

# British Columbia Organic Grower



FUTURE OF ORGANIC:  
Inclusion

Journal for the Certified Organic Associations of BC - Summer 2020  
Volume 23, Issue 3 (\$5.00)



**COABC**

Certified Organic Associations of BC

# In This Issue

Editor's Note .....	3
COABC News Patch .....	4
Biodynamic Farm Story VI .....	6
Organic Stories: Charlie Lasser .....	8
Footnotes: Principle of Fairness .....	18
Ask an Expert: A Network of Support .....	28
COABC Order Form .....	31



## The Lasser Legacy

After 70+ years of farming, experimenting, and learning—Charlie Lasser is eager to pass his lifetime of knowledge on to the next generation. Read more on *page 8*.

# Features

BC Land Matching Program .....	12
iCertify Welcomed with Open Arms .....	16
Workplace Safety in the time of COVID .....	20
BC Fish Harvesters .....	24



## Supporting Farmers with Workplace Safety

Head to *page 20* to find out more about AgSafe's programs and support for farmers in the time of COVID.

## 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:

[certifiedorganic.bc.ca](https://certifiedorganic.bc.ca)

View and share articles from our online edition at:

[bcorganicgrower.ca](https://bcorganicgrower.ca)

Editor: Darcy Smith

Designer: Moss Dance

We welcome Letters to the Editor (300 words maximum) and articles (1,000 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](mailto:editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca)

### Advertising (rates & copy)

[bcogadvertising@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto: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](mailto:office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca)

[certifiedorganic.bc.ca](https://certifiedorganic.bc.ca)

For general information or to contact your local Certification Body, call the office, or check our website:

[certifiedorganic.bc.ca](https://certifiedorganic.bc.ca)

**On the Cover:** Maylene of Loveland Acres working with row cover. Credit: Loveland Acres.

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 operators. Please consult the permitted substance list, CAN/32.311 for guidance. Your CB has the final authority for approval of inputs.

# Editor's Note

By Darcy Smith

Well. Two months sure can be a long time. When we sent the last issue of the BC Organic Grower off to the printers, the changes sparked by a global pandemic were new and shocking. Since then, we've had time to adapt to a radically different world—which is not to say things have gotten any easier. Yet every day, I see stories of how farmers are working harder than ever to feed their communities, and an increasing public awareness of the importance of local, organic food.



If this global crisis has shown us anything, it's the importance of relationships and community. Our summer 2020 issue of the BC Organic Grower continues to explore the future of organic, this time taking a deeper look at inclusion—at what it means to have an organic community, and how that community may need to evolve.

Our Organic Story feature by Jolene Swain takes us up to visit Lasser Range in the Peace region. As Charlie Lasser rounds the corner on 90 years of life—and farming—he shows us how to move into the future, full of the wisdom of the past and an enthusiasm to try new things (page 8).

More than ever, now feels like the time to build bridges, grow community, and celebrate bringing new farmers into the organic fold. On page 12, Tessa Wetherill, Okanagan land matcher for the BC Land Matching Program, introduces us to two such farmers, Robin and Maylene, who have just launched Loveland Acres and are already feeling the love of the organic community.

On page 16, Cara Nunn shares her experience with iCertify as a certification body coordinator, and the potential she sees in adapting to this new technology—both to producers and to providing “a stronger voice for organics” in agriculture.

In Organic 3.0, inclusion takes on several meanings. On the one hand, inclusion of different sustainability movements: see page 24 for an article about sustainable, small-scale fisheries by Marc Fawcett-Atkinson, which could just

as well be about the organic sector, if you subbed in “farmer” for “fisher.” On another, inclusion on the level of social justice and fairness: see page 18 for a call to action on the Principle of Fairness and farm workers by Anne Macey. The article was originally published in the Canadian Organic Grower in 2018 and Anne graciously updated it for this publication.

This issue also features a strong dose of COVID-19 resources, of course—it's impossible not to see all the ways we were unprepared for this scenario, and how the future of organic will need to account for a possibility that this may be the “new normal.” Anna Helmer serves up some pandemic real talk in her latest farm story installment (page 6), and on page 28, Karina Sakalauskas highlights COVID-10 funding and information for farmers and food producers. Wendy Bennett at AgSafe shares workplace safety tips and resources (page 26). Thanks to ALM Farm, Hope Farm Organics, Merville Organics, and Fresh Valley Farms for sharing photos of how you've adapted on-farm and at the market! And check out additional gems scattered throughout the issue pointing you towards podcasts, articles, webinars, and more! 🌱

If you have a story to tell about organic food and farming, please get in touch. Reach out with your thoughts, letters, and story ideas to [editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca)—and be sure to visit us online at [bcorganicgrower.ca](http://bcorganicgrower.ca).

 [bcorganicgrower.ca](http://bcorganicgrower.ca)



*Kira Kotilla of Kloverdalen Farm at the Merville Organics booth at the Comox Valley Farmers Market. Credit: Merville Organics.*



Radish harvest at Tendergreens Farm.  
Credit: Tendergreens Farm.

## Coming Together Under COVID-19

By Eva-Lena Lang, COABC Executive Director

By the time this goes to print, British Columbia will have begun to ease its COVID-19 restrictions, opening up social activities, schools, businesses, and parks—with an emphasis on maintaining social distancing and small group sizes. And while the agriculture sector has continued to operate during the past few months as an essential service, it has not been without challenges and uncertainties. Organic pro-

ducers have had to adapt their safety measures and business models, all the while keeping up with the steady flow of COVID-19 developments and information.

We're thankful for the BC Ministry of Agriculture's continuous communication and collaboration during this time. Their frequent updates, resources, and initiatives have helped organic farmers and market gardeners navigate the rapidly changing marketplace and continue to provide access to local, healthy food.

In early May, we met with the Ministry to discuss the impacts of

COVID-19 on BC's organic sector and to express the importance of moving BC forward sustainably.

We discussed the concern about seed production shortages for the next growing season due to the high demand for farming and home gardening. The good news is that the organic seed sector has a strong base and has received several boosts from the Ministry and supporting organizations, including projects that aim to increase the competitiveness of BC organic seed producers and provide seed production training, business resources, and market supports.

We also spoke of alternative supply channels for the organic sector. The Buy BC program has been enhanced due to COVID-19 to increase consumers' awareness of, and participation in, the program. One of the Buy BC resources included a webinar on the topic of pivoting production in the time of COVID-19, conducted by BC organic farmer Chris Bodnar. Support materials and resources are available via AgriServiceBC. For more info please see:

[gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriservice-bc](https://gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriservice-bc)

More announcements from the BC Ministry of Agriculture are upcoming and include increasing e-commerce support for the program, support for farmers' markets, and other supports aimed at prioritizing the purchase of provincially produced products.

Slaughter and processing capacity in the province have also been affected by COVID-19, particularly due to the increased safety protocols to protect workers from risk of exposure. The province's livestock industry specialists have been closely monitoring slaughter access and capacity.

Another topic of discussion was support for post-harvest storage facilities within the organic sector. The Ministry advised that produce that cannot be sold or stored could be channeled to regional food hubs for processing. More information on this can be found via Feed BC: the BC Food Hub Network.

[gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/growbc-feedbc-buybc/feedbc/feed-bc-the-bc-food-hub-network](https://gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/growbc-feedbc-buybc/feedbc/feed-bc-the-bc-food-hub-network)

Beyond COVID-19, COABC is currently working with the Ministry to partner on the delivery of

several initiatives and projects, including:

- iCertify, a three-year (2019-2022) CAP-funded program to further the development of COABC's online organic certification system
- Organic Extension Needs Assessment study, a two-year (2019-2021) CAP-funded program led by KPU with collaboration of COABC and the BC Ministry of Agriculture

While times are still far from "normal," we are grateful for the strong support from the BC Ministry of Agriculture and from forward-thinking organizations, locally minded consumers and of course organic farmers and producers around BC who have worked so hard to react and adapt to this unprecedented situation.

## Representing BC's Organic Community Internationally!

In March, 2020, BC organic farmer Arzeena Hamir was appointed to the board of IFOAM North America! Established in 2016, IFOAM North America works to educate the general public, provide a forum to exchange ideas, and engage in North American-specific activities to advance organic agriculture and its principles. These activities are carried out in partnership with IFOAM and the global organic community.

IFOAM is leading change organically on the international stage, building capacity to facilitate the transition of farmers to organic agriculture, raising awareness of the need for sustainable production and consumption, and advocating for a policy environment conducive to agro-ecological farming practices and sustainable development.

Under its mandate to create a truly global network, IFOAM - Organics International has established, and encourages the additional establishment of, ten Regional Bodies. The Regional Bodies of IFOAM are just that, regional initiatives working across topical areas to unite IFOAM affiliates in locations around the world. Mirroring the principles and structure of IFOAM - Organics International, each Regional Body represents the interests of their geographical zone or individual country. All Regional Bodies strive to unite and lead the organic movement in its full diversity to achieve positive, sustainable change around the world.

