

December 12 2014

Review of the Canadian Organic Standards A 3rd Meeting for the Technical Committee will be held in Gatineau from December 15th to December 17th.

The agenda is loaded with over 200 items to be presented by the conveners of the 6 main working groups. Ted Zettel will also update the Technical Committee on the issue of the creation a permanent PSL Committee and Tony McQuail will report about the [small scale certification issue](#).

Hugh Martin, the Chair of the Technical Committee on Organic Agriculture, is enthusiastic:
We are very pleased to see the level of participation from all the Working groups throughout the process for the COS revisions. Our challenge has been to identify the main issues, do research on each of them and have discussions coming to a conclusion and a proposal to the TC on each issue. We have made tremendous progress.

Some issues will raise a lot of attention:

- **Should the size of flocks be limited to insure the welfare of the birds in organic operations?**
- **How can the quality of the air or the minimal natural light can be defined in organic poultry operations?**
- **Should the 5 year retention of records be reduced?**

It will also be proposed to add or clarify many definitions such as irradiation, nanotechnology, food-grade, preparation, etc.

Other items that will be presented

Crop production - Jean Duval, responsible for the Crop section and for special productions such as Maple, Sprouts and Mushroom production, will recommend to make a clear distinction between sprouts and shoots grown in water and shoots and microgreens grown in soil.

His maple workgroup will propose a revision of the standard that applies to the cleaning of the osmosis membranes as this process is at the core of today's maple syrup's production.

A proposal will be put forward to clarify greenhouse production in containers.

Preparation - Rochelle Eisen, the convener of the Preparation work group, will propose few notable changes to the preparation section to make the standard clearer on current requirements. But there is one exception;

her work group will recommend that when water is a liquid product's main ingredient, such as in a soup or a beverage, it will need to be considered in the organic percentage calculation.

Another proposal that some may find helpful will be the addition of incidental additives into the preparation section, making it clearer that incidental additives, such as hand sanitizers, culinary steam, cleaning and sanitizing substances, and lubricants, should not compromise organic integrity. There is also a proposal to modify the packaging subsection to make it clearer that packaging materials cannot be the product of GE or nanotechnology.



The Members of the Technical Committee on Organic Agriculture at the Vancouver Meeting:

Rochelle Eisen, Kelly Monaghan, Susan Able, Jacques Dallaire, Jenny Hillard, Linda Labrecque, Maureen Bostock, Susan Smith, Elizabeth Corrigan (partly hidden), Stephanie Wells, Dag Falck, Joyce Kelly, Shannon Jones, Arnold Taylor, Janine Gibson, Ted Zettel, François Labelle, Connie Kehler, Laura Telford, Amy Kremen, Roxanne Beavers, Hugh Martin, Anne Macey, Tim Rundle, Gérard Bouchard, Lindsay Fernandez-Salvador, Ron Hamilton, Matthew Holmes, Priscilla Reimer, Andy Hammermeister, Jean Duval, Mark Schuessler, Serge Lefebvre, Nicole Boudreau.

PSL – Crop Production - Maureen Bostock has chaired many meetings of her PSL Crop WG; her work group is proposing to allow clove oil as a sprout inhibitor. All potatoes have an internal clock that goes off mid-winter when sprouting is initiated and the chemicals used by non-organic potato producers to stop sprouting cannot be used in an organic system. Clove oil is a natural extract from the clove plant which can have the same effect.

Her WG will also propose to add salt as a substance that can reduce the growth of a fungus on the surface of compost in mushroom production. Mushroom growers face many unique challenges in growing their crops in biologically active composts in a warm, damp environment. Salt would help control this particular fungus that prevents the mushrooms from germinating.

It will be also proposed to allow minerals extracted from saltwater as a new source of naturally occurring minerals, and to remove rotenone from table 4.3 because of its effect on human health and its broad spectrum action which kills non-target insect species, many of which are beneficial insects.

PSL - Livestock Production - As the organic principle of prevention is primary and key to reducing the spread of antibiotic resistant bacteria, the PSL Livestock Work Group will propose that physical teat sealers for drying off dairy cows be allowed. Physical, removable teat seals would be used to prevent mastitis, the most common problem currently leading to antibiotic use on dairy farms.

PSL - Processing - PSL Processing WG will submit 61 items. A restructuring of Sections 6 & 7 will be proposed to improve the clarity and use of the content in these Sections.

One of these concerns the use of waxes. It will be proposed to move Waxes to Table 6.3 (Food additives), as part of broader revisions that will re-categorize certain 311 Section 6 listings for improved consistency and clarity in how substances are identified (as food additives, NOIs that are not food additives, and/or as processing aids).

The annotation of Table 6.3 Waxes will require the use of organic waxes (such as beeswax) where commercially available, and only organic waxes or carnauba wax will be acceptable for application to fresh produce. This change will also account for the dual nature of cheese wax as both processing aid for cheese aging and as an inedible packaging material. The revisions would also allow paraffin wax (formulated without synthetic preservatives, synthetic colours or any bactericide or fungicide) to be used as a cheese coating, but only if suitable formulations of organic and/or non-synthetic waxes are commercially unavailable. This revision attempts to level the playing field for Canadian organic cheese makers relative to their European counterparts.

The four Table 6.5 substances would be moved to other PSL tables based on characterizations consistent with their use. Magnesium carbonate, magnesium stearate and potassium phosphate would be moved to Table 6.3- Food additives.

Potassium iodide from Table 6.5 is added into the current listing for Potassium iodide in Table 6.4. The requirement that limits these four substances to be used in only 70-95% organic products is carried over into each of these substance's annotations. With this action, the current Table 6.6 (Processing aids) would be renumbered (6.5).

Table 6.7 (Pest Control) would be moved to a new section of 311 (Section 8- the current 32.311 section 8 would become section 9) to clarify that the use of these substances is not limited strictly to the processing sector and is permitted by any organic producer that handles and/or stores food and/or feed.

A firmer distinction with regard to substances used as cleaners, disinfectants and sanitizers will be proposed: 7.3 (no removal event required) vs. 7.4 (removal event is mandatory).

Revisions of the Enzymes substance listing annotations are deemed necessary to let operators function with respect to the GE prohibition of 32.310 1.4.1a, which applies to all PSL substances

The revision of the Canadian Organic Standards is funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and industry partners. Our sponsors are part of the Canadian organic economy, and OFC and the whole sector thank them all!

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Canadian Pork Council
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Yorkshire Valley Farms

The changes to the Canadian Organic Standards will impact all stakeholders in the organic sector.

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Additional information

The President of the Technical Committee and the Working Group Conveners - [click here](#)

The Working Group participants

- Crop Production - Principles & PSL - [click here](#)
- Livestock Production - Principles & PSL - [click here](#)
- Preparation - Handling & Processing PSL - [click here](#)

Meetings of the Technical Committee on Organic Agriculture

- Report - 1st Meeting of the Technical Committee held in December 2013 - [click here](#)
- Report - 2nd Meeting of the Technical Committee held in April 2014 - [click here](#)

Canadian Standards Interpretation Committee

Reminder - Comment Period ending December 23 2014

- Is it allowed to pasteurize organic honey?
- Can Dextrose be used as a flavouring agent in organic products?
- Relating to table 4.2 "Compost obtained from off-farm sources", which elements are considered "trace contaminants"?

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 October 27th to December 23rd 2014.

All comments regarding these answers should be sent to OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca

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