BC Organic Grower

British Columbia Certified Organic

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President's Message

by Linda Edwards

Summer is supposed to be a quiet period for the COABC. Everyone is busy farming ... no time for projects and programs. Well, that seems to have changed this year.

For one thing, there was IFOAM in August. Everyone who was able to go agrees it was a wonderful experience. The COABC booth at both the Congress and at the World Exhibition was one of the busiest. This was partly due to its wonderful appearance. Thanks, Jovanka! The free Sunrise apples donated by Cawston Cold Storage on behalf of some of the organic growers in Cawston also helped. And probably the most important was the friendly, helpful volunteers who staffed the booth. Many helped but Ingrid Northwood, Steve Gallagher, Paddy Doherty and Ted Buchan devoted a tremendous amount of energy and time and we thank them. Thanks too, to Leo Deschamps who was a good neighbour at the World Exhibition.

There is an interesting footnote to the World Exhibition. This two day event of thousands of participants and visitors mostly pursuing food-oriented interests – i.e. buying and eating organic food products – managed after recycling to generate only 65 pounds of garbage!

Then there was the Food Safety survey which was carried on throughout the summer. See Lee McFadyen's report on page 22.

The Trust technical committee, a.k.a. the Organic Sector Development Program committee, has also been hard at work during the summer, and was able to approve two projects: activities at IFOAM to promote the BC Organic sector, and the first stage of development of a marketing strategy – sometimes called the Checkmark project. Both of these responded to priorities in the Strategic Plan. The committee is made up of Herman Bruns, Hans Buchler, Ben Brandsema, Cathleen Kneen and myself from COABC. Jo Ann Sandhu is the BCMAFF representative, Tracy Innes represents Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Walter Goerzen has been appointed as Investment Ag's ex-officio representative. Kristen Kane has been hired on a part time basis to administer the project.(She can be contacted at the COABC office.)

Funds are to be allocated according to the priorities and categories outlined in the Strategic Plan, but are not limited to those initiated by COABC itself. If you have an idea for a project which may be eligible for funding through the Trust, contact Kristen at the office for more information.

10th Anniversary AGM Upcoming!

February 14th to 16th, 2003
at Camp Alexandra
Crescent Beach, White Rock, BC

Registration Deadline January 24

Keynote Address

will be by Bob Williams of the VanCity Community Foundation on the theme Organic Agriculture & Sustainable Community Development.

The experience of developing the IFOAM and marketing projects made it clear that while there are a number of projects COABC needs to undertake to fulfill the Strategic Plan, the Board does not have the volunteer resources to write these proposals, find the matching funds and oversee their initial implementation. Some of the administrative monies were therefore allocated to hire a project developer. A competition was held and Gunta Vitins was hired. Under the direction of the Board, she will be writing proposals for the areas described in Sections 5 and 6 of the Strategic Plan.

See the special issue of the BCOG July 2002 for more details on the Strategic Plan.

The next big event for COABC will be the AGM February 8th til 10th in White Rock. If you have attended an AGM before, you don't need me to convince you to try and come. If you haven't taken part before, make this year the one to do it. No matter what form or venue we have used for our AGM, they have all been well worth

attending, even though some may have been better than others. Part of the reward is information gained, opinions heard and expressed and knowing you are participating in the functioning of this wonderful and vital organization. Another and maybe even more important aspect is the fun and fellowship that occurs.

This year we are reverting to a tried and true format, with workshops as well as a business meeting and social event – on the model of Naramata and Parksville. The AGM Committee is hard at work trying to confirm a roster of very exciting speakers. The general framework is on page 30 next to the registration form. Final details of speakers, workshops and timetable will be circulated to CBs as soon as they are available, and will be sent directly to all registered participants. In the meantime, do send in your registration. There will be room for only 80 registrants – so don't be disappointed!

This will also be my last AGM as your President. It has been a fascinating, challenging, and ultimately enjoyable two years. I wish all the best to the next President – and I suppose I am looking forward, just a little bit, to having some more time for farming! ✓

Standards Review ready for comment

The Standards Review Committee members are nominated by each Certifying Body and appointed at the Annual General Meeting. They meet throughout the year and must circulate a draft of any changes to the membership of the CBs for six weeks for feedback before final ratification. Changes are implemented on January 1 of each year.

The Standards Review Committee has completed its initial review of number of issues, and a document was posted to the COABC website on November 1 for public review and comment up to December 15, 2002. This document is on pages 28-30 of this issue of the BCOG. It can also be viewed at the COABC website <www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca> in the "what's new" section. Please take at look at the proposed standards changes and send your comments to the COABC office.

The proposed organic land management and greenhouse standards are available from the website (as above) or in print from the office in first draft form. That means no decision is going to be made this year, but people who are interested should read them and send their comments to the Standards Review Committee via the COABC office.

Remember that every CB needs to nominate a member of the Standards Committee as well as a Director for the COABC Board at the AGM!

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

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Next Issue Theme:
Soil & Seeds

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COABC in 2003 and Beyond

by Linda Edwards

At the last Annual General meeting of the COABC, the changing nature of certifying bodies, the theory of proportional representation, and the need to re-examine the structure of the Board was discussed at some length. Bob McCoubrey wrote an excellent article summarizing this in the Spring issue of the BC Organic Grower. This topic has also been on the agenda of the last two Board conference calls.

What is described here is what the Board feels will be the best way for the organization to function in a democratic fashion – at least for the next year or so. It will be monitored and adapted as needed depending on the continual changes occurring in the organic movement.

the things which will not change

★ As decreed in our by-laws, only certifying bodies can be voting members on the COABC Board.

★ Each certifying body currently sending a Board member to the COABC will continue to be eligible to do so.

★ These representatives will continue, as they do now, to be the majority on the Board.

what will change

✯ Certifying bodies will be able to elect one representative for every 50 members instead of one representative per certifying body.

As a movement, we have always prided ourselves on democratic governance. However, representation on the Board from the existing CBs is no longer equitable. There are certifying bodies with as few as 15 members and one with 150 +. Currently each sends one representative to the Board. It is felt that the idea proposed at the last AGM of one Board member for every 50 enterprises within its certification program would correct this imbalance.

The number 50 works because it keeps the number of directors about the same as it is now. COAPA has already disbanded, and at least two certifying bodies (OPACK and CROPS) and possibly one or two others will take the final step towards disbanding as a certifying body when proportional representation is adopted. These certifying bodies are currently sub-contracting their certification to PACS. Obviously reducing the number of directors in any other way would not work at this time and I don't think anyone would like to see a larger board. Fourteen people on a conference call is difficult enough!

In summary, every certifying body currently a member of COABC and carrying out its own certification would continue to send one Board member to COABC as long as they had at least the legal requirement of 5 members and PACS which has more than 150 but less than 200 would send 3. This would of course apply to any other certification body that had 100 or more members. It would be simplest to set the number eligible to be elected before each AGM when a new Board takes over. This would not change during the ensuing year even if a CB gained or lost 50 members.

✯ When proportional representation is adopted, certifying bodies contracting their certification out to PACS would no longer be eligible to send a director to the Board. This could mean that a geographical region's perspective is not represented at the Board, even if PACS is careful to ensure that its representatives are geographically scattered.

The Board has therefore discussed a possible increase in associate members on the Board. This is what our by-laws say about that:

" 'Associate member' means a society that is a consumer advocacy organization or an environmental advocacy group that has met the associate membership criteria of the society. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of BC is a permanent associate member of the society. Associate members do not vote and are not liable for fees or dues. An associate member may appoint an ex-officio director to the board if approved by the directors to do so."

Jo Ann Sandhu is the provincial associate member. Cathleen Kneen is the only other associate member on the Board representing a range of environmental and consumer advocacy groups.

The Board feels geographic representation on the COABC is important. This could be taken care of if PACS members represent the areas formerly represented by CBs which are no longer certifying. However, with more CBs opting for PACS certification, and an increasing membership of processors who also need to be represented at the Board, there is a concern that bioregional perspectives may be lost. Where there is no certifying body in an area, one possible option for geographical representation might be to encourage non-certifying organic organizations to represent geographic areas that are not represented by a certifying body. These organizations could be part of the Board as associate members.

We have also discussed from time to time to extending Associate membership to like-minded groups like the SPCA but have never reached a decision one way or the other on that. The Board has agreed that Associate members should never exceed 25% of the COABC membership. Acceptance of applications for Associate membership are at the discretion of the Board.

