



1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Room 2055-S, STOP 0201  
Washington, D.C. 20250-0201

February 9, 2021

Ms. Abby Youngblood  
Executive Director  
National Organic Coalition  
25 Harvard Street  
Arlington, Massachusetts 02476

Dear Ms. Youngblood:

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of January 28, 2021, expressing interest in the origin of livestock provisions in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) organic regulations. Origin of livestock for dairy animals continues to be a topic of interest to the organic community and a priority for the USDA.

There continues to be broad support in Congress and the organic community on the need for clarification of the current rule. The 2015 proposed rule and the two previous public comment periods have provided valuable and thoughtful feedback. USDA needs to address this feedback in a way that both answers the underlying need and that will withstand legal challenges. To that end, we previously shared our intent to advance a supplemental proposed rule given the complexities of this very technical rule. This remains our current path forward, to maximize opportunities for public input and to design a final rule that will most align with organic community goals.

In the meantime, USDA continues our ongoing work to assist organic dairy farmers. This includes the ongoing livestock compliance project, which has continued unannounced Federal inspections to better enforce uniform compliance with the established organic standards. We also continue to pursue enforcement actions when the existing regulations are violated. Protecting the integrity of the organic seal is an important priority for USDA.

I hope you will share this response with your cosigners and continue to be engaged as we move this rulemaking forward as expeditiously as possible. Thank you for your unwavering support of the Nation's organic dairy industry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Summers", written in a cursive style.

Bruce Summers  
Administrator