



May 10, 2011

TO: Growers, companies, researchers, consultants involved with organic apple and pears

FROM: David Granatstein

RE: Phase-out of antibiotics for control of fire blight

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), a part of the USDA National Organic Program (NOP), has signaled its intent to phase out the exception for use of antibiotics (tetracycline and streptomycin) for control of fire blight on organic apples and pears. This is the only use of antibiotics allowed in certified organic production. The NOSB had targeted phase out for October 2012. At their recent meeting in Seattle (April 26-29, 2011), the Board heard extensive testimony on the lack of a fully proven alternative at this time. Based on the testimony, the Board extended phase out **until October 2014**, with the expectation that the fruit industry would focus efforts on finding suitable alternatives by this time. It is likely that a national task force will be formed to work on this and to keep the NOSB apprised of progress.

The Northwest Horticulture Council was instrumental in getting a petition submitted for the relisting of oxytetracycline (submitted by Wash. State Hort. Assoc.) and helped coordinate the testimony at the NOSB meeting. Washington Tilth Producers is also active on this issue, as well as growers and fruit companies. People involved in these efforts logically can link with any national effort that emerges.

One initial action proposed is to survey the various people and entities involved in organic apple and pear production to get a sense of the alternative fire blight controls they may have tested. I have offered to make the contacts and organize the responses. We are thinking to use this feedback to develop a sort of "situation report" for further discussions with USDA on antibiotic phase-out.

If you are willing, can you check within your organization about any testing of alternative fire blight products or management that would be compliant with organic production? This could include formal trials conducted by you or your personnel, grower trials your personnel are involved with, or trials with product manufacturers. The following information would be helpful to get in order to compile our current status with alternative control, along with the university, USDA, and private research underway:

Trial date

Trial location (City, State) (can list multiple locations for a standard trial at several sites)

Crop (apple, pear, apple and pear)

Treatment comparison (was there a control, what was it? What were the alternatives tested?)

Key parameters measured

Key results

Contact person (name, phone, email)

Any feedback you have on this issue is welcome. Please email responses to me at [granats@wsu.edu](mailto:granats@wsu.edu)  
Thanks for your cooperation.