Arzeena and her husband run Amara Farm, a 26-acre certified organic vegetable and fruit farm in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island British Columbia. She is also in local government, is the Area B Director on the Comox Valley Regional District, and is the President of the Mid Island Farmer's Institute. We can't wait to hear more about what she gets up to at IFOAM!

[ifoam.bio](https://ifoam.bio)

## COVID-19 & Farmers: Impacts & Solutions

Canadian Organic Growers (COG) is looking to hear from farmers on how the COVID-19 pandemic has been affecting them. The results of this survey will be used to advocate for organic farmers at the federal level. The responses to this survey are anonymous.

Link to the survey

[surveyMonkey.com/r/covid19farmers](https://surveyMonkey.com/r/covid19farmers)

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey! 🌱



# biodynamic farm story: Farming Amidst THE PANDEMIC

*A misty backdrop to Anna Helmer's pontifications on COVID and what it means for her small farm... Credit: Helmers Organic Farm.*

By Anna Helmer

**B**iodynamically, there is nothing to be done but carry on. As far as I know, Rudolph Steiner did not articulate any advice on performing the pandemic farm pivot when he envisioned what has become Biodynamic farming. Mind you, he did live through the big flu of the early 20th century, so I think it quite possible that there is resilience to the effects of physical distancing built into his ideas.

For evidence, I can tell you that at least one of his Waldorf schools has handled the necessary pivot to online learning with aplomb. The first day back from spring break, a five-day Grade 1 lesson plan plopped into my inbox: the product of an assortment of computer applications and teachers devoted to delivering school to the children. The student has remained engaged and the whole thing is somewhat magical, I have to say, especially given their previous abhorrence of screens.

Our farm has too performed a pivot—but it is too early to tell how it will turn out. It doesn't look all that different from last year so far. Planting potatoes, planning on selling them. Further details to be decided later. It can't be sorted out right now, with the information we have. Not to boast or anything, but I feel numb about it.

The thing about COVID is that everyone is affected. I can't possibly bang on about my own tough situation full in the knowledge that others must have it much tougher. When

regular, run-of-the-mill, middle-class tax-payers are facing an uncertain future, one assumes one's troubles are standard to the point of tediousness.

Suffice it to say, COVID-pressure must be a widespread, underlying condition on almost every farm this spring. If you haven't got it, I think you should. It's time to slide. You just have to pass through the phase of despair to get to the numb phase, where you just keep plodding along. It's easy to trigger if you ponder the fact that a lot of your customers don't have jobs and have no prospect for a job. They have been homeschooling and entertaining their kids for weeks. Many of them have realized that these kids are difficult and have trouble hearing the word "no." Most of the things that generally offer happiness, satisfaction, and inspiration aren't available right now, or possibly even soon: waving kids off to school (in retrospect, a personal favorite), office drama, alone-time (Oh! Oh!), conferences, vacations, etc etc. If this isn't you, isn't that nice. It is your customers. Thank goodness the mainstream food system is underperforming, and the people have to eat. They may go local afterall, so get to plodding along.

You're welcome for bringing the bouyant down a few pegs. Someone had to do it. Nothing worse than perky positive types when one is trying to be resilient. Speaking for myself, I knew I had issues when my rough draft included the following in a list of pandemic upsides:

Cheap gas. Isn't it fun to fill up? Nevermind the climate. Gas-guzzlers for the win!

Don't worry. I came to my senses and edited it out.

The conventional food system is creaking and in some cases cracking. Turns out slaughtering and processing tens of thousands of animals a day by a low-paid, disposable —yet irreplaceable—workforce in an industry owned from top to bottom by billionaires keen on profits is a weak model. What could possibly go wrong? COVID. That's what. Get real.

I am not editing out my scornful tone.

Back to farming. I am writing this May 13th. You are reading well into June or July. I wonder what's happening now?



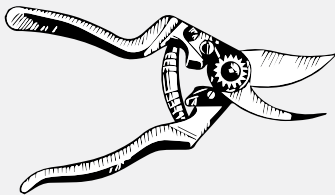
*Anna Helmer hesitated for so long over writing this sign-off bit that it no longer made sense to put anything here at all.*

## Soundbyte

"It hit like a ton of bricks. Those mid-March markets in Vancouver. All of a sudden, we were doing a quarter of the sales that I'm happy with."

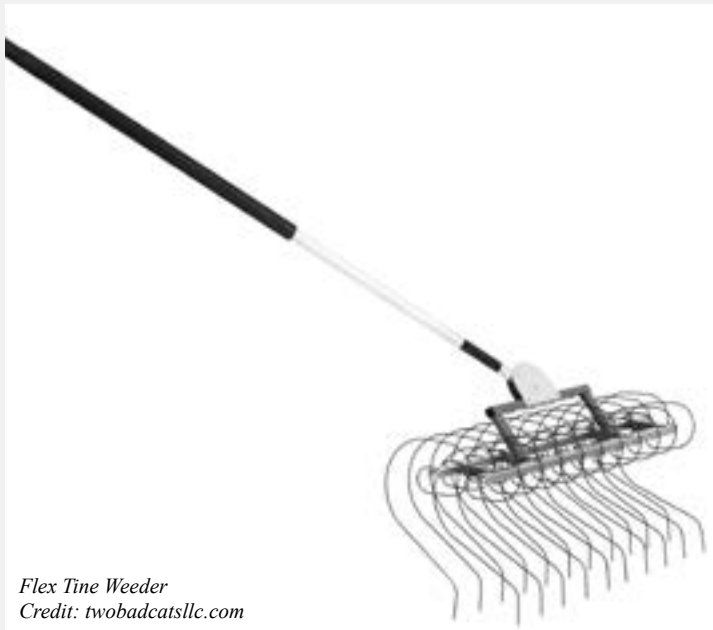
As part of their Growing Pains series, CBC's On the Coast interviewed BC organic potato farmer Anna Helmer on how COVID-19 has changed the way she'll sell her crop this year. Have a listen:

 [cbc.ca/player/play/1737069635630](https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1737069635630)



# COOL TOOLS

## Weeding 2.0 - The Market Gardener



*Flex Tine Weeder*  
Credit: [twobadcatsllc.com](https://www.twobadcatsllc.com)

*We recently came across a new post for "Weeding 2.0" on the Tools section on Jean-Martin Fortier's popular website, The Market Gardener.*

### **Flex Tine Weeder:**


"Light and and effective tool that allows for blind weeding of beds while weeds are at the white-thread stage. 30-inch version weighs 7lbs 4oz."

### **Double Wheel Hoe with Bio-Discs:**

"Tool has two wheels that straddle the crop and a modifiable toolbar - I use the disc attachment that allows you to both cultivate between rows and on the rows (by burying small emerging weeds). Works perfect for crop spaced from 5 to 8 inches between rows."

~ Jean-Martin Fortier

*If you want to see these innovative new tools in action, check out the videos at:*

 [themarketgardener.com/weeding-20](https://themarketgardener.com/weeding-20)

*Are there useful tools you swear by? DIY hybrids you couldn't do without? Mysterious implements that came with the farm? Share them with the organic community! Send a brief paragraph and a photo to Darcy at: [editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca)*



# THE LASSER LEGACY

## Raising Healthy, Nutritious, Environmentally-Friendly Cattle



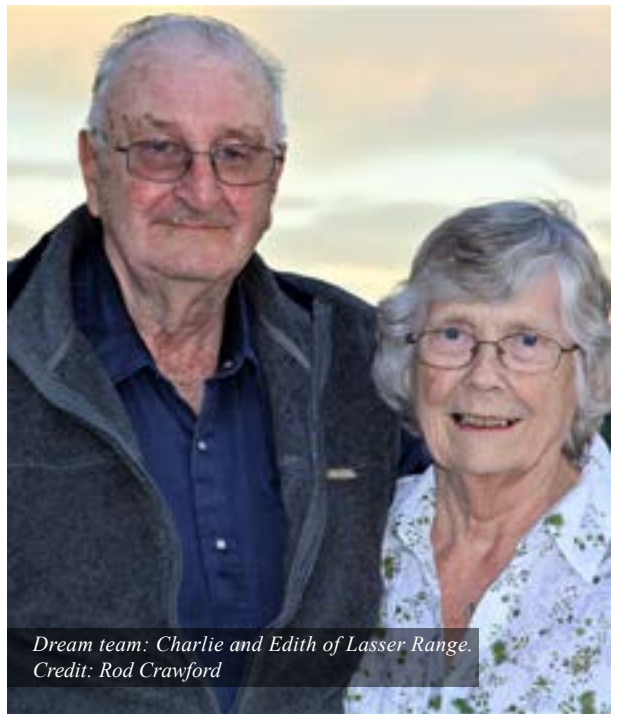
*Cattle on Pasture at Lasser Range. Credit: Rod Crawford. Right: Charlie Lasser (right) with Ron Reid on the COABC Vanguard of Organics panel in 2018. Credit: Michael Marrapese.*

By Jolene Swain

Charlie Lasser’s plan was to retire at 100. Just three weeks short of his 89th birthday, he’s been considering extending that to 110—there’s so much to learn and so much knowledge to share when it comes to raising cattle, and he’s just not quite finished.

