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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Congress Asks for Extension on USDA's National Organic Program Certification**

*Urges Deadline Extension to Address Delays*

**WASHINGTON, D.C., 09/19/ 2024** – A bipartisan group of [key members of Congress today called on the USDA](#) to extend the certification deadline under the National Organic Program's (NOP) Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) rule, which could cause widespread harm to the organic wine and spirits industry.

The Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) is advocating for an extension of the certification deadline for distributors and importers who rely on organic products to supply the consumer marketplace.

The SOE rule, which took effect in March 2024, mandates that importers of organic wine and spirits obtain USDA-accredited certification, a process from which many were previously exempt.

Since the rule's implementation, industry members have reported significant delays and challenges, as certifying agencies face backlogs exceeding four months. This has left businesses unable to comply within the initial Sept. 19, 2024, grace period, even if they have engaged a certifier to complete the process.

“As it stands, the current backlog and certification delays are creating unnecessary disruptions in the international commerce of organic wine and spirits,” the members of Congress wrote in a letter to Dr. Jennifer Tucker, deputy administrator of the National Organic Program (see attached letter).

“These delays are threatening the economic livelihoods of many family-owned distributors, adding stress to an industry already grappling with post-pandemic recovery and shifting consumer preferences,” the letter continued. The lawmakers urged the USDA to extend the

certification grace period by an additional 120 days to allow importers time to complete the certification process without jeopardizing their businesses.

WSWA warned: “Without immediate action, wine and spirits importers and distributors face economic consequences due to the inability to bring products into the country, and many businesses may be forced to reconsider their investment in organic products just as consumers are gravitating toward them.”

WSWA remains committed to supporting its members and ensuring that these supply chain challenges are resolved swiftly for the benefit of consumers and businesses alike.

### **About Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America**

Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) is the national trade association representing the distribution tier of the wine and spirits industry. WSWA is dedicated to advancing the interests and independence of distributors and brokers of wine and spirits. Founded in 1943, WSWA has more than 380 member companies across 50 states and the District of Columbia, and its members distribute more than 80% of all wine and spirits sold at wholesale in the United States. To learn more, visit [www.wswa.org](http://www.wswa.org) or connect with us on Facebook or Twitter.