

British Columbia

Organic Grower



Fall 2021, Volume 24, Issue 4

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Justice

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ORGANIC BC



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Apples at Kalala Estate Winery.
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KEEPING IT REAL

in the Face of Climate Collapse

Well. Maybe next year I'll get to write an editor's letter that doesn't start out with "oh my, things aren't great"—it seems it's been a bit of a running theme over the last few issues. And no wonder. Between the pandemic and the weather, farmers are going through it. As the proverbial canaries-in-the-coal-mine for climate change, farmers feel it close to home, whether due to floods earlier this year or one of the most intense fire seasons on record, or any of the other ecological impacts, big and small.

It feels a bit trite to say that we can look for the cloud's silver lining when what we're really hoping for is just some actual rainclouds—so I won't say it. Instead, this issue is serving it up the way it arrived: raw, real, and at times heartbreaking. The theme of Fall 2021 was meant to be Harvesting Wisdom, exploring what we can learn from movements outside the organic sector. In the end, the theme that's emerged is probably something more like, "keeping it real in the face of climate collapse."

Our Organic Stories feature this issue doesn't profile just one farm. Organic producers impacted by the drought, heat waves, and subsequent fires that rolled over the province shared their experiences with us (page 9). There isn't enough space in these pages to capture everyone's story—I don't know anyone who hasn't been deeply impacted, whether directly by the fires, or by working outside day-in and day-out under blankets of smoke, or by the ongoing drought, which has led to water restrictions on food producers in island communities. Thank you to the farmers who took a moment during such a stressful season to tell your stories, and thank you to everyone else out there working so hard to feed your communities.

Our Ask an Expert column by Emma Holmes this issue is, no surprise, all about fire season

need-to-knows for organic producers (page 14). Check it out for detailed information about how to maintain organic certification during evacuations.

On page 6, Natalie Forstbauer shares moving words on the need to regenerate globally, and on page 18, Anna captures the spirit of grumpy farmer month—and a particularly intense one at that—in her latest farm story. We see you, Summer Anna.

Speaking of climate change, on page 20, Abra Brynne explores the long-time role organic farmers have played in climate-friendly agriculture. On page 24, the Small-Scale Meat Producers fill us in on regulatory changes that support local and sustainable meat, but there's more work to be done—be sure to fill out their survey by September 10.

On page 28, Susanna Klassen explores farm-worker labour movements around the world, tying migrant worker justice to the fairness principle of organic agriculture.

In organic sector news, we have a new look. The COABC rebrand as Organic BC means the BC Organic Grower got a makeover—we hope you like it! Read more about the Organic BC rebrand on page 16. In less-positive organic sector news, the Canadian government announced they will not fund reviews of the Canadian Organic Standard. See what that means for the organic community on page 23.

If you have a story to tell about organic food and farming, please get in touch. Reach out with your thoughts, letters, and story ideas to editor@organicbc.org—and be sure to visit us online.

bcorganicgrower.ca

~ Darcy Smith, Editor



News Patch

SAVE THE DATES

2022 Podcasts & Conference

JANUARY 15 ~ PODCAST RELEASE

FEBRUARY 25 - 27 ~ CONFERENCE IN KAMLOOPS

BC Organic Conference

Save the date—BC's organic community gathering will be here before you know it! We're excited for this year's event, which will combine the best of our in-person conferences of years past, with the best of the creative new approaches from last year.

Celebrate Organic Week with Cook-Along BC

BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation and We Heart Local BC are hosting a free Cook-Along BC webinar from 5:30pm to 7:00pm on Wednesday, September 15. Join this virtual cooking event to celebrate both BC Chicken Month and Organic Week, the largest annual celebration of organic food, farming, and products across the nation!

This cook-along will feature hearty fall-inspired recipes and fresh ag-education. Chef Trevor Randle will provide expert online instruction as he guides participants through two locally grown organic recipes: "Organic Braised Moroccan Chicken with Couscous" and "Organic BC Cider Poached Apples with Toasted Walnuts."

Farmers Dion Wiebe of Rosstown Farms and Natural Foods and Molly Thurston of Claremont Ranch Organics will join Chef Randle to provide insights on poultry and organic farm-

ing in BC. Participants will be entered into a draw for a chance to win 1 of 3 prize packages valued at \$250+ each.

To register for this free event, please visit

bit.ly/3yICSAi

Farmers for Climate Solutions

Organic BC is excited to join the Farmers for Climate Solutions network. Farmers for Climate Solutions works alongside and supports organizations addressing climate change concerns in agriculture, and helps farmers mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Organic farmers have been leaders in many of the practices being adopted today and we look forward to further engaging to share solutions and build upon them.

farmersforclimatesolutions.ca

Updates from the BC Agriculture Council

Very exciting news from the BC Agriculture Council (BCAC). Danielle Synotte, who has been working at BCAC for several years, has been promoted to Executive Director. Reg Enns

has stepped down after over 10 years in the role and is pleased to hand the reins to Danielle. Reg won't be far off though—he will be overseeing the staff and all activities of the Western Agriculture Labour Initiative (WALI) as the new general manager. Reg will also continue to oversee the management of ARDCorp and its programs until the completion of a transition to a new delivery agent.

Over the past year much work has gone into looking at how BCAC can most effectively do its work as the voice for all agriculture in BC, resulting in a shift of focus. Going forward, BCAC will put more emphasis on advocacy work and proactive policy development. Programs such as the Environmental Farm Program will continue with support from other organizations in execution.

On a sad note, Allan James, chair of ARDCorp and champion of the Environmental Farm Plan and Climate Action Initiative programs, passed away suddenly over the summer. Many people from the organic community have gone through the EFP and have benefited from his dedicated work. He will be missed.

Canadian Organic Standards and Labelling Update Resources

In December of 2020, the Canadian General Standards Board's Organic Agricultural Technical Committee completed the task of updating CAN/CGSB 32.310 and CAN/CGSB 32.311. Many hours were dedicated by passionate individuals to update these standards. The technical committees with the support of all the working groups look at every one of the petitions received over the past five years (since the last update) and considered input provided by operators and other stakeholders. To view the new standards and a collection of resources, please visit:

bit.ly/3kvHeQa

Groundwater Licensing Deadline Coming Up!

Do you rely on groundwater for your agricultural operation? You could lose your priority rights to access water if you have not applied for a water license by March 1, 2022.

The Water Sustainability Act (WSA) came into force on February 29th, 2016. We are nearing the end of the WSA six-year transition period to bring approximately 20,000 existing non-domestic groundwater users into the water licensing scheme and its first-in-time, first-in-right (FITFIR) priority system.

Licensing establishes rights to groundwater based on the same priority scheme that currently exists for surface water, and will help to reduce conflicts between water users in times of scarcity.

