

British Columbia

Organic Grower

*In this issue: National Organic Week, BC farmers' markets
and Bitterbine Hop Company*



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Next Issue Deadline:
November 29, 2010


President's Letter By Brad Reid

Summer is over and fall and final harvest is here. Hope it was a good season for everyone and that winter preparations are going well. At COABC we will be starting Board Meetings again to look at all of the challenges that our industry has to face over the winter. We continue to work on funding issues since the BC Government no longer funds the organic extension position. If you have questions about organic farming the best thing that you can do is contact the Ministry of Agriculture for assistance.



This is the first Grower that is going out to a wider readership and we welcome all new readers. We know that you will find our magazine informative and we look forward to any comments that you may have on things that you want to see in future issues. Our editor and designer have worked hard to make the Grower educational as well as a publication where you can “meet” the people who make up the organic family in BC.

Preparations are well under way for the annual COABC organic conference for 2011. This year we are returning to the Mary Winspear Centre on Vancouver Island. The conference is a great opportunity for growers, retailers, processors, packers and consumers to meet exchange ideas and put faces to names in our industry. I hope to meet some new people there and look forward to connecting with all our members.

Thanks to everyone for their continued support of COABC and our common goal of providing organic food for the people of BC that contribute to a healthy environment, healthy animals, healthy people and a healthy economy. 



Achieving success through involvement!

At the 2009 COABC Board Retreat the following committees were identified to help move the organization forward. Which one speaks to you? Where do your skills fit in?

The Capacity Development Committee: The Capacity Development Committee will be responsible for finding and securing funding sources to ensure the sustainability of COABC.

The new BCCOP Campaign Committee: The BCCOP Campaign Committee will primarily be responsible for implementing BCCOP branding strategies and acquiring the funding to support these specific initiatives.

The Advocacy Committee: The Advocacy Committee can be convened to deal with issues such as regulating the term Organic in BC. This would include preparations for meetings with Ministers and government officials.

Interested in helping out? Contact COABC administrator Sarah Clark at admin@certifiedorganic.bc.ca



**Food Safety Systems Implementation (Processor) Program
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British Columbia food and beverage processors are aware of the importance and economic advantages of implementing food safety systems in their operations. The FSSI (Processor) Program offers small businesses education and funding support to prepare and implement food safety plans. This program is managed by the Small Scale Food Processor Association.

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Workshop registration
Toll free 1-800-619-7372
fsai.outreach@ssfpa.net

Administrator's Report *by Sarah Clark*



Quarterly Achievements

We've been working hard to plan for:

- **COABC conference March 4-6th, Sidney, B.C.**
- **National Organic Week**
- **Certification Body audits**
- **NOP witness audit in office**
- **Funding sources**



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Getting the message out about organics is vital and as you read this, National Organic Week will be upon us. October 9 to 16, 2010, will be Canada's first week celebrating organic agriculture. The hope is that this will be the first of many, which will promote the practices and principles of organic agriculture from animal welfare, biodiversity, soil health and more.



The organic message will also be heard at the 2011 COABC conference in Sidney. Planning is moving ahead for the March 4 to 6 event. Conference coordinator Lee Fuge, in conjunction with Rochelle Eisen and myself, has been working on the program to bring you an informative and enjoyable three days focused on "The Next Generation."

Speaking of Rochelle Eisen, at the time of writing additional funding for continued support of an organic extension agent in BC has not yet been secured and the initial 3 year government funding has been exhausted.

Extension is not just for current organic producers and processors. Extension agents field questions from many sources, new producers and processors, those wishing to transition to organic practices, certification bodies, individuals and organizations who are impacted or may impact organic producers such as local government, provincial ministries outside of agriculture and the service sector such as Hydro or transportation.

At a recent meeting of organic extension agents from across the country there was consensus that extension personnel try to ensure that no question goes unanswered. One hundred thousand dollars per year is needed to cover extension and its activities in BC. We need to find 50% of the funds to match potential grant opportunities. How can you help? Check out our sponsorship package on-line or contact me directly at admin@certifiedorganic.bc.ca 

Editor's Note by Andrea Langlois

With every issue of the BC Organic Grower, I am amazed at the breadth of knowledge held by people working tirelessly to build a better food system in our province – a system that balances the ecological with production outputs. From research to practice, there is just so much happening in BC around organics.



Andrea Langlois,
editor




moss dance, layout

Ever considered whether lavender oil could be used as an insecticide? Or, would you like to know more about beetle banks and how they're being used to increase natural predators? Soheil Mahmoud and Renée Prasad have summarized research findings on both of these promising organic methods. If you are a poultry producer or are interested in animal welfare, we also have a great feature about the importance of lighting for chicks and turkey poults.

On the policy side of things, we've brought a few topics forward in this issue for clarification and interpretation. In the spring, the BC government issued an amendment to their new meat processing regulations which caused a bit of a commotion as processors and consumers pondered the repercussions for the struggling organic meat industry.

We're also pleased to feature an article by the Organic Federation of Canada, which outlines how the Federation works and the role of the COABC. So much work has been accomplished over the past several years and not only do we have new federal organic standards, but for the first time there will be a national celebration of organics from October 9 – 16.

We look forward to hearing from consumers, producers and everyone in between about what is happening in your communities to celebrate National Organic Week. Please don't hesitate to drop a line or send a photo, sharing words and images about the successes of this celebration (editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca). 



A special thank-you to Brian Harris for sharing fantastic farm images throughout this issue.

To order Brian's FarmFolkCityFolk 2011 Calendar and his new Kids Can Press children's book "UP WE GROW! A Year in the Life of a Small Local Farm" please visit: www.farmfolkcityfolk.ca

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Dear Rochelle

Organic Tidbits



This edition of Dear Rochelle is a catch-all covering a multitude of small, but in some way semi-related issues rather than one large topic. Hope you enjoy the change. I am also taking this opportunity

to bid adieu as this will probably be the last Dear Rochelle you will be reading for a while, since my position is scheduled to end, although I hope I am proven wrong.

Can I use a product listed on the OMRI Brand Names List?

One of the most challenging tasks in organic certification is determining whether or not a particular commercial input is allowed. The CAN/CGSB 32.311 Permitted Substances List (PSL) only lists generic ingredients that are permitted for use in organic production. But when you go to buy a specific product it is hard to tell if it is acceptable or not. Inputs, amazingly enough (other than food), are not required to list all the ingredients on the label. So you can buy a potting mix that clearly says on the label that it contains peat and perlite. Both of those are allowed, but it could also contain a synthetic fertilizer or a synthetic wetting agent, both of which would not be allowed and are not listed on the label. And even if you ask your supplier or the manufacturer they will often not be willing to disclose everything in the product. It is incredibly frustrating.

What many organic producers do is check the brand name against the Organic Materials Review Institute's (OMRI) brand name list. The OMRI is an American non-profit organization, and this can be problematic for Canadians because the presence of a brand name on that list doesn't mean that it is registered for use in Canada (important for pesticides) or that it is compliant with the Canadian Standards, as the Canadian and US organic generic lists of allowed products are similar, but not exactly the same.

On the Farm Example

Sodium nitrate (sometimes called Chilean nitrate) is allowed under the NOP for a certain percent of a crop's nitrogen needs. Under the Canadian Organic Standards



it cannot be used. Fortunately the presence of sodium nitrate is noted in the OMRI lists – either right next to the brand name (x% sodium nitrate) or upon clicking the name of the product under “restriction,” where it tells you that sodium nitrate is restricted. As a Canadian grower you have to practice this extra level of due diligence.

If OMRI identifies which products contain sodium nitrate and I can buy the product in Canada, everything should be fine, right?

Unfortunately, it is not that simple. Consider GMOs in the US versus in Canada. The prohibition against genetic engineering is worded differently in the two standards. The Canadian Organic Standards (COS) prohibit the use of “... any of the following substances or techniques: all materials and products produced from genetic engineering...” whereas the NOP Standards (US) prohibit organic products from sale that are “produced with excluded methods,” which includes a variety of methods of genetic modification. Even though it is hard to discern the subtle differences at first glance, these

differences can affect ingredients used in processing as well as other inputs – even fertilizers.

