

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ORGANIC ADVISORY BOARD HANDBOOK

January 2004

INTRODUCTION

The Washington State Department of Agriculture's (WSDA) Organic Advisory Board (OAB) was established in 1987 to advise WSDA concerning the implementation of the WSDA Organic Food Program. The OAB consists of organic farmers, processors, handlers and other interested parties that meet 3-4 times a year to discuss the Organic Food Program and recommend policy to the WSDA Organic Food Program.

ORGANIC FOOD PROGRAM'S MISSION STATEMENT

The WSDA Organic Food Program protects consumers and supports the organic food industry by ensuring the integrity of organic food products. The program certifies organic producers and handlers to US National Organic Standards and enforces organic standards in Washington State. The program supports the development of export markets by providing certification to foreign organic standards .

ORGANIC ADVISORY BOARD GOALS

1. Establish, maintain and when needed, adapt a sound, long-term financial plan for the Organic Food Program.
2. Monitor and give input regarding the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) and prepare the Organic Food Program for compliance as needed.
 - a) Develop policies that meld with federal regulation changes.
 - b) Make recommendations to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB).
 - c) Anticipate and prepare for possible problems arising from federal regulation changes.
 - d) Determine the priorities for the Organic Food Program for necessary actions arising from federal regulation changes.
3. Improve the quality of the Organic Food Program services to clients.
 - a) Maintain a high standard of integrity.
 - b) Simplify and clarify regulations, increase effectiveness.
 - c) Encourage dialogue within the state's organic food industry through public input at Organic Advisory Board meetings.
 - d) Constantly improve quality of service.
4. Promote the Organic Food Program and improve public awareness and confidence in it.
 - a) Support and work with other organizations active in sustainable agriculture.
 - b) Encourage guests from other organizations to observe and/or participate in OAB meetings.
5. Continually improve the effectiveness of the OAB decision making process.

ORGANIC ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERSHIP

1. Each board member is appointed to a renewable three-year term.
2. The board shall consist of at least 12 members representing the following categories:
 - a) Growers - The majority of the board will be composed of different size growers with a balance between large and small growers sought. Growers are represented from most agricultural areas of the state with a balance also sought between growers of different crops.
 - i) Tree Fruit - North Central Washington (Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan counties)
 - ii) Tree Fruit - South Central Washington (Yakima, Grant, Benton, Franklin counties)
 - iii) Vegetable – Eastern Washington (East of the Cascades)
 - iv) Vegetable – Western Washington (West of the Cascades)
 - v) Grain
 - vi) Livestock
 - b) Processors - Processor of organic products
 - c) Handlers - Wholesalers and retail distributors of organic products
 - d) Consumer - Promotes organic agriculture to consumers
 - e) Industry Supporter - Promotes organic agriculture from a related field
 - f) Research & Education - Promotes organic agriculture through research and/or education
 - g) Environmentalist - Promotes organic agriculture from an environmental field
 - h) At-Large - Additional members appointed by the OAB

Selection of Board Members

The OAB shall have a nominating committee consisting of 3 members who will work with program staff to recruit new members for the board. The nominating committee will recommend candidates for open positions at regular board meetings. Upon recommendation by the OAB, the program staff will draft appointment letters for the WSDA director's approval and signature.

Board Chair Qualifications and Terms

Board Chair candidates must have at least one year experience on the board prior to serving as the Chair. Board Chair serves a two-year term, elected by the majority of the board members present at time of election, and may serve successive terms.

Vice Chair Qualifications and Terms

Board Vice Chair candidates must have at least one year experience on the board prior to serving as the Vice Chair. Vice chair serves a one-year term, elected by the majority of board members present at time of election, and may serve successive terms, with no term limit.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ORGANIC ADVISORY BOARD

1. **Organic Advisory Board**
 - Schedule dates, times and locations for a minimum of three (3) meetings a year, alternating between Eastern Washington and Western Washington locations (including both in-person and telephone meetings)
 - Approve meeting and operating procedures
 - Define tasks to fulfill goals
 - Respond to issues brought up by staff and other board members
 - Elect a chair and vice-chair
 - Form committees as needed
 - Monitor and respond to changes of the NOP, foreign organic standards, and accreditation requirements.
2. **Decision Making**
 - Decision making will be by majority. Roberts Rules will be followed.
 - Attendance by 50 percent or more of board members will be a quorum

3. **Organic Advisory Board Members**

- Read materials before meetings
- Attend meetings on time and well prepared
- Help with committee tasks
- If appropriate, chair a committee
- Direct public queries to the appropriate designated spokesperson
- Stand by the decisions of the OAB when talking to the public, though it is appropriate to voice one's own opinions if the distinction is made clear
- Bring issues of concern related to the Organic Food Program to the board
- Abide by the rules established by the Board
- Removal from the OAB may be invoked if a board member misses two (2) consecutive meetings without good reason and/or notice

Chair

- Facilitate all OAB meetings
- Work with Organic Program Manager to prepare meeting agendas
- Act as the OAB spokesperson
- Call emergency meetings when necessary
- Vote and make motions
- Direct another member to act as the facilitator when necessary

Vice-Chair

- Oversees committees and work with committee chairs to ensure that goals are being met
- Work with WSDA staff on issues that arise between meetings
- In the Chair's absence, facilitate OAB meetings

Committee Chair

- Works with WSDA staff and other board members to define goals, develop a time frame to accomplish goals, identify tasks, and who will accomplish them
- Reports to chair and staff on committee work
- Sets meetings and communicates with all committee members
- Responsible for committee minutes and all reports

Expectations of WSDA staff

- Distribute meeting materials to all OAB members in a timely manner
- Take, write and distribute minutes and any committee reports
- Arrange and plan for OAB meetings
- Reimburse members for travel and per diem expenses under WSDA protocol
- Reimburse members for phone charges related to OAB business