

October 4 2017

Standards Funding Initiative

COG and OFC partner to prepare the next review of the Canadian Organic Standards



Jim Robbins, President of the OFC and Ashley St-Hilaire, COG's Director of Programs and Government Relations

Amendments to the 2015 version of the Canadian Organic Standards are not yet published, but already the sector must start planning the full revision of the standard that has to be completed by November 2020.

Our national organic standards (COS) are the central part of the regulatory regime that supports the growth of sustainable agriculture and protects consumers against misleading claims. They are overseen by the Canadian General Standards Board, a standards development organization, accredited by the Standards Council of Canada (SCC).

The SCC requires all national standards be continually kept current and relevant – this is achieved by a technical committee review of the entire standards regime within five years of the past publication of the standards.

The full review of the COS must be completed by November 2020; if it is not completed by that time, the standards will face the penalty of being withdrawn and losing the national standard designation.

Canada would not be able to maintain the equivalency agreements with our international trading partners. Export opportunities will suffer; the whole Canadian organic sector will lose its base, its backbone.

The cost of this review is approximately \$1,000,000. Of this amount, the Canadian General Standards Board collects \$600,000 in service fees. There is an additional cost of \$400,000 for organizing industry consultations and conducting environmental impact assessments of the agricultural practices that can modernize organic agriculture. We firmly believe that the government of Canada should pay the cost of the review of the Canadian Organic Standards.

This fall, the Organic Federation of Canada and Canadian Organic Growers are leading a Standards Funding Initiative, with support from the Canada Organic Trade Association.

This initiative will aim to work closely with the Government of Canada to find a permanent solution to funding the standards.

The initiative officially kicked off on September 19th when Ashley St-Hilaire, COG's Director of Programs and Government Relations, and Jim Robbins, President of the OFC, presented these organic sector priorities at the [House of Commons' Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food](#) as part of the government's consultation on a National Food Policy.

[Click here](#) to read their testimony.

On September 28, Nicole Boudreau, coordinator of OFC, Ashley St-Hilaire (COG), and Lauren Martin, COTA Government Relations and Regulatory Affairs, met with the Office of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and the AAFC Market and Industry Services Branch to present the issues related to the lack of funding for COS review. Dairy Farmers of Canada, Egg Farmers of Canada and the Canadian Health Food Association support the requests presented at this meeting.

Many other meetings will be held in October with government officials to find a permanent solution to funding the COS review. The sector would be strategically disadvantaged in the world market by having to fund the maintenance of its own organic standards regime and we are calling on the federal government to commit to consistent, multi-year financial support for the organic regulatory regime.

Standards Interpretation Committee

Call for nominations

Are you interested in joining the Standards Interpretation Committee? Or, do you know a stakeholder who understands the standard and has the capacity to answer questions addressed by operators?

Do you like organic production and want to join the team that interprets the Canadian Organic Standards (COS) in order to help operators comply with the COS?

The OFC welcomes all good candidates!

The Standards Interpretation Committee (SIC) is an advisory body that has been created to assist the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) in the interpretation of the Canadian Organic Standard (CAN/CGSB 32.310 and CAN/CGSB 32.311), in order to achieve the uniform application of the rules to all operators through various certifying bodies.

You are invited to submit nominations for two positions on the SIC.

Each nomination must be accompanied by an outline of the candidate's credentials; nominees must have:

- a) stature within the organic community; respected and trusted by their colleagues to uphold organic principles;
- b) broad knowledge of and experience in organic production and/or standards development, with particular expertise in one or more of the areas. For example, the person might be a
 - i) member from the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) Committee on Organic Agriculture, **or**
 - ii) stakeholder with experience in the organic standards development process as well as technical expertise in at least one aspect of organic production, **or**
 - iii) stakeholder with experience with any other kind of standards' development and/or interpretation.
- c) proven ability in consensus building and group decision making.

Appointments to the SIC are three-year terms. Members are remunerated for their participation to the SIC, for a maximum of nine hours per month.

Other current members of the Standards Interpretation Committee are Rochelle Eisen, Kelly Monaghan, Amy Kremen, François Labelle and Rob Wallbridge.

We will accept nominations until November 3rd 2017.

SIC nominations should be sent to the OFC at info@organicfederation.ca Please contact the OFC if you have any questions or require further information - info@organicfederation.ca 514-488-6192