

BC Organic Grower

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Spring 2005



British
Columbia
Certified
Organic



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President's Message

by Deb Foote

When I was first approached a little over a year ago to stand for the board of PACS, I was more than prepared to take up the challenge, to do my part for my community. It had been a year since Wild West was sold and my role in the organization changed. For those of you who have known me over the years, you can probably appreciate the identity crisis that I went through at the time. In some ways I was at a crossroad in my life and was glad to have a way to fill the "void". Not to mention there was a certain honour in being asked to serve my community. It seemed natural to take on the role as a PACS representative to the COABC board. At the time I never envisioned taking on the role of President after such a short period of time.

For those of you who I don't know me, here is a little background.

I am a second generation BC citizen. I was born in Stewart, on the southern tip of the Alaska panhandle, but was raised in Terrace. I come from a family of seven and am second

youngest. With so many mouths to feed my parents kept a large garden of mixed vegetables and small berries. Participation in the maintenance and harvest of the garden was an expectation of all of the children when we were growing up.



I remember distinctly one of the rituals of spring: my dad would hook up the utility trailer and head down the road to Sampson's Poultry Farm for a load of manure. Then home again to spread it on the garden. There it would lie for a couple of weeks, during which time we never dreamed of opening the windows (they all opened in the back of the house). And hanging out in the tree house was out of the question (I have a particularly low gag reflex). Not to mention the grief we got from our neighbour friends at school. After the manure had cooled off dad would till the whole "mess" along with some compost and goodness knows what else into the soil.

Later when the crops and weeds started to grow, it was the children who were called upon to do the work. Every weekend during the spring and summer a certain number of hours were to be dedicated to the garden, before we were allowed to hang out with our friends. I remember resenting my parents for this.

When the peas started to ripen, we had to pick them (not my favorite job) and shell them so my mom could prepare them for freezing. Now that job I didn't mind, it was one for the bowl, two for Deb - two for Deb one for the bowl. I still love fresh picked peas to this day (but then who doesn't). On the other hand I remember many a night when a when I sat for what felt like hours after everyone left the table in front of a plate of cold peas (even today I am not crazy about cooked peas). Funny, the only way I really liked to eat my veggies in those days straight from the garden, pull a carrot and eat it after wiping the dirt off on my jeans.

SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

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product for the meals and auction**

In the late 70's my older sister Sheila who was involved with a pre-order food co-op, introduced me to organic foods. I first started buying with her when I was in my last semester of high school.

The pre-order co-op soon organized a retail storefront where I became a volunteer on the inventory committee. This led to a position on the steering committee, or board of directors if you will. Eventually I took on a salaried position, until my son Brendan was born in '82. In 1984 the co-op folded as a result of economic pressures of the day. This precipitated my migration to the lower mainland in 1985.

I joined Wild West Organic Harvest in May of 1986. I was hired as a warehouse worker and bookkeeper, and have worked in every department within the company over the years. Through work and travel I have gained many contacts within the Organic Industry on a local, national & international level. Today my role is that of Grocery Purchasing Manager, and I act in the capacity of Organic Certification Administrator, ensuring that products are correctly identified for both Produce & Grocery listings.

I have served as a director with the following organizations: Northern de Lights Food Co-op, Wild West Organic Harvest, CCEC Credit Union, The Canadian Federation of Worker Co-ops, Farm Folk/City Folk as well as PACS and COABC. I look forward to serving as President of what I believe is a first class organization.



Cherry Growers Alert!

by Linda Edwards

ENTRUST (Spinosad) to be Registered for 2005

The Pest Management Regulatory Agency will register this pesticide for a wide range of crops including most fruits and vegetables for a wide range of pests March, 2005. This is an OMRI approved product.

See the Winter edition of the BCOG (Volume 7 # 4) for more details about its role in controlling Cherry Fruit Fly and the fall edition (Volume 7 # 3) for details about all of the other crops and pests it is registered for.

It is uncertain whether GF-120, the other spinosad product, will be registered this year or next but it is in the pipeline.

See also page 23 for more uses of Spinosad!

BC Organic Grower

is received by all members of organizations belonging to the Certified Organic Association of British Columbia. BC Organic Grower is published quarterly by COABC.

We welcome letters to the Editor (500 words maximum) and articles (1000 words maximum). We reserve the right to edit for length.

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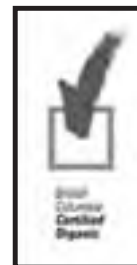
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Next Issue Deadline:

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What does COABC do?

by Kirsten Kane

In the past ten years, there has been constant tension in the COABC between attempting to oversee an organic regulation (being a regulator) and promoting the objectives of the members (being an advocate). In order to provide some basis for managing the COABC, the Strategic Planning process of 2003/2004 divided the core services of the organization (accreditation and management of the BC Certified Organic Program, information regarding the program, and external relations on regulatory issues) from the “key activities” of organic promotion, education, research, and advocacy.



Kirsten Kane, COABC Executive Director

To achieve these goals, COABC needs to be financially stable, with membership fees covering the core services of the organization and the development of funding sources and volunteer energies to carry out the key activities. My role, variously labelled “business manager” and “executive director” is to achieve all of this

while ensuring that the control of the BC Standard for Organic Production remains in the hands of the farmers.

So what have we done?

Quite a lot, actually. The Standards Review Committee has been strengthened by hiring Cara Nunn to provide secretariat services. We have developed procedures and a

Quality Manual for the COABC Accreditation Board. We have arranged for update of the Brand Names list, and established a Website committee to ensure that our site is both functional and also attractive to the general public interested in organics. We have an agreement for collaboration with Canadian Organic Growers which will facilitate the work of consumer promotion and education—something COABC has never accomplished, but is continually being asked to undertake.

Promotion of the organic perspective both within and outside of agriculture organizations continues to be a focus, with membership on the BC Agri-Food Trade Council as well as activities such as our booth at the Interior Provincial Exhibition. Within the organic sector, we have worked on developing the Environmental Farm Planning project and arranged an extension of the Organic Sector Development Program.

For 2005

The COABC office is the primary contact point for licensees. Information flow from the office will be fully integrated with the website, so that essential information on the website is always current – this will reduce telephone time for office staff. In the core services area I will be taking on a new project, working with BCMAFF to implement an annual seminar for administrators and develop a procedures manual which is more user friendly than Book 1.

Key activities will be enhanced by our alignment with Canadian Organic Growers in the creation of COG-BC, which will be able to bring

Thank You, COABC Members!

The Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD) Organic Agriculture Protection Fund (OAPF) extends a sincere and heartfelt THANK YOU to the Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia (COABC) and to all the individuals that continue to support our court case. Your generosity is appreciated and needed. Your continued donations will help us through the duration of this case.

If we are ultimately successful in this case, companies that introduce GMO crops would have to take measures to prevent contamination of other crops, and would be liable for the market loss and/or clean-up costs if contamination occurred in spite of these measures.

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organic consumers into a registered charity that has consumer education and organic promotion in its mandate. COABC will continue the successful projects initiated in 2004 and will initiate new projects where there is evidence that they provide service to the members and financial benefits to the society. An On-farm food-safety project, the Organic Conference AGM, an Organic Food Awards event, and further development of the OSDP are examples of projects that have potential to provide service and money to the COABC. No membership fee increases are proposed. The COABC will continue to investigate fundraising opportunities such as the Mohawk/Husky loyalty card program.

Organic Sector Development Program


The OSDP has been good for the organic sector and good for the COABC. It provides funding for organic projects, impetus for new ideas, and funding for COABC office staff. The Board will develop a new Strategic Plan to provide the basis for a renewal of the OSDP, in addition to the extension which has already been negotiated. This will bring new funds for imaginative projects to enhance the organic sector in BC.

