

Dacian CIOLOȘ

Member of the European Commission

Brussels,
DC/GJ/bdv/D(2012)178919

*Dear Deputy Secretary Merrigan,
Dear Ambassador Siddiqui,*

I would like to confirm that the European Commission has examined the United States request for recognition of the U.S. National Organic Program (NOP) in accordance with Article 33(2) of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007. Based on this review, the Commission has recognised that the NOP complies with principles and production rules equivalent to those laid down in Titles II, III and IV of Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 and that its control measures are of equivalent effectiveness to those laid down in Title V of Regulation (EC) No 834/2007.

As a result the Commission has amended Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008 and added the United States to the list of recognised third countries in Annex III of that Regulation. The relevant Regulation will be published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 15 February 2012.

In addition to the mutual recognition of our respective organic standards and control systems, I am delighted to further strengthen our regulatory and standards co-operation on organic agriculture in general.

*The Deputy Secretary of Agriculture
Dr. Kathleen Merrigan
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW.
Washington D.C. 20250
United States of America*

*The Chief Agricultural Negotiator
Ambassador Isi A. Siddiqui
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
600 17th Street, NW
Washington D.C. 20508
United States of America*

For this purpose, the EU is committed to working with the United States in an Organics Working Group consisting of representatives of USDA and USTR on the U.S. side and representatives of the European Commission on the EU side. This Organics Working Group will meet periodically (at least annually) to:

- evaluate the use of veterinary drugs in organic production,*
- monitor conversion practices,*
- implement import certification programs to facilitate trade and promote electronic certification programs,*
- establish cooperation arrangements on recognition of new third country arrangements,*
- initiate a common assessment exercise for third country evaluations,*
- exchange information regarding animal welfare, antibiotic-free dairy and other animal production issues, and cleaners and disinfectants,*
- exchange information on methods to avoid contamination of organic products from genetically modified organisms and other activities to enhance the integrity of organic production systems,*
- review instances of significant non-compliance with organic certification program requirements, and*
- review operation of the Organics Working Group and the operation of our mutual recognitions of our respective organic standards and control systems, no later than 1 January 2015.*

I am convinced that this arrangement will strengthen organic agriculture across the Atlantic and will help create new opportunities for organic farmers and thereby support the sustainable development of our rural areas.

I would also like to acknowledge the excellent co-operation between my services, the Department of Agriculture, in particular the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Foreign Agricultural Service, and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative throughout the process.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "C. Hill", is written in black ink.