

Nanoparticles in Organic Production? Issues and opinions

Speiser, B.¹

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Abstract

The use of nanoparticles (particles smaller than 100 nanometers) is only at its beginning, but it is already evident that nanomaterials will soon infiltrate most areas of modern life, including many applications in agriculture, food processing, and packaging. Nanoparticles are very heterogeneous with respect to their origin.

With few exceptions, there are no organic production standards relating specifically to the use of nanoparticles. The Soil Association excludes all uses of nanoparticles, and Austria Bio Garantie excludes nanoparticles from organic cosmetics. In a discussion at BioFach 2008, most participants felt that more information is needed in order to make a decision.

Nanotechnology is an up-and-coming technology with a wide array of potential future uses. It is not yet clear exactly how beneficial these uses might be for organic farming, nor are the exact risks to human health and the environment known at the moment. In this situation, the organic sector should take a precautionary position, but it seems unwise to close the door to all potential uses of nanoparticles at this stage.

¹ Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FIBL, Ackerstrasse, CH-5070 Frick, Switzerland