

- USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service will coordinate planning and operation of 20 farmers markets at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with 46 similar markets at the U.S. Departments of Energy, Transportation, State, Labor, and Capitol Hill.
- USDA's Farm Service Agency opened its first 1998 farmers market on June 1, in Kansas City, Mo., with seven small and limited-resource farmers participating (nine additional markets are scheduled throughout the summer). USDA's food gleaning initiative generated 196 pounds of perishable produce and 96 pounds of nonperishable baby food and supplies at the first market. USDA is leading a government-wide initiative to increase food gleaning and food recovery nationwide.
- AMS developed a brochure on establishing farmers markets on Federal property. It is available in hard copy or on the AMS farmers market Internet home page. More information can be obtained by calling 1-800-384-8704.
- USDA makes it easy to find a listing of the farmers markets in your State. Go to Internet site <http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets> and click on a picture of your State to bring up an alphabetical listing.

July 1998

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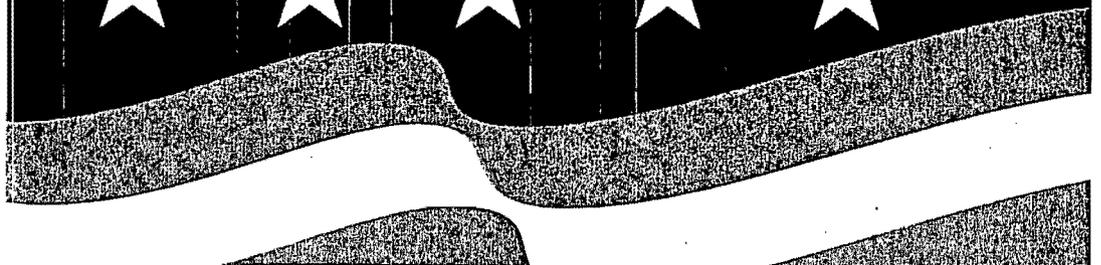
National
Commission on
Small Farms

A Time to Act

*A Report of the USDA National
Commission on Small Farms*

January 1998

National
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on
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