Under our current by-laws, the directors of the COABC (being the official representatives of all member bodies) are empowered to make any decisions relating to COABC at any meeting. Directors will be reaching their decisions based on discussions with their memberships. Please direct your ideas and comments to them or to the Board as a whole via the office. Kristen Kane will pass on any general comments to all of us. We would like to finalize this issue at our December conference call/meeting so that the CBs will be able to elect their representatives before the AGM in February. ✓

Healthy Soil

by Julia Jamieson

"How do you recognize a healthy soil?"

This was the question posed to farmers by University of Wisconsin-Madison researchers in 1995 in an effort to develop approaches to soil health assessment that integrate farmer and scientist knowledge[1]. The researchers discovered that farmers have a complex understanding of soil health which integrates chemical, physical, and biological properties of soils, plants, animals/humans, and water. This research led to the development of a soil health scorecard which uses descriptive, locally-relevant indicators based on farmer knowledge and language, and is intended for soil health assessment by farmers without technical or laboratory equipment.

Murmurs in the B.C. organic community suggest a desire by some members to improve their understanding of soil health and to investigate alternative soil health assessment strategies. The InfoBasket Organics Community[2] and the Rural Capacity Building Through Organic Agriculture (RCBTOA) website[3] provide a starting point for investigating different approaches to soil health. For example:

- ATTRA's Sustainable Soil Management - Soil Systems Guide is an overview of the properties of sustainable ('living') soils, management and monitoring steps, and case studies of successful soil stewards. It also refers to the Soil Foodweb approach which involves laboratory analysis of soil organism populations.
- The Savory Centre for Holistic Management's "Simple Ways to Assess Soil Health" is a sensory approach to soil health assessment, and requires only water and a shovel.
- The Solvita® Soil Life Test uses "patented colormetric CO2-Gel technology in a safe and easy-to-use test process" to measure soil biological respiration.
- The Soil Quality Institute's Soil Quality Test Kit uses simple tools to perform 12 on-farm tests of physical, chemical and biological soil properties.

Perhaps members of the B.C. Certified Organic program have personally-developed approaches to soil health assessment?

Certainly the concept of soil health and its assessment in organic farming systems is one of great interest not only in assuring the integrity of organic agriculture, but also in sharing local knowledge, exploring the possibilities of integrating scientific and farmer knowledge in soil health research, and building capacity for soil stewardship and sustainability.

Your insights into soil health assessment on B.C. organic farms are requested to contribute to the development of a Master's thesis research, and to the anticipated organization of soil health workshop(s).

Please contact Julia Jamieson at juliamjam@hotmail.com or ph. 604-682-6911.

1. Romig, D., Garlynd, M. and Harris, R. 1996. Farmer-Based Assessment of Soil Quality: A Soil Health Scorecard. In: Doran, J. and Jones, A. (eds.). Methods for Assessing Soil Quality, SSSA Special Publication Number 49, pp.39-60. Soil Science Society of America, Inc.: Madison, Wisconsin.

2. BCMAFF's online extension service: http://infobasket.gov.bc.ca/Infoman/communities/community.asp?UserID=2&

3. RCBTOA: http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/training/soil.htm

Julia Jamieson will be leading a workshop on Soil Health with Art Bomke at the AGM.

Soil Testing 101

by Av Singh

You'd be hard pressed to find any farmer who wasn't familiar with the notion of soil testing. It's the creed for most agricultural extensionists and crop consultants. Soil test. Soil test. Soil test.Yet surprisingly, for many producers, including organic farmers, the management practice of regular soil testing (once every 3 to 4 years) is not common. There are various reasons for this. A minority of producers do not link the potential economic benefit of catering your fertility regime to soil test recommendations, and therefore view soil testing as an additional expense. Some find it difficult to interpret soil test lab reports. Many organic producers find conventional soil test lab reports frustrating because they are not practical for their production systems, or consider them to be a superficial assessment of soil health and thus a poor indicator of crop production potential.

> The soil's ability to resist erosion, buffer pollutants, and cycle nutrients are important in assessing soil health

Nevertheless, mandatory soil testing is a requirement for some organic certifying bodies, and the new National Organic Standards will likely mandate soil testing every three years. For those farmers and gardeners who are uncomfortable with soil testing, here are some basic pointers.

What do I need to take a soil test?

All you really need is a soil probe or shovel, a bucket (preferably made of plastic or non-galvanized metal), boxes or bags (often provided by soil test labs), and a waterproof marker for labeling. If boxes aren't available Ziploc bags are suitable.

How many samples are enough?

A soil sample is most effective when it accurately represents the area of the soil being sampled. Composite samples of several individual samples within a field area are a good way to obtain representative samples. Sample cores should be collected from 15 to 20 random spots for every 20 acres. Avoid sampling near roads, fencerows, highly eroded areas, etc. Do not include soil from both high yielding areas and low yielding areas in the same composite sample, as recommendations for these areas would vary. This may seem very tedious, but keep in mind that this little 1 kg sample is representing over 20 million kg of soil.

The depth of sampling is somewhat dependent on field management practices. If the field is to be worked only the top two inches or is pastureland then a 10 cm (4-inch) sampling depth is adequate. For soils worked or tilled, the proper sampling depth would be just less than 15 cm (6 inches). Soils will generally drop in terms of fertility the deeper you go. So samples taken too deep may make it appear you need more fertility than is truly the case.

When and how often do I take my samples?

A soil sample every 3 or 4 years may be sufficient to provide general indication of fertility, but will not provide detailed analysis for very specific management decisions. If you want to monitor soil improvement of a particular area or are attempting to produce a very high quality product then more frequent soil testing would be recommended. Remember, taking the soil test is only half the battle; if you haven't taken the time or don't have the money to implement initial soil test recommendations, then don't waste more time and money on taking more soil tests.

continued on page 8...

continued from page 7

Frequency of sampling is also dependent on soil type, crop rotation, and climatic factors. Sandier soils have greater fluctuations in nutrient levels and require more frequent soil tests. Crops such as silage corn and alfalfa remove large quantities of potassium, requiring more soil sampling. Crops grown under irrigation require more frequent sampling, so you might think the converse would be true for soils under drought conditions. Actually, droughty soils require frequent soil testing because of the variability in the uptake of available nitrogen.

Soil can be tested at any convenient time, but is done primarily in the fall after harvest, which permits enough time to get the analysis back from the lab and make plans for the next growing season. Often organic producers alter their crop rotation or choose to include green manures and underseeded crops in response to soil tests.

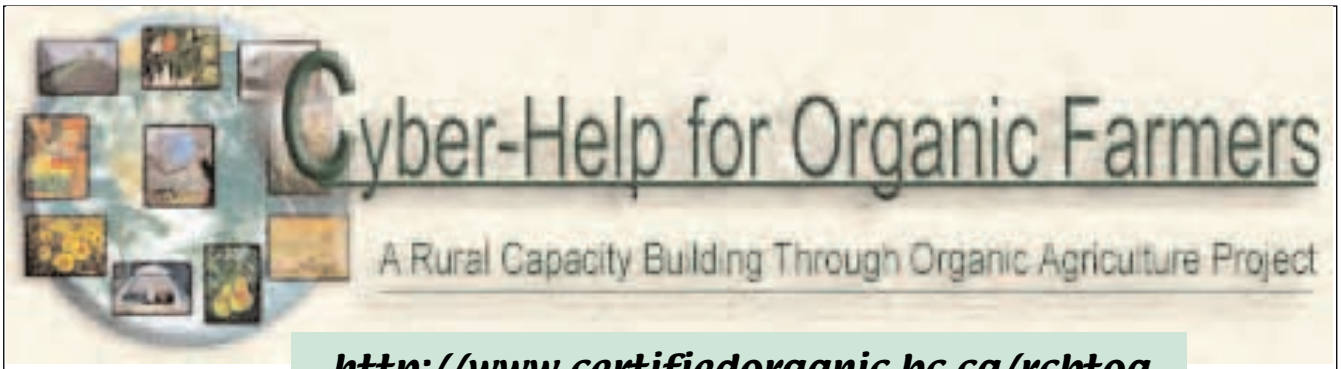
How do I interpret my results?

The standard soil test (readily available through university, provincial government, or commercial labs) provides data on soil nutrient levels (N,P,K, Ca, Mg) and a few soil chemical characteristics (soil organic matter, pH, base saturation, and cation exchange capacity). These parameters form the basis of fertilizer and liming recommendations for a subsequent crop. However, translating the results of a standard soil test into useful organic fertilizer recommendations is not a simple matter. In the US, there are several private labs and a few public labs that are issuing organic recommendations or formulas to help convert conventional recommendations into organic management. Also, the PEI Department of Agriculture and Forestry has initiated a program to help organic producers develop an organic nutrient management plan based on fertility recommendations using only certified organic amendments.