Since its inception, but in particular the last year, the OSDP has been fielding, and in some cases, reviewing, applications focussed on the perceived necessity of farmer training programs. These have ranged from locally developed apprenticeship or internship programs, distance or e-learning type programs, to programs with a vision of an actual institute or centre for learning. While all of these initiatives have merit on an individual basis, the lack of cohesion or co-operation between them can only serve to undermine the success of each. A successful Organic Education program needs to

serve the needs of all (or as many as possible) would-be students in all commodities, in all regions, in all aspects of Organic production and processing. COABC, as the primary voice for Organics in BC (and the new partnership with COG and its mandate for education) is in a position to develop a program with a common vision, mandate, curriculum, evaluation system and delivery by recognised, accredited delivery agents.

COABC will also develop an OSDP project in partnership with COABC's eleven certification bodies that will bring relevant (i.e. regionally based, farmer driven) seminars/workshops to each of the regions primarily represented by the CBs. Another proposed project will investigate the implications to organic operators of the National On-Farm Food-Safety program and determine if a national organic On-Farm Food-Safety program should be initiated.

This is just a sampling of the many activities in and around the COABC office for the next year. Hang on, people, we're in for an exciting ride! ✓



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Bill C-27 Threatens Canadian Food

by Cathy Holtlander

Bill C-27, the CFIA Enforcement Act, was introduced into Parliament on November 26, 2004, and is currently being studied, and possibly amended, by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Food prior to debate at Second Reading. This bill is the second step in a three part process. Step One was the creation of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in 1997. Step Two is Bill C-27, (about which I will go into more detail below) which increases the CFIA's powers. Step Three is to have the CFIA re-write the food and agriculture regulations in order to implement the government's "smart regulation" agenda.

Paul Martin's Throne Speech in October 2004 indicated his government would start implementing the recommendations of the External Advisory Committee on Smart Regulation. So-called "Smart Regulation" would:

- integrate Canadian and US regulatory processes for agriculture and food, and extend federal regulatory integration with the US to the provincial level as well;
- fast track new drug approvals and provide measures for regulator immunity from liability;
- shift towards voluntary compliance, performance targets, and industry self-regulation processes instead of enforceable standards;
- implement a single review and approval of products and services for all jurisdictions in North America;
- reduce regulatory barriers to advancing the biotech industry in Canada; and
- fully commit Canada to a risk management regulatory framework (as opposed to a protection and safety framework).

According to MP Wayne Easter, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Bill C-27 "helps to create similar authorities and powers to that of our largest trading partner, the United States. The

Canadian and U.S. economies are highly integrated. ... The bill contains a number of powers and authorities similar to those contained in the recent United States legislation."

Bill C-27 not only consolidates the inspection and enforcement powers the CFIA currently has regarding 13 food and agriculture Acts (Meat Inspection, Fish Inspection, Health of Animals, Feeds, Seeds, Plant Protection, Fertilizer, Customs, Canadian Agricultural Products, Consumer Packaging and Labelling, Competition, Monetary Penalties, and CFIA Acts), it also adds new regulation-making authorities.

The regulatory powers Bill C-27 gives to the CFIA will lead to even more market power and control for the biggest agri-business players. Corporations such as Cargill, Lakeside, Maple Leaf, Monsanto and Bayer will be in a position to influence the new regulations, and we can expect them to favour regulations that require heavy investment in expensive technologies and which permit voluntary performance targets instead of enforceable quality controls.

The Canadian Meat Council, representing the largest meat packers in Canada, says Bill C-27 is a step in the right direction and that they are comfortable with the CFIA re-writing the inspection regulations because they have a close relationship with the CFIA. In fact, prior to joining the Meat Council, Don Raymond, its Director Regulatory and Trade, was with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for 34 years!

Not only does Bill C-27 increase the CFIA's regulatory powers, but it also gives the CFIA virtually unlimited authority to collect and share information, ostensibly to protect us from bioterrorism. Bill C-27 authorizes the CFIA to collect any information for the purposes of investigating or enforcing any law, and to enter arrangements with government agencies and

**The
Canadian Food
Inspection Agency
Enforcement Act –
The biggest threat to
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organizations within and outside of Canada to do the same. In the context of the US Homeland Security Act, this is an erosion of civil liberties, especially for farmers, fishers and food processors, which we should be concerned about.

Bill C-27 must be debated in Parliament before it can become law. However if it passes, the regulations that the CFIA will be able to make as a result will not be subject to Parliament, as regulations are adopted by Order in Council. Therefore, we are urging people all across Canada to take action right now to get this bill stopped before it is too late!

If Bill C-27 passes Canada will be locked into "made-in-Washington" food regulations. The US permits irradiation of meat and genetically modified growth hormones in dairy cattle and milk, it has consistently failed to meet World Health Organization standards for BSE prevention and testing, and it permits hormones and antibiotics that are banned in European countries. Under the Bush administration we can only expect American food regulations to become more about corporate interests and less about the health of citizens and the integrity of the food system.

Call, write or meet your MP to express your concerns and tell him or her to vote against Bill C-27. Write to members of the House Standing Committee on Agriculture and Food, or to the Committee clerk, expressing your concerns and opposition to the Bill. You could also write a brief and submit it to the Committee, particularly if you have personal experience that illuminates the CFIA's track record. Contact and educate others, such as local and regional food processors, consumers groups, health promotion organizations, etc. and urge them to take action as well.

The Beyond Factory Farming Coalition is setting up a "fax your MP" tool on the website at www.beyondfactoryfarming.org. Please use it and tell others about it. Act now to protect Canadian democratic control over our food system!

Cathy Holtlander is the Project Organizer for the Beyond Factory Farming Coalition

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SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY, ENCOURAGING ACTION

The annual conference of COABC (held in Sidney at the end of February) attracted about 300 people to a dynamic weekend of learning, exchange of ideas, music, dance, and great food.

Entitled *Seeds For The Future*, the conference highlighted the politics and practice of seed-saving, with a keynote speech from Cuban Humberto Rios Labrada on the Participatory Plant Breeding work he leads in Cuba and Mexico. National Farmers Union Stewart Wells, himself an organic farmer in Saskatchewan, described the devastating effects of the proposed changes to Canada's Plant Breeders Rights legislation. In plenary and workshops local seed breeders Dan Jason (Salt Spring Seeds), Mary Ballon (West Coast Seeds), and Patrick Steiner (Stellar Seeds) added an impassioned plea for farmers to get involved in maintaining the diverse seed supply on which we all depend.

Agriculture Minister John Van Dongen joined us for lunch and took the occasion to comment on several contentious issues. He assured us that input from the COABC and its members is vital to the successful conclusion of initiatives on supply management, meat inspection, and the national organic standard. He also noted the growth in the organic sector and commented that we are the face of agriculture for the average consumer in BC.

Being diverse, the conference had other highlights as well. Practical workshops on pastured poultry, cover cropping, pests and plant diseases vied for attention with management discussions of land ownership options, working with chefs and other market issues, and political workshops on supply management, meat inspection, and a film on genetic engineering of food - and much more.

There were also diverse activities, in which eating fabulous food and drinking organic wine, beer and juice featured prominently, along with our auction, dancing to the music of a local marimba band, and a tour of a new local winery. The auction, led by entertainer Roma Tomato (Bobby Arbess) with his sidekick Mr. Carrot (aka Brewster Kneen), raised more than \$2,700, a portion of which will be donated to the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate for their court case against Monsanto et. al.

For those who were unable to attend this amazing event, the BC Organic Grower will feature articles from some of the workshops in upcoming issues. ✓



Lee Fuge, Conference Coordinator, with Anne Macey



The Conference was also marked by wonderfully diverse food, much of it donated by COABC members.

MANY THANKS TO ALL OUR SPONSORS AND DONORS

Seeds of the future: When will they switch ON?

By Dr. Humberto Rios Labrada



Stewart Wells, Victor Alenis Moreno & Humberto Rios Labrada at Seeds for the Future

In the 80's Cuba was the most important agro-chemical consumer in Latin America

We were independent from the United States, but we were dependent on imported inputs for our High-Tech=High yield=Agrochemical technological package. Then came the collapse of the Socialist Bloc and the socioeco-

nommic crisis in 1990. Food got very scarce. By 1993 my salary had moved from near first world living standard to 3 American dollars per month.