Part of the problem is how OMRI interprets the NOP “excluded methods” GMO standard. OMRI accepts seed meals from crops that are genetically engineered for herbicide resistance (for example canola meal, soybean meal), but not those that have been genetically engineered with Bt (for example cotton seed meal, corn meal). Their reasoning is that there is evidence of risk of Bt toxin persistence in soil, but there is no evidence of a risk of GM trait expression for genetically induced herbicide resistance. With the Canada Organic Standard prohibiting the “use” of any genetically engineered product, and the US standard saying “*must not be produced with,*” OMRI looks into whether the trait is expressed. In Canada that seems to be irrelevant – you just can’t use the material.

Now consider plant material based soil amendments in the US versus in Canada. The Canadian PSL has specific requirements for oil seed meals used as a soil amendment – they must be non-GMO (and organic, unless commercially unavailable); ditto for alfalfa meal unless commercially unavailable (this is a headache) and that all plants or parts of plants must be organic,¹ or else composted before use or assessed as commercially unavailable. The NOP doesn’t have the same requirement which means, once again, that OMRI approval for a fertilizer is not an automatic yes.

The bottom line is that certifiers are responsible for reviewing inputs used by their producers for compliance with the Standards. The certifier is supposed to make their own judgement about the input, and not depend on someone else’s list. The certifier must also check for restrictions on how products can be used in the standards. For instance, you can only use a product that contains non-composted manure if you apply it a certain number of days before harvest.

How about a COS brand names list?

I have been told that the Organic Federation of Canada (OFC) is generating a collated list of products accepted by Certification Bodies (CBs) from across the country who willingly volunteered their lists for this purpose. OFC’s list will identify all CB’s who approved a particular input. The list will be accessible online (stay tuned). This would not mean that your certifier would agree with the other certifier, but at least it will give you a place to start. You still have to run the products by your certifier. Unofficially, I have also been told that very few certifiers have volunteered their lists.


What about hand sanitizers used in processing plants?

If hands (or gloves) touch a food as it is being processed you could consider that the hands (or gloves) are a food contact surface, in which case the certifier will want to know whether the sanitizers or soaps used comply with the sanitation section of the PSL. This is not the case in the US where hand cleaners are considered outside the scope of the standard, as well as indirect processing aids (eg blade lubricants). Again, check with your certifier.

One other important US vs. Canada difference: accessory nutrients

“Accessory nutrients” like DHA and ARA² are commonly found in USDA certified products, but are not permitted in certified organic products in Canada. Fortification of any kind except what is required by law is not acceptable under the COS.

Do you need buffers around existing hydro poles & creosote poles?

The relevant portion of the COS is section 5.2.1 stating: *Measures shall be taken to minimize the physical movement of substances prohibited by par. 1.4.1 from neighbouring areas onto organic farmland and crops.* Similarly, measures shall be taken to minimize the contamination of land and crops with such substances. You and your certifier would have to figure out what a reasonable measure would be to minimize the chance of the crop becoming contaminated by the prohibited substances on the hydro-pole or creosote post. The problem is that there may not be much research on this pertinent to your area for either of you to make an informed decision on the measures to take. One paper I read suggests 76 centimetres is sufficient for creosote hydro poles, but again, it would be dependent on soil type and precipitation. 

Notes:

¹ One strange anomaly worthy of comment. The Canadian Standards require organic plant materials for fertilizer yet at the same time allows manure, feather meal, blood meal (sterilized) and bone meal (from non-risk materials) from non-organic sources.

² Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) is a long chain polyunsaturated fatty acid that is added to various foods stuffs in conjunction with arachidonic acid (ARA) in order to supply the body with structural fats. There is rising concern on the continued use of these synthetic omega 3s as there is a growing body of evidence showing that the synthetic versions are detrimental to the health of children.



National Organic



Apple Blossoms at Starry Night Farm
by Gary Akey



Eating the harvest on the University of British Columbia Farm where over 200 varieties of vegetables, herbs, flowers, and small fruits are grown organically, Vancouver, BC
by Brian Harris



New born Picasso sheep
by Helmut Lang

Week

October 9-16, 2010

www.organicweek.ca

This event, which starts Thanksgiving weekend and extends to World Food Day, is about celebrating all things organic. We have a lot to celebrate – a vibrant alternative food system, a growing number of ecologically minded consumers and growers and new national Organic Products Regulations, which we hope will unite Canadians with a single national organic logo and the BC certified organic logo.



James and Rob Fensom planting at our farm “Harmonious Homestead and Ewe” near Mount Ida, Salmon Arm, BC. “Teaching the next generation” is an important part of organics in BC, as the knowledge needs to be sustainable as well as the farming system. By Claire Fensom

Navigating Organics at BC Farmers' Markets



Mother and child at Trout Lake Farmers Market, Vancouver, BC

Brian Harris

“The amount of trust that consumers have in BC farmers’ markets and vendors is striking, and this trust can be fostered through continued efforts to educate consumers about our BC agriculture system.”

By Georgia Stanley and Elizabeth Quinn

BC producers of agricultural products who are selling their products within BC are permitted to use the term “organic” without being certified organic, as long as they are not deceiving the public in their claims.

This has resulted in an interesting atmosphere at BC’s farmers’ markets – whose organizers have been left to their own devices to decide how to manage certified and uncertified organic claims. We wanted to get some clarity on this issue and find out how markets, vendors and customers are navigating this issue, so we spoke with some of those involved.

Ginette, a farmers’ market shopper, purchases certified organic and transitional organic products from the market. She identifies organic vendors through their signage and, in the absence of an organic certificate, she will ask the vendors directly.

“I usually ask if it’s organic. Sometimes vendors will say no it’s not certified organic but we use such and such natural product. I usually take their word for it. I trust that the market does pre-screening of vendors, and that they will not allow vendors who use harmful products,” she says.

And Ginette is not the only one. We discovered that many farmers’ market shoppers have great trust in farmers’ market products, however in many cases customers assume that all farmers’ market vendors are organic.

In response to this need for greater consumer awareness at farmers' markets, the Vancouver farmers' market society regulates how vendors use the term organic. Vendors can not use the term "organic" unless they are certified organic and they are also not permitted to claim they are "uncertified organic."

Roberta Laquaglia, Operations Manager of Vancouver Farmers' Markets explains, "Vendors can say what they do, but are discouraged from saying what they do not do. Vendors can say 'we use integrated pest management' but cannot claim to be 'NO SPRAY,' which is a misleading claim to make to the public."

To recognize those farmers who are not certified organic but are not using synthetic pesticides, fungicides, herbicides, or fertilizers, Vancouver's farmers' markets have created a separate category for "naturally

grown" products, which can be claimed as long as it is accompanied by a notarized affidavit.

Vancouver's organic policy and "naturally grown" policy arose out of a desire to be fair to both producers who have gone through the certification process and to customers seeking certainty about how their food was produced. Roberta explains, "There's an impression amongst consumers that all farmers' market products are certified organic. They don't know what to ask producers."

Barry and Jane Richardson, owners of The Meating Place, have made similar observations at farmers' markets. They sell custom cut conventional, organic, farm-raised meats and poultry at the Kelowna, Vernon and Armstrong Farmers' Markets.

"Customers don't understand the difference between certified organic and free range," Barry explains. There is a real need for public education. To help people understand what they are buying, Barry creates labels for all his different products, local, organic, grass fed, grain fed. The most common question he hears at the farmers' market is "Are all your meats organic?"

"Most people don't ask, but the people that do really care. Some people just take comfort in knowing with certified organic, there is no question what the animals are fed – there is a certainty there. People take comfort in knowing that it's being done properly," he says.

