BC Organic Grower

British Columbia Certified Organic

Vol. 6, No. 3 Fall 2003

COABC, #8A, 100 Kalamalka Lake Rd.
Vernon BC V1T 9G1

President's Message

by Patrick Mallet

I am writing this letter during the worst fire season in British Columbia in fifty years. Two hundred houses burned last night in Kelowna and one third of the city has been evacuated. In many parts of the province, it has been the driest summer on record. It is not surprising, given the climatic conditions, that we are having such a devastating fire season. What we seem to have forgotten is that for most of the ecosystems in the southern interior of our province and large portions of the north, fire is an integral component of the ecological cycle and would occur naturally at relatively short time intervals.

We have become complacent about the possibility of fire and, as a result, we are woefully ill-prepared to deal with the threat of fires around our communities. A provincial policy of fire suppression, combined with lack of proactive planning in our communities has created this tinderbox situation. Too much fuel (dry timber) in the forests, resulting from overstocked forests and external factors such as the pine bark beetle, intensifies the impact that forest fires have, once they are ignited. A lack of community planning at the fire interface zones means that fires move seamlessly from forests into neighbouring communities.

In rural communities, some of the first properties to be confronted with forest fires are farms that are situated along that interface zone. In Kelowna, some of the first properties to burn were local farms. While the loss of houses is tragic, the ecological impact of these fires is no less serious. Even if orchards and vineyards have been saved by assiduous irrigation, there is other damage. Fire is a natural part of the ecological cycle, but when abundant fuel causes a fire to burn intensely and at high temperatures, it burns the soil that harbours the micro-organisms and seeds that will regenerate the land. For farms, this is devastating.

Here in Kaslo, we had a public meeting earlier this week, organized by our Community Forest, to talk about fire interface planning – how to manage the zone between public forest land and private land. During the meeting, we learned about some very simple practices that landowners can carry out to decrease the potential threat from forest fires. We all need to be planning now for what we can do on our own properties and with our communities to mitigate this threat in the future. For now, I only hope that the Autumn rains come when they're supposed to and that no more homes and livelihoods are lost.

Despite the distractions of lightning strikes and water shortages, COABC has been able to carry out a number of activities through the busy summer months. For quite a few months, COABC has been in discussion with the British Columbia Biodynamic Association (BCBDA) about its continued membership as a certifier in COABC. BCBDA would like to enter into a more formal relationship with its national affiliate, Demeter Canada. Through discussions with JoAnn Sandhu at BCMAFF, we needed to establish whether COABC could continue to accredit BCBDA. The key issue was that COABC only has a provincial jurisdiction, which means that BCBDA could authorize Demeter Canada to issue the certificates for its certified members, so long as BCBDA maintains control of the decision-making process. Since this will be the case, I am pleased to report that BCBDA will continue to be a valued member of the COABC family.

In the lower mainland, discussions between Fraser Valley Organic Producers Association (FVOPA) and Thrifty Foods regarding logo use in advertising highlighted a welcome opportunity for COABC to promote its Checkmark logo. As with other retailers, Thrifty Foods offers a wide variety of organic products for sale, many of which come from COABC licensees. Until now, they have not had formal permission to use the COABC logo or phrase, BC Certified Organic. As a result, they have often advertised their products simply as organic, missing out on a great marketing opportunity for both COABC and Thrifty Foods to highlight the local origin of these products.

In July, the Board approved a new generic policy that was drafted by Paddy Doherty to address this situation. The Conditions for Consent to Use Official Marks agreement offers a simple solution for uncertified suppliers to be able to use both the Checkmark and the phrase, BC Certified Organic, in their advertising. At the same time, it provides COABC with the legal mechanism to ensure correct use of the logo, as is required under our agreement with the provincial government. Uncertified suppliers need to have copies of valid certificates for all food products for which the Official Marks are used, and agree to submit to inspections when requested by COABC or BCMAFF. We hope that this agreement will be widely adopted by retailers and other food suppliers and that we can all benefit from the increased visibility of the BC Certified Organic label. I encourage you to approach retailers that you deal with to take advantage of this new opportunity. ✓

Important News!

Fire Retardant

In response to an inquiry from PACS, the CFIA has indicated that any fruit/vegetables that have come into contact with a fire retardant will not be marketable this year. The member they were inquiring about has drift from the retardant and CFIA are ruling that his crop will not be fit for consumption. It will be up to the CB to make the determination for next year.

Equivalence with USDA Achieved

"BCMAFF has been informally advised that the BC Organic Program meets the requirements of the 'USDA Recognition of a Foreign Government's Conformity Assessment Program' as authorized under 7 C.F.R. §205.500(c)(1)of the NOP. It is expected that the arrangements will be formalized within the next few weeks."

Class Action Against Egg Board

On June 25, 2003 the BC Supreme Court certified a class action on behalf of certain certified organic egg producers and egg graders against the BC Egg Marketing Board. On August 11, 2003 the BC Supreme Court approved the terms of the Notice to all potential class members. It is anticipated that this notice will be posted on the COABC website in the last week of August 2003. If you are interested in this proceeding and have not received the Notice directly from your certifying body, please visit the COABC website to view the official Notice.

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www.CertifiedOrganic.bc.ca

Cover Photo: Rubinsons' farm in Deadman Creek, BC

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Where There's Smoke...

by Lee McFadyen

The fire was huge, covering over 70,000 acres, in the Pasayetan Wilderness area about 10 miles south west of us, in Washington state. The fire came very close to Cathedral Provincial Park; if it had jumped the border it would have been next to impossible to get people out.

For the first couple of weeks we had ash rain on us each day and by one p.m.the mammoth plume of red/black smoke obliterated the sun completely. For a few days one week, we could not see our neighbour's house, the smoke was like a thick smog, and I felt like a smoked person. It was hard on the breathing too, as it penetrated indoors. Later, the sun was reduced to a deep orange glow behind the smoke. During this period the sky was one huge expanse of blue and the temps soared to 38-40 degrees by noon. The temperature would drop 6-8 degrees when the smoke plume advanced. Tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and cucumbers are quite prone to sunburn and by a bizarre twist of fate, we had none, 'thanks' to the smoke!

We could actually read what was happening with the fire by the smoke: red and black, quickly swirling into the sky meant a high fuel area had been reached and the appropriate ash would fall on us. A lazy, grey smoke indicated not much advancement, not much fuel. The smoke was soon joined from the Osoyoos fire to the east. As the Osoyoos fire threatened human habitation it was aggressively fought and no houses burned. The other fire was in a true wilderness area and was probably long overdue for a burn. ✓

Organics and Marketing Boards

by Gunta Vitins

There are rumblings and changes afoot in B.C.'s supply managed systems. The marketing boards, in particular the BC Egg Marketing Board and the BC Chicken Marketing Board, are exerting more pressure on members of the organic sector to comply with their systems. The court actions launched against Olera Farm and other organic egg producers, as well as organic poultry producers, are a case in point. The boards have been also been limiting growth, through their special permit programs, of organic producers operating within their systems. In addition, several small organic producers who are producing within the provincial "thresholds" are being heavily scrutinized by agents of the boards.

The BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (BCMAFF) conducted a review of the regulated marketing systems in 2002 and is now preparing a new economic policy framework to make changes to the regulated and supply managed systems. We need to get involved collectively to ensure that the organic sector's needs are being considered and addressed. Clearly, the ostrich method of burying one's head in the sand is not working - in fact, it is working against us.

On May 30th 2003, members of the organic community - specifically, a coalition of nine retailers, distributors and home delivery companies, sent a letter to Premier Gordon Campbell outlining their concerns and requesting legislative changes in support of organics. Here is what they said in their letter:

Dear Premier,

We, the undersigned distributors, retailers and home delivery companies operating in the province of British Columbia, are gravely concerned about the negative impacts of the regulated marketing systems in BC on the supply and price of organic chickens, turkeys, dairy and eggs. These products are in high demand by BC consumers and the limited supply does not meet growing demand. In addition, the costs of the supply management systems under the BC marketing boards unnecessarily increase costs of these products to consumers. The regulated marketing systems that were developed to address organic products are not flexible enough and are actually impediments to commerce. We respectfully ask that you address our concerns which affect not only our businesses but the health of BC agriculture and the economy as a whole.

Consumers throughout BC are increasingly seeking certified organic eggs, poultry and dairy products - these are food products that are highly differentiated from conventional commodities through specific production, distribution and retail practices. In British Columbia, organic food products are produced, distributed and marketed according to prescribed organic production and handling standards under the Agri-Food Choice And Quality Act. Clearly, by establishing this Act and supporting legislation for organic foods, the BC government recognizes the distinct nature of organic products as do consumers. Organic foods are obviously not "commodities" but are specialty products that are highly differentiated in the marketplace.

With this in mind, we request the BC government to go one step further by distinguishing organic products as being distinctly different than commodities and remove organic products from the purview of the supply managed marketing board systems - through legislation. We respectfully make this request since it is clear that the marketing boards are not supporting the growth of the organic egg, feather and dairy sectors - in fact, they are restricting supply and increasing costs which are actions that are detrimental to the market.

The rationale for this request is supported by the results of the CORE Review of Regulated Marketing that was undertaken by the BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries in 2002. According to the CORE Review, the regulated marketing systems have done a satisfactory job of managing conventional commodities (and we applaud their efforts); however, they clearly fall short with respect to the management of organic/specialty products, for various reasons:

• Inadequate quota allocations: The organic sector has grown and continues to grow at a rate that surpasses growth in commodity sectors - ie. 20 - 35+% per year. The marketing boards' current quota allocations have lagged behind and, as a result, serious under-supply situations are arising.

