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## Naturally grown – almost organic?

**T**he EU regulation on organic marketing covers not only the word 'organic' but also other terms like 'biological', 'ecological' and any other phrase that may be understood by consumers to mean the same as organic. The US National Organic Program has adopted a more narrow approach and protects only the word 'organic'. An initiative in the US has taken advantage of this limitation – or opportunity – by creating an alternative certification system for organic products. As they cannot use the word organic they have registered the trademark Certified Naturally Grown™ (CNG).

The initiative is presented as a grassroots alternative to the USDA organic programme. It is 'created by small farmers, for small farmers, and is being run by small farmers' says Ron Khosla, Executive Director. He continues 'The Organic label was not grown with government control and high licensing fees, it was grown with sweat, idealism, and farmers helping farmers to improve and stick to those ideals!'

The producers associated with this new initiative will follow the standards in the National Organic Program. So what then is the difference? The main difference lies in the inspection and certification requirements. The

NOP imposes a number of documentary requirements and limitations on farmers and certification bodies that are seen to be more of a problem than the standards themselves. Certified Naturally Grown, Inc., the certification body associated with the new initiative, is not (and could not) be accredited by the USDA and is therefore not required to implement the system as designed in the NOP. Farmers are not required to keep so many records. They are inspected annually, but the inspectors are their colleague farmers rather than the independent inspectors envisioned by the NOP. In fact, participating farmers are expected to perform inspections:

'You (the participating farmer) are encouraged to inspect the farms of friends whom you know and trust and have worked with for many years. These are the people that will form the Foundation of Trust that this movement needs. To help maintain the integrity of the programme, you may NOT inspect the same farm that inspected you. While the new USDA programme forbids farm inspectors from making suggestions to improve a farmer's situation, the Certified Naturally Grown programme ENCOURAGES sharing and advice between farmers.'

This philosophy is quite contrary

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