
MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 9, 2019
TO: USCC Market Development Committee and USCC Executive Committee
FROM: Ron Alexander (RAA), USCC Market Development Committee Co-Chair & Industry Liaison to AAPFCO
RE: Update from the AAPFCO Summer Annual meeting 2019

The 2019 AAPFCO Summer Annual meeting was held in Louisville, Kentucky from August 7th to 9th. Control Officials from 35 different states and Canada attended.

Welcome, Opening Comments, Roll Call and Vote

Under the new AAPFCO meeting format, after the Role Call, to determine which states were in attendance and to make sure that they have a quorum, voting by the membership takes place. This is the formal vote by the membership on issues approved by the committees (and the Board) to go 'tentative' or 'official' at the previous meeting. This is when the status of new items and modifications are formalized (approved) or voted down by the membership.

Nothing was voted on during this session that affected the composting industry.

Terms & Definitions Committee

Many fertilizer related definitions were discussed during the recent committee meeting; but only the humic substances definition was related to compost.

T-100 Humic Substances – constituents of soil organic matter and the aquatic environment, consisting of complex heterogeneous mixtures of carbon-based substances formed by biochemical reactions during the decay and transformation of plant and microbial remains. They are primarily composed of three main fractions, called humic acids, fulvic acids, and humin, which are operationally defined by their solubility in dilute alkali and acid solutions. *Sources of humic substances are commercially harvested from terrestrial deposits which include, but are not limited to, Leonardite, oxidized lignite, oxidized sub-bituminous coals, humalite, carbonaceous shales (including humic shale), peat, and sapropel.*

This 'approved' definition, created by the Humic Products Trade Association (HPTA), limits what products can claim they contain humic substances. Considering this definition, some states may feel that compost should not be able to claim humic acid content. That stated, several states already do allow compost to claim a humic acid content (even with the new definition), as long as analytical testing illustrates its existence in compost. In fact, a proposed change in the definition was being sought, so that a non-mined material could claim that it contained humic substances. The HPTA objected, but a working group was formed to evaluate definition changes. Control Officials asked the working group to continue

its efforts on the definition at the recent meeting. The USCC AAPFCO representative is attempting to serve on the working group.

Uniform Bills Committee

The only issue that was discussed that could possibly affect compost, was the consideration of the creation of a uniform (and standard) means for states to evaluate the efficacy of a product, substantiate claims, etc. This concept is in the very early stages of discussion, and compost may not be affected anyway (because of our prior efforts to standardize a list of allowable compost claims).

Environmental Affairs Committee

The USCC led working group presented additional information on the allowance of a ‘slowly available phosphate’ claim on compost product labels. At the committee meeting, it proposed a label format and a method to calculate slowly available phosphate, using the water extractable phosphorus test method as the means to quantify it. Without a formal vote, because the label suggestions were found to be allowable by the AAPFCO Official Publication and its Labeling Guidance document, the working group was directed to continue its efforts.

The working group now aims to complete the following before and at the February 2020 meeting:

- Propose a definition for “water extractable phosphate” (WEP),
- Gain approval of the proposed test method (and its use as a means to measure WEP), and
- Determine if the Uniform Bills Committee must evaluate the proposal.

These USCC efforts could allow compost manufacturers to make phosphorus claims, and illustrate how it is environmentally safe, or defend-themselves from overzealous regulators who are concerned with a compost’s innate phosphate content.

The AAPFCO 2020 Winter-Annual meeting is scheduled for February in New Orleans, Louisiana.