Many organic producers view standard soil tests as "treating the symptom" management, and desire better evaluation tools that can help assess whether their farming practices are leading to a healthy soil system. Increased awareness of the importance of measuring non-chemical parameters has led to several on-farm test kits and testing equipment. On-farm soil test kits capable of assessing soil respiration, infiltration, bulk density' electrical conductivity, soil pH, soil nitrate, aggregate stability, soil slaking, earthworm activity, topsoil depth, compaction, root development, water salinity, and nitrate/nitrite levels in water, are available in the US. In reviewing the diversity of the above soil quality parameters, it is clear that the crop productivity is not the only factor. The soil's ability to resist erosion, buffer pollutants, and cycle nutrients are also important in assessing soil health.

There is an additional benefit in promoting non-chemical indicators of soil health. The standard soil test has effectively demonstrated the importance of macronutrients in crop productivity. Increasing farmer knowledge about soil parameters such as biological activity and soil structure may lead to more innovative farming practices that promote a well-balanced soil system. ✓

OACC research assistant, Alain Joseph, samples the soil in the fall after harvest. The depth of the soil probe is approximately 15cm. Twenty or more soil cores of a given area are combined to form a composite sample, then mixed and a representative subsample is submitted for testing.



http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa

See the Logo, See the Website

The first phase of the Cyber Help for Organic Farmers website is ready. Take a look and please tell us what you think by using the feedback form on the site or sending an email to <cyber-help@certifiedorganic.bc.ca>.

We have sent out our first edition of the project's electronic newsletter. If you did not receive it and would like to be on that subscriber list, send an email to <cyber-help@jnweb.com> and include the following in the subject line "Add My Address to your Newsletter Mailing List" .

Progress is being made on many fronts including the development of the cyber-help training tools. Feedback to date has been very positive as well as constructive.

Rochelle Eisen will be leading a workshop on Cyber-Help at the AGM

May or Must?

by Linda Edwards and Lee McFadyen with input from Paddy Doherty

Issues both old and new make it time for a reexamination of *regulatory* (aka mandatory) vs. *voluntary* in regard to the use of organic/certified organic in the marketplace.

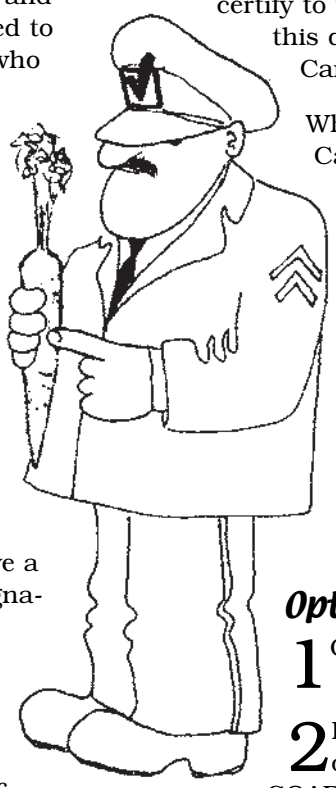
Marketing direct to the consumer, over the farm gate or the tail-gate (farmers' market or box programs), is part of the stereotype of the organic farmer. The fact is, however, that most organic produce is not sold to consumers who know the producer, but rather through retail outlets. Surveys indicate that only about 3% of organic products are sold through farmer's markets and box programs; farm gate sales, although difficult to accurately determine are very small; probably less than 1%. Even at the farmers' markets, the link between the producer and the consumer may be tenuous or transitory at best.

Farm Certification was adopted to address the gap between producer and consumer, by assuring the consumer that there was a process to verify that what was said to be done was in fact occurring. It soon became apparent that having a multitude of different certified organic standards was eroding whatever advantage certification was providing. This is why adopting a minimum set of standards by certifying groups, initially on a geographical bias, then as a province and now on a national and international basis has became important to reduce confusion in the market place.

Another change is about to occur. The US supplies 85-90% of the Canadian organic market. This product has been certified by 40 or more certifying bodies. Now under the National Organic Program (NOP) all organic produce, regardless of certifier, will soon bear one label: USDA Certified Organic. Product certified by CCOF, Oregon Tilth, the different States etc. may (or may not) also add a secondary label, but

the USDA label will be the primary and possibly the only one. This is becoming a common practice in many European countries as well. This has serious implications for BC, and Canadian, organic producers.

There are currently a multitude of certifying bodies and labels in Canada. This point and the problem with it was clearly illustrated to me last spring when I visited an friend who has been a long time supporter of the organic movement and purchases organic products whenever possible. She opened her fridge and cupboards and brought out 6 different products with 6 different certification labels – all of certification bodies located or operating in Canada. She wanted to know which one(s) were really certified organic. Her second question was why couldn't there be just one label?



Another new issue is an increasing amount of organic product coming in from overseas. Canada is one of the few countries in the world that does not have a regulatory program for the organic designation. When Canadian organic producers export their products to the UK (for instance), they must follow strictly controlled procedures that ensure organic products entering the UK meet the UK minimum standard. *There are no organic criteria for imported organic products entering Canada.* Canadian organic producers often compete against imported organic products with no evident certification.

Furthermore, there are currently no rules for the development and operation of organic certification bodies in Canada. Anyone can open a CB and start certifying to whatever standard, using whatever procedures they feel like. Clients of foreign certification bodies do not have to operate according to Canadian standards and procedures. There is no rule to stop a Canadian grower from getting their certification from another country, often less restrictive standards than are available in Canada. If Canadian growers don't like the standards in Canada, they can get their certification from somewhere else. For example, when the members of the COABC decided (after much debate) that greenhouse crops must be grown in soil-based media (as is the case in the UK), BC greenhouse operators simply began to certify with California Certified Organic Farmers. Thus, there were hydroponically grown, certified organic tomatoes, grown in BC and sold in BC, but certified from California. Since October 21 of this year in the US, all certifying bodies must certify to the NOP standards in the US – but this does not apply to what they do in Canada.

While most growers in BC and in Canada are operating under certified organic auspices, there is also product, both local and imported, labelled only as "organic" and there are people operating outside of inspection systems other than complaint driven ones. There are no figures available about these operators. They range from large companies who label everything from shampoo to pet food as organic to people selling $200 worth of product a year from their farm gate.

Options

1 Continuation of the above situation.

2 Introduction of a regulatory program on a provincial level based on COABC Standards for all producers, processors etc. in BC. This would include all COABC members and anyone else in the province selling product with either 'organic' or 'certified organic' claims. All other certifying bodies – Canadian and out-of-country – functioning in the province would also have to accept the COABC standards as a minimum standard. It would also mean all organic/certified organic product being imported into BC would have to meet the minimum standards. (Remember that this standard is operating under provincial legislation so this would be a perfectly reasonable course of action.)

3 Introduction of a regulatory program on a federal level based on the Canadian Standards for all producers, processors etc. in Canada. All other certifying bodies functioning

continued on page 12...

...continued from page 11

in or importing into Canada would have to accept the Canadian standards as a minimum standard as well. Again, this would restrict both 'organic' and 'certified organic' to products complying with the Standard.

4 One or other (or both) of the above, with a distinction between those who wish to participate and those who do not. In other words, anyone, local or foreign, who chose to use 'Certified Organic' on their label would operate under a mandatory system adhering to a minimum standard (either BC or Canadian) with inspections etc. Those who grow organically and sell directly to people who know them without any labelling at all would be totally unaffected. Also, those who use labelling/advertising etc. claiming to be 'organic' only could continue to do so. They would not have to belong to a certification body and the definition of what they were doing would be their definition. Any questioning of this would be on a complaint basis only at which time the Canadian Food Inspection agency could be called in.

This would mean, of course, that anyone big or small, local or foreign, could also operate under this basis in this country.

It would also mean that those choosing or needing to be certified organic, and incurring the extra associated costs and work, would need to educate the public about the difference between 'certified organic' and 'organic'. This would be important because study after study shows that the vast majority of consumers do not distinguish between organic and certified organic.

In most countries in the world, use of 'organic/certified organic' falls under a regulatory program with an inspection program, annual certification review, adherence to a minimum standard etc. The US has decreed that anyone grossing under $5,000 per year will be exempt from the rules and regulations required over-all. However, they are still grappling with the finer details about how to cope with this and deal with detecting and/or dealing with fraud.