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• Increased costs to consumers: The marketing boards are adding costs unnecessarily to organic eggs, dairy and poultry through special permit programs and levies which do not benefit the organic sector. The producers of these products are forced to pass these additional costs to the consumer, resulting in unreasonably high retail costs which are unaffordable to many consumers seeking organic products.

• Inadequate costs of production formulas: Marketing boards do not recognize the vastly different costs of production for organic eggs and poultry as compared to conventional commodities. Organic products are more expensive to produce than commodities resulting in products that are higher priced to consumers. The additional costs applied by the current regulated marketing systems to organic products then compounds the cost issue which renders organic products unaffordable to consumers.

• Barriers to Entry: The aforementioned costs and quota allocation issues represent barriers to entry for new producers which exacerbates the under-supply issue.

• Time to Adjust: The regulated marketing system has not met the needs of this growing niche market even though they had a considerable amount of time to adjust (some boards have had 10 years) - this unacceptably long adjustment period is expected to be chronic due to regulatory impediments.

• Loss in farm income, retail sales, tax payments etc: The production of organic foods and other niche products represent significant increases in farm income which reduces the need for government support - an issue which is endemic in conventional commodity sectors. The regulated systems' continued mismanagement of organic production will negatively impact potential growth in farm income as well as retail sales (thus affecting the tax base).

• Grandfathering of Original Producers: Recognition must be given to the organic producers who originally developed the market. Not only have they achieved tremendous brand loyalty from consumers, consumer demand is increasing mainly due to their efforts. Unfortunately, a few of these producers are currently embroiled in costly litigation with the marketing boards - a more collaborative method of dealing with these producers should be considered as well as an alternative approach to grandfathering them into an entirely new system which is supportive and responsive to the organic sector.

In order to improve the current situation at hand, an alternative system may need to be developed to manage the growth and orderly marketing of organic products, especially in the supply-managed sectors (eggs, feather, dairy). The organic sector in BC is well organized under the auspices of the Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia - this organization should be involved in the development of such a system. However, the first step would be to legislatively recognize organic products as being distinctly different from conventional commodities and remove organic products from the purview of the regulated marketing systems.

We trust that you, Premier Campbell, and your colleagues in government whose stated interests are to enhance economic activity and sustainable food production, will respond to this request. This is a tremendous opportunity for you to help boost the economy and support free enterprise. We and our customers -- BC consumers, are seeking positive solutions -- it is clear that we need a more responsive and supportive system for locally produced organic foods. This first step of changing the legislation to distinguish organic products from commodities, thus removing them from the management of the current marketing boards, will bring us closer to the government's goals of establishing a system that is in the public interest, affordable, effective, efficient and accountable.

We look forward to receiving your response at your earliest convenience.

Yours Sincerely,

Capers, Choices, Daily Scoop, Discovery Organics, Hazelmere Organic Farm, Kildara Farm, Pro Organics, Small Potatoes Urban Delivery, Wild West Organic Harvest

CC:Brenda Eaton, Deputy Minister to Premier, Corporate Planning & Restructuring
John van Dongen, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
Ross Husdon, Chair, BC Marketing Board
Michel Maurer, Chair, BC Chicken Marketing Board
David Taylor, Chair, BC Egg Marketing Board
Shawn Heppell, Chair, BC Turkey Marketing Board
John Jansen, Chair, BC Milk Marketing Board

On July 7th, the Premier responded with a rather positive letter indicating that "Honourable John van Dongen, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, is developing a clear economic policy framework that will address the need for the regulated system to allow for, and encourage, growth in your industry." In addition, Premier Campbell also stated that "all avenues must be considered if the existing structure of the regulated system cannot achieve adequate flexibility to respond to the growth of organic markets." Clearly, the government is prepared to do something, but to date, has not asked for input directly from the organic sector.

The organic community has a window of opportunity to provide a concrete proposal to government for consideration. The COABC, in collaboration with the coalition of organic retailers, distributors and home delivery companies (their numbers are growing) will be developing a policy options proposal to present to Minister van Dongen this fall. We will be asking each COABC member to provide feedback to this proposal -- in particular, all members who are producing "supply managed" products such as eggs, chicken, turkey and milk (for fluid and "industrial" (value added) purposes). The draft proposal and request for your feedback will be issued at the end of September 2003. COABC members will have 2 weeks in which to respond. Your input is critical to ensure that we speak in a unified voice when presenting the policy options proposal to government.

For more information, please contact the COABC office.

August 21, 2003

Honourable John van Dongen
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
Parliament Buildings - Room 137
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
Via Facsimile: 250-387-1522

Dear Minister,

We understand that you and your staff at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries are developing an economic policy framework that will address the need for the regulated systems to allow for and encourage growth in the organic sector (as per the letter from Premier Gordon Campbell to Gunta Vitins, dated July 7th 2003). We greatly appreciate your support. We look forward to providing input into the development of the policy framework, since it has serious implications for our sector.

With this in mind, we are developing a policy options proposal, in collaboration with other organic sector stakeholders, to present to you and your staff this fall. We trust that you will not finalize the framework until you have considered our proposal.

We plan to finalize our policy options proposal by the end of October - the reason for this timing is that it will take several weeks for all of our membership, many of whom are farmers, to provide feedback to the proposal. We would like to discuss the proposal with your staff at the end of October, and then arrange a meeting with you in early November, to formally present the proposal.

In the meantime, we respectfully request your ministry to instruct the BC Chicken Marketing Board and the BC Egg Marketing Board to cease their restrictive actions against organic producers. Their current actions are extremely damaging to our sector and unwarranted during this period of development and consultation.

We look forward to meeting with you and your staff this fall.

Respectfully,

Patrick Mallet

President, Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia

The Family Farm

by Cathleen Kneen

"Family farmers? We're an endangered species, you know," says Eli Rubinson. Eli and his brother Saul operate a market garden with their parents, Mendel and Paula Rubinson, near Savona; their sister Rebecca lives just down the road.

Mendel and Paula never actually planned to become part of an endangered species. They were part of the "back-to-the-land" movement in 1971 when they settled on a piece of crown land 30 miles up the Deadman Valley. In those days they earned money by working for neighbouring ranchers and picking fruit in the Okanagan. Their move into selling produce came a few years later, when the Kamloops Farmers Market was created by some people from the United Church, realizing that the key to stopping hunger is to increase local food production. The Rubinsons were among the first vendors, selling lettuce and bedding plants. Their attendance at the market was sporadic, however, since it took them $1^1/_2$ hours to drive to Kamloops.

Meanwhile their family was growing. The children were home-schooled, played with kids from a nearby commune, and had daily chores and farm work to grow the family's food. By 1986, Mendel explains, the neighbouring kids had moved away and maintaining the children's social life was beginning to involve way too much driving. When a neighbour approached them to buy his 170-acre property nearer to Savona – he was looking for someone who would not log it – they jumped at the chance. "It was only a 15-mile move," commented Mendel, but it made quite a difference because now we had a few acres of good land and hydro and phone where before we only had running water in the summer."

"You can earn a living for a family off 4-5 acres of garden," Mendel says. "Of course, we don't buy new furniture," he adds. Nor do they have a fridge or a dryer, although that is more a matter of principle than finances. Paula first became an environmentalist when she realized that upper Deadman Creek is in Zone A of the trace element deposition pattern of the smokestack from BC Hydro's proposed Hat Creek thermal power project. Just as one way to stop hunger is to increase local food production, so one way to stop mega-projects is to conserve electricity, she says. "And who needs a dryer in the desert, anyway?"

The move also gave the children the choice to go to school. But home schooling and the Rubinsons' attitude of respect for their children – "we always tried to treat them as people,"says Paula – had already made their mark. On his first day in 7th grade in Savona, Saul walked into the staff room and made himself a cup of coffee. (He stuck it out and finished high school.) Now the two sons work with Mendel on the farm full-time, and Eli is building a house on the property. Only Rebecca is not interested in farming; Mendel (who grew up in Montreal) describes her as "a true child of the West",