Barry tells us, "There is a real market for high end, organic products at farmers' markets. We need more organic pork and chicken growers so that these products are more readily available. Keeping in mind that all



Robin Tunnicliffe at the Saanich Organics stand at the Moss St Market in Victoria

Andrew Stordy



Brenda Grealis at the Langley Organic Growers booth at the Trout Lake Market

Brian Harris

“There is certainly a need for increased consumer awareness about organics and what types of products are available at the farmers’ market.”

meats must be slaughtered in government inspected facilities, which, especially for poultry products, are not always available to smaller producers.”

Barry and Jane do not sell to retail stores because it would significantly raise the price of their products to consumers.

“We choose to sell directly to the public at Farmers’ markets. This helps to keep costs more affordable for our customers,” says Barry.

We also spoke with Jon Bell, a farmer and vendor at the Sechelt Farmers’ Market. Unlike Barry and Jane, Jon’s products are not certified organic, although he does follow organic practices. Many customers don’t ask about his methods and he believes that many customers assume he is organic because he sells at the farmers’ market.

When asked why he has chosen not to become certified organic, Jon will tell you that he can sell his products without being certified.

“The bottom line is that there is no market advantage in certifying, most people are accepting of you and your word. It’s a financial decision,” says Jon.

Jon sells at a number of farmers’ markets and very rarely sells to the supermarket because he prefers to receive the full price from the customer at the farmers’ market – as opposed to 50% of the retail price from the supermarket. At the supermarket, Jon’s uncertified organic gooseberries are simply put under

the category of conventional. There is no differentiation between his product and the next.

In contrast to Vancouver’s Farmers’ Markets, Sechelt’s Market doesn’t regulate how vendors use the term organic. When customers ask Jon if his products are organic he says, “We practice organic agriculture but we are not certified.”

Jon explains that all farmers at the Sechelt Market charge roughly the same price for their products – including certified and uncertified organic farmers. “Local customers are generally looking for unconventional products. Some are satisfied with knowing that it’s local – it’s that trust in the grower. Some are satisfied with the ability to talk to the grower and with the ability to understand how their food was produced. It’s about the relationship between consumer and grower,” says Jon.

In the end, we discovered there is little clarity on this issue. Markets, vendors and customers are navigat-

ing this issue on their own, and in some cases it seems to be working quite well. However, there is certainly a need for increased consumer awareness about organics and what types of products are available at the farmers' market.

The amount of trust that consumers have in BC farmers' markets and vendors is striking, and this trust

can be fostered through continued efforts to educate consumers about our BC agriculture system.

The BC Association of Farmers' Markets is looking into developing guidelines around labeling of organic products at BCAFM farmers' markets, which may be used to assist markets, vendors and customers in navigating this issue. If you have

any questions or comments about this article please send an email to info@bcfarmersmarket.org or visit our website to find a market near you www.bcfarmersmarket.org.

Georgia Stanley, administrative coordinator, and Elizabeth Quinn, manager, work for the BC Association of Farmers' Markets.

Editor's Note: "Organic" is synonymous with "certified organic" according to the Canada Organic Office since "organic" has been defined in the federal Organic Products Regulation. This makes the term "certified organic" redundant and, in fact, it must not be used on cross border traded goods. Within the province the use of the phrase "certified organic" is still common.

In late 2009 the COABC recommended legislative change requiring all intra-provincial organic Agri-Food claims be substantiated with third party certification. Such a legislative change would eliminate the current confusion portrayed in this article. Discussions around this recommendation are underway at the governmental level.

The COABC has offered assistance to the BC Association of Farmers' Market in developing labelling guidelines for BCAFM farmers' markets.

Organic Retail Facts:

The value of organic food products (including imports) sold in Canada through all retail channels was estimated at \$2 billion in 2008. This represents:

- 66% growth over 2006 (\$1.2 billion)
- Approximately 2.5% of total food sales at the retail level.

The organic sales breakdown per retail channel was as follows in 2008:

- Conventional retail: \$925.8 million
- Scanned organic grocery products: \$443.2 million
- Retail channel adjustment: \$282.6 million
- Organic fresh meat and produce: \$200 million
- Direct to consumer: \$400 million
- Other conventional specialty outlets (Specialty markets, natural health store, food service, etc.): \$712 million

In 2008, Canada was tracking 61 imported organic products with an import value representing nearly \$252 million.

- The U.S. is Canada's main source of organic imports, estimated at nearly \$187 million (74%) in 2008.
- The remainder of imports are mostly from Chile, Mexico, China, Italy and Germany.
- Organic fresh vegetables and fruits was the largest organic import category in 2008 (\$223 million).

SOURCE: The Canadian Organic Sector, Trade Data and Retail Sales (2008). Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. For more information: www.agr.gc.ca/organic



Lighting

and its Effects on the Welfare of Broiler Chickens



By Ian J.H. Duncan

In most modern poultry production systems, lighting is very carefully controlled to maximise productivity. Both rate of growth and reproductive performance can be manipulated using various lighting programs. However, in some cases, the welfare of the birds has been forgotten. Just because birds are “performing well” (i.e. being productive) does not mean that they are enjoying a good quality of life.

It should be remembered that, compared to the mammalian farm species which depend mainly on a sense of smell, chickens are largely visual animals. The species they are derived from, jungle fowl, although not long-distance fliers, do fly short distances and roost in trees, and so vision is of paramount importance to them.

There are three aspects of lighting to be considered: (1) the level of illumination, (2) the wavelength of the light, and (3) the photoperiod (or day-length). The effects of artificial lighting will, of course, vary depending on the housing system being used. This can vary from completely controlled environments in which the birds only see artificial light, to free range in which they might see very little, with every combination between.

Level of Illumination

Chickens are often kept in extremely dim conditions. This saves electricity, reduces bird activity and so improves feed conversion efficiency, and reduces the incidence of feather pecking and cannibalism. However, the light level is often so low (less than 10 lux) that the birds’ welfare is compro-

mised because they are being deprived of sensory input.

It’s worth remembering that we need about 20-25 lux to read a newspaper and that outside on an overcast day the light level is about 1,000 lux. It has been shown that hens themselves prefer much brighter conditions especially when feeding.

Another point to consider is that in some housing systems, raised platforms are available for feeders and drinkers. Birds may have difficulty successfully flying up to those facilities when there is too little light to enable them to accurately judge distance. In order to enjoy a good

quality of life, all chickens should have light of at least 20-25 lux.

Wavelength of the Light

Birds have a wider spectral sensitivity than human beings, particularly in the ultra-violet (UV) part of the spectrum. They also have better colour vision than human beings. The two usual sources of artificial light via incandescent and fluorescent lamps emit wavelengths that seem to be acceptable to birds even though they are deficient in UV wavelengths. There are other artificial light sources, such as sodium lamps, that emit a very narrow band of wavelengths and these should probably be avoided.

Fluorescent lamps are becoming very popular in poultry barns because they are so much more efficient than

“As with any very young animal, chicks naturally spend much of their time resting and sleeping. The story that chicks need continuous light to learn to feed and drink is a complete myth.”

incandescent lamps. When first introduced, they could not be dimmed, which was a problem, but this has now been overcome. Also, since fluorescent lamps with magnetic ballasts flicker at twice the supply frequency (imperceptible to human beings), there was concern that birds, which have a much higher flicker fusion frequency than human beings, might see the flickering and find it aversive. However, it has been shown that domestic fowl actually prefer fluorescent lighting presumably because it is richer towards the UV part of the spectrum.

Photoperiod

Consulting any book on poultry husbandry will reveal some variation on the following instructions: “So that chicks may quickly learn to eat and drink, continuous 24-hour light should be used during the first few days after hatching.” Thereafter, the traditional advice for broilers is that they should have very long days or even continuous light.

What has been completely forgotten in these recommendations is the



Further Reading

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need for the birds to rest. This is of paramount importance for young chicks. As with any very young animal, chicks naturally spend much of their time resting and sleeping. The story that chicks need continuous light to learn to feed and drink is a complete myth. Of course, they need to feed and drink, but this can be done in a very short time; what they also need is undisturbed sleep and rest.

