

April 2014

Review of the Canadian Organic Standards

Second Technical Committee meeting - Vancouver, April 14th-16th, 2014

The [Technical Committee \(TC\)](#) on Organic Agriculture will meet in Vancouver, from April 14th to 16th, to continue considering the recommendations proposed by the Working Groups (WGs). The [Working Groups](#) responsible for analyzing the modification requests submitted by the organic sector have been very active, and will be presenting 156 recommendations to the members of the TC.

All sections of the organic standard will be covered. Jean Duval will present the Crop Working Group's recommendations regarding the 27 requests to modify the crop production section. Parallel production and treated posts will be brought back to the table for further discussion. Section 8, "Preparation and Handling of Organic Products," is the subject of 12 modification requests, and the Working Group led by Rochelle Eisen will be proposing a complete rewording of sections 8 and 9.

69 requests relate to the Permitted Substances Lists, and the PSL Crop WG, led by Maureen Bostock, will present a new version of Table 4.2.

The PSL Livestock WG, led by Janine Gibson, will present new substances for livestock healthcare, based on their consultation with Rodale Institute expert Dr Hubert Karreman. Roxanne Beavers will present the WG recommendations relating to organic food processing; organic processors are very creative, and 30 requests will be assessed.

The Livestock WG, which is led by Anne Macey, will be presenting 48 recommendations. Anne kindly answered some questions and shared some reflections about her work in the revision process.

As the Convener of the Livestock WG, you had a mandate to address over 80 items from the permanent Work List where all requests from the sector are compiled. Are the requests about a lack of clarity of the written standard or about the introduction of new practices?

It's a mixture. Some are about lack of clarity. Ideally the standard should be clear enough that there is no need for anyone to send questions to the Standard Interpretation Committee. Other requests are about lack of detail, and in those cases the challenge is deciding just how much detail is needed in addition to the general principles. There may be quite explicit standards for one species, but hardly anything for another, such as rabbits. Sometimes the proposals are to change a particular requirement to make the standard stricter or to make it less strict, and occasionally there are requests for explicit prohibitions of a practice that the proposer thinks is not in line with organic principles.

The Working Groups are made up of 97 volunteer stakeholders, whose their participation is essential to the review of the Canadian Organic Standard.

[Click here](#) to see the lists of participants. The OFC and the [Working Group Conveners](#) thank them all!



Anne Macey

How can you reconcile organic requirements for species as different as rabbits and cows? What are the common requirements?

There are general statements applying to all livestock types but many of them require further elaboration in order to apply them to the different species. That is why, in section 6.8 for example, you see the general requirements for living conditions based on the basic principles in 6.8.1 to 6.8.6, and then sections for each of the different livestock types, which are in addition to the general statements. It is the specifics that allow the organic inspector to determine whether or not the operation meets the requirements.

Do you think that to comply with the organic standard, livestock operations should remain rather small? How big can a complying operation be, while also respecting requirements for outdoor access and animal welfare?

All operations regardless of size have to comply with the standard. At some point I think we will need to have the discussion as to whether there should be a limit to size in a single production unit, but its much more complicated than talking about large and small. Just what do we mean by small when referring to poultry operations for example? Is small 100 birds or 10,000 birds? For some producers it may be impossible to make the modifications necessary that would allow for compliance, whereas others with more resources have an easier time. In any standards revision we have to make sure that we are not weakening the standard and moving away from the principles of organic production to make it easier for very large, industrial-scale operations to comply. An organic standard is a guarantee to the buyers of organic products that certain conditions are being met.



Organic Certification for Small-Scale Operations

Tony McQuail will present his initial observations from the survey on the certification of small-scale operations Initial impressions from the survey on certification for small-scale operations

Tony McQuail, the convener of the Working Group responsible for the organic certification of small-scale operations, will present a preliminary report to the Technical Committee on the results of a recent survey. The survey, [which is still online](#), has generated great interest, with over 235 respondents submitting comments. The cost of certification and the record-keeping required by the certification process appear to be potential barriers for small-scale operations. However, respondents also proposed some interesting initiatives, such as the implementation of a tax on the sale of pesticides to help cover certification fees and improve the promotion of organic production.

There is still time to participate in the survey. Please remember that your participation will help the WG generate proposals to create a certification process that is workable and attractive to small-scale, local organic farmers and businesses.

REMINDER - All operators will have the opportunity to comment on proposed modifications to the Canadian Organic Standards this summer

Following the upcoming second TC meeting in April, a 60-day public review of the proposed amendments will be launched, giving the Canadian organic sector the opportunity to review all proposed amendments to the COS and to submit their comments.

This first public review is tentatively scheduled to take place in June and July 2014.

The sector’s comments will then be submitted to the TC, whose mandate includes resolving issues raised by the public.

This review will be followed by the first ballot (tentatively scheduled for October 2014), when voting TC members will vote on the list of proposed amendments.

Stay tuned! The OFC will communicate all relevant information!

Meeting Calendar of the COS Review	
Meeting #2	April 14-16, 2014, in Vancouver
Public Review	(Tentatively) June/July 2014
1st ballot	October 2014
Meeting #3	December 16-18, 2014
2nd Public Review/2nd ballot	(Tentatively) January/February 2015
Meeting #4	March 24-26, 2015 New COS will be published on August 30, 2015

What Organic Standards are for Two million organic farmers

In 2012, there were 1.9-million certified organic farmers in 164 countries around the world, who cultivated 37.5-million hectares, and had a worldwide turnover of 63.8-billion US dollars – that’s what the organic movement has achieved.

**Canadian Input Directory
Have you visited Organicinputs.ca lately?**



You only have to type a keyword, brand name or ingredient to find an input that you are looking for, or a problem to which you need a solution.

Bill Huneke, the website designer, reports that the number of visitors is growing day by day. “Monday is the busiest day,” he comments. Organicinputs.ca will be announcing major additions to the list of approved inputs soon. To be continued...

Spring Break

Forage Genetics International (FGI) has decided not to begin selling herbicide-tolerant genetically modified (GM) alfalfa this spring

Natural farmers Union press release [here](#)

Organic branding

The “Think before you eat” campaign

“Organic food is great tasting and nutritious; it reduces our exposure to pesticides and GMOs; it’s produced and certified to meet national organic standards; it’s healthy for soil, plants and animals and reduces our carbon footprint.”

This statement is at the base of a branding campaign that will soon be launched across Canada. The Canadian Organic Trade Association (COTA) will be managing the campaign, and will share postcards, banner stands, print and digital materials with the sector in order to promote organic products. Visit

<http://thinkcanadaorganic.ca/> to see the campaign website. The French campaign will be available soon!

Stay tuned!

Standards Interpretation Committee

Questions and Answers on issues related to the Canadian Organic Standards

Are electric trainers allowed to manage animals in tie-stalls?

Can organic and conventional sprouts be produced in the same facility if grown in visually distinguishable containers?

Can acetic acid be used for acidifying drinking water for animals?

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 March 5th to May 7th 2014.

All comments regarding these answers should be sent to 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).