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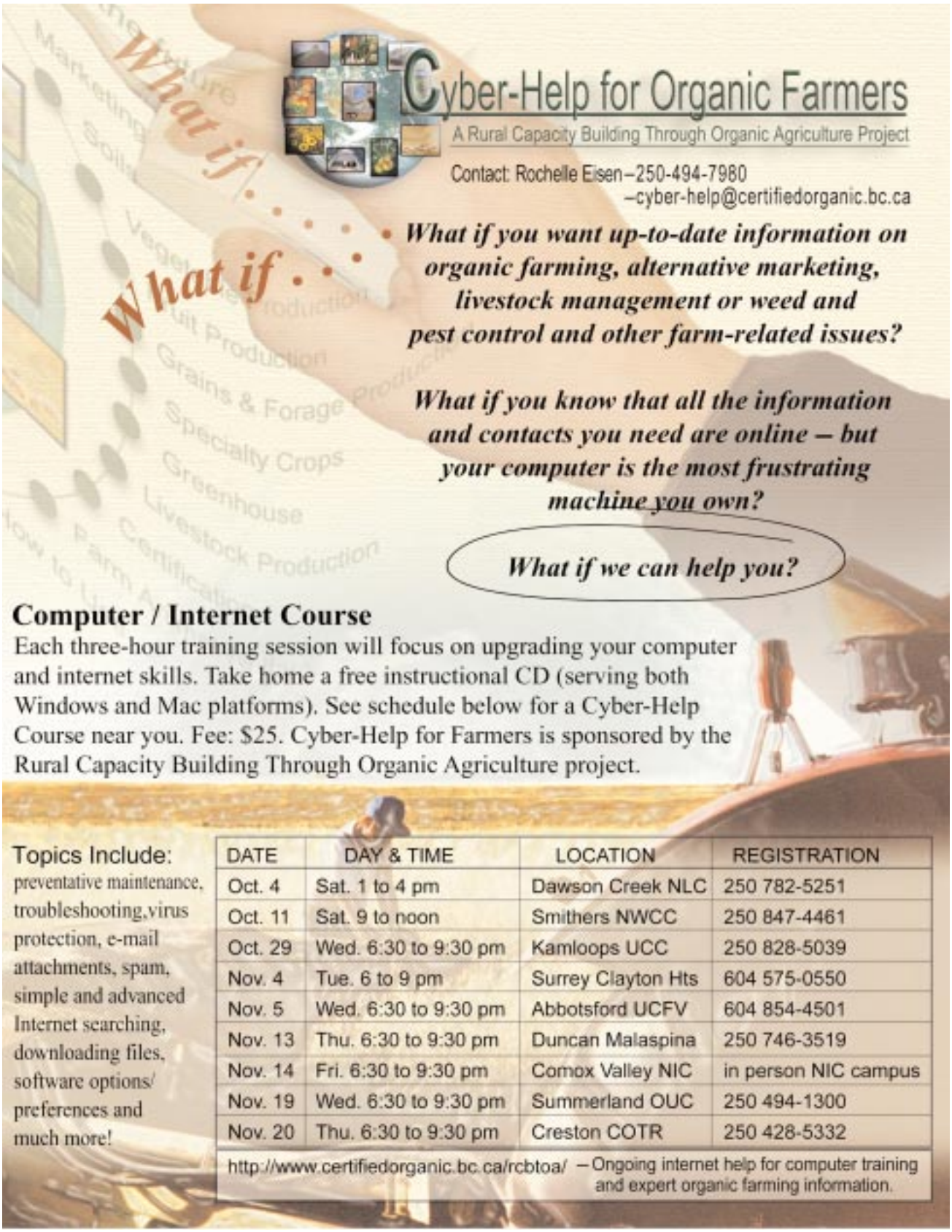
Paula, Eli and Mendel Rubinson at their stand at the Kamloops Farmers' Market


What if . . .
What if . . .
Cyber-Help for Organic Farmers
A Rural Capacity Building Through Organic Agriculture Project
Contact: Rochelle Eisen – 250-494-7980
– cyber-help@certifiedorganic.bc.ca
What if you want up-to-date information on organic farming, alternative marketing, livestock management or weed and pest control and other farm-related issues?
What if you know that all the information and contacts you need are online – but your computer is the most frustrating machine you own?
What if we can help you?
Computer / Internet Course
Each three-hour training session will focus on upgrading your computer and internet skills. Take home a free instructional CD (serving both Windows and Mac platforms). See schedule below for a Cyber-Help Course near you. Fee: $25. Cyber-Help for Farmers is sponsored by the Rural Capacity Building Through Organic Agriculture project.
Topics Include:
preventative maintenance, troubleshooting, virus protection, e-mail attachments, spam, simple and advanced Internet searching, downloading files, software options/ preferences and much more!
DATE | DAY & TIME | LOCATION | REGISTRATION
Oct. 4 | Sat. 1 to 4 pm | Dawson Creek NLC | 250 782-5251
Oct. 11 | Sat. 9 to noon | Smithers NWCC | 250 847-4461
Oct. 29 | Wed. 6:30 to 9:30 pm | Kamloops UCC | 250 828-5039
Nov. 4 | Tue. 6 to 9 pm | Surrey Clayton Hts | 604 575-0550
Nov. 5 | Wed. 6:30 to 9:30 pm | Abbotsford UCFV | 604 854-4501
Nov. 13 | Thu. 6:30 to 9:30 pm | Duncan Malaspina | 250 746-3519
Nov. 14 | Fri. 6:30 to 9:30 pm | Comox Valley NIC | in person NIC campus
Nov. 19 | Wed. 6:30 to 9:30 pm | Summerland OUC | 250 494-1300
Nov. 20 | Thu. 6:30 to 9:30 pm | Creston COTR | 250 428-5332
http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/ – Ongoing internet help for computer training and expert organic farming information.

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involved in hockey and barrel racing – the farm provides hay and pasture for her horses.

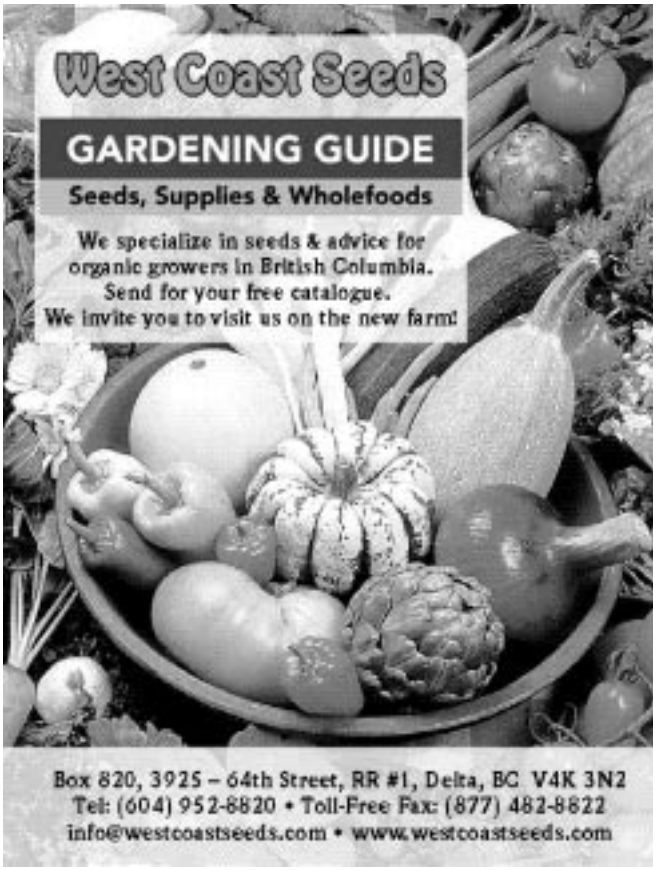
Music is an important part of the Rubinson's family life. The boys started their first band in their mid-teens and later a quite successful group called Thirsty (as in, "the band is thirsty"), until one of the key players left the area. "What we do," says Mendel, "is go out and work and then after lunch we play a little bit and sometimes in the evening." Now they play in public as Heavy Mendel and the Sound Goods ("because they make me sound good," says Mendel).

The Rubinsons are also deeply committed to the environment and promotion of organic agriculture (they are certified by STOPA which they helped to found). Mendel is President of the Kamloops Farmers' Market, and for the past 6 years Paula has thrown her energies into developing the Kamloops Organic Food Co-Op to provide an outlet, particularly through the winter, for local organic producers and a reliable source for the whole range of organic food products. The store, on Seymour Street in downtown Kamloops, opened last December and still has room for more local growers - and of course, more customers!

The focus of the family, however, is the farm. Mendel believes that there are two things which are going to save agriculture: the family farm and the communal farm. In their case, the boys grew up with the farm and brought new skills into it. For example, they are both good mechanics while Mendel says he doesn't have the patience. "You know," he says, "young people have ideas like doing things more efficiently, using better hoeing techniques, for example. They can take it to another level because they are more intelligent than me."

Do they think their sons will ever leave?

"Well," says Mendel, "Eli is going to take a year off and do something else. Saul might also want to do that. But they have seen what it is like out there, this is really a beautiful place. It's a personal thing that they're in touch with the land - it might be a selfish thing but it's important." ✓



Spinosad- a biopesticide for all sectors

by Linda Edwards

"One for the rook, one for the crow, one to die and one to grow" is a nice motto when planting corn but when the objects in question are cherry trees the loss of three in four is a little extreme. Or at least, so cherry growers in BC seem to think; most of them have given up on growing organically, at least up to now. A new product on the horizon promises an effective agent against the cherry fruit fly (along with the Colorado potato beetle, cabbage worms and others), acceptable to organic standards. It sounds almost too good to be true, and of course it is not quite that simple. But it could be a major new tool for many organic farmers.

The magician is Spinosad, the antibiotic product of a soil actinomycete. (Actinomycetes are soil organisms that are somewhere between a fungi and a bacteria. They are responsible for that rich soil odor we like to say indicates a good soil.) This substance is effective against insects by ingestion as well as by contact, although ingestion is 5-10 times more effective. It works by excitation of the insect nervous system, leading to involuntary muscle contractions, prostration with tremors, and paralysis. This can take from minutes to hours. Exposure results in cessation of feeding, followed about 24 hours later by paralysis and death. Spinosad will last 2-7 days on leaves and less than a day in soil or water. It is produced by a fermentation process.

A spinosad based product with the trade name Success is registered in Canada for a wide range of fruits and vegetables; however, it contains inert materials not allowed for organic production. Another product with spinosad as the active ingredient called Entrust is registered in the US and is OMRI and NOP approved. However, this formulation is not yet available in Canada. DOW AgroSciences, the owner of this product, is currently considering pursuing registration of Entrust in Canada. American organic growers and others in many other countries in the world already have this product, and I am confident that within one to two years it will be available for organic growers in Canada.

Spinosad is active against a number of serious insect pests: Lepidoptera (caterpillars such as leafrollers, cabbage worms and loopers, diamond back moths, European corn borer), thrips, Colorado potato beetle, and Diptera such as cherry fruit fly, walnut husk fly, and leaf miners. There are also a number of other pests where it may have some efficacy including codling moth, ants and grasshoppers.

