

Ideas and Issues Workshop 2

- NOSB is having difficulty in finding effective & progressive ways to talk about leadership issues.
- Big picture issues become endless discussions with no conclusions or they are taken off the docket because of conflict
- Tend to continually request public comment as opposed to taking comments/analyzing and then jumping forward to the next level of leadership.
- There was hope that this would be an organic think tank, and that hasn't happened. Potential has been lost over time for this kind of leadership.
- Missed opportunities for board members to do independent thinking processes.
- Challenge is the guideposts that program put on board - restricted it to prescriptive instructions on work plan for the board
- Huge opportunity for NOSB to be a concentrator of public comment.
- NOSB needs autonomy, and to create independent work plans outside of the instructions of the program.
- Material review/sunset processes are time consuming and takes a disproportionate amount of time.
- Creative problem solving opportunities - prescriptive subcommittee meeting that is only one hour, it can't ramble
- NOSB needs more time to work on solutions together at face to face meetings without time restraints that impede creativity and workflow.
- Elevate NOSB and facilitate more diverse voices in participating in the board.
- Transparent appointments process - listing who has applied for the position
- Reducing barriers to service - extremely important but laborious process to serve on the board, for folks/organizations without support to serve - the need for a stipend for service.
- Enable the hiring of research assistants for each NOSB member.
- There needs to be more parameters of what USDA does when NOSB passes a recommendation (standard policy recommendations versus material review).
- USDA needs to set clear standards on how they respond to each recommendation, and give clarity of their plans. If they can't do something, need to give details back to board to rethink and revise recommendations.
- More autonomy for the NOSB and work agenda. Revisit and go back to sunset policy pre-2013 when it was changed without any notice or comment making. Need to go back to when every 5 years materials need a 2/3rds vote to be relisted.
- Farmers, BIPOC led and limited resources organizations need to have a stipend to be part of NOSB. Staff support like research assistants would also enable more participation.
- The national list, technical advisory panel, and sunset processes have never worked the way they were intended. NOP has a history of disregarding NOSB recommendations as exhibited by the backlog list.
- NOSB is dealing with way too many details.
- We should get rid of the sunset review because it is not working.
- The original intent would be there would be no synthetics used in organic food products but there was a lawsuit that changed the statute. WE have dealt with many instances of undue influences over the USDA.
- We need clarity on the word "stakeholder." There is a deep ideological divide in how stakeholders are viewed. There is a misunderstanding of who is a stakeholder.
- The public comment process needs to be reformed. Our European, future generation, animal, and developing country stakeholders need to be included.
- The ideological perspective is embodied in the OMB. Often things fall apart when OMB blocks things and NOP throws up their hands.

- How do we deal with the perception that the regulations being put forward are an economic burden on the industry? How do we get the message across to OMB that these regulations are what the industry wants? We need NOSB to communicate that for recommendations to be taken seriously.
- NOSB board membership is practically impossible for people who have a fulltime job.
- The sunset process is a burden, especially for people who are farmers or do not have scientific knowledge of substances. How do we achieve diversity within the confines of what NOSB is supposed to do?
- The hardest part is the relationship between the NOSB and the NOP. The stakeholder base and certain organizations are very helpful. The NOP has its own criteria and their job is different from NOSB. NOSB does not have a consideration of economic impact and that carries over to the NOP recommendation.
- Admiration for the unique relationship between NOSB and NOP. Message to consumers is this model is what all food should be.
- However, the NOSB process is inaccessible to most people to engage or join the board. Most people may not have the specialized knowledge to come to conclusions on material reviews. Supportive of technical support for NOSB to free them up to address the bigger picture.
- NOSB has specific statutory duties under [FACA](#)(+) and must follow other regulatory requirements including OMB. FACA was created for the opposite scenario than the NOSB structure. FACA's goal is to put transparency, openness, and structure in advisory committees. When you try to give a FACA board more power, that goes against the purpose of FACA because it tries to prevent advisory boards from doing backdoor lawmaking.
- Organic is a voluntary program. How do we push the boundaries on that? What does that mean in our voluntary framework? What would be an alternative structure? Other models might have more power and autonomy. Commissions, appointed boards, etc.
- Does NOSB need to be strengthened through amendments to OFPA? Maybe in some areas NOSB recommendations should be required for NOP to make changes.
- NOSB should not have more power or greater scope than it has now. They get stuck in their own details that they create. Depending on who is on the NOSB, issues are taken up and they start working on way too many things than they can actually handle. They need to narrow in and focus on their purpose.
- Maybe the whole materials review process needs to be examined to bring in more expertise to help NOSB make decisions or understand what they are being asked to do. Is NOP providing them enough tools?
- Could NOP do some of this research work?
- Private industry needs to do more. If we want things that cannot be taken up by NOSB and NOP, why is the private sector not doing more to develop additional standards and working groups to do work to bring to the NOSB.
- Maybe we need additional committees or commissions that are formed on a short term basis to do some activities NOSB otherwise has to take up. NOSB should not be the only place where recommendations are made.
- The rulemaking process gives more access to the public than the NOSB process.
- There should be more support funding for the NOSB so work can be done for them by experts. Because we are a voluntary program, the public can do more on our own than the NOSB. There should be more criteria for getting appointed to the NOSB that considers their sector, background, experience, time, support, etc. An elected board would have their own set of problems but we should continue considering alternative methods of choosing board members. The structure should not be seen as restriction, but rather as assistance to help NOSB know what they can do or prioritize.