I was working on finding new squash varieties, so very important to the Cuban diet. The Experimental Station said, "Yes we would like to support you in better scientific work. But we do not have any more fertilisers or inputs. The land is not ready for your trials, because there is not fuel or spare parts for tractors."

Organic agriculture was being forced by economic conditions and not necessarily by consciousness.

My own scientific model was melting down. We needed a new paradigm in plant breeding, moving from a system of: Policy makers **B** researchers **B** farmers, to decentralised and participatory seed systems. I had to move from the experimental station to on-farm conditions, and my work started to involve farmers. Public germplasm became "open source" to local stakeholders, and farmers began choosing varieties for local adaptation.

Two key activities: seed and technology diversity fairs, and farmer trials.

What happened when farmers' access to seeds diversity improved and they became real part-

	Before Socialist Countries Collapse	After Socialist Countries Collapse
Yield	6-8 tons ha ⁻¹	6-8 tons ha ⁻¹
Energy requirements (Millions kcal ha ⁻¹)	17 millions	4 millions
Net income ha ⁻¹ (Cuban pesos)	-462	372

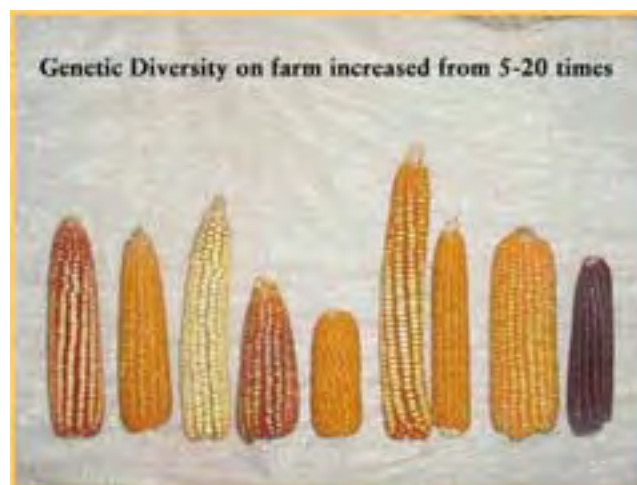
Comparison of input use and results of pumpkin breeding strategy in Havana. (Rios, Soleri and Cleveland, 2001)

ners to crop improvement? Genetic diversity on farm increased from 5 to 20 times. The farmers decided to open up a farmer field school, and the role of the scientist changed from a varietal decision maker to agrobiodiversity facilitator. The production of potato seed and concentrated animal feed became possible in Cuba with farmers' participation. Farmers began working with tissue culture plant propagation on farm.

Decentralisation and participation in plant breeding work is spreading out in Latin America. Farmers and Scientists need to associate for innovation and benefit sharing.

- Public research & development institutions need to be refocused to facilitate agro-biodiver-

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sity and enhance local stakeholders participation in policy decision making.

- It is important to reach a better understanding of local seed systems as “development cells” for national and international developments.

Vegetable production in Urban Agriculture, Cuba (Companioni et al., 2001)

	1994	1999
Production (Ton)	50	900000
Yield (Kg/square M)	2-3	23-24

- It is extremely important to build up a critical mass of practitioners promoting decentralisation, participation and organic alternatives.

- Institutionalisation: so that participation and decentralization becomes regularly and continuously repeated, maintained by incentives and rewards, for major significance on national agriculture policies.

Have small farmers enough entrepreneurial capacity to produce healthy food, with reasonable yields, with reasonable energy consumption? The short answer is, Yes! When the farms become the research lab, the cost of innovation and technology transference is lower, and there is building of capacity by enhancing small and medium enterprise. Small farmers can do!

Thus the Cuban experience in low input agriculture will likely have relevance elsewhere in the future. It is not just a response to a socio-economic crisis but a real development option. ✓

Update on Plant Breeders’ Rights

by Stewart Wells

Since May of 2004, the National Farmers Union (NFU) has been concerned about calls to radically change and privatize the Canadian food supply system. These proposed initial changes concentrated on “criminalizing” age-old farming and gardening practices of storing seed, cleaning seed, re-using seed etc. These practices would then be partially “decriminalized” by allowing farmers to be “exempted” from some of the restrictions. In short, the seed companies would be granted the exclusive rights to all of the above practices, while some limited exemptions could be granted. This turns our food supply system on its head.

Later on, in November of 2004, the NFU received documentation showing that the Canadian government wants to end the public’s role in plant variety development, applied agronomy research,

and animal production research. Some Canadian media picked up on the issue, but in general, other farm organizations and commentators took the position that the NFU was overstating the case.

Changes to Canadian food legislation criminalize farmers and destroy publicly funded research

At the recent COABC meeting, I outlined the evidence that was mounting—the Canadian government was preparing to withdraw from public research and at the same time preparing new Plant Breeders’ Rights (PBR) legislation in order to restrict farmers and reward seed companies. Unknown to me at the time was the fact that one day before the COABC meeting started, the government of Canada had already started to move.

On Thursday, February 24th, the Canadian government announced the closure of 4 facilities: the Atlantic Cool Climate Crop Research Centre in Newfoundland, the Agriculture

Canada Research Station in Nappan, the Cereal Research Centre in Winnipeg, the Agriculture Canada Research Centre in Kapuskasing.

The facility closures were accompanied by the usual claims that research scientists would not be lost and that research would continue. Whether or not these claims are true remains to be seen.

It is clear however, that the federal government is seriously considering the changes to the food supply system. No one can deny that the issues are upon us, and we need everyone to make their views known to the political establishment. There are two key messages to deliver:

1. We do not want our publicly funded research establishment to be destroyed. It needs to be maintained and enhanced.

2. We do not want any changes to the current Plant Breeders' Rights legislation.

These messages need to be sent to the Minister of Agriculture, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Prime Minister of Canada, and your local M.P. ✓

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2005 AGM Makes Critical Decisions

The Annual General Meeting was held in conjunction with the Seeds for the Future conference in Sidney, BC, on February 27, 2005, with all members represented except for the Bio-Dynamic Agriculture Society.

The minutes are available from the COABC office. Three issues generated considerable interest:

Standards Review Committee Changes

After some discussion, it was agreed that each CB shall have the right to appoint a member to the Standards Review Committee, which will otherwise be appointed by the Board of Directors from among their number, COABC licensees, or members of the public. It was understood that the SRC will use expert advisors when appropriate.

COABC Executive:

President: Deb Foote

Vice President: Sonia Stairs

Treasurer: Hermann Bruns

Director at Large: Hans Buchler

Risk Assessment & Certification

The Risk Assessment Proposal was passed with one negative vote. The following language will be incorporated into Book 1:

Certification Bodies may alter inspection frequency to a minimum of one inspection in three years according to the following criteria:

- Enterprise must not be exporting organic product out of BC
- Enterprise must not practice parallel production
- Enterprise must not have outstanding conditions
- Enterprise must have received a valid organic certificate in all of the previous three years
- The enterprise must be assessed for risk, and receive a low-risk ranking from a certification committee

Certification Bodies that allow for reduced inspection requirements must develop a Risk Assessment Program. This program must be documented and it must be provided to all organic operators in the certification program - CBs cannot limit application to the program to

continued on page 12...

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classes of producers or methods of production. The COABC Accreditation Board must provide written approval of Risk Assessment Programs before implementation.

CBs that choose to implement a Risk Assessment Program will comply with the following criteria:

- VOs will be provided with a risk assessment checklist and will verify the risk of non-compliance with the BC Certified Organic Program by the enterprise whether by intent, by neighbouring activity, or by neglect
- Risk assessment checklists will be comprehensive and will include all areas of possible risk including:
 - contamination or commingling of organic product
 - contamination of site
 - mislabelling
 - fraud
 - any other major or minor non-compliance with the BC Certified Organic Program
- CBs will provide certification committees with guidelines to enable them to rank enterprises according to risk and to determine which low-risk enterprises qualify for reduced inspection requirements. CBs will ensure that enterprises that do not qualify receive a statement indicating why they do not qualify.
- Certification Bodies will keep records of all enterprises enrolled in risk assessment pro-

**COABC
endorses
COG's position
on Plant
Breeder's Rights
Legislation**

grams and will arrange for yearly random and unannounced inspections of at least 5% of all such enterprises. Such inspections will include a risk analysis.

- The CB may decide to undertake extra inspections of enterprises that are determined to be high-risk.

**Proposed Changes to Plant
Breeder's Rights**


COABC endorses the Canadian Organic Growers' response to the Seed Sector review and proposed amendments to the Plant Breeder's Rights legislation. Following is an excerpt from that position statement:

Definitions:

The definition of a breeder would be modified to state "any person who originates, or discovers and develops, the plant variety". COG thinks that this change is a slight improvement on previous wording. Without qualification the word 'discover' effectively allows for the pirating of genetic material developed by farmers over generations without any effort on the part of the breeder. While pirating of genetic material can and does still occur, with the new definition at least some work has to be done before the breeder might be recognized as such.

Scope of PBR:

COG does not believe rights should be extended to harvested material or to products of harvested material. Providing more money in the way of royalties to the companies currently domi-



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nating the seed market will not help address the issues of concern for farmers and particularly organic farmers (e.g. the traditional practice of saving and exchanging seeds, the ability to adapt varieties for local conditions, etc.). Canadian farms are in severe financial stress. Extra seed costs will not help and will force more farmers off the land. Money needs to be kept in the agricultural system at farm level and not siphoned off for corporate interests.

Exceptions to the Breeder's Right (Including Farmer's Privilege):

COG strongly believes that what is being referred to as farmer's privilege should be maintained and that it should not be limited to certain crops. Furthermore we believe it is the farmer's right to save seed. We believe loss of the farmer's privilege would give too much control to breeders and companies who do not have interest in the common good or in developing a sustainable system of agriculture. It would also prevent farmers being able to participate in solutions.

The International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture came into effect as of June 2004; it was signed and ratified by Canada 10/06/2002. This treaty recognizes the contribution of farmers to the conservation and development of genetic resources. This is the basis for Farmer's Rights. It is not intellectual property rights; it is recognition of

the collective innovation of farmers on which agriculture is based. This treaty protects farmers traditional knowledge granting them the right to participate fully in benefit sharing (including monetary benefits) and in national decision making about plant genetic resources. PBR legislation which seeks to further erode farmers' rights would seem to be in direct contradiction to the provisions of this treaty.

Duration of the Breeders Right:

COG believes it is not in the public interest to extend rights further and would prefer to see them cut back to five years.

Annulment & revocation of rights

It is proposed that a right may be annulled or revoked if the variety was not uniform or stable or if it was granted to a person not entitled to it. Similarly rights may be revoked if the variety is no longer stable. Any amendment which provides additional circumstances when rights may be annulled or revoked is an improvement on the current situation. ✓

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Cultivating Community

You Expect It, We Inspect It

by Robert Dixon

Organic inspectors or Verification Officers (VOs) visit farms and processors (certified members) and write an inspection report for the certification committee (certifier) to use to help decide on yearly status. Under ISO 65, VOs are not supposed to make the certification decisions, nor are they supposed to offer advice or consulting services to the certified members they visit. We are also not supposed to take gifts even though they are regularly offered, people are very generous and proud of what they produce!

VOs can explain the certification standards so people have a better understanding of what is expected of them. This article will examine what VOs look for during the inspection visit.

The 'you' of the title is from the motto of an international inspector training organization. It turns out there are several different 'you's, including the certifier, the certified member and consumers. The different expectations about certification affects what VOs look for.

Certifiers have different needs, depending on whether they are local, provincial or international. All of them agree on the basics: verify the information in the application; describe what was done to meet conditions from the previous year; examine documents for the audit trail and review concerns and noncompliance issues at the end of the inspection.

VOs try to meet certifier expectations by identifying critical organic control points and highlighting them in reports. If the VO does not mention an area of concern, the certifier may not know this critical organic control point, or source of risk, exists. VOs try to write clear, concise reports about complicated files. Good communication between certifiers and VOs is essential.

Certified members have varying expectations. New members need explanations, have lots of questions and can take longer for inspection visits. People who have been certified for years expect the process to be quick, with no surprises and not cost very much. If these expectations are not met, it can lead to 'creative tension'.

A VO should focus on doing their jobs, i.e. verify that Standards are being met and record their observations. Certified members can help by providing the information to speed up the inspection visit.

VOs are looking for the details of each operation to ensure internal consistency between what is written or spoken and what is being

observed. Standards describe what is Required e.g. practices which maintain or improve soil health, and what is Prohibited e.g. use of petroleum based herbicides. VOs need to look at both these areas despite the difficulty in assessing whether soil health is improving, as required by standards.

VOs can use crop yields, pests and how the soil looks as a rough guide to the biological processes on the farm. Research from local regions can help, for example the Spring 2004 issue of the BC Organic Grower had two articles on soil



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health assessments. This research, conducted on the long time certified organic growers of the Similkameen, indicated further research into managing & monitoring biological processes of soil are needed in BC.

Consumers: The purpose of the inspection is to verify Standards are being met but the VO also thinks about what the consumer expects from organic food. Studies from around the world show the same set of values driving the sales of certified organic foods in all countries. These concerns are that food be pesticide free; have higher nutritional content; taste good; and be free of genetically modified organisms. VOs may not directly look for evidence to see if these consumer expectations are being met, but the certification standards are designed to promote these biological factors on a healthy farm or processor and to reduce the risk of contamination from prohibited materials. Current research is beginning to show that consumer expectations are being met by the certification process. Will certification continue to meet consumer expectations in the future as the risk of

GMO and other contamination increases? We all believe it will.

Some things the VO assesses are :

1. have risk issues been disclosed that create more work? if so, chances are the person believes in the process
2. can accurate records be produced for an audit trail?
3. are critical organic control points identified and actions taken to reduce the risk?
4. what people say about future plans for their operation.

What VOs really look for during the inspection is whether the farmer or processor is going to go out of their way to maintain the organic integrity of their soil, crop or food product. Do they understand what is required and can they meet these requirements? The answers will determine whether the organic integrity of the crop or food product will be maintained on behalf of the consumer. ✓

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Marketing Boards Must Accommodate Organics

by Gunta Vitins

In response to the ongoing conflicts between specialty producers and the marketing boards, the BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Fisheries (BCMAFF) commissioned a study in Nov/Dec. 2004 to develop recommendations to better integrate specialty production in the supply managed sectors in B.C. BC Agriculture Minister John Van Dongen met with key members of the organic community in January 2005 to present the proposed changes to the supply management system. The Minister stated that he was fully committed to the initiative and that changes will be implemented according to the recommendations presented in the LeRoux Report.



Gunta Vitins is presented the Founders' Award for 2005

Summary of Recommendations:

- Small producer exemption levels should be increased – The levels still have to be determined but it is hoped that for eggs it will be 500 (rather than 99) and for broilers possibly 2000.
- All classes of production from small-scale/back yard to mainstream production of milk, eggs, chicken, turkey and broiler hatching eggs, should be regulated. All producers are to be registered with the boards, irregardless of flock/herd size (including producers who are within exemption limits).
- Specialty product definitions should reflect unique product attributes with substantive farm level differentiation, 3rd party certification, and identity preservation through to the consumer. As far as “organic” is concerned, products would meet the criteria if farms are certified by an agency accredited by COABC or one that has national accreditation.
- A phased permit system should be developed to foster innovation and to progressively advance specialty producers to become holders of specialty quota. Producers seeking to produce specialty products at levels greater than

the exemption limits should initially establish their operations under permit. A permit system will allow for start ups without the need to hold quota. All existing producers would be issued permit for their production levels as of January 1, 2005.