Senior licensees are given priority over junior licensees when it comes to exercising their full rights to water. If you are an existing user and you apply for a water license during the first six years of the WSA (February 29, 2016 to March 1, 2022), you will be granted a date of precedence based on the date you began using groundwater, as determined by evidence submitted with the application. If you wait to apply until after March 1, 2022, you will be treated as a new applicant and given a junior priority date based on the date of your application.

If you apply for a license as an existing non-domestic groundwater user on or before March 1, 2022, your water license application fees will be waived. After March 1, 2022, you will be treated as a new applicant. New applicants for non-domestic groundwater must pay application fees.

The WSA does not apply to domestic users of groundwater. If you are a well owner and you use water for domestic purposes, you are exempt from licensing and paying provincial water fees and rentals. However, domestic groundwater users are deemed to have rights to the water they use for domestic purposes and are encouraged to register their well with FrontCounter BC:

bit.ly/3y6aAJQ

For more information about the WSA and how to apply, visit:

bit.ly/3BkZouM

New Requirements for Groundwater Users:

bit.ly/3z6fzf4



Let's Hold Hands

By Natalie Forstbauer

The emptiness of the Earth's desertified soils is palpable.
The insidious poisoning of our water is profound.
The toxic air filling our lungs is suffocating.
The mass extinction of life is alarming.
The dis-ease in human bodies is dominating.

We wonder, "What can we do? What can I do?"
To change the course of the destruction of earth, humanity, and all living creatures.

Is Global Regeneration even possible?

Is it possible to bring life back into soil?
Is it possible for our waterways to run clean?
Is it possible to purify the air we breathe?
Is it possible to reverse the illness and disease raging through humanity, our pets, and wildlife?

I sit in wonder...

And with certainty - I see it is possible.

Now is the time to engage in Global Regeneration.
There has never been a better time to have your hands in the soil working with nature.
Now is the time to deepen into nature's wisdom and guidance and rise.

It's time to shine as a farmer, steward of the land, seed saver, gardener, and lightworker in unity for Global Regeneration.

It starts with you.
It starts with me.
It starts with conversations.
It starts with meeting yourself, each other and the Earth where we are, at this very moment in kindness, compassion, and reverence.

Here's the thing.
Earth does not *need* us.
We *NEED* her.
Let's Hold Hands.

What if we turned towards helping each other?
What if we turned towards what we want to create?
What if we turned towards being intentional in our actions?
What if we turned towards being conscious of our choices?
What if we turned towards being aligned with nature?
What if we turned towards listening to the wisdom of our bodies?
What if we turned towards amplifying the amazing work being done locally and globally in our homes, communities, and countries?

When we go looking, we see Global Regeneration is in manifestation...

Soil has shown us she comes to life with billions of organisms in just one teaspoon of healthy soil when supported with living biology.




Continued on page 27...



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A SUMMER OF DROUGHT, HEAT WAVES & FIRE



“It is definitely a topsy-turvy world right now—so much is out of balance

as we can see in the wildfires around us, as well as flooding and more fires around the world. We're feeling for Mother Earth and recognize the shifts that humans (particularly the extractivist, endless-growth mindsets) need to make to start to repair what we have messed with (which is a LOT). We are grateful that things aren't so out of balance that we can still grow good food for family and farm friends, building relationships, and where we can do better, be better.”

~ Michelle Tsutsumi, Golden Ears Farm, Chase BC

“*The biggest impact of the fires* has been on our own mental and physical (respiratory) health. It wouldn't even be that bad if it wasn't on top of this ongoing drought, but as it is, the uncertainty of the situation is a lot to deal with.”
Annelise Grube-Cavers, Fresh Valley Farms, Armstrong



Throughout the province, temperatures reached record highs in late June, with seasonal temperatures fluctuating in the high 30's for long periods of time in the Interior. Smoke from hundreds of fires choked out the sun and left the earth and plants parched for water and sun scorched. What follows is a collection of stories from organic farmers in their own words and as told to Marjorie Harris. Gratitude to the farmers who shared their harrowing experiences and stories of community coming together.

Coping with Heat Waves & Drought

By Marjorie Harris

The cherry crop experienced losses of 30% due to extreme temperatures up to 51 degrees for one or two days, followed by extended days of extreme temperatures. The cherry harvest was just beginning and the cherries were burned up, basically dehydrated and shriveled on the trees. One full block had to be abandoned. Many cherry farmers in the area lost entire blocks of trees to heat



Sunrise apples damaged by extreme heat in Cawston Ranch. Credit: Sally Mennell's Orchard.

and water demands causing orchard abandonments.

~ *Jarnail Gill, Blossom River Organics, Keremeos*

At the end of June, the Oliver area was hit with two days of 47 degree temperatures, which then stayed over 40 degrees for many days. If the plants were not given enormous amounts of water they would have dried out. Hans used 40% to 50% more water this year than ever in his 40 years on the vineyard. Because of the high heat the evapotranspiration rate is very high and the water is needed by the plant to cool itself. If there is not sufficient water for the plant to do this the stomata on the leaf will close and the plant will completely shut down growth. The plant can burn up if it can't cool, or take three to four weeks to start again. Also, some winter hardiness could be lost if the plants come back too late in the season. Therefore, the only choice available to save the plants and the vineyard was to water. Pumping from the well does have limited resources and thankfully not as much water is needed now. High temperatures combined with the large amount of water the vines did go into leaf growth. The bunches are very uneven in size and most are smaller berries that will not size up. Harvest season looks like it may be two weeks ahead.

~ *Hans Buchler, Park Hill Vineyards, Oliver*

In late June, temperatures soared over 40 degrees for five days peaking at 45 degrees. The Sunrise is our first summer apple and the first to be assessed for the damaging effects of the very intense heat that we had so early in the season. While the sun burning to the most exposed fruit is very deep and unsightly, it doesn't appear to have affected a large percentage of the Sunrise crop. There may also have been some premature ripening in some of the Sunrise but on the whole pressures seem to be holding steady. Harvest dates are about the same as last year. Sunrise apples like most summer apples have relatively short storage life and don't seem to be affected by internal quality issues as may be the case for some of the later apple varieties which rely on their storability.

~ *Sally and Wilfrid Mennell, Sally Mennell's Orchard, Cawston*

David is a third-generation apple farmer in the BX area of Vernon, where temperatures reached over 44 degrees. The cider apple orchard is on a metered municipal treated wa-

ter system. The trees needed more water than ever before, but a balance had to be made between keeping the trees alive and the economics of paying more for metered water than the business can afford. David admits to running on gut instinct to keep the orchard going all around. Far less scab sprays were applied. The apples are smaller across the whole orchard.