- It would be great to see a stronger sense of leadership from the NOSB and not just a reaction to everything that comes their way.
- The think tank should be in the private sector, not the NOSB.
- Different organic camps need to communicate with each other to work out our different priorities.
- NOSB is made aware of implications of decisions, but follow ups on the results of decisions. Need to improve the learning process and what are implications but also what are the results.
- Do people really take crops out of production after the decision? NOSB needs to work with growers- looking back and asking, how have decisions affected landscape?
- NOP does do more long term thinking in who they want on the board. NOSB and NOP work with each other - gratifying to support others in their work on strengthening the enforcement of organic. I see longer term thinking in the recruitment than others might see.
- Another thought about public/private - I would like to have this conversation about whether certifiers should be private organizations/businesses. I definitely think that inspectors should be trained and managed by NOP
- We look at every problem in organic as a standards issue - we put it on NOSB, it gets tied up in NOP, it's a mess. We need to bring things out of that framework. An effective PPP needs to get beyond the NOSB and NOP. We can do more if we look at private sector initiatives, working within the current framework. The private part of the PPP is not only the NOSB.
- I am in strong agreement about the need for the private sector to convene think tanks to develop topics and standards prior to them going to the NOSB! And we definitely need to work together to be successful!
- Need to look beyond the market and standards as the primary drivers for organic to become the mainstream.
- Organic needs to be a part of every field and farm in some way.
- Look beyond regulation and enforcement get us there- other incentives and capacity building. Work at the state and local levels needed.
- Need PPP at every level, not just federal. States can be labs for experimentation on organic policies and advance organic. Need to look at other models.
- Not disbanding NOSB but it's healthy to look at limitations as they currently stand, and seek creative solutions that don't rely on NOP/NOSB.
- Private groups who have gone beyond NOP - Real Organic Project for example. Created a standard that uses NOP standards as base and then goes beyond. Controversial, but then again so is NOP/NOSB. Don't have to sit around and wait for NOP/NOSB. It's a voluntary standard. Can move it along and prove that whatever changes or standards or initiatives can work. If they want to get regulated, then you can add it to the regulation.
- Many of the solutions revolve around the need to talk to each other more and come to a pathway before things get to the NOSB. The Organic Produce Wholesalers Coalition is an example- folks who are cutthroat competitors in the market who get together and have discussions about policy, enough so that we can put forward an idea to the NOSB. In some cases we've proposed an entire set of standards - SOE discussions - non-processing handling procedures. Detailed standards, dealing with our own sector. Willing and eager to sit with stakeholders and deal with these things, but only if the

conversations can be constructive and well informed and moving forward. Present fully formed ideas to NOSB.

- Can serve as technical assistance to those who don't have the background. Provide detailed comment about how materials are used by crops & handlers. Would like to do it as a broader discussion to bring ideas forward that are more fully formed.
- More that private sector can do - developing a coalition of organic and regenerative ag, grow more state programs.
- Why is there not a non-profit certifier where people can apply to be organic which is funded through somewhere else.
- Organic was founded because of a patchwork of definitions, communicating to consumers requires a consistent standard. Not wishy washy definitions. It erodes the value of organic. But how can we support organic through private initiatives?
- Multiple benefits of organic, that USDA is leery to point out. USDA focuses on it as a marketing label and keeps value judgements out of it - they can talk about climate, health benefits of organic without having to say that conventional ag is bad. Once USDA does that, then you can form the basis for being more aggressive for farmers to transition to organic.
- While organic is good and the best out there, organic can get even better and should get better. The standards need to be tightened, loopholes exist. CAFO style operations, soil health requirements, climate friendliness of organic. Statutory language about fostering soil health related to hydroponics being in organic. Monocultures fly in the face of cover cropping and rotation requirements.
- More independent oversight of the accreditation process.
- Need to lean into the NOP - for all its faults -- its a tool and system (especially with Climate Smart Agriculture).
- Why don't we have a 30% organic by 2030 goal? Given the marketplace, we need a lot more.
- NOP could be used as a broader tool for the administration.
- Looking at this topic as the role of NOP and its stakeholders. There is potential that is untapped and there are areas in which we have implemented the NOP in unproductive ways. We can find ways to tweak it to make it meet our needs better. We need to get rid of stuff that is not working and making it work better in different areas.
- We need to have more transparency.
- The technical advisory panel and peer review process have never worked the way they were intended. The NOSB has the authority to convene technical advisory panels but has not. They have handed that to the NOP. The drafters of OFPA envisioned getting scientific expertise from government agencies working with the NOP on technical issues. With peer review the idea was that certifiers would be doing peer to peer evaluation of each other as part of the accreditation process. That was seen as anticompetitive or a conflict of interest by USDA. The USDA thought they could do certification better than certifiers.
- NOP has no authority over input manufacturers/suppliers. That is a big gaping hole in materials and a big part of national list dysfunctionality.

