

Protecting Native Ecosystems

Eliminating the Incentive for Conversion to Organic Production



March 2018
Issue Brief

www.WildFarmAlliance.org

OUR WORK



Empowering Farmers Connecting Consumers Protecting Wild Nature

Since 2000, Wild Farm Alliance has initiated policies that support farm stewardship, educate farmers about on-farm biodiversity conservation, and assist them with its practical implementation.

Our mission is to promote a healthy, viable agriculture that protects and restores wild nature.

Our work is centered on engaging and empowering those involved in the food and farming movement, including everyone from farmers to consumers.

Learn more and get involved: www.WildFarmAlliance.org

Pushing for a New Rule

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) just published a proposed rule recommendation to the National Organic Program. It mirrors what Wild Farm Alliance proposed in fall 2017 and what you helped to promote. This new rule will protect Native Ecosystems from conversion overnight to organic production.

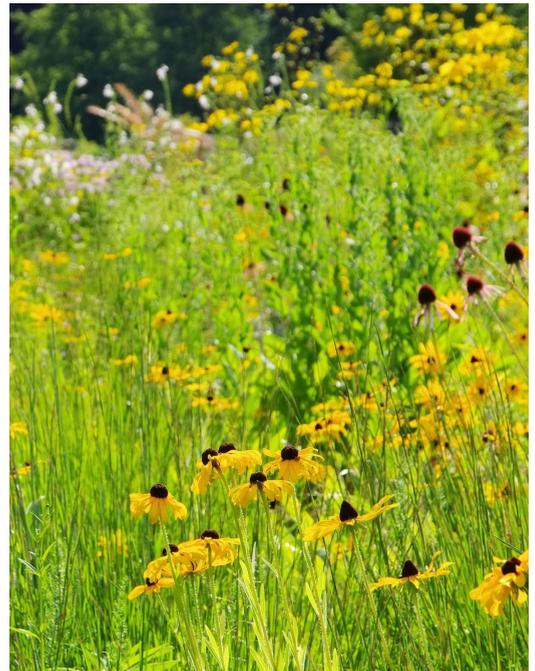
With this new regulation, the NOSB will incentivize the transition of non-organic farms while minimizing the loss of lands with important habitats from conversion.

These Native Ecosystems are necessary to support declining and rare species today and a hundred years from now, when there will be much less available due to increased human populations and climate change.

Until now, certification of Native Ecosystems has been extremely unfair to the organic producers who have worked hard and made significant financial commitments to convert non-organic farms into organic production.

Organic agriculture is built on the philosophy of caring for the Earth. The organic label must protect these Native Ecosystems for the future - the NOSB should not do anything less.

OUR GOAL



**Please take action today and help us push through to the final finish line.
Your voice is more important than ever right now!**

COUNTERING THE ARGUMENTS



Argument: It is hard for beginning farmers to find land to farm.

Counter: Too often, beginning farmers end up with lands that have never been farmed because they are too steep or wet, which sets them up to fail. There are 37 programs in the US that help beginning farmers obtain land
<https://www.farmtransition.org/resources/>

Argument: Organic producers cannot find land to expand their operations.

Counter: 99% of the agricultural land in the world is farmed conventionally. They should be transitioning this land to organic production.



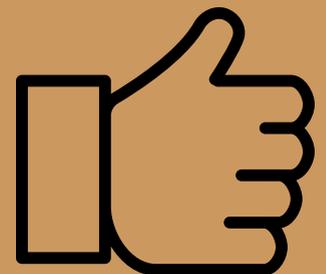
Argument: Transitioning land is expensive

Counter: More and more resources are becoming available to producers transitioning to organic.

- NRCS Conservation Action Plan 138 - helps producers implement a system of conservation practices for organic.
- Companies, like General Mills and Kellogg, are supporting their producers as they transition to organic.

Argument: It will be hard for organic operations to adjust to this rule.

Counter: Areas that are already converted could be grandfathered into the rule. Since it will take a few years to enact, organic businesses will have time to make adjustments. Since many countries already have standards that don't allow conversion, this rule change won't affect their producers.



TAKE ACTION

In just a couple of weeks, the full NOSB (not just the subcommittee) will be voting to approve this rule recommendation.

Whether or not you have submitted comments in the past, we now need to urge all of the NOSB members to push this recommendation forward.

Below are taking points to make when submitting comments. Visit www.WildFarmAlliance.org/submit_comments to learn more.



Tell the NOSB you support the motion to approve the two-part proposal to Eliminate the Incentive to Convert Native Ecosystems to Organic Production. The NOSB's leadership will ensure the USDA organic label provides critical protections for Native Ecosystems, and the integrity of the National Organic Program will be preserved.

1. Define "Native Ecosystems" in a way that an assessment can be made based on plant species present in natural and semi-natural vegetation types.



2. Require a timeframe of ineligibility, ensuring that a site supporting a Native Ecosystem cannot be certified for organic production for a period of 10 years from the date of conversion.

Pass the two-part proposal, then encourage Guidance that will ensure uniform compliance with the Native Ecosystems definition and the period of converted lands not being eligible for certification.

COMMENTS DUE APRIL 4, 2018

Your comments will ensure organic agriculture today protects habitat for countless species now and in the future!

Join with Wild Farm Alliance and thousands of other organic and conservation advocates to tell the NOSB to approve this rule recommendation today.

www.WildFarmAlliance.org/submit_comments