David explained that once temperature goes above 30 degrees, the trees shut down growth and the apples stay small. David shows me how on the hottest days the sun scorched the south facing fruit, baked to apple sauce on the trees, and now the hardened skins have split. The Gala and the Ambrosia hold the sun-damaged fruit and these have to be hand removed. As a third-generation farm, some blocks still have very low-density plantings; the large leafy canopies on these trees helped to protect the fruit. Overall, David says it looked like the orchard was starting to recover from the first heat wave and now with the second heat wave upon the orchard the growth is definitely slowing, "but who knows how the season will turn out," David says, grinning a big smile.

~ *David Dobernigg, The BX Press, Vernon*

Saving the Farm

By Marjorie Harris with story from Rob Vanderlip: Zaparango Organic Farm, Westwold

The farm was blanketed with thick smoke for weeks before the fire arrived. The last planting of potatoes was struggling and lanky with the sun for photosynthesis. After the fires, the potatoes grew like crazy with steady fire prevention irrigation, hot weather and lots of carbon dioxide, green growth for weeds and crops vigorously filling out the plants.

On Aug 5th Robert Vanderlip, his son Chelan and everyone else in Westwold were ordered to evacuate from the approaching out-of-control fire that had just left Monte Lake as scorched earth. Rob, 69 years old, and Chelan, 32, opted to stay and try to save the family farm by fighting the fires.

In Rob's own words he said "On Thursday, August 5th at 5pm the fire came over the forested mountain from Monte Lake like a locomotive engine barreling down his dried out native grass hayfield, then stopping at the green alfalfa and corn fields, to split east and



*Protecting the family home with irrigation.
Credit: Spray Creek Ranch.*

west back into the forest and down the railway tracks heading into the town of Westwold. The flock of 70 sheep, free ranging ducks and chickens crowded into the green pastures.”

Rob and Chelan sprung into action pulling the 200 gal Turbo-mist sprayer tank with the Massey 35 diesel tractor to hose-down the understory along the railway tracks and put out fires in the circuit around the farm. One hour into the firefight electric power was lost to pump water from the wells to fill the sprayer tank. Fortunately, one of the wells was located high enough upslope to gravity feed fill the sprayer tank and keep the livestock troughs constantly full with water. Fire crews from Alexis Creek arrived in two hours and the Kelowna fire department also responded by 10pm but there was no power to fill the fire crew tanks. Rob and Chelan had set up sprinklers, and by 4am they had succeeded in preventing fire from entering Westwold.

The Zaparango family farm lost a hydro pole, two tool sheds and thousands of dollars in tools on day one of the fire. The fire battle on the homefront lasted another seven or eight days. Rob and Chelan volunteered and then

were hired on by BC Wildfire service as guides for the roads and terrain of the fire suppression area.

Rob highly recommends that everyone keep gas generators with fuel on hand for emergency power. His 120-volt generator kept five freezers, three fridges and the fuel pump going throughout. A 240-volt generator was brought in on August 7th to power pumps for the two domestic wells to fill fire fighting water tanks.

Fire Evacuation

By Tristan Banwell, Spray Creek Ranch, Lillooet

As I steered my tractor through the corners on my biggest hayfield, the thermometer was showing temperatures in the high 40s and humidity below 10%. I watched an enormous pyrocumulus cloud form to the north as the McKay Creek Fire took hold. The following afternoon, smoke rapidly plumed to the south as our sister town of Lytton was devastated. The days that followed feel like weeks in my memory. The whole team shifted to fire prepa-



Smoke billows over a nearby mountain range at Solstedt Organics. Credit: Solstedt Organics.

rations—ensuring livestock were in safer locations, setting out water lines to protect structures, and clearing away flammable items. The farm crew displaced from Solstedt Organics in Lytton showed up the next night. (The Standard requires that organic farm evacuees relocate to another organic farm... Just kidding.) After just 36 hours came the 3am evacuation order—text alerts and officers knocking at the door. By 9am, 11 farm residents and several recently arrived evacuees were dispersing with beloved possessions to other safe locations, and I was left to plan, prepare and take care of the livestock.

Thankfully for us, the evacuation order was premature (better than late!) and the crew and family returned days later. I learned a lot from the experience. We went into this somewhat prepared—the buildings are fire-resistant, fuels in the forest are managed, most tools we need are around here...somewhere... But, all those wildfire plans are in my own head, depending on me to direct implementation. The farmstead looks different under threat of fire than it did the day prior, and we realized a lot more can be accomplished in advance. The tools need to be staged, the preparations need to be completed before the emergency, and the plans need to be on paper. We need backup power in case the grid goes down.

I learned that there is a network of support out there, but when you need those extra hands, it could be too late or unsafe. I also learned that although friends and family were concerned that I would be in danger from the fire itself, the risks I faced were familiar. Working alone. Operating machinery. Making decisions and

taking action while affected by fatigue and stress. It is crucial to take time to rest and recover, even when it feels that every moment counts.

In so many ways, we have been fortunate thus far through the difficult summer of 2021. Our creek-fed irrigation water is holding up. The wildfires throughout the Interior have not yet raged through our farmstead, pastures and range. The systems we have in place to protect our livestock from the intense heat have worked. Some of this is luck, some is good planning and preparation. Even as we build diversity and resilience into our agroecological systems and businesses, we always rely on a little bit of grace from Mother Nature. This season has been a good reminder that we must also prepare for moments when there may be none.”

Running on Fumes: Solstedt Organics

By Ashala Daniel, Solstedt Organics, Lytton BC

On June 30th, a CN train sparked just outside the town of Lytton, the closest town to my farm. Within half an hour, the town had burned to the ground. My land partner’s son had a place in town and raced to see if he could save anything but couldn’t even make it into town as there were propane tanks exploding and the whole town was on fire. That night, I sat in my pond and cried. For the town and for fear of that fire jumping the river and coming towards us.



*An erie orange sky at Fresh Valley Farm.
Credit: Fresh Valley Farm.*

We were evacuated from the west side on Thursday and I travelled to the city to deliver to restaurants and sell at the Trout Lake Farmers' Market. It was surreal being in the city, crying a lot, putting out a donation jar for Lytton, while back at the farm, the fire had indeed jumped the Fraser river and was burning just five miles south of the farm.

My husband travelled back to the farm on Sunday with me as locals had been fighting the fire for three nights and needed relief. BC Forestry had only just started to show up. A friend joined us and they joined the local crew fighting the fire at night while Forestry fought it during the day. I made food, irrigated my and my neighbour's farm and harvested. Again, it felt so pointless, but it was all I could do. A crew from New Brunswick showed up and were stationed at our fire for 14 days, evacuation orders were lifted and people started to return to the farm.