- If we can work with real organic, Rodale, and regenerative organic ag to come up with best organic practices, that can take a lot of pressure off the organic standards processes. That could be a driver of innovation and adoption of climate-smart and humane agriculture without going through NOP and OMB.
- We need a national organic action plan. Update the one from 10 years ago. That is a tool we can use in PPP, the farm bill, and on an ongoing basis to adapt to new realities.
- Reactive approach in the US: we do not have the routine updates for regulation than other countries have, we are not continuously evaluating where the issues are. Not looking forward systematically to be ready for new challenges. Complex issue like COVID, where do we focus on when everything looks as an emergency?
- lack of action on NOSB recommendations, enforcement not been applied
- CI is embedded sunset review process, peer review process and accreditation process, but not working the way it should. Weakness in the Sunset review process
- Example of CI: we need to keep up with the pace of the industry. Third party certifications update their standards every year and are very responsive to feedback done every year or two years at most. If we could do period updates more frequently instead of trying major changes very ten or fifteen years. Other certifications and standards constantly adapting to needs, issues, innovations out there
- Hard to know what needs improvement in the regulatory arena. How do we ensure that NOC brings the best information on information and practices in the market, climate and biological diversity? We had the structure, but the NOC has been weakened. Concern in the legislative process: we do not honor the diversity in the process in the NOC. We need a system that is better scrutinized, the public needs to know that the board is looking at the feedback and concerns in the process. We could apply the structure of the Sunset to the regulatory review process, have incentivized engagement and routine improvements
- Need to have a better definition of soil building and looking at conservation issues, seed sourcing
- The framework is already there, but getting to implement it is the challenge. We need to fix the implementation of the framework NOSC (?)
- We do not want the sustainability standards of the 1990s, but need to update our standards to reflect new science and understanding
- Regenerative sounds great in the consumers' mind but does not go through the rigorous certification such as organic agriculture
- When the law was drafted, it gave the NOC some oversight of the national list, but most of it is an advisory role. It has the ability to be site specific, move faster than the regulatory apparatus, but has not worked as intended. The intent of the law mostly lost
- More resources for organic certifiers training are needed
- There are bad habits in industry
- There seems to be a lot of drag in the system, status quo. For example, how to improve the soil? great things organic is supposed to do and do not understand hydroponics put as organic
- What are we talking about when continuous improvement: by whom, under what circumstances?
- Having more sets of expectations from the standards?
- Food safety - it pushes improvement: how the entity fosters continuous improvement in operators. There are annual certifications in the food safety realm. We need to change the mindset of operations in their plans to be similar to the changes on food safety
- Private solutions. It is very important to get regulatory guidance: who is accountable? Set industry best practices, share information. How do we know we are doing the right thing?

There is a handbook but it is not legally binding, there is not accountability so guidance is not helping the continuous improvement. If it is not a requirement, it does not lead to anything. I wish we can use it as a learning tool, but not as part of the regulatory process. Guidance is mentioned a lot, but it is not necessarily useful.