A hen with a brood of chicks in temperate latitudes will spend about 8 hours during the night sitting brooding with her chicks sleeping and resting under her feathers. Then, during the day, there are periods of activity, with the chicks feeding and drinking, alternated with periods of brooding, with the chicks once again sleeping and resting. One of the functions of these brooding periods is thermoregulation, but what has been forgotten is that these brooding periods also allow the chicks to sleep and rest. Even when broody hens and chicks are given very high temperatures, bouts of brooding still alternate with bouts of activity.

When chicks are kept in continuous light (as recommended in most production manuals) they spend much of this time trying to sleep (watch them for 10 minutes to convince yourself that this is true) but are constantly being disturbed by other chicks moving to the feeder.

There is even some evidence suggesting that this might contribute to “starve-out” in turkey poults – they may run out of energy before the behavioural “feeding system” in their brain gets switched on. In experiments carried out in the lab, all turkey poults started to feed eventually if they were allowed to conserve energy in the first few days after hatch. This suggests that all young chicks should be allowed to sleep and rest. If domestic fowl chicks are allowed to have synchronized periods of sleep and rest, they show much healthier active behaviour through the day.

Right from placement, chicks should have a distinct day and night with at

Continued on page 23....

Bitterbine Hop Company



Bitterbine's beautiful heading hops

Sam Quinlan



Sam Quinlan

“I woke up this morning and all my muscles were sore from digging 150 holes on the weekend. I don’t need a gym membership, I get all the vitamin D and fresh air I need.”

By Spring Gillard

I don’t drink. So it came as a big surprise to be writing about beer and getting downright intoxicated by the story Sam Quinlan had to tell me. Sam and his business partner, Tim Hazard met at Simon Fraser University (SFU) where they were both working on their Masters degrees. Not in brewing, but in wildlife ecology. In fact, Sam tells me, they see themselves as biologists first and farmers second.

So how did two young biologists wind up growing hops? Seems they both had a dream to own a microbrewery one day. When they found out the dream was shared, the idea caught fire. Tim proposed they start by growing hops.

“We’d never seen a hop plant and didn’t know how to grow them. I think I spent more time researching hops than yellow warblers during the six months I was working on my

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hippie chips

thesis," Sam says. There was a lot of beer research too. He and Tim were living in a house full of biologists who were only too happy to participate in the beer and brainstorm sessions.

It all happened fast. And serendipity lent a hand at every turn. Another SFU friend who was doing PhD fieldwork in Lillooet got them interested in the region. It was affordable, and the hot dry climate seemed ideal for growing many hop varieties. In December 2008, they bought the first property they were shown.

"As soon as I saw that plot of land, I knew that it would make a perfect hop farm and microbrewery," Sam said.

"But how could you envision something you'd never really seen?" I asked.

"The internet is a wonderful thing. I had seen pictures and read articles," said Sam. But the best help came from Rebecca Kneen at Crannóg Ales, an organic farmhouse microbrewery in Sorrento. Kneen had developed a one-stop-hop-shop manual that Sam claims they could not have done without. They bought rootstock from her too.

The first year they cleared the one-acre parcel they planned to cultivate. It was in virgin condition, full of rocks and needed lots of organic amendments. There was plenty of other work too, constructing eighteen-foot trellises, putting in irrigation systems, sourcing equipment and materials. They secured funding through Farm Credit Canada, and mentoring and use of a tractor from a neighbouring farmer.

"We would not be where we are without the people in town," said Sam. And their friends who regularly make the commute from Vancouver to help out. Sam even turned his recent 30th birthday into a work party. The work becomes a social event and the reward at the end of each day is home-brewed beer. The twosome featured some of that beer at an investor's night during the Olympics at BC Pavilion in Robson Square.



Sam Quinlan

This spring they got their first 1000 plants into the ground. They're testing thirteen different varieties to see which ones are best suited to the conditions. They've consulted with BC microbreweries along the way to make sure they're on target for market demand. They have their first sales lined up for this fall's harvest. Two breweries will buy fresh hops to add to their specialty harvest ales. Hops are usually sold dried but these seasonal beers require them fresh.

They also plan to sell hops to home brewers. They have transitional status with PACS and will harvest their first certified crop in 2011.

When asked about their biggest challenges, Sam responds, "The extreme commute."

Both work full time in Vancouver and make the three-and-a-half-hour drive every weekend. Friends and neighbours look after the farm when they're not there.

"And the joys?"

"Exercising," he laughs. "I woke up this morning and all my muscles were sore from digging 150 holes on the weekend. I don't need a gym membership, I get all the vitamin D and

Continued on page 24...



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The Potential Application of Lavender Essential Oils in Insect Control



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By Soheil Mahmoud

Lavenders (*Lavandula*) are perennial shrubs that belong to the *Lamiaceae* (mint) family of plants. Because they are drought resistant, have few pests and pathogens, and require little (if any) fertilization, lavenders rank very high as sustainable crops.

Although lavenders are mainly grown for their essential oils, they have many other applications. For example, dried flowers are commonly sold as wands and sachets. Lavender plants are also often used in landscaping, and can be readily spotted in backyards, rock gardens, cottage gardens, and border plantings. This article focuses on lavender essential oils, highlighting re-

cent findings related to their potential application in insect control.

The name “lavender” was most likely derived from the Latin term “*livere*,” meaning “to be blue,” in reference to the colour of the commonly grown lavender varieties. Over 30 lavender species have been described, many of which are valued as ornamental plants.

In addition, several varieties of three species are commercially cultivated for their essential oil. These include English Lavender, or Lavender (*L. angustifolia*), Spike Lavender (*L. latifolia*), and Lavandin or Lavandin (*L. intermedia*); a sterile hybrid resulting from a natural cross between *L. angus-*

tifolia and *L. latifolia* plants).^{1,2} Over 2 million liters of lavender essential oils are produced annually worldwide, with France and England leading the production.

Although large-scale lavender farming for essential oil production is currently not feasible in North America due to the high costs of land and labor, and lack of infrastructure, small-scale entertainment farming has been very successful. In Canada and the United States, lavender farmers typically focus on agri-tourism and on the production of small quantities of high quality essential oils for incorporation in locally marketed products.



“While the tested oils were ineffective against spider mites, they proved efficient in the control of aphids.”

Essential oils obtained from various lavender species are comprised mainly of a group of scented organic compounds known as monoterpenes, including linalool, linalool acetate, 1,8-cineol, beta-ocimene, terpinene-4-ol and camphor.³ The proportional composition of these compounds determines the olfactory and biological activities of the oil, and hence its market value.

While oils obtained from *L. angustifolia* species – which are mainly used in perfumery and aromatherapy – generally contains high percentages of linalool and linalool acetate, and little or no camphor, those obtained from *L. intermedia* varieties contain high camphor and are mainly used in various hygiene products including soaps, shampoos and household cleaners.^{1,2,4}

Certain lavender oils have also been used to treat various medical conditions including infection and fever.⁵ In recent years, there has been a particular increase in the use of high quality

essential oils practitioners of holistic approaches, such as aromatherapy, to treat stress, anxiety, and insomnia.


There is evidence indicating that lavender oils exhibit deterrent activity against a number of pests including mites, grain weevils, aphids and clothes moth.⁵ Although we still heavily rely on synthetic chemicals to control insects and many other pests, there is growing concern regarding the potential harmful effects that chemicals may have on human health and environment.