Pesticides can only be used for the specific crop they are registered for and for specific pests on those crops. Success is registered for a wide variety of root and tuber crops, brassica, leafy and fruiting vegetables and stone and pome fruits for the caterpillars noted above, and for Colorado potato beetles. Both the US and Canada require toxicity evaluation of all pesticides prior to registration. However only Canada requires efficacy testing - does it work when used as directed? - and this has been done for these applications in Canada. It would be expected that if/when Entrust is registered that these registrations would also apply to the same crops and pests. However, Success has not been assessed for efficacy against cherry fruit fly or thrips in nectarines and until that is done, it cannot be legally used in Canada for those pests. Cherry fruit fly has been a major barrier to expansion of organic cherry production in the Pacific Northwest of Canada and the United States. Spinosad has now made growing organic cherries in the US so much easier and more viable and undoubtedly will in Canada as well when the product is registered here.

So much for what this product does for the bad guys. What is its effect on non-target organisms,

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beneficials and the environment? Spinosad has been tested for toxicity (acute plus long term carcinogenic and mutagenic effects) against a wide number of mammals, birds and aquatic organisms. The former two were unaffected. Aquatic organisms however can be killed by spinosad. It is very important not to spray this product around water bodies. Fortunately, it does not leach in the soil.

A number of studies have been done to determine the effect of spinosad on predators and parasites. It is non-toxic to Orius species (pirate bugs/anthocorids), Chrysopa, (lacewings), coccinelids (lady bugs) and predaceous mites. They also found coccinelids and lacewings fed spinosad infected insects were not effected. However, bees and wasp parasites are very susceptible to spinosad if they come in contact with it when it is wet. However, once it is dry, it no longer presents a danger to them. An easy solution to protecting these important organisms is to only apply the product in the evening when they are no longer flying. Within 3 hours, the product would be dry and would no longer be toxic to wasps and bees. One study showed a predatory beetle, Staphylinidae (a.k.a. rove beetles)was negatively affected by high levels of spinosad. Earwigs are even more susceptible, not only to the compound but to eating insects contaminated with spinosad. While stone fruit and vegetable growers plus people who "just hate earwigs" will probably be happy to hear this, apple and pear growers are not. Earwigs are critical to and very effective in the control of such important pests as leaf rollers and pear psylla. Avoiding the use of spinosad in these crops or only using it before earwigs inhabit the trees will be important.

When a product works as well as spinosad appears to, one has to become aware that resistance to it could occur. Because of genetic diversity, every population of any organism contains some individuals that will not be susceptible to a pesticide. If the pesticide works well, this means the resistant ones are present only at very low numbers, probably because they are somehow not as successful as the main population. Perhaps their chitin is a little bit thicker which protects them against the pesticide. However, it might also be a trait that makes them slower and less successful at getting the best food and mates. The more you keep killing the ones you can kill, the faster you clear out the competition for the ones you can't kill. Then one day the spray doesn't work anymore. To avoid this, alternate use of spinosad with other methods and/or products of control. For example, alternate it with Bt sprays for the various caterpillars. And only apply it when the pest is high enough in numbers to cause economic damage.

I have been gathering information about this product since 1997. It has gone from a new but vague possibility in pest management to something which will dramatically change organic and conventional production of many crops. In May I attended an organic tree fruit conference in Colorado. Organic growers there have been using this product for 2 seasons now and are very excited about it especially for cherry fruit fly control in cherries and against leafrollers in apples and pears and thrips in nectarines. Unfortunately I do not know any American vegetable growers using the product but understand it is quickly being adopted there also. It is also providing a much softer alternative for many conventional growers.

In the late 1980's, a new innovation in pest management that could be used by organic producers became available. This was pheromone mating disruption for control of codling moth. It worked so well that what had been a major pest greatly limiting organic production of apples and pears, no longer was. The result was a large increase in the acreage of these two crops world wide. I predict that spinosad will have a similar effect but for many more crops and many more pests. ✓


BSE
Are you concerned?
Feel Safe with Organic Beef!
Organic beef producers use no animal by-products, hormones, antibiotics, GMO feeds or chemical fertilizers.
Jerseyland Organics offers a full line of Certified Organic beef.
We run a herd of Angus beef cattle. These cattle are pasture raised on private lands – we do not range on native grasslands as this compromises native species' food sources.
Further, our beef is available as only grassfed, or if preferred, finished on organic grain.
We will do whole sides, freezer packs or individual cuts.
Delivery available throughout Southern BC and Vancouver area.
All beef is raised in accordance with COABC standards.
Please contact us for prices and availability.
Jerseyland Organics
Box 1468 • 2690 Almond Gardens Road
Grand Forks BC V0H 1H0
Ph: (250) 442-8112 • Fax: (250) 442-8737
Farm: (250) 442-8683
email: jersylnd@sunshinecable.com
YOGUR

Standards Changes - Pay Attention!

Following is a summary of suggestions before the Standards Review Committee for consideration.

The Committee will accept specific proposals for producer input from October 1, 2003 to mid-November. For further details refer to the COABC's What's New webpage or contact the COABC office for a hard copy. Please submit input for the SRC to the COABC office.

The following suggestions have been submitted to SRC for consideration; no recommendations have been made yet by the SRC.

Each Certification Agency has a representative on this Committee. Committee Chair: Lee McFayden

Read these changes with your copy of the Standards in front of you. If you require more clarification or details on some point, contact your CB's representative on the SRC.

Section 2- Definitions & Certification Procedures

Section 2.1 (59)

Parallel Production Definition - Duplicate 3.3.4 "Production of the same crop or similar crops which are not easily distinguishable, in the same crop rotation on both the organic and non-organic portions of the farm".

Add a 100% organic definition - any product raw or processed composed of 100 organic ingredient(s), processing aid(s) and additive(s).

Add transition definitions - taken from the National Standard draft:

i. Transition - The act of establishing organic management practices in accordance with this standard.

ii. Transition Period - the period of time between the start of a program of organic management of a production unit and the completion of the production unit as organic in accordance with this standard.

iii. Transitional Product - A product from an enterprise that has completed one or more years of the transition period towards becoming an organic enterprise.

Section 3 - Land and Resource Management

Section 3.3.2 (6)

Meat Animal transition reads, "Animals must be maintained by an enterprise that is certified organic. These conditions apply from birth...Pastures must be CO." Remove "These conditions apply from birth" Replace with either:

i) These conditions apply from conception except as set out in 8.4.2 OR

ii) These conditions apply from third trimester of in-utero development." Will also affect section 8.4.2, 8.5.1.

Section 3.3.2 (9)

Replacement Dairy Stock: A request for a temporary 2 year proviso allowing goat producers to conventionally source up to 10% of the total milking herd with a 3 month cleansing period imposed prior to milk being identified as certified organic.

Section 3.3.2 (3) Transplants, (4) Mushroom, (5) Sprout, (11) Processing

Remove the 2 inspection requirement, leaving to the discretion of the certification body, or remove the 90 day requirement in processing.

Section 3.6

Fence/Trellis Buffer Zone requirements. What is the distance needed from treated posts to crop? From treated post to livestock?

Section 3.9 Manure and 3.10 Compost

i. Implications of off-farm manure being a possible source of GEO contamination - should we prohibit off farm manure unless feed was non-GEO? Also relevant to 2.4

ii. Is nonorganic livestock allowed on certified land? In view of 3.9.3 (1a).

iii. Is certified organic livestock permitted to graze, feed, roost or rest in organic (trees, bush, vine or vegetable) production areas? In view of 3.9.3 (2d).

Section 3.10 (4)

Composting temperature requirements. Clarification was sought regarding if tempera-

ture record keeping is required. This is not an SRC issue, but a cert committee issue.

Section 4 - Organic Crop Management

4.3.3 (3)

A request to remove the 12-month transition period for non-organically sourced strawberry plants.

Section 8 - Livestock

Add (10) to 8.1.3

Feed (prohibited) Animals may not be transferred in and out of organic management.

8.5.1

Source of slaughter stock; current standards are contradictory. See above section 3.3.2 (6). Also may affect 8.4.2.

Milk goats transition period - see 3.3.2 (9)

Replace 8.1.3 (4) Feed Prohibited " Unapproved animal products" with "mammalian or poultry by-products (i.e. slaughter waste) or other unapproved animal products".

Section 9 - Poultry

Add (i) to 9.3.2 (10)

"Housing: a coop with 1.5 square feet per bird with a patio of 2 sq. ft per bird be allowable".

Section 11- Processing Issues

Irradiation and Microwave clarification - completed, refer to online version.

Minor Processing edits:

i. Add (2) to 11.6.1. Pest Control Recommended "The pest management program must be effective in controlling pest"

ii. Add (5) to 11.6.4. Pest Control Prohibited "Contamination of food stuffs by pest or pest residues"

Material List Revisions

Section 14 - Crop List

Add Vinegar - Allowed (W)

Modify Calcium Chloride - "must use food grade quality. Can be used to adjust nutrient deficiencies and/or physiological disorders".

Section 15 - Processing List

Modify Ammonium Sanitizers - regulated, see quaternary ammonium

Modify Quaternary Ammonium Sanitizers - "prohibited for use on surfaces that may contact food".

Section 16 - Livestock List

Modify Propylene glycol - prohibited

Organic Land Care Standards Draft

Has not yet been addressed by SRC.

Greenhouse Standard Draft

This has been in use for one year. SRC looking for feedback on this standard before making a motion to accept.