In Summary:

Do We Need a Regulatory Program?

Linda says YES:

It is all about consumer confidence and fairness among producers making similar claims but not necessarily bearing similar costs. Certified organic has brought a respectability to the

movement that is vital for what surveys tell us is 97% of the organic product sold. Those using 'organic' only and operating outside the system definitely benefit from–and can also be a threat to–the integrity of organic certification.

As noted above, there is currently no rule to stop a Canadian grower from getting their certification from another country, often to less restrictive standards than are available in Canada. Those operating under certified organic systems are thus at a disadvantage in the market, because their competition may be allowed to use materials and practices that they cannot.

A regulatory program would give the Canadian organic sector and consumers some confidence that imported organic products meet the same rigorous standards that are required of domestic organic products.

A common label, whether it be the Check Mark, Canadian Organic or a combination of the two, would assist in building consumer awareness and loyalty. US produce will very soon be carrying one simple, easily-understood label – and there is lots and lots of it. If we want to be able to sell our products in our own markets, we need to give the consumers what they need: an easy way to identify local organic products.

In summary, you do not have to be certified to grow organically. Certification is to sell product. So is the use of the words 'organic' or 'certified organic' in whatever forms they are used in the market place. If you can sell without use of the words 'organic' or 'certified organic', then a choice to certify becomes one to support the concept and the movement only. This is a valid choice, of course, but you could well decide that it is not worth your while or the expense it incurs. However, if 'organic/certified organic' are words that help you sell your product then they have a value and that value has a cost in terms of consumer confidence and fairness.

You don't need to have a driver's license for a car that only sits in the yard. However, if you want to drive it anywhere off the property, you do. If I tell Motor Vehicles that I only want a license to drive to the Cawston store, they quite rightly won't give me one at a reduced price or regulations. It is just as important that I understand and adhere to the same rules of the road in driving to the Cawston store as in driving to Vancouver. And I am glad they keep checking on a regular basis on some of our old timers who do only drive to the Cawston store! Real world time/fair and safe world time!

Lee says NO

Organic: "designating a chemical compound containing carbon, of, like or derived from living organisms". Perhaps future dictionaries will say, "an approach to farming". Do we who use organic methods have the right to, in essence, copyright a word with several meanings? Is it really any different from Monsanto copyrighting the neem tree?

All of the above arguments are valid and well thought out. I support the principles of certified organically grown/processed etc but cannot accept the principle of copyrighting a word that has many uses. Organic growers need to certify so that it is clearly understood by the marketplace what is meant by 'organic product'. The certification program identifies it and defines it. But we have to accept that some people will advertise their product as organically grown when it is not certified because we do not 'own' these principles, nor did we invent them. If this is trade protectionism, which is practiced world wide, then let's call it that.

Certified organic standards were developed by marketers and growers to set a standard for organically grown products. Some growers practice sound organic methods that comply with and sometimes exceed certification standards and choose not to be part of a certification program. Some have a poor understanding of 'organics' and this is in part the sector's fault. Too often, in marketing and media, 'organics' are reduced to 'no pesticides'. Their reasons vary, from not wanting to be involved with yet another bureaucracy to feeling that they do not need certification because their customers have confidence in them. A few really have direct contact with all their customers and the buyer is in a position to make a judgment on the grower's integrity. Many growers in this category still choose to be certified, and their customers expect it. Most farmers' markets insist that growers designating their product as organic must be certified.

Certification used to be relatively simple, you grew to a set of standards, were inspected and you completed necessary paperwork which was not too onerous. Then a need for auditing the regional certifying bodies was identified and

continued on page 14...

...continued from page 14

COABC was developed and the paperwork and bureaucracy grew.

Many products, particularly personal care products, have long used the term 'organic' on their label as the components that make up the product are from an 'organic' source, even if petroleum based. They make no claim that the ingredients are 'organically grown' and this has become misleading to consumers. We now see 'certified organic' on personal care products and this differentiates between an ingredient source or a production system for the ingredients.

The United States industry can buy certified organic product from any country, repackage it and it then becomes a product of the USA. It may well meet the USDA organic standard, but it still misleads the consumer. The product may well have been produced by sound organic methods with exploited labour, explaining why it comes into Canada so far below our costs of production.

Granted, exporters have to comply with whatever trade protectionist regulations are in force if they want to sell into a given country. Trouble is, there is usually a way around regulations. The arms embargo against South Africa just meant that American arms arrived there through Israel. Real world time – not so fair and safe time.

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BC Certified Organic Makes a Splash at IFOAM 2002

After all the hype, the IFOAM World Congress in Victoria in August was even better than expected. Not only were there about 1500 of delegates from 92 countries all around the world, but there was masses of useful information available. The congress agenda was jam-packed with technical presentations, posters, research reports and workshop discussions on just about every topic. A common theme was the tension between 'industrial' and 'community' organics or, how to make a living and maintain our principles at the same time. Given the number and range of presentations, the focus was on information and in-depth discussion was to some extent relegated to the halls - which were constantly a-buzz.

The buzz extended to the COABC lobby booth, which swarmed with people from Benin, Nepal, and Nigeria, from New Zealand and Germany, Korea and Taiwan, keeping the volunteers busy giving out materials and answering questions.

BC Certified Organic products were showcased at the evening reception in the BC Museum and at the banquet sponsored by Pro Organics.

The Organic World Exhibition on Saturday drew thousands of people and provided an opportunity to show off BC organic products and to promote the BC Certified Organic symbol to a genuinely interested public as well as the conference delegates.

The closing ceremonies offered a standing ovation to event organiser, Anne Macey and thanks to the many volunteers who made the 14 IFOAM World Organic Congress such a success. Bernward Geier, IFOAM Director for International Relations, summed up the feeling of the international delegations for their Canadian hosts by stating, 'that though he did not wish to cast aspersions toward previous congresses', this 14 IFOAM Organic World Congress will be remembered by him as 'the warmest and most hospitable of the previous 13 he had attended'.

Proceedings of the Congress can be ordered from:
Canadian Organic Growers
Box 6408, Station J Ottawa, ON K2A 3Y6
<www.cog.ca>

Tapes of many of the presentations can be ordered from Audio Archives Duplicators
100 West Beaver Creek, Unit 18 Richmond Hill, ON L4B 1H4 ph: 905-889-6555
<archives@idirect.com>

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Building Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture

by Kim Sung-Hoon

Excerpted from a talk entitled "Harmonization with Land, Water, Air, and Human Communities in Rural/Urban Settings: The Korean Experience" delivered in Kumamoto, Japan, October 2002. Kim Sung-Hoon is Professor of Chung-Ang University, Seoul, Korea and currently a visiting scholar at UBC. He was for two years the Minister of Agriculture in the government of Kim Dae-Jung.

In addition to securing ample supplies of affordable food for all, sustainable local agriculture has performed numerous non-tradable functions such as ecological preservation, flood control in the case of Asiatic paddy-farming, maintaining the economic viability of local communities, conservation of landscape and culture, etc., all of which constitute the so-called 'multifunctionality of agriculture'. The current market system, however, fails to capitalize the true value of non-trade concerns and the multi-functions of agriculture. Without intervention of proper policy measures to remedy this, small scale family farming in densely-populated countries might face the fading-out of community-based agriculture in the foreseeable future.

A recent Korean government survey of December, 2001 reveals a significantly increasing-trend of Environmentally Friendly Agriculture (EFA) production ever since the government officially began launching the EFA policies and programs in 1999. For the 3 year period of 1999 to 2001, the environmentally-friendly agriculture production increased from 260 thousand M/T (1.1% of total production) to 526 thousand M/T (2.7% of total). Total number of EFA participating farm households reached 27 thousand in the year 2001, approximately 2 percent of total farm households in Korea. In this 3 year period, EFA production increased by 2.5 times while eco-agricultural cultivation land area and number of eco-agricultural farmers grew at about the same rate. Of the year's total EFA production, about 70% were low-chemical agricultural products while purely organic agricultural products reached only 6% and the remaining 24% represented either no-herbicide, no-chemical or transitional organic production.

The EFA participating farmers have reduced the application of chemical fertilizers by about 39 percent with the average number of usages of pest/herbicides less than 50% (from 6 times to 3 times per crop) and yet maintained the 99% level of the average rice yields per hectare (that is, 4.92 tons) in the survey period of 1999-2001. Korean-type environmentally friendly sustainable agriculture may well be characterized as a sort of 'precision farming', based on the Integrated Pest and Nutrient Management (IPNM) system that has been so far successful in maintaining a stable level of high yields without undermining the current ecosystems.

