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## MEMORANDUM

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**DATE:** August 3, 2021  
**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 2021

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The 2021 AAPFCO Winter Annual meeting was held virtually on July 27 to 29. 205 to 260 registrants attended the virtual meeting each day. In all, 84 Control Officials and 176 Industry Liaisons attended the meeting.

### **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 initiatives approved by AAPFCO committees, are voted upon by the membership (and these initiatives gain 'tentative' or 'official' status).

The only issue relevant to the composting industry that was voted upon during this opening session was placing compost and various other products in a category of 'plant and media product which contain plant nutrients'. This classification is for internal AAPFCO purposes, but essentially allows composters to register their products as soil amendments or fertilizers (really, soil amendments with nutrient claims). This effort was approved to go 'official'.

### **Lab Services Committee**

In order to be able to claim that carbon-based products contain lower amounts of water-extractable phosphate (WEP), 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, as well as to help compost customers better manage nutrient addition (for proper plant growth). Working with The Colorado State and Pennsylvania State Universities, the USCC proposed the SERA (Southern Extension & Research Activity) -17 test method, which was developed for manure and biosolids. Several composters are already testing for WEP, especially if their product is to be used in stormwater and erosion control applications, and in states which are limiting phosphate usage in certain turf applications.

At the Committee meeting, Dr. John Spargo, the Director of the Agricultural Analytical Services Laboratory at Penn State University, presented on the subject on behalf of the USCC. He reviewed the detailed steps taken to complete the analytical method. Dr. James Bartos of Purdue University also presented (as Chair of the Lab Services Committee [LSC]) regarding their committee's evaluation of the test method. The LSC's interest being the reproducibility of test results, knowing that compost is more heterogeneous than inorganic fertilizers (containing sticks, etc.). It is also understood that nutrient guarantees based on these test results may have to be verified by state Control Officials. Overall, the LSC likes the test method, but is concerned about pulling representative field samples and doing a 'mass reduction' of the samples received by a lab (to do the actual analysis). They also want to more precisely determine how to deal with the more heterogeneous product samples, as well as create an investigation allowance, which is used by Control Official when they pull and product samples in the field.

**Terms & Definitions Committee**

Many fertilizer related definitions were discussed during the recent committee meeting; but only one definition, ‘water extractable phosphorous’ related to compost. The term previously proposed by the USCC, and currently in ‘tentative status’, was extensively discussed again. After these discussions, the definition was voted by the Committee to be moved to ‘official status’.

*Water extractable phosphorous – 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.*

At the next AAPFCO meeting, the State Control Officials will vote on making the definition ‘official’. That stated, at this point, the definition may be used.

**Uniform Bills Committee**

At the Committee meeting, the USCC AAPFCO Industry Liaison completed a presentation illustrating how testing for the WEP content of compost (and other carbon-based products) could be used to make slow-release phosphorous claims on fertilizer labels, while following acceptable labeling rules. See the example below; and note that the amount of phosphate that is not water extractable, is claimed as slowly available phosphate.

**1.25-1-0.5  
GUARANTEED ANALYSIS**

Total Nitrogen (N) .....	1.25%
1.0% Water Insoluble Nitrogen*	
0.25% Water Soluble Nitrogen	
Available Phosphate (P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> )** .....	1.0%
Soluble Potash (K <sub>2</sub> O).....	0.5%

*Derived from cow manure*

*\*1.0% Slowly available nitrogen from composted cow manure  
\*\*0.75% Slowly available phosphate from composted cow manure*

After some discussion, it was determined that making slowly available phosphate claims for carbon-based products was in fact allowable. The Committee further suggested that the USCC continue to work with the Lab Service Committee to improve the test method and sampling methods, where necessary.

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

*Special thanks to DC Water (James Fotouhi) and Synagro (John Uzupis) for attending the AAPFCO committee meetings (virtually) and lobbying for the USCC WEP initiatives in the meeting ‘chat’.*

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The AAPFCO 2022 Winter Annual meeting is scheduled for February in Mobile, Alabama.