Since then, it has been a struggle with the Thompson-Nicola Regional District to travel roads to the highway, making our journey seven hours instead of four. The fire continues to burn and now First Nation communities south

of us have been evacuated. The Fraser Canyon is closed as I write this as the fire was getting very close to the highway and now, with torrential rain last night, a mudslide has made the highway unpassable. I may be forced to travel up to Lillooet and down the Sea-to-Sky highway when I go to the city this week. The Duffey Lake road is horrible and scary with a big cube van and most trips involve groups of people in their fast cars cutting me off in dangerous spots all the way.

I was talking to my neighbours this morning and we all agreed that we are running on fumes. Which isn't uncommon for farmers in the summer, but the added element of threat of fire for six weeks has really shattered all of us. It's hard being in the city and hearing people say "Oh, you're famous," when they know my farm is in Lytton. I know people don't know what to say around tragedy. But it's very hard to keep a smile on my face and make that person feel welcome in my booth at the farmer's market. I'm angry, I'm sad, I'm exhausted, I'm on edge, and I'm also so deeply grateful to still have my farm, my livelihood, and my home. 🌿

Marjorie Harris, IOIA VO and concerned organophyte.



*Chickens at UBC Farm.
Credit: Hannah Lewis.*

FIRE SEASON NEED-TO-KNOWS

By Emma Holmes

The BC Wildfire Service website has information on current wildfire activity, evacuation alerts and orders, wildfire preparedness information, and an interactive map, etc.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Fisheries (AFF) supports livestock relocation during emergencies. See website here for more information:

bit.ly/2WaiIMY

AFF supports Wildfire 2021 Emergency Feed Program that is meant to support commercial livestock businesses who due to wildfire activity cannot access their normal forage/feed supply:

bit.ly/37YhLZW

Feed Considerations

The Organic Standard outlines the clauses pertaining to the use of non-organic feed during a catastrophic event in CGSB-32.310, 6.4.7:

“If organic feed is unobtainable as the result of a catastrophic event with a direct impact on the production unit (for example, fire, flood, or extraordinary weather conditions), non-organic feed may be used for a maximum of ten consecutive days (or up to 30% non-organic feed for up to 30 consecutive days), to ensure a balanced livestock ration. Non-organic feed from land in transition to organic production and free of prohibited substances shall be used in preference to non-organic feed”

- When you move animals to a non-organic farm (in the event of an emergency), you can feed them complete non-organic feed for a 10-day period.

Steps an Organic Livestock Producer Needs to Follow to Maintain Organic Status in the Event of an Evacuation

1. Call operator's certifying body in advance (if possible) for guidance and to talk through plans.
2. Inform the Organics Industry Specialist that an organic operation is under evacuation alert. The Organics Industry Specialist can also call the certifying body on behalf of the producer if needed. Currently, the position is filled by Emma Holmes who can be reached at emma.holmes@gov.bc.ca or 250-241-1337.
3. Ideally, organic livestock would be able to find an organic buddy farm. Organic BC has a search tool that allows you to search organic operations by sector and region: organicsbc.org/findorganic. The Organics Industry Specialist can also help with this.
4. The primary concern to organic integrity is how the organic livestock are managed (feeding and treatments) with feeding being the biggest concern.

- After those 10 days, if you need to stay on that non-organic farm for a longer period, then you can feed the animals 30% non-organic feed (remainder must be organic) for 20 days.
- After that 20-day period, you can feed the animals 25% non-organic forage (remainder must be organic) if there is a documented forage shortage.
- Crown range or community pasture can be used without affecting the organic integrity provided that documentation confirms that the land has not been treated with prohibited substances for at least 36 months.
- Should a producer not be able to meet the above requirements, their animals will lose their organic status and will require a 1-year transition back to organic status. One caveat to this is that breeding stock can be fed non-organic feed and be transitioned back immediately to organic status once they begin eating organic feed again, but their nursing young and any offspring whose mother was fed non-organic feed in the last trimester will lose their organic status and will require 1-year transition period.

*BC has never experienced such widespread fires and feed shortages before. The Organic Standard was developed at a time when the above feed considerations for climatic events provided enough allowances for an organic operator to maintain their organic integrity. If an

operator is at risk of losing their organic certification due to feed shortages, please keep the Organics Industry Specialist in the loop as they are working closely with the Executive Director of Organic BC to support producers in maintaining their organic status during evacuations and unprecedented feed shortages.

Treatment Considerations

If the organic livestock should require treatment, those will need to be worked out on a case-by-case basis with the certifying body. 🌿

Emma Homes is the Organic Industry Specialist at the Ministry of Agriculture



*Smoke plumes above Solstedt Organics.
Credit: Solstedt Organics.*

Welcome to



ORGANIC BC



*Erin at Fierce Love Farm with carrot harvest.
Credit: Fierce Love Farm.*

By Stacey Santos

The Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC) is now officially Organic BC! In early July, we launched our new website and brand, and along with it, new opportunities for growth, collaboration, and inclusivity.

But before we get to that, let's talk about the journey and why we decided to undertake such a massive project—one that unexpectedly coincided with the onset of COVID-19 in our province, making it an exceptionally busy and challenging year!

The driving force behind the major change was the fact that our brand and website no lon-

ger accurately represented our organization. We outgrew them. They remained securely in place while we expanded, adapted, and continued to accomplish so many excellent things for our members and the organic sector.

And so, the journey began to create a fresh, revitalized, and inviting presence that truly reflects our community and our organization. In the spirit of COABC's grassroots origins, the Organic BC project was a team effort that brought together staff, members, and volunteers. It's not easy to build a new website from scratch along with a new brand, but our team really came together to navigate the challenges with experience, creativity, and a much-needed sense of humour.



A lush farmers market display at UBC Farm.
Credit: Hannah Lewis.

Deciding on a name was perhaps the easiest part of this project. Organic BC is a reflection of our vision, toward an organic British Columbia, and invites everyone, from organic farmers and farmers-to-be, to consumers and government, to be a part of our community. We worked with an amazing designer, Sandra Hanson, to bring our vision to life. Our logo font is vintage, a nod to our roots, and brings visual interest and a natural, earthy feel.

An important note on our new name: Organic BC is our public-facing brand. Currently, all accreditation activities, internal documentation from the Accreditation Board, and certification body documentation will remain as is and does not need to be updated from COABC to Organic BC. That said, if there are any references to COABC in logos, text, or links on your website/materials, please update those!

The new website, built by a Vernon-based web company, was created with community in mind, and features new tools for organic farmers, prospective organic farmers, consumers, and anyone looking to learn more about what it means to be organic. It connects users to educational events and job postings and offers the latest information and resources on organic agriculture, certification, and opportunities to get involved and help shape the sector.

We've spent the last couple of months settling into our new brand and website and are now focused on unleashing the potential of our

Stay Connected

We have heard that some of our emails have gone to people's spam folders. To ensure you keep getting important updates from us, please check that @organicbc.org email addresses are marked as safe.

hard work. We thank everyone for your support during this journey and we can't wait to take Organic BC to new heights!