As a result, the past few decades have witnessed a surge of interest in natural products (including essential oil) as “environmentally friendly” alternatives. A vast body of literature indicates that essential oil constituents from several plants (including Lemongrass, Neem and Eucalyptus) exhibit potent repellent activity against several insects and other arthropods.^{3,5} The most active oil constituents include the monoterpenes alpha-pinene, limonene, citronellal, cineol, and camphor,^{3,5} all of which are found in various lavender essential oils, at least at a low concentration.⁴ In particular *L. intermedia* species (which grow very well in BC) produce substantial amounts of cineole and camphor.^{1,4,6}

In this context, we evaluated the insect repellent potential of essential oil from various lavender species. In one study, starved housefly were allowed to feed on sugar cubes treated with essential oils from several *L. angustifolia* and *L. intermedia* species. Although many of the essential oils tested had little or no repellent activity, essential oils obtained from Premier (*L. angustifolia*), Grosso (*L. intermedia*) and Supper (*L. intermedia*) lavenders effectively repelled housefly.⁶

In a second study, we evaluated the repellent activity of Grosso and Supper essential oils against spider mites, and aphids (both common pests, particularly on organic farms) on bean leaves and green pepper seedlings. While the tested oils were ineffective against spider mites, they provided efficient control of aphids. In a third study, we

tested the repellent activity of essential oil from Provence lavender (*L. intermedia*) against fruit fly. This essential oil effectively repelled the fly for at least two hours post application.⁷

In summary, essential oils obtained from certain lavender species can offer at least short-term effective protection against some common insects and pests. It should be possible to use these oils, either alone or in combination with other oils, to develop environmentally safer insect repellents. However, given that lavender oils are volatile and evaporate fairly quickly, strategies must be adapted to stabilize the oils in order to achieve long-term protection. 

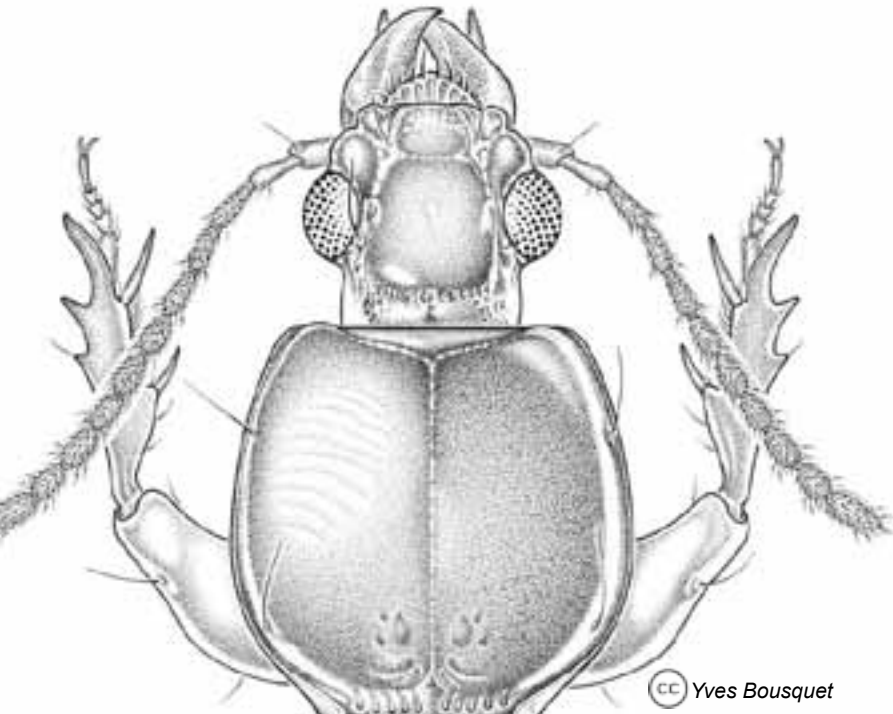
Soheil Mahmoud is an Assistant Professor of Biology at UBC Okanagan, where he investigates the genetics of natural product production in plants.

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Beetle banks

a worthwhile investment for your farm?



By Renée Prasad

By now many growers have probably heard or read the term “beetle bank.” Perhaps you are wondering if this is something that is worthwhile for your own farm. In this article I’ll explore the benefits and limitations of beetle banks.

Beetle banks were first developed in the UK in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s as a way to enhance farmland biodiversity. In terms of biodiversity, the hope was that beetle banks would provide habitat for small rodents and ground nesting birds, thereby helping re-establish wildlife to the countryside.

Beetle banks were also thought to provide habitat within a field for ground dwelling beetles (ground beetles and rove beetles) and spiders. The hope was that the predat-

tors would build up in the beetle bank over the winter and then move into the fields during the spring and summer and eat pests.

In theory, they were to have a dual benefit – to society via conservation of birds and wildlife and to farmers via conservation of beneficial insects and spiders and reduced pest problems. Currently, active beetle banks are being used in the UK and growers in Oregon and Washington have also started to add them to their farms.

For growers, the main draw is the possibility that beetle banks could help increase the overall number and diversity of natural enemies and consequently help reduce pest pressure. How strong is the evidence for this? First it is important to understand that increasing natural enemies and bringing down pests are two separate processes and one may not necessarily result in the other.

Evidence for increased natural enemy populations

Most studies of beetle banks consistently show that the number and diversity of ground beetles, rove beetles and spiders all increase within one to two years after beetle banks are first planted. The increase is especially dramatic in the early part of the season when beetles and spiders can easily colonize the middle of fields from beetle banks.

In contrast, beetle and spider numbers are much lower in the middle of a field without beetle banks, because the good guys have to move in from much further away (the surrounding field margin or adjacent fields). Studies of the oldest beetle banks in the UK show that the pattern for higher amounts of ground beetle, rove beetle and spider in beetle bank fields is consistent over 10 or more years.

Evidence for reduced pest pressure

The second benefit of beetle banks is the reduction in pest pressure. Since natural enemies generally appear to increase with beetle banks, it seems obvious that pests should go down. In England, researchers have shown that aphid numbers are lowest on wheat plants growing closest to beetle banks.

In other studies however, the impact of beetle banks on pests is not very clear. For example, in a set of studies conducted in Washington State and B.C. from 2002 to 2005, there was no increase in predation of cabbage maggot eggs in fields with beetle banks compared to fields without.

One problem in trying to demonstrate the effect of beetle banks on pests is that ground beetles, rove beetles and spiders are all generalist predators, i.e. they eat anything they

can get there jaws around. Therefore focusing on one specific pest may not be the best way to evaluate beetle banks.

Other researchers have looked at the impact of beetle banks on weed seed predation by ground beetles, and again the findings are not consistent from study to study.

However, there is mounting evidence from agricultural research that an overall increase in the diversity and abundance of natural enemies leads to less fluctuation in pest populations (so fewer outbreaks) and fewer pests overall. But demonstrating these patterns in the messy and complicated world of a real farm is not always easy. Whether these reductions in pests off-set the costs associated with beetle banks (initial establishment, taking land out of production, subsequent maintenance – see side bar) is a question each grower will have answer for themselves.

Always with the fine print: do beetle banks have any drawbacks?

In trials in south eastern Washington, the number of crucifer flea beetles was found to be much higher in plots with beetle banks than without. In fact there is the potential that any pest that likes to use the grassy margin of fields as a refuge or shelter would use the beetle banks in a similar manner (for example, slugs and snails).

In the 2002 to 2005 WA and BC studies, one Mt. Vernon grower found that mole damage was dramatically higher in artichokes growing next to beetle banks than in artichokes growing in an area of the field without beetle banks.

Finally, because beetle banks are uncultivated there will be a battle with weeds for the first couple of years until the grasses used for the banks are well established. These weeds will need to be managed so that they don't set seed and spread to the cropped portion of the field.

Building a Beetle Bank



Renée Prasad

TIMING

The original beetle bank builders have recommended that beetle banks be established in the fall.

DIMENSIONS

The dimensions of the bank should be approximately 0.4 meter high by 2 meters wide and as long as you like. Many growers divide the length of the bank into sections to allow for road ways or machinery to pass through. The main part of the beetle bank needs to be undisturbed once established so plan ahead with these breaks along the length. Most growers are able to achieve the height needed with two directional plowing, however one farm in Oregon raised their beetle bank by hand!

vide the length of the bank into sections to allow for road ways or machinery to pass through. The main part of the beetle bank needs to be undisturbed once established so plan ahead with these breaks along the length. Most growers are able to achieve the height needed with two directional plowing, however one farm in Oregon raised their beetle bank by hand!