Personal Body Care/Cosmetic Standards

A proposal was put forward for COABC to draft personal body care/cosmetic standards. SRC researching and would like feedback on certifying non-food production.

Aquaculture Standards (fin and shell)

Review background document http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/services/aquaculture-standards.html. An information session is planned for November.

Rabbits

A request for rabbit specific standards was submitted. Has not been addressed by SRC.

Harmonization

A request that COABC standards are harmonized with the new National Standards. Suggestion that harmonization would be dealt with once the National Standard is passed. ✓

Cover cropping with fall rye? Careful!

by Rupert Jannasch

Cover crops are invaluable for controlling weeds, preventing soil erosion and preserving soil organic matter. Ideally, growers will vary cover crops from year to year to take advantage of different botanical characteristics such as rooting patterns, allelopathy and nitrogen fixation. Variety also helps thwart the establishment of certain weeds and pests. The hectic pace of the farming season, however, often means growers are scrambling to plant any crop at all by autumn. For the sake of easy establishment and reliability many will choose the old standby, fall rye.

Fall rye at Dragon Mountain Farm

By late August, cover crop choices are limited. Oats, brassicas (oilseed radish, rape/canola, mustard) and possibly buckwheat (very frost sensitive, little biomass) are a few options. Unlike fall rye, oats and brassicas winterkill and leave little surface trash to contend with in the spring. Hairy vetch will not over-winter in many regions of Canada, but in some areas, late summer can be an excellent time to establish this acid tolerant, leguminous crop for plough-down the following summer. It bears mentioning that in Atlantic Canada, at least, late summer is a good time to establish more long-term forage stands such as white clover, timothy and meadow fescue, partly because weed pressure is usually lower in the autumn than in spring.

For squeezing in a growing crop between fall and spring, however, fall rye is without equal. Rye can yield 2-6 tonnes dry matter per hectare depending on soil fertility and when it is ploughed under. The crop's expansive root system, autumn tillering, early spring growth and long straw provide excellent weed control.

Rye is also well known for its release of allelopathic chemicals – substances that retard the growth of certain weeds. These are found in a variety of crops and weeds and are being studied as possible alternatives to synthetic herbicides. The chemicals released by rye have inhibitory effects on weeds such as wild oats, red rooted pigweed, ragweed and common purslane.

Allelopathy is complex and requires the correct combination of crop, soil and weather conditions to work, so growers should not assume rye is a panacea for all weed problems. For instance, the allelopathic effect appears to be less effective when rye is either tilled or chisel plowed as opposed to being left on the soil surface. Small seeded vegetables such as carrots may be sensitive to the inhibitory chemicals. Larger seeded crops, legumes and transplanted crops like tomatoes are not.

Normally, fall rye is direct seeded (100-135 kg/ha) after the main crop, preferably by the middle of September. In some years, it may establish as late as November. Alternatively, rye can be overseeded into soybeans from an airplane, high bodied tractor, or with other types of broadcast seeders. Optimum timing is at leaf yellowing or early leaf drop. In Minnesota, fall rye has also been established in corn with aerial seeding.

Rye can follow potatoes – either by drilling or broadcasting – directly after harvest. The earlier the potato variety, the more chance of success. With late season varieties, post-harvest field work may be impossible and the days too short for establishing the crop. One short-cut method is to broadcast rye several days before harvest. It's a gamble, but worth some experimenting.

Despite rye's many advantages, the decision to

plant should not be taken lightly. Establishing fall rye is relatively easy, but spring management is an enormous challenge if the following crop is to be planted in time for the main growing season. Rye is an extremely difficult crop to kill. It will regrow after ploughing and it is prone to secondary tillering after mowing. Consider also that rye can soak up a lot of water in early spring, but if left growing too long the soil can dry into concrete.

A relatively short mat of rye may be directly incorporated in the soil, but as the crop grows beyond about 12 cm, mowing or flail chopping first is advisable. Some organic farmers recommend that green manures should be cut and wilted for several days before incorporation to lessen the acidifying effects of decomposition on the soil. After incorporation the rule of thumb is to wait two weeks before planting – perhaps longer with mature stands.

The regrowth problem can be overcome by waiting until at least the early heading stage or even flowering before cutting or ploughing the crop. The problem, of course, is that planting may be delayed well into June – beyond the date still feasible for planting a main crop.

To use rye successfully as a winter cover, growers need to fully appreciate the crop they are dealing with. According to one vegetable production text from 1945, growers need "not only the necessary equipment, but the determination to get the crop plowed under before it becomes too large and strawy ..."

Watch www.mda.state.mn.us/ESAP/greenbook2003/cropsys12.pdf) for results of a 2003-2005 Minnesota trial investigating the effect of fall rye (varieties, seeding rates, and the method and timing of killing the rye) planted in either corn or small grain residues on two organic and two conventional farms prior to subsequent soybean production.

Rupert Jannasch, M.Sc., P.Ag. is a consultant for the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada. Please send comments or questions by phone (902)893-7256 or by email oacc@nsac.ns.ca.

Diverse Interests, Common Needs

by Ross Smith & Assoc.

A study was commissioned through the Organic Sector Development Fund to determine the research needs for the organic sector, in the light of the priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan. Focus groups were held in different regions of the province by the project team of Ross Smith and Associates (Sarah Davidson, Elaine Spearing, Bill Smith, and Oscar Somasco), and the full report is available on request.

The highest ranked priority, and the common thread connecting the very diverse interests and needs of the province's organic growers, is soil fertility and management.

The report also suggests the possibility of focusing on investment in industry human resources, rather than exclusively on investment in research projects.

Following are some highlights from the report:

Organic producers in each of the regions of the province have a diversity of interests, although there are important regional differences as well. There is a focus on tree fruits in the South Okanagan/ Similkameen region, on ground crops in the North Okanagan and Thompson regions, and the Fraser Valley has a large number of producers and a high concentration of organic ground crop production, dairy and poultry producers, and berry producers. Vancouver Island mirrors this concentration although there are fewer producers. The Prince George and Peace River region has the fewest number of certified organic producers and the largest acreage in organic production, focused mainly on beef and grain production. Small dairy, beef, greenhouse, seed, herb, nursery, specialty field crop, ground crop and specialty livestock producers are scattered throughout each region.

An important challenge in the research process was accounting for the differences in size of certified organic operations and the marketing foci of producers in each region. There is as much difference between the same sectors in different regions of the province as there are between different sectors. ... There was a noticeable difference in the topics discussed at the various workshops, depending on the regional and the sectoral interests of the majority of participants.

Some workshops consisted of producers well established in their sector, with larger operations and seasonal employees, and who placed considerable emphasis on marketing. These producers discussed issues such as the need to increase production to meet falling premiums, and to open new market channels. In other workshops, attended mostly by small producers*, the primary concern was human resource constraints. Marketing was an issue, but was generally focused on penetrating local markets and maintaining the integrity of farmers' markets and home box delivery operations. These producers were most concerned about limitations of time and labour required for the scale of their operation. Very often a family team was doing most of the labour, accounting, and marketing as well as maintaining one or two off-farm jobs. These two producer characterizations are presented for illustrative purposes and can be seen as opposite ends of a continuum. Many of the producers in the province fall somewhere along this continuum.

soil managment and fertility is the highest priority

Another theme across the workshops was certification as a driver of increased marketing penetration and increased production capacity versus other, more process-driven models for the organic sector. Some participants felt that certification and the accompanying COABC branding program (the checkmark), or better, a Canadian organic branding program, encouraged or could encourage new consumer loyalty. Stringent certification, improved labeling and handling procedures, increased food safety protocols, combined with grower or grower agent branding would ensure marketplace acceptance and increased market penetration. We will refer to this as a 'product-driven' approach. Other

** The terms 'small producer' or 'large producer' are arbitrary and are used here to denote a difference, mainly in production volume or cash flow from organic production.*

producers felt that this product-driven approach was at high risk of diminishing the real intent of organic production as a 'process-driven' approach. The main argument for a process-driven approach to increase production capacity was that it could be more resilient given potential and current pressures facing all agricultural industries.

For example, advents in technology and monitoring capabilities may be able to find contamination in all farm products because of our industrial setting. This could jeopardize any purely product-driven approach that emphasizes only brand-name (certified organic) loyalty. A good example would be the recent finding of a bovine spongiform encephalitis (BSE) infected cow in northern Alberta, now jeopardizing all beef production in Canada. Regulators have been reiterating the procedural integrity of Canada's beef handling system, but face difficulty because marketing has always emphasized product quality. Both possible approaches for increasing production, product-driven and process-driven, when applied to increasing production capacity, have merit and provide their own advantages to the industry as a whole.

The following summary table (Table 3) of research priorities is based on our research results and an expanded definition of research needs. Some of these priorities require primary agronomic research (field trials, test plots, replication, etc.) and others require primary socio-economic research (information collection and analysis, participatory methods, socio-economic data gathering, organizational development, industry data collection, business planning, etc.). The table is elaborated upon in the regional discussions of the results.

