

business.community.life.

# naturalfoods merchandiser

December 2010  
Volume XXX I - Number 12 - \$18  
naturalfoodsmerchandiser.com

NATURAL  
PRODUCTS  
EXPO

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF  
NATURAL PRODUCTS EXPO

## Stumped about PC standards?

You won't be after reading  
our update on page 24

The man taking  
on **GMOs**  
page 9

**Satiety:** top foods  
that satisfy  
page 20

8 heavyweights for  
**weight management**  
page 28



health & beauty

Personal care takes on  
*organic*  
and *natural*

How will the industry define label claims?



USDA Organic

Laurie Budgar

In 2009, U.S. consumers bought \$7.8 billion worth of personal care products that claimed to be either natural or organic, according to *Nutrition Business Journal*. But how many of these soaps, lotions and other body care products were really natural or organic? Here's a look at the latest industry attempts to define the terms.

**Organic standards**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Organic Program has long been held as the gold standard. "These are the toughest standards anywhere and most realistically represent the generally understood definitions of what an organic product actually is," says Larry Plesent, CEO of Middlebury, Vt.-based Vermont Soap Organics. But the USDA is embroiled in a dispute over whether it is—or even should be—effectively enforcing use of the term *organic* on personal care products.

Government regulation of "organic" personal care has a convoluted past. "The USDA originally said the term *organic* and the USDA [organic] seal could not be used for personal care products," said Joe Smillie, senior vice president of USDA organic certifier *Quality Assurance International*, in a recent webinar on the topic. "Then in August 2005 ... they said [personal care] could be certified under the National Organic Program and use the seal." And to make matters even more complicated, "in April 2008, the Food and Drug Administration said they do not define the term *organic*," even though cosmetics and personal care products are under the jurisdiction of the FDA, Smillie said.

Last April, Miles McEvoy, deputy administrator for the NOP, sent a memo to the chairman of the National Organic Standards Board stating that the NOP would do the following:

- Collaborate with the FDA and the Federal Trade Commission "to understand the issues associated with use of the term *organic* in personal care ... to have a comprehensive approach that aligns with each respective agencies [sic] mission and regulations."
- Begin gathering information regarding the labeling of personal care products in the marketplace.
- "Consider the recommendations of the NOSB on rulemaking and take them under advisement for future incorporation."

Still, many personal care manufacturers use "organic" in their names or on their labels even if their products are not USDA-certified organic. In March, Finland, Minn.-based Organic Consumers Association and Yonkers, N.Y.-based Consumers Union filed a complaint with the FTC charging that the USDA's enforcement of the term *organic* is inconsistent between food and personal care. That same month, NOP staff went to Natural Products Expo West and discovered that among 26 personal care exhibitors, only six were USDA certified, and 14 used "organic" in their names or on their labels but were not certified to NOP standards.

Alexis Baden-Mayer, political director for OCA,

GLENN ASAKURA