

National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture
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October 29, 1999

Kathleen Merrigan, Director
Agriculture Marketing Service, USDA
3701 South Ag Building
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Ms. Merrigan:

The under-signed organizations are writing to urge the USDA to establish a simple, cost-effective cost-share program for organic small farmers in order to offset the costs of organic certification and encourage the participation of more farmers in the organic certification program. There are currently many models in effect in the United States, including a new one in Minnesota.

It is critical that a cost-share program be included in the new proposed Organic Rule. Otherwise, a majority of current organic farmers would not be able to be certified due to the fees and other expenses associated with the certification process under this Rule. Please contact us if you need additional information. We stand ready to assist you in moving this program forward as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Organic Steering Committee of the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture:

Michael Sligh, *Rural Advancement Foundation International, USA*
Elizabeth Henderson, *New York Sustainable Agriculture Working Group*
Joe Mendelson, *International Center for Technology Assessment*
Melanie Adcock, *Humane Society of the United States*
Margaret Mellon, *Union of Concerned Scientists*
Mark Lipson, *Organic Farming Research Foundation*
Arkansas Certified Organic, Inc
Baton Rouge Economic & Agricultural Development Alliance, Inc
California Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
Callaway Food Circle
Carr's Way Farm
Center Valley Organic Farm
Chicago Greens/Green Party USA

Columbia Area Food Circle
Community Food Security Project at Occidental College
CROPP, Organic Valley
Fertile Crescent Farm
Florida Organic Food Advisory Council
Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers, Inc.
Frontier Natural Products Cooperative
Hendersonville (N.C.) Community Coop
Independent Organic Inspectors Association
Indiana Organic Program
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Louisiana Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
Maine Organic Farming and Gardening Association
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
Midwest Organic Services Association
Minnesota Project
Missouri Organic Association
National Center for the Preservation of Medicinal Plants
New England Small Farm Institute
Northeast Organic Farming Association -- New York
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
Ocean Beach People's Organic Food Co-op
Ohio Ecological Food and Farming Association
Organic Farmers and Marketers Association
Organic Independents/Organicworks!
Organic Consumers Association
Pine Creek Organics
Prairieland Community Supported Agriculture
Regional Environmental Action League
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
Rural Coalition
Southern Organic Certifiers Caucus
Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
The Land Institute
Western Pennsylvania OCIA Chapter
WI Chapter OCIA #1