We invite you to explore our website, get involved in the #thisisorganicbc community on social media, and celebrate with us as we continue to champion and advocate for a healthy, diverse and resilient food system. 🌱

organicbc.org


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Funding for Organic BC's website and online tools has been provided by the Governments of Canada and British Columbia through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.



*Brassica seeds in hand.
Credit: Thomas Buchan.*

Biodynamic **(It's Mentioned)** *Farm Story*

Dear Autumn Anna,

I am writing to you from the depths of a “do the best you can” sort of summer season, where the word “pleasant” is never used to describe the weather and the most relaxed you felt was at the 15-minute waiting period after the Moderna.

I, a very wilted version of yourself, am writing to you because I am yearning for your life, but I don't want you to forget about me. I am dreaming of a cool breeze and rain gear. I want to be at the other end of harvest. I can't wait for all the fires to be out, the heat waves to be over, the water restrictions lifted, and the flies dead.

I want to feel pleased with farming again. I want to be excited about a pending winter of farm study, potato selling, and project completion.

That's you, Autumn Anna. You are cool and accomplished. You are jazzed about winter markets and you might even have the garlic planted. You've probably taken care of all kinds of neglected odd-jobs and repairs. The sight (giddy at the thought) of rain falling on snow is close. Very close.

There is some work to be done, however, because of this summer's experiences. I am concerned that once comfortably bundled in long johns, you will saunter off into winter without sparing a further thought about what has transpired. While understandable, it would be a waste of a difficult experience.

Remember the heat dome and subsequent heat waves? No longer theoretical, this place is getting hotter. I don't for a second think it will be a steady, regular progression—next summer might be as cool and wet as last summer certainly was. However, now that the summer temperatures on the farm have hit 47 degrees, the door is open to do it again and now you know what to expect. You had better put some thought into it.

Your office and tool area in the new shed are in the path of the afternoon sun and unbearably hot: this needs to be remedied for next summer. Please don't forget. Additionally, seasonal workflow and productivity expectations could be heavily modified to make it possible to opt out entirely from work all afternoon, all summer. This is profound, obviously.

Here is the deal, girlfriend: you don't handle the heat very well. You get cranky, easily tired, and take a disappointingly pessimistic

view of farming life. You keep going, as you are able to work while uncomfortable, but I thought I should flag it here for future consideration. I am confident that Autumn Anna can be brought to love farming again and we both know that Late Winter Anna just can't wait to see those fields, but we need to be thoughtful. It might help to be specific: I suspect it's selling carrots and potatoes at afternoon markets with temperatures in the high 30s that causes problems. Here's a hot tip: don't do it. Further profundity.

Autumn Anna, you have made it through this summer because I did a few things right. I shed a limiting reluctance to swim with tadpoles, newts, frogs, and a surely remarkable array of water beetle species so that I could submerge in cool water. Luckily for us, the ducks didn't discover the location of the pond until the last heat wave broke.

I really stuck to my guns and curtailed the planting plan. I got carried away with the personal tomato greenhouse but callously and admirably plowed in the parsnips when they failed to germinate properly and didn't even attempt a celeriac crop. Practical decisions like this, the result of the previous winter's sober thought, made the watering program more manageable in a year when irrigation requirements were higher than ever before.

Very early one morning during the heat dome, I completed the biodynamic compost heap of cull potatoes by adding the six preparations of yarrow, chamomile, nettle, oakbark, dandelion, and valerian. The hay- and manure-covered mound has been sitting there in the hot sun for six weeks, and in a biodynamically-ironic twist, it is cool inside, not hot. It is well beyond our understanding of biodynamics to explain this.

Autumn Anna, I hope you are hearing rain as you read. I hope the carrot crop was satisfactory. I hope you are readying the seed potato catalogue and that you find an up-to-date email list in the excel file.

You have done your best, and it was good enough. Enjoy the process of falling in love with farming again.

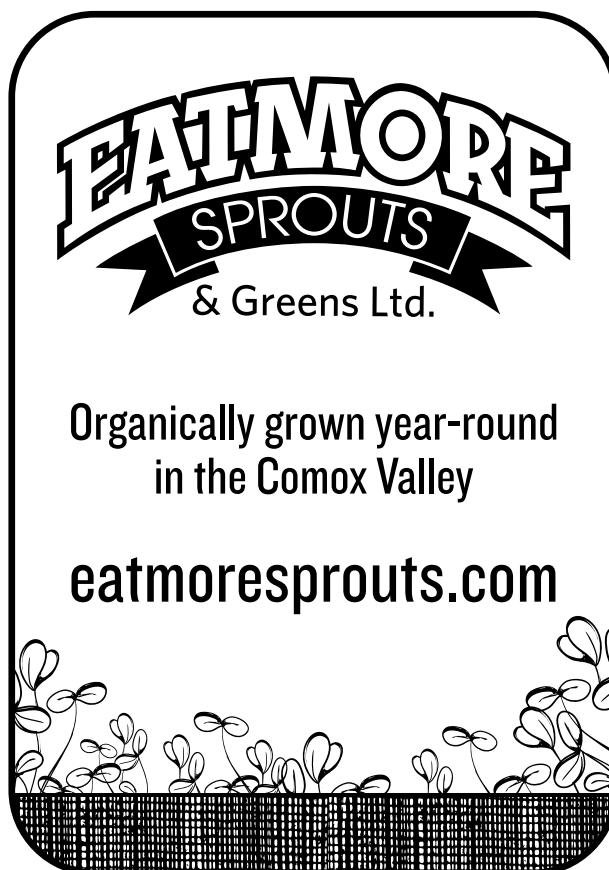
Anna Helmer farms with her family in Pمبرton, where her rudimentary biodynamic practices continue to inspire further study, wonder, and ironic ambition.



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Harvesting Wisdom

PROTECTING OUR LIFE-SOURCE



Credit: Abra Brynne

By Abra Brynne

Farmers fulfill a complex set of roles. You grow and raise food that nourishes others—some of whom you may meet and some you will not. You are also entrepreneurs with a vested and real interest in seeing your business survive and, better yet, thrive. When you add organics into this mix, it necessarily introduces additional complexity.

There are those who choose to become certified organic because it is a smart business decision based on what the farm produces and market opportunities. But, as someone who has been an active volunteer in the BC organic community since the mid-1990's, I am well aware that there are many who farm organically because you truly understand yourselves as stewards of the land you have the privilege to work. It is for this reason that you preserve riparian areas, bushy areas, and trees on the land even if it restricts the land available for cultivation. And many adopt practices to minimize disturbing the soil structures and the lives teeming under the surface, embracing no till practices without falling into the chemical trap that often accompanies no till.

