

My name is Linley Dixon of The Cornucopia Institute. I have a Masters in Plant and Soil Science and a PhD in Plant Pathology. I have also worked for the Agricultural Extension Service as a plant pathologist and for the USDA's Agriculture Research Service. My husband and I started what is now a 150 member CSA and farmers market vegetable farm in southwest Colorado. After seven years of farming on rented land and moving the farm location three times, we understand some of the challenges that new organic farmers face.

I'm a member of local chapters of the National Young Farmers Coalition and the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, so I regularly hear about the struggles of the beginning organic farmer. At the same time, through The Cornucopia institute, I hear from the original organic pioneers, many of whom were part of the movement to create the standards. Neither group has good things to say about what organic has become, yet they both express that OFPA was well written if it is enforced.

As we've seen with organic eggs, where over 80% of the market is now CAFO operations where outdoor access is a "porch," please remember **market forces drive production to the minimum standard**. Through your tenure, please keep the minimum standard in line with OFPA because that minimum standard is what organics ultimately becomes.

On hydroponics, attempts to define organics based on "biology" in the system is not in line with OFPA. All production systems, including conventional systems, have "biology." Whether fertilizers are readily available to plants, or are made available by bacteria, is missing the point. Container systems are *not* organic systems because **they're removed from the regenerative organic practices that cycle nutrients and capture carbon into the soil**.

We are tomato greenhouse growers, in the soil in the ground. We're avid composters and covercroppers. These practices are required of organic farmers in OFPA. We use regular fish emulsion for our container transplants, but once we plant, our fertile soil takes care of the rest. Nutrients are lost in containers, and so they are a temporary and necessary practice to get a plant in the ground. Containers should not be the entire system because they constantly require fertility.

Authentic organic farmers aren't getting the financial benefits of the increase in demand for organics. Imports and industrial hydroponic/container operations that never should have been certified in the first place are the problem. What we need to remember in this room when we are trying to "grow organics" is that there is a massive local food movement sweeping the nation, including thousands of farmers adhering to OFPA that can "grow organics" if given the opportunity. Let's encourage these farmers to get certified by keeping the standards strong.

The organic founding farmers paved the way and taught us to strive for continuous improvement in our systems. They're working now toward no-till and greater soil carbon capture and renewable energy in their systems. When they ask for that same continuous improvement in the organic standards, they're called "a firing squad" or "hooligans" or "luddites" by the industrial players that are profiting from their hard work. Please remember the heart and soul of the foundation of the organic movement in your decision making to keep organics growing in the right direction.