

British Columbia

Organic Grower

——
The Principle of Fairness



Journal for the Certified Organic Associations of BC - Spring 2017
Volume 20, Issue 2 (\$5.00)

COABC, 202-3002 32 Ave, Vernon BC V1T 2L7
Canadian Publications Mail Agreement #40047167

Program Administrator



COABC
Certified Organic Associations of BC

In This Issue

Editor's Note	3
COABC News Patch	4
Organic Stories: Mackin Creek Farm	8
Footnotes: Root Cellar Art	22
Ask an Expert	28
COABC Order Form	31



Mackin Creek Farm

Rob Borsato and Cathie Allen helped build the organic food movement in the Cariboo from the ground up.

Page 8

BC Organic Grower

is received by all members of organizations belonging to the Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia. BC Organic Grower is published quarterly by COABC. Subscribe online at:
www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca

Editor: Darcy Smith
Designer: Moss Dance

We welcome letters to the Editor (300 words maximum) and articles (1000 words maximum). Letters to the Editor are published at the discretion of the editor, based on relevance and suitability.

Letters & submissions:
editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca

Advertising (rates & copy)
bcogadvertising@certifiedorganic.bc.ca

Non-member subscriptions
(\$20/year plus GST) please contact:

COABC
202-3002 32nd Ave
Vernon, BC, V1T 2L7
Phone: 250-260-4429
Fax: 250-260-4436
office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca
www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca

For general information or to contact your local Certifying Body, call the office – or check our website:
www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca

On the Cover: Rob Borsato and Cathie Allen of Mackin Creek Farm. Credit: Mackin Creek Farm.

Unless otherwise credited, all photos property of the COABC or Creative Commons.

Products advertised in BC Organic Grower are not necessarily approved for use by organic farmers/processors. Please consult the permitted substance list, CAN/32.3.11 for guidance. Your CB has the final authority for approval of inputs.

Features

Rights of Migrant Workers	12
Meal Kits: A New Market	16
Ecological Farming with Interns	18
Indigenous Foodlands and Organics	20
COABC Conference Review	24



Labour & Farming

Radical Action with Migrants in Agriculture in the Okanagan is advocating for the rights of migrant workers.

Page 12

Editor's Note

By Darcy Smith

Principle of fairness – *Organic agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.*



I was raised on organic eggs and homegrown veggies, and even the seven-year-old digger of earthworms in me seemed to inherently grasp the “better for you, better for the environment” ethos of eating organic. It’s no surprise that when I grew up, moved out, and started feeding myself, organic food found its way on to my plate—more or less.

Then I started to travel a little more widely, by book and by plane, and the reality of global industrial agriculture hit me like a ton of bricks. Poor treatment of migrant farm workers, rampant and devastating effects of pesticides on farmers in developing countries, suicides in India—as my eyes opened, my commitment to organic intensified. And I started thinking about the most common consumer complaint about organic: “too expensive”. Too expensive for whom? If I choose to save a dollar on bananas, I’ve made another choice: that someone, somewhere else in the world, born to less privilege than me, will be exposed to unsafe working conditions.

And yet, those arguably most impacted by conventional agriculture—farmers and farm workers—are so often left out of the conversation. The media talks about nutritional content instead of social and ecological justice. That’s why I was so glad to see the principle of fairness in the latest revision of Canada’s Organic Standard—and why we’ve dedicated our Spring 2017, on the principle of fairness, to looking at the human side of farming.


For our Organic Stories feature (page 8), we visit Mackin Creek Farm in the Cariboo as Rob Borsato tells us what it was like to build a farm—and a food movement—from the ground up. On page 22, we get to spend a little more time at Mackin Creek in Footnotes from the Field, where guest contributor Cathie Allen writes about how life in the field inspires her art.

On page 12, Radical Action with Migrants in Agriculture (RAMA) shares the plight of migrant farmworkers in our own backyard. Flip forward a few pages for the first in a series of four articles on unpaid labour on ecological farms (page 18). In “Indigenous Foodlands and Organic Agriculture, Fairness, and Social Responsibility”,

Rebecca Kneen offers up some food for thought on the implications of living and farming on unceded territory—and how we can all support Indigenous Food Sovereignty (page 20). For Ask an Expert (28), Keeley Nixon joins us to talk about transforming conflict on the farm.

There’s lots to learn in this issue too. We look at a potential new market for your produce on page 16, and the Newspatch contains valuable information about the new Water Act, Safe Food for Canadians Act, and Organic Online System.

Finally, on page 24 we take a moment to celebrate our community—and the humans who make it so special—with our conference recap. To quote Nicholas’ inspiring keynote, I hope the stories in this issue feed you as the growing season kicks into high gear.

Let’s keep the conversation going—I’d love to hear from you. Reach out with your thoughts, letters, and story ideas at editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca 

 bcorganicgrower.ca

**DISCOVERY
ORGANICS**



We are a locally owned independent distributor of certified organic fruits and vegetables. We specialize in working with established and emerging local farms – big and small. This includes providing market intelligence about seasonal crop supply in our regional markets and other support services.

Whether you are a new farmer, considering organic certification, or want to expand your production, we are your go-to.

www.discoveryorganics.ca
Tel 604 299 1684



Organic Online System

COABC unveiled the new Organic Online System to a group of CB admins, VOs, Accreditation Board members, and other interested parties at the Accreditation Board training on Friday, Feb 24 during the annual COABC conference. Attendees were walked through a live demo of the application portal, database management software, and VO app.

We are excited to be at the point of testing, and in coming weeks CB admins will be orienting themselves in the software. Several CBs will be participating in in-depth testing of the applicant

portal and VO app with operators—operators interested in participating in testing should reach out to their CB admin for more information.

If you have questions or comments about the Organic Online System, please reach out to info@certifiedorganic.bc.ca.

BC Water Sustainability Act: Register Your Well!

On February 29, 2016, the BC Water Sustainability Act was introduced to enable government to manage surface water and groundwater as one resource, provide water users

with greater certainty regarding their water rights, and establish clear rules about managing water during times of scarcity. Under the new regulation, all non-domestic groundwater wells have to be licensed. For the full Act, please visit: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/watersustainabilityact/2016/02/29/blog-post-19-test/>.

Existing groundwater users have a three-year window to apply for a licence and users of groundwater will require a water license and be required to pay water fees and rentals. Licences will also be required for any newly constructed wells from 2016 onward, with the exception of wells used only for domestic (household) purposes. To com-

plete the Groundwater Licence Application, you'll need to provide details on the name and description of the aquifer, well details, and construction reports, as well as purpose and quantity of water use.

The application fee ranges from \$250 to \$10,000 per well depending on the quantity of water used every year. If you apply for the licence before December 31, 2017, the application fee will be waived, so there is an incentive to take action sooner rather than later. As well, water rights will be managed according to "first-in-time, first-in right", meaning that senior licences will have priority over junior licences during water shortages. This Water Rent Estimation Calculator can help you predict annual costs: http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/water_rights/water_rental_rates/calculator/index.html.

How to Register

Register your well through FrontCounterBC's Well Registration Site. For information on the Licensing Process, including the application itself, making changes to an existing license, and more visit: <http://www.frontcounterbc.ca/Start/water/>. The site is being continually updated, and will eventually be a complete resource for Groundwater Licensing Information.

You can also call 1-877-855-3222 toll-free Monday - Friday during regular business hours (8:30-4:30) with questions related to the new regulations and licensing process.



Safe Food for Canadians Regulations

On January 21st, the new Safe Food for Canadian Regulations (SFCR) was released in the Gazette 1. Industry and consumers have until April 21st, 2017 to comment on the proposed regulations. Once SFCR is published in Gazette 2, it will bring the Safe Food for Canadians Act into force. The regulations as they stand have a number of potentially disruptive implications for organic operators and the industry.

Below are some of the key issues the Canada Organic Trade Association (COTA) has identified, along with their recommendations:

Section 338-339 Definition:

various activities means manufacturing, processing, treating, handling, slaughtering, producing, storing, packaging, labeling and conveying. (diverses activités)

COTA recommendation:

The terms identified under "various activities" requires precise definition. In other words, by not specifically defining these terms, they must be interpreted as broadly as possible. The definitions should be included in the Regulations.

The inclusion of all forms of storing and conveying (transportation) of organic products is a major change from the current regulatory regime. If product is packaged / contained in storage, and no repacking or labeling occurs, certification is not necessary as there is minimal risk to product integrity. Conveyance (transportation) does not require separate certifica-

tion but integrity is protected by protocols required by a certified handler. Storage should be limited to bulk and/or non-packaged goods subject to potential contamination and/or commingling.

We also recommend 'handling' definition must include importers, brokers and traders.

Section 347(2) Necessary steps:

The certification body must not cancel a certification unless the holder of the certification was notified in writing of the grounds for the cancellation and was provided with an opportunity to be heard in respect of the cancellation.

COTA recommendation:

We request that this section be replaced with a modified version of sections 359 and 360, which would give a party a right to have a decision made by a certification body, refusing certification, reviewed by the President of the CFIA. An independent tribunal could then review the decision. As an example, a tribunal similar to what was established pursuant to the Agricultural and Agri-Food Administrative Monetary Penalties Act. This would give all parties a template as to how the review process might be handled on a going forward basis. Given the emphasis on providing a comprehensive set of food-based regulations, it is reasonable to expect that a specialized tribunal will be created to assist with any disputes arising from the administration of the Regulations.

Section 342(2) Certificate:

The certification body must provide the applicant with a certificate that confirms the organic certification of the food commodity and that indicates whether CAN/CGSB 32.310 or CAN/CGSB 32.312 is applicable, the period of validity referred to in subsection (3) and, in the case of a multi-ingredient food commodity, the percentage of its contents that are organic products.

COTA recommendation:

The requirement to declare the exact organic content percentage of multi-ingredient products on the organic certificate is inconsistent with current practices in Canada and among our current and potential trading partners, specifically the ‘95% or more organic ingredient’ category. This requirement is impractical for the certified operator, and could place Canadian operators at a competitive disadvantage with our trading partners. Currently, products need to be categorized in one of the two categories outlined in the Canadian organic standards—organic (95% or more) and 70-95% organic content.

Section 342(3) Period of Validity:

The organic certification of a food commodity is valid for 12 months beginning on the day on which it is granted under subsection (1).

COTA recommendation:

The notion of an expiring certificate is not in keeping with the current mode of operation for the Canadian industry and our largest trading partners. We request Section 342(3) be revised as follows: “The certification, once issued, shall remain valid, unless suspended or cancelled by the certification body. The certificate shall be updated by the certification body on an an-

nual basis. To remain valid, the holder of the certification must apply annually to the certification body for continued certification. The certification body may initiate suspension or cancellation where the application is not submitted within the specified timeframe.”

