

Congress of the United States

May 26, 2016

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to you today regarding the proposed rule, "National Organic Program; Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices," published in the Federal Register on April 13, 2016. Due to the complex nature of this rule, we request a 90 day extension of the comment period, from 60 days to 150 days. Additional time is necessary for stakeholders to evaluate the changes made in the proposed rule and provide comprehensive feedback on the potential impacts if the rule is implemented.

Our constituents have expressed significant concern regarding possible unintended consequences, including reduced access to organic products, substantially increased organic food costs for consumers, significant disruption to the organic feed and processed organic products industries, increased exposure to disease and mortality for organic poultry, increased risk of contamination or food-borne illness, and significant barriers for current organic producers to maintain organic certification. We respectfully request additional time to ensure more thorough public comment on these key areas to inform your decisions prior to this rule moving forward.

We appreciate the work you do on behalf of America's farmers and ranchers and thank you in advance for considering our request.

Sincerely,



Pat Roberts, Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry



Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry



Mike Conaway, Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture



Collin C. Peterson, Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture