

# 2021 Organic Sector Survey / Enquête sur le secteur biologique

## General Comments / Observations Générales

### Question 42

- **Is there anything else you would like to share about the organic sector with us?**
- **Y a-t-il autre chose que vous aimeriez partager avec nous au sujet du secteur biologique ?**

### Comments / Commentaires

Note: The comments below were submitted to the survey by individuals, and do not reflect the views of the Organic Federation of Canada, Canadian Organic Trade Association, the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada, or the Canadian Organic Growers.

Remarque : Les commentaires publiés ci-dessous ont été soumis par les participants au sondage et ne reflètent nécessairement pas le point de vue de la Fédération biologique du Canada, de l'Association canadienne du commerce biologique ou, le Centre d'agriculture biologique du Canada de Cultivons Biologique Canada.

- J'aimerais pouvoir simplement trouver les meilleurs relais pour aider à l'information de la disponibilité de semences bio au Canada en grandes cultures.
- A date le secteur privé me donne beaucoup plus de support que le grand nombre d'intervenants publics
- I would like to anticipate more consumer driven demands based on increased information available.
- Ensuring organic integrity is crucial. Increased supports for Certifying bodies and their certification committees and increasing the amount of verification officers available to conduct inspections (bring IOIA training to Canada for a reasonable cost). Including more regenerative requirements in the standard, and educating the public on what "regenerative practices" are currently embedded in the organic standard. Provide increased supports and training for operations wanting to transition to organic.
- Try to increase the markets. There are a large number of grains out there that would be grown if buyers had the markets and storage capacity to buy from producers.
- Many times it doesn't matter how many scientists get involved with something, the true knowledge is with a farmer who has been growing things for decades. Scientists can make a new Non-GMO grain, but it takes a farmer to know where and if it will grow well on their land. If scientists want to study something, study old farming practices to see if they can come up with new ideas.

Very important. If a process or way of doing something isn't broken, don't re-invent the wheel. Leave it alone

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- Inspection can be a challenge with inconsistent skills and knowledge of inspectors. Climate change will continue to have a major impact on organic farms and increase disease and pest problems.
- I look forward to a time when organic farming is a legitimate branch of agriculture - provincially and nationally.
- There will always be moral hazard and bad actors in any sector, it is imperative that organic standards are developed, implemented and monitored in order to ensure long term stability of the organic sector. Next, the organic sector needs to move beyond the rhetoric and negative framing about conventional production systems, or the use of GM/ gene-edited crops. The few who know nothing about food production are the ones who buy into this framing at the expense of disengaging the ones who understand both ways of farming.
- This survey is an excellent example of everything wrong with the organic industry. Long, boring and pointless.
- Policy kills, Principles amaze!
- Words restrict, Imagination grows...organically
- Be of Good Cheer!
- Thank you for supporting organic growing!
- Organic has a role to play in mitigating Climate change. More dedication of the organic sector in that area would be important.
- 1.) The development of a plant-based standard is overdue. Other countries are leaving us behind:
- <https://www.biocyclic-network.net>
- <https://stockfreeorganic.net/stockfree-grower-to-grower-certification-facebook-scheme/> Etc.
- We are proud to be an organic farmers as my family loves working with no chemicals and believe in the benefits and improved quality of the food products. We do need to be careful with dust as that still is a problem at harvest and when working with seeds. We have been making a profit but we worry if the profit in organics will continue as there is so much outside pressure for cheap food and who cares where it comes from yet, consumers want local food at the same prices.
- COTA seems to have a bad reputation for not providing proper & accurate information and is therefore being shut out of gaining information - they should get their house in order if they want support from producers.
- Il serait important d'établir et de connaître la place du biologique dans le mouvement sur l'agriculture régénérative et Régénération Canada.
- thank you for working so hard and diligently to represent Canada's organic sector interests