Farming is part of Charlie’s DNA. Coming from a long line of Swiss ranchers, he finished up with school in grade nine and bought his first work horse when he was 14. “I never went to school long enough to learn that there are things you can’t do,” says Charlie. Running a team of horses by the time he was a young teen, he earned money mowing, ploughing, raking, and hauling hay to make the next investments towards having his own land to farm.

Over the past 70 plus years of farming, Charlie has had his share of side hustles in local politics and public service. “You have to get out there and help people, that’s what life is all about,” says Charlie. From the longest-serving mayor of Chetwynd (22 years), to founding or serving on numerous boards and councils, including BC Hydro,



*Dream team: Charlie and Edith of Lasser Range. Credit: Rod Crawford*



**“ I want people to remember that we worked the land, and took care of the land, we didn’t abuse it. With this virus, everything that happened before will be changing, our whole way of life will be changing. As a result, you’re going to see more people concerned about organics, and more people concerned about where their food comes from and how it is raised.”**

Northern Lights College, Lower Mainland Municipal Association, the University of British Columbia, the Chetwynd Communications Society, and even the local thrift store, it seems he’s done a little of everything. But his true calling and passion has always been farming, and it was important that anyone he dated understood that.

When he met his life partner Edith, she not only understood Charlie’s draw to the land, but came from a ranching background herself, and knew just as much about cattle as he did. Together, they made a great team—too busy farming and surviving to argue: “We used to laugh, we could never remember when we had an argument. It was hard work starting out, and we had to work together to survive.”

Edith passed in 2016, after 62 years and three days of marriage, and it is clear that she is dearly missed. After many years working at the family dairy in Pitt Meadows, Charlie and Edith brought Lasser Ranch in Chetwynd in 1971, and moved the family up in 1974.



Charlie is known as one of the early pioneers of the organic industry in BC. “When I was young, everything was organic, that’s how we farmed,” he says. When commercial fertilizers came to market in the ‘50s, he sprayed once on their farm in Pitt Meadows, and didn’t like it. He’s been



# OMRI Canada

**Stay Current** Your organic business is moving fast, and input products are changing, too. Don't risk your organic status with unverified products. OMRI.org is updated daily with new product information:

- formula changes
- ingredient updates
- product name changes
- company name changes
- clarifications to the standards

Visit [OMRI.org/Canada-list](https://www.omri.org/Canada-list)  
info@omri.org • 541.343.7600



OMRI Listed – Naturally Trusted

setting the standard for organic cattle ranching ever since. “The land and earth is like a bank account, when you build it up, it will produce and you can live off the interest,” says Charlie. “If you use fertilizer, your land becomes a drug addict, it has to have that commercial fertilizer or it will not grow.” According to Charlie, it might take a bit more time at first to build up your land, but the returns are fantastic. Fellow organic pioneer in the fruit industry and good friend Linda Edwards knows Charlie as someone always eager to try something new. “He made money as a cattle farmer, and more importantly, he had a good time doing it,” says Linda.

Of course, farming has changed a lot since Charlie’s ancestors ran cattle in the 1400s, and even since Lasser Range was established back in 1971. Antibiotics were discovered, a game changer for the dairy industry. Horses, once relied upon to round-up cattle, have been replaced by smaller and more numerous pastures in a practice and a grazing style now known as *management-intensive grazing*. And finally, amongst organic, grass-fed, and animal welfare certifications to name a few, it seems that Charlie might be on a mission to grow what he suspects will be the world’s most environmentally-friendly and nutritious cattle with his latest new feed ingredient. Call it a hunch.

Actually, it’s more than a hunch. Dr. John Church and his team at Thompson Rivers University discovered that organic grass-fed can supply an extra 30-40 mg of healthy omega-3 fatty acids per serving than conventional or ‘natural’ grain-finished beef.<sup>1</sup> In this study, over 160 sources of beef were sampled from grocery stores on Vancouver Island, and one sample stood out from the rest when it came to healthy omega-3 fatty acids. The source of that beef? You guessed it: bred and raised on Lasser ranch. But there’s more to the story. These cattle had been grass-finished at Edgar Smith’s Beaver Meadows Farm near Comox, BC. Upon further investigation, Dr. Church found that there was another interesting component of the nutrient rich beef: storm cast seaweed. Now, in collaboration with farmers like Charlie and Edgar, they are digging deeper into the nutritional differences of meat from cattle fed seaweed from an early age.

Feeding seaweed to cattle may not only lead to beef that is more nutritious, but also better for the planet. Cow burps and flatulence are well known for adding methane, a greenhouse gas that traps considerably more heat than carbon dioxide, to the atmosphere. While the number of cows on the planet is a contentious topic these days, reducing the methane production in individual cows might be a step in the right direction.

Not all seaweed is created equal. It turns out that certain strains can reduce methane output by up to 60% in live animals. And that’s not all. According to Charlie, who has started feeding Smith’s seaweed to a select group of

weaned calves on his ranch, not only are methane levels reduced, but the calves getting seaweed snacks appear to be putting on more weight than their gassy siblings.

Dr. Church and his team at TRU are working on a detailed microbial community analysis of the rumen to demonstrate that the seaweed product is able to shift activity away from methanogenic bacterial species found in the digestive tract, towards those that benefit from excess hydrogen, resulting not only in reduced methane, but an increase in production. This could confirm Charlie’s observations that adding seaweed to the diet results not only in a reduction in methane but also, an increase in beef production. But is the market ready for a low carbon footprint ‘Sea Beef’?

Feeding seaweed to cattle is not new. Coastal ranchers in places like Japan and Scotland have historically fed seaweed to their livestock. Conveniently, Charlie’s cows appear to be big fans of the variety of invasive red seaweed, *Mazzaella japonica*, harvested and baled by Edgar. “Once they get used to that seaweed, boy they go for it,” says Charlie. Other species studied down in California are not quite so palatable and require grinding and mixing with molasses to convince the cows to eat. *Mazzaella japonica* shows a lot of potential, but Charlie says “there’s a whole plethora of other seaweeds” that Dr. Church and his team are eager to try.

While we’re just now adjusting to what the global Sars-CoV-2 pandemic means for our food system, farming strategies that tackle climate change and food security have always been important to Charlie. “I want people to remember that we worked the land, and took care of the land, we didn’t abuse it,” says Charlie. “With this virus, everything that happened before will be changing, our whole way of life will be changing. As a result, you’re going to see more people concerned about organics, and more people concerned about where their food comes from and how it is raised.” By the time you read this, he may have already celebrated his 89th birthday. On that day, and the days to follow, you’ll find him out checking on the cattle, experimenting, and learning—willing and eager to pass his lifetime of knowledge on to the next generation. 🌱

*Jolene Swain farms at WoodGrain Farm, a wilderness farmstead in the Kispiox Valley north of Hazelton in the unceded lands of the Gitksan First Nation. Here she has spent the last five seasons growing organic vegetables for two local farmers’ markets and an increasing array of seed crops available through the B.C. Eco Seed Co-op, as well as helping get the hay in for the milk cow and small flock of sheep. Jolene works off-farm as an organic verification officer and consultant, and is the Central & Northern BC Land Matcher for the B.C. Land Matching Program delivered by Young Agrarians.*

References:

<sup>1</sup>Canadian Journal of Animal Science, 2015, 95(1): 49-58, doi.org/10.4141/cjas-2014-113



## YOUNG AGRARIANS FARMER PODCAST CLUB

Young Agrarians has a Farmer Podcast Club. Enjoy weekly farmer-friendly podcast recommendations delivered to your inbox!

**SIGN UP for YA's Farmer Podcast Club here:**


 [eepurl.com/dtEnmr](http://eepurl.com/dtEnmr)

Here is our pick from the YA Farmer Podcast Club Archives:

### **Monetizing Food Waste Rural Routes to Climate Solutions**

Food waste is not normally something you'd think you could make a buck off of, if you're an agricultural producer. Don't get us wrong, producers are pretty inventive when it comes to using what they and the land produce and ensuring as much as possible of an animal or crop doesn't go to waste. At the end of the day, producers can't control what consumers want to buy. For the moment, consumers want mainly food that looks a certain way and sold at fairly low prices.

Aman Adatia, CEO of Fare Community, a new Calgary-based social enterprise gearing up to make its mark in the food and beverage industry, believes how we view food waste (he prefers to call it food surplus) needs to change if we are to tackle issues like economic inefficiencies, social injustices, and climate change. Converting what we usually think of as food waste into value-added products, whether that's apples with blemishes or cuts of beef that are usually turned into ground, is one of the keys to turning this situation around.

 [youngagrarians.org/farmer-podcast-club-monetizing-food-waste](http://youngagrarians.org/farmer-podcast-club-monetizing-food-waste)

# 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](http://www.discoveryorganics.ca)

Tel 604 299 1684



## Celebrating 30 Years

Pro Organics is proud to represent BC organic producers and to be celebrating our 30th year of supporting local, organic, sustainable farming.