Unlike conventional agricultural products, EFA agricultural products do not need to pass through the complex central wholesale markets, since most of them are directly sold to the ultimate consumers /institutional buyers at the prices reflecting the value projected by both producers and consumers in that it guarantees

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the coverage of production costs. Planned production and government direct assistance to producers' income in terms of the so-called 'direct payment for EFA' give an advantage to eco-agricultural farming in Korea. About 36% of EFA agricultural products are sold directly to consumers, about 40% goes through either farm producers' direct outlets or consumer organizations, and the remaining 24% is distributed to specialty or department stores.

As a result, the average farmer's real income has increased by 6.2% for the period of 1998-2001, largely owing to the higher prices received. Of course, to do eco-farming requires a strong will and commitment and a lot of sweat. Needless to emphasize, the lion's share of the benefits accrued from environmentally-friendly agriculture goes to the consumers and the society in the form of safe food, health-enhancement and environmental protection.

At the start of the Kim Dae Jung Regime, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry embarked on a policy of support for Environmentally-Friendly Agriculture through a close consultation process with farmers and consumers and a strong package of legislation and regulations.

It is, however, worth while to mention that the birth of modern-type eco-farming can be dated back to the mid-1970s and that independent farmer-members of non-profit self-help organizations such as Jung Nong Hoe (the Righteous Farming Society) and the Korea Organic Farmers Association have been engaged in various types of eco-farming without receiving any governmental and public supports for at least two and a half decades. However, recent institutional changes in policies and programs have supported and even given financial backing to environmentally-friendly agriculture. Among the policies implemented since 1998 are:

1 Designation of Environmentally-Friendly Farming Areas

In order to facilitate the introduction of EFA on a large scale, the government has so far designated more than 40 areas mostly surrounding the major municipal water sources, and provided facilities and equipment necessary for eco-farming. During 1998 to 2002, the government invested more than W50 billion to create/support large-scale environmentally-friendly agricultural areas designed to reduce farm-pollution such as chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides and animal wastes, while improving the quality of soil and water through the installation of a breeding facility for micro bio-organisms, treatment of livestock night soil and liquefying manure, etc.

Besides the large-scale EFA areas, the government has also created 538 eco-agricultural family farm groups since 1995, with total spending of W134.5 billion in small-scale water source protection areas and mountainous villages for the purpose of encouraging organic agricultural production while raising the environmental and living standards of the villages concerned. The immediate purpose of this program is to aid EFA organic farming by installing modern facilities for breeding homegrown micro bio-organisms, greenhouses, and cold storage and transport systems, etc.

In addition, to ensure safe rice production and healthy environment, the government since 1999 has financially supported the farmers' IPNM efforts to reduce the use of chemicals and other pollutants coming from the process of growing rice. Under the project rice farming is implemented with strict use of IPM and INM methods under the technical guidance of extension agencies.

2 Soil Improvement Programs

Korean soil is acidic and sterile, which means soil productivity is low. In order to lay the basic foundation for environmentally-friendly eco-agriculture, such soil nutrients as lime and silicic acid are provided by the government for farmland that are acidic and lack silicic contents.

Furthermore, the government finances the necessary tools and machinery for soil transplantation to raise the productivity and quality of soil, and has supported the farmers' production of compost and manure utilizing weeds, agricultural byproducts, animal wastes and forestry byproducts. Commercial production of government-approved organic fertilizers are financially subsidized, too.

Ducklings are released into a field where transplanting of rice was just finished. The ducklings will eat up weeds and insects and urinate paddies until harvest time, when they will grow into adult ducks for Koreans' favorite health food. They are organic, too.

3 Direct Payment System for Environmentally-Friendly Agriculture

Up to 2001, the EFA direct payment system provided income subsidization to eco-agricultural farmers who cultivate their produce mainly in water-supply protection zones, national parks and environmentally-secured areas. Beginning in 2002, the system has been revised to subsidize all those producers whose products are legally approved as free from chemical contamination.

4 Rice Farming Direct Payment System

This system took effect in 2001 to guarantee steady and stable income for farmers, to prevent flooding and to maintain scenic beauty, and to encourage the appropriate usage of chemical fertilizers and pesticides to meet with eco-agricultural standards.

5 Creating Market Demand for EFA Products

Like other industries, the success of EFA policies and programs depends on creating market demand for the products. The new marketing schemes for EFA products include financial incentives to such programs as frequent consumers' visits and green tourism to EFA farms, together with accelerating the so-called 'B to C' transactions via the Internet, a public mass-media campaign for consumers' awareness of EFA products, and support for sales promotion of EFA products through agricultural cooperatives, urban consumers' cooperatives and NGOs' self-help organizations. One slogan used is: "Though Worm-eaten and Oddly-looking, the Taste More Delicious and Safe!" [direct translation]

Despite these accomplishments, the present level of Korea's eco-friendly agriculture still remains at the infant stage, compared with those of other developed countries like the EU and Canada. Many Korean farmers are still insufficiently equipped with systematic eco-agricultural know-how and facilities. The enlargement of expert personnel, the building of natural cyclic farming systems, community-based food security programs, enhancement of quality approval methods, efficient agricultural marketing systems, and the establishment of an organic livestock industry are a few of the many tasks that lie ahead. ✓

Office Update

The COABC office located in Vernon has become the communications hub of the province's organic industry. We continue to develop and enhance resources to assist farmers and Certifying Bodies with education forums and liaison between government, industry and farmers.

With the return of Kristen Kane and some creative rearrangement of the administration job, the office is now staffed five days a week. Kristen is present Monday through Wednesday and Cara is present Wednesday through Friday. Office hours are from 9 am to 4 pm every day.

The basic management of the COABC web site is now being done from the office providing immediate response to changes in member contact and status information. News items are being updated and posted regularly on the web site as well.

Several display packages for shows have been put together and are easily sent to Certifying Bodies and farmers. These consist of the "What is Organic Farming" brochure, several postcards depicting organic products, rack cards summarizing COABC and its function, business cards with the COABC logo and web address, copies of the last two issues of the BC Organic Grower and a poster describing the COABC.

The Organic Sector Development Program (OSDP) is being administered from the office. The OSDP will allocate funds from the Agri-Food Futures Fund, through the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC, to projects falling within the priority categories as defined in the Strategic Plan. The Plan and the application forms are downloadable from the web site. ✓

Organic Advisory Service Progress Report

By Kristen Kane

Since April of 2001, the COABC office has sent out 112 Organic Advisory Service (OAS) Packages. The package contains an advisor request form, an introductory letter, the booklet "What Is Organic Farming", and if the applicant is new to organics in BC, a copy of the latest BC Organic Grower.

Of these 112, we have conducted Advisor visits to 45 farms. We consider a file complete if we have received the Advisor Evaluation Form from the applicant.

The Evaluation forms tell the story of the OAS– comments like "a real incentive to pursue organic status", "a wonderful opportunity", "a great service...should remain available to everyone", "an idea packed day", "incredibly helpful" and "this is a fantastic service for new farmers"–brand the program.

OAS

Packages sent out: 112

Visits conducted/Pending: 45

Visits available (under current funding): 10

Advisors available: 19

Files complete: 35

Its not only the service that gets rave reviews- our advisors do too. Comments like "a master teacher" "practical and philosophical" "has so much to offer", friendly and encouraging" and "unbelievably helpful" describe the people we send out.

Most of the visits have been requested by people who are either brand new to farming, or by those wishing to transition from conventional methods. However some farmers with transitional organic status as well as those who are certified organic have made use of the service, which simply reinforces that we never stop learning, or can know everything.

Currently we are charging farmers $50 for an advisor visit. The program has been funded by a grant from the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia, which has provided funding for 55 advisor visits. We pay each advisor $200 per visit to cover travel expenses, and travel they do – we have had advisors travel from the Okanagan to the Cariboo, and from the Similkameen to the North Islands and beyond

The evaluation forms ask those who have made use of the service to suggest methods for improving the OAS. Some state that the service needs no improvement, though at least one quarter of the respondents have requested that the advisor come equipped with "hand-outs" or some other type of resource manual for ongoing concerns like soil management, or pest and weed control, etc.

In a typical visit, which can last up to eight hours, the advisor will cover everything from pest control to certification information to marketing intelligence, depending on the needs of the farmer. Ideally we match an individual requesting the service with an advisor with relevant expertise, but sometimes we are constrained by geography and availability of advisors.

