

# THE CULTIVATOR

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News From [The Cornucopia Institute](#)

## USDA Establishes Strong New Organic Standards for Pasture and Livestock

### Victory for Integrity of Organic Food and Agriculture



Family farmers across the country, who produce organic milk, are celebrating the release of strict new USDA regulations that establish distinct benchmarks requiring the grazing and pasturing of dairy cows and other livestock. Many hope that the new rule will put an end to the abuses that have flooded the organic market with suspect milk from a handful of mega-dairies generally confining thousands of animals in feed lots and barns.

"We are delighted by the new rules," said Mark Kastel, Senior Farm Policy Analyst at The Cornucopia Institute. "The organic community has been calling for strong regulations and its enforcement for much of the past decade. Cheap organic milk flowing from the illegitimate factory farms has created a surplus that is crushing ethical family farm producers."

The new rules require that dairy cows and other ruminants be out on pasture for the entire growing season, but for not less than 120 days. It also requires that the animals receive at least 30% of their feed, or dry matter intake (DMI), from pasturing. For more, [click here](#).

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## Genetically Modified Alfalfa Threatens Organic Agriculture

Public comment period extended until March 3rd

Organic farmers and consumers of organic meat and dairy products need to make their voices heard with comments to the USDA about the proposed approval of genetically engineered Roundup Ready alfalfa. The USDA's draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) approves of releasing the new crop into the environment, despite known risks genetically modified alfalfa poses to organic livestock agriculture.



*Alfalfa image from the [Wikimedia Commons](#)*

Alfalfa is a perennial plant and the fourth most widely grown crop in the U.S. It is a fundamental source of livestock forage and a relatively cheap source of protein for organic ruminants, as well as adding valuable nitrogen to the soil. Because bees can carry alfalfa pollen for up to 4-6 miles, potential contamination from a neighbor's field, even miles away, renders useless buffer strips and other devices typically employed with genetically engineered corn and soybean crops. These pesky bees just won't respect fence lines and 'no trespassing' signs!

[Click here](#) to view Cornucopia's action alert for more background and details on how to submit comments to the USDA on this important issue.

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## USDA Seeking Comments on Finish Feeding of Organic Beef and Ruminants



*Beef cows on pasture*

With the release of the new pasture/livestock rule, the USDA asked for additional input from the public to help finalize one last portion of the new rule -- the amount of time and details acceptable for the "finish feeding" of beef and other ruminants. Finish feeding with grain is used by many organic farmers and ranchers to improve the grade of beef (marbling of the flesh) and involves feeding grain to livestock for the last portion of their lives. Other organic producers create 100% grass fed animals.

The USDA is taking public comments until April 19 on the appropriate length of time for finishing, such as 120 days (as long as 1/5th of the animal's life) and on the use of feedlots for this practice (the proposal that is being commented on would require all cattle, even when in feedlots, to at least have access to pasture). Comments can be sent to the USDA by visiting <http://www.regulations.gov/>. Then enter this USDA docket number into the search or keyword request line: AMS-TM-06-0198; TM-05-14FR.

Cornucopia is still developing its position on this topic and welcomes your input, particularly if you raise and sell ruminant livestock for slaughter. You can send your

thoughts to [cultivate@cornucopia.org](mailto:cultivate@cornucopia.org).

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## Visit With Cornucopia Staff at the Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference – Feb 25-27 in LaCrosse, WI

If you are coming to LaCrosse, WI for the [Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference](#), please head to the exhibit area and stop in at The Cornucopia Institute exhibit (booth 312). Codirectors Mark Kastel and Will Fantle will be there and always enjoy chatting with Cornucopia members and supporters.

Better yet, if your schedule permits, please sign up for a shift in the booth to greet other farmers if you'd like to talk about the issues that Cornucopia champions: [cultivate@cornucopia.org](mailto:cultivate@cornucopia.org).

The organic farming conference has attracted more than 2500 enthusiasts to the event. Hosted by *The Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES)*, it is the largest organic farming conference in the country. Workshops, speeches, an 'Organic University' with in-depth growing workshops, a trade show, films, social events, and good food are all part of the conference.

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## Organic, Local, Authentic Food and Farming News 24/7 at [www.cornucopia.org](http://www.cornucopia.org)

The full Cornucopia staff reviews numerous news items every day. We will post the most interesting of these once or twice a day. Just the most important items if you are making your living on a family farm, running a business ethically producing or distributing food, retailing or a consumer that just wants to be plugged-in to enhance your knowledge base.

Visit any time: [www.cornucopia.org](http://www.cornucopia.org) and we would welcome your feedback in terms of its content.



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