- Environmental issues, emissions, soil quality, etc: the more we give the NOSB, the more nimble and responsible to cutting edge issues. Progress in those issues is hampered by the board's lack of authority. Example of GMO. NOSB is writing the agenda
- We need to move organic towards addressing issues of soil quality, biodiversity. Why is it not happening? Will the strengthening organic enforcement (SOE) help with this?
- How do you create a framework for the certifiers to implement what is in the statute? There is an issue with rigors and how certifiers pay attention to the plan
- Maybe we need more data to support regulations
- Operators are held to the standard, and certifiers need to do it. It is critical piece
- We need more consistency and enforcement on the soil health provisions,
- We need biodiversity guidance with a holistic planning approach, avoid being reductionists
- Biggest barrier to transition is mindset. They need to change
- What the certifiers community do on its own about how certification is going to occur raises concerns on liability
- Thoughts on the Farm Bill
- Law codifies a voluntary system, certifiers and a label, is this system working?
- There needs to be a buffer in the relationships between the operator and the certifiers.
- A farm bill could be anything. The next farm bill should include other issues such as rural development,
- There are political realities going into the new Farm Bill and the NOSB is under attack. We must be careful about what we say, and be aware of powerful enemies
- We already have a powerful tool and should be careful not to weaken it
- What are the advantages of organic, just the lack of pesticides?
- Organic is much better, but is it more nutritious?
- Good and bad and ugly in the conventional is mostly bad and ugly
- SOE exclusions. We can have something similar for the environmental standards, and do research to create standards that are measurable: have some standards as baseline, and standards to measure effectiveness. Currently it is about checking boxes but it is not measurable against something.
- Farm Bill needs to ask for assistance for the development of measurable standards related to environmental practices, e.g. water, organic matter, biodiversity, etc.
- Think bigger than NOP and other aspects for information and research at the USDA
- Still, information and research from USDA on organic is limited. We need to be getting equity for information on organic vis-a-vis conventional. It matters very much. Push for information equity in the Farm Bill.
- Barriers to transitioning, should we have a transitional process?
- There is paperwork burden for transitioning
- How to streamline in the process of transitioning
- More funding for mentoring in transition
- Include farmer mentoring in the Farm Bill
- Create a more inclusive and diverse transitioning process. Solidarity with black farmers, issues particular to Native farmers. Integrate diversity, equity and inclusion in transitioning
- Lack of specific risk management tools for transitioning, i.e., crop insurance for organic
- Not just providing financial for transitioning, but also mentoring provided by people on the ground

- Important to be successful in the transition. It is only going to work with a label, it gets very complicated.
- Without a specific label for transitional forced to market as non organic.
- Need for a transitioning label
- Defining a term in the label will be very helpful.
- 44,000 operations outside US borders and imports of organic food into the US
- There is a crisis of next generation of farmers in the country
- In the old days, fear among organic farmers that a transition label undercut their prices, but things have changed
- Hard to imagine risk management tools in the current environment and context around organic, not in organic
- How can we prove that a product comes from a transitional farm?
- Montana is a leader in transition from conventional to organic
- Motivate growers into transitioning
- The label should include some type of price premium above conventional but below organic, and premiums going completely to the farmers
- Weeds are a big problem, especially the invasive ones.
- Weed management is still a crucial point and the biggest farmers challenge
- Organic systems presentations at the ASA, but still funding for organic research limited
- Organic research benefits both organic and conventional producers, but the opposite is not true
- Need to ask for more funding from 6% to 12% for organic research
- We need to take credit for the things we are already doing: How much carbon are you putting into the ground?
- How much information is out there for trying to tell if a product has been really grown organic? Additional data to increase confidence that the product is organic.
- Against hydroponics because it does not include soil, a crucial component of organic agriculture.
- It is a process-based rule not a standard-based rule to define what is organic with some exceptions. This is what you measure and we will call it organic if you have this level/data. 5% pesticide
- Is the science there to back up the organic benefits?
- What can be done to have the certification of expert adviser on organic agriculture?
- What areas of certification do we need to improve?
 - Need to improve retail and food service certification -- critical that maybe this is the next 10 years of organic. More meals eaten outside than inside the home -- ½ of the market for organics if not certified.
 - What's stopping that?
 - Not much of a forum for this kind of certification. Always talk about the way it's been, not the way it's going. Is this out of the box thinking? The next ten years has to take this on.
 - The way we've been looking at organics sales segments has been flawed -- and that's why the certification model doesn't work for a restaurant. Need to envision another kind of a program -- something like USDA weights and measure - a simplified form of certification.
- An opportunity to mold and shape organic outside of the USDA.
- Would a consumer be able to know that they are choosing an organic restaurant? Yes, but also open up the door to a restaurant to have one or several dish that is organic, maybe not the entire restaurant.