We further request Section 345 (3) be revised as follows:

“The certification has the same period of validity as stated in Section 342(3).”

Section 350(1) Expressions:

The expressions “organic” or “biologique” or “organique”, “organically grown” or “cultivé biologiquement”, “organically raised” or “élevé biologiquement” and “organically produced” or “produit biologiquement” and any similar expressions, including abbreviations of, symbols for and phonetic renderings of those expressions, may only be shown on the label or used in the advertisement of a food commodity that is to be sent or conveyed from one province to another if (a) the food commodity is an organic product; and (b) in the case of a multiingredient food commodity, at least 95% of its contents are organic products.

COTA recommendation:

Labelling of “Certified Organic” should be expressly permitted under the Regulations. The previous Organic Products Regulation (OPR) did not permit usage of “Certified Organic”, which was not restricted for our trading partners including USDA and EU.

Section 347 Cancellation/Revocation of Organic Certificate:

The SFCR does not provide adequate protection for organic consumers from wilful violations of this portion of the regulation and/or fraudulent activity.

COTA Recommendation:

Protecting the integrity of the organic claim is implicit in the regulatory process. Protection is needed from wilful violators and intentional fraud, whether from certified or non-certified operators. To accomplish this, COTA recommends Section 347 should be revised.

For more information on the SFCR, COTA’s full recommendations, and how you can get involved, please see COTA’s release at: goo.gl/BHwMAO

Pre-publication of the proposed regulations in the Canada Gazette, Part I: <http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2017/2017-01-21/html/reg1-eng.php#reg>

Breweries Under Threat by ALR Regulations

By Brian and Rebecca Kneen

Recently, craft breweries have been scrambling to understand the implications that 2015 changes to the ALR Act will have on their businesses. Persephone has applied for non-farm use under the current rules and has been denied. Crannóg Ales is currently in negotiation with the ALC. Below is an update from Crannóg Ales in Sorrento as they fight for changes to the ALR Act that will allow them to continue operating their farm and brewery.

The current ALR regulation limits on-farm breweries (unless we apply for non-farm use) to growing 50% of all our ingredients on our own farms, which the ALC has interpreted to mean only barley (they have specifically excluded hops). Raw barley is not a brewing ingredient, so this would require not only a much larger land base for on-farm breweries (limiting them to



Harvesting hops
Credit: Crannóg Ales

lesser of 10% of total parcel size or 1000 square meters.

Thanks to your support we were able to get a meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, Norm Letnick.

Rebecca from Crannóg, Ken from the Craft Brewers Guild, and Brian from Persephone were on a call with the Minister, his Deputy, and Assistant Deputy Ministers. Unfortunately, we were underwhelmed with their offering. Minister Letnick was unable to commit to any solutions to the current dire situation, and said only that if re-elected and assigned to the Ministry of Agriculture, he would keep an open mind.

So, what's next? We will settle in for a long road to get things changed.

We are going to try to work with the bodies that he listens to including the ALC, UBCM and BC Ag Council. And, we'll be trying to bring up this issue many times over during the election.

How You Can Help:

Now, I suspect, you're wondering how you can help—because you are awesome! Here are a few actions you could take on behalf of beer farmers and small business across the province:

Bring it up with the MLA candidates in your riding. Ask them directly, on social media, at all-candidates forums, and anywhere else you see the opportunity.

Keep writing to any or all of the following politicians:

- ✉ Norm Letnick: AGR.Minister@gov.bc.ca
- ✉ NDP Ag Critic Lana Popham: l.popham@leg.bc.ca
- ✉ Premier Christy Clark: Premier@gov.bc.ca

continued on page 11...

rural central BC) but also more on-farm processing to add a malt house and year long storage as there is no custom maltster in BC. The result would be to increase industrial use of agricultural land. There is also no limit proposed to the size of on-farm breweries, which we at Crannóg Ales and Persephone feel is necessary to protect farmland from the industrialization we have seen in the wine industry.

The changes we propose would both limit the size of on-farm breweries and increase the potential to buy from other BC farms. This would be a benefit to other BC farms growing hops or malting barley. HINT: We need a LOT more organic malting barley being grown in BC!

For those who would like to see our proposed changes to the current regulation, here they are:

A brewery, distillery or mead-

ery, and ancillary uses, are designated as farm uses for the purposes of the Act if

- a. at least 50% of any of the farm products used to make the beer, spirits or mead produced each year is grown on the farm on which that brewery, distillery or meadery is located, or
- b. the farm on which the brewery, distillery or meadery is located is more than 2 ha in area and at least 50% of any of the farm products used to make the beer, spirits or mead produced each year is grown
 - i. on the farm, or
 - ii. both on the farm and on another farm located in British Columbia that provides any farm product to the brewery, distillery or meadery under a contract having a term of at least 3 years. And,
- c. any permanent structures used to produce beer, spirits or mead must not exceed the



MACKIN CREEK FARM



*Rob Borsato and Cathie Allen
Credit: Mackin Creek Farm*

Growing a local food movement in the Cariboo

By Rob Borsato (with thanks to Marjorie Harris)

It was the “back to the land” movement of the late ‘60s and early ‘70s that nudged, on separate paths, Cathie Allen and Rob Borsato to the Cariboo. Together, in 1985 they purchased 105 acres of mostly timbered bench land above the Fraser River about 45 kilometres north of Williams Lake.

Immediately, they were captivated by the dramatic vistas, the arid climate, the light, silty soils, the bunchgrass hillsides, the open Douglas fir forests laced with juniper and sage, and Mackin Creek itself, which cut a deep swath through the middle of the property as it tumbled aggressively to the Fraser.

“Like any couple starting out with a piece of raw land, we were swamped with priorities—shelter and fences for animals, shelter for us, breaking some land, and, most challenging of all, developing irrigation and domestic water”, recalls Rob. Getting water up from the creek, a full 100 metres below, proved to be the biggest obstacle, especially since electricity was still several kilometres down the road. “Initially, we used a hydraulic ram, which harnesses the power of a large flow of falling water to push a smaller volume up hill. With some engineering, a fair amount of infrastructure, and a lot of tinkering, it served us well for a few years, until our farm needs outgrew the capacity of the pump.” “By then”, adds Cathie, “we had saved up the money to put in a permanent grav-

“ The horses are a perfect fit: not only do they supply the essential components of soil fertility, but they do the heavy lifting.”



Credit: Mackin Creek Farm

ity feed system, with over a kilometre of buried pipe. It still works beautifully.”

During those early years, Rob continued to work as a horse logger, living away at camp all week, farming on weekends, and taking full advantage of spring “break up” to do the farm field work. To initially break the land, they used four big horses (black Percherons) and a heavy duty, single-bottom breaking plough. “It took two of us, one on the plough handles and the other driving the horses, and it was always exciting. We broke an additional half acre each season, for 10 years or so. We broke a lot of other stuff, too”, he quipped.

Rob hasn’t horse logged for over a decade now, but still uses the horses to do the heavy work on the farm, including all the discing, compost spreading, any ploughing, harrowing, planting and hilling potatoes, all the cultivating between rows and beds, and getting firewood for home and the greenhouse boiler. “For us, with a five acre organic garden, the horses are a perfect fit: not only do they supply the essential components of soil fertility, but they do the heavy lifting, and they provide for me an enjoyment that is very personal and enriching, even on bad days.”

Cathie worked off farm as a draught person prior to the birth of their son, Joe; she added the role of teacher when they elected to home school him. And, not unlike

N.O.O.A Farm Certification \$410

Certifier of choice for small/medium scale operations throughout BC

Benefits: ~Simple Application forms
~Lowest fees with Peer Review
~Mentoring, Seminars, Farm Visits
~Flexible, Friendly organization

Contact: Cara 250-540-2557 northorganics@gmail.com

RANCHO COOLING

Frozen, Refrigerated, and Dry Storage Facilities

Megan Payne
250-938-5062
cooling@ranchovignola.com
www.ranchocooling.com
3155 Pleasant Valley Rd • Armstrong, BC • V0E 1B2

other farm-raised kids, Joe played a significant role on the farm for most of his youth, even coming home to work summers during undergraduate years. “We were

“ It took two of us, one on the plough handles and the other driving the horses, and it was always exciting. We broke an additional half acre each season, for 10 years or so. We broke a lot of other stuff, too.”

so lucky to be able to have all that extra time with him, especially in light of the fact that the farming lifestyle can be so demanding”, reflects Cathie.

‘Demanding’ might well be a classic understatement, especially in those developmental years on the farm. “We quickly came to realize that the challenges were bigger than we were”, recalls Cathie, “and only by working cooperatively with others would we all have a chance of success”. The challenges lay not only with learning how to grow food, but how to market it as well. On this front, there was no infrastructure in place, no local farmers’ market, little awareness of local food, no talk of CSAs, no organic certification.

But there was, in the Cariboo, a nascent but enthusiastic group of young and aspiring farmers/back-to-the-landers who shared common goals and principles. Together in 1988, they formed the producers’ group that would grow and eventually host the Quesnel Farmers’ Market. About the same time (and likely organized by Paddy Doherty), they were meeting on Sunday afternoons on little farms at the end of dirt roads to begin the formation of the Cariboo Organic Producers Association. A few years later, some of these same people convened in Kamloops to help create the BC Association of Farmers Markets. “And, at the same time, we were trying to figure out which varieties of garlic grew best, and how were we ever going to get rid of all those zucchini”, laughs Cathie.

For the first few years, the farms and the farmers’ markets in Williams Lake and Quesnel seemed to be growing slowly and with some synchronicity, “Then, in the early 90’s, farm production was outstripping demand, so they had to look at other marketing approaches. They learned what they could about CSAs, and partnered with Dragon Mountain Farm out of Quesnel, and introduced the concept to the Cariboo. “It caught on quite quickly, and eventually each farm was delivering 100 boxes a week”, says Cathie. “Shortly after getting this established, we saw the local food movement emerge, along with the exponential growth of organics, and the generally increased awareness consumers seemed to develop toward food. All of us who had been at this for awhile were positioned well to take full advantage of the additional consumer demand”.



At this point, with the security of a committed CSA group, and a strengthening local farmers market, they were able to focus on ramping up per acre productivity. “Simply put, we learned something from our mistakes every year”, chuckles Rob. “What we did learn early on was how important soil fertility is to the success of the whole operation. So we figured out how to make good compost and are religious about applying it, we incorporate pigs and chickens into our rotation, and we use green manure crops whenever we can”.

The importance of feeding the soil, and the broader perspective of holistic land management, are some of the most fundamental lessons they impress upon interns. Several of these apprentices have gone on to develop their own successful farming operations, and this has been a real measure of gratification for Rob and Cathie. “These success stories are very uplifting”, attests Cathie, “in so very many ways, including the simple fact that more acres are being farmed organically”. They continue to share farming knowledge within their community. These include weekend workshops on organic farming, evening garden club talks, and elder college courses. Currently, Rob is also doing consulting work with three local First Nations Bands to develop community gardens.