The fact is, organic farmers have long been fully committed practitioners of climate-friendly

agriculture for decades before such a term was coined. When I look back over the years of my involvement with Organic BC, alongside the many passionate, knowledgeable and caring volunteers with the organization, myriad examples come to mind that justify this statement:

- The cyclical and fierce debates on the standards review committee over the inclusion of manure from conventional sources into compost;
- Andrea Turner, who was adamant that the full life-cycle, including harm at the production stage of pressure treated posts, needed to be understood and incorporated into the deliberations of the standards review committee;
- Wayne Harris hosting a rotational grazing workshop provided by E Ann Clark, formerly of the University of Guelph, with multiple farmers from the Creston Valley deeply engaged in the conversations about optimizing soil, field, and animal health simultaneously and symbiotically through careful management;
- The Reid brothers who led the battle to open the Chicken Marketing Board to specialty producers, including organic;
- Linda Edwards' brilliant guide on organic tree fruit production;

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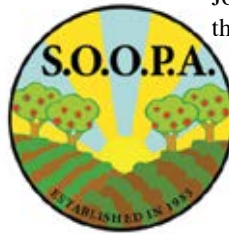
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- Rick and Vicky Llewellyn, who also went toe-to-toe with a marketing board and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in order to enable on-farm production of certified organic cheese;
- Hermann Bruns' longstanding practice of sharing the knowledge they have garnered over decades of trial and error on the farm he operates with his partner Louise;
- Tim and Linda Ewert who operate Wildwood Farm near Pouce Coupe exclusively on bona fide horsepower, including using the horses to grind their own feed;
- Mary Alice Johnson who over the years has mentored so many young people who have then gone on to have their own successful farm operations;
- The persistence of volunteer-based regional certifiers that provide accessible certification to area farmers; and
- The hundreds of certified organic farmers in BC who work year-in and year-out, through the vagaries of market and climate, to grow and raise certified organic foods while working to preserve and improve the land upon which they work.

Recognizing Indigenous Stewards

It is well established that the world's centres of biodiversity owe their existence to the stewardship of Indigenous peoples. I remember well the 2018 annual conference in Chilliwack at which several Indigenous Food Sovereignty leaders, including Dawn Morrison, spoke to packed rooms. BC organic farmers crowded in to learn more about Indigenous relationships to the land, their stewardship practices, and their work towards food sovereignty. The tensions with settler agriculture were also explored. While organic farmers perpetuate settler agriculture on the landscape, it is clear that there are areas of complementarity in the shared care for the land, the water, and all the species that contribute to the well-being of an ecosystem.

Youth Wisdom, Youth Voices

Scientists have persisted in their warnings about climate change over multiple decades, despite the fact that their words have fallen on uncaring ears for too long. One group that has needed less persuasion is the youth. In communities across our province, county, and around the world, youth are taking action. Many are so young they do not yet have the right to vote. Nevertheless, they are leading

awareness campaigns, engaging with political leaders, and using their voices to focus more attention on the urgent need for action.


It is both sad and ironic that our un-enfranchised youth are among the most vocal about the need to save our precious planet. Groups like Fridays for Future can be found in most communities.

They understand that it is their future at risk. The generations before them who have been a part of getting the planet to its present state owe them a debt that can never be fully repaid.

Acting Together

The wildfires that raged across BC again in the summer of 2021 are a stark reminder of how important it is that humanity more fully embrace climate friendly practices in all aspects of life. The August 2021 release of the International Panel on Climate Change report made it abundantly clear that we have run out of time to take real action in the face of the climate crisis.

Farmers for Climate Solutions, of which Organic BC is a member, was instrumental in the August announcement by the federal government of the On-Farm Climate Action Fund. The program promotes the widespread adoption of climate-friendly agricultural practices. It is high time for organic farming to become the dominant—"conventional"—approach to agriculture.

By learning from and uniting the voices and knowledge of organic farmers, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and climate scientists, we can help to shift how humanity lives on this precious planet. 

Abra Brynne grew up on a small tree fruit farm in Syilx Territory. She is a former co-chair of the Organic BC Standards Review Committee, a long-time volunteer with Kootenay Organic Growers Society, has sat on the Organic BC board, and was the founding certification committee chair for PACS. She has worked closely with farmers and on food systems for 30 years, with a priority on food value chains and the regulatory regimes that impede or support them. Abra is a founding member of many agriculture and food-related organizations. Since 2016, she has led the Central Kootenay Food Policy Council.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SET TO ABANDON ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

By Jim Robbins

The Canadian government is dropping funding for the review and interpretation of the Canadian Organic Standards (COS). The Standards must be updated every five years in order to remain relevant to evolving organic practice and in order to be useful in organic equivalency agreements with other countries.

Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (AAFC) did contribute significantly to the 2015 and 2020 reviews of the COS, but it has alerted the organic sector that it will not fund any future reviews and will insist that the organic industry pay for this mandatory process, a budget of over \$1M every five years. Moreover, Agriculture Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau has confirmed that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) will drop funding of the Standards Interpretation Committee, which has been funded since 2009 by the CFIA. This committee resolves disputes between certification bodies and organic operators, and prevents fraud and misinterpretation of organic practices.

Minister Bibeau visiting the organic greenhouse of Marc Schurman, the PEI representative on OFC Board.


AAFC claims that they support maintenance of assurance systems related to sustainability as they look to make industry more resilient and competitive, and that there is much to be drawn from the organic sector. They argue that they have funded projects submitted by organic organizations for market development, strengthening of organic supply chains, development of the National Organic Ingredient Strategy, and a few other projects over the past ten years.

However, without the COS, which is the skeleton of the whole organic industry, these contributions will have no future impact. A lapsed

Standard will not convince consumers to buy Canadian organic food, nor will it convince importers of organic food in other countries to buy Canadian; in fact, it will make it impossible.

American and European organic operators do not have to lobby their respective governments every five years for funding of the maintenance and enforcement of their organic standards. On the contrary, the United States Department of Agriculture directly funds the administration of their National Organic Program. The European Commission has a Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, which is responsible for developing and managing the European Union organic production framework, including an expert group for technical advice.

Organic agriculture is recognized as an efficient tool for reducing greenhouse gases, building soils, and enhancing biodiversity. Amid a summer of drought and fires threatening food production in many Canadian provinces, organic systems offer a method of reducing agriculture's impact on the environment while sustainably producing high quality food.

However, without an ongoing organic standard defining what organic production systems are, and without a fair enforcement mechanism protecting organic integrity, organic agriculture lacks the tools that it needs to maintain growth and provide the ecological services it is capable of producing. 

Jim is an organic producer from Delisle, Saskatchewan, growing field crops and raising cattle. He has been President of the Organic Federation of Canada since 2016.