All in all, however, the Organic Advisory Service has been very successful. People who have made use of the service are generally astounded at the value for their money, and are more than satisfied. We hope to continue the service, though funding is quickly running out. We will have to look at new ways to keep the service afloat, which may mean raising the user fee.

The success of the program is mainly due to the quality of the product, namely the advisors – their dedication, professionalism, and vast stores of knowledge makes them a credit to the organic industry. These people have a great commitment to organics, and wish to share their enthusiasm. The Organic Advisory Service is a credit to COABC, and needs to continue.

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Farmer to Farmer

by Lee McFadyen

The South Asia-Canada Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture was an exciting and very rewarding project developed by Inter Pares, IDRC and SANFEC in August 2002. A group of 8 Canadian farmers from across the country joined farmers and NGO (Non-Government Organization) representatives from South Asia who are working together in a farmer-led campaign to retain the right to practice cultural and biological diversity.

Canadians Robert Guilford, Manitoba, Alison Hackney, and Madeleine Roussel, Quebec, Martha Jane Robbins, Saskatchewan, and from B.C. Gregoire Lamoureux, Patrick Steiner, John Wilcox, Lee McFadyen, and (briefly) Cathleen & Brewster Kneen, joined farmers from Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Abra Brynne was our "mother hen" along with Dominique Caouette from Inter Pares and Daniel Buckles, Kevin Conway, and Line Caouette from IDRC. We toured a cross-section of small farms and a seed house in the Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island and Salt Spring Island, and then gathered to discuss our experiences and find our common ground.

Our guests were surprised and pleased to see and hear about our organic agriculture. They thought that the North American industrial model for agriculture was THE way we farmed. They learned that many Canadian farmers reject the North American industrial model that has been promoted in their countries as the future of agriculture.

We, on the other hand, were inspired by their work to protect and restore seed diversity. Seeds and diversity were common threads throughout the IFOAM conference. Diversity has been decimated, worldwide. If one idea from our dialogue had to be identified as the most important, it would be the issue of farmers doing all they can to ensure a safe and diverse seed supply for the future, and not to let this be controlled by a few

transnationals, as they would then really control our food and therefore our lives.

Together we wrote and presented our statement: Common Ground, A Vision from the South Asia-Canada Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture to the IFOAM World Congress on Organic Agriculture, and received overwhelming international support. After the Congress, support for the statement continues to flow in as individuals and organizations from all walks of life are signing on. People are realizing that agriculture is everyone's bread and butter - or rice. We truly cannot have a healthy culture without healthy agriculture.

Canadian farmers were enriched by this experience. It strengthened our resolve to continue on our course. It felt good to be with people who the day before had been strangers, with whom we did not share a common language, whose cultures were so different to ours, and to find we have the same basic needs, share the same concerns about our futures, and indeed are from the one earth. Our common humanity prevailed.

The second stage of this dialogue will occur when Canadian farmers visit South Asia next January. This will enable us to better understand the principles discussed during our dialogue and to participate in our hosts' cultural events sharing our Canadian reality with a wide cross-section of farmers in South Asia.

We invite you to join us in this global, grass roots movement to promote and support biological/organic agriculture and to promote and protect our genetic diversity. Ask your certifying body, consumer group, customers, everyone, to read and sign COMMON GROUND. The statement is posted at <www.ryerson.ca/foodsec/Documents/seacan.htm> or you can get a copy from Dominique Caouette, Inter Pares, 221 Laurier Ave. E, Ottawa, ON K1N 6P1, email <doming@interpares.ca>

Inter Pares is a Canadian social justice organization working with Third World Countries;

IDRC is Canada's International Development Research Centre;

SANFEC, South Asia Network on Food, Ecology and Culture, promotes peace and harmony and food security in South Asia. ✓

Farm Food Safety Pilot Project

by Lee McFadyen

The market for organic food rests heavily on the public's awareness of its health benefits. This means that in terms of food safety, organic producers must be squeaky clean. A pilot project undertaken by COABC with BCMAFF was designed to evaluate on-farm food safety practices and ensure that we have the detailed information we all need to live up to our reputation.

A steering committee was struck by the COABC Board of Directors to work with Kathleen Zimmerman of the BCMAFF Food Safety and Quality Branch, and report to the Board. The committee hired two well-qualified consultants to carry out the farm visits and prepare the reports. Philip Watney, from Prince George, a microbiologist, an accredited IOIA Inspector and a Food Safety and Organics consultant and Lisa Pierce from Surrey, who is an IOIA certified inspector and has completed the Foodsafe sanitation program for food handlers.Lisa and Philip signed a confidentiality agreement and removed any information that would identify farms before submitting their reports to Kathleen Zimmerman and the steering committee.

Peter Johnston, Of Lasqueti Island, (Island Organic Producers Association), Jill Rothe from Oliver, (Bio Dynamic Agricultural Society of B.C.,) Harvie Snow, from Surrey, (Fraser Valley Organic Producers Association) and Lee McFadyen, from Cawston, (Living Earth Organic Growers Association) formed the steering committee.

The goal was to have 20 vegetable growers in the Fraser Valley and 20 tree fruit growers in the Okanagan Similkameen volunteer for the project. Philip visited 19 farms in the Okanagan Similkameen and one at Quesnel and Lisa has visited 10 farms in the Fraser Valley and hopes to find ten more to visit before November 11. A check list was prepared by BCMAFF representative, Philip, Lisa, and the steering committee. Lisa and Philip used the checklist to evaluate the food safety practices at each participating farm. This checklist will give the participating farms and COABC a 'picture' of how certified organic farmers conform to food safety standards. This 'picture' will verify our strengths and help us address any weaknesses.

The COABC Directors, steering committee members and participating farms are looking forward to reviewing the reports and ensuring food safety practices conducted by certified organic growers meet stringent standards. This is in the best interest of our growers and their consumers.

There will be a workshop with Kathleen Zimmerman at the AGM.

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HAACP and Organics

by Philip Watney

HACCP ("ha-sip") stands for Hazards Analysis and Critical Control Points [aka. "Have a Cup of Coffee and Pray" Ed.]. In the last dozen years HACCP has become the global method of choice for food producers, retailers, and governments to reduce the likelihood of food-borne illness. Since HACCP is a general model that is fitted to a specific company, it can be used to increase the food safety of both farms and processors. Simply put, you look at your operation from raw materials to finished product in order to identify and control food safety risks.

A good HACCP plan should include the other requirements a food producer may need to meet. These include regulations of organic certifiers, regional health boards, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Agrifoods (BCMAAF), the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), or the federal Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), to name a few. Most of the government requirements fall under the category of "Good Manufacturing Practices" (GMPs) and "Good Agricultural Practices" (GAPs). These are basic, common sense requirements, such as having bathrooms (with soap!) for employees. While GMPs provide the very basics of food safety, HACCP builds on them to make a food safety system specific to each operation.

There are three levels of HACCP, in general. The first level is the "prerequisite programs" which are necessary to have in place before developing a full HACCP plan. The premises, raw materials, pest control, storage, equipment, employee training and food recall system must all be checked to see if they promote food safety. These prerequisites confirm that a company has taken care of the basics for making safe food. The second level of HACCP is to create a detailed "HACCP plan" for each food product, outlining

continued on page 24...

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the distinct materials, steps, hazards, and controls in its production. This is a detailed assessment of the risks and controls for each food produced. The third and final step is to submit the HACCP plan for review and approval by the federal Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), although this step is voluntary for most food manufacturers.

Why use HACCP?

HACCP is the law (for some folks): For companies that produce more biologically hazardous food products (such as meat, dairy, egg products, and seafood) inter-provincial trade or export often requires production to be done in plants with federally approved HACCP plans.

The competition uses it: Like the "organic integrity chain" which keeps a product "certified organic" all the way to the customer, the use of HACCP throughout a food's production keeps the "food safety chain" intact. For this reason, many larger retailers and processors are beginning to request that their suppliers adopt HACCP.

No one likes food poisoning: In this day of media hype and rising public concerns about food safety, publicity resulting from a single food borne illness outbreak can be disastrous for even the best company. Even if the company survives, the damage to its reputation and sales may take years to overcome. HACCP can be looked at as form of business insurance since it reduces the likelihood of producing an unsafe product.

HACCP has some good side effects: HACCP requires close scrutiny and a clear understanding of a company's operation. Fresh ideas are developed and previously unrecognized inconsistencies or problems are identified. This often allows a company to reduce waste and/or make improvements in profitability, consistency or quality. All of these can add to the bottom line.