Now, nearly 30 years since they started farming, Rob and Cathie are talking about more changes. “We’re going to scale back our production to about two acres, not rely on full-time employees, and hopefully be able to build into it all some flexibility so that we can get a bit of time off in the summer months. We have two wonderful granddaughters, with whom we’d love to go camping once in awhile”, says Rob. “We’d like to find that sweet spot where we can continue doing what we love to do, just maybe a little less intensely”, adds Cathie. 🌿

In addition to operating, with partner Cathie Allen, Mackin Creek Farm, on the west side of the Fraser River north of Williams Lake, Rob is involved with several regional agricultural organizations. Mackin Creek Farm was recognized by the BC Association of Farmers Markets as “Vendor of the Year” for the 2014 season.

Newspatch, continued from page 7...


- ⇒ Minister of Small Business coralee.oakes.MLA@leg.bc.ca
- ⇒ Your local MLAs

Get your local municipality or regional district to bring the issue up to the UBCM, preferably using the changes to the regulations outlined in our petition. You can make a presentation to your regional district or municipality fairly easily in rural BC, just by asking to be on the agenda of their next meeting.

Local Chambers of Commerce are also being supportive, so if you belong to a Chamber, ask them to also bring this to their provincial body. We can help you with language or a submission if you like. None of these government and non-governmental agencies will be electioneering, so more can be done with them right away.

Host or help us put on events in your community to draw attention to this. If you own a pub or restaurant or farm, maybe you'd like to host a long table dinner, etc. Get people aware of the issue and discussing why or why not these changes should come about. Agriculture is everyone's issue so let's get everyone involved. The first such event is going to take place at the Cascade Room before the publication of the BCOG on March 30th, but stay tuned for future events. And, if you need beer to get the conversation going, give us a call, we'll help you out.


Please share this petition around and get signers on-board:

 change.org/p/minister-of-ag-up-date-the-alr-to-allow-hop-farming-breweries



Show your local farmers some love. Farmers work hard and deserve our support over and over. Buy their products, ask them how else we can help them, eat and invest local.

The momentum we have built to-date got us a meeting with the decision maker. Unfortunately, that meeting came too late to do something before the election. That could take the wind out of our sails OR it could fuel our campaign through and long after the election.

We aren't looking for open minds, we are looking for changes that benefit our farmland, small businesses, and communities. Let's keep this going! 



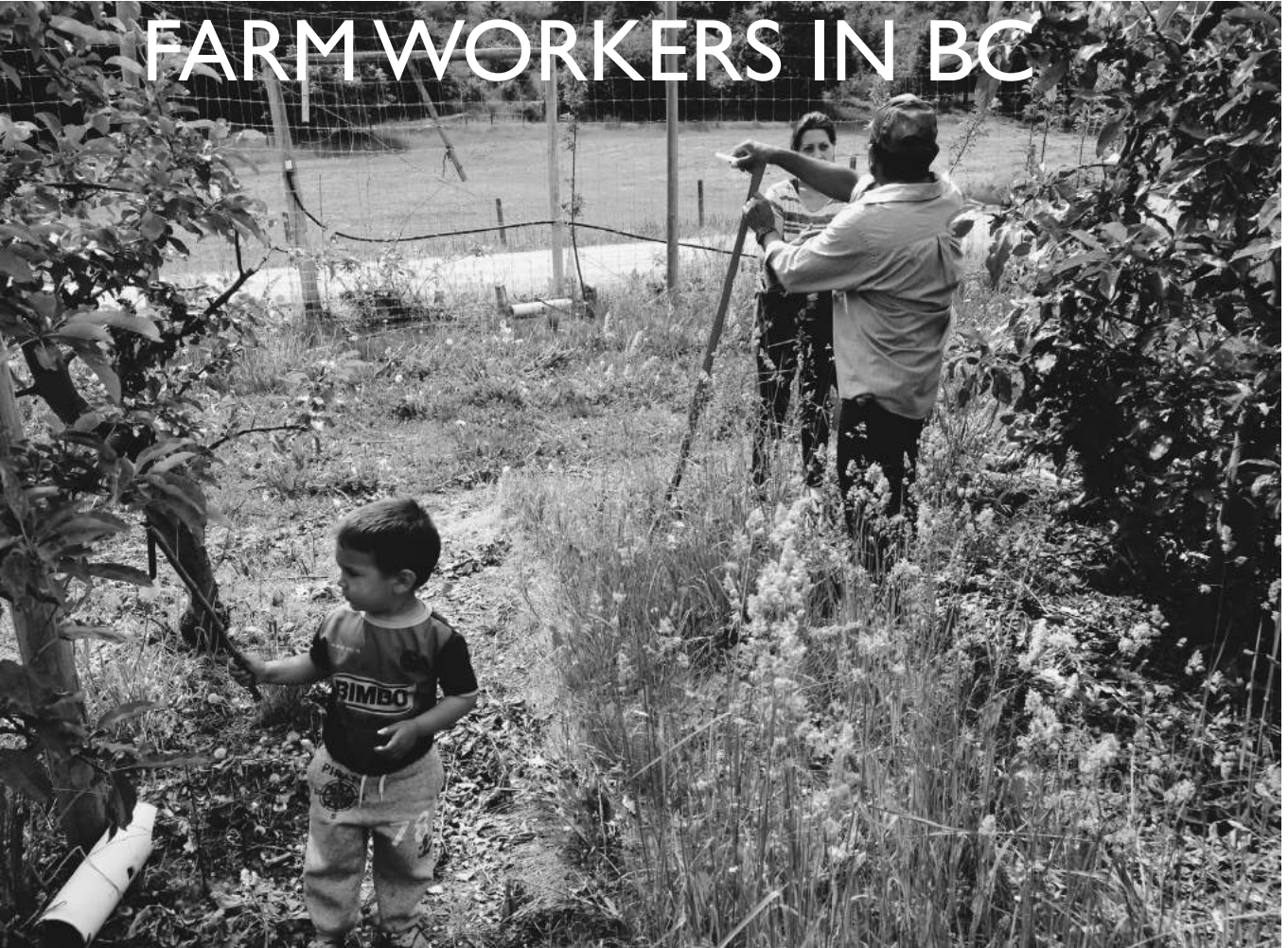
NATURE'S FARE MARKETS

*Live well.
Live organic.*

Kamloops · Kelowna · Langley · Penticton · Vernon · West Kelowna

www.naturesfare.com

TEMPORARY MIGRANT FARM WORKERS IN BC



The Invisible ‘Foreign’ Labour in ‘Local’ Food

By Robyn Bunn, Elise Hjalmarson, and Christine Mettler, collective members of Radical Action with Migrants in Agriculture (RAMA) Okanagan. RAMA is a volunteer, grassroots collective of community organizers that works to address the disenfranchisement and injustices faced by seasonal agricultural workers in the Okanagan.

As you know, agriculture—particularly organic agriculture, which typically relies less on chemicals and machinery—is labour intensive. Farming is physically demanding, dirty, and sometimes dangerous work, so much respect should be given to all the people who grow our food.

The International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM) recognizes the high need for labour in organic farming, and lays out principles that acknowledge workers and their right to fair, dignified, respectful treatment as they labour in the fields that feed the world.

In the realm of organic food production, there is an increasing move to center and embrace the role of farmers in putting food on our plates. However, while farmers occupy a position of prominence in our communities, there is not nearly as much attention paid to farm workers, despite their significant role in food production. As a result, issues faced by farm workers may sometimes be overlooked or ignored by the organic agricultural community. This is particularly salient as it relates to hardships faced by seasonal migrant agricultural workers in BC and in other provinces. Due to labour shortages, farm owners in BC—including organic farmers—are increasingly turning to Canada’s Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) to fill their labour needs with temporary foreign workers.

So what does it mean to be a temporary foreign farm worker in Canada, and how does support for temporary foreign workers align with tenets of philosophies behind organic farming?

“[the boss] only sees [us] as a worker—not as a human, as a person”

- Migrant Farm Worker in the Okanagan

The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program

The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program is a bilateral agreement between the federal governments of Canada and Mexico, and between Canada and several nations in the Caribbean. The program has been in place since 1966, after farm owners in Ontario lobbied to create a labour pool necessary to sustain their changing industry. The continual shortage of farm workers resulted in the expansion of the program to other provinces. In 2004, BC farm owners began bringing SAWP workers from Mexico and they were joined in 2010 by workers from the Caribbean.

Since its introduction, the program has grown exponentially, and each year more and more people are brought to work on Canadian farms. Between 2006 and 2015, the number of temporary migrant agricultural workers has more than tripled in BC. In 2015, just under 9,000 workers came to BC. This includes workers in the SAWP program (the vast majority), as well as other agricultural workers in the “high skilled” and “low skilled” streams of Canada’s overarching Temporary Foreign Worker Program. Although no statistics are available, RAMA estimates that over a third of these workers are in the Okanagan. Workers come for as little as two months to as many as 10 months out of the year, before being required to return to their home countries.

Model with a Rotten Core

At first glance, the SAWP program may seem like a “win-win.” Farm owners get the labour power needed to grow and process their products, and workers earn money to take care of their families back home. Although it sounds like it satisfies the needs of all parties, there are many issues with the temporary migrant worker model. The most salient issue and the one that sets the tone for all others is that workers have legislated impermanence: the program stipulates that they are not allowed to stay in Canada, no matter how many hours they put in. This means that workers’ job security is contingent on their ability to come back to Canada and work again next year, and their likelihood of coming back next year is heavily influenced by positive recommendations from their employers. This sets workers up to be particularly vulnera-



Raising awareness for the injustices faced by migrant farm workers. Credit: RAMA

ble to exploitation. They want good recommendations, so many workers agree to work that is unsafe, such as applying pesticides without proper gear, or tolerating poor conditions. This is further compounded by the fact that SAWP workers’ visas are tied to one employer. If a worker does indeed experience significant problems at work, they cannot simply quit and find a job in Canada with another employer, like other employees have the freedom to do.

Second, employment contracts stipulate that housing be provided and that rent is set at a certain rate. Due to the costs of transporting workers to and from farm, most employers house their workers on-farm, in structures that often leave much to be desired, to say the least. This puts SAWP workers in the rare position of living at their workplace, where employers may continuously surveil their actions.

RAMA has worked with SAWP workers whose bosses expect them to be available for work around the clock, requesting that they work long days (sometimes up to 16 hours), or on their scheduled days off. Despite the fact that workers pay rent, many are also subjected to ‘house rules’ such as not being allowed to have visitors, or having evening curfews. Additionally, as would be expected, farms are located far from any services such as doctors, grocery stores, or banks, and often not on regular transit routes, leaving workers isolated and stranded on-farm without their own means of transportation.

