

**Organic Organizations and Farms ask USDA to  
Swiftly Finalize Rule to Save Family Organic Dairy Farms**  
*Letter delivered to Congress signed by 118 organizations and 249 farms*

**January 28, 2021:** Today, organic organizations with support from organic farmers delivered a letter to the acting Secretary of Agriculture asking for USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) to finalize the Origin of Livestock rule as soon as possible.

The need to close regulatory loopholes hurting organic dairy family farmers was first proposed in 2015 under Secretary Vilsack's first go-round at the USDA as Secretary of Agriculture. Since then, the problems have escalated while USDA's response has progressed at a snail's pace despite unity among the organic community and a direct mandate from Congress for its completion. Last June, the USDA's National Organic Program missed a deadline Congress set for the NOP to finalize the long-awaited Origin of Livestock rule. Each month that goes by without implementation of this rule puts more family organic dairy farmers out of business across the country.

The letter, signed by 118 organic organizations and 249 organic farmers from across the nation, strongly urges the Secretary of Agriculture to oversee the finalization of the origin of organic livestock rule and to ensure that the rule is enforceable.

"Organic dairy farmers have been left behind by the NOP, and the years of broken promises of fixing this regulatory loophole have been devastating. We need a strong, enforceable Origin of Livestock rule as soon as possible," says **Kate Mendenhall, Executive Director of Organic Farmers Association**.

"We need an Origin of Livestock Rule that truly protects organic family dairy farmers, is enforceable by the NOP, and levels the playing field for American organic dairy farmers," says **Ed Maltby, Executive Director of Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA)**. "Western organic dairy farmers are suffering immensely, and we need to see action from the USDA," says **Jill Smith, Consultant for the Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA)**.

Congress recognized the need to strengthen the organic dairy standards and included language in the Fiscal Year 2020 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agency Appropriations bill requiring the NOP to issue a final Origin of Livestock rule by June 17, 2020. That deadline passed without USDA action to finalize the rule.

"The new administration has the opportunity to deliver a win for organic dairy producers, who have suffered too long due to inconsistent enforcement. Finalizing this regulation should be a top priority in 2021. The final rule must be strong enough and well thought out, so it truly closes the existing loopholes and allows the NOP to crack down on bad actors," says **Abby Youngblood, Executive Director of the National Organic Coalition**.

The organic community is gravely disappointed at the lack of attention and priority NOP has put on this issue. The new administration must take a new focused approach to finalizing a strong Origin of Livestock rule that protects organic dairy farmers and the integrity of organic milk.

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