- Most retailers are doing some kind of processing -- so there is a need for monitoring within that system. There are a few retailers who have opted for full certification, but most of them are only certifying their produce/bulk/etc. -- one or two departments.
- We do not often see organic listed on a menu item -- how do we trust this?
Restaurants and retailers don't have to be certified organic.
California has the most enforcement. Some retailers and restaurants who voluntarily seek certification. CCOF only certifies two restaurants, and it's hard. Brokers and traders are also concerns for those who sell to food service.
- The entire system is based on trust, how can we trust the USDA?
- Maybe a restaurant will have organic chicken, but not all of the food on the plate will be organic - it would be nice to understand that the restaurants know how to maintain the integrity of organic throughout the kitchen and cooking and serving process.
- Confusion on imported vs. domestic certification.
- Each certifier has different osp makeup, and different ways of managing inspections.
- Consistency of interpretation and application across accreditation is important
- It is **nice to have a standardized template for the OSP.**
- Formalize the process of enforcing consistency amongst certifiers.
- Trade needs consistent certification.
- Should we have speciality areas of certifiers?
- Should certifiers be able to select and choose what they will or won't certify (i.e. hydroponics?)
- Improve the efficiency of certifiers through unification as an industry. **Consistency of certifiers.**
- There are nuances in the expertise of inspectors too.
- Wanting certifiers to confirm if yes/no you can sell this. They should be able to say yes this is allowed in the market.
- Couldn't there be a database of grey area decisions?
- More resources are needed for investigations as a certifier.
- How to improve NOP's review of its processes and accountability?
- Messy out there with out countries, which seems like we are in a reactive mode. Difficult to do the right thing when we don't have even the NOP to give us guidance. If there is an issue with a country, we try to resolve it quickly. It makes it hard when there is a lingering question on what to do.
- Would like to move from reactive to proactive
- What exactly do you need to prove standardization certificates, etc. to make sure there aren't issues with inspection time?
- We need to make improvements because it is holding the industry back because questions are being raised from different interpretations around the world.
- Retailer/food service a huge area for bringing integrity and consistency in certification.
 - If certification does not work for restaurants, is there an alternative method we need to use?
- Inconsistencies in certifiers
 - New idea: MOU between ACA and NOP to formalize ACA agreements or other tools for consistent interpretations
 - OK to have specialized certifiers if the right accreditation is in place
 - Would be great to increase transparency of certifier expertise and clientele base (require certifier to list it, ask ACA to keep database, use integrity database to clarify)
 - OK to have specialized inspectors if consistent standards for what qualifications are needed and transparency to certifiers in whether the inspector has the qualifications.

- Could we explore a clearinghouse database of for judgement calls like legal precedent
 - Could we track high risk areas and transparency for industry to understand that better
- Improve efficiency of certifiers through:
 - Unification as an industry – what information do we need and why?
 - Address inefficiencies in foreign transactions and certificates, especially variations in inspections
 - Are there efficiencies to be found in the investigation and due process procedure?
- Separation from paying fee to certifier who grants certification
 - Achilles' heel: awkward to pay for a certificate, suggests a conflict of interest. Are there any solutions? Is this an area to improve communication and explanation?
 - Example of a strange expectation: food safety auditor actually took payment from client
 - Flip the concept: why do people have to pay to not pollute
- Public NOP peer review
- Address inefficiencies and inconsistencies in foreign transactions
 - Inconsistencies leave us vulnerable
 - Need to move from reactive to proactive
 - Need system that supports consistency among certifiers. Some certifiers don't trust practices of others. Address this in accreditation and expectations of what information certifiers need.
- Hydroponic facilities cropping up in Maine - one is using the claim "organic". Big issue felt right now in Maine
- Consumers don't necessarily know what all "organic" means - this could have been done better initially
- The organic label is still breaking through to consumers Logo for the cotton sector: doesn't pertain. Majority of claims are done with alternative labels.
- Personal care product level is where the USDA label could be used
- Organic sales took off during COVID 19 lock downs. Consumers were choosing organic. Can't argue with consumers voting with their dollar
- Natural product expo show- tens of thousands of products come through each year. One that carries the most weight- USDA organic logo.
- Concern with a new logo; competing with all of these other logos out there. Recognizability of the logo is important
- The seal is essential. Doesn't necessarily resonate with consumers, it's more like a minimum standard.
 - USDA has a credibility gap right now
 - The logo isn't a conversation piece, it's more like a verification
- Split in the organic community- is the USDA upholding their side of the partnership? Some companies don't want to put the USDA seal on their product. But consumers don't think in that way, they are just looking to see: "is it organic or is it not?"
- The seal is recognizable based on research that's been done. But there might be a way to better communicate the benefits of organic and is there a better way to communicate that?
- There are other claims, including NON GMO that are also respected by consumers. But consumers don't necessarily know what all organic means without some education or learning.
- It's a big ask to try to bring all of those claims into a logo. But yes consumers need a lot more learning in terms of what are the benefits of organic