Third, and importantly, workers who come to Canada through the SAWP have no pathway to permanent residency or Canadian citizenship. Some have been coming to work in Canada for decades, which puts strains on families and relationships at home as mothers and fathers have to leave their families behind for months at a time. They are typically allowed to stay for up to 8 months of the year, and must return home by December 15. This makes clear that they are valued only for their labour, and are not invited to become members of Canadian communities. This is illustrated through the frequent practice of



‘medical repatriation’, where workers are sent back to their home country if they are injured on the job and are unable to work for the season. In many of these cases, workers face overwhelming obstacles to accessing their rightfully owed workers compensation.

Fourth, although workers pay into social security programs like employment insurance and parental benefits, they cannot access those benefits. When workers are forced to leave at the end of the year, their Social Insurance Numbers are also cancelled for the time they are away from Canada. This precludes their ability to access social security benefits. Although seasonal workers in Canada can access employment insurance benefits in the uncertain offseason, migrant workers cannot.

The above is not an exhaustive list of issues with the SAWP, but they paint a good picture of ways in which the program sets up migrant workers as a “second tier” labour force in Canada. RAMA is always careful to note that abuses within the SAWP program are not a matter of “a few bad apples”; rather, the nature of the program itself sets up a structure in which workers are vulnerable to exploitation and have little control over or recourse to address their working and living conditions. In short, it is not fair.

Supporting Farm Workers

Radical Action with Migrants in Agriculture (RAMA) strives to redress these injustices and support workers in

the Okanagan Valley by engaging in direct support work with farm workers and by undertaking advocacy and public awareness campaigns. Many workers arrive in BC with very little information about available services and supports (which are few and hard to access), may not know much of the language, or what their rights are in Canada. Some hardly leave their place of employment at all while they are here, and to add to their feelings of isolation, often face discrimination from local residents when they enter local communities.

RAMA works to make our communities more inclusive of migrant farm workers, and ensure that they feel welcome and recognized for the work they do, which contributes greatly to local industry. We also advocate for just and fair conditions for workers—principles that are also supported by the philosophy of organic farming.

Farm Labour Within Organic Philosophy

Of the Four Principles of organic agriculture, as established by IFOAM, the Principle of Health and the Principle of Care both include the well-being of people in farming alongside health and care of animals, ecosystems, and the environment. The Principle of Fairness refers specifically to workers, among others:

“Fairness is characterized by equity, respect, justice and stewardship of the shared world, both among people and

in their relations to other living beings. This principle emphasizes that those involved in organic agriculture should conduct human relationships in a manner that ensures fairness at all levels and to all parties—farmers, workers, processors, distributors, traders and consumers. Organic agriculture should provide everyone involved with a good quality of life, and contribute to food sovereignty and reduction of poverty.” http://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/poa_english_web.pdf

Since its inception, IFOAM, as the global body representing organic agriculturalists, has supported the rights and dignity of farm workers and as such, those rights and freedoms are at the core of the philosophy behind organic agriculture. In its aim to spread and expand organic agriculture, the organic movement also includes the mandate of advocating for farm workers rights.

Despite this position, the SAWP sets up circumstances that are patently unfair. However, many of the problems that arise from the structure of the SAWP program could be resolved by the following policy changes:

- ✪ Open work permits. If migrant workers could change jobs as freely as other employees, then they would be less likely to accept poor working conditions, forcing the standards for all farm workers to go up.
- ✪ Allow access to benefits. It is fundamentally unfair that migrant workers pay into Canadian benefit coffers through deductions to their paycheques, but are denied the right to collect Parental Benefits, Employment Insurance, or Canadian Pension Plan funds upon retirement.
- ✪ House SAWP workers off-farm, preferably in community. Instituting policy that stipulates an end to the isolation of migrant farm workers would make strides towards community inclusion of farm workers and add to feelings of belonging. It would also increase worker’s mobility and access to health care and other necessary services.
- ✪ Grant Permanent Residency to all migrant workers upon arrival. Like opening up work permits, having permanent status leaves migrant workers less dependent on their employers and would allow them to leave poor working conditions, making them less vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. It would also enable them to start to build a life in Canadian communities. If migrant workers are a valuable work force, they should also be considered valuable community members, be able to bring their families, and become part of our communities.

As growers, workers, eaters, and community members, we all have a responsibility to each other to ensure that everyone involved in agricultural production is treated with fairness and respect. RAMA supports workers and aims to build more inclusive, equitable communities that recognize the struggles of temporary migrant farm work-

ers and come together to mitigate the challenges that SAWP workers face. Join RAMA and the national coalition of organizations advocating for migrant workers’ rights, write to your political representatives about your concerns, and talk to your neighbours and fellow growers. Let’s make fair and dignified conditions for migrant farm workers part of the growing movement for a fair, healthy, and sustainable food system.

“Honor the hands that harvest your crops” - Dolores Huerta, Leader in the United Farm Workers Movement 🌿

RAMA is a migrant justice collective that advocates for Latin American and Caribbean migrant farmworkers in the unceded Syilx territories of the Okanagan Valley. We work to build radically inclusive and more socially just communities by engaging in political advocacy, accompaniment, direct support work, public awareness campaigns, and the documentation of workers’ conditions and experiences. We are a volunteer-run, not-for-profit group.



 ramaokanagan.org



Celebrating 27 Years

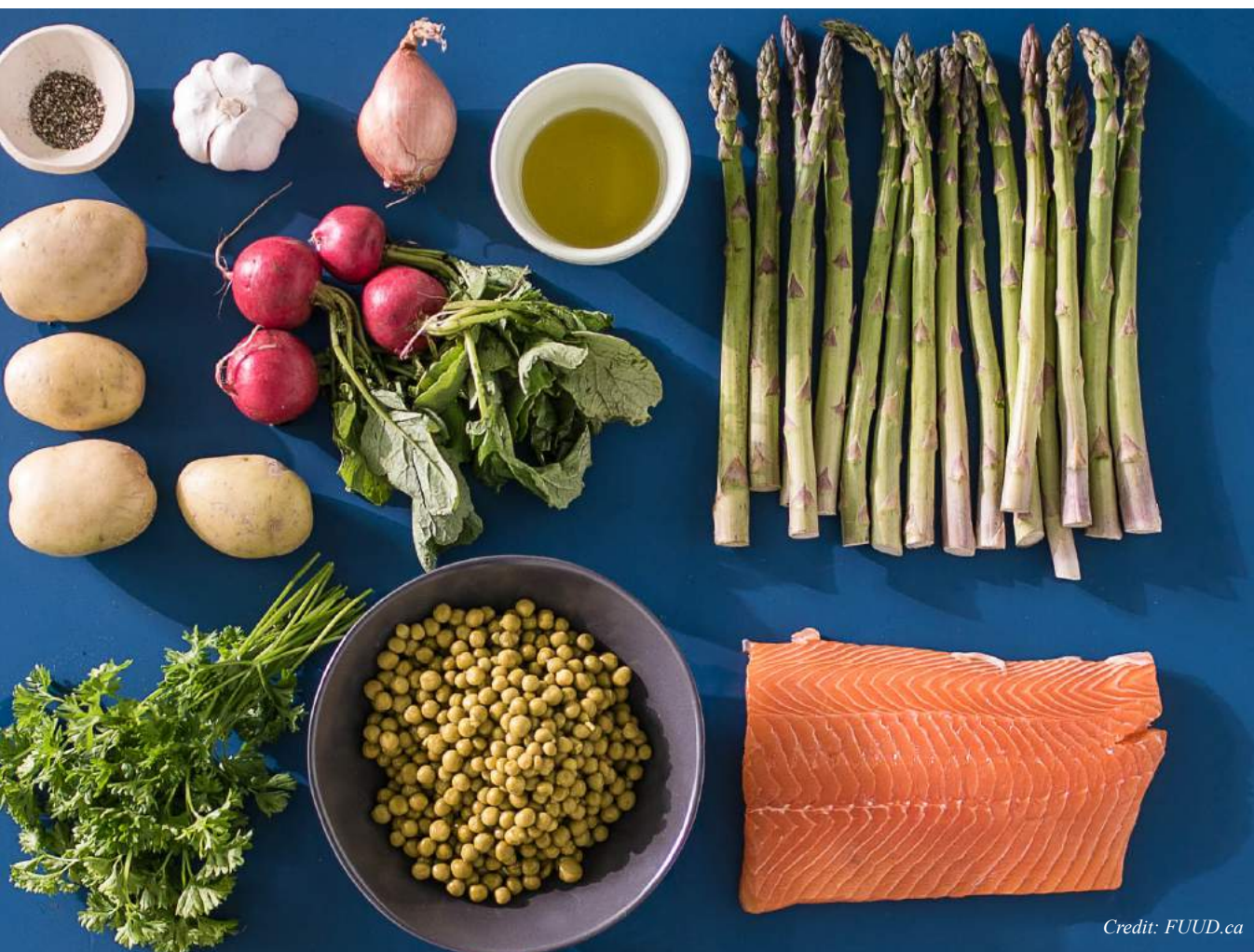
Pro Organics is proud to represent BC organic producers and to be celebrating our 27th year of supporting local, organic, sustainable farming.

Today, as it was 27 years ago, our mission remains the same: Promoting the growth and integrity of organics from field to table.



4535 Still Creek Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5C 5W1
Tel: 604-253-6549 or 1-800-461-1122

New Market: meal kits!



Credit: FUUD.ca

By Devon Kirchner

Times change, and trends come and go. However, there are certain things that, try as we might, we can't quite change so quickly. Human beings have always needed to eat—and that's where the farmer comes in!

As consumers seek out a deeper connection with their food, new markets emerge. In the last 20 years, we've witnessed the explosion of Farmers' Markets, CSAs, and restaurant demand for locally grown ingredients. Innovative entrepreneurs continue to develop new markets, and the rise of meal kit delivery is the latest untapped opportunity for local farms.

Companies such as BC's own FUUD.ca deliver weekly pre-portioned meal kits to busy people across the province. The people behind FUUD.ca are passionate about good food, and are constantly in awe of the amazing agricultural variety available in this great province.

Like restaurants, meal kit services embrace the seasonality of suppliers, utilizing what each time of year has to offer and giving people a chance to break out of what they usually eat and try something new. Through their meal kits, Fuud.ca wants to bring people to the table again,

Similkameen Okanagan Organic Producers Association



Join other growers committed to maintaining the integrity of organic farming in British Columbia

- Affordable certification fees
- ISO options available

For more information, contact
Cara Nunn: T 250-540-2557
simokorganics@gmail.com

to gather and share and laugh and create (and hopefully make a mess along the way). FUUD.ca sources a variety of different ingredients for their meals kits; fruits, vegetables, meats, seafood, grains, pastas, sauces, seasonings and more, all from as many BC suppliers as they can get their hands on.