*Photo: Seedlings at Amara Farm.
Credit: Michaela Parks*



*Spray Creek Ranch Cattle.
Credit: Small Scale Meat Producers Association.*

By Ava Reeve

Drive down any rural road in this province and you're sure to pass cattle on the range, a flock of sheep, or mobile pens for pastured poultry. Small-scale livestock production has a long tradition in BC, and has been reinvigorated in recent years with practices such as rotational grazing and regenerative agriculture that allow for significant meat production without industrial practices. Demand also seems to be growing for local and sustainable meats.

But are there really enough of these small producers to play a serious role in BC's economy today? And how much potential does this industry have for the future?

Associations representing commercial livestock producers collect data on their own members - those producing over 300 hogs with BC Pork, for example. Commodity producers also enjoy the benefits of their association's advocacy, and commerce support from marketing boards.

Meanwhile, producers selling directly to consumers, raising multiple livestock species, or simply operating at a smaller scale have lacked a collective voice in provincial conversations about agricultural policies. And little is known about the current scale and potential capacity of these producers.

The Small-Scale Meat Producers Association (SSMPA) aims to address both of these issues. In spite of a diversity of livestock types and sizes of operations, the organization says that its members are united by operating without the supports of the existing commodity associations or marketing boards.

SSMPA was established by a group of farmers and ranchers in 2017, and its membership now includes representation from all livestock sectors. "The Small-Scale Meat Producers Association represents British Columbia farmers and ranchers who are raising meat outside of the conventional, industrial system," reads the SSMPA website home page.

This might include a pork producer raising 200 hogs per year, and all poultry producers



Credit: Small Scale Meat Producers Association.

who sell direct to consumer. It can also include cow-calf operations that process a few cull cows for sale to friends and neighbours, even if they otherwise primarily sell at auction.

It has also succeeded in becoming recognized in consultations and conversations with the BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, such as in the development of changes to on-farm slaughter licencing that the province recently announced.

Julia Smith of Blue Sky Ranch near Merritt is the President of SSMIPA. “We’re happy with the regulatory changes,” she says of the announcement. But, she notes, “There’s more work to be done to build a thriving small-scale meat industry.”

Including Smith, SSMIPA’s founding members were selling their meat products directly to members of their communities, rather than

“ We have so many people who want to enter this industry. Imagine the impact if these producers will have a fair chance at success.”



Suckling piglets. Credit: Small Scale Meat Producers Association.

through a marketing board or distributor, and feeding communities in the process. And their experience was that their industry was growing.

Smith raises a rare heritage breed of hog as well as a small herd of cattle on pasture. Selling directly has helped her see better margins than many commercial producers, where processors and retailers realize the lion’s share of the profit.

The demand for her product has been enough to enable Smith to grow her operation, from raising just two pigs in her first year, to running a farrow-to-finish operation with fourteen sows and two boars just four years later. She has supplied meat and other farm products to hundreds of British Columbians and currently has a waitlist for both meat and breeding stock.

Smith says this experience is repeated across the province. “We know that a small-scale operation can contribute to food security and the local economy. What we don’t know is the cumulative potential of producers like this

spread all over the province - or their specific barriers to reaching that potential.”

She says information like this hasn’t been available because the right questions weren’t being asked. This summer, SSMPA launched a comprehensive survey of meat producers. She says the resulting information will help the organization define its policies and priorities to support these producers moving forward.

The province seems to agree that the industry has promise; many of the new changes to the slaughter regulations had been advocated for by SSMPA for years. Smith believes the number of producers that could be affected by policies like this is in the thousands. And they should all be giving their two cents to SSMPA.

“Everyone who processes at a provincially-inspected abattoir or on-farm should be participating in this survey,” she says. “Tell us: What is your path to growth? What obstacles do you need to overcome in order to reach your goals?”

At Blue Sky Ranch, Smith’s own goal was to produce just under 300 hogs per year. But the operation met with processing roadblocks at 125 hogs.

“We’re not the only operation that isn’t reaching its full capacity,” says Smith. “SSMPA is using the survey to document this. We want to know what would happen if we could create the conditions for successful operations across the province. For example, how many abattoirs would need to be built before producers could book the slaughter dates they need, with enough reliability to scale their businesses?”

“We’re connecting the dots, but without data to prove our case we won’t get the resources and support to let our industry thrive.”

Smith emphasizes that this survey is an independent project. “SSMPA is a producer-led organization and our mandate is to look out for producers,” she says. “We’ve gone to great lengths to protect the anonymity of survey participants and we will not be sharing survey responses or any other raw data with government, or anyone else.”

For an added incentive SSMPA connected with BC-based fencing company FenceFast, which has offered a \$25 discount to every current producer who participates. Smith says Fence-

Fast recognized the potential. “Really, this is just an example of the ripples of impact that can come from growing a locally-based industry like this.”

She adds, “We might be surprised at the opportunities being squandered because of challenges that are within our capacity to address. Even producers might be taken aback. We hope that there will be findings in our report that invigorate and inspire producers with a vision of what could be possible. We have so many people who want to enter this industry. Imagine the impact if these producers will have a fair chance at success.”

The survey is open until September 10, 2021 and can be accessed at smallscalemeat.ca/survey or it can be completed over the phone by appointment at 250-999-0296. SSMPA can also be reached at info@smallscalemeat.ca.

SSMPA is conducting regional focus groups in mid-September to dig deeper into potential solutions to the problems identified through the survey. By early 2022 they will be releasing a report on their findings, and announce how they will ensure that their own programming is geared to meet the needs of its membership. 🌿

Producers - and all supporters of local and sustainable meat production - are invited to join SSMPA by signing up at:

smallscalemeat.ca/membership

Ava Reeve is the Executive Director of the Small-Scale Meat Producers Association, where she gets to pursue her passion for the sustainable practices that result in a high quality of life for both livestock and people.



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Children playing at Forstbauer Farm.
Credit: Thomas Buchan.

... *Let's Hold Hands*, continued from page 6

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Natalie Forstbauer, is the founder and editor-in-chief of Heart & Soil Magazine. She is a TEDx speaker, author, organic/biodynamic farmer and traumatic brain injury (TBI) survivor. She is passionate about human potential and seeing people live their best lives. Raised on an organic farm, trained in Polarity Therapy, alternative medicine, Neurofeedback and Transformational Leadership she brings a wealth of knowledge and life experience to her audiences.

heartandsoilmagazine.com

Fairness as **MIGRANT JUSTICE**



Credit: Fuerza Migrante.

