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.
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 Vallaey 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.
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.