



THE ORGANIC FEDERATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

February 2014

## Headlines

**Q&A on issues related to the Canadian Organic Standards**

- + Organic sector invited to submit requests for modifications to the Canadian Organic Standards (COS)**
- + Survey - Organic Certification for Small-Scale Operations**
- + Monsanto promises not to sue farmers for inadvertent contamination**
- + Pesticide residues: the organic industry blamed for contamination caused by agrochemical agriculture?**
- + Agenda – OFC AGM – February 28 in Barrhead, Ab**

Reminder – Comment period

## Q & A on issues related to the Canadian Organic Standards

- **Are herbicidal soaps allowed under the Standard?**
- **When calculating summer ration for ruminants, can pasture be considered “long-fiber forage”?**
- **Revised answer to the following question: Can conventional straw be used as a compost feedstock for compost that is used to grow organic mushrooms?**

The Organic Standards Interpretation Committee (SIC) provides interpretive guidance to the Canada Organic Office on issues related to the National Standards for Organic Agriculture (CAN/CGSB 32.310 and CAN/CGSB 32.311). [Click here](#) to see the proposed answers to various questions raised by organic stakeholders, regarding the National Standards for Organic Agriculture.

**The proposed responses are subject to a 60-day comment period from December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013 to February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014.**

All comments regarding these answers should be sent to [OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca](mailto:OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca)

### Archives - Final Questions and Answers

All final questions and answers will be posted on the [OFC website](#) (as a pdf).



## Organic sector invited to submit requests for modifications to the Canadian Organic Standards (COS)

The [Review of the COS](#) is underway, and it is exhaustive: all sections of the [organic standards](#) have to be revised. The review exercise will take 2 years, and the objective is to publish the fully revised standard in 2015. After holding their [first meeting](#) to address issues already listed on the permanent work list, the members of the [Technical Committee](#) and the [Conveners of the Working groups](#), who are responsible for the review of the standard, are ready to hear the sector's concerns.

Requests for modifications to the COS should be made in case of one of the following:

- 1) The meaning of a paragraph is vague and the wording open to several valid but conflicting interpretations. The intent of the paragraph needs to be clarified and the language changed to spell out what is intended.
- 2) Different paragraphs seem to conflict and lead to different conclusions.
- 3) The industry has evolved, such that a section that had been included is no longer relevant, or an issue has emerged that was not envisioned earlier but now needs to be regulated.
- 4) The requirement for compliance is grossly inconsistent with what is required in the USA or EU, creating an unfair competitive environment.

Before submitting your request, please consult the [Final Q&As](#) section issued by the Canadian Standards Interpretation Committee (SIC), as these interpretations may provide some clarification. If you are not satisfied with the SIC interpretations, please complete the attached Revision Proposal Form, which can also be downloaded by [clicking here](#).

Please make sure to describe the modification that you are proposing in detail, and provide adequate background information. Without this basic information, your request cannot be considered by the Working Groups or the Technical Committee.

**Deadlines:** The Canadian General Standards Board can receive requests for modifications at any time. However, we invite you to forward your request **before March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014**, to ensure that it is addressed under the current review project.

**[Visit OFC's website](#) to read more about the COS Review  
or contact us if you have questions!**



## Survey - Organic Certification for Small-Scale Operations

Why organic businesses do and don't certify?  
Are there ways that organic certification could be designed that would serve better small scale operations?  
Would your business benefit from being certified organic?

A Working Group, the Working Group on Small Scale Organic Certification, has been mandated by OFC to identify the barriers to certification and come up with proposals to create a certification process that is workable and attractive to small local organic farmers and businesses.

We invite you to help us by answering the questions of our survey – [click here](#) to reach the survey and let us what you think and what you propose. If you have questions, please contact [Tony McQuail](#), the WG Convener.

## Monsanto promises not to sue farmers for inadvertent contamination

January 13. The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday declined to hear an appeal by organic farmers and others seeking to require Monsanto Co to promise never to sue farmers if their fields inadvertently have plants containing the company's patented genetically modified traits.

This case was filed against Monsanto by the Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (OSGTA) and over 80 other plaintiffs seeking legal protection in case of their products were inadvertent contaminated by the company's products.