How HACCP works

Food safety risks fall into three categories: Chemical (cleaners, pesticides, fertilizers, etc.), physical (glass, metal, wood, etc.), and biological (pathogenic food poisoning organisms). A good HACCP program works by finding and controlling all areas where these potential risks could occur at unacceptable levels. While synthetic chemicals are not permitted in organic production, care still needs to be taken to ensure there is no contamination from substances used for cleaning, or biologicals used for pest control.

Risk controls include general practices such as having employees check incoming bags of ingredients for tears and mis-labeling, and specific risk-control steps such as pasteurizing.

HACCP addresses issues such as materials and methods, employee training and proper record-keeping. If you are doing what it takes to be certified organic, you are probably already on your way to using HACCP, since many of the responsibilities and documents for organics and HACCP overlap and can be combined.

As with organics, HACCP can be done partly or completely depending on the needs of the producer. A small family farm may follow some general HACCP guidelines to increase the food safety of their farm gate or CSA operation, while a large seafood exporter may use a complete and federally approved HACCP plan. Similarly, not every organic producer / processor needs HACCP. Small farms growing dried herbs for sale in the local farmer's market will find that HACCP is not worth the effort. However, producers of more dangerous products such as apple juice who plan to sell to a broader market should definitely consider HACCP.

Like organic certification, the commitment and investment in manpower results in increased product quality and increased market access. The shared ground between HACCP and organics means that companies who are certified organic have a head start should they decide to implement HACCP.

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The Farmers Market: a-Family a-Fair

On behalf of the 2003 Farmers Market Conference committee, we would like to invite your Market Manager, your Board of Directors and your Vendors to the 2002 Annual General Meeting of the BC Association of Farmers' Markets and the 2003 Conference. We ask you to also invite a City Councillor or member of your local Downtown Business Association to attend.

March 7, 8, 9, 2003

Speakers and workshops are still to be determined. The cost for this years' conference will be between $125-$150 which will include: Friday: Reception, Saturday: Breakfast, Break Snacks, Lunch, Dinner Banquet and entertainment, Sunday: Breakfast and Break Snack. Accommodation is available at the Best Western.

The conference will be held in Mission at the Best Western – Mission City Lodge on March 7-9, 2003.

This year's theme "the Farmers' Market: a-Family a-Fair" will explore how the Farmers Market is

- *a community of families*
- *a part of the community family*
- *the vendor family*
- *the vendors' families*
- *a family place to be*

For more information, contact:

Mary Forstbauer, phone: 604-794-3999 or emal: organicearthmother@yahoo.com

Registration: Leah Williams 32538 McRae Ave. Mission, BC V2V 2L7 ✓

HRH Addresses IFOAM Conference

A highlight of the opening session of IFOAM in August was a video address by HRH Prince Charles. Following is a part of what he said.

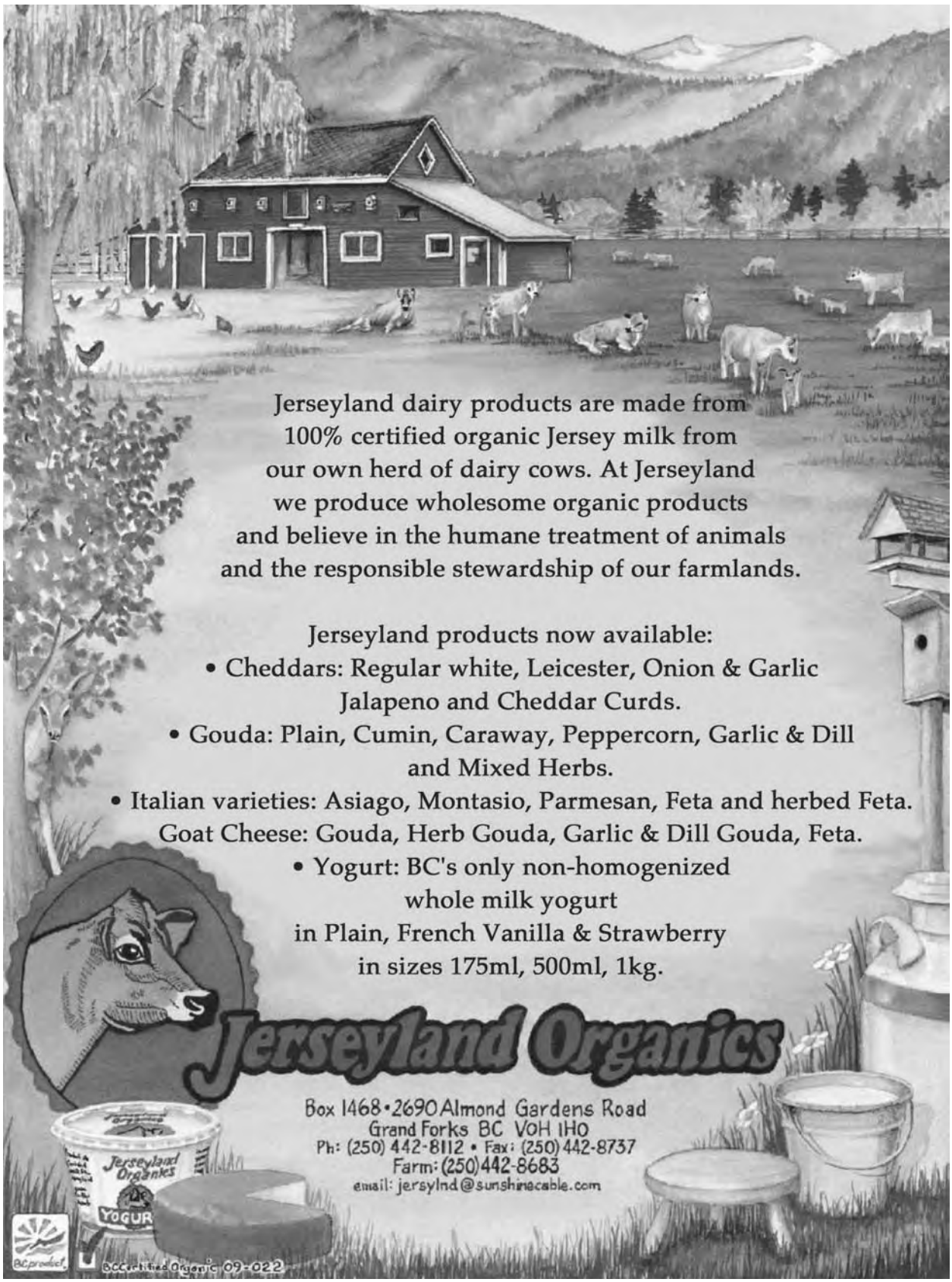
"As I suspect many of you may know, my interest in organic farming and gardening has become something of a public as well as a private passion. This is largely because I have been convinced by the evidence of my own eyes at Highgrove and on the many other organic farms I have visited all over the world, that organic farming is the most sustainable alternative to the intensive industrial model, which has become the conventional orthodoxy over the last 50 years. Organic farming delivers, I think, all the things people really want from agriculture: high quality food, protection of the environment, more jobs, and greater self reliance on natural systems working in harmony with nature. But I also happen to believe that it helps to bring the 'culture' back into 'agriculture', which is an aspect that our relentlessly materialistic society is in danger of overlooking. The conventional establishment is wont to disparage what they call "inefficient peasant farming systems", and yet, where do its representatives most want to go for their holidays? Usually to parts of the world, very often on the continent of Europe, where they can take full advantage of the benefits of 'inefficiency'; in other words, the food, the wine, the landscape, and the villages. And when you think about it, it is in fact the 'inefficient' bits that make life worth while, that invest it with joy, and even spiritual value. So at all costs we must prevent joyless over-efficiency from destroying the true meaning of life as well as the fundamental balance of nature.

"It was Sir Albert Howard who summed up the essence of organic farming best when he wrote that the health of the soil, plant, animal, and man is one and indivisible. I would like many more people to read Howard's book An Agricultural Testament. It seems so appropriate to me that a British agricultural scientist, sent to India to teach the Indians how to farm, came to realize that the traditional farming systems of North-West India held the secret of truly sustainable agriculture. He then became effectively a student of those indigenous farmers and ended up exporting their knowledge to the West. That kind of humility should be a lesson to us all as we face the next period of rapid development in organic agriculture.