By Susanna Klassen

The organic sector has many roots, and has been strengthened by a diversity of movements and ideas. Though rarely acknowledged, the sector was given a significant boost in the late 1960s when hundreds of thousands of Mexican farm workers mobilized millions of consumers in the United States to boycott the conventional grapes and lettuce they were working to produce.¹ The boycotts were organized by the United Farm Workers under the leadership of Dolores Huerta, Cesar Chavez, and others, in collaboration with allies like

the Black Panther Party. The protest was a response to the hazardous working conditions caused by unsafe applications of toxic pesticides. This was around the same time that the organic food movement was starting to gain traction among both farmers and consumers, and the boycotts bridged struggles for farm worker justice with the interests of health and social justice-minded consumers—a boon for the organic market in North America.²

We often hear about the influence of organic pioneers, such as Sir Albert Howard, and how their commitment to soil health helped

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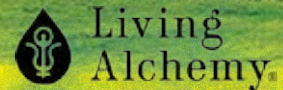
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¹COTA, "The Canadian Organic Market: Trends and Opportunities 2017", November 2017

shaped the organic sector. However, there are other movements, including the struggles for justice and labour by agricultural workers, without which organic agriculture would not be what it is today. The Canadian organic sector is anchored to some of these social justice roots through the organic principle of “Fairness,” which includes explicit reference to farm workers, and is “characterized by equity, respect, justice, and stewardship of the shared world, both among people and in their relations to other living beings.”³ But, despite the inclusion of the Fairness principle in the introduction to the Canadian Organic Standards, the standards themselves do not contain a single requirement relating to social fairness, including for workers.

Today, the wellbeing of farm workers has once again been elevated in the public consciousness. The devastating impacts of COVID-19 shone a light on many of the ugliest parts of our food system, including insufficient access to protective equipment, deadly incidence of disease, and xenophobia experienced by essential farm workers, many of whom are racialized migrants.⁴ The climate crisis also continues to threaten the health and safety of farm workers—look at the recent heat wave in the Pacific Northwest—and has already been deadly.⁵

Migrant workers are uniquely vulnerable due to their precarious and temporary status in Canada. Since migrant workers’ ability to work and remain in the country is tied to a single employer, they cannot easily leave unjust, abusive, or dangerous working conditions the way that workers with residency or citizenship status can. Despite regulations that are meant to guarantee minimum standards and conditions of employment, migrant workers’ access to these limited rights and benefits is effectively curbed by the risks associated with exerting them. Meanwhile, poor enforcement and follow up by regulatory bodies means that employers often break rules and cut corners at the expense of workers.

While not all organic farms hire paid workers, increasingly, more labour-intensive organic farms do hire temporary foreign workers through either the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), or the Primary Agriculture stream of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). While we don’t know how many migrant workers are employed on organic farms, we know that organic farms in Cana-

da use more labour than conventional farms in general. There is not good data specific to migrant labour on organic farms, but preliminary analyses of a survey I conducted of BC vegetable growers and publicly available data suggest that organic farms utilize migrant farm workers at a rate that is similar to conventional farms.

Numbers aside, it is clear that organic farms are not exempt from the structural inequities faced by migrant farm workers. Instances of abuse, neglect and unfair treatment of migrant workers have been documented on organic farms in Canada. These include several complaints of underpaid wages and poor conditions at Golden Eagle Blueberry Farm in BC, or the tragic death of two migrant workers at Filsinger’s Organic Foods & Orchards in Ontario. While these examples may seem extreme, many experts have pointed out that unfair conditions for migrant workers are not the result of a few “bad apples,”⁶ but rather a system that disempowers and devalues migrant workers in favour of a flexible and dependable labour force.⁷

In recognition of these realities, and the lack of any requirements in the Canadian organic standards to enact the organic principle of “Fairness,” several organic community members have been asking what can be done to improve fairness in organics as it relates to labour. These efforts have included a petition to the organic standards review process for social fairness standards put forward by Organic BC’s own Anne Macey, in collaboration with Janine Gibson and Marion McBride.⁸ While these proposed standards were not voted on by the Technical Committee (which governs the standards revision process) in the 2020 revision process, the committee has committed to discussing it again in 2025.⁹ Additionally, several directors of the Organic Federation of Canada are already working on revising the proposed social fairness standards, which include but are not limited to standards relating to farm workers.

Another approach to embodying the principle of fairness, however, is to look to migrant workers and migrant advocacy organizations themselves and ask how the organic community could contribute to migrant justice demands in Canada. Together with other experts and advocates, and in light of exacerbated inequities caused by COVID-19, these groups


have called on the federal and provincial governments for structural changes to the TFWP, including:

1. Regularized/resident status for all migrants upon arrival and an end to repatriations ;
2. Granting of open work permits to migrants;
3. Improved protections and benefits;
4. Improved procedures to follow-up on complaints from workers;
5. Stronger mandates and supports for employers;
6. Improved inspection regimes;
7. Improved access to information for workers; and,
8. Improved representation of migrant organizations in planning and implementation of supports.^{10,11}

Another important issue that has been raised by groups like Fuerza Migrante (including during a session about Fairness and Solidarity with Migrants at the 2020 COABC conference) is the lack of worker voices in, and knowledge about, their own employment contracts. It is important to note that the changes that migrants and migrant advocacy organizations are seeking are much broader than the organic sector, and most are focused on structural and systemic changes to the temporary foreign worker programs, including how they are regulated and governed.

The theme and purpose of this fall issue to “harvest wisdom” from beyond the BC organic sector presents a valuable opportunity to contemplate how the organic community fits into a larger landscape of demands for change within and adjacent to the food system. Aided in part by the values-based grounding to the principle of Fairness, it seems that the organic community has made progress towards viewing labour generally, and migrant workers specifically, as inherently part of organic agriculture. But as of yet, migrant justice demands (including improved representation of migrant justice organizations in planning and decision-making) are not yet centred in the sector’s approach to Fairness.

Perhaps the sector can continue to explore what can be done to achieve Fairness through organic standards in addition to considering how they might advance migrant justice priorities. Treating migrant justice as the core of

the Fairness principle seems like a good place to start. 

fuerzamigrante.ca/en/

Susanna is a PhD Candidate at the University of British Columbia. Her PhD research is about the contributions of organic agriculture to food system sustainability with a focus on labour and agroecological diversification. This article draws from a collaboration with Fuerza Migrante, a migrant worker collective, and a forthcoming publication by Susanna, Fuerza Migrante, and Hannah Wittman called “Sharing the Struggle for Fairness: Exploring the Possibilities for Solidarity & Just Labour in Organic Agriculture.”

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- ⁷For a more in-depth article about temporary foreign worker programs and the organic sector, see the following piece from the BC Organic Grower by Robyn Bunn, Elise Hjalmarson, and Christine Mettler, collective members of Radical Action with Migrants in Agriculture (RAMA) Okanagan: bcorganicgrower.ca/2017/04/temporary-migrant-farm-workers-in-bc/
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