

New campaign urges Congress not to mess with new organic animal welfare rules

Organic Trade Assoc. says 'handful' of big ag trade groups attacking proposed regulations

by Sustainable Food News

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The [Organic Trade Association](#) (OTA) has launched an advocacy campaign urging its 8,500 members to tell their congressional delegations to vote against any amendments that may jeopardize controversial, [proposed regulations](#) aimed at updating organic livestock and poultry welfare standards.

The Washington, D.C.-based trade group said "a handful of conventional agricultural trade groups are attacking [the proposed] organic standards. Tell Congress to vote no on amendments that peck apart the USDA organic label."

OTA explained that the new campaign, titled "[Do Not Play Chicken with Organic Standards](#)," is meant to convey the message that "any action that undermines the process that safeguards the [USDA's] [National Organic Program](#) (NOP) should be opposed."

Earlier this month, the NOP [extended the deadline for public comment](#) on the proposed regulations until July 13 to "allow the organic community, stakeholders and consumers additional time to provide feedback."

Late last month, leaders of the U.S. Senate and House agriculture committees [sent a letter](#) to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack urging him to grant a 90-day extension of the comment period to address their concerns over the proposed rule, particularly that it may lead to "substantially increased organic food costs for consumers."

Specifically, the proposed rule would, among other things, require laying hens to have year-round access to an outdoor area with "at least 50-percent soil cover," essentially prohibiting the current widespread use of covered porches.