"Sadly, ladies and gentlemen, I believe it is almost inevitable that as organic farming becomes more and more commercialized, we will encounter downward pressure on the integrity of organic farming systems, as expressed in the IFOAM Principles and Standards. I, for what it's worth, believe that it would be simply disastrous if organic food were to become just another globally traded commodity without any identity or story behind it; or if standards were eroded until they were little different from many of the farming systems which prevail today. Needless to say, I sincerely hope that will not happen, and I am sure that your conference, with its theme of localization, can be a major influence in encouraging exactly the kind of farming systems we need to see.

we must prevent joyless over-efficiency from destroying ... the fundamental balance of nature

"As you may know, I also have a profound concern about genetically modified crops. Apparently it is now politically correct to call them 'the products of modern biotechnology' as if that would somehow make them even more acceptable, but I don't intend to do so. One of many concerns about these crops is the extent to which organic crops can become contaminated through cross-fertilization and accidental mixing. If effective steps cannot be taken to resolve this growing problem, millions of people around the world will be deprived of a basic right: to choose to consume only natural, uncontaminated organic produce. No doubt your conference will also have something to say about this issue, coupled, perhaps, with what I believe is the vitally important question of whether companies should be held liable for any potential damage caused by their genetically-modified products, both to the environment, to human health, and to the livelihood and rights of organic farmers." ✓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Standards Changes

by Standards Review Committee

The following is a list of proposed standard changes being considered by the COABC Standards Review Committee. To comment on any of the changes, please contact the COABC office, Tel: 250-260-4429, Fax: 250-260-4436 or email office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca, or Tracy Schimpf, Standards Review Committee secretary, Fax 250-764-4287, email schimpf@silk.net

Please submit any comments by December 15th.

Shellfish Farming

"Shell'ved" for further information

COABC to research aquaculture in general and specifically the proposal of Shellfish farmers for organic status. Hiring of a consultant, contact with Suzuki Foundation and Naturaland (German certifier that made aquaculture presentation at IFOAM).

Treated Posts

SRC recommends that COABC adopt the draft Canadian Standards regarding treated lumber for 2003. This issue to be reviewed once the Canadian Standards have been formally passed.

Draft Canadian Standard

3.6.3 Regulated

for new installations or replacement purposes. Lumber treated with arsenate or prohibited substances in direct contact with livestock is not permitted, with the exception of regional areas where low rainfall and fence post distance, minimizes livestock contact and contamination risk and where commercial availability of alternative fencing has not been developed. Disposal of all used treated fence posts in a manner that minimizes arsenate or other contamination must be documented.

SRC proposes the following additions/changes

Management Standards Transition Period

3.3.1Certification Status

3) BC certified organic status may only be granted if the appropriate transition period (as set out in 3.3.2 for each type of operation) has been completed and the land, product or herd is being produced and handled in accordance with these standards. This must be verified on a yearly basis by a recognized certification body accredited by the COABC. Transition periods may have been completed under a non-accredited certification agency as long as its standards were equivalent to and the agency recognized by COABC.

3.3.2 Required

1) For crops grown in the ground.

• The period of transition is 36 months from the last application of a prohibited substance during which time the implementation of an appropriate soil management plan must be documented. During the last 12 months of transition the land must be registered in a certification programme compliant with COABC.

• Products may be stamped 'transitional' after the first 12 months of transition are completed, when approved by the Certifying Body.

9) Milk

• Animals purchased from a conventional source must be managed according to BC C.O. program standards for 12 months before they can be certified organic.

• Pastures must be certified organic or in 3rd year transition to satisfy this requirement.

• Provisions for the transition of pasture are the same for those grown in the ground.

11) Processing

• Enterprise has been inspected at least twice and meets the requirements set out in these Standards.

3.3.3 Regulated

2) For crops grown in the ground

• if the applicant can provide documentation that the land and crops have been managed in accordance with these Standards, but were not verified by a certification body, a certification body may accept documentation rather

than 'certification' as a verification of compliance with these Standards. However, the land will still be required to be enrolled in a certification program recognized by the COABC for at least 12 months before BC Certified Organic status may be granted. The enterprise must receive at least two inspections before a certificate can be issued.

Organic Soil Management

3.7.1 Regulated

2) Importation of soil must have prior permission of the certification committee.

3.7.3 Prohibited

1) Use of synthetic fertilizers, unless specifically permitted in Crop Materials List, Section 14.

Environmental Protection

3.1.1 Recommended

7) Importation of soil must have prior approval of Certification Committee

Crop Production Materials

14.2

P Fertilisers, synthetic

All synthetic fertilisers are prohibited, unless specifically allowed or regulated in these standards.

Draft Standards

A new area of standards operate as a 'draft' document for a minimum one year period to allow for revisions as problem areas develop.

Greenhouse Standards

SRC proposes that the new Greenhouse Standards be adopted as a 'draft' set of standards with minimum one year of input as outlined in Draft Standards.

Land Care Standards

SRC proposes that the new Land Care Standards be adopted as a 'draft' set of standards with minimum one year of input as outlined in Draft Standards. Proposed 'Draft Standards' available from the COABC office on request.

Christmas Trees

A clarification

Standards are covered under crops - perennial.

GMOs

A clarification

Land that has previously grown genetically modified organisms is subject to the same transition period as any other land. Extra monitoring for contamination of GMOs may be required by the certifying body.

An addition

4.1.12

As the risk of cross contamination by pollination, and the long term hazards of genetically modified organisms are not well understood,

continued on page 30...

... continued from page 29

certified organic farms which also operate conventional fields cannot use genetically modified organisms on the conventional portion of the farm.

9.3.2 Poultry Spacing

• Delete 9)

• 11) a. add "housing of at least" 0.36...

b. maximum of 1,000 birds per acre of runs {of farmland (to allow room for pastures and adequate land for environmentally sustainable use of chicken waste)}. Runs should include provisions for cover. Runs should encourage birds to go out into runs. There should be 2 (pasture) runs per flock for rotation (of runs) unless free range.

h. 1 well maintained nest box/4 laying hens, or for communal boxes, 120 sq. centimetres per hen.

i. delete chart

• 12) a. 0.36 square feet/pound of bird barn space ✓

COABC 10th Anniversary!

A festive and informative celebration & AGM

February 14th to 16th, 2003

at Camp Alexandra

Crescent Beach, White Rock, BC

The Conference will open on Friday, February 14th, at 7:30 p.m. with a keynote speech on the theme Organic Agriculture and Sustainable Community Development (speaker to be confirmed).

There will be a travellers' supper available at 5:30 Friday.

Saturday, February 15th, will be devoted to workshops and presentations including:

• Interpreting Soil Fertility

• Can Fish Farming Be Certified Organic?

• The Organic Agriculture Centre and BC Organics

• Rural Capacity Building Through Organic Agriculture – Cyber-Help

• Food Safety Audits

• Organic Marketing Strategies Roundtable

Watch the website or contact the office for an updated list of speakers and workshops.

The Annual General Meeting of the COABC will be held on Sunday morning, February 16th, including election of Directors and other business.

AGM - Organic Agriculture & Sustainable Community Development

Accomodations

Accommodation is dorm-style and all beds are bunk beds. There are shared washrooms and showers. Bedding and towels are not supplied.

Meals

Your registration fee includes all meals: a "traveller's supper" on Friday night before the evening session, breakfast, lunch, banquet dinner and snacks on Saturday, and breakfast, mid-morning snack and lunch on Sunday. The kitchen will use certified organic foods.

Please note that the banquet is included in the registration fee this year!

Pre-Registration is Vital

There are only 80 beds available for the AGM this year – only by pre-registering will people be able to sleep on-site.

A full package with workshop details, schedule, and workshop registration information will be mailed to you following our receipt of your registration.

AGM Registration Form

Registration Deadline is January 24, 2003

A full package with workshop and speaker details and timetable will be mailed following our receipt of your registration.

Your Member Certification Association: _____

Name(s): _____ Farm/Business: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Tel: _____ Fax: _____

E-Mail: _____

Special Dietary Requirements: _____

Do you need a ride? _____ From where? _____

Do you have product that you would like to donate for the meals? Please list.

_____

Option 1 - $135/person - includes overnight accomodation (2 nights), registration, all meals & snacks

Option 2 - $100/person - no accomodation, registration, all meals & snacks

CHEQUE ENCLOSED FOR TOTAL COST $ _____

Please send the registration form and with cheque or money order made payable to COABC to:
COABC #8A-100 Kalamalka Lake Road Vernon, B.C. V1T 9G1