- A separate class of quota should be available for specialty production and should only be transferable within the same class (thus “organic” quota will only be used for organic production).
- Allocation procedures should ensure fair treatment of both specialty and mainstream producers, and Board allocation decisions should require prior approval of the FIRB (Farm Industry Review Board). Permit and quota allocations should be based on demonstrated growth in each product class.
- Levies should reflect services provided. There should be no extra fees for specialty permits or quota that are not service-based. (eg. “quota lease fees” do not provide a service)
- Specialty producers should have Board representation, and Specialty Product Advisory Committees should be established. The system will be managed by the existing boards but the concerns regarding appropriate allocations, conflict of interest and the need for greater transparency were recognised; these concerns will be addressed in several ways.
- New entrant programs should be revised to include clear financial commitment and permit issuance criteria, and incentive amounts issued should be non-transferable.
- New entrant programs should be funded, in part, by a minimum 5% assessment on all transfers of quota.

Timelines

The implementation time line is very short — FIRB is to review and approve each Board's draft orders by March 31, and the programs are to be implemented by June 30, 2005.

The LeRoux Report is available on the COABC website in the "What's New" section.
<http://licensees.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/WhatsNew/SupplyMgmtReport.html>.

COABC Implementation Team

The COABC has assembled a team to ensure that the organic sector is represented and integrally involved in the entire process.

COABC Implementation Team Chair:

Brian Hughes - Tel: 250-655-3093
email: kildara@shaw.ca

Implementation Team Members:

Brad Reid - Tel: 604-856-5050
email: bkreid@direct.ca

Ric Llewellyn - Tel: 250-442-8683
email: jerseyland@telus.net

Paddy Doherty - Tel: 250-747-3287
email: paddy@quesnelbc.com

Everyone in the BC organic sector will have an opportunity to provide input and to represent their individual concerns – preferably in writing, so that their information is complete and clearly understood.

FIRB Contact Information:

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Kathleen Gibson: Tel: 250-598-4280
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email: gbhgroup@shaw.ca

Brenda Coutts: Tel: 250-356-2465
Fax: 250-356-5131;
email: Brenda.Coutts@gems8.gov.bc.ca

For more information, please contact Brian Hughes, COABC Team Chair. ✓



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Chicken Welfare

by Dr. Michael C. Morris

excerpts from an article by Dr. Michael C. Morris in *Organic NZ*, published by the Soil&Health Association of New Zealand, www.organicnz.org

Beak trimming

Amputation of part of the beak (euphemistically described as beak trimming) is performed to reduce feather pecking and cannibalism. Studies on peripheral nerve activity suggest that partial beak amputation is extremely painful. The beak of hens is a complex sensory organ, with a rich supply of pain receptors. In addition, bundles of nerve fibres (neurotomata) form on the stump. Discharges from these fibres indicate that the pain from the stump is long lasting and intense. Similar chronic pain has been reported in human amputees.

The presence of chronic pain is backed up by behavioural studies on adult hens which show

chickens
are motivated
by pleasure

that hens avoid non-essential use of their beak for six weeks after amputation. Dozing and general inactivity can last up to 252 days.

Beak-trimmed birds spent less time scratching and dust bathing.

These and other behavioural differences in hen behaviour prompted some scientists to conclude that there was a "possibility of depression resulting from a chronically painful condition".

Nor is there any evidence to back up the claim that there is little or no pain involved if beak trimming is done early in the life of the chick. What little evidence is available in fact confirms that chicks avoid using their beaks for two weeks after the operation. The only evidence that beak trimming is less detrimental at an earlier age relates to production efficiency; hens debeaked at an early age laid more and heavier eggs. However, a conclusion that younger animals do not suffer pain when beak trimmed cannot be made on productivity alone. Neurophysiological, anatomical or behavioural data are required to back up the findings, and the limited behavioural data available backs up the common sense notion that young hens feel pain.

Feather pecking

Hens under natural conditions spend almost half their time pecking and foraging. If opportunities to forage are not available, then hens have been found to "misdirect" this behaviour into feather pecking. However, if foraging substrate or enrichment objects are made available for chickens to peck at, feather pecking and aggression is reduced, even if hens are kept in cages.

Simple enrichment of hens' living conditions also drastically reduced feather pecking. In a study on 3000 battery chickens, it was found that the provision of one simple enrichment device (a babies' toy) in the cages reduced aggression by giving the hens something to peck at. Violent pecking was reduced to such

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an extent that the monthly mortality rate declined from 1.06% to 0.57% of birds.

“Willingness to work” experiments - evidence for the emotion of pleasure

Behavioural scientists often use consumer demand theory to determine preference. The preference of human subjects for different outcomes can be measured quantitatively by their willingness to pay for such outcomes, either in monetary terms or in some other measurable commodity. Since hens are generally strapped for cash, experimenters instead measure how much a hen is prepared to work for an outcome.



Dorking Hen. Photo: Maria Castro

When such experiments are performed, it is found that hens often go to considerable lengths, lifting heavy weights, walking through air blasts, and pushing open swing doors to gain dust baths, nest boxes, and enough space to spread their wings. Interestingly, hens will work hard for a dust bath even if they have already taken one. This suggests that chickens are motivated not simply by an instinct to obtain something that has survival value (for example by ridding the chicken of parasites), but that they also have an anticipation of something pleasurable.

Such experiments show that hens are unsatisfied with the limited behavioural opportunities

afforded by battery cages, and are prepared to work hard to ameliorate their condition. Further studies on hen behaviour provide strong evidence that if hens are unable to better their environment and display normal patterns of behaviour, they show destructive or aggressive behaviour similar to that shown by humans in similar situations.


It is accepted that physical pain can be measured indirectly through behavioural and physiological indicators. Surely the presence of psychological suffering can be measured in the same manner. Animal welfare scientists have concluded that abnormal or “stereotype” behaviour in animals gives an accurate indication of frustration, since the same behaviour is found in mentally disturbed humans, and have even suggested that the presence of stereotypical behaviour is a sign that animals are being driven insane. ✓

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A Canadian Version of the Brand Names List

by Linda Edwards

In the very near future there will be a Canadian Organic Brand Names List on the COABC Website. This will be a list of products – inputs you purchase – by brand name that can be used by certified organic growers, processors and handlers. As most of you are aware, the OMRI list and process provides a very valuable service in evaluating products to see if they meet organic standards. As OMRI members, this information is available to us. However, there are many products on that list that are not registered and/or available in Canada. A process to separate those out and to also include non-OMRI products allowed for organic processing and production in British Columbia is now underway.

What are the criteria for an allowed input?

1. All of the contents must be on the generic materials list as allowed or regulated.



Still not on the Canadian Brand Names List. Really.

The generic material (e.g. calcium chloride, microbial products, sawdust) must be on the COABC Materials List as an allowed or regulated material. The Materials List is in BOOK 2 of the Certified Organic Management Standards, Version 5. If you do not have a current copy, check the website copy. Always look to see if there are any restrictions on their use. For example “sawdust and wood chips” are allowed for weed control or as a fertilizer. However the annotation says that they must not come from treated or painted wood.

2. The particular brand or input containing the generic material must be allowed.

If the generic material is combined with other products, you must make sure the specific product or brand you want to use is also approved. For example, *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) is a microbial product and microbial products are on the generic Crops Materials List and are allowed. However, you cannot go and buy Bt. It is available in a number of forms, combined with other materials (carriers, adjuvants etc) to make the product you actually use. These added materials must also be approved. For example, one company formulates (combines) Bt with carriers and adjuvants that are acceptable for organic growers. This is the product with the brand name Dipel. Another company combines it with products which are prohibited for use in organics and therefore Foray (the brand name) cannot be used.

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3. If a manufacturing process is involved, it must also be acceptable for organics.

The product you purchase must also be manufactured or formulated in a way acceptable for organics. For example, calcium chloride products that use sulphuric acid in the manufacturing are not allowed. Those that use steam distillation are.

So how do you know the answers to #2 and 3?

Although we can look up generic materials on the COABC list, we do not have the expertise to determine if a product meets the criteria noted in #'s 2 and 3. To assist us with this, COABC and its members belong to the Organic Material Review Institute (OMRI). This is a non-profit organization based in Eugene, Oregon. They have panels of experts they can call on to determine if all of the materials in a product and/or the manufacturing process used to produce products are acceptable for organics.

So why can't we just check everything out on that list?

COABC members/Canadians cannot use everything that is on the OMRI list because they may be registered and available for use in the US but not in Canada. The following is an explanation of how this works. Pesticides, animal health care products and some fertilizers are particularly affected by extra Canadian rules. Most processing aids do not need to be registered. We will determine and list the ones that are OMRI approved and available in Canada.

Pesticides allowed for organic use in Canada

Pesticides are anything used for the control of disease, insects and mites, birds, rodents and weeds. There are many products approved by OMRI which cannot be used in Canada because they are not registered here. If they are not, their use is illegal. This applies to everyone. Also, 1.2.6 Book 2, the BC Certified Organic Production Policies and Management Standards states "COABC requires as a condition of membership that its members and any licensees enrolled in the certification program adhere to all provincial, federal and municipal laws and regulations and standards affecting the agricultural industry".

This registration is done by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency which functions under the Canadian federal Health Department. Pesticides not registered in Canada are not available for sale here as such. Sometimes though a product may be available for another purpose. For example, potassium bicarbonate is for sale in Canada as a fertilizer. In the US and as is listed in OMRI it is also formulated as a fungicide for powdery mildew called Kaligren. Use of potassium bicarbonate as a fungicide in Canada is illegal.

Also, even when a product is registered for use in Canada and is OMRI approved, it can only be used for the crops and the specific problems listed on what is called the label. This is the information on the container and/or accompanying it. For example, Dipel 2X is registered for tree fruits, vegetables etc. but not for grapes. Therefore it cannot be legally used on grapes. Also, a product might be registered for one pest on a crop but not another. In this case it can-

continued on page 22...

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...continued from page 20

not be legally used for the latter. Information will be given on the website where you can find out these kind of things. If you would like to get a product registered for your particular crop or pest see the summer issue of the BCOG 2004, Volume 7 #2.

Livestock products allowed for organic use in Canada

Animal health products must be approved by the Bureau of Veterinary Drugs section of the CFIA. Those that are have a drug identification numbers (DIN). There are quite a few such products but only those approved by OMRI as well can be used without further investigation.

Livestock mineral and/or vitamin supplements need to be registered and would then carry a registration number. Livestock feeds that meet certain nutritional standards do not need registration but are regulated through labelling.

Fertilizers

The Canadian Fertilizers Act and Regs divide products into two broad categories: 1) Fertilizers and 2) Supplements. Fertilizers are those products that provide nutrition to plants. About 99% of fertilizers do not need registration. They are regulated through labelling. However there are some fertilizers that require registration e.g. micronutrient fertilizers. The Canadian Brand Names list will list all OMRI approved fertilizers of all kinds which are also registered and available in Canada.

Supplements are those products that provide benefits to plants and/or the soil but not from nutrition. Examples are legume inoculants, microbial supplements, fulvic and humic acids, wetting agents, rooting hormone or any product that makes claims that are not nutrition based.

Most supplements are required to be registered, which means they are reviewed for safety (environment and food chain) and for efficacy.



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What about products available in Canada which are not on the OMRI list?

Do not panic if the products you use are not in this directory. Remember it is a voluntary process for a company to apply to have their product assessed and there are some that have not applied for OMRI approval. This does not necessarily mean it is not a product that could be used in organics. Urge companies with products you want to use to apply to OMRI for assessment. All information is treated confidentially and all that is made public is whether or not the product is acceptable. The process is not very expensive and most companies more than make it back on increased sales. Consumers of non-reviewed products must satisfy themselves that all the ingredients including the adjuvants, fillers or carriers, (which often are not identified on the labels), and the manufacturing process meet organic standards. There will also be a number of non-OMRI products on the Canadian Brand Names List. The list to be posted on the website will be in two parts. One section will list alphabetically all of the products allowed for use by organic processors and handlers in Canada. It will be noted which ones are OMRI approved and which ones are not. The other will be listed by categories i.e. Fertilizers and Soil Amendments, Production Aids, Pesticides including weed control, Livestock Products and Processing Products

Special warnings

If you are exporting to the UK or the US check with your certifying body about special restrictions which may apply. For example, tree seals including petroleum based ones, are allowed in Canada but not in the US. ✓

Classifieds

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ENTRUST for Potatoes

Organic potato producers have access to a limited number of options to control the populations of Colorado potato beetles in their crop. The bacterial insecticide Novador has been a key product over recent years but was being eliminated from approved organic input lists when this project was undertaken. It was necessary to assess the efficacy of a replacement insecticide, Entrust.

In potato production in general but especially in organic production, it is also important to understand potential interactions between N fertility, plant development, insect population dynamics with their potential consequences for the use of insect control products.

A research project, undertaken in 2004 on a transitional organic site at AAFC Fredericton, had three objectives:

1. Compare the efficacy of a potential organic insecticide (Entrust) to a bacterial insecticide (Novador) and to no insecticide,
2. Test the hypothesis that healthy, vigorous (well fertilized) plants have a better tolerance of insect pests such as the CPB;
3. Compare the effect of three levels (0, 150, 300 kg total N ha⁻¹) of organic fertilization (Nutriwave 4-1-2, Envirem Technologies, Fredericton, NB) on potato yield and plant biomass.

The high rate of organic fertilizer was required to produce significant marketable yields.

The efficacy of the insecticide Entrust at controlling a low density population of Colorado potato beetle in an organic production setting was shown to be similar to or better than Novador. It was possible to produce three levels of potato crop/plant health (measured as plant height and plant canopy) by manipulating fertilization levels.

The hypothesis that healthy, vigorous plants have a greater tolerance to insect pests such as the Colorado potato beetle was not fully assessed because of the unusually late colonization and very low beetle density. Insect control treatment (Entrust applied at 1.5 oz/acre and Novador at 6 L/ha) were not required until July 20th. However, data from weekly counts (taken from June 29th – August 21st) of abundance of CPB adults, egg masses, and larvae suggested that plant health affects the timing of the different potato beetle life stages and therefore the timing for the application of the insect control measures. ✓

Agricultural Awareness - Okanagan Style by Bob McCoubrey

Many BC farmers have been calling for activities that promote agricultural awareness among the non-farm community, especially since the BC Agricultural Council recently announced the shelving of its high profile Ag-Aware program.

Kelowna-based Urban Harvest Organic Delivery has been creating agricultural awareness by taking its customers to the farm in an effort to let them learn where their food comes from and how it is produced. Partners in business and in life, Lisa McIntosh and David Nelson established Urban Harvest in 2000, with the credo "Farm fresh organic produce right to your door." This past summer, they began organizing farm tours for their customers on some of the farms that supply their company with produce.

"The purpose of the farm tours was to celebrate local organic food, farming, and farmers", said Lisa. "Specifically, we invited our customers to:

1) come together to celebrate the bounty of FOOD produced in our region,



Melanie Bachmann with her daughter Amelie, checking out a new apple tree recently grafted to Northern Spy.

2) learn first-hand about organic FARMING practices and gain a deeper understanding of the certified organic approach to sustainable agriculture; and

3) engage with some of the organic farmers in our area and 'put a face to the food' that arrives on their doorsteps each week!"

On a sunny Sunday last September, ten Urban Harvest families gathered at McCoubrey Farms in Lake Country to learn about growing pears, apples and other tree fruits, to explore the details of organic certification and to get a feeling for some of the challenges and rewards that face farmers in BC. Pears from McCoubrey Farms are among the regular offerings in Urban Harvest boxes that are delivered weekly or bi-

weekly, year round, throughout the Central Okanagan.

At the farm tour, Lisa and her staff organized creative activities for the kids, challenging them to make edible art from pears and other food items, while their parents enjoyed organic coffee, tea and desserts that tour participants brought along to share.

