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IFPA applauds introduction of new organics legislation

The International Fresh Produce Association applauded the introduction of the Continuous Improvement in Organic Standards Act. The bill is a product of a coalition of industry partners, including the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance, Organic Trade Association, Organic Produce Association, National Organic Coalition and the Organic Farmer's Association.

IFPA has worked closely with OTA and Northwest Hort to secure a Republican lead on the bill, Rep. Newhouse (R-WA) and a Democratic lead, Rep. Panetta (D-CA). The bill would improve the National Organic Program by establishing a process by which the USDA solicits input every five years from organic stakeholders regarding what (if any) organic standards are in need of updating. This model of establishing a work plan based on stakeholder input is also used by ARS and APHIS, and adds transparency and accountability to the standards process.

"IFPA thanks Reps. Dan Newhouse, Jimmy Panetta, Salud Carbajal, Chellie Pingree and David Valadao and our fellow members of the industry coalition for support of the Continuous Improvement in Organic Standards Act of 2023," said Vice President of U.S. Government Relations Rebeckah Adcock. "Since the first nationwide standards were established in 2000, the network of requirements and regulations that monitor the organic industry have been a gold standard for food and agricultural systems around the world."

The 1990 Organic Foods Production Act set to "establish national standards" that help consumers know that the products they're purchasing are produced in a consistent way. Since the first nationwide standards were established in 2000, the network of requirements and regulations that monitor the organic industry has been a gold standard for food and agricultural systems around the world. However, over the past several years, the federal regulatory apparatus has fallen behind, slowing innovation and continuous improvement within the industry.

"The organic sector has to be able to keep improving and evolving to meet the future needs and desires of both producers and consumers, and this legislation goes far to enable that progress," said Tom Chapman, CEO of the Organic Trade Association. "Consumers are eating more organic produce than ever, and organic policy needs to be responsive to the issues that impact organic produce growers and consumers. We are grateful to work with partners like the International Fresh Produce Association to get that done."

IFPA welcomed hundreds of members of the industry to Washington, DC, during the organization's Washington Conference in September. Attendees marched on the Hill to advocate for a variety of industry priorities, including labor and immigration reform, nutrition and food safety. This is one of 15 bills that have been introduced this Congress directed at the reauthorization of the 2023 farm bill which has the support of IFPA and the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance.

"The Organic sector has grown to more than a \$67 billion U.S. market, with the USDA Organic seal serving as one of the most trusted consumer labels in the marketplace," said Adcock. "However, in order to maintain that growth, the standards must be able to be responsive to changes in scientific information, environmental and ecological data, and consumer demands."

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