Today, as it was 30 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

# Sparkly Eyes, Grit, and Land Access: NEW ORGANIC FARMERS ON LEASED LAND



By Tessa Wetherill

Spring on an organic produce farm looks like baby greens, tiny radishes, overflowing seedling greenhouses, and freshly turned soil. Everything feels precious and new and brimming with possibility. Touring around Loveland Acres in Salmon Arm with farmers Robin and Maylene, those feelings were especially palpable and poignant since it's their first season on the land. They've had a long journey getting here, one filled with familiar challenges and dreams. The other familiar things these farmers have are sparkly eyes and grit, ineffable qualities that go a long way in agriculture.

As a farm business, Loveland Acres' main goal is to provide high quality organic food for as many months of the year as possible. Robin and Maylene have been personally committed to eating as locally and seasonally as possible for many years and have identified a gap, often referred to as the hunger gap, in the availability of local produce in the region.



Top: Robin and Maylene with starts. Above: Crop rows in gorgeous soil under row cover. Credit: Tessa Wetherill. Below: Robin on the tractor. Credit: Loveland Acres.





*Above: Robin in the high tunnel hoop house. Below: Maylene with the celeriac harvest. Credit: Loveland Acres*



“We want to help promote the Eat Local message all year round,” says Maylene. Which is why their next big project is to purchase and convert a shipping container into a commercial kitchen, an investment that will give them a place to process their produce, dry peppers, can tomatoes, and make pickles.

In discussing this next step in their business plan, Maylene points out that “no one talks about the money when starting a small farm.” She makes a good point. Even with all their sweat labour, these new farmers have invested a huge amount of money that they saved over a long time of working two jobs each into infrastructure, systems, and set up. They have poly tunnels, seedling greenhouses, storage spaces, and a very impressive irrigation system—all necessary to launch into marketing their products this season. The next step in building towards their goal of providing local food 12 months a year will take more capital than they have available right now, but seeing what these farmers have done in a couple years, I have no doubt they will make it happen.

In 2014, Robin and Maylene both left their professional careers in publishing and printing to pursue a siren song towards sustainable or-



*Above: Maylene with low tunnel row cover hoops. Credit: Tessa Wetherill  
Right: First farmers' market. Credit: Loveland Acres.*

ganic agriculture and a better quality of life. In her former life in Toronto, Maylene describes her experience with insomnia and a feeling of unease with the constant race and pace of the city and industry she worked in. When Maylene is asked what she loves most about farming, the answer is easy: mental space. Thinking about whatever she chooses all day long, rather than the 300 emails in her inbox. Contemplative, diverse, connected labour. That said, they both admit to having the occasional nightmare about their greenhouse flying away and that time they missed the window on flame weeding carrots!

Robin and Maylene met interning on an organic farm in Ontario. They fell in love with each other and the land and made a life-altering decision. Being in that environment and working in sync with the processes of nature, they both immediately began feeling healthier and sleeping better. They were learning that this was the life they were called to. They spent the next four years working and volunteering on farms across Canada and eventually found full-time employment working on a third-generation family-owned orchard in the Okanagan.

“For any aspiring farmer, working in agriculture is essential. It is the best way to learn and get hands-on experience. The only catch is that wages in agriculture are prohibitively low, which makes the prospect of land ownership, especially in the Okanagan, pretty unrealistic,” says Maylene. “With the average agricultural wage hovering around \$14 an hour and the average price per acre of land in the Okanagan sitting at about \$100,000, it’s not hard to see that land ownership is essentially out of the question for most agricultural workers.”

The high cost of land was the biggest hurdle they faced. Starting their new farm business on leased land was the

only viable option for them, which is how they ended up connecting with the B.C. Land Matching Program (BCLMP) and with me, the land matcher for the Okanagan region.

Loveland Acres is one of 73 matches the BCLMP has supported on over 900 acres across the province since launching in Metro Vancouver in 2016 and expanding province-wide in 2018. The BCLMP provides land matching and business support services to new and established farmers looking for land to start or grow their farm business, as well as landowners interested in finding someone to farm their land. The benefits of land matching are hands-on support services to help new farmers and landowners evaluate opportunities, access resources, and ultimately find a land match partner. The program aims to address a lack of affordable farmland as a significant barrier for farmers entering the agricultural industry. The BCLMP is delivered by Young Agrarians, a farmer to farmer resource network, and is funded by the Province of British Columbia, with support from Columbia Basin Trust, Cowichan Valley Regional District, Real Estate Foundation of B.C., Bullitt Foundation, and Patagonia.

After registering for the BCLMP, we worked together to refine their focus on what attributes Robin and Maylene were looking for in a piece of land, taking the guesswork out of the leasing process and then connecting them with interested landowners.

“The BCLMP is so much more than a program that links landowners and land seekers. They helped us negotiate a stable and secure land lease, provided advice and access to a lawyer to look over our agreement, and connected us with their business mentorship program,” says Maylene.



“If Tessa hadn’t reached out to us, we’d probably still be unsuccessfully trying to convince bankers and mortgage brokers that we weren’t crazy, and that, yes, you could make a living growing vegetables on two acres of land, with only a walk-behind tractor and a few simple pieces of equipment.”

Robin and Maylene knew from the beginning that organic certification was a priority for them, so when they were introduced to landowners Dag and Elina Falck, who own the land on which Loveland Acres has made their home, there was an instant spark of connection through their shared values.

Besides wanting to give their customers a guarantee that the food they produced was being done in a way that met the highest criteria for environmental sustainability, they have also felt the support of a community of fellow organic growers in the region. The pair emphasized the importance of being connected to a group of people who understand what they are going through, are available to answer questions, and generally help alleviate the feeling of being alone in a tough industry. On one particularly bad week, filled with unfortunate life events, including a car breaking down and other irritations, they recalled attending the annual general meeting for the North Okanagan Organic Association (NOOA). Just being in a room with other organic growers gave them the encouragement they needed to push through and keep going.

The willingness these farmers have in engaging with the community and accessing all possible resources to support their dreams has been instrumental in moving them into the exciting place of possibility they are at now. When I asked, what’s the most exciting thing for you right now, they responded by loading me up with freshly-harvested arugula

and French Breakfast radishes, which I ate in handfuls on the way home.

Land matchers love being able to help farmers achieve secure access to land to start or expand their businesses, and to help farmland owners enjoy the benefits of agriculture of all kinds on their land. Farmers, get in touch to start a conversation about leasing land for your operation! Landowners, reach out to the BCLMP to help a farmer access land, whether you have hundreds of acres of farmland, or a small urban plot. There are so many growers looking for spaces to produce food across the province, and your land might just be the perfect fit. 🌱

Send an email to [land@youngagrarians.org](mailto:land@youngagrarians.org) and a land matcher will get in touch to learn more about your needs and vision and help you get on your way to making a match. For more information about the B.C. Land Matching Program, please visit

[youngagrarians.org/land](https://youngagrarians.org/land)

*The B.C. Land Matching Program is funded by the Province of British Columbia, with support from Columbia Basin Trust, Cowichan Valley Regional District, Real Estate Foundation of B.C., Bullitt Foundation, and Patagonia.*

*Tessa Wetherill farmed full-time and with all her heart for 11 years, first in Vancouver and then the North Okanagan, before joining the Young Agrarians team as the BCLMP’s Okanagan Land Matcher. She loves all things that grow—plants, people, and communities—and what really lights her up are relationships and collaborations that form strong, diverse human ecosystems.*

# Certification Coordinator Welcomes New Online System With **OPEN ARMS!**



*Cara Nunn building her new greenhouse. Credit: Maia Nunn*

*By Corinne Impey*

When it comes to growing, organic certification, and supporting local operators, Cara Nunn could be considered an expert. She has also seen many changes over her 20-year career in the organic industry.

Cara is the Certification Coordinator for the North Okanagan Organics Association (NOOA) and the Similkameen Okanagan Organic Producers Association (SOOPA).

“My interest in growing began at a very young age as a child raised on a market garden in the Lake District of the Okanagan,” says Cara, who has a professional background in biogeography and experience working as a Managing Agrologist in the ginseng industry.

Cara started working with NOOA in 1997 and later expanded her work to include SOOPA. Now, nearly 23 years later, Cara continues to support organic growers and operators.

Most recently, Cara has been helping her operators with the switch to iCertify, COABC’s newly launched online organic certification and renewal system. At the same time, she has been learning new skills and processes related to the administration of the online program.

“The system has come together better than I could have asked for,” says Cara.

Having participated in the initial system development as well as many system demos, feedback gathering sessions, and testing, Cara played an active role in the project.

“I really appreciate the input we had in developing the questions and format,” she says.

“The system is very robust and extremely capable,” says Cara. She acknowledges that at times, it can be a bit daunting, but “the iCertify Technical Advisor has been invaluable in getting answers and finding how to navigate the system.”




Regardless of any challenges related to learning a new system, she says the move to online certification is important. "I see the biggest benefit being an integrated location for all operator information: files, emails, communications, uploads, reports. Everything—chronological and orderly!"

"Record management has been heading this way for decades," says Cara. "And the benefits go beyond the certification bodies."