Organizational Development and Professional Development

Many participants felt relatively isolated from other certified producers within their own sector, possibly because the current certification organizations are based on regions, not on sectors. For example, many ground crop producers in the North Okanagan have very little knowledge or communication with their counterparts in the

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Table 3: Summary of research priorities for all regions (ranked)

Note	Research need identified	Relative cost of conducting research	Relative return on investment	Availability of research or information	Expected spread of research benefits	Priority (ranked)*
3.1	Soil fertility and management	Medium to high	High	Many & diverse sources	Many producers	1
3.2	Information needs	Low	High	Many & diverse sources	Many producers	2
3.3	Pest control	High	High	Scattered, little regionally specific work	Some producers	3
3.4	Marketplace development	Medium	High	Many sources of information	Many producers	4
3.5	Weed management, cover cropping, green manures	Medium	Medium	Many sources, many research projects	Many producers	5**
3.6	Infrastructure development	High	Medium	Many sources, requires private enterprise partners	Some producers	6
3.7	Livestock management and infrastructure	Medium	Low	Many sources	Some producers	7
3.8	Seed production	Low	Low	Many sources	Some producers	8

** Please see detailed notes for more information about ranking specific projects within each category*
***Many potential projects in this category could overlap with projects in the first category (soil fertility and management).*

...continued from page 19

Fraser Valley. Similarly the certified livestock producers in the province are scattered in different regions and have little communication with each other.

Our researchers were told that the research process for this study was valuable to many participants because of the opportunity to meet for purposes other than general meetings or certification meetings; and that they were able to discuss with other growers particular production and marketing concerns. We believe that these sentiments describe the rising need for a continuing forum for expression of professional development interests. This forum may be most appropriately organized around sectoral interests, for example sector caucuses within a larger professional development organization.

The role of entrepreneurs

There is a critical role to be played by entrepreneurs in the different organic sectors throughout the province. A cursory overview of the B.C. organic scene for the last twenty years reveals that the industry has been driven by entrepreneurs of various types, from worker co-ops and individual business people in the distribution business, to manufacturers, to growers and retail outlets.... This independence is one of the great strengths of the organic food production and distribution system. ... Research funding dollars should be directed at skill and knowledge building activities that will benefit the individual efforts of all producers and encourage the entrepreneurial culture that has served the industry well to date.

Research Modes

At the onset of this study, it was assumed by the project developers that institutions, represented primarily by university or college based researchers, would play a significant role in delineating the 'research needs' of B.C. organic producers. Both the response from producers, and review of the literature, suggest that a more appropriate role for institutions is as 'service providers' for the industry, i.e. that research projects be producer-led and expert-supported, not the other way round. However, there are significant support functions that can be provided by these institutions quite apart from their potential role as research service providers.

The participants in this study have indicated that their preference is for on-farm and participatory research work. This preference is echoed throughout the research needs studies we have reviewed. There is also a preference for a 'producer led, expert (university)- supported' approach to the choice of topics for any research work that is undertaken.

Communications

The common request from producers that information be 'pushed' (actively delivered) to them, likely means that the listing of information or research results on a website will not be sufficient to meet their needs. More active communication tools are available, including subscription-based tailored information packaging, both electronic and print media. 'Pushing' has a cost that will have to be borne by producers.

CyberHelp and *The Grower*, the two current media offering information services to B.C. organic producers, may be able to extend their services in the direction of a customized 'trade journal' directed at sectors within their readership. ... Conferences, workshops, seminars, focused discussion groups, sector caucuses, farm field days, farm tours, and the like, are some of the more active means of information collection and dissemination. ... The Organic Advisory Service is considered valuable and should be strengthened. Production manuals

Mark your calendar!

The **COABC Annual Meeting** will be held in Naramata on the weekend of **February 28-29th, 2004.** In addition to the business meeting and the usual networking, gastronomic, and entertainment opportunities, several producer education workshops will be offered, with a primary focus on maintaining soil health. If you have ideas for workshops at the AGM or want to help organize the event, please contact your CB's representative to the COABC.

that have been initiated but not completed need to be reactivated.

Resources spent on these activities to spread existing knowledge may prove more beneficial than 'de novo' research projects.

For a complete copy of the report contact the COABC office, or Ross Smith and Associates at Box 181 Groundbirch, BC V0C1T0
phone (250) 780-2378
email: wgsmith@neonet.bc.ca

✓

Linda Edwards passes the talking stick to Gunta Vitins at the COABC AGM. The stick was presented to PACS by its maker, Ted Buchan.

Classifieds

CERTIFIED ORGANIC APPLE TREES Granny Smith on M9 rootstock, Ready to plant in spring 2004. Call Alain at 499-5654 or email: Alainp@telus.net Old Tower Farm, Keremeos, B.C. PACS 16-095

ORGANIC ACREAGE near Cranbrook. 7 acre well-developed cut flower & bulb farm. Includes 1 acre of raised beds with irrigation system throughout and 3 acres of steep forested slope above river. Excellent water well. 2000 sq ft house; 700 sq ft older house; 2500 sq ft warehouse. $250,000. Call (780) 351-2432.

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CERTIFIED ORGANIC FARM in the heart of the West Kootenays, near the beautiful heritage city of Nelson. Enjoy all that organic farming has to offer in paradise. Clean air and 2 major rivers within 5 minutes. Strong and growing local market for greenhouse products and excellent potential for winter storage crops. $280,000. (250) 399-4313 for more info see www.soilmatters.com

NEED FARMING HELP? Cyber-Help for Organic Farmers offers FREE advice, training and expertise. For information, go to www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/ or email your question to <cyber-help@certifiedorganic.bc.ca>. A BC-based, provincial and federally-sponsored service.

NEED TO IMPROVE your computer skills? Cyber-Help for Farmers is offering training this fall. The $25.00 registration gives you three hours of instruction, plus a FREE take home instructional CD. See full-page ad this issue for location nearest you.

COABC CHECKMARK HIGHWAY SIGNS for your certified organic farm or business. $100 plus tax for 75cm x 60cm single sided sign and logo with farm name applied. Freight extra. email <office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca> or phone the COABC office at 250-260-4429.

Organic Certification for Farmed Salmon *by Nathan Pelletier*

Following are edited excerpts from the paper Applying Organic Principles to Aquaculture Systems: Understanding Proposed Organic Certification Standards for Farmed Salmon, available on the COABC Cyber-Help website at <www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/services/aquaculture-standards.html>

In the past two decades farmed salmon has become BC's largest agricultural export product. This reflects a global trend: with increasing demand for seafood products and concurrent declines in wild-capture fisheries, aquaculture has become the fastest growing food industry in the world.

The Aquaculture Development Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries has recently undertaken research related to organic certification for aquaculture producers. The aim of this undertaking is to facilitate constructive dialogue and cooperation between interested parties in creating standards that will

- create opportunities for the development of an organic aquaculture industry in BC
- maintain the integrity of organic standards
- develop alternative aquaculture products for consumers

Standards for organic aquaculture have been developed in other jurisdictions throughout the world, although many are still in draft form. Yellow Island Aquaculture Limited (YIAL), located on Quadra Island, BC, has developed internal standards for organic salmon production. These draft standards will be submitted for review by the COABC standards review committee. Because the concept of organic aquaculture is new to the COABC, it is necessary that the standards review committee be provided with adequate background information and support throughout the review process. The Aquaculture Development Branch will endeavour to provide such assistance to the Standards Review Committee as required.

Organic Aquaculture Workshop

Thursday, November 6, 9:00 - 4:30

Coast Bastion Inn, Nanaimo BC

Global growth in demand for organic foods is 20% per year.

Aquaculture is the world's fastest-growing food sector.

ORGANIC AQUACULTURE may provide a market-driven approach to promoting economically viable and environmentally and socially superior aquaculture practices.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, in collaboration with the aquaculture industry and the Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC), is exploring the application of organic food production principles to the culture of fish and shellfish. Join representatives from government, industry and organic certifying bodies for a one-day workshop to discuss organic aquaculture production and the proposed organic standards for finfish and shellfish culture.

Workshop attendees will represent experts and practitioners in both aquaculture and organic certification.

To register, fill out the form at right and include a cheque or money order (payable to COABC) for $45.00. Lunch is included. Register early as space is limited to 60 participants. Rooms will be available at the Coast Bastion for November 5 & 6 for $65/night single or $75/night double plus applicable taxes. When booking, please quote "Organic Aquaculture Workshop".

Organic aquaculture & workshop information will be posted on <www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/services/aquaculture.html>

Registration

Organic Aquaculture Workshop

Nov. 6, 2003 Coast Bastion Inn

Nanaimo BC

Name: _____

_____

Address _____

_____

_____

Tel: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Please enclose $45 registration (includes GST), payable to COABC and mail to:

COABC
#8A-100 Kalamalka Lk. Rd. Vernon, BC
V1T 9G1

Developing standards for organic aquaculture poses a number of significant challenges. Given the basic differences between terrestrial and aquatic animals and environments, most terrestrial organic standards cannot be directly applied to aquaculture systems. However, the same principles are relevant to areas such as livestock origin, feed ration, health care, living conditions, and identification. These overarching general principles of organic production must be connected to the specific conditions of aquaculture systems while remaining fully consistent with the basic philosophy of organic production.

Livestock Feed

The fundamental requirement of organic livestock feed management is to provide a complete, balanced ration that closely conforms to the organism's natural dietary preference while remaining exclusively composed of allowable materials. Since there is currently no permissible alternative to including appropriate amounts of fish meal and fish oil in the diets of piscivorous fish, organic standards-setting committees have proposed a number of options to address this issue.

- allow a set percentage of fish meal and fish oil from wild-capture fisheries as a feed supplement in organic production. The amount allowable would dictate which fish species could feasibly be produced in an organic system.
- require that at least 50% of the fish meal and fish oil originate from trimmings or by-products of fish caught for human consumption and the remainder come from independently-certified sustainable fisheries that target stocks not used for human consumption.
- Prohibit fish meal and fish oil from dedicated harvesting and manufacturing operations that are not independently certified as sustainable (Soil, UK).