WEEDING AND GRASSES

Once the bank has been established the next step is to do some weed control. Oregon farmers waited two weeks after the beetle bank was raised and then used flame weeding to kill weeds.

Next, plant the appropriate grass species. The ideal grasses are those that are perennial and form tussocks. It is the combination of roots, stems and dead leaves of tussock-forming grasses that provide the microhabitat predatory beetles and spiders need to over-winter. In our mild climate you may be able to get your grasses to establish in the fall, but be prepared for a second planting in the spring if we have a harsh winter.

When choosing a species, you want to avoid anything that can be invasive into your cropping area. In the Oregon studies, growers are choosing species such as slender wheatgrass, water foxtail, blue wild rye, and combinations of these. Check with your seed supplier to see what they would recommend for your region; but this may be another area where you have to experiment a bit on your own to find the right grass that works for you.

MULCHING

In Oregon, growers lightly mulch beetle banks after sowing grass seeds – be careful your mulch does not have weed seeds.



Demonstration beetle bank at WSU – Mt. Vernon research station (Spring 2004). This bank is 2 years old at the time. The bank is raised about 0.3 m (1 foot) and is about 2 m wide. Notice that while the surrounding field has been cultivated the beetle bank remains untouched.

Renée Prasad

To bank or not to bank?

A beetle bank isn't for every farm or farmer. In Washington and Oregon over the past few years beetle banks and other types of insectary plantings are being actively pursued on both large (600 acre) and small farms (<20 acres), so size is not the limiting factor.


But time should be a consideration. Because beetle banks need tending (especially weeding) in order to be successfully established, the main caution would be to ensure that sufficient effort is given in order to see such an endeavour succeed.

The lack of hard and consistent evidence in support of reduce pest numbers may deter some growers. On the other hand, the ample evidence showing that natural enemies increase with beetle banks will inspire others.

At one of the co-operating Washington farms (2002-2005 studies), the beetle bank (and the beetles and spiders collected from the surrounding crop) became an important component of the children's tours put on for CSA-clients. Perhaps beetle banks are best suited for those farmers with a good sense of humour ("beetle bank" – think of the puns!), some extra and willing hands to pitch in to help with establishment, and the patience and resources to let nature and time achieve the right balance.

Management

Management challenges including keep weeds under control in the bank so that grasses can establish. The British experience seems to be that 2 to 3 years are required for the grasses to fully establish a good enough cover. Refrain from mowing your beetle banks too heavily or low – but make sure to mow down any seed heads. The recommendation from the UK is

to leave a cultivated strip between your beetle bank and the surrounding crop as a way to prevent the grasses in the beetle bank from competing with the adjacent crop. 

Renée Prasad is the research coordinator at E.S. Cropconsult Ltd. and a sessional instructor in the Agriculture Technology Department at UFV - Chilliwack.

Resources

Establishment guide from the United Kingdom: http://www.gwct.org.uk/education__advice/sustainable_farming/habitat_management/1546.asp

Guide from Oregon State: <http://www.ipmnet.org/BeetleBank/index.htm>

Beetle bank in Connell, Washington: <http://www.tri-cityherald.com/2010/06/13/1052359/connell-organic-farmer-touts-beetle.html>

...“Lighting” continued from page 15


least 6-8 hours of darkness. Of course this means that brooders are required that do not emit light – but these are easily available. Broilers should continue to be grown with a distinct day and night.

In the past 20 years, intermittent lighting programs have been developed for broilers, which involve a repeating schedule of 1-2 hours of light and 1-2 hours of darkness. These claim welfare benefits through restricted access to feed, slower early growth, and a reduced incidence of lameness. However, it seems to me that these programs actually mimic a brooding

cycle and some of the benefits may be due to the birds being allowed to sleep and rest synchronously and being more active when the lights are on.

Conclusions

1. Chickens are visual animals that should be given sufficient light (at least 20-25 lux) to enable them to engage in an active lifestyle.
2. Daylight is probably the ideal light for birds, but both incandescent and fluorescent light seem to be adequate.
3. Sleep and rest are very important for birds, particularly young

chicks. Periods of darkness allow birds to sleep and rest synchronously and are essential for good welfare. In addition to a “night” of at least 6-8 hours, both young chicks and older broilers can benefit from intermittent lighting programs that simulate brooding cycles. 

Ian J.H. Duncan is the Emeritus Chair in Animal Welfare at the University of Guelph.



Chick Tips ... On Lighting



At a recent SPCA workshop, Dr. Ian Duncan presented some interesting information on intermittent lighting for newly placed chicks and poults. Challenging the conventional wisdom of providing 24-hour light for up to the first week of life, ostensibly to ensure the young are able to find feed and water, he showed data that demonstrated broiler chicks given alternating 40 minute periods of light and dark performed at least as well as those given 24-hour lighting (see “Lighting” article above). The benefits of such a program could be substantial not only for health and welfare of the bird, but also in energy savings. Certainly much research over the years has demonstrated the benefit of providing periods of darkness for growing poultry.

This information, however, brings to mind many other attributes of lighting to which we must pay attention. The timing of light is critical for egg producing birds, of course, and getting the right daytime/night time combination is essential. But the quality of light is also important.

Relatively high intensity lighting (20 to 30 lux) during brooding is very important for attracting the young to the reflections off of water, which is instinctive for chickens and turkeys. But later on, high intensity is not as important and can be reduced to about 10 lux.

In some lines of birds, high intensity lighting can lead to cannibalism and feather picking. Evenly distributed light is also valuable, especially for egg laying birds. If light is unevenly dispersed, it can create areas where birds preferentially lay eggs on the floor instead of in nest boxes. For example, I have seen situations where hens have chosen to lay eggs in the shadow of a feed line, leaving a long line of eggs down the centre of the barn.

To keep lighting optimal:

- Bulbs should be evenly placed
- Make sure all bulbs are working and clean
- All bulbs should be of the same wattage
- Shadows should be cast only where they are needed (e.g. nest boxes)
- Intensity for most periods except brooding should be such that you can easily read a newspaper by the light cast

If measuring light intensity, do it at the level of the bird, not yourself as light intensity decreases the further away from a source you go.

Lighting is one area that we tend to take for granted. Good lighting properly timed will be a net benefit to the welfare and production of the flock.

Dr. William Cox is the BC Ministry of Agriculture’s Poultry Health Veterinarian Contact him by telephone 604 556-3023 or email William.Cox@gov.bc.ca

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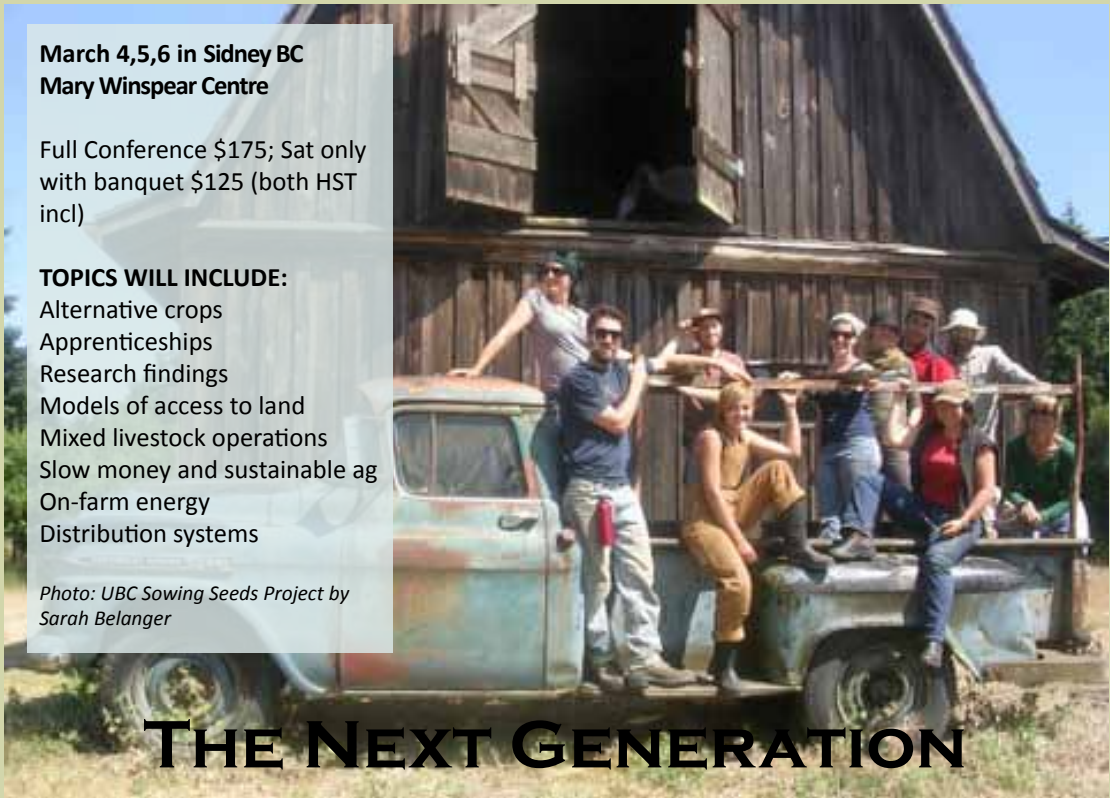
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Photo: UBC Sowing Seeds Project by
Sarah Belanger



