



Testimony to California State Senate Committee on Food and Agriculture
“Assuring Integrity of Organic Food and the Use of Organic Fertilizers”

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Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you very much for the opportunity to appear today on behalf of the Organic Fertilizer Association of California (OFAC). This committee and OFAC share the same goal of insuring that the users of fertilizer materials acceptable for certified organic production that they comply with the USDA National Organic Programs (NOP) standards.

OFAC, formed in October 2007, represents the interests of organic fertilizer producers, distributors and retailers that provide organic fertilizer to the agriculture and horticulture industries. The organization is also dedicated to increasing public knowledge of biological and organic cultural systems.

Organic integrity and safety of our members' products is of primary interest to the organization and we have worked with certifiers, CDFR, food processors and others to insure we reach that goal. The use of products that do not meet the qualifications of the NOP can result in the loss of certification for the crops and land on which it's used. Also the sale of a product stating it is acceptable or organic production is false and misleading and puts growers and legitimate manufacturers of organic inputs at an economic and competitive disadvantage.

We continue to educate our members on guidelines regarding an audit/verification system to create confidence in the quality and integrity of the products they produce and market.

It is OFAC's position that the CDFR Fertilizer Inspection Program should be the lead state agency in assuring the products meet NOP standards. The CDFR Fertilizer Materials Law states that department is to promote the distribution of effective and safe fertilizer materials essential for the production food and fiber. It also states that it provides assurance to the consumer of commercial fertilizer, agricultural minerals, packaged soil amendments, and auxiliary soil and plant substances that the product purchased is properly identified, and to provide assurance of the validity of the quality and quantity represented by the manufacturer of these products. Additional authority exists under label, labeling, misbranding, and adulteration requirements of the fertilizer law and regulations.

The department has also proposed and sought comments on a regulation that would require all fertilizer manufacturers to disclose all ingredients in their fertilizer and a description of the manufacturing process. Hopefully this will help CDFA determine the validity of claims on organic products.

In addition to the previously mentioned items, steps should be taken to require all fertilizer materials making the claim that they are acceptable for certified organic production be registered with CDFA Fertilizer Inspection Program. Staff trained in organics should review these labels for accuracy and claims made. Also the field inspection staff should have training regarding fertilizer materials used in certified production.

The Fertilizer Inspection Program should adopt the definition for organic input put forth by the American Association of Plant Food Control Officials.

The CDFA Fertilizer Inspection Program should explore areas of cooperation and possible memorandums of understanding with organizations such as the Washington State Department of Agriculture Organics Program which registers brand name materials used in organic food production and the Organic Material Review Institute (OMRI) that lists such products. Such cooperation will reduce costs and leverage the respective programs abilities to insure organic integrity.

An audit process lead by CDFA should be developed to audit facilities that produce fertilizer materials for certified organic production. Again it is hoped this could be a cooperative effort of the various agencies and organizations involved in assuring the products meet the standards.

Appropriate civil penalties should be put in place for violations of the Fertilizer Materials Law and Regulation. But companies that are accused of such violations also must have access to due process regarding the claims being made against them.

OFAC members are committed to making the process work to insure our customers receive the materials they need. We are willing to work with the CDFA in addressing the financial needs and funding to implement the above program.

Again thank you for the opportunity to present our position and OFAC looks forward to working with all parties to insure the integrity of the products we supply growers.

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