Research is underway to identify acceptable alternatives to fish meal and oil. In BC, a government funded initiative is exploring the potential use of vegetable protein and oil as a fish meal replacement. Early results indicate that at least fifty percent of fish meal and fish oil can be replaced by vegetable-based products without compromising fish health or quality

Animal Health

In many terrestrial livestock production systems, organic standards now ban the use of antibiotics. Aquaculture, however, presents a number of unique challenges in treating sick animals. Aquatic organisms must typically be treated as a group, whereas terrestrial animals are easily iso-

continued on page 24...

lated and treated individually. Treatment options are also limited for aquatic animals - usually to medicated baths or feed, so even if only a small percentage of the stock becomes diseased, the entire stock must be treated. A zero tolerance standard for antibiotic use would perhaps present potential organic salmon producers with an unacceptably high level of risk since a single disease incident in the production cycle would preclude organic certification for the entire stock.

As in any organic production system, antibiotics must not be withheld in order to maintain organic status when their use becomes necessary. Whether organisms treated with antibiotics can retain their organic status is ultimately at the discretion of the standards review committee. Most standards require that a doubling or tripling of the withdrawal period be observed before the animals can be harvested and sold as certified organic product. Bio-Gro requires that any animals treated with antibiotics be removed from the organic production stream and be sold as conventional product. YIAL has proposed a similar standard.

Organic principles are relevant to areas such as livestock origin, feed ration, health care, living conditions, and identification.

Sea Lice

Sea lice are crustacean ectoparasites that feed on the mucous and skin of host fish. They affect salmon in a variety of ways, mainly by reducing fish growth, causing loss of scales (which leaves the fish open to secondary infections) and damage to the flesh (which reduces marketability). High parasites loads may also result in fish mortality. Sea lice commonly infect both wild stocks and farmed fish.

Concern has been raised that salmon farms act as reservoirs for sea lice, which may infect wild stocks as they migrate past the farms. Several studies in Ireland, Norway, and Scotland support this contention. To date, there are no empirical data linking the 2002 decline in Broughton Archipelago pink salmon with the salmon farms in that area. Preliminary investigations by Alexandra Morton suggest elevated levels of sea-lice infection of wild pink salmon near farms in this area. The provincial government and DFO are currently monitoring sea lice on wild salmon and monitoring/managing sea lice on farmed salmon.

Globally, a variety of treatments for sea lice exist. These include bath or in-feed treatments using pyrethroid/pyrethrins, organophosphates, avermectins, benzonphenyl ureas, or hydrogen peroxide. Research suggests that at least some of these chemicals pose varying degrees of environmental risk, including toxicity to non-target aquatic organisms.

Yellow Island Aquaculture pens, Quadra Island, BC

According to organic principles, an organic salmon standard must simultaneously prohibit the release of detrimental materials into the environment, ensure the health of farmed fish, and minimize the risk of disease transmission between farmed and wild fish. Low stocking densities, stock selection, and optimal site location may effectively mitigate problems of sea lice infestation. Low stock densities are desirable because, as with many other disease or parasitic infections, infestation levels are host-density dependent. Parasite loading is also reduced in areas of high water flow. Yellow Island Aquaculture Limited attributes their 18-year success in

avoiding lice infestations in their chinook salmon to a combination of low stocking density and site characteristics such as high water flow.

Salmon photographed at Yellow Island Aquaculture, Quadra Island

Basic Living Conditions

The techniques for maintenance of proper living conditions must be governed by the physiological and ethological needs of the organisms in question while simultaneously maintaining the health of the aquatic ecosystem. Stock densities of farmed fish should be as close as possible to natural conditions. Conventional net-pen salmon farms typically stock fish at 10-12 kg/m3 for Chinook and 16 kg/m3 for Atlantic salmon. The majority of organic aquaculture standards cap density at 10 kg/m3 for Atlantic salmon. It has been suggested by sonar surveys that Pacific salmon naturally school at densities of 5 kg/m3 or less.

Concerns have been voiced regarding whether raising farmed fish in net pens is acceptable in an organic system, particularly if the species is migratory. Arguably, keeping fish in large net pens is no different than raising sheep and cattle in fenced enclosures. Net cages are generally large (10x10x10 m) and subject to high water flow. Furthermore, farmed salmon are harvested before reaching maturity - which is the only time when the migratory instinct is significant.

Animal Waste

Maintenance of the integrity of the soil is central to organic agriculture. For aquaculture, it is the quality of the water that must be ensured – both in terms of its purity as an input and its freedom from pollution as an output. A key consideration is the introduction of excess feed and feces into the aquatic ecosystem. While organic standards favor production systems that contain and recycle the nutrients they produce, a truly closed system is rarely possible - even in terrestrial production systems. The critical question becomes whether the aquatic ecosystem has the capacity to naturally cycle these nutrients. As such, the potential for environmental impacts is site-specific.

The question as to whether nutrient inputs from salmon farms into marine ecosystems may contribute to harmful algal blooms (HABs) has been well addressed in the scientific literature. Various studies of phytoplankton production and blooms in the Pacific Northwest have found that salmon farms had little or no effect on ambient levels of either nutrients or phytoplankton density.

Research has shown that in some cases fish feces may accumulate on the sea floor beneath net-pens. Excessive waste can result in the development of anoxic conditions and a decline in biodiversity in the benthos. These conditions have been found to have measurable effects up to five years following the cessation of farm operations, before the seabed returns to baseline conditions. Accumulation of organic material under farms can extend to distances of 145-205 m. The magnitude of effects is correlated with water

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depth and current speed at the farm site. In all cases studied, benthic impacts from salmon farms are ephemeral, and remediation occurs naturally without intervention during fallowing periods or following cessation of the operation. It must also be noted that establishing lower stocking density standards will concurrently reduce effluent production and the associated benthic impacts. The standards-setting committee might require that excess feces be collected, where appropriate, and used in agriculture.

In the past, accumulation of feed pellets in the benthos was also a concern for the aquaculture industry. However, improvements in technology and feed management practices have subsequently greatly reduced feed wastage. Feed wastage is currently estimated at less than five percent.

Research is currently being conducted to assess the feasibility of producing shellfish and seaweed in the vicinity of net pen farms to uptake excess nutrients. Other researchers are investigating the possibility of using rotifers to digest fish feces and subsequently using the rotifers as food for cultured shrimp.

Above all else, site selection can be a critical factor in determining an operations impact on local ecosystem processes. Favoring areas of high current flow may prevent sediment build-up, parasite loading, and enhance ambient water quality. The Soil Association standards require a minimum tidal flush rate of 5-10 cm/sec at organic production sites and that the current speed should exceed one body length/sec at some stage of the tidal cycle. Additionally, their standards require that each farm develop an environmental management plan that defines the environmental loading of the site and its impact on the surrounding area, with appropriate controls or reductions; and that includes measures to prevent fish escapes. ✓

Mad Cows and Crazy Farmers

by Cathleen Kneen

Most cattle ranchers could probably survive even three dry years in a row, with dried-up pastures and costly hay, if it were not for the disaster of "the BSE crisis". The discovery of a downer cow with BSE in Alberta earlier this year closed the border to the major beef market in the USA and by extension other markets as well, and drove prices for slaughter cattle through the floor.

The economics of beef cattle on a medium scale (100+ cows, grass-fed beef) have been shaky for some time, particularly in the ranching region of the Peace, where cattle are on feed 210 days of the year. According to Bill Smith, a Peace country cow-calf rancher who sold his herd in the 3rd week of July, with hay costing $100-$120 /ton (plus hauling) the cost of production for a 500 lb calf is $1.20-$1.30 per pound. "You're short before you even look at overhead," he said.

The situation is not much better in the Nicola Valley, where the 300-400 cow herd is essentially a thing of the past, and only the largest ranches are surviving. Of course, this has always been a semi-arid region, so the current dry spell has had much less effect than in areas which have not already set up irrigation systems and closely guarded water rights. Still, the double whammy represented by BSE has accelerated the loss of the medium-size farms. One farmer commented that he saw a cow at the Armstrong auction sale started off at 10 cents a pound. She sold at 21 cents. "You can't go on that way for long," he said.

Many farmers have reduced their herds. One organic farmer whose herd dropped from 44 to 20 animals commented that it is hard "to keep the dream alive" of keeping the land organic when there is not enough feed for the cattle. Of course one can buy hay, but it is expensive and hard to find, making the cows "a very expensive hobby".

Bill Smith was more pointed. "I'm tired of being

a Mexican in my own country," he said. "In order to feed people I work for $2 an hour. I'd rather plant trees on the land."

Even organic farmers who sell direct to consumers are feeling the effects of the BSE scare on beef prices. In the Prince George area, for example, sides of conventional beef are selling at $1.39 cut and wrapped, which is so far below the cost of production – not to mention the cost of production of organic beef – as to be laughable. While new customers are attracted to organic beef, there are signs that consumption is dropping overall and farmers who formerly sold everything by word of mouth are now considering advertising.

On the other hand, there seems to be an increased demand for pork, which is ironic since chronic wasting disease is prevalent in pigs and it amounts to the same thing. Of course the strict prohibition against feeding animal byproducts in the organic standards does help with consumer confidence; on the other hand, without a secure source of organic weaners one faces many of the same questions about the animal's history before it is placed under organic management.

There is more connection between organic and conventional than many organic advocates would like to admit. Not only do we often share seed stocks and breeding stock, but there are connections throughout the processing and distribution system – not to mention that we are all subject to the same weather and environmental conditions, including contamination of various sorts.