Take advantage of this new market that delivers local, organic food right into the homes of your consumers. 🌿

Devon Kirchner is FUUD.ca's content curator. She has an ever-growing passion for all things food, and tries to integrate this into every aspect of her life and work. She loves to support local farmers and producers, as well as sample incredible food and food producing techniques from across the globe. FUUD.ca emphasizes the strong



Credit: FUUD.ca

relationships they have grown with their suppliers. If you share in their joy of connecting good food to good people, they would love to work with you.

There is lots of living to do! Are you ready?

With over 25 years of business planning and development, including 9 years in BC agriculture and time with COABC, Karen uses her skills and expertise as a Financial Consultant with Investors Group. Comprehensive planning can help improve your financial well-being in all life stages.



Whether you need succession planning, estate plans, retirement equations, inheritance stewardship options, or income protection, she will work with you to create a "do-able plan." She provides service to clients in the Okanagan, Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island.

For an appointment: #250-545-9188 or
Karen.Fenske@investorsgroup.com

#200—2899 30th Ave
Vernon, BC



Insurance products & services distributed via I.G. Insurance Services Inc. Insurance license sponsored by The Great-West Life Assurance Company. Trademarks, including Investors Group, are owned by IGM Financial Inc. and licensed to its subsidiary corporations.



SOUTHERN IRRIGATION

Intelligent Water Solutions

View our product guide online:
www.southerndrip.com



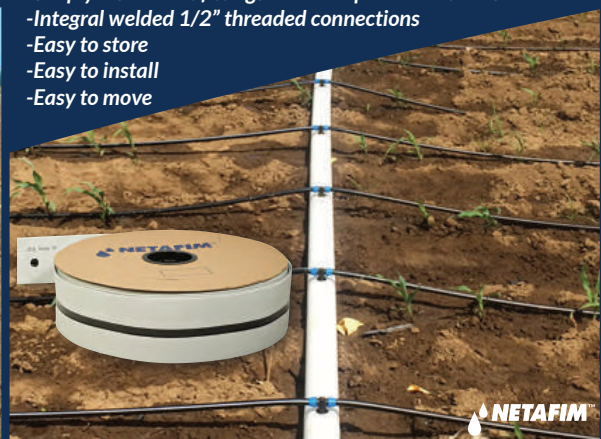
MEGANET Sprinklers

- Soft spray ideal for germination
- High distribution uniformity
- Low cost per acre
- Easy to install
- Easy to move



POLYNET Flexible Pipe

- Simply disconnect fittings and roll up when not in use
- Integral welded 1/2" threaded connections
- Easy to store
- Easy to install
- Easy to move



CHILLIWACK 44160 Yale Road West 1.800.663.2615

www.southerndrip.com

ECOLOGICAL FARMING

WITH INTERNS & VOLUNTEERS IN ONTARIO



Credit: Charles Levkoe

By Michael Ekers and Charles Levkoe

Originally published by Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario in Ecological Farming in Ontario, Volume 36, Issue 5. While the research was conducted with farms in Ontario, much of the findings likely carry over to BC.

There are increasing numbers of interns, apprentices, and volunteers working on small- and medium sized ecological farms across Ontario, but also across North America and Europe. More and more, farmers are looking to young people seeking farm experiences as a way to train the next generation of farmers and meet the labour demands of their operations. As readers will surely know, interns often exchange their labour for room and board, a stipend and importantly, training in organic, agro-ecological, and/or organic production methods. This is a relatively new and potentially defining trend within the ecological farming sector with considerable significance for farm operators and interns alike.

Over the last two years we have been leading a research project examining the growth and implications of farm internships and the experiences of these types of farm workers. Incredibly generous farmers, interns, and non-profit members have made our research possible by completing our surveys and taking time out of their busy days to patiently and thoughtfully answer our questions. This first, in a series of short articles, reports on some of our initial findings. We will explore further results and observations in subsequent pieces.

Many of the farmers and agroecology advocates that we initially met with noted the lack of data and information

on farm internships and volunteer work, which we describe as new forms of non-waged work. In response, we conducted two Ontario-wide surveys in 2014 and 2015 of farms making use of interns and volunteers. The goal of the survey was to determine the scale of internships and volunteer positions on farms and the types of farms making use of non-waged workers. It also sought to explore the benefits and challenges of working with interns and volunteers. There were several key trends that emerged from the 200 responses to the survey.

The farms making use of non-waged workers tend to be relatively small to medium sized with an average of 69 acres under cultivation. In terms of production methods, about 60% of the farms in our sample were non-certified, but practicing ecologically-oriented methods, including agroecological, biodynamic, permaculture, and organic farming. 21.7% had a recognized certification, with the majority being certified organic. 14.5% identified as practicing other kinds of agriculture, while just under 4% employed conventional methods. 87% of the farms we surveyed market their products directly to consumers through a CSA or a farmer's market while 39% of farms sold to retailers and only 9% sold to a wholesale buyer.


On the types of farms we just discussed that responded to our survey, there was an average of 4.2 non-waged workers on farms compared to an average of 1 minimum waged-worker per farm. Our results suggest that 65% of the workers on the farms we surveyed were non-waged, while the provincial average for the entire agriculture

sector is 4%. While it is difficult to gauge exactly how many farms are using non-waged workers our research suggests that there are at least several hundred farms in Ontario that are sharing their knowledge and skills and meeting their labour demands through the recruitment of interns and volunteers.

One of the key findings of our survey was the thin profit margin associated with ecological forms of agriculture production. We suggest that the use of interns and volunteers must be understood within this economic reality. Respondent farms reported an average annual gross farm revenue of \$94,786. Perhaps more illustrative of the strained financial situation of the farms we surveyed is the personal net on-farm income that farmers drew from their revenues. On average respondents reported a personal on-farm income of only \$13,629.

The challenging financial situation means that many farms felt dependent on their non-waged workers to meet the farm's labour demands. Almost 60% of farm owners and operators felt that they were dependent on interns and volunteers. However, our analysis suggests that the dependency of farms was not related to a farms' reported revenue. Farmers with high revenues were as equally dependent on non-waged workers as lower grossing farms. However, one factor that determined whether a farm was dependent on non-wage workers was levels of off-farm income. The average off-farm income for dependent farms was \$20,554 lower than non-dependent farms.

Farmers' dependency on non-waged workers is a significant issue for the ecologically oriented farming sector given the increasing public and legal scrutiny on various internship programs across North America. Additionally, many survey respondents flagged the risk of being dependent on non-waged workers that despite the best of intentions generally lack experience with farm work and may not be as committed or dependable as paid workers.

A pressing issue that comes out of these findings is around the sustainability of non-wage workers as a model for farmer training and on-farm labour. We need to ask the question: Is it possible to scale-up and expand forms of ecological farming through non-waged workers? Is this a trend that is fair for all? There are no easy answers to these questions but in our next installments we will explore some of the tensions and possibilities in the comingling of farm labour and educational training on farms. If you would like more information on the project, to comment on these issues or contact us please visit our website: foodandlabour.ca. 

Dr. Michael Ekers is an Assistant Professor in Human Geography at the University of Toronto Scarborough. His work mobilizes social and political theory and political economic approaches to understand the making of different environments and the cultures of labour in environmental spaces.



Credit: Charles Levkoe

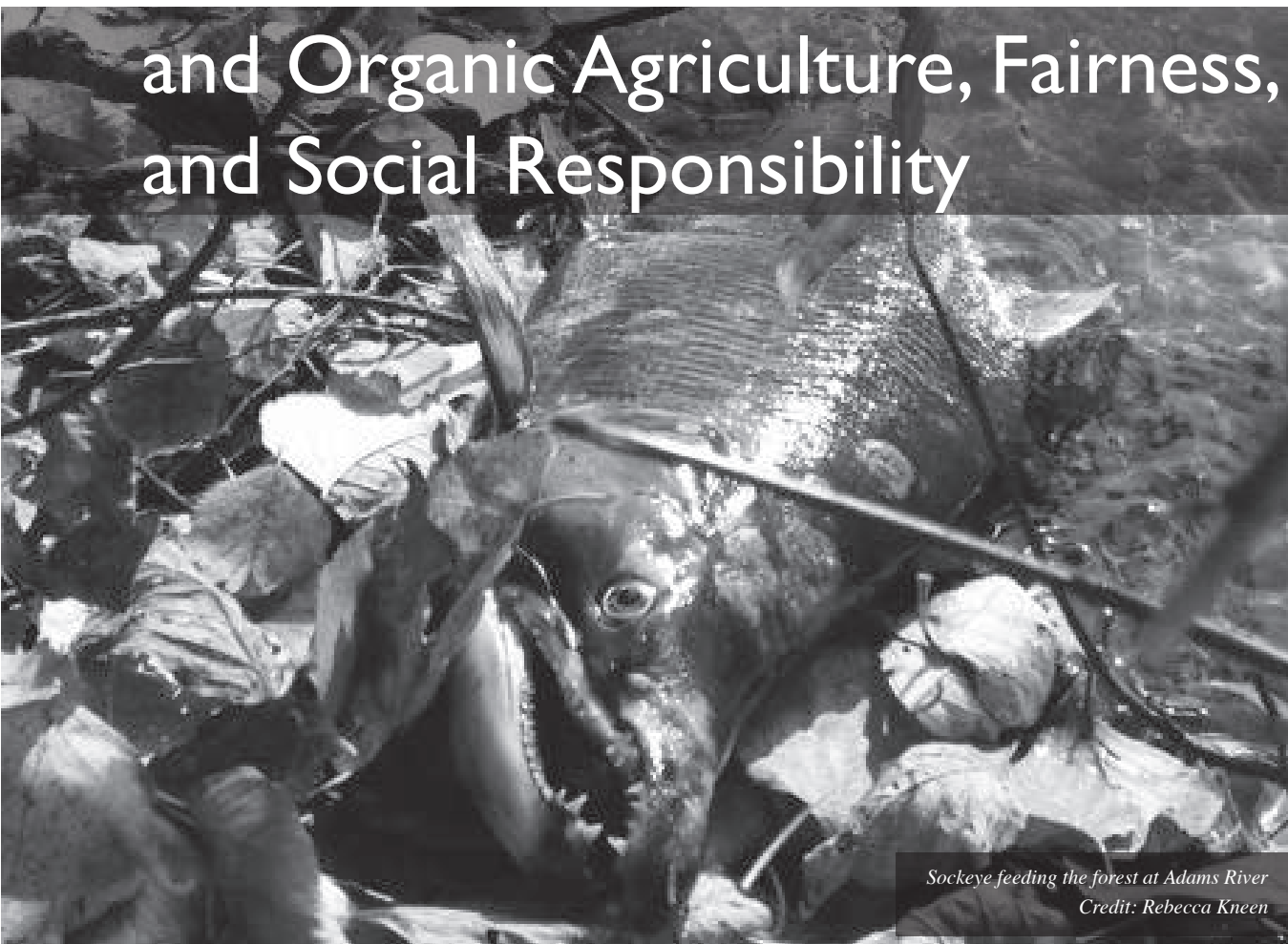


Credit: Charles Levkoe

Dr. Charles Levkoe is the Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Food Systems and an Assistant Professor in Health Sciences at Lakehead University. He has been involved in food sovereignty work for over 15 years in both the community and academic sectors. His ongoing community-based research focuses on the opportunities for building more socially just and ecologically sustainable food systems through collaboration and social mobilization.

