

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 2397

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Regulating organic food products.

Sponsors: By Representatives Linville, Schoesler and Hunt; by request of Department of Agriculture.

House Committee on Agriculture & Ecology

Senate Committee on Agriculture & International Trade

Background:

The U.S. Congress enacted The Organic Foods Production Act as part of the 1990 Farm Bill. This act established uniform national standards for the production and handling of foods labeled as "organic." It also authorized a U.S. Department of Agriculture national organic program to set national standards for the production, handling, and processing of organically grown agricultural products. The National Organic Standards Board was also created by the act. This board advises the Secretary of Agriculture in setting the national organic program standards. Producers who meet these standards may label their products as "USDA Certified Organic." The final national organic standards rule took effect on December 21, 2000. Those who grow or market "organic" products must comply with the rule by October 21, 2002.

The act permits the Secretary of Agriculture to allow each state to implement a state organic certification program for producers and handlers of agricultural products that have been produced using organic methods as provided for by the USDA. State standards may be more restrictive than the federal standards, but may not be less restrictive.

Washington adopted statewide organic standards in 1992. Any food labeled or represented as organic must be produced in accordance with the standards set by the Washington Department of Agriculture. The director of the department has the authority to establish a list of approved substances that may be used in organic food production. This list must approve the use of most natural substances and prohibit the use of most synthetic substances.

Summary:

The director of the Washington Department of Agriculture must adopt the standards developed under the national organic program for food labeled, represented, or sold as

organic. The authority for the department to develop standards independent of the federal standards is repealed. The intent and definition sections of the organic standards program are updated to reflect the national standards, and technical changes are made.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 97 0

Senate 48 0

Effective: June 13, 2002