This is underlined by the different theories of the cause of BSE. Of course feeding rendered animals (especially sick or 'downer' animals) to ruminants is beyond stupidity. But there are other theories, particularly one which suggests a connection to the use of organophosphates as a systemic parasiticide on animals. Another suggests a connection to Chronic Wasting Disease in wild elk, transmitted by farmed animals into the feed chain. Still another theory suggests it is a result of long-term mineral imbalance, explaining why the disease shows up in older animals. It is likely that all of these and more are contributing factors, rather than the reductionist "one cause – one outcome" approach preferred by the regulators.

Whatever the cause, the long-term implications of the BSE crisis are more stringent regulations, more centralization and loss of local slaughter facilities with a likely increase in illegal backyard slaughter to avoid the costs of trucking to a distant abattoir. To avoid such a dismal prospect, organic livestock farmers need to be involved in the discussions of best management practices along with their conventional neighbours. The fact is that even in Texas the average herd is less than 35 head. In other words, despite the attention paid to the large herds, large feedlots, and large processors like Cargill, there is a substantial and important beef industry which stands a chance of being more sustainable than the present model.

Certified organic farmers and conventional farmers need to work together to ensure that policy makers understand the importance of small-scale production and facilitate its development in their planning. ✓

An Organic Regulation for Canada

by Paddy Doherty

Australia has one, Costa Rica, the US, UK, and the Czech Republic have one, but Canada still does not have a law governing the use of the term, 'organic' on food products. Does Canada need a Regulation? The majority of certifiers, traders and advocates for the organic sector in Canada think so – and at the 2003 Guelph Organic Conference, they gave unqualified support to an ad hoc Organic Regulatory Committee to develop and implement an organic regulatory program for Canada.

What is a Regulation?

Regulations provide the specifics for laws. The Organic Regulatory Committee is considering a regulation (defining a mandatory organic program) under the Canadian Agricultural Products Act (the law). The regulation would reference the Canada Standard and corresponding criteria for control over the use of organic in Canada.

Why do we need a Regulation?

Without a national regulation, there is no control over imported organic food – anything can be labelled 'organic' (except in Québec, which has a regulation) and will compete with legitimate organic food products.

Lack of a national regulation causes some difficulty for organic exports from Canada. The EU has provided an exemption until the end of 2005, allowing exports on a country-by-country basis. When this exemption ends, it is unlikely that the EU will recognise a Canadian program that is not consistent, mandatory and national in scope. The EU has already indicated they will not recognise provincial programs.

There is a need and a desire for a national designation (official mark) for organic in Canada. Wholesalers and retailers want this, consumers want this, and market surveys say we are confusing the consumer with the myriad of symbols on organic foods. The USDA Organic symbol is already widely recognised in the US – Canadian organic food is not even identified as Canadian.

Outside of Québec, there is currently no regulated oversight for organic certification bodies operating in Canada. Anyone can call themselves a certification body and certify 'organic' products to whatever standard and criteria they choose. Organic products with less than credible certification can compete with legitimately certified organic food.

There is no regulation (outside of Québec) that requires organic operators to certify to a national standard. Enterprises may bring in certification bodies from anywhere in the world, certifying to any standard in the world.

Most Canadian certification bodies are accredited from outside of Canada and many have accreditation from three or more separate agencies. A national regulation would be internationally acceptable, possibly requiring only one recognised accreditation.

How will a national Regulation benefit you?

A national designation (symbol) will increase the profile of Canadian organic products and help customers choose your organic products over imported competition. There will be less label confusion in the marketplace. Increased profile will increase the market – this will benefit all organic producers, large and small.

National regulation will ensure that your products are competing with legitimate organic products – produced under the same standards you operate with.

If you export organic products, a national regulation will allow the Federal government to negotiate trade agreements with foreign jurisdictions; government-to-government agreements will provide easier access to foreign markets.

A national regulation will ensure that all certification bodies in Canada operate to the same standard. Operators will not be free to shop around for the most lenient program. This will eliminate unfair competition in the market and

ensure continued consumer confidence in the organic sector.

A national regulation will prohibit the use of "organic-light." Anyone using the term "organic" will have to be certified, eliminating unfair competition from non-certified operators.

How will a National Regulation affect you?

All persons involved in farming, harvesting, producing, processing, manufacturing, preparing and handling of agri-food products, and using the word "organic" (including synonyms such as "biologic," "ecologic," "biodynamic") to market such products, will need recognized organic certification.

If you market organic product and are currently not certified, you will need to be.

If you are a certified organic operator (farmer, processor or handler), annual certification will be required and your certification body will have to meet criteria described in the Regulation.

If you are a member of a CB that belongs to the BC Certified Organic Program, your CB will either have to meet the more stringent requirements of the BC Certified Organic ISO 65 Compliant Program, or your CB may choose to work with another qualified CB in order to facilitate certification.

What will a National Regulation cost you?

If you are already certified under the BC Certified Organic Program, the costs for certification are not likely to increase beyond 10-15% required to manage a national organisation.

If your certification body is not currently (ISO Compliant) accredited, the costs for accreditation will be borne by the clients/members of the certification body. Persons in the business of certification have proven that there is some economy of scale – more clients/members do lower the cost of providing reputable certification services.

If you market organic products and are not currently certified, you should investigate the cost

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of certification by an accredited certification body in your region. This will provide an estimate of what a National Regulation will cost you.

The Organic Regulatory Committee is just beginning to work with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and provincial governments, to determine the most suitable organic program for Canada. We can learn from the successes and failures of other jurisdictions and we can work with public and private certification and accreditation programs. Now is the time to make your views heard on this issue. Contact a member of the ORC and/or view the Canada Organic Initiative (COI) page on the COABC website <www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca>.

Members of the ORC:

1. Robert Beauchemin - Table Filiére Quebec
2. Gary Caldwell - organic processors
3. Jon Cloud - organic processors
4. Jeanne Cruikshank -Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors
5. Paddy Doherty -Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia
6. Janine Gibson - Canadian Organic Growers
7. Wally Hamm - Pro Cert Organic Systems
8. Jennifer Grant -Canadian Health Food Association
9. Larry Lenhardt - Organic Crop Producers and Processors
10. Raymond Loo - Organic Crop Improvement Association
11. Debbie Miller - Organic Crop Improvement Association
12. Cindy Murray - Organic Producers Association of Manitoba
13. Tomas Nimmo - Quality Assurance International
14. Clark Phillips - Atlantic Canada Organic Region Network
15. Ann Slater - Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario
16. Arnold Taylor - Saskatchewan Organic Directorate
17. Alan Webber - Alberta Organic Association
18. Stephanie Wells - Organic Trade Association

✓

OSDP Report

by Cathleen Kneen

At its meeting on July 31, the Organic Sector Development Program Committee approved four proposals:

Labelling Handbook

This project will assist BC organic growers and processors to comply with provincial and federal food labeling regulations. The labeling handbook for the BC Certified Organic Program will be a simplified version of the current Symbol Users Guide, Consent Conditions, and Licensing Agreement, and will clearly explain to the COABC member how the program symbol is used and their responsibilities for proper usage.

Brand Name List

A contractor will be hired to update the COABC's existing list of organic inputs and brand names on a monthly basis, using information obtained from the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) listings. This will be compared with information obtained from Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) and the federal agency dealing with fertilizers to ensure that all inputs listed on the COABC website comply with federal programs. The status (allowed, regulated or prohibited) assigned per product in this directory will reflect both Canadian federal legal status and compliance with the BC Certified Organic Program Management Standards. The BC Certified Organic Program will only allow products that comply with the Canadian Regulations. The Brand Name List will be posted on the COABC website.

Building Organic Seed Capacity in BC

Two three-day workshops focusing on the technical and practical aspects of seed growing will identify "best practices", lead to a better educated seed growing network in BC, and help expand market opportunities for BC Growers. (see box on right)

COG Transition Handbook

Canadian Organic Growers will produce a manual on How to Manage the Transition to Organic Farming. This will be the third in our series of renowned production handbooks, following The Organic Livestock Handbook and The Organic Field Crop Handbook. It will be be a practical, accessible, step-by-step Handbook to guide farmers in the process of converting their operations from conventional to organic farming. COG is requesting funding from Canadian provinces, to match federal Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Foods funding for this project.

The next funding deadline is November 14, 2003.

Anyone with a proposal idea is encouraged to contact Kristen Kane, OSDP Administrator, at the COABC office before submitting the proposal to ensure it follows the guidelines and priorities of the OSDP. These are outlined in the Strategic Plan, which is available on the website, www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca. Proposals which involve research should reference the COABC Research Needs study, a summary of which is on pages 18-20. The full study is available on request (see pg 21 for contact details). ✓

Seedgrowing Workshop

Nov. 21-23 • UBC • Vancouver

Fundamentals of Plant Improvement for Organic Agriculture

This three day intensive course is designed to teach seed growers the skills necessary for the selection and breeding of seed crops so they are better adapted to organic systems and environmental challenges. If farmer selection is directed towards extremes in climate, crop diseases, and pests, varieties are then produced that will excel under regional and organic conditions.

About the Instructor: Dr. John Navazio is Director of Seed Grower Development and Seed Research at Abundant Life Seed Foundation. He initiated a breeding program for northern adapted tomatoes, carrots, beets, and squash at Garden City Seeds. John spent five years as Senior Plant Breeder at Alf Christianson Seed Company in Mount Vernon.

Course Registration: $180, includes preparatory reading material, three days of in-class instruction, three lunches.

For information and registration, contact:
Patrick Steiner
psteiner@jetstream.net
phone (250) 675-3309

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