I led a tour of the farm, discussing everything from organic standards, to pest control, soil stewardship and modern tree training practices. Those on the tour were fascinated by the diversity of issues and by the intricacies of some of the plant and pest "systems" which farmers have to understand and manage.

Melanie Bachmann of Kelowna thought the most memorable part of the tour was the description of the planting and precautions

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taken against pests. When asked if she would recommend this type of tour to a friend, she said, "Yes, it is something everyone should take in to learn more about our food supply and appreciate why organic foods are sometimes not "perfect" and a little more expensive than non-organic, and how important the process is for our health and the health of our planet."

Ten year-old Nicholas Denton said "how cool it was to learn how pears were grown. The best part of the tour was when I found an apple on the ground that had a lot of very little ants in it. They were climbing out of a hole where the stem was and I was surprised how many of them were in there. Mr. McCoubrey said some things that made me realize that organic farmers use methods that confuse bugs and makes it so they won't go inside the fruit".

His eight year-old brother Craig commented, "The orchard was a fun-filled place and I think

my friends would like it. Organic foods are healthy and don't poison the environment and that is why I like them. They taste better."

**It's
cool to learn
how pears are
grown!**

**I think my
friends would
like it.**

"As for me", the boys' mother Susan said, "I went on the tour for the primary reason to provide an opportunity for our boys to learn more about how fruit is produced. I didn't realize how much I would get out of the tour. It is so satisfying to get our bin from Urban Harvest and see fruit in there and know where it came from. I can't bite into a pear now without thinking about how much care and attention (and pride) goes into growing it."

For my part, I found the day to be rewarding as I spent the afternoon doing what most farmers don't get to do very often - talk face-to-face with my final customers. I hope they went home feeling they could trust me and the methods I use to grow the pears they are eating each

continued on page 26...

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...continued from page 25

week. I think they went away with a better understanding of how rewarding the business of farming can be, and how challenging some of the problems can be. We discussed the Sterile Insect Release program, the never-ending battle with weeds and the delicate balance of pests and predators, which we strive to maintain whenever possible.

My wife Sharon and I are big fans of Urban Harvest for a number of reasons. Besides being a valued buyer of produce from the farm, Urban Harvest brings an ethical approach to doing business, with a stated goal of trying to help farmers to be successful. Lisa and David buy local produce whenever possible and are committed to paying prices that are fair to both their business and the producer. In the winter, we subscribe to the box delivery program and are pleased to receive fresh, top quality, organic fruits and vegetables, conveniently delivered to our door for about the same cost as conventional produce at the supermarket. And to top

it off, the box contains a newsletter each week, filled with recipes and information on new types of produce, along with community activities that Lisa thinks may be of interest to her customers.

As BC AgriTourism Association President Richard Bullock told a group of farm leaders last year, "There is no better way to promote agricultural awareness than to get people out to the farm." With distributors like Lisa and David on the job, agricultural awareness will be a lot easier to promote for the farmers who supply their business with local organic produce.



✓ Bob McCoubrey on tour

CFIA Visits BC

On Tuesday, March 2, CFIA's Joe Southall, Mike Leclair, and Vivienne Laxdal together with AFC's Tracey Innes visited the COABC office to meet with COABC, PACS and NOOA staff and local growers. They were there to answer questions and listen to concerns about Canada's new National Organic Regulation and Standard. CFIA is poised to govern a National Regulation, and are intent on seeing it in law by the end of 2005.

The individual presently at the helm of all this, Joe Southall is determined to see this process through to the end, and stressed that he wants and needs cooperation and commitment from Canada's Organic Community. Obviously a difficult task, so gathering information from the sector is Phase I. Compiling the information and assorted wish lists into a draft regulation and putting it out for comment will be Phase II. It seemed to those in attendance that the CFIA regards the BC program very highly, and

by Kirsten Kane and Lee McFadyen

strongly suggested that BC tell the CFIA "what it wants". During the meeting CFIA Policy Analyst Mike Leclair was intent on gathering opinions and suggestions on technical matters ranging from transportation of goods to logo issues, and noted many comments with interest and enthusiasm.

The following day the team met with LEOGA members in Cawston. In answer to questions, the following statements were made:

Joe stated 'categorically' that all International CB's operating in Canada MUST have an office in Canada and all CB's must meet the Canadian standard and regulation.

There needs to be a democratically elected National body, (COABC is an excellent model) to operate the standard and regulation.

A regulation should have a National symbol.

The CFIA may issue a license to farmers thereby allowing us to operate our organic farms. This might be issued by the COABC, a National body or...

The CFIA is concerned about consumer protection and consumer confusion. By regulating the word organic, the consumer would be protected from the fraudulent use of 'organic'.

"Regulated" means anyone who wants to apply the word organic to their farming/processing practices MUST be certified by a recognized CB. However, the standard/regulation would NOT cover personal care products. The confusion around the use of 'organic' on the label of these products would continue.

The CFIA will not have any more inspectors to 'police' the program, consumers/farmers/others would need to be diligent in reporting any infractions.


Up to \$390,000 has been spent on developing the standard and regulation. This has been paid for by Ag. Canada. In future maintaining the standard/regulation will be user pay. Farmers exporting internationally will require the most service therefore will pay accordingly, exporting across Provincial borders will require next level of service, next pay level and those marketing within their Province require the least service, pay the least.

Joe stated that the CFIA would need no more than 6 people in an office in Ottawa to direct the program. LEOGA members expressed concern about the tendency of bureaucracies to expand escalating costs.

Joe expressed concern about irregularities in the competence of VO's. He suggested a three month training course with a longer practicum. LEOGA members expressed satisfaction of the VO's we have used. We questioned the necessity of such training, and concern over what his suggested training would do to VO costs. We also requested a copy of the report which is being prepared for the CFIA on inspector training.

Joe Southall will return to BC for consultation on phase II of the process, and at the very least there will be opportunity for input at a meeting in the Lower Mainland. They would like to have a similar consultation in the Central Okanagan, though this may not be possible to arrange.

Paddy Doherty is a member of the national task force working on the national organic regulation and reports regularly to the COABC and interested parties. To get on his mailing list, email him at: paddy@quesnelbc.com ✓



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Slaughterhouse Four (and counting)

by Cathleen Kneen

The process around new Regulations regarding the inspection of animals slaughtered for meat in BC flows inexorably on, while farmers and processors continue to grasp at overhanging branches in a (possibly vain) attempt to avoid being swept over the waterfall.

One of those branches is called the Small Scale Meat Committee (a voluntary group) connected to BCMAFF's Meat Industry Enhancement Strategy. The committee is working to develop some tools which may help small processors determine what steps they would need to take to fit within the new regulatory structure, without having to call on the CFIA to come and inspect their property. There is considerable interest within the Ministry (and, we understand, also within the Ministry of Health) in developing viable models for what are being called "micro" scale processing.

This is of particular concern to organic farmers, as in addition to the general issues for livestock producers in regard to humane treatment of animals (including not trucking them very long distances) and traceability of the meat, organic farmers frequently have small numbers of ani-

mals which may not fit the "standard" and would therefore not be appropriate for a regular abattoir even if it would take them.

The BC Food Systems Network is working together with the Rare Breeds Association and the Island Farmers Alliance to develop some proposals regarding both facilities and inspection which will, they hope, enable the Regulation to meet its stated goals of healthy meat for the population and a healthy and viable agricultural sector. At present the regulations appear to be modelled on the health requirements for export-scale slaughterhouses. In addition, it requires that all animals must be inspected both before and after slaughter, anywhere in the province. In both of these areas the group are trying to find ways to base regulation on the safety inherent in locally-focused, hands-on, low-throughput operations.

The roar of the falls is already audible – the "adjustment period" ends in September 2006 – so if you have any suggestions or are willing to work on any of the issues, please contact Cathleen Kneen, cathleen@ramshorn.ca, phone 250-675-4866. ✓

C'mon. We're organic... We're up for a challenge.