THE NEXT GENERATION


Farmer Focus - continued from page 17....

fresh air I need. I have a great tan. I interact with my friends in a different way. Even though I'm getting free labour out of them, they love getting out of the city too."

"What exactly is a bine?" I inquired, reflecting on the name Bitterbine.

"A deciduous vine," he answers with biological enthusiasm. "And hops add the bitterness to beer. Bitter-bine. Tim came up with the name."

As the author of their company blog (bitterbinehops.blogspot.com), it's clear Sam is a wordsmith. When I comment on his writing abilities and knack for slogans, he admits he may be a closet ad guy.

"I can't stop thinking about stories, labels and brand names," he says. They positioned their Olympic beer as zero mile. "The hops were grown here. The spring water we used was on site. And Lillooet is at mile zero on the Cariboo Highway." 

Spring Gillard is a communications consultant, sustainability instructor and author of Diary of a Compost Hotline Operator. www.compostdiary.com



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The Organic Federation



By Nicole Boudreau

What's the weather in BC today Hermann?"

"Well, windy and cold. Spring is late this year. What does it look like in Ontario?"

"Sunny and warm; we're having a beautiful spring over here."

As with many Canada-wide associations, we work together mostly by phone and email. We share visions, opinions and make decisions on teleconference calls, and the ups and downs of Canadian weather are always the introduction line.

When the OFC was first incorporated in November, 2006, a few OFC directors already knew one another. They were the pioneers, the first participants to the ad hoc Organic Regulatory Committee that in 2002 was holding informal meetings to try to gather the stakeholders and voice a common concern to the Canadian government.

There were no Canadian Regulations controlling the production and marketing of organic products. Hopes were high, feelings were sometimes ambiguous: how would life be with good standards and regulations in place? How to ensure that all aspects of organic production and trade would be well covered in the regulations?

The OFC's main goal was to represent the Canadian organic industry while working with provincial, territorial and federal governments

as partners on national organic regulatory issues. How could this very rich but abstract objective be reached? It was first decided that, in order to represent the

entire country, one director would represent one province; the founders argued intensely about, but finally rejected, an incorporation based on a professional membership such as a seat for CBs, a seat for traders, a seat for growers, etc.

Then, the OFC convinced the AAFC (Agriculture and Agri-food Canada) that there was a need "to develop the capacity of the organic sector (both nationally and provincially/territorially) to represent itself on national regulatory issues." They provided a grant of \$565,900 to create an office and communication strategy, to promote development of each provincial organization member, to build infrastructure, and to plan for the end of government funding. And it was all done by phone, by email and yearly AGMs.

The first teleconferences were full of good intentions but it was not easy to establish a spirit – the feeling that the OFC was more than the monthly teleconferences. Because when you talk alone in your office to twelve people you don't see, you sometimes get the feeling that your sentences fall in some desert where no one is listening. It requires some training.


But from one month to next, OFC directors developed a comfortable way of working together. Each voice has become familiar, jokes can at last be shared without shyness, and some empathy has developed amongst directors. Furthermore, OFC succeeded in assuring permanent funding through its participa-

tion in various projects and with the collection of membership fees.

Activities and projects can be followed on the OFC website (www.organicfederation.ca) that is updated regularly. And though organic production is now regulated, there are many issues to look at for assuring that Canadian organic operators and consumers' interests are covered and maintain the permanent growth of the sector.

BC has played a leadership role in the establishment of the OFC: being, along with Quebec, the first province to implement an organic regulation, and with the convincing and energetic involvement of Paddy Doherty, the previous COABC rep, BC has helped implement realistic objectives and policies. Paddy participated in the committees responsible for the Stream of Commerce Policy, the creation of the Standards Interpretation Committee, OFC Sustainability Committee, OFC Executive, COO Liaison Committee, and the Organic Value Chain Round Table.

The current COABC representative, Hermann Bruns, is a marathon runner – a convinced long-time organic producer with a pragmatic and synthesizing approach. The kind of director that OFC now needs to pursue its mandate to have a country with an agricultural system based on sustainable organic methods.

Thrilling, isn't it? This issue is on the agenda for our next teleconference call, whatever the weather is. 

Nicole Boudreau the coordinator of the Organic Federation of Canada.

of Canada & the COABC



OFC Activities

- Participates in the CBSB standards development, maintenance, review and amendment processes.
- Manages the Standards Interpretation Committee in cooperation with the Canada Organic Office.
- Supports scientific organic research initiatives by managing the Organic Science Cluster.
- Coordinates consultations on standards and regulatory issues with all provincial and territorial organizations and manages efficient communication within the Canadian organic sector (for example, the creation of an OFC Blog for the discussion of parallel production).
- Monitors the impact that the implementation of the Canadian Organic Regulations have had on the organic sector and recommends subsequent measures or modifications to regulations.
- Monitors the organic standards of Canada's trading partners and advises the Canada Organic Office on matters of standards harmonization and equivalency.
- Supports all provincial jurisdictions that adopt the Canadian Standards for intra-provincial trade.
- Surveys the sector for regulatory trade impediments and problems on matters of trade facing the industry.
- Assists in creating strong provincial and territorial organizations.

Organic farming increases biodiversity among beneficial, pest-killing predators and pathogens. In potato crops, this leads to fewer insect pests and larger potato plants. The control of pests by their natural enemies is a valuable ecosystem service: unpaid, and often overlooked, predatory insects such as ladybirds devour their voracious cousins that damage crop plants. But the insecticide sprays used in conventional farming are largely non-selective, researchers now show that such insecticides disrupt the communities of those natural enemies — which, in turn, provide less effective pest control.

Source: Lindsay A. Turnbull & Andy Hector. "Applied ecology: How to get even with pests," Nature Nature 466, 36-37 (1 July, 2010)

Slaughterhouse Rules:

Making Sense of the Province's Updated Meat Processing Regulations



CC Garrett and Kitty Wilkin

By Andrea Gunner

The B.C. government implemented the new Meat Inspection Regulation on September 30, 2007. Various explanations were initially given for the changes to the regulation, the main ones being food safety, traceability and pressure coming from the Canadian government regarding equality in food safety across the country in order to protect export market access. The latter certainly makes sense when one considers the devastating effect that BSE had on the Canadian beef industry when the borders were shut.

The implementation of the Meat Inspection Regulation was beset by confusion, resistance, increased costs, and led to the loss of community scale livestock processing facilities across the province. Consequently, community scale livestock production shrunk, negatively impacting both rural economies and food security.

Thanks to the voices of many dedicated and persistent producers, processors and consumers, the B.C. government re-considered the “one size fits all” regulation and released an

amendment this spring which includes two new facility classes: “D” for slaughter up to 25,000 lbs. per year, meat from which can be sold at farm gate, to restaurants and to retail outlets; and “E” intended for up to 10,000 lbs. per year, meat from which can only be sold at farm gate.

