

**SB 887 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**

**Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire**

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**Action Date:** 03/11/25

**Action:** Do pass with amendments and requesting referral to Ways and Means. (Printed A-Engrossed.)

**Vote:** 5-0-0-0

**Yeas:** 5 - Girod, Golden, Nash, Prozanski, Taylor

**Fiscal:** Fiscal impact issued

**Revenue:** No revenue impact

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**Meeting Dates:** 3/4, 3/11

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**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

The measure directs the Director of the Department of Agriculture (ODA) to hire an Organic Policy Special Assistant to oversee the tracking of national trends, policies and regulatory changes that impact the production, marketing, or certification of organic agricultural products and aid ODA in federal and state level organic sector advocacy. It also requires the Organic Policy Special Assistant to facilitate trade in organic agricultural products, address organic import substitution and data gaps related to organic products, support statewide infrastructure for organic product handling and processing, and integrate organic practices into relevant ODA programs.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

- Organic Policy Special Assistant role and responsibilities
- Organic Policy Special Assistants in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin
- Organic food market

**EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:**

The amendment clarifies duties of the Organic Policy Special Assistant.

Detailed Summary:

Adds that the Organic Policy Special Assistant shall coordinate the tracking of national trends, policies and regulatory changes that impact the production, marketing or certification of organic agricultural products to advance the organic sector and aid the department in federal and state level advocacy.

Further clarifies that the Organic Policy Special Assistant shall facilitate trade in organic agricultural products, including how to address organic import substitution.

**BACKGROUND:**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) describes organic agriculture as the application of a set of cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that support the cycling of on-farm resources, promoting ecological balance, and conserving biodiversity by maintaining or enhancing soil and water quality; conserving wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife; and avoiding use of synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, irradiation, and genetic engineering.

Organic producers use natural processes and materials when developing farming systems to contribute to soil, crop and livestock nutrition, pest and weed management, attainment of production goals, and conservation of biological diversity.

The Department of Agriculture’s (ODA) National Organic Program (NOP) is a USDA accredited certifying agent for organic crop production and handling/processing, enforcing federal standards for organically produced

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agricultural products sold in the United States. ODA's Organic Program staff ensure that NOP regulations are met locally for both crop production and handling. ODA certifies organic growers who have implemented growing practices for at least 36 months, as well as processors who meet organic processing requirements and produce an organic product. ODA completes on-site inspections of grower and producer operations to ensure that NOP standards are being met.