- Fact sheets on USDA website: startling that we need to have these to educate consumers.
- Is there low recognition of the label? If yes, then could change. But if there isn't, if it's already working, not sure we should mess with it
- In research some have done, yes it is highly recognizable. Up there with NGP (Non-GMO Project) verified. It's up there with other seals that don't have much backing
- What is the criticism that organic gets opened up to if the label is changed without fixing the problems of organic standards? Could be another way that people can claim greenwashing, etc.
- No I don't think we should add any claims to the organic label or logo. We need to separate the logo but also the "organic" claim. May need a claim for "chemical free"- for the hydroponic growers can have something to use as a label other than organic.
- The power of the seal- it's simplicity. Education behind what that seal means is important. USDA being less credible seems like something that needs to be addressed. Maybe take USDA off of the seal? But then it's addressing the name but not the actual issues behind it.
- An urgent issue to address is USDA's credibility
- I don't think it's wise to change the logo. If it aint broke don't fix it.
- Continuous improvement was the goal in the 1990s. Wanted it to be the gold standard
 - Animal welfare standards
 - Environmental benefits
 - Climate
 - Farm worker health and safety- including financial
- We need to move away from synthetics. OMRI label is going on more synthetics.
- We need to figure out if it's got recognition in the marketplace. Asking consumers what they would like to see in terms of claims. Look into the logo language.
- Non-GMO project certified is the number one competitor with organic label. Also the NGP- verified logo.
- QI- have incorporated educating how non GMO is incorporated into organic already
- Fair for Life- another certification
- Things are heating up in "regenerative" "sustainability" spaces as well.
 - Agreed that regenerative is becoming a focus for consumers. Fear: It's going to become meaningless like "natural or "sustainable"
 - I'm also worried about regenerative ag- non-organic brands are claiming regen-ag. Could be the next non-GMO wave. Fear that it will erode organic further
 - Regenerative organic vs. regenerative. With organic seal there is a set of standards. But with Regenerative- there is no standard. It means something different to each customer.
- Fiber industry- non wovens. Sanitary products. No one uses non GMO seal or USDA seal. Organic content standard and the Global Organic Textile standard- addresses whole production chain.
- Differentiation between consumers and customers:
 - Consumers want Non GMO.
 - Customers (retailers) very often asked about climate and emissions reductions goals. Saying it's certified organic is not viewed as sufficient. "regenerative" also coming into retailer space. Organic is not equated with regenerative.
- "Local" is the claim that consumers want
- Growth in products that are making climate claims on their products. There is not a seal. We need a science based way to verify these claims as consumers start wanting to make

- Regenerative Organic seal- Rodale. Rigorously done. I hope to see this seal grow.
- Hope that the word will get meaning behind it. It could be a slippery slope to denuding the organic label itself. Organic should already result in climate-friendly, regenerative production.
- We've let organic be diluted by some practices that are not regenerative. Preference would be to get organic back. To be understood as not just chemical free but also good for the planet.
- Regenerative Organic Certified- textiles are also using this claim- Patagonia is going for it. (ROC) By regenerative organic alliance
- Have seen some gains made in understandings of healthy soils in relation to organic. Have done explaining that organic is regenerative.
- Challenge of "local" as a threat to organic. Want consumers to understand local does not necessarily mean organic. When local producers claim "we're basically organic" it puts organic producers at a disadvantage.
- Organic Marketing Association.org- flip the script to the fun side to help the organic community and brands reach mainstream consumers.
- How feasible and realistic is it that the agricultural standards could be changed enough so that all of the organic standards are actually regenerative? Feels like there is a big gap there right now. Are producers willing to make those kinds of changes?
- Is there even a valid definition of "regenerative?" With all of the microclimates across the country, how can the practices be standardized across the whole country? It would look differently depending on your place.
- Need to evolve and create more and more paths forward
- Trend emerging towards measurement of outcomes rather than just practiced-based standards like organic is. Need to move toward measurement of outcomes in organic in order to remain relevant.
- In 2021 Organic is still trying to explain "organic". how successful will be at explaining regenerative?
- How to effectively measure carbon sequestration? These systems don't work effectively on a small scale. Really only work for larger operations. We'd be moving away from small organic producers if we try to be focused on outcomes
 - Could be a soil- health measurement. Basis for that in OFPRA already- explicit mention of improving soils.
 - Technology for how to measure emissions on small operations is coming along. Can use the USDA tools for conservation measurement OPEN TEAM- Open technology ecosystem for agriculture management. is one project. Opportunity to align that work with organic certification. But scale down these tools. Have to work with the private sector to make technologies work for small farmers also.
 - Number of small farmers who don't get certified because of the cost- would this add to the cost for small farmers and even less. Especially a challenge for the small farmer
- Animal welfare and labor- both have been asked for
- Real organic project- has taken the USDA organic program and taken some parts of it. They don't have traction in the marketplace.
- They are the primary mouth piece to the consumer. Their role in promoting and protecting the seal is important. Like Kashi- they could promote a transitional seal, etc.
- Need to engage more younger entrepreneurs, new brands. Passionate leaders in these industries are championing animal welfare, social welfare, etc. Org industry can align with these other things, which will pull entrepreneurs into this industry.
 - A lot of work to be done there to connect with these entrepreneurs