These two new facility classes are currently only available in three of the nine designated rural and remote areas of the province (Bella Coola, Haida Gwai and Powell River), with applications implemented successively in the other rural and remote regions over the coming year.

The amendment unfortunately has led to more confusion as bureaucrats and politicians have contradicted themselves, and each other, leading some processors and many producers throughout the province to assume that they are exempt from the Meat Inspection Regulation. This is most definitely not the case. The only activity that is exempt is the slaughter of a farmer's own animals for personal use. All meat for sale is subject to the regulation.

Since the inception of this draft Regulation in 2004, there appears to have been considerable confusion amongst the governing agencies, which has intensified as they have had to deal with the mare's nest that has been created. From the producer side, it appears that the underlying policy was sound – who would argue

about needing food safety and traceability as well as protecting access to markets for our poor beleaguered beef producers?

Yet, the implementation has been fraught with ignorance of the practical and the economic considerations for producers and processors of a variety of sizes, existing regulations from other government agencies, and a lack of clear communication within and between the various agencies. Couple this with the challenge of educating bureaucrats who appear to be going through an insatiable revolving door, and after six years, it is small wonder that some processors are ready to throw in the towel.

The introduction this spring of a graduated licensing system – with measures proportionate to the number of animals to be slaughtered and the distance from the end consumer – seems to offer a way to address scale and location differences. Powell River producers and processors tested the new licensing model this summer, and will be followed by Haida Gwai and Bella Coola producers and processors in early fall.

If successful, the “E” license should be rolled out through other areas of the province in the late fall and winter. The question now is whether this amendment has come along early enough to keep processors from exiting the industry.

On the positive side, the staff members of the current responsible Ministry (Healthy Living and Sport) have been more open and responsive than any we have seen up to this point. They have heard from a wide range of producers and processors and are struggling to balance the competing interests with what is reasonable and fair and to make adjustments as needed.

People Points


Am I Doing a Good Job?

Karen Fenske

Most employees like to know whether or not they are doing a good job. Performance reviews can be an opportunity to increase employee engagement and strengthen your team. The main ingredient is to invite the employee to self-report about their job performance. Valuing their contribution to their personal development can reduce stress and increase mutual respect.

The following steps can be the foundation for a casual or formal process:

1. Attain a healthy, overall perspective of your employee by taking a few moments every few weeks to complete these phrases:
 - a. (Employee name) is good at these parts of the job...
 - b. (Employee name) contributes to the team by.
 - c. (Employee name) makes our operation better with his/her ...
 - d. (Employee name) appears to struggle with...
 - e. (Employee name) would benefit from training/development/learning in...
2. Inform the employee you would like to talk about how the job is going on a specific date. Ensure that you can give the employee 30 minutes of your undivided attention. Prior to the discussion, ask them to think about the answers to these questions:
 - a. What strengths he/she brings to the company?
 - b. What he/she likes most about the work?
 - c. What he/she finds difficult or challenging?
 - d. What could he/she do to improve his/her performance, work habits, etc.?
3. At your meeting:
 - a. Review the job description, which should include their role, responsibilities, and expectations, to ensure that both of you are clear about the job. Often employees see parts of the job that employers don't. At the same time employees can veer off track and lose sight of their responsibilities.
 - b. Ask the employee to share their answers from #2 above.
 - c. Offer a summary of your feedback from #1 above.
 - d. Move forward. Whether the employee is "ideal" or not there is always something that he/she could learn more about. Set a goal or two and brainstorm about how the individual can go about the learning process i.e. on the job-training, off-site courses, etc. You may discover that you can make changes to increase job efficiencies and satisfaction by implementing different systems or equipment, task reorganization, clarifying or "tweaking" job descriptions, etc.
 - e. If you are in the position to assist their training you may want to negotiate a cost-share arrangement i.e. the employee takes a course and when they pass, you pay a portion or 100%. You might also ask them to share their new knowledge with other staff at a meeting.

Following through with this process gives you a chance to take stock in what is working out and what needs to change without losing ground with staff. There are always good things about the people you hired and areas for growth. 


Karen Fenske is the president of StratPoint Solutions. www.stratpoint.ca

The B.C. Food Processors Association, charged with administering the Meat Transition Assistance Program, has worked diligently to build relationships with bureaucrats and politicians, and to represent some common sense and provide stability of personnel throughout the process.

The situation is evolving, with increased consultation and the diversity of interests and scales of opera-

tion are being considered. That being said, policy change and the wheels of government grind exceedingly slowly. In the meantime, there is debt to service, marketing opportunities lost, and increasing mental and emotional stress for producers in the livestock and meat sector.

Yet, there is more hope for community scale processors through the current climate of consultation and

input. It is my fervent hope that these processors still have the patience, goodwill and financial resources to stay on course. 

Andrea Gunner, P.Ag., is an agricultural economist with many years of experience connecting agricultural producers with consumers in sustainable and economically viable systems.

Events and Announcements

The 13th annual Pacific Agriculture Show will be held from January 27 to 29, 2011 at the Tradex Exhibition Centre (Abbotsford Airport), in Abbotsford, BC. Admission is \$10.00 at the door. For more information www.agricultureshow.net/.

The next application deadline for the Organic Sector Development Program (OSDP) is November 12, 2010. Projects funded under the OSDP should match the objectives identified in the Organic Sector Strategic Plan 2009-2013. Information on the strategic plan and the OSDP can be found on the COABC website www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca

Fourth Biennial Organic Connections Conference and Trade Show will be hosted at TCU Place in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, November 21 - 23, 2010. <http://organicalberta.org/events/embrace-the-future-organic-connections-november-2010>

IOIA and Assiniboine Community College will cosponsor Basic Organic Process Inspection Training using the Canadian Organic Standards as a reference in Brandon Manitoba from November 2-6, 2010. The course includes 4 days of instruction including a field trip to a certified organic livestock operation, plus ½ day for testing. For more information about this training, please contact Mary Petersen at Ph: 204-725-8700 Ext 6683 or email: PeterseM@Assiniboine.net

IOIA and Oregon Tilth Certified Organics (OTCO) will co-sponsor Basic Crop

Inspection Training and Basic Processing Inspection Training October 4-8, 2010. Courses will run concurrently. IOIA and OTCO will co-sponsor Advanced Organic Inspector Training (Processing focus) October 4-5. Demeter Association and IOIA will co-sponsor Biodynamic® Inspection Training October 6-7. All trainings will be held at LaSells Stewart Center on the Oregon State University campus. Visit: www.tilth.org for more information.

Experiencing shipping bottlenecks in the Okanagan/ Thompson corridor? Think a rail option could alleviate the situation? Paul Johansen (sales@johansen.ca; phone 250-480-9838) is conducting an unofficial assessment of need/impact and any feedback would be appreciated.

Farm Folk City Folk has just launched a new business networking site for those in agriculture and food: www.sharedharvest.ca/metrovan-couver. From field to table, farmers, food processors, restaurants, distributors, warehouse, and consumers can list Wanted and Available ads for food and agricultural products and services. There are 22 categories including, Bees and bee products, Dairy, Fish, Fruit and Vegetables, and over 300 individual products and services—with more to be added as needed. Membership is free. Posting ads is free. Their goal is 500 members by the end of September.



Husky Mohawk Community Rebate Program

COABC is involved with the **Husky Mohawk Community Rebate Program** in order to raise additional funds for the organisation. Husky forwards 2% of the loyalty card users' purchases to COABC in the form of a rebate. All COABC members were sent a card in 2005 and a small amount of members have been using the card resulting in an average rebate of **\$30 per quarter**. We still need more help to raise funds using this loyalty program.

If you would like to receive a card or additional cards, please contact the COABC office at (250) 260-4429 or email us at office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca.

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Organic Tree Fruit Management	\$32.00	\$39.95	HST exempt (5% GST)		
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