



September 25th 2012

ORGANIC TUESDAY

Canada celebrates the Organic Week!

Canadian associations and stakeholders are sharing information about Organic Week activities; the complete list can be consulted at www.organicweek.ca

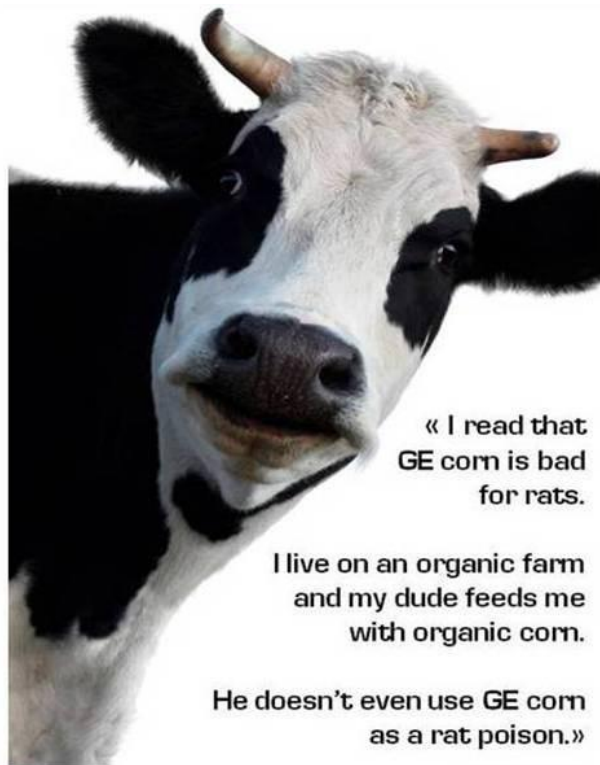
To read the press release issued by COTA, [click here](#).

ACORN presents the list of activities in Atlantic Canada: [Click here](#)

COABC is also promoting [interesting activities](#). The Organic Week is promoted under [Semaine Bio](#) in Quebec.

The OFC presents today an interview with Dave Lockman, Certification Manager and Processor Certification Coordinator at ProCert.

Lockman is an agronomist who graduated from Guelph University and holds a Master's degree in Business Administration of Agrifood from Laval University. He speaks his mind as a Canadian Certification Body about the Canadian organic system.



« I read that
GE corn is bad
for rats.

I live on an organic farm
and my dude feeds me
with organic corn.

He doesn't even use GE corn
as a rat poison.»

Organic is non-gmo!
Organic Federation of Canada
www.organicfederation.ca



Fixing clear rules for organic trade and production

A Canadian CB speaks his mind

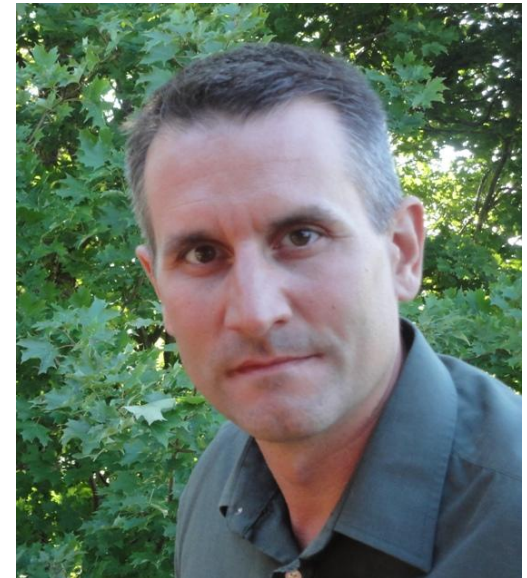
By Nicole Boudreau

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Dave Lockman likes rules that are clear and well applied. As a CFIA Accredited CB, his job is not to compromise or bend directives to serve the organic operator. Instead, it is to make sure that the organic operator being inspected abides by the rules and complies with the regulations of the Canadian Organic Standards.