INDIGENOUS FOODLANDS

and Organic Agriculture, Fairness, and Social Responsibility



*Sockeye feeding the forest at Adams River
Credit: Rebecca Kneen*

By Rebecca Kneen

Most of us in BC live on unceded territory—territory that was appropriated by settlers from Indigenous peoples without treaty. We are beginning, finally, to explore the implications of this condition on our relationship with the land and our Indigenous neighbours.

We are learning that we live within a great contradiction: we want to improve our communities' food sovereignty, but we are inheritors of theft. We desire to act for the benefit of ecosystems, but we are missing countless generations of knowledge that could and should inform our stewardship. How we begin to change the paradigm within which we live will shape the future of ecological agriculture and social justice.

The basis of Indigenous food systems is a non-exploitative relationship to land, recognizing that “we are all related” and that systems are interconnected. Whether categorized as hunter-gatherers, fishers, or farmers, the goal of the relationship was not production or extraction, but living in balance.

Organic agriculture strives to understand ecosystems and to live in balance while at the same time engaging in production for sale. Our history with developing the organ-

ic standards has always been a struggle to maintain that balance in the face of extractive agribusiness models attempting to co-opt organic principles. We've been pressured to allow large-scale monocropping, high-density livestock production, and systems that treat organics as “just a different set of chemicals”—and we've resisted.

As organic farmers, we are aware that we operate within the larger ecological context. Our water sources, our soil nutrients, our air all depend on systems outside our farm boundaries. While we swear at the coyotes and deer, we also know that like the salmon, they are critical to the biosphere we live in. What we have forgotten are the people who are also part of that larger biosphere.

We live within biospheres that were tended by Indigenous people for uncountable generations. The saskatoon, salal, salmon were all cared for in order to provide food for the people and sustain the biome. If we are going to live here, we in turn need to learn how to live here properly.

The key principles of Indigenous food sovereignty will ring a chord in the hearts of organic farmers, as they embody the principles we have also set for organic agriculture:

1. Sacred or divine sovereignty: Food is a gift from the Creator; in this respect the right to food is sacred and cannot be constrained or recalled by colonial laws, policies and institutions. Indigenous food sovereignty is fundamentally achieved by upholding our sacred responsibility to nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food.
2. Participatory: Indigenous Food Sovereignty is fundamentally based on “action”, or the day to day practice of maintaining cultural harvesting strategies. To maintain Indigenous food sovereignty as a living reality for both present and future generations, continued participation in cultural harvesting strategies at all of the individual, family, community and regional levels is key.
3. Self-determination: The ability to respond to our own needs for healthy, culturally adapted Indigenous foods. The ability to make decisions over the amount and quality of food we hunt, fish, gather, grow and eat. Freedom from dependence on grocery stores or corporately controlled food production, distribution and consumption in industrialized economies.
4. Policy: Indigenous Food Sovereignty attempts to reconcile Indigenous food and cultural values with colonial laws and policies and mainstream economic activities. Indigenous Food Sovereignty thereby provides a restorative framework for policy reform in forestry, fisheries, rangeland, environmental conservation, health, agriculture, and rural and community development.

 indigenousfoodsystems.org/food-sovereignty

From the Indigenous Food Systems Network:
While the language may be a bit different from that found in the organic standard, the ideas of healthy interdependent relationships with the land, daily practice of stewardship, and the ability to be independent of corporate-controlled food systems (especially around seed production) are integral to organic agriculture.

The concepts of Indigenous Food Sovereignty are necessary for us to adopt if we are going to build a food system that upholds these values. Most of these values seem to be part of our organic values already, but we are now on a journey to find common language to express them and to understand that their framework is in itself restorative.

On the ground, in our daily practice of farming, there are many ways we can incorporate these ideas. As organic farmers, most of us already maintain buffer zones around at least part of our farms. We can fill these areas with indigenous plants, bringing back native vegetation and wildlife as we do so. We can provide corridors for birds

and homes for beneficial insects, forage for bees, and at the same time begin to understand the delicate balance of living in the more natural ecosystem. Many of us have waterways and other “wild” areas on our farms. When we change our basic language from “wild” to “Indigenous foodlands” we begin to transform our understanding of those lands and the people.

We can begin to build relationships with our Indigenous neighbours by opening these areas to them for harvesting and care. We can open these areas as teaching grounds for wild harvesting methods, and maybe learn about protocols as we do so. We will need to do this with the knowledge and understanding that there will be serious emotional issues around inviting people back to land that was stolen many years ago.

We grow food to feed people. This is central to our idea of ourselves as farmers, but we can also think a bit differently about production. Not everything is bound to a financial transaction, and sometimes what we “produce” is relationships. By feeding elders, by teaching young people, by asking how we can build good relations and what the protocols are, we open the door to non-exploitative relationships.

While our hearts may speak the same language, there are many points of contention between production agriculture and Indigenous ways.

- Land ownership, licensing of mineral, timber, and water rights, the privatization of land and water, and theft by patenting indigenous knowledge and plants all make it “difficult to reconcile outstanding Indigenous land claims and have dispossessed Indigenous hunting, fishing and gathering societies.”
- The fragmentation and division of ecological systems into the sectors of various government agencies “limits the sustainability of the agri-food system which is interdependent on the healthy functioning of the neighbouring Indigenous food system...”
- Agriculture as a whole exists within an economic model based on extraction, production, and “resources” rather than “deep ecological and spiritual relationships with plants and animals that provide us with our foods in a regenerative, life giving paradigm.”

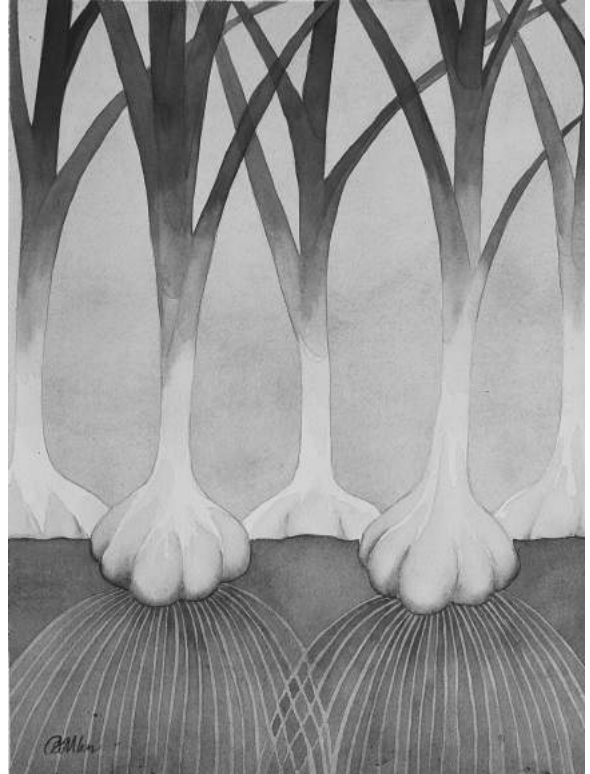
(Above quotes from Dawn Morrison, “Cross Cultural Interface Where Indigenous and Sustainable Agri-Food Systems Intra-act,” 2015 Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty.)

We have to think hard about these issues, as they are central to our food system and our entire mode of thought about how we relate to land. Until we shift our thinking and our language, we cannot also shift our relationships.

Continued on page 30...



ROOT CELLAR ART



By Cathie Allen

Editor's note: We're taking a detour from the usual Organic Standards focus of Footnotes to explore the inspiration that can strike while working in the field. A farmer's life is more than physical labour and paperwork—spending so much time in the natural world opens a window into art for many, including Cathie Allen, who wrote about her art for this issue.

“Stored away in the root cellar of my mind” is how

Cathie Allen begins to discuss the subjects of her watercolour paintings. Like all full-time organic market gardeners, Cathie's summer life is consumed by cauliflower, chickens, meals for the crew, and everything else that makes up a farm. Yet, these seasonal images linger, and are “stored away” (and sometimes reinforced with photographs) until winter, when they come back to life with brush and paper.

For the most part self-taught, Cathie acknowledges the inspiration she received from her Mom, who at 90 still paints; she was also strongly influenced by Karen Muntean, who provided instruction at the Island Mountain School of Arts in Wells, BC. Cathie's work has been

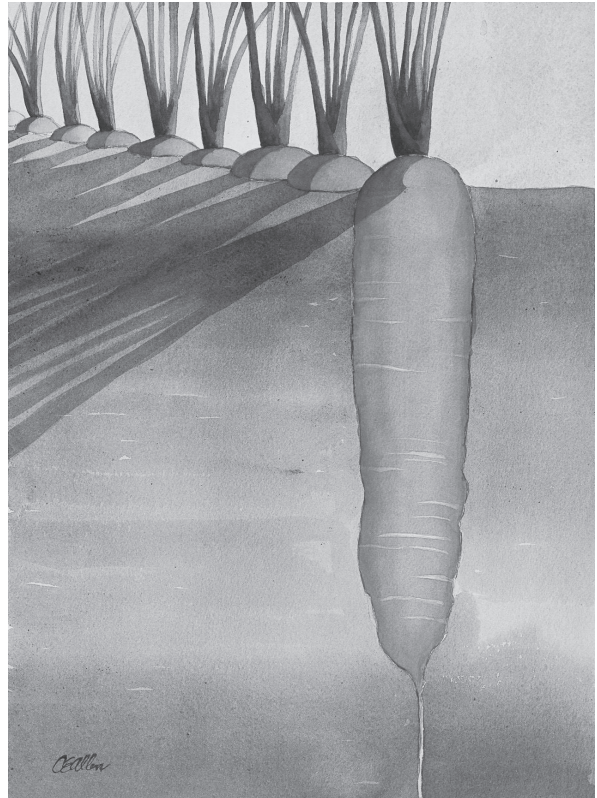


described as “fresh”, “keenly sensitive to detail”, with an “earthiness” that saturates it all.