"The ability to provide details about our industry to government and funding bodies will provide a stronger voice for organics. It is also important for ourselves to have an integrated, clear system to verify integrity of organics to our own members and within our industry."

Looking ahead, Cara is anticipating the launch of a new feature in iCertify: a database of approved inputs that will become available this summer. This database will be managed under the COABC umbrella of certification bodies and will be accessible to COABC members.

"To be able to offer an ongoing list of approved inputs and products throughout the community and have it accessible to our producers will keep the knowledge flowing," says Cara. "It will also streamline the time involved in verifying products that may have already been looked at by another certification body."

"Pooling resources and building community is a strength of the BC Certified Organic Program that I am happy to support." 

*Funding for this project has been provided by the Governments of Canada and British Columbia through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The program is delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC.*

## Similkameen Okanagan Organic Producers Association



Join others committed to maintaining the integrity of BC Organic farming

- First applicants membership fee deals
- Affordable certification fees
- COR options available

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

## N.O.O.A

## Farm Certification \$445/low risk \$325

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

**ORGANIC, NATURALLY.** For more than forty years, Horizon Distributors has supplied retailers with premium organic and natural products in the dry, fresh, and frozen categories. More than 5,000 SKUs provide healthy choices for your customers, who number among the 66% of Canadians who regularly buy organic foods<sup>1</sup> and the growing diversity of those who seek out natural options.

A market leader in Western Canada for decades, Horizon is the flagship company of a national network of Canadian businesses, which distribute organic and natural foods, health and beauty aids, supplements, and household products. The Horizon Group comprises the following well-established companies, which supply 22,000 organic and natural SKUs to more than 4,000 outlets across Canada:

- Horizon Distributors, Burnaby, BC
- Ontario Natural Food Company, Mississauga, ON
- Christmas Natural Products, Burnaby, BC
- Corwin Distribution, Mississauga, ON
- PSC Natural Foods, Victoria, BC
- Directa Distribution, Pointe-Claire, QC
- Planet Foods, Calgary, AB

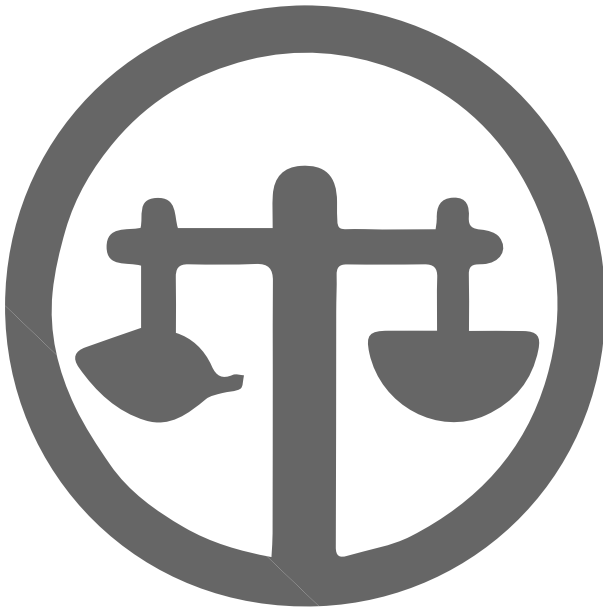
• horizondistributors.com  
• facebook.com/HorizonDistributorsCanada  
• 604.524.6610 1.800.663.1838



<sup>1</sup>COCA, "The Canadian Organic Market Trends and Opportunities 2011" November 2011



# THE PRINCIPLE OF FAIRNESS



By Anne Macey

*Originally published in The Canadian Organic Grower, Spring 2018, and updated by the author in May 2020, with thanks.*

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) has established its Principles of Organic Agriculture. Within those, IFOAM includes a Principle of Fairness, which states “Organic agriculture should be built on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.” The IFOAM text elaborates further, saying 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.”

Many of us have always thought of organic agriculture as a food system that includes social values, yet nothing in our standards speaks to social issues. The focus is very much on agronomic practices and permitted substances. Animal welfare is addressed, but when it comes to people and relationships, North Americans have resisted any

suggestion that social justice standards are needed. The argument is that those kinds of standards are written for the global South where exploitation of the work force and poor working conditions are more common. The US and Canada have labour laws to protect farm workers.

I am not so sure, and in any case, fairness in the food system is about much more than treatment of farm workers. Fairness and basic rights include fair trade, fair pricing for the farmer, and fair access to land and seeds. It means fair wages for workers, decent farmworker housing, and more. I agree that incorporating social issues into standards could be problematic, but it is time we had a serious discussion about whether they are needed—and, if not, whether there is an alternative approach. How can we create trust and demonstrate that organic farmers respect their workers as much as the critters in the soil? How can we ensure farmers get a fair price for the quality food they produce?

Colleagues in the US (Michael Sligh, Elizabeth Henderson, and others) worked on these issues with the Agricultural Justice Project (see sidebar on Social Standards in Food Production), developing social stewardship standards for fair and just treatment of people who work in organic and sustainable agriculture. These standards currently fall into the realm of “beyond organic” with the stated purpose:

- To allow everyone involved in organic and sustainable production and processing a quality of life that meets their basic needs and allows an adequate return and satisfaction from their work, including a safe working environment.
- To progress toward an entire production, processing and distribution chain that is both socially just and ecologically responsible.<sup>1</sup>


Here in Canada, two things got me thinking more about the need to introduce something on the topic of fairness in the Canadian Standard. The first was hearing about the poor housing with no potable water for migrant workers on a fruit farm in the Okanagan (not an organic farm), despite laws being in place to protect those workers.

The second is the debate about farm interns and apprentice rights on organic farms. With high labour requirements, many organic farms depend on WWOOFers and other short-term interns for their work force. But sometimes

the relationship sours and the workers end up feeling exploited. While many farmers commit to providing a rich and rewarding experience for their interns, in other cases conditions are less than ideal. An intern's expectation will likely include learning what it takes to become a farmer, not just how to weed carrots.

Maybe we don't need to spell out lots of specific requirements in the standards, but we could at least make some principled statements about the need for organic agriculture to provide fair working and living conditions for farmers and their workers, whatever their status. For years this type of approach was used in the livestock standards, without the need to spell out exactly what was needed for compliance. We only articulated more specific rules when consumers became unsure about the ability of organic agriculture to address animal welfare issues and started looking for other labels. We could also include statements about fair prices and financial returns for farmers or buyers' rights to a good quality product.

Unfortunately, since writing this article not much has changed. To bring the discussion to the table, I made some proposals for the 2018 standards revision process. The Organic Technical Committee set up a task force on the topic but no agreement was reached, although it might end up as an informative appendix to facilitate the review in 2025. In the meantime, following a discussion at the 2020 COABC conference we wondered if COABC should conduct a pilot project which, if successful, could be brought forward to the 2025 standards review. Perhaps a first step might be for organic operators to have a "letter of agreement" or similar in the first language of their employees and interns committing the operator to uphold the principles of social fairness regardless of any other formal labour contract that might exist.

The conversation continues. 

*Anne Macey is a long-time advocate for organic agriculture at local, provincial, national and international levels. She has served on the CGSB technical committee on organic agriculture, the ECOA Animal Welfare Task Force, the COABC Accreditation Board and on the Accreditation Committee for the International Organic Accreditation Service, as well as her local COG chapter. She is a writer/editor of COG's Organic Livestock Handbook, a retired sheep farmer, and a past president of COG.*

Footnote:

<sup>1</sup>Source: Agricultural Justice Project. 2012. Social Stewardship Standards in Organic and Sustainable Agriculture: Standards Document.

[agriculturaljusticeproject.org/media/uploads/2016/08/02/AJP\\_Standards\\_Document\\_9412.pdf](https://agriculturaljusticeproject.org/media/uploads/2016/08/02/AJP_Standards_Document_9412.pdf)

## Social Standards in Food Production

### Domestic Fair Trade

The Agricultural Justice Project is a member of the Domestic Fair Trade Association along with a wide range of farmworker and farmer groups, retailers, processors and NGOs from across North America. These groups are united in their mission to promote and protect the integrity of domestic fair trade.

Farmer Direct Co-op, a 100% farmer-owned, organic co-op based in Saskatchewan, was a leader in domestic fair trade, as the first business in North America to earn that certification. Its membership includes more than 60 family farms producing organic small grains and pulse crops in the Prairie region.

Domestic fair-trade certification is based on a set of 16 principles, encompassing health, justice, and sustainability:

- Family scale farming
- Capacity building for producers and workers
- Democratic and participatory ownership and control
- Rights of labor
- Equality and opportunity
- Direct trade
- Fair and stable pricing
- Shared risk & affordable credit
- Long-term trade relationships
- Sustainable agriculture
- Appropriate technology
- Indigenous peoples' rights
- Transparency & accountability
- Education & advocacy
- Responsible certification and marketing
- Animal welfare

Source: *Domestic Fair Trade Association* ([thedfta.org/about/vision-and-principles](http://thedfta.org/about/vision-and-principles))

### Aquaculture

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) includes social requirements in its standards certifying responsibly farmed seafood.

