

‘USDA has been aware for years that its oversight of organic food fraud has been a massive failure’. Here’s what’s needed

Amended U.S. Department of Agriculture rules [announced](#) last month suggest the agency has high hopes for plans to crack down on fraud in the organic food sector.

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The amended rules have some producers and sellers [concerned](#) they will increase costs for them and consumers. That’ll mean higher prices, and higher prices likely mean more incentives to cheat.

A more glaring problem is this: the USDA has been aware for many years that its oversight of organic food has been a massive failure—but that knowledge hasn’t spurred the agency to act. For example, a 2010 report by the USDA Office of Inspector General found the agency’s “enforcement of federal laws governing organics is abysmal,” *Food Safety News* [reported](#) at the time. A subsequent USDA OIG report in 2017—this one [focusing](#) on organic-food imports—[found](#) (per *Buzzfeed*) that “consumers who make a point of buying organic food may be getting ripped off” due to lax USDA oversight and other problems.

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As I’ve [proposed before](#), a better plan than allowing the USDA more power over organics would have Congress rescind the agency’s oversight over organic foods entirely. With that change, the private, state-based bodies (such as CCOF and Oregon Tilth) that have been responsible for certifying producers as organic since the 1970s would continue to verify a producer’s organic status.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)