Monsanto's supposed promise not to sue farmers whose crops contained traces of the company's biotechnology products convinced the Supreme Court not to accept the case filed by the OSGTA and other plaintiffs.

The OFC contacted Monsanto Canada to know if this promise, which was posted on their [US website](#) under the section "Just Plain False - Myth: Monsanto Sues Farmers When GMOs or GM Seed is Accidentally in Their Fields", would apply in Canada.

**Trish Jordan, Public and Industry Affairs Director at Monsanto Canada Inc, replied that "Monsanto has never sued a farmer when trace amounts of our patented seeds or traits were present in a farmer's field accidentally or as a result of inadvertent means – (and that) was first developed and adhered to in Canada... We continue to regularly share and communicate that commitment to anyone who asks. So, yes – the same commitment very much applies in Canada and we have never sued a farmer for accidental or inadvertent presence, nor would we ever do that."**

Ms Jordan also commented that ... "The number of organic farms, the number of organic growers and I believe the overall production of organics – certainly the sale of organic foods – has increased in the exact same time

*period as the massive proliferation in acres planted to GM crops. That, to me, is the best evidence that organic and GM production methods can – and are – both thriving together.”*

Last year, the Canadian Seed Trade Association (CSTA) released a coexistence plan for the GM and organic sectors ([click here](#) to download the plan). However, the CSTA clearly declines all liability for any problems that may arise when their plan is implemented. The plan has been [criticized](#) by the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network as being limited and unrealistic.

The organic sector is facing a number of contamination risks from GM seed being disseminated by the wind, transported in running water and spilled in and around fields . Nature does not segregate what it blows and coexistence will remain extremely hard to manage.

**The Organic Federation of Canada will hold  
its Annual General Meeting on  
Friday, February 28th, from 4:00 to 6:00, MST**

at the Conference Room of the [Barrhead Neighbourhood Inn](#),  
6011 49 St, Barrhead, AB T7N 1A5 (Agenda in Appendix)

## **Pesticide residues: the organic industry blamed for contamination caused by agrochemical agriculture?**



[A number of reports from CBC](#) have recently revealed positive results when organic products were tested for pesticide residues. The onus of the contamination was put on organic practices, and the CFIA’s management of the Organic Products Regulations. The main conclusion from this series of papers seemed to be that organic products are not as “pure” as people would have expected, even if organic producers are applying practices that are annually inspected.

Many organic stakeholders have been contacted by the press to tentatively explain the presence of pesticide residues on organic food, but we have not heard of any conventional farmers being contacted to explain why their chemical inputs can be found in water, air, soil and equipment.

Neither do we hear about the degradation of the chemical inputs used in conventional agriculture: pesticide breakdown “may take anywhere from hours or days to years, depending on environmental conditions and the chemical characteristics of the pesticide” ( [BC Ministry of Agriculture](#)). So while pesticide use is intensive enough that natural breakdown processes do not suffice to eliminate them, organic farmers are being blamed for the residues found in trace amounts on their produce.



## Appendix

### Agenda - OFC AGM

## Annual General Meeting of the Organic Federation of Canada

**Friday, February 28th, 4pm to 6pm, Mountain Standard Time,**  
at the Conference Room of the [Barrhead Neighbourhood Inn](#),  
6011 49 St, Barrhead, AB T7N 1A5

1. Convene and introductions – Roll call of the member delegates and sector participants
2. Adoption of Agenda.
3. Appointment of referee for the minutes.
4. Adoption of minutes of AGM 2012-2013.
5. Report from the President.
6. AGM Special Event– The Alberta Organic Sector
  - a. Sustainability of the Alberta organic sector;
  - b. Facing GMO contamination;
  - c. Lack of intra-provincial rules: impact on the Alberta sector
7. Reports on Projects:
  - OFC General Management and Communication
  - Review of the Canadian Organic Standards Report
  - Organic Science Cluster Report
  - Standards Interpretation Committee Report
  - [Organicinputs.ca](#) – National Organic Input Brand Name Directory
8. OFC Financial Report 2012-2013; appointment of the auditor.
9. Designation of directors (voting and ex-officio)
10. Domestic issues – Next AGM
11. Varia
12. Adjourn

Come and join us!

[info@organicfederation.ca](mailto:info@organicfederation.ca)

[www.organicfederation.ca](http://www.organicfederation.ca)

