



CORNUCOPIA  
I N S T I T U T E

## NOSB Fall Meeting - 2016

### Mark Kastel Testimony

My name is Mark Kastel. I'm the codirector of The Cornucopia Institute and act as our senior farm policy analyst. Our membership consists of approximately 10,000 individuals, including an important percentage of the nation certified organic farmers.

I first want to formally deliver over 1400 individually signed proxies, and again with a high percentage of certified organic farmers, from over 40 states represented.

Yes! Please hand-deliver my signed proxy letter, below, to the members of the National Organic Standards Board.

Dear NOSB members,

Please discontinue certifying all hydroponic and aquaponic operations for the following reasons:

1. The organic certification of soil-less operations violates the Organic Food Production Act of 1990 (OFPA), which requires maintaining and improving soil fertility as the foundation of organic agriculture. The biological diversity and complexity in a soil system cannot be replicated in water to produce the environmental benefits and nutrient-dense food organic consumers expect.
2. The NOSB's 2010 formal recommendations on the "Production Standard for Terrestrial Plants in Containers and Enclosures (Greenhouses)" specifically states that "hydroponics and aeroponic systems are prohibited." The NOP's decision to allow organic certification of hydroponic systems is in violation of their legal responsibility to follow OFPA (the statute for setting standards).
3. OFPA "assure(s) consumers that organically produced products meet a consistent standard." The 2010 NOSB recommendations are consistent with international standards. Twenty-four EU countries, Canada, Mexico, and recommendations from the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and the Expert Group for Technical Advice on Organic Production (EGTOP) prohibit organic certification of hydroponics and limit container growing to the sale of annual seedlings.
4. The "Keep the Soil in Organic" movement has strong support from many farmers who founded the organic movement and organizations representing over 2.2 million organic stakeholders. Organic farmer and Hydroponic Task Force Member, Dave Chapman stated that if the certification of hydroponics is not discontinued, "Between hydroponics and animal welfare, we will have lost organic as a word describing our way of farming."
5. Soil bacteria and fungi provide plants with minerals obtained from the mineral fractions of the soil. Carbon, captured from the atmosphere, returns as organic matter to the soil. Healthy soil should be the primary source of fertility for organic crops, not the continuous feeding of liquid nutrients.

I urge you to consider the enormous negative impact on U.S. farmers from imported hydroponic fruits and vegetables flooding U.S. markets, especially given the fact that hydroponic produce cannot legally be labeled organic in the countries of origin. Please consider the harm to organic integrity when standards are inconsistent and the founders of the organic movement disagree with USDA policy makers.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Stakeholder Type (farmer, processor, retailer, consumer, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

They are all making it very clear that hydroponic and container growing, whether or not the roots are in liquid or a nonnutritive substrate, in a container, is not consistent with the spirit and letter of the organic law.

...Why should you listen to these organic stakeholders?



Why should you listen to veteran experts, who will be testifying this week, like Dr. Michael Hansen and Charlotte Vallaeys of Consumers Union, Dr. Terry Shistar of Beyond Pesticides or Dr. Linley Dixon of The Cornucopia Institute?

Please allow me to make this clear, all of these organizations, with long legacies of monitoring organic policymaking are tax-exempt PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS.

The [voting record](#) of this panel indicates, in contested votes, many members universally reject the advice and counsel of these learned public representatives.

**NOSB Member Voting Record Scorecard**  
Evaluating the policy positions of independent and corporate representatives on the board.

Explanation of votes:  
 ✓ Agree with Consumers Union position  
 ✗ Opposed Consumers Union position  
 [A] Abstain  
 [N] No record  
 [C] Conflicted due to affiliation  
 [M] Member of CU

Current members by column:

NOTE: Scores may include votes not listed. See archival votes document for pre-2011 meeting.  
 NOTE: ON ABSECTIONS: Abstentions do not support the position of The Cornucopia Institute and other public interest groups. Under records based on legislative conflicts of interest, abstentions are often used by members to create favorable non-potential conflicts.

Date of Meeting	Position	Affiliation	New Name	Spoke for products	SCORE	Conflicts	Policy and governance interest		Abstain (A)	Abstain (N)	Abstain (C)	Abstain (M)	Abstain (O)
							Yes	No					
Spring 2015													
Concepts Position													
Early Oatley	Senator	Three Springs Farm	[Image]	75%	✓	✓	✓	✓	[A]				
Francis Thicke	Commissioner	Redstone Dairy	[Image]	81%	✓	✓	✓	✓				[A]	
Carole Walker	public consumer interest	Southern Univ. and A&E College	[Image]	80%	✓	✓	✓	✓	[A]				
Nick Maxwell	Senator	Nick's Organic Farm	[Image]	83%	✓	✓	✓	✓				[A]	
Alexandra Blomster	public consumer interest	Polymer Labs	[Image]	80%	✓	✓	✓	✓				[A]	

NOSB Fall 2015      NOSB Member Voting Record Scorecard - [www.cornucopia.org/foia/voting-scorecard](http://www.cornucopia.org/foia/voting-scorecard)

A sizable percentage of NOSB members, in contested decisions, vote and stand nearly 100% in consort with the Organic Trade Association and its corporate members.



And what is the OTA? Let me first tell you what it is not ..... It is NOT a public interest group.

It is a trade association mandated to lobby on behalf of businesses in the organic industry. Although they might want to say they represent farmers, they represent the businesses that buy commodities FROM farmers. They might want to say they represent consumers. But they represent the businesses that sell organic products TO consumers.

Who should you be listening to in the organic community?



The FMC Corporation, originally Food Machinery and Chemical Corp, has one reason that they are funding an Astroturf campaign to convince you how necessary carrageenan is in organic foods .... Profit.



Likewise, the reason that multinational companies like Driscoll's (whose vast preponderance of business is conventional), or Wholesum Harvest, have funded a phony-baloney grassroots group, the Coalition for Sustainable Organics .... is profit.



Profit is not a dirty word. But suggesting that labeling organic, growing without soil, is legal or ethical is flatly wrong ... But it does appear to be highly profitable.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer questions on the prohibition in international organic law prohibiting hydroponic and container growing.