



Policy Memorandum

To: Accredited Certifying Agents and State Organic Programs

From: Miles McEvoy, Deputy Administrator

Subject: Sulfur Dioxide in wine made with organic fruit

Date: September 20, 2010

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) maintains a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Alcohol, Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB). Under this MOU, the TTB receives, reviews, and approves or rejects labeling applications for alcohol products bearing an organic claim.

The TTB recently received a label application for a product that contained sulfur dioxide in a wine which qualified for the “made with organic***” classification, but which was made with fruit other than grapes, e.g., pears and blueberries. The TTB requested clarification from the NOP on whether sulfur dioxide is allowed in a “made with organic (fruit other than grapes)” wine.

The NOP examined its own record of decisions regarding wine labels and sought a legal opinion on this issue. According to the Office of General Counsel (OGC), Section 205.605(b) of the NOP regulations allows the use of sulfur dioxide in wines that are “made with organically grown *grapes*” (emphasis added). Because the NOP regulations specify “grapes” in this annotation, the use of sulfur dioxide in other true fruit wines (i.e. those that are made with organic fruit other than grapes), and which are labeled, “made with organically grown (fruit other than grapes)”, is prohibited. The NOP issued a memo to TTB on September 8, 2010 informing them of this clarification.

This policy clarification applies to wines classified as “true fruit wines” by the TTB. Please note that some wines are made with organically grown grapes and contain other organic fruit added for flavoring. These wines are not affected by this policy. According to TTB, grape wines that have other fruit added for flavoring are **not** true fruit wines. Thus, these wines can be properly described with the claim “made with organically grown grapes,” and contain added sulfites as specified under Section 205.605(b) of the NOP regulations.

If you have any questions regarding this memo, you may contact Melissa Bailey, Ph.D., Director, NOP Standards Division at 202-720-3252 or Melissa.bailey@ams.usda.gov.