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THE ORGANIC FEDERATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

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GE Alfalfa Not Commercialized Yet but the Organic Sector is not Reassured

GE alfalfa is not yet appearing on the [List of Varieties with Novel Traits](#) and Their Progeny which are registered in Canada

The Canadian Seed Trade Association (CSTA) is expressing concerns about GE alfalfa. In a message to OFC, Ms Patty Townsend, the Executive Director of CSTA, states that CSTA's Board has made coexistence planning a high priority for the Association.

"Because of our diverse membership, we believe it is our responsibility to try to develop and implement plans that will ensure that our members, and the farmer customers that they serve, to choose the production system that best suits their businesses and their markets, whether it is organic, conventional or production systems that employ products of biotechnology."

But she adds that CSTA is not privy to the decision making processes of the commercializing company.

Agronomic research is taking place in Eastern Canada to determine suitability and demand of the product and the commercializing company, [Forage Genetics International](#), claims that "there will be no commercialization without a coexistence plan developed by the Eastern alfalfa hay value chain".



In a letter sent to CSTA, the OFC states that, being an important facet of the Canadian economy and cultural mosaic, organic agriculture must be protected. OFC expresses also concerns about the outcomes, should GE alfalfa be proven to contaminate organic fields. The stakes are very high as GM alfalfa could ultimately mean the loss of organic certification for many farmers as well as the destruction of public trust in the organic brand.

"We sincerely desire to work together to preserve all the tools necessary for a diverse and sustainable Canadian agricultural sector", concludes Ted Zettel, in OFC letter to CSTA.

The *Union des producteurs agricoles* rejects GM Alfalfa

The Quebec *Union des producteurs agricoles* (Quebec Farmers Association) adopted a motion last December 6th asking to the Federal government not to accept the commercialization of GM alfalfa. [Click here](#) to read the full motion.



Organics: Past, Present and Future

OFC AGM in Vernon in February 2013

OFC will hold its Annual General Assembly in Vernon, BC, to participate to the celebration of [COABC 20th anniversary](#).

The BC organic sector is certainly an inspiration for the Canadian stakeholders and OFC is honored to be invited in Vernon. More info to come!

National Brand Name Directory Project

OFC signed an MOU with [Peppersoft](#) to manage the National Brand Name Directory Project. There is still a lot of work to do but in the meantime, if you are a manufacturer of inputs that are acceptable in Canadian organic production, you can contact [Bill Huneke](#). More info to come!

The Organic Science Cluster II: Work in Progress

The [Organic Science Cluster II](#) is underway! With the precious support of the OSC II Steering Committee, OACC has selected 56 research projects presented in 7 provinces, involving 18 research institutions, plus AAFC researchers, and covering all scopes of organic agriculture, from soil to field crops to vegetable, insect and diseases, livestock and many other fields, including organic aquaculture. Those 56 submissions are accepted/conditionally accepted and upon the completion of the full proposal, they will be peer reviewed by scientists before being definitively incorporated in the OSC II and funded by AAFC if the industry is also supporting financially the projects to a maximum of 33%.

Q&As from last Comment Period transferred to Archives

Very few comments were issued about the [Q&As posted for public comment](#) in the October-December 2012 period. All Q&As except Q 131 have been transferred to the [SIC Final Q&As](#). Another comment period will be open in January.

Pesticide Residues Should Organic be Tested?



Articles were published in the National Post and in Kelowna Daily Courier about the pesticide residue testing issue. On a harsh and discrediting tone, a freelance “writer”, named Misha Popoff, claims that organic products should be tested. Suspicious of the Canadian organic system, he associates the organic logo to some kind of fraudulent claim that anyone can apply if papers are correctly filled. Canadian organic producers and stakeholders do not agree.

The [Organic Standards](#) and [Regulations](#) are public documents. Accredited Certifying Bodies are listed on the [CFIA website](#). The [Standards Interpretation Committee](#) answers unclear issues. And, as Irena Ivankovic, who graduated in Food Politics and Environment at York University, puts it in the December issue of [Discourse Magazine](#) (p.30), “An organic farm must be able to show through invoices and properly documented paperwork how, when, where and what was done on the farm. (...) To cheat, spray or apply prohibited substances such as pesticides and to hide it successfully from the inspectors is not very likely... It takes years to switch from conventional to organic and to start turning a profit, so farmers who have transitioned would not dream of risking their certification.” These are not arguments that were raised in the newspapers that seem to dedicate more space to superficial ideas than choosing to really assess what reality is. Should the Canadian organic sector decide to have more residue testing, the presence of trace residues would surely mean one clear thing: buy more organic food! If pesticides are even present on products diligently grown without their use, it means that the overall pesticide load in the environment is really too high. Organic agriculture is one of the main practices that will help reduce the overall pesticide presence.

Happy Holiday!