"ASC certification imposes strict requirements based on the core principles of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), these include prohibiting the use of child labour or any form of forced labour. All ASC certified farms are safe and equitable working environments where employees earn a decent wage and have regulated working hours. Regular consultation with surrounding communities about potential social impacts from the farm and proper processing of complaints are also required by certified farms."

Source: *Aquaculture Stewardship Council*



# WORKPLACE SAFETY

## During the time of COVID-19

*By Wendy Bennett - Executive Director, AgSafe BC*

It's fair to say that there isn't one farmer in British Columbia who has experienced anything like what we are going through right now with the COVID-19 outbreak. The invasive spread of the virus has forced most businesses to suspend or alter operations.

In BC, food and agriculture providers are designated essential services and are allowed to continue operating under strict COVID-19 related health and safety protocols.

Agricultural producers are pretty diligent about safety on their farms. They have safety policies and plans to keep their workers, families, and themselves safe. But 2020 has not been business as usual as farmers have had to adapt to the added challenge of COVID-19.

The BC Centre for Disease Control has identified important actions that we all can do to help impede the spread





*Left, below left: Farmers working safely with appropriate PPE at ALM Farm in Sooke, BC. Credit: ALM Farm. Above: Planting pickles the safe way in an enclosed space with more than one person at Hope Farm Organics. Credit: Hope Farm Organics*

of COVID-19—physical distancing, thorough hand washing, and wearing a covering over the mouth and nose (e.g. non-surgical mask or shield) when physical distancing is not possible. Implementing and enforcing these practices in a workplace is not easy.

AgSafe is BC’s non-profit health and safety association for agricultural producers, and works with farmers and ranchers to help them develop and implement robust workplace health and safety systems.

In response to COVID-19, AgSafe has developed a large library of health and safety resources and materials designed specifically for the agriculture industry. The resources reflect industry requirements and range from best practices and employer protocols to checklists and signs in multiple languages.

## COVID-19 Resources

**Employer Protocols & Procedures:** A collection of information and document templates for on-site prevention, exposure control planning, protocols and risk assessments, safety notices, and health assessments.

**Risk Assessment:** WorkSafeBC expects every employer to conduct a workplace COVID-19-specific risk assessment. A Risk Assessments & Infection Prevention & Control Protocols document is available for employers to download in PDF and Word formats.

**Temporary Foreign Workers:** Employers can download a TFW Application Checklist and supporting documents, and many of the COVID-19 documents and signs have been translated into Spanish, French, and Punjabi to help employers communicate safety protocols and practices.



**Signage:** Bilingual versions of hand washing and physical distancing signs in English-Punjabi and English-Spanish can be downloaded for printing.

**New Worker Orientation Video:** One of AgSafe’s most popular resources, the New Worker Orientation video, has been updated and translated into Spanish. This short video can be included in new and young worker orientations. Supporting booklets and checklists can be requested from the AgSafe office as well as downloaded from the website.

**Mental Health:** The impact of the outbreak on the industry adds another layer of stress. Looking after our mental health is as important as looking after our physical health. Links to local, provincial, and national mental health organizations are included in the COVID-19 resources.

**Certificate of Recognition:** For employers working on their Certificate of Recognition safety certification or re-certification, all program related activities and audits must follow the COVID-19 safety and hygiene practices

outlined by public health agencies. This is outlined in AgSafe’s COVID-19 information.

AgSafe is monitoring the situation very closely and actively working with other health and safety associations, industry, and government to keep information accurate and up-to-date. 🌿

If you are an agricultural employer in BC you can access AgSafe’s health and safety services in several ways:

Contact your regional AgSafe Safety Consultant or Advisor:

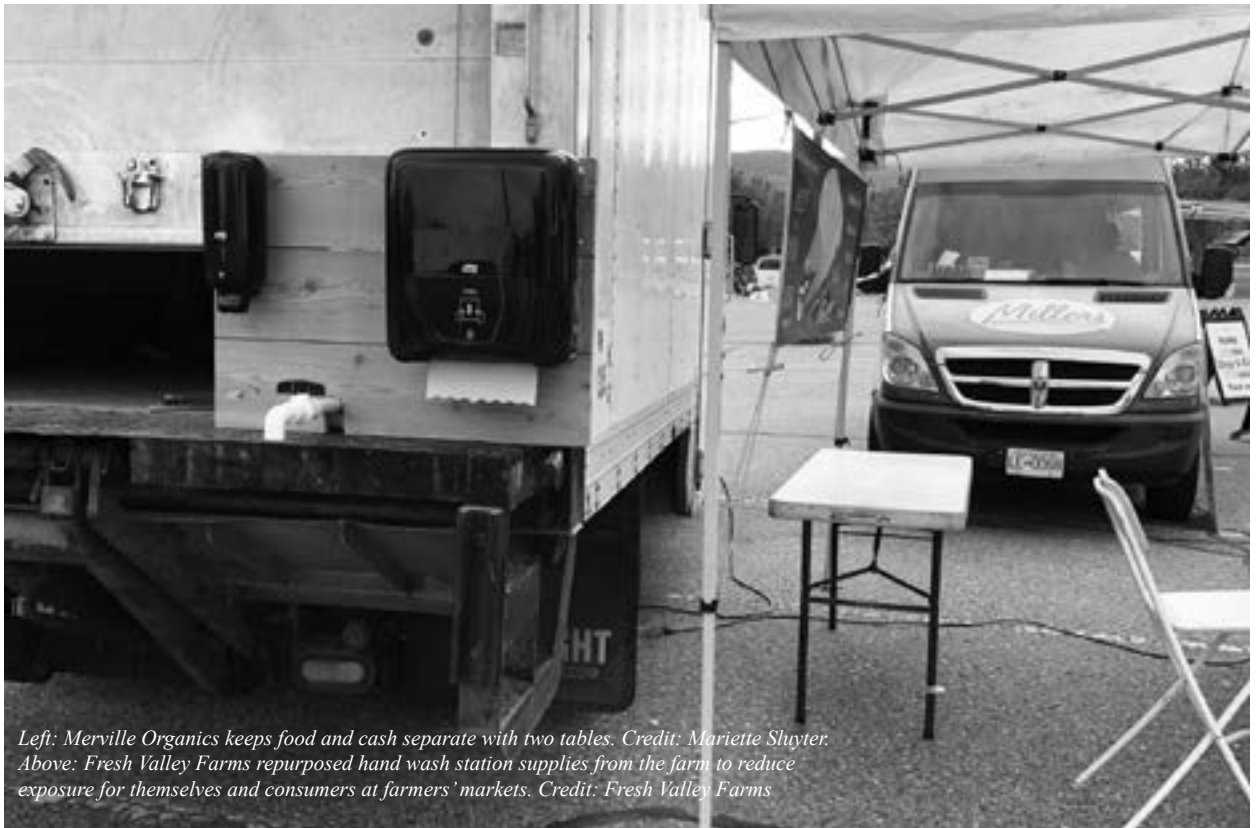
📍 [agsafebc.ca/about/our-team](https://agsafebc.ca/about/our-team)

Call the AgSafe office at 1-877-533-1789 or email

📍 [contact@AgSafeBC.ca](mailto:contact@AgSafeBC.ca)

For COVID-19 resources and other industry-specific workplace health and safety information, visit

📍 [AgSafeBC.ca](https://AgSafeBC.ca)



*Left: Merville Organics keeps food and cash separate with two tables. Credit: Mariette Sluyter.  
Above: Fresh Valley Farms repurposed hand wash station supplies from the farm to reduce exposure for themselves and consumers at farmers' markets. Credit: Fresh Valley Farms*

## Additional Resources

### BC Ministry of Agriculture

Response to COVID-19:

🔗 [gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/covid-19-response](https://gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/covid-19-response)

Temporary Foreign Farmworkers Must Self-Isolate:

🔗 [gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/covid-19-response/temporary-foreign-farmworkers](https://gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/covid-19-response/temporary-foreign-farmworkers)

Emergency Management for Agriculture:

🔗 [gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/business-market-development/emergency-management](https://gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/business-market-development/emergency-management)

### WorkSafeBC

Preventing exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace: A guide for employers:

🔗 [worksafebc.com/en/resources/about-us/guides/preventing-exposure-to-covid-19-in-the-workplace?lang=en](https://worksafebc.com/en/resources/about-us/guides/preventing-exposure-to-covid-19-in-the-workplace?lang=en)

### Government of British Columbia

Revision of the Workers Compensation Act (April 2020):

🔗 [gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/about-bcs-justice-system/legislation-policy/legislation-updates/workers-compensation-act](https://gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/about-bcs-justice-system/legislation-policy/legislation-updates/workers-compensation-act)



# For BC Fish Harvesters, Sustainability is a Way of Life

*Prawn harvest. Credit: Melissa Collier*

*By Marc Fawcett-Atkinson*

**W**ith a campervan-sized cabin and two children, a family dinner aboard Joel and Melissa Collier's fishing boat is a lesson in gymnastics. There's barely room for a plate—never mind elbows and legs—but the Comox-based family wouldn't have it otherwise.

