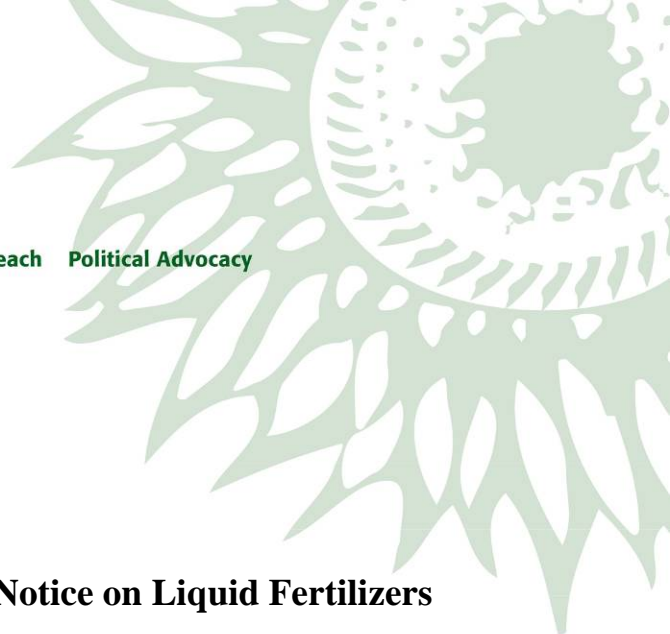




# CCOF

Organic Certification Trade Association Education & Outreach Political Advocacy



For Immediate Release

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## **CCOF Applauds National Organic Program Notice on Liquid Fertilizers**

**(February 20, 2009) Santa Cruz, CA** – CCOF applauds the National Organic Program (NOP) for their notice on liquid fertilizers issued today. The notice states the NOP is taking additional steps to protect the organic community by requiring third party reviewers of organic liquid fertilizer inputs, such as the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) and Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), to implement a detailed audit and inspection protocol for all high nitrogen liquid fertilizers effective October 1, 2009.

CCOF has been advocating for increased regulation and industry reform since the issue of potential adulteration liquid fertilizers came to light and, in the past two months, has taken a number of additional steps to push for change.

On January 12th, CCOF issued its own ‘Liquid Fertilizer Approval Policy’, much of which is now reflected in the new NOP notice. The CCOF’s policy was an immediate response to press coverage in December 2008, of a 2006 California State Department of Agriculture (CDFA) investigation into the company California Liquid Fertilizers. This investigation took over two years and eventually resulted in the company’s products being withdrawn from the organic market.

CCOF Policy and Program Director, Claudia Reid, met with four California Legislative staff members on January 15th regarding liquid fertilizer, the State Organic Program (SOP) reform, CDFA and other related issues.

On January 23rd, 2009 following a USDA/FBI raid on a manufacturer of liquid fertilizer, Port Organic Products, Ltd., in Bakersfield, California, CCOF took action and sent all its certified operations a notification to cease and desist use of the fertilizer products manufactured by that the company, while other certifiers decided to wait while the investigation moved forward.

“When consumer confidence in the integrity of organic is at stake we believe it is important to take swift and decisive action,” stated Jake Lewin, CCOF Chief Certification Officer. “When this second incident came to light in January, we decided to take immediate steps to protect organic producers and the public.”

Today, the NOP notice states it is no longer confident that the liquid fertilizers Marizyme and Agrolizer, manufactured by Port Organic Products, Ltd., are in compliance with NOP regulations.

On January 30, CCOF took additional steps to protect the integrity of organic products by implementing a liquid fertilizer sampling initiative to test a variety of liquid fertilizers in the

marketplace and to provide supplemental information in conjunction with the companies recently announced policy.

On February 3, 2009, Jake Lewin testified before the newly-named California Senate Committee on Food and Agriculture, at a hearing entitled “Assuring the Integrity of Organic Food and the Use of Organic Fertilizers.” Lewin spoke to CCOF’s role in and response to the high-nitrogen liquid fertilizer issues. Lewin’s testimony was given under rapid-fire questioning by Senator Dean Florez (D-Shafter), chair of the committee, and Senator Abel Maldonado (R-Santa Maria), vice chair. The committee and other members of the Legislature may consider introducing legislation that will provide CDFA with increased enforcement authority for fertilizer fraud, as well as increasing fines against perpetrators of label violations

On February 11, 2009, CCOF Executive Director, Peggy Miars and Lewin met with NOP officials in Washington D.C. to provide an update on the liquid fertilizer issue.

“It’s been a busy two months,” stated Miars, “but we are very pleased with the outcome and the NOP decision to issue this new notice in a time sensitive manner. It is what the industry needs and we’re pleased that, once again, CCOF has been able to play a leadership role in ensuring the integrity of organic food and farming.”

More information on CCOF activities to address concerns about potentially spiked organic liquid fertilizers be found at [www.ccof.org/atwork.php](http://www.ccof.org/atwork.php). CCOF policies on organic liquid fertilizer can be read at [www.ccof.org/Certification\\_Updates\\_Resources.php](http://www.ccof.org/Certification_Updates_Resources.php)

#### About CCOF

*CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers), a nonprofit organization, was founded in 1973 and is one of the nation’s oldest and largest third-party organic certifying agencies. CCOF certifies, educates, advocates and promotes organic through:*

- *A premier organic certification program for growers, processors, handlers, and retailers.*
- *Programs to increase awareness of and demand for certified organic product and to expand public support for organic agriculture.*
- *Advocacy for governmental policies that protect and encourage organic agriculture.*

*CCOF certifies more than 2,000 organic operations in 35 states and three foreign countries and serves over 350 supporting members - consumers, suppliers, businesses and individuals - interested in supporting its work.*

*For further information on CCOF visit: [www.ccof.org](http://www.ccof.org)*

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