Lockman, who was hired by ProCert in 2007, feels that the Canadian Organic Standards are workable and quite easy to apply. He also likes the latest version of the Operating Manual (v14) published by the COO on June 20, 2012. "There are a few minor problems but the COS are easy enough to work with. The problem that we have in Canada," says Lockman, "is rather linked to understanding the implementation of the system, not the wording of the COS."

According to Lockman, "The Canadian system still lacks some uniformity. Though we have a central office such as the Canada Organic Office, the monitoring of the CBs is performed by four Conformity Verification Bodies (CVBs) that have a different interpretation of the OPR and the COS. So when those CVBs are auditing the CBs they are recommending to the CFIA for accreditation, they can make different decisions about the CB's certifying practices.



In a way, the US National Organic Program is simpler: the NOP manages the organic standard, accredits the CBs and monitors the market. All the operators are subject to the same rules applied in a fairly consistent way. Although, there is no such thing as a perfect system, consistency in Canada will come with time. The COO Manual is a good tool that will help achieve uniformity at all levels."

Concerned about the need to protect the operators and promote organic production in Canada, Lockman is also a bit wary about the agreements that Canada signed with the EU and the USA. "The arrangements do make life easier by only having to worry about the COS. However, Canadian operators must be made aware that importing countries, such as the European Union, may have specific "quality criteria", such as maximum levels of pesticide residues and GMOs that can be imposed without being explicitly stated in the equivalency arrangement. It means that certification to the Canadian

Organic Regime (COR) does not guarantee the access to the export market. Exporters must be aware of the quality requirements of the country they intend on exporting to.”

The EU will soon publicize the acceptable levels for each type of pesticide tested in organic products. In the meantime, however, organic products from Canada are regularly quarantined during export to the EU when tested positively for pesticides: buyers, certifiers and government officials require explanations when they detect pesticide residues. Some exporters will decertify the organic products and lose the organic premium to avoid storage fees; others will decide to fight, performing further tests to show no pesticide residues, as many pesticides are volatile and levels can dissipate over time or results vary from lab to lab and sampling protocols. Testing guidelines are already in place in the United States and it is also expected that a mandatory organic product testing program will be in place by 2013 or 2014.. The United States is proposing to require certifying bodies to sample and conduct testing from a minimum of five percent of operations they certify.

“Testing is always problematic, and very costly,” Lockman states. “Random and targeted testing are meant to be used as a deterrent to fraudsters.”

Testing can also be perceived as unfair as GMOs and pesticide residues caused by drift or commingling from conventional agricultural practices still brings the issue of levels back to the table. “Canada has no levels for GMOs or pesticide residues. Even if CBs in Canada do testing, what do they comply with? There is no threshold in Canada. We will sooner or later need to adopt thresholds which are comparable to our trading partners; otherwise Canadian organic products may not be welcomed on international markets. As a consequence, Canadian products could be subject to testing when they cross the border and will have greater chances to be refused. That is not fair for Canadian exporters.”

Lockman pleads for a better support mechanism, such as a good interpretation of the standards and the OPR. He feels that the the Canadian Standards Interpretation Committee will continue to do a very good job by sticking to the standard, rather than being tempted to state what the standard should be. “We all have our own idea on what it should be. Now that the standards are written into law (OPR), we must focus on understanding what is actually written. ” He is not too concerned by the 200 items on the work list of the CGSB Committee on Organic Agriculture. “The standards are quite clear in general. People add items to the work list because they want changes or because they feel that some of the organic practices stated are unfair compared with other countries’ standards Canada has trade arrangements with.”

Should the COS be changed to be closer to other countries standards? According to Lockman, “If an equivalency arrangement is in place with another country, then it would only make sense that the standards be harmonized as much as possible in order for trade to be as fair as possible. However, should matters of trade influence organic principles? That would be up to the Committee on Organic Agriculture to decide.”

Lockman certainly hopes that the Canadian government will support organic agriculture and allocate the management tools that are needed to harmonize and monitor the Canadian organic production. “The last thing we need is a poorly funded organic program.”

**Why Organic?
Because it is better
trying to work with
nature than against it.
It's only natural!**

Dave Lockman