"Fishermen don't fish for money," said Melissa Collier, a swimming scallop, salmon, and prawn fish harvester, and

co-owner, with her husband Joel, of West Coast Wild Scallops. "There's so many other things that draw you here. The idea of providing food for other people. That where you work is the most amazing place in the world. And that you appreciate the animals you're able to harvest and the environment that you're able to live in."

She's not alone. There are about 5,600 fish harvesters working in BC's \$500 million industry, most of them





*Freshly harvested scallops. Credit: Melissa Collier*

small-boat harvesters deeply embedded in the socio-economic and cultural fabric of their communities and First Nations. Fishing has sustained Indigenous and non-Indigenous people on this coast for generations, offering food security, employment, and community while fish harvesters' cultural and ecological knowledge of the BC coast is grounded in their work. Fish are life to coastal communities—sustaining them and their habitat is at the heart of the Colliers' and other small-scale fish harvesters' work.

“Fishermen want sustainable fisheries,” said Collier. “We rely on our scientists to define what are unsustainable limits and determine what we can catch. And then we stay within those limits.”

The limits, established by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) annually, are only part of the picture. Harvesters like Collier rely on low-impact fishing techniques and local knowledge to minimize their impact on the marine ecosystems sustaining them. Decisions around where and

when to fish within season openings allow them to minimize bycatch, gear loss, or negative impacts on the benthic environment. This is made easier by their smaller vessels (about half of the fishing vessels in BC are under 35 feet while only two percent exceed 80 feet) and low-impact gear, allowing them to attend to highly localized environmental conditions.

“I’m beholden to my crew and to my family in terms of how we’re making fishing decisions,” explained Guy Johnston, a small-scale salmon and prawn harvester based in the Cowichan Valley, on Vancouver Island. “In a big industrial operation, you’re gonna be forced to keep going even if you’ve got a lot of bycatch or if you’re hurting the ecosystem.”

The combination of personal responsibility and an effective management structure has made BC’s fisheries among the world’s most ecologically well-managed. They are not, however, sustainable, as minimal consideration is given to coastal communities’ socio-economic health, cultural well-being, food security, and resilience in the face of crises. A decades-long focus on narrow ecological and economic targets by DFO—as opposed to focusing on a holistic sustainability grounded in ecological and human well-being—has increased corporate and foreign ownership, prioritized export markets, and pushed many small-scale harvesters out of the industry entirely. Collier and Johnston are exceptions and many of their friends and fellow harvesters operate under direct or indirect corporate control.

That’s because most BC fisheries are managed through an unregulated market for licences and individual transferable quotas (ITQs) where anyone, including speculative investors and multinational corporations, can own access rights to BC fisheries. Access to fish—once a key source of food, cultural cohesion, and socio-economic well-being in coastal BC—has been transformed into a global commodity. These owners will then lease their quota and licences, often worth hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars, to fish harvesters before the season for an upfront price. Lease fees can reach up to 85 percent of the estimated value of the fish, leaving fish harvesters struggling financially, unable to cover basic operating costs and to reinvest in their communities after paying them. Large factory boats, usually owned by corporations or wealthy individuals—which can stay at sea longer, harvest more efficiently, and have a far greater ecological footprint than smaller operators like Johnston or the Colliers—are prioritized in this system.


Food security in BC’s coastal communities and First Nations has also been negatively impacted. Geared to maximize profits instead of considering the overall well-being of the province’s coastal regions, the industry has largely focused on serving higher-value international markets in the United States, Asia, and Europe. The result: About 85 percent of the seafood harvested in Canada is exported,

while Canadians import close to 90 percent of the seafood consumed in the country.

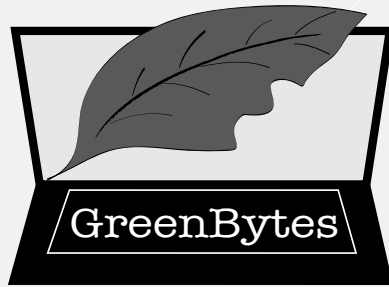
Without access to the full value of the fish they catch—whether that value is generated by selling to global markets or more locally—many fish harvesters are prevented from reinvesting in their crews, families, and adjacent communities, while fewer young people can enter the industry. This lack of local investment is felt throughout coastal communities, both by industry-specific trades like boat-building, and further afield in supermarkets, farmer’s markets, and other areas of regional economic activity. Nor is it limited to fish harvesters’ incomes, but also impacts their communities’ health and ability to sustain intergenerational knowledge, local stewardship initiatives, and traditional marine knowledge, cultures, and ecosystem well-being.

“Fisheries are not only about employment but also about [a] sense of identity, belonging, culture, and much more,” notes a 2017 report by the T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation and Ecotrust Canada on the issue, *Just Transitions, Just Transactions: Towards a Truly Sustainable Fisheries in BC*. “The decline of wellbeing in BC communities historically based on fishing is well-documented, with increased unemployment and drug use, loss of infrastructure and youth retention, as well as increased youth delinquency and suicide.”

Still, there are glimmers of hope. In May 2019 the federal Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans recommended significant overhauls to BC’s fisheries policy regime that would prioritize local investments and sustaining the industry’s cultural and socio-economic importance. Last year, many of the key ideas explored in that report started the process of being made into law, but only for East Coast fish harvesters. These overhauls would prioritize a holistic approach to sustainable management that balances healthy marine ecosystems, economic demands, and thriving, resilient communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has also significantly increased British Columbians’ interest in purchasing their food locally. Johnston, who runs a community-supported fishery (CSF), said he has seen significant public interest in his program, echoing the experiences of other small-scale harvesters who do direct sales or CSFs. The Colliers are also looking to increase the number of British Columbians who can buy their wild scallops, prawns, and salmon.

“My husband is a fourth-generation fisherman,” says Collier. “We want to be able to fish every year. We want our children to be able to fish, and we will do everything we can to make that possible.” 

*Marc Fawcett-Atkinson is the communications manager for the T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation, a BC-based NGO which advocates for a future of abundant, sustainable fisheries, and healthy ecosystems that support thriving communities in B.C.*



## WEBINAR ON MARKETING DURING COVID-19

Did you miss AgriService BC's webinar, Pivoting your Farm Production and Marketing Plan During COVID-19, presented by BC organic farmer Chris Bodnar?

"Many growers are facing uncertainty this season as their marketing channels have changed or disappeared. With information changing daily, it is difficult to know how to plan for the months ahead. However, at this early point in the season, it is still possible to make changes to crop and/or marketing plans. This webinar will provide growers with a framework for identifying their risks and making plans for their production and marketing. We will discuss how these changes can be used to help mitigate risk. Content will include using cost of production analysis to understand impacts of crop choices and opportunities for accessing alternate marketing outlets. This webinar is most applicable to small- and medium-sized farm operators."

The webinar can be viewed anytime, for free at:

 [youtube.com/watch?v=lfHxiRkF5nk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfHxiRkF5nk)

**NATURE'S FARE MARKETS**

**AT OUR CORE**

**100% CERTIFIED ORGANIC PRODUCE**

We always choose local farmers when in season.

<p>get a truly healthy glow</p> <p><b>NATURAL PERSONAL CARE</b></p>	<p>get the goodness to go</p> <p><b>ORGANIC JUICE &amp; SMOOTHIE BAR</b></p>
<p>enjoy better options</p> <p><b>ETHICALLY SOURCED MEAT &amp; DAIRY</b></p>	<p>create wholesome meals</p> <p><b>HANDPICKED GROCERIES</b></p>
<p>good-for-you fare for all</p> <p><b>GLUTEN-FREE, VEGAN &amp; ALL DIETARY NEEDS</b></p>	<p>kick-start your health</p> <p><b>PREMIUM VITAMINS &amp; SUPPLEMENTS</b></p>

KAMLOOPS | KELOWNA | LANGLEY | PENTICTON | VERNON | WEST KELOWNA | WHITE ROCK

naturesfare.com   



# A Network of Support for BC's Ag Industry in COVID-19



Credit: Gabriel Jimenez

By Karina Sakalauskas

I know the past two months have been a challenge to all. I hope your families and workers are staying healthy and safe at your farms.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak and to respect physical distancing measures, Ministry staff are working remotely but are still available to assist you. We continue to support the sector's needs by providing services via email, phone, and through virtual meetings whenever possible. As we move on to the next stage of BC's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are attempting to regain a sense of normalcy.

During these last two months, the Sector Development Branch at the Ministry, to which regional agrologists and industry specialists such as myself belong, has been reaching out to industry stakeholders and reporting to executives on the impacts experienced by the agriculture sector with regards to COVID-19 containment efforts.

I am in constant contact with COABC and representatives specific to their commodity portfolio such as organic farmers from different areas and from different food and beverage categories (poultry, livestock, dairy, veggies, fruit), organic processors and distributors, the accreditation board of COABC, certification bodies, and inspectors among others.

Some of the current impacts on the organic sector, identified through outreach efforts, are as follows:

- Revenue losses from closed farmers' markets, restaurants, and other sales outlets and difficulties in finding new supply routes.
- Lack of support for small-scale diversified farmers (lack of qualification for support and insurance programs).
- Lack of capacity for non-profit industry associations to address issues without stable revenues.
- Delays in audits and inspections, including for organic certification. New growers or those in transition to be

certified organic will be most impacted by cancellations or delays.

