

My name is Anaïs Beddard, and I represent the second generation at Lady Moon Farms. This is my third time speaking in front of the NOSB, and I see some new faces. Welcome! Your time and commitment are recognized and highly valued, so thank you. Lady Moon is the largest organic vegetable grower east of the Mississippi, with farms in Florida, Georgia, and Pennsylvania providing year-round produce. My parents started farming organically 30 years ago because they felt strongly about growing healthy, delicious, good-for-you food, food that was grown in the soil.

At the time, organics did not carry the same weight it does now. It had been around since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it hadn't received any respect in the larger agricultural industry. My parents were part of a group who believed that this age-old system of growing was the best way of producing food. They fought to be heard and struggled to be respected, but they were passionate about their cause. And in time, the name 'organic' took on meaning and earned trust in the marketplace.

These revolutionaries didn't start farming organically because they could get higher prices for their produce. They started because they believed in the process and the importance of nourishing the earth's soil. It is an expensive production system that requires a lot more effort, time, and investment to be successful. You aren't only focusing on producing a strong harvest during season, but on cultivating an entire ecosystem year-round. Crop rotations, cover crops, green manure. These are just a few of the practices in our toolbox that we MUST utilize to be effective. You aren't an organic grower just by using OMRI approved inputs. That was and IS the whole point of the organic model: it is not an input-based system. It is a regenerative model focused on building the soil.

When you read OFPA, soil is prevalent throughout all the guidelines. Why hydroponic operations were ever allowed to be certified is beyond me. We diluted the label's integrity, while nearly every other country made it stronger. Now we're faced with an industry that continues to post double digit growth, but to what extent? New growing systems based on evolving technology will continue to be developed. That does not mean they should wear the same label as those systems that are well-defined and rooted in the industry. It is more important now than ever before to maintain this label's integrity.

I agree with the discussion document in that hydroponics, aquaponics, and aeroponics should be excluded from organic. Container systems that rely predominantly on liquid nutrients are no different from hydroponics. We should adopt the EU standards. Organic was founded on the principle of enriching the soil, which means in the ground. I urge the NOSB to make a recommendation as soon as possible. The expansion of hydroponic operations continues at an astonishing rate, and the uncertainty in the marketplace is increasing. The farmers before me fought hard to make organic a respected system. I aim to spend the rest of my life fighting to ensure that work is not lost.