
MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 5, 2020
TO: USCC Market Development Committee and USCC Executive Committee
FROM: Ron Alexander (RAA), Industry Liaison to AAPFCO
RE: Update from the AAPFCO Summer Annual meeting 2020

The 2020 AAPFCO Summer Annual meeting was held virtually, on Friday, July 31st and Monday/Tuesday August 3rd and 4th. Control Officials from 37 different states and Canada attended (90 individuals), as did 150 attendees from industry.

Welcome, Opening Comments, Roll Call and Vote

Following the AAPFCO meeting format, after the Role Call, to determine which states are in attendance and to make sure that they have a quorum, voting by the membership takes place. This is when the status of new items and modifications are formalized (approved) or voted down by the membership.

The only voting issue relevant to the composting industry, which took place during this first session, was the formal approval of the 'water extractable phosphate' definition. The definition was formally approved to go into 'tentative' status.

Terms & Definitions Committee

Many fertilizer related definitions were discussed during the recent committee meeting; but only one definition, 'water extractable phosphate' related to compost. The term 'water extractable phosphate' was proposed by the USCC, after the previous submittal of a technical package required to propose a new definition. The definition is now formally in tentative status, and no further action could be taken during the committee meeting, because the related test method is under review by the Lab Services Committee. Their efforts are progressing, but slowly.

Water extractable phosphate – the amount of phosphate in a carbon-based fertilizer that is readily water soluble, as determined by the SERA (Southern Extension & Research Activity) -17 test method.

As previously discussed, the current definition for 'humic substances' (which was developed by the Humic Products Trade Association), has the potential to limit which products can claim that they contain humic substances. This is a potential problem for compost (which contains humic substances), but since the submitted changes to the existing definition were voted down, the effort was removed from the committee's agenda. Following the rules of order, the USCC would have to propose a modification to the humic substances definition at an upcoming meeting in order to assure that compost is included. The USCC and its MDC will have to decide whether this effort should be started.

Finally, there was an ‘Amendment Working Group’ formed to help categorize soil and plant amendment products according to a new format that AAPFCO wants to use for terms and definitions. The USCC representative and one from Scotts Miracle-Gro completed the efforts assigned to the committee, essentially placing compost (and some other organic recycled products) in a category that would allow it to register as a soil amendment or fertilizer, and allow for various nutrients to potentially be claimed (MNP – multi nutrient product).

Uniform Bills Committee

The only effort that was discussed at the committee meeting that could affect compost, or really, other new organic recycled products, is the development of *Guidelines for Efficacy Data Submission*. A formal process is being put in place whereas a new product wanting to make labeling claims will have to complete a formal scientific review to do so. *Although a great step forward, this will not stop individual companies from cheating (promoting unproven claims).*

Lab Services Committee

In order to be able to claim that carbon-based products contain lower amounts of water-extractable phosphate, a lab method must be developed and approved to do the analysis. The importance of this claim relates to the potential negative environmental impacts of highly soluble phosphate sources. Working with The Pennsylvania State University, the USCC proposed the SERA (Southern Extension & Research Activity) -17 test method, which was developed for manure and biosolids. Many composters are now testing their products using this method, especially if their product is to be used in stormwater and erosion control applications.

The USCC presented again on this subject (answering questions posed at the last committee meeting). Even with the new data presented, questions were again asked about the robustness of the test method. Therefore, the USCC will continue to gather additional information and the Lab Services Committee will be forming a technical group to work through the technical issues.

Environmental Affairs Committee

No Environmental Affairs Committee meeting was held during the Summer Annual meeting.

The AAPFCO 2021 Winter-Annual meeting is scheduled for February in Mobile, Alabama (but may be a virtual meeting again, based on the COVID-19 situation).