- Information technology challenges in conducting remote inspections as well as in the transition to e-commerce by farmers.
- Labour concerns and difficulty in productivity due to physical distancing measures.
- Loss of WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) impacts organic farmers, farmers' markets, and small-scale diversified producers.
- Shortages of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other supplies.

Throughout the last week of April and first week of May, the Ministry of Agriculture planned a series of meetings for Minister Lana Popham to engage directly with industries of varying commodities and food system groups over a phone call (Phase 1). COABC's executive director, Eva-Lena Lang, members of the COABC board, and organic farmers were invited to participate in a roundtable on April 30th, 2020.

Some highlights of the topics discussed include: support for certification bodies and COABC, support for small farms and market gardeners, collaboration between the organic sector and the Ministry, access to slaughter and processing capacity, alternative food supply chains, seed production shortages, and infrastructure and postharvest storage facilities for the organic sector. I have followed up with COABC, providing resources and initiatives related to the topics discussed. The Minister of Agriculture, Lana Popham is planning to engage with the industry again around June (Phase 2).

During this time of uncertainty, there is an overwhelming amount of information to digest. Here is a summary of the latest activities that the Ministry is conducting in response to COVID-19:

## Funding opportunities

### BC Agri-Business Planning Program

The BC Agri-Business Planning Program is now open to support producers and food processors through two streams:

- COVID-19 Business Recovery Planning to help BC producers and processors develop and implement an immediate and long-term recovery plan.
- Specialized Business Planning to enable BC producers and processors to make more informed decisions and strengthen their business.

[gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-sea-food/programs/agri-business-planning-program](https://gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-sea-food/programs/agri-business-planning-program)

### BC Food and Beverage (BCFB) Protecting our People: PPE Access Program

BCFB announced a program to procure and offer PPE for the exclusive benefit of the food production, seafood, and agriculture sectors in BC. Companies needing PPE can purchase through this initiative. BCFB's goal is to order in large enough quantities to make them more affordable for industry to purchase them.

[bcfoodbeverage.wixsite.com/cv19news/ppe](https://bcfoodbeverage.wixsite.com/cv19news/ppe)

### On-Farm and Post-Farm Food Safety Program (OFFS): COVID-19 funding now available

OFFS is offering funding for protective and safety equipment for the April 2020 to March 2021 fiscal year. Eligible companies can seek funding to acquire PPE and other approved safety supplies for use at their facilities in order to maintain a safe workplace and mitigate the risk of COVID-19. With applications for personal protective equipment funding only, the usually mandatory Good Agricultural Practices assessment requirement is waived.

[bcfoodsafety.ca](https://bcfoodsafety.ca)

## Funding updates

### Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA)

CEBA has decreased the requirements for a payroll of \$20k to make the funds more eligible for sole proprietors (i.e. owner/operators of small farms).

[covid.smallbusinessbc.ca/hc/en-us/articles/360046424393](https://covid.smallbusinessbc.ca/hc/en-us/articles/360046424393)

## Resources and more

### Recommendations for U-Pick, Farm Stands and Agri-tourism

These new documents outline information for U-pick, farm stands, and agri-tourism operators to meet Provincial Health Officer (PHO) orders, notices, and guidance. The information in these documents is meant to complement PHO recommendations.

[gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-sea-food/covid-19-response#PHO-Orders](https://gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-sea-food/covid-19-response#PHO-Orders)

### BC Food Product Notification and Tracking Tool

The Ministry Food Service and Distribution working group has developed a tool to track existing overages and shortages of BC products due to COVID-19, sharing this information with potential markets. If you are experiencing difficulty in finding sales channels for your products or are lacking in inventory, please email me at

[karina.sakalauska@gov.bc.ca](mailto:karina.sakalauska@gov.bc.ca)

## BC's Restart Plan and the Agriculture and Seafood Sector - Important Information

Many sectors, including Agriculture, are encouraged to make plans and establish protocols on how they can operate safely in line with Public Health and Safety Guidelines. WorkSafeBC and the Ministry of Agriculture will work with industry associations to ensure the direction and guidance they provide to their members meets the requirements set out by the Provincial Health Officer. Individual businesses will need to ensure their own plans align with these sectoral plans.

[gov.bc.ca/restartbc?bcgovtm=RestartBCinformationforAgricultureSector](https://gov.bc.ca/restartbc?bcgovtm=RestartBCinformationforAgricultureSector)

## Receiving Temporary Foreign Workers - Provincial Inspections for COVID-19

All temporary foreign workers arriving in BC for seasonal farm work are required to self-isolate in government-managed accommodations for 14 days before being transported to their farm. Host farm operators must ensure a safe workplace and demonstrate proof of an inspection control plan with the Ministry of Agriculture.

[gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/covid-19-response/temporary-foreign-farm-workers](https://gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/covid-19-response/temporary-foreign-farm-workers)

## Guidelines for Protecting BC Farmers and Farm Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

[gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-farms-farm-workers.pdf](https://gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-farms-farm-workers.pdf)

## On-Farm Food Safety and Good Agriculture Practices: COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

[gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/food-safety/good-agricultural-practices/frequently\\_asked\\_gap\\_questions\\_re\\_covid-19.pdf?bcgovtm=RestartBCinformationforAgricultureSector](https://gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/food-safety/good-agricultural-practices/frequently_asked_gap_questions_re_covid-19.pdf?bcgovtm=RestartBCinformationforAgricultureSector)

## Small Lot Pork Producer Management & Production

BC AGRI, in collaboration with BC Pork, have released a new resource manual titled Small Lot Pork Producer Management & Production. While not related to COVID specifically, it is of special interest as many people are starting to raise their own animals and would like to learn more about best management and recommended animal husbandry practices.

[gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/](https://gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/)

[agricultural-land-and-environment/strengthening-farming/farm-practices/bc\\_small\\_lot\\_pork\\_producer\\_resource\\_manual.pdf](https://agricultural-land-and-environment/strengthening-farming/farm-practices/bc_small_lot_pork_producer_resource_manual.pdf)

To keep up-to-date on how we are supporting you, I would recommend signing up for our AgriService BC bulletin. Sign up here:

[agriservicebc.campayn.com/contact\\_list\\_form/signup/88410](https://agriservicebc.campayn.com/contact_list_form/signup/88410)

The Ministry of Agriculture maintains a list of resources for businesses, including support for businesses on our website.

[gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/covid-19-response](https://gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/covid-19-response)

As we continue to adjust to the ever-changing social landscape in the face of COVID-19, I would like to say thank you to everyone continuing to work on your farms to support the local organic food sector. 🌱

Please feel free to send me your comments, ideas, and questions at [karina.sakalauskas@gov.bc.ca](mailto:karina.sakalauskas@gov.bc.ca)

*Karina is the Organic Specialist with the BC Ministry of Agriculture.*

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:

## DIY ECOMMERCE TOOLKIT



Are you looking to move your business online, transition from what you're currently using, or integrate Point of Sale with your online sales for your farm or food business? Young Agrarians put together an awesome DIY website toolkit to help you get started!

[youngagrarians.org/ecommerce-farmers/](https://youngagrarians.org/ecommerce-farmers/)



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: PST Number: _____ Business Number: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option 2: Certificate of Exemption: <a href="#">FIN 490</a>

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	\$15.00	Full Case-\$190.00		

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		
<b>NEW!! COABC T-shirts</b> 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		
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.



## SAFETY READY COR Self-Assessment Tool

Safety Certificate of Recognition

1-877-533-1789

SafetyReady.AgSafeBC.ca



FREE Online  
Self-Assessment

Get feedback on your  
health and safety program

# C

**Certify:** We believe in providing certification with competence, knowledge and professionalism.

# E

**Ethical:** We believe in providing service with a high moral standard and integrity.

# R

**Reputation:** We believe in developing and building trust with our clients and consumers while growing our client base.

# T

**Transparency:** We believe in maintaining accountability with the standards that guide us.

# I

**Interests:** We believe in protecting our current programs while proactively diversifying.

# F

**Future:** We are constantly looking for opportunities to improve our systems to meet our high standard of customer service.

# Y

**You:** We believe service should be given from our team to yours with care, professionalism, knowledge and pride.

## WHY CERTIFY WITH PACS?

Friendly Knowledgeable  
Certification Experts

Dedicated to the diversity  
and evolution of the  
organic certification  
industry in Canada.

### FOLLOW US:

PACSOrganic 

@pacs\_organic 



### CONTACT US

admin@pacscertifiedorganic.ca  
www.pacscertifiedorganic.ca  
Phone: 250-558-7927

CROPS - ORCHARDS - GREENHOUSES  
LIVESTOCK - DAIRY - WILD CROPS  
VINEYARDS - WINERIES - CIDER  
BREWERIES - DISTILLERIES  
CHOCOLATIERS - COFFEE  
MOBILE JUICERS  
CANNABIS  
& MORE

