

# Details

## US-EU Organic Equivalence and What It Means for You!

By Bill Wolf

By now you've probably heard that the United States and the European Union (EU) have signed an organic equivalence cooperation arrangement in which products certified to either region's standard are mutually recognized in both the United States and the European Union. Many people worked steadfastly on the equivalence process—from the initial vision over ten years ago through the detailed gap analyses to final negotiations. This agreement opens many doors, and the organic community in both the U.S. and EU has much to be excited about. Now it's time for U.S. growers and handlers to take advantage of the simpler production rules and market opportunities this arrangement presents.

### US-EU Organic Equivalence: The Facts

As of June 1, 2012, the date the arrangement goes into effect, the EU will recognize the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) as equivalent to the EU Organic Program, meaning that products produced and certified to meet the USDA NOP standards can be marketed as organic in the EU. Likewise, the United States will allow European products produced and certified under the EU Organic Program to be marketed as organic in the United States.

The arrangement is limited to organic products either produced within the U.S. or the EU, or where the final processing or packaging occurs within the U.S. or the EU. General country labeling requirements must still be met. Also, because of a couple differences in the two standards, there are some limitations:

- All NOP-allowed materials can be used to produce and handle organic products destined for the EU except for pears or apples produced using antibiotics to control fire blight.
- Antibiotics cannot be administered to animals for products entering the U.S.

### What's in It for You?

The U.S.-EU organic equivalence arrangement is good for organic businesses. Specifically, it:

- Increases market opportunities for organic farmers, ranchers, processors and marketers
- Reduces burdensome paperwork by eliminating dual certification
- Lowers costs by eliminating dual certification

- Offers greater recognition for organic products; facilitates worldwide organic growth
- Provides increased transparency of international organic standards, adding to consumer confidence

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## Momentum Mounts for Just Label It

America is coming together for the Right To Know what is in our foods, with over 460 organizations partnering to demand federal labeling of genetically engineered (GE) foods ranging from health care providers, retailers and conventional and organic farmers to parenting, religious and community advocacy groups.

Just Label It began 2012 with the announcement that a half million consumers signed the FDA petition on GE food labeling and within one month, the total comments on the petition had skyrocketed to three quarters of a million—the most comments on a food petition in FDA history. One thing driving this was a collaboration with *Food, Inc.* filmmaker Robert Kenner, who created a compelling short video, *Labels Matter*, about three women who share a belief in the right to know, but for entirely different reasons. Tens of thousands of Americans viewed the video online at [www.justlabelit.org](http://www.justlabelit.org) and shared it with family and friends on Facebook and Twitter.

**How You Can Help.** The FDA has until March 27, 2012, to respond to the petition, so spread the word! Consumers can send a comment with just one click ([www.justlabelit.org/takeaction](http://www.justlabelit.org/takeaction)). Companies are also encouraged to post a Just Label It graphic-link on their website. In March, a new infographic as well as a survey on consumer attitudes toward GE labeling will be released.

Visit the website for updated news, information and tools. As those who helped get the organic regulation passed know, the March date is only a step, and consumer education and support will need to continue well after that date no matter what happens, so help spread the word!



Use this graphic (or the infographic coming out in March) to link to [justlabelit.org](http://justlabelit.org) and educate your consumers on the importance of the FDA petition & GE labeling.

**Don't Miss This Session at Expo West: "Our Right to Know! A Conversation on the California and Federal GMO Labeling Initiatives" 2-3:15 p.m., Marriot Ballroom 6.**

**Calling All Californians!** The California November 2012 ballot to mandate labeling of genetically engineered foods also needs your support. The signature drive will end April 22 and approximately 800,000 signatures are needed. Local chapters of the campaign are actively seeking volunteers. Visit [www.labelgmof.org](http://www.labelgmof.org) to find out more about the campaign or to volunteer.



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## Harnessing the Power

To take advantage of this opportunity without making any costly mistakes, make sure you understand the details of EU labeling requirements and how to interpret the U.S.-EU equivalence arrangement vis-à-vis your products. You may also want to work with a consultant to explore opportunities to enter into or expand your

presence in the EU market.

*Special thanks go to all who helped bring this historic arrangement to fruition—with special call-outs to the USDA, Organic Trade Association, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Bob Anderson, Katherine DiMatteo and the members of the US-EU Equivalency Task Force.*

*Peter Murray, the lead investigator for the initial gap analysis in 2001, deserves a*

*special note of tribute, as he would have especially appreciated this accomplishment. He passed away in 2004.*

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## New E-Book on Labeling GE Foods from Stonyfield Farm and The Organic Center

*Label It Now: What You Need to Know About Genetically Engineered Foods*, a consumer guide to understanding foods that have been genetically altered, is now available as an electronic book for download. The book covers the legacy of Roundup brand herbicides, regulatory issues and how GE foods have rapidly become a part of our food supply, with little oversight or scrutiny. It also includes a consumer action plan.

Co-authors include Gary Hirshberg, president and CEO, Stonyfield Farm, Charles Benbrook, chief scientist of The Organic Center, and Britt Lundgren, director of organic and sustainable agriculture at Stonyfield. All proceeds from the book, which sells for \$2.99 per copy, will go to support [JustLabelIt.org](http://JustLabelIt.org), a national campaign working for GE food labeling. *Label It Now: What You Need to Know About Genetically Engineered Foods* is available for download via iBookstore, iTunes, Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble and other digital booksellers.

## Clarkson Grain Celebrates New Rule on Organic Lecithin

More than six years after introducing the first organic soy lecithin to the market, Clarkson Grain is finally being rewarded for its investment in organic innovation. In February of 2012, the USDA published a rule in the *Federal Register* that removed nonorganic soy lecithin from the National List, section 205.605 as an “allowed synthetic,” meaning that organic lecithin must now be used in products labeled organic. The only exception is if a product requires de-oiled lecithin, which has not been developed in organic and therefore was added to section 606, allowing the use of nonorganic unless the organic form becomes available. However, the majority of lecithin used today is oiled, or liquid lecithin.



For the past six years, manufacturers have not officially been required to use the organic lecithin even though it was available. This was due to many factors—including an underfunded, understaffed National Organic Program (NOP). While some companies chose the organic option anyway, many others decided to take advantage of the loophole to cut a bit off the bottom line.

**Encouraging Organic Innovation.** When the National List was first developed, the goal was that ingredient manufacturers would create organic innovations to take the place of listed items, and that the list would shrink as time went by—and now this is finally starting to happen. Organic soy lecithin is the first ingredient to effectively “kick” the nonorganic version off the list.

“It’s exciting to see the organic system working the way it is supposed to work,” says Lynn Clarkson, CEO and founder. “After the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) recommended this action, it took 2.5 years for the NOP to make it a final rule, but that’s not terribly upsetting because no organization is born mature, and until recently, the NOP didn’t have enough financing to do more than buy paper clips. But now the system has the means to better regulate, which encourages entrepreneurs to innovate.”

Clarkson says that there are still challenges though. “After doing all this work to introduce a new organic ingredient into the market, thinking it will be embraced with excitement—often we are instead greeted with complaints about costs. However, almost every ingredient in an organic product cost more, but people invest in these ingredients because they believe in organic.”

He adds, “This new rule helps even up the playing field for those who create organic products. Those companies that started using organic lecithin in 2004 have been paying more, while other products that sit on the shelf next to them have been allowed to use cheaper conventional versions that reward the use of pesticides. Rather than fight with people, we worked diplomatically, quietly through the regulatory system. Fortunately, we saw ourselves rewarded this year.”