Her recent works, the root series, are filled with good examples. “With these paintings, I wanted to expose some of the beautiful vegetables which mostly grow underground, often unnoticed. Especially nowadays with the huge disconnect between people and their food sources, much more than flavour and nutrition stand to be lost.” Her root series consists of 10 original watercolour paintings, featuring beets, summer turnips, leeks, potatoes, shallots, radishes, garlic, parsnips, carrots, and onions. The painting with the horses, the one she calls “family portrait”, depicts the four black percheron horses working abreast, pulling a disc. It was these four horses who broke the five-acre market garden, half an acre a year. “Sadly, these four horses are now all buried here, but we have a replacement team to carry on with the farm work and provide me with future inspiration”, adds Cathie.

Cathie’s work has been displayed in Cariboo and Central Interior galleries, as well as being selected for display by the BC Festival of the Arts. She also painted the cover and chapter illustrations for a children’s historical novel, *Moses, Me, and Murder*.

Cathie Allen has been a life-long painter. She lives and farms with her partner Rob Borsato at Mackin Creek, on the west side of the Fraser River, about 45 kms north of Williams Lake, BC. They have operated Mackin Creek Farm, a five acre, horse-powered market garden, since 1988.

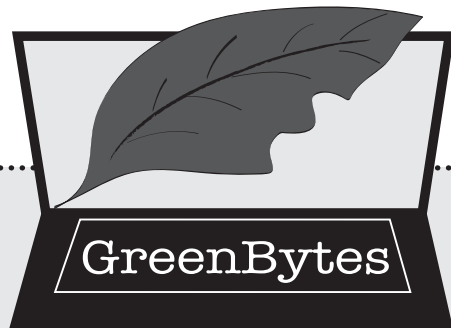


Images facing page: Onion, Garlic & Leek paintings by Cathie Allan
Above: Carrot painting also by Cathie Allan

Organic Grocer
organicgrocerweb.ca SINCE 1993

WORKING WITH OUR SUPPLIERS AND LOCAL FARMERS SINCE 1993 FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

508-7380 KING GEORGE BLVD.
SURREY, BC V3W 5A5
604-501-0116



Mandatory Organic Regulation

Did you know that as of September 2018 all products marketed or labeled with the word “organic” will need to be certified organic?

Visit COABC’s website as we keep you informed with new information regarding the upcoming mandatory organic regulation.

 certifiedorganic.bc.ca

2017 COABC CONFERENCE

& AGM Review



Nicholas Peterson delivers his keynote address on Saturday morning
Credit: Michael Marrapese

By Darcy Smith

COABC hosted the 2017 BC Organic Conference at the Coast Bastion Hotel in Nanaimo in February. The theme “Relationships in Transition: Land, Livestock, Waterways, and Community”, was threaded through the entire weekend.

Keynote speaker Nicholas Peterson set the tone in an inspiring way. His presentation was focused on the relationships we have as food producers to each other, the land we grow on, and also the communities we feed. His perspective was that of a father, a farmer, and even more importantly, a First Nations leader. He shed light on achieving sustainability, the challenges we face, and the important job we have as food producers and workers of the land.

Nicholas spoke of the need to work and celebrate together. In the Indigenous tradition, he wove stories into his presentation. One in particular struck a chord with many. He told of a world where people had long wooden spoon arms. In one area, the people could not feed themselves as the spoon arms would not reach their mouths so though there was bounty, these people were angry and starving. In another area however, the people were happy and full. These people used their spoon arms to feed each other. He reiterated that when we are angry or unhap-



Sharing Perspectives Across Cultures on Indigenous Food session
Credit: Michael Marrapese

Conversations about Decolonization

We were fortunate to be joined on Friday evening by Joe Akerman, who led a discussion on decolonization at the open space. Many participants in the discussion expressed interest in learning more about the work Joe is doing at Xwaaqw'um on Salt Spring Island. Since spring of 2015, by working closely with Elders, Cowichan Tribes, BC Parks and the local community, the activities at Xwaaqw'um have offered culturally relevant, life-long learning opportunities while helping to heal and build relationships for the benefit of youth and future generations. To sign up for their newsletter and learn about upcoming programs and volunteer opportunities, please email xwaaqwum@gmail.com.

py, we should reflect and ask ourselves “Am I feeding others or just trying to feed myself?” Our happiness and fulfillment increases when we feed others. These are the actions and connections that are crucial for true sustainability; this is how we as farmers and individuals play a vital role in restoring relationships across humanity.

The Friday reception kicked off the conference with welcoming remarks from dignitaries and our president. The



Top: Joe Akerman shares a summary from Friday night's Indigenous Food Sovereignty discussion table at the Open Space session. Above: The COABC Board welcomes participants to the conference. Credit: Michael Marrapese

Kickstart Your Growing Season

BioFert Manufacturing Inc. is a fertilizer manufacturer focused on formulating certified organic fertilizers and soil amendments. BioFert was established with a vision of providing high efficacy, non-toxic, biodegradable and eco-friendly fertilizers and soil additives for use in agriculture.



Here are some of the EcoCert approved fertilizers to kickstart your growing season.

Hi-N 10-3-0 is a granular formulation suitable for all crops as a complete fertilizer for organic production in soil and soil-less mediums. Hi-N is formulated to give high efficiency in crop production. Enriched with added sulphur and micronutrients for optimal performance, it also provides nitrogen in a readily available form for up to 90 days. Hi-N improves soil structure and nutrient retention with minimum leaching losses.

BioFish is a fish based liquid fertilizer for all crops. Made by using a unique aerobic fermentation process that renders nutrients and minerals readily

available for plant use. Besides drench, BioFish can be used in drip and foliar applications because of its unique formulation as it will not clog irrigation lines. BioFish also enhances microbial activity in the soil, decomposes undigested organic materials in soil and increases nutrient availability for plants by maximizing root development.

RapiGro is extracted from seaweed (kelp) using a unique fermentation process. It is ideal for use on seedlings and young plants as it promotes profuse rooting and helps the plants in attaining dense root structure. It has a wide range of naturally occurring auxins and cytokinins that boost plant growth. RapiGro is a concentrated solution, therefore only small quantities are required for effective results.



For more information, visit BioFert's website at www.biofert.ca, or call 604-557-1496 for any questions.



Chris Bodnar of Close to Home Organics receives the 2017 Brad Reid award. Credit: Michael Marrapese

Open Space discussions, a tradition at our conferences, were led by Arzeena Hamir and Moss Dance. The discussions were fruitful with a few of the groups continuing their conversations well beyond the allotted hour.

The conference sessions were informative and ranged from record keeping to Indigenous cross-cultural sharing to reaching the wholesale market to livestock health and

welfare. The Indigenous sessions were well received, and a highlight included people of all backgrounds speaking about their connection to the land. Saturday afternoon featured an update on the upcoming mandatory organic regulation, and we will be sure to share more information about the regulation with you as it comes to us. We are always wowed by the depths of knowledge shared by our community at the annual gathering, and this year was no exception!

The 2017 Brad Reid award went to Chris Bodnar. From the moment he stepped into farming, Chris has been lifting above his weight and there is no one else that deserves this award more. As a farmer, community leader, and mentor, Chris is someone many young farmers look to as an example. His work in the Young Agrarian's Business Mentorship Program has created lasting change for new farmers in start-up, and for all the mentees in the program who have benefitted from his fantastic farm financial management webinars. When we recognize people like Chris for his incredible skills, including community mindedness, his ability to see the best in everyone, and his desire to share knowledge and encourage the next



Clockwise from top left: Charlie Lasser, Carmen Wakeling, and Arzeena Hamir from the COABC Board (credit: Michael Marrapese;) Kris Chand & Shirlene Hua take in the keynote address Saturday morning; Nicholas Peterson shares family stories during his keynote address; and Young Agrarians mix it up Saturday evening (Credit: Moss Dance.)

generation, it gives us all a chance to think about how we can incorporate these qualities more into our own work.

As always, the conference weekend is made possible by the hard work of many dedicated individuals. This year's conference coordinator, Jesse Johnston-Hill, did a fabulous job pulling all the ends together to create a wonderful weekend that attendees will remember for a long time to come. A heartfelt thank you goes out to the event sponsors, planning committee, volunteers, hotel staff, and food donors, who all contributed to this memorable weekend. 🌿

We are grateful to the Ministry of Agriculture for funding many of the sessions this year. If you have suggestions on session topics for next year's conference, please drop a line to:



Above: As usual, the Saturday night silent auction was a hotspot!

Below: Ashlee Cooper shares about ethnoecological restoration and native plant propagation in W̱SÁNEĆ Territory.

Credit: Michael Marrapese.

📧 conference@certifiedorganic.bc.ca





Organic, naturally. For thirty five years, Horizon Distributors has supplied retailers with premium quality, organic, natural and gourmet products in the dry, chill and frozen categories. Our 5,000 SKUs provide healthy alternatives for your customers, whether they are long-time natural foods consumers, or those with special dietary needs searching for new options.

A market leader in Western Canada for decades, Horizon is the parent company of a national network of Canadian businesses distributing organic and natural foods, health and beauty aids, supplements and household products.

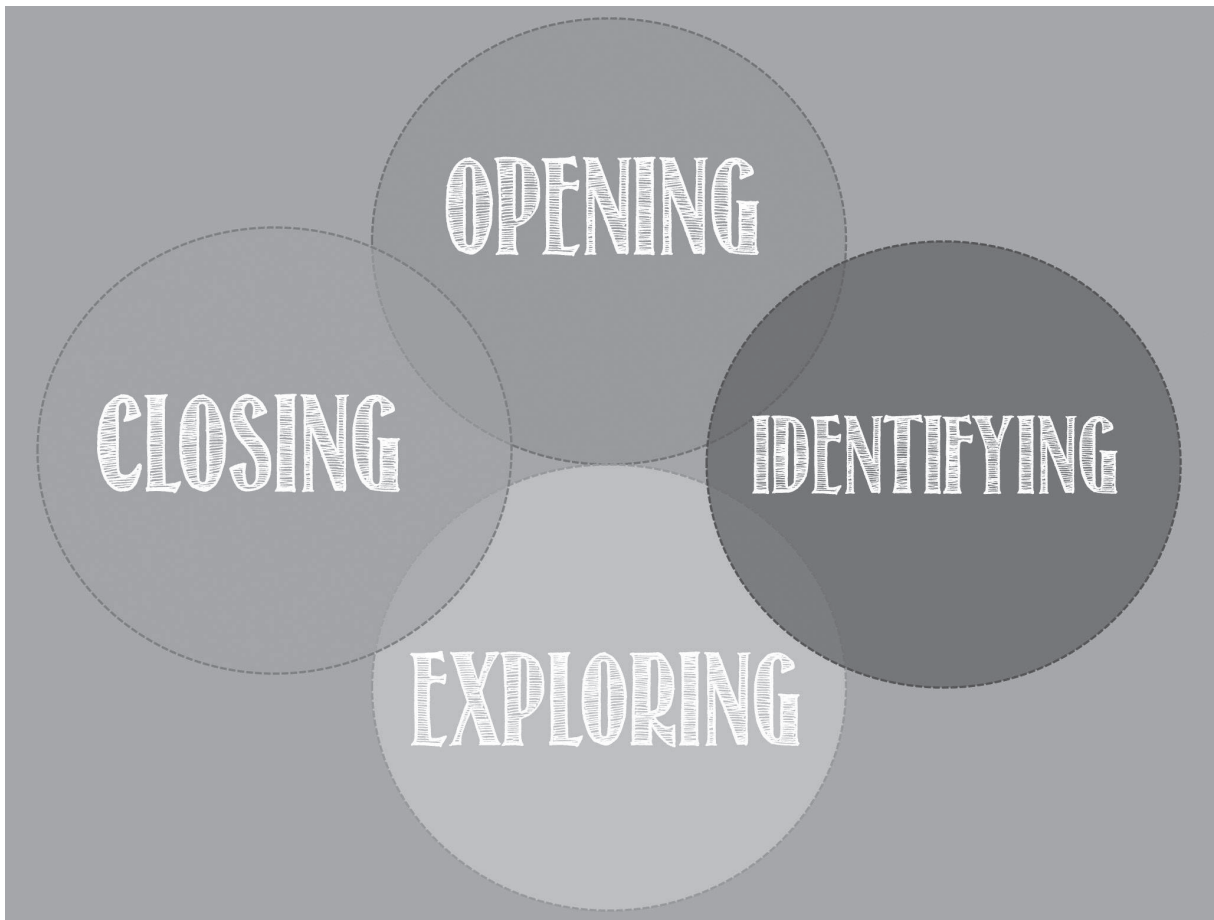
The Horizon Group comprises the following well-established companies, which supply more than 20,000 SKUs to 4,000 outlets across Canada:

- Horizon Distributors, Burnaby, BC
- PSC Natural Foods, Victoria, BC
- Christmas Natural, Burnaby, BC
- Tara Natural, Burnaby, BC
- Organic Horizons, Guelph, ON
- Corwin Distribution, Concord, ON
- Directa Distribution, Pointe-Claire, QC



www.horizondistributors.com
604.524.6610 | 1.800.663.1838

Transforming Conflict on the Farm



By Keeley Nixon

Seeds ordered? Check. Planting calendar set? Check. Staff hired? Check. Conflict resolution preparedness in place? Wait, what?! Though it's often overlooked in the sheer onslaught of too-much-to-do-not-enough-time of daily farm life, collaborative communication practice can be one of our strongest tools.

Think you've got this covered? Remember back to the hardest moments of last season—could something have been made easier by clarifying a directive or job duty? Sharing feedback sooner? We can't go back, but wouldn't it be nice to avoid the uncomfortable hardship of unresolved conflict?

This is the crux of good communication; it's not something we're explicitly taught, but it is something we can always improve with practice. And while unfamiliar communication tools may feel awkward at the time, the alternative of inaction is often much worse.

Our communication muscles are underdeveloped—the good news is there are simple things we can start doing to build them.

Change how you understand conflict

- Conflict is not inherently bad or negative. Conflict is normal and part of an ongoing cycle of change.
- Recognize where conflict comes from. Assumptions, misunderstandings, and perceptions can all prompt conflict, and forces such as the individuals involved and their relationship, time demands, and stress can impact it.
- See the agenda and relationship. In any conflict there's an agenda and a relationship at play. How we deal with conflict is dependent on the focus of each.

- Aim to depersonalize. It won't be neutral but strive for cooperative instead of adversarial. Think "us vs. issue" instead of "you vs. me"

Know thy self

- Acknowledge your lenses. Values, ego, expectations, goals, needs, attitudes, and beliefs inform how we engage. Be mindful of what these are for you.
- Identify your default style. When a conflict arises do you cooperate, direct, compromise, accommodate, or avoid? Each has a time and place, and knowing your default will help you build awareness of when it serves you best—and when to try a different approach.

Lean in to process

Think of the process as a messy Venn diagram of 4 overlapping stages: 1) opening (approaching the issue) 2) identifying (sharing perspectives) 3) exploring (building understanding) and 4) closing (agreeing on solutions). Each has certain goals and tasks, and in order for communication to be effective, there are some important considerations:

- Be mindful of language. Use "I" language to speak from your experience and use "we" language for collective goals and impact.
- Where and when a discussion happens matters. Friday afternoon at the wash up area is likely not the best time or place. Think about a space where everyone is comfortable, allocate time to bring the topic up, and share enough information to clearly convey the topic. This could sound like, "I'd like to check in with you about how we each feel the season is going so far... Could we make time after lunch one day this week?" Making time for regular check-ins creates space for conversation before issues arise and a space to channel ideas in-between.
- Check your body language and don't interrupt. Listen to understand before you speak to be understood
- Question assumptions. Try asking, "Can you tell me what makes you think that way?" or, "What have I done/said that makes you think that way?"
- Anticipate emotion. When you feel emotion rising, stop and breathe before you respond. Defensiveness comes on fast, don't let it.
- Stay open to resolution. Recognize that there's no right way to resolve a conflict and in sharing perspective, listening deeply, and engaging you may be surprised where a solution does emerge. If a resolution isn't apparent try taking a break and coming back at a set time, obtaining more information to help inform the group, or agreeing to disagree.

Tension and conflict are inevitable in any job. With the lived realities of being a farmer, or working for one, prickly situations are common. We owe it to ourselves and each other to strengthen our businesses and practices by learning how and when to approach tough conversations and show up with open ears and an open heart both on and off the farm. 🌱

Keeley Nixon has been involved in farming and food sector organizing since moving from the BC interior in 2001. After stepping out of field last season she's pursuing training in mediation with a focus on agriculture. Keeley thrives on working with farmers to create durable changes and preserve important relationships. She brings her passion for food, good design, community engagement, and general joie de vivre to all that she does.



*Keeley Nixon harvesting seeds
Credit: COABC*

Eat More Sprouts & Greens

**Grown in the Comox Valley
Year Round!**

**Look for our sprouts & greens
at your favourite
grocer or restaurant.**

2604 Grieve Rd., Courtenay, BC V9J 1S7
250.338.4860 | www.eatmoresprouts.com

... *Indigenous Foodlands, continued from page 21*

If we are going to take responsibility for what we do on the land, we must also take responsibility for the system within which we function. We cannot sell food to fascists, dispossess people from their land, or behave as if we have no responsibility for social justice. Our responsibility for stewardship and sustainability does not end at the farm gate.

For more information on how to be an advocate for Indigenous Food Sovereignty in your community, check out the following resources:

Indigenous Food Systems Network

 indigenousfoodsystems.org

BC Food Systems Network:

 bcfsn.org

Wild Salmon Caravan:

 wildsalmoncaravan.wordpress.com

Rebecca Kneen farms and brews with her partner Brian MacIsaac at Crannóg Ales, Canada's first certified organic, on-farm microbrewery. They have been certified organic since inception in 1999. Their farm is a 10 acre mixed farm growing hops, fruit, and vegetables as well as pigs, sheep, and chickens. Rebecca has been involved in agriculture, food, and social justice issues since she met her first pair of rubber boots at age three on the family's Nova Scotia farm.



Classifieds

Suppliers Wanted:

Ostro Organics is looking for cleaned, certified organic borage, evening primrose, hemp, safflower, sunflower, camelina oil-seeds. Growers/Processors please contact info@ostro-organics.ca or call #778-922-2229

Would you like to run your classified ad in the BC Organic Grower? Classified ads are 30 words for \$25/issue (plus tax.) Email Moss at bcogadvertising@certifiedorganic.bc.ca for more information.



*Native bumblebee
Credit: Rebecca Kneen*



*Wild ginger
Credit: Rebecca Kneen*



Certified Organic Associations of BC 202-3002 32nd Avenue, Vernon, BC V1T 2L7; p: 250.260.4429; f: 250.260.4436; office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca

ORDER FORM

Enterprise Name: _____
 Contact Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City/Province: _____
 Postal Code: _____ Phone Number: (____) _____
 Certification Body & No.: _____
 Date Ordered: _____ Date Required: _____

PST Exemption (for packaging materials)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option 1: BCAC Farmer ID #: _____ Expiry: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option 2: PST Number: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option 3: Certificate of Exemption Farmer exemption: 0458FILL.pdf Other enterprises exemption: 0490FILL.pdf or request the appropriate exemption form from the office.

Item	Units	Unit Price	Quantity Discount	Quantity	Total
Stickers 1" round	1000 pc roll	\$13.50	10 rolls \$120.00		
Stickers 1 1/4" square	1000 pc roll	\$13.50	10 rolls \$120.00		
Twist Ties 10" (15,000 per case)	1000 pc	\$13.00	Full Case-\$165.00		

The packaging materials above are only available to COABC Certified Organic members and are PST exempt for qualifying enterprises (see above).

Have you signed a Consent to use Official Marks Declaration Form (July 2006 revision)? Y/N Are you Certified? Y/N
 With which products will you be using the packaging materials? _____

Promo Materials: available to everyone	Member \$	Non-member \$	Tax		
Bucket Hats size M or L *	\$15.75	\$15.75	PST taxable		
Ball Caps	\$13.10	\$13.10	PST taxable		
Natural T-shirts (Plain) S * or XXL	\$5.00	\$5.00	PST taxable		
NEW!! COABC T-shirts Designed by Brian MacIsaac Men's size S-XXL & Ladies sizes S-L	\$17.85	\$17.85	PST taxable		
Organic Tree Fruit Management	\$19.95	\$25.95	No PST		
Western Canada Organic Directory	\$6.00	\$6.00	No PST		
Sub-total (before taxes and shipping):					

*Limited quantities available - please contact the COABC office for availability

GST # 887782431

Postage Rates

Minimum charge of \$10.00 per order for any promo and/or packaging materials
 GST will be added to postage amounts
 Rates vary and will be calculated at the office

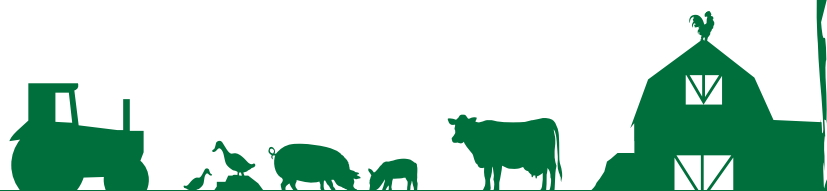
An invoice will be sent with your order. Postage and applicable taxes will be added to your invoice.
 Please do not send payment before receiving invoice.



More than a farmer

I nurture healthy soil, that grows
healthy food, that grows healthy people,
that grow healthy communities!


Certified Organic Associations of BC



www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Supported by BC's Buy Local program