

Organic farming groups at odds over compost contaminated with pesticides

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

A rift has developed among environmental and organic groups in a lawsuit over compost contaminated with pesticides used in organic farming.

Several environmental organizations are asking a federal judge to overturn the USDA's policy of allowing organic growers to use under certain circumstances compost from plants treated with pesticides.

The plaintiffs — Center for Food Safety, Center for Environmental Health and Beyond Pesticides — claim that USDA has disguised this policy as a “guidance” to the industry, thereby unlawfully circumventing notice-and-comment procedures for enacting regulations.

The USDA has countered that the “guidance” isn't subject to this rule-making process because it's merely informing the organic industry about how the agency will be “enforcing compliance” with existing regulations.

. . . .

The Western Growers Association, whose members grow roughly half of the organic produce in the U.S., asked the judge not to vacate the USDA's “guidance” if she finds the agency violated administrative law.

If the “guidance” is invalidated, the WGA fears that organic farms will effectively have to test compost to ensure it's free of any synthetic pesticides, which would be “analytically and economically impossible” . . .

The impact would be that many organic farms would stop applying compost to the soil, impeding necessary nutrient-building, until the USDA develops proper rules, the WGA argues.

Overturning the USDA's policy would also invite litigation by consumers . . . the group said.

These objections were joined by the Organic Trade Association and California Certified Organic Farmers, which have previously allied with the Center for Food Safety in controversies over biotech crops.

Read full, original post: [Contaminated compost causes organic rift](#)