- Marketers are trying to figure out what claims to put on the front of their packaging- organic isn't viewed as enough. Organic + now. I want organic to mean all of that. What's important should be right up front.
- Collaborative private sector efforts can work. Companies have the ears of consumers and they have to be driving recognition of the logo. OTA can create some kind of collaborative program, and come out together which will have more power.
- Do some consumer research on the seal? what are perceptions of it?
- Farm bill could include ways to talk about some of the benefits of organic
 - This could be prepared in advance of the farm bill
- Make animal welfare and soil health not optional in organic-this would protect the organic seal and the label. This would address a lot of the concerns from customers above.
- Social standards- (ROC already does this).
- Transitional seal could be established
- Need to build support across the whole organic community. What chunk can we realistically do by 2023?
- There should be a lot of money available for promotion.
- Transition to organic: If there was a way to put a label on it. Promote it to consumers. So that it has some value in the market.
- Lack of a transitional label has been a problem for transitional organic cotton and soon to be hemp
- There is a transitional standard globally, just not in the US
- We desperately need a transitional label
- I'm not sure it's a label that is needed- brands have tried it. Consumers don't understand it. Maybe at the customer level and behind the scenes. But agree that there needs to be more support for transition- funds to help drive transition.
- Education and collaboration are a priority over legislation (generally speaking) Collaboration, etc. The public, policy-makers, legislators. Securing funds for more education and promotion is key.
- Controversies- animal welfare, hydroponics vs. soil. These haven't been dealt with. ROC standards tried to address these points, but ppl not taking them up. Bar is so high. Can we collaborate to address these controversies?
- Every agency within USDA could be doing something positive on organic for example to improve organic literacy.
- OTA could pull a group of producers to work on organic best practices- expanding the standards but do so in a spirit of collaboration
- Lack of understanding among consumers as to what organic really is. We need talking points that whole organic industry could align on.
- Increasing transparency in communication.
- Explore the food service industry- school nutrition, institutional purchasing, expanding the market for organic. Certifying restaurants.
- Consumers still don't know what organic means- so much is included in organic. Focus group of consumers.
- Organic and climate. Organic needs to be at the climate table.
- Organic is still breaking through to the consumer, but not enough, and a lot of **confusion**.
- It's better in Europe in terms of trusted brands and the motivation to encourage organic.
- There is confusion and maybe that speaks to the movement in general.
- We need to improve the rule so the cheap shots that people make at organic are no longer so damaging.
- Hate the label regenerative.

- Organic is the only legally defined production system that we have: when someone says regenerative it could mean anything and that just confuses people.
- Certified organic is the baseline for regenerative, the USDA organic label has taken some hits with real problematic conceptions around it especially when it comes to hydroponics and livestock. These are valid issues that need to be addressed with consumers.
- The organic rule is just so slow to change and very ineffective to the changing climate.
- Attach regenerative to organic to address concerns. Regenerative organic certification is an add-on to USDA organic: it is top-down and attempts to put a lot of meat into regenerative. Need to put some reality into the word regenerative.
- Need an add-on definition for a number of things that seem to be lacking in the market with organic: starting with organic at the base and additional add-on labels.
- Organic as a seal is more threatened than it ever has been
- As we start broadening what we think of in terms of sustainability(esp social) organic is incomplete.
- Do we layer certifications or endeavor to make it what it ought to be?
- We chose organic because it was good for workers to be protected from chemicals, but today we see organic doesn't protect workers for good working conditions.
- We want organic to resonate, we want it to be reimagined and become more important once again.
- Organic has become just no-pesticide which is not good. Consumer groups end up doing a lot of harm to organics.
- Hope that in the future instead of yelling at each other on social media, get everyone in the same room to talk openly and respectfully.
- It is time to address social justice in organic labels. We can do a lot of positive things but we need to be talking to each other. To those consumers to which social justice matters, it matters a lot too.
- A sea of labels, a lot of consumers have lost focus on what organic truly means.
- Needs to be some knowledge or relearning that happens around what organic stands for, what it doesn't stand for (ex. To have on a pack non-GMO and organic but you shouldn't need non-GMO).
- Too many things consumers don't get it anymore.
- Don't know that consumers ever fully did understand what organic means, very many I discuss have no idea.
- Need public marketing campaigns to educate people on what that seal means. Comes down to consumer education, they buy what they know.
- The organic label is still resonating but not resonating enough. Organic is insufficient for some of the areas we are trying to reach : humane animal treatment and handling of livestock is such a huge thing.
- People are looking for their brands to address social issues: do we layer or try to fix this label to cover everything?
- Our real challenge is pulling in new people and inspiring people to join us.
- There still continues to be growth in organic.
- So much chatter out there it is really hard to get our message across.
- We need to focus and refocus on the brand.
- All time low in trust in government and our seal is seen as a government extension: Is a deep attachment to politics hurting the USDA label... is it actually a benefit to consumers to tie this to the government? Would it be better off with the private sector? The strength of our seal is our job to promote, the government will not do it. Only 20% of the lower age bracket trust their government.

