



Perry Johnson Registrars Food Safety, Inc.

Strengthening Organic Enforcement: An Overview

In a pivotal advancement to the USDA organic regulations, the Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) final rule marks a significant step forward in overseeing the production, handling, and sale of organic products. Published in the Federal Register on January 19, 2023, and fully implemented by March 19, 2024, the SOE rule aims to enhance the integrity and traceability of organic goods, catering to the evolving demands of the organic market and consumer expectations for transparency and authenticity.

Key Highlights of the SOE Rule:

- **Comprehensive Coverage:** The rule extends to all entities engaged in organic production and handling, emphasizing the need for certification for a majority, with limited exemptions, thus broadening the scope of oversight.
- **Import Certificates:** A notable requirement is the NOP Import Certificate for organic products entering the United States, ensuring an electronic and verifiable trail from the point of origin to the domestic market.
- **Organic Certification Process:** Detailed steps to certification underscore the commitment to maintaining organic standards across the supply chain, from choosing a USDA-accredited certifier to the issuance of an operation certificate.
- **Fraud Prevention:** The introduction of mandatory fraud prevention plans for certified operations reflects a proactive approach to safeguarding organic integrity against fraudulent practices.
- **Exemptions Clarified:** While the rule outlines exemptions, it underscores the responsibility of exempt operations to uphold organic standards and documentation requirements, promoting accountability across the board.

PJRFSI recognizes the implications of these enhancements for businesses within the organic supply chain. The heightened requirements for certification, along with the emphasis on traceability and fraud prevention, necessitate a strategic approach to compliance and integrity. Businesses must adapt to these regulatory updates to not only remain compliant but also to reinforce their commitment to organic integrity and quality, meeting the expectations of consumers and stakeholders alike.

The Strengthening Organic Enforcement rule is a monumental step in fortifying the trust and reliability of the USDA Organic label. We at PJRFSI stand ready to guide and support businesses through this transition, offering expertise in achieving and maintaining compliance with these enhanced standards, ensuring the continued growth and success of the organic industry.

For more detailed information on the SOE rule and its requirements, visit the USDA AMS website at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/strengthening-organic-enforcement/faq> or contact a project manager at pjrfsi@pjrfsi.com.

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