**PRIVATE LABELING BEST PRACTICES**

**Purpose: To increase oversight of labels and additional clarity when approving private labels.**

***Definitions:***

***Private label brand owner-*** *is a company that contracts out the processing and packaging of organic products and does not physically handle product. As such is excluded from certification and therefore not required to be certified; however, once Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) is finalized, these types of operations will need to be certified.*

***Co-packer-*** *also known as a contract manufacturer/packager, undertakes either the entire task of manufacturing and packaging and labeling of food to a client’s specifications, or some part of the process. Many co-packers can be used for different steps. Various activities may occur manufacturing, procuring ingredients, distribution of finished products, etc.*

**Certification of Private Label Products and Label Review**

Private label products or services are typically those manufactured or provided by one company for sale under another company’s brand. Label information for private label products must contribute to traceability and transparency to the end consumer.

There are many common issues with the certification of private label products which include the following:

* the private label owner may not be certified.
* the private label owner does not own the product formulation information, in this case, the

information must be obtained from the certifier of the co-packer or manufacturer.

* multiple certification agencies involved in the certification process.
* multiple manufacturing facilities producing same product, but which may contain different

ingredients, for one label owner.

**Who should go first when seeking approval?**

* The co-packer’s certifier should always add the product to the Organic Certificate first.
* If the label owner’s certificate does not list the product yet, add the product to the co-packer’s Organic Certificate with a Condition to provide the updated label owner certificate in a certain timeframe. (A provisional approval may be granted)
* The co-packer’s certifier should approve a new product first and list on the co-packer’s organic certificate. Then the label owner’s certifier can approve the product and list on the label owner’s certificate.

**Best Practices for Developing Consistency in the Product Label Review Process for Private labels**

***Best Practices include:***

* Communication among the certification agencies involved is necessary to improve

traceability and transparency. The organic certificate is not sufficient documentation to indicate brand name product label approval.

* Label approval for multi-ingredient products must involve the certifier(s) of the manufacturer(s) of the products. In many cases where product labels would be approved by multiple certifiers – example: the certifier of the manufacturer of the multi-ingredient product approves the product label; the certifier of the private label entity then approves the label.
* If a label submitted by a private label company is not compliant, the certifier of the

manufacturer cannot approve that label and vice versa.

* The use of facility identification numbers, particularly if the product distributor is not certified. In the US the use of facility identification is not required, except for dairy processing facilities. Facility identification would improve the transparency particularly if multiple facilities were producing the same labeled product. The NOP Database ID numbers could be used for this purpose and added at the time of processing along with lot codes.
* When certifying co-packers, watch out for uncertified label owners listing an incorrect certifier in the COB statement.
* Always list brands on Organic Certificates, both on co-packer and label owner certificate. To highlight different international approvals, list a single brand/product combination per line on an organic certificate.
* Watch out for co-packers subcontracting with other co-packers to produce products for an uncertified label owner.