- The majority of consumers would not be able to tell you what label claims mean. It's not just organic : an overall lack of education on what the claims mean.
- Is the system of agriculture the theme of the label: biodiversity, climate change-the ecological component of agriculture. Buy this product because you are supporting a kind of agriculture good for water, air, climate. Agro-ecological label. Label needs more sustainable messaging with it.
- Needs some sort of criteria of evaluating the sustainability of a farm-environmental sustainability resonates a lot with consumers.
- Add-ons can be done (i.e. Never GMOS and more)
- Refreshing the seal is a really good idea that would give us the space to rebrand and remarket at the same time. 2 dimensions: There are things organic is, and always has been (GMOs).
- Broader ecosystems biodiversity: organic isn't always that either→ there are crop rotations and soil health being built but we must make that story better and tell that story (currently poor organic practices like large monocultures). Enforcement and the standards: certain areas of NOP allow conversion of pristine land into organic.
- Organic can mean a lot of things and can be done in a lot of ways which means "It always means this" is complicated.
- One one side, we have this legally defined thing no one else can have that is international, the problem is you find one bad apple and the whole barrel is compromised.
- Intuitive and feel good aspect: regenerative feels good, it is a beautiful word but has no meat behind it.
- A whole generation doesn't want to insist on organic certification any more, local is more important than organic is: local farmers markets don't advertise organic.
- Difficulty of it not being perfect, but we don't highlight the achievements like the biodiversity element (people don't even know it is there).
- We need to be looking at biodiversity and climate change and now is the time for people to participate and bring younger people into the pool.
- Every time marketing studies are done consumers are pulled to organic because of pesticide on food.
- Have been really limited by USDA only allowing seal to be in one PMS green, black, relax that and get off PMS scale. USDA seal leaves a lot to be desired, add-on labels have the potential to attract very savvy consumers who are looking for more than no pesticides.
- Humane raised and other labels add to the organic label, the way forward is to have all the labels.
- What resonates to the next generation? Where is it important to talk about regulation and enforcement or philosophy and values? Is there a way to bring organic back to those foundational values-farming with nature.
- Time to reimagine the seal and the way we think about the seal as an industry. Trying to bring more of our values and philosophies forward into the consumer mind and then being transparent and accountable
- It's difficult for consumers to connect with a "no pesticides" narrative as much when it often feels like it leaves out the people/planet/social responsibility piece, which is only growing in emphasis/demand
- The more labels wrapped around the boxes consumers end up more confused instead of more clarified. We can do more but we need to be careful of trying to be everything to everybody at the same time.
- Most serious threat to organics continues to be non-GMO.
- Organic seal is very well recognized both nationally and internationally.

- Regenerative is the biggest threat (the big industry co-option if it i.e. Walmart and Sithfields). Regenerative has been lost in the massive amount of PR and communication going on to define it in a way that it means nothing. A runaway term that everyone is trying to jump on it. Insist it has to be attached to organic!
- A lot of regard for organic in that it is third party certified.
- Tremendous opportunity in taglines.
- Fair trade, rainforest alliance, regenerative organic alliance, B-Corp, Certified Humane. Carbon-zero certification.
- Traceability of food with blockchain technology: fairly transparent and if done right publicly can really let the consumer express their desires (a means to get different aspects on a label including organic).
- Equity in accessibility is important. QR codes: electronic connectivity is not that present in rural areas and using QR codes is a way of hiding information rather than making it visible. If consumers have to go through these steps many won't take those steps.
- Something on the label is important. Add-on labels are the quickest and most immediate way to inform what is going on (pasture-raised, grass-fed).
- Real need for efficiency in data collection in supply chain: getting retailer standards to align more closely to organic. More efficiency built in how we communicate sustainability through our supply chains.
- Codifying additional standards
- Promotion side: no domestic program to market organic. Should carefully study aspirations of EU and Green Deal Farm to Fork, need to convert land and we will only do that if we promote organic as a way of life.
- Whole issue of climate has to become important and organic is not the solution but it is better for climate solutions: Need USDA to recognize this system of production is worthy of attention from so many angles, climate change, water quality etc.
- Consider the political environment of the next Farm Bill, danger of putting forth things in such a hostile environment
- Get organic a better seat at the table for climate smart agriculture. Make organic the gold standard for climate smart. -Top priority
- The role of organic within school nutrition: is there an opportunity to make a bigger ask there.
- SNAP & WIC & institutional programs in hospitals: work done on benefits of organic in these settings
- Climate change! USFRA , quantifying organics role here OTA should be at that table