You think you are so good 'cos you are organic, right? **Take the EFP challenge** – show your muster. Getting started is easier than you think. It's as simple as making a personal commitment to complete this self-assessment process. Three hundred questions sounds like a lot – but if you run a farm you can do anything! Making smart decisions about wildlife damage, fuel storage, and irrigation may contribute to your farm's sustainability. Completing a plan may significantly reduce your environmental risk. And there's money available, too.

So what do you need to do?

1. Attend an EFP workshop (or bribe your COABC EFP planners to supply you with the material!)
2. Complete the workbook (remember - be honest)
3. Then book a farm visit with your lovely organic EFP advisor so they can verify your score

300 +1 questions, can you answer yes to them all?

Prize for the highest number of yes answers to be awarded at the next AGM – this means you have till Dec 2005 to take up the challenge!

26th March Grand Forks 1-4pm

Boundary Womens' Centre

27th March Nelson 1-4pm

Location to be announced

29th March Vernon evening

Location to be announced

12 March Lilloet 1-4pm

Lilloet Rec Centre

COABC has an agreement with the British Columbia Agriculture Council to be a delivery group for the Canada-British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Program. Brochures describing the program can be obtained from the COABC office.

For workshop or program information, call Elaine Spearing (250) 747-3237 e-mail: elaines@quesnelbc.com.

On-Farm Fuel Storage

By Elaine Spearing

Petroleum may be the most polluting substance used and stored on organic farms. Risks are not limited to spills. Volatile organic compounds are released into the air from petroleum products – in fact, many volatile organic compounds and nitrous oxides aid in the production of ground-level ozone, a known respiratory irritant and crop growth retardant. Volatile organic compounds can also contribute to the formation of fine particulate matter, causing health and visibility concerns.

So what can you do about this?

- paint all fuel storage tanks a light colour,
- shade tanks (e.g. build a roof),
- Install pressure relief valve-type vent caps. These valves allow tank pressure to build up slightly before emissions are released.



It is critically important to control all fuel spills as even small amounts of petroleum can have harmful effects. Not only is petroleum toxic to fish and other aquatic organisms, petroleum kills algae and other plankton, smothers fish spawning areas and hence reduces the rate of photosynthesis in aquatic plants.

For stationary fuel storage

- Construct storage tank areas in accordance with accepted engineering practice,
- Support tanks on non-combustible material (i.e. metal),
- Use self-closing nozzles or an anti-siphoning device,
- Ensure no drips, leaks or overflow occurs when receiving or dispensing fuel,
- Have spill containment to hold a single tank's volume plus 10%, or for multiple tanks, the largest tank's volume plus 10%,
- Use bumper guards to protect tanks from direct collision by vehicles,
- Have a fuel spill clean-up kit readily available.

Locate tanks:

- at least 30.5 metres away from wells (this is required under the BC Health Act),

- a suggested distance of at least 15m from water-courses,
- a suggested distance of at least 30m from a domestic intake.

For jerry cans, drums and truck-box fuel tanks:

- do not fill beyond their safe filling level,
- keep drums upright and secure during transport,
- avoid dispensing from horizontal drums,
- Have secondary containment for truck box fuel tanks that are removed from the truck or trailer and operated in a fixed location for any length of time.

To obtain a complete checklist and reference guide on this and other topics, attend an EFP workshop.

The BC Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide can be viewed on the BCAC website at

http://www.bcac.bc.ca/efp_documents.htm ✓

An old Jewish man lived alone in the country. He wanted to dig his potato garden but it was very difficult work as the ground was very hard. His only son, Saul, who used to help him, was in prison for Insider Trading and Stock Fraud.

So, the old man wrote a letter to his son and described his predicament:

"Dear Solly: I am feeling pretty bad because it looks like I won't be able to plant my potato garden this year. I'm just getting too old to be digging up a garden plot. If you were here, all my troubles would be over. I know you would dig the plot for me. Love, Papa"

A few days later the old man received a letter from his son:

"Dear Papa: For heaven's sake, don't dig up that garden, that's where I buried the money & stocks. Love, Solly."

At 4 am the next morning, a team of FBI agents and local police arrived at the old man's house and dug up the entire garden area without finding any money or stocks. They apologized to the old man and left. That same day the old man received another letter from his son:

"Dear Papa: Go ahead and plant the potatoes now. That's the best I could do under the circumstances. Love, Solly"

We at Jerseyland, on behalf of other organic producers, applaud the efforts of the British Columbia Minister of Agriculture, Hon. John Van Dongen, for his efforts to resolve the ongoing marketing board issues that have devastated so many of us in organic dairy, chicken, turkey and eggs. Without strong leadership at BCMAFF the marketing boards would have continued their dictatorship over our organic farms. We also appreciate the efforts expended by so many.

To name a few:

Richard Bullock - Chair FIRB, George LeRoux & Kathleen Gibson - Specialty Production Consultants, COABC Specialty Implementation Committee - Gunta Vitins, Brian Hughes, Brad Reid, Ric Llewellyn, Paddy Doherty and the many others working in the background for all their support.

LET'S FINISH THIS ONCE AND FOR ALL !

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West Nile virus

by Arlene Soloman

This fall the COABC office was contacted by Sunny Mak, Geographic Information Systems Analyst for Epidemiology Services, BC Centre for Disease Control, regarding the protection of organic farms from pesticide spraying for West Nile Virus [WNV].

West Nile Virus is a mosquito-borne virus. In nature, it is normally passed between mosquitoes and birds. The usual way for humans to get WNV is through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people infected will experience no symptoms at all. About 20% of those infected with WNV will develop mild flu-like symptoms lasting a week or less. Symptoms typically include fever, headache, and body aches; a rash on the trunk of the body and swollen lymph glands may also be present. In less than 1% of cases WNV can cause meningitis [inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord], or encephalitis [inflammation of the brain]. People over 50 years of age are most at risk for severe illness.

The virus has been spreading westward across North America. To date, WNV has been reported from seven provinces in Canada, including Alberta, and is expected to arrive in BC in 2005. As part of the surveillance system in BC more than 1300 dead birds [possible hosts for WNV] and more than 52,000 mosquitoes [WNV vectors] from across the province were tested in 2004. There were no human cases of West Nile virus, no infected birds and no infected mosquitoes found. However, precautionary steps are being taken by the BCCDC, should there be an outbreak of human illness in BC in 2005.

In addition to the surveillance activities, an integrated pest [mosquito] management strategy is in operation: this hinges on environmental monitoring and reduction of mosquito breeding sites, with the application of larval mosquito control agents if needed, as well as public communication and education about how to prevent mosquito bites. The approach taken will emphasize disease prevention and protection of the environment. Adult mosquito control will only be considered should surveillance findings

indicate a significant risk to human health despite the implementation of other measures.

Farmers can do much to reduce mosquito breeding habitats and protect themselves, their families and other animals (horses, cats, dogs) from WNV. Mosquitoes do not need a lot of water to breed. Emptying containers where water collects such as unused tires can do a lot to control mosquitoes. Mosquitoes also breed in irrigation ditches, stagnant ponds and in pooled water on fields. Certified Organic Management Standards (4.6.1c) permits the use of biologic larvicides (e.g. Bti) in these environments. This bacterial product kills mosquito larvae before they hatch and can be purchased without a permit at hardware and gardening stores.

The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) is soliciting the assistance of COABC in compiling an updated registry of organic farms in the province. The location of these farms will be mapped using a Geographic Information System [GIS], and integrated with surveillance and land use data. This information will assist health authorities in identifying areas which areas are feasible for spraying to control mosquito populations if the risk to human health is deemed considerable to a community. Health authorities will attempt to avoid organic farms as much as possible.

It is very important that you ensure that your Certification Body has a listing of your farm's actual location (not simply a mailing address or P.O. Box) for the registry, and that this information is forwarded to COABC. The BCCDC has also requested that we include any non-certified farms that we may know about in our regions. That would include those people who are enquiring about certification for 2005.

Sunny Mak may be contacted for further information at: Tel. [604] 775-1019 or sunny.mak@bccdc.ca.

*Further information on West Nile Virus can be found at:
<http://www.bccdc.org/content.php?item=183>*



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