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- Great to see these organizations are joining efforts to conduct this questionnaire. The challenging times the world has been experiencing as a result of COVID-19 offers a valuable opportunity to promote the organic sector further. Teamwork and cooperation will provide better end results. And as stated before, it is important to explore a better and win-win relationship with the media at all levels.
- you missed CRISPR when mentioning GMO's
- This question seems to assume that EVERYONE has easy access to a computer or smartphone and WANTS to spend time on social media.
- too many organizations doing the same work yet too many holes still in the system/process. The consumer is still hesitant to pay the premium required to support specialty organic products, so in many cases it is driven by a passion to do what is best for people and planet by owners, producers. Too many people are still trading off of the word "organic" without being certified. The Canadian wine industry is an example.
- The organic sector has to continually move forward to higher animal welfare standards. We can't let the commodity boards set standards for organic. Organic has to lead the way in all aspects of animal welfare.
- Organic methods of crop farming have to include sequestration of carbon. This will be the downfall of organic farming if we can't show that we are working hard and being leaders to decarbonize our whole farming operations. The organic industry has to be leaders in regenerative agriculture. In the last standards there was very little discussion or emphasis on regenerative agriculture and carbon sequestration. Since we only review the standard every 5 years and it takes so long to review the standard the organic sector will be very behind by the time we review the standard again. The organic sector has a history of over cultivation and this has to be addressed. I do read and see that there is research being done on alternative practices regarding tillage but we need to put these into our standards.
- There is a need to continually tell our organic story and show that we are different than conventional agriculture. We also need CFIA to help us with policing the organic label which is so valuable to us as an industry. We can't let Beyond Organic and other claims in the market place take away from all the hard work that our organic has done. We also have to keep organic relevant with all consumers. Without consumers we won't be able to make a living.
- Thanks for your efforts in fields of Organic Production.
- The beauracracy evolving around organic farming is getting a bit ridiculous

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- I am sad to see new young farmers not considering certification because of paperwork overload and costs. Also general acceptance of their customers to trust them without 3rd party inspection. However general dissatisfaction as well among certified producers of diverse farms ( veg, herbs, fruit, seeds, often livestock as well) with the complexity of the paperwork. Most certification applications are geared to field crops, so it is a complex, time-consuming nightmare to complete these forms.
- reduce costs of certification
- Organic used to be the norm and it should still be. The agricultural world is upside down due to the heavy lobbying of chemical companies and their financing of research to their advantage and profits. Everything that is not organic or from regenerative agriculture should be labelled as such, especially the GMOs.
- The chemical industry has hijacked the world in the 20th century (including food production and transformation that have caused many chronic diseases and general decline in health, then the pharmaceutical industry involved in agriculture and medicine) and now the biological manipulations in the 21st century that only exacerbates the problems. All to the profits of a decreasing number of profiteering conglomerates and individuals. "Control the food and you control the world".
- If we are to survive, I believe that we have to encourage the proliferation of organic and regenerative agriculture of all size farms including small family farms near markets, a return to sanity over greed.
- The problems are not with organic certification, although I did find the process long, expensive, contradictory, confusing and unresponsive. The issue is that non-organic, or conventional, farming does not get regulated and certified. Food is too inexpensive generally and its role in society is misunderstood. Bad food should not be cheaper than good food. This is the crux of the equity issue.
- Thank you for supporting organics and organic farmers!!!
- When I last attended a Organic conference, I did feel that the gray areas were hazy enough that being certified didn't satisfy me - as I heard of non-organic exceptions being made to level the playing field with conventional somewhat. I understand how hard it is to police the practices, and I imagine I could be shocked by the potential of how much organic fraud is out there.
- I am in a fortunate niche of living on an island and being able, helpfully due to covid, able to sell everything we could grow. Hopefully that will continue and grow. If my kids give it up, I would lease my land to other farmers, but hope not to have to do that, as I care about keeping faithful to organic practices. My spouse started the farm and I came to it 18 years ago, not from a farming background. He died 9 years ago. I feel out of the loop now as I don't follow the publications as much.

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- Please quit attacking conventional agriculture, use that time money and energy into research that I can use to produce a better quality product, with higher yield and better weed control.
- Please kick regenerative ag out of the Organic sector. Let regenerative ag develop there own associations, bylaws, etc. Again it is another body attacking "industrial ag" trying to make a few people rich.
- If they drive product prices any lower there will be no organics in Western Canada
- There are some wonderful products available
- More information on systems based approach to farming/ranching is needed and how organic systems can be developed and can be profitable.
- Require packers to stop using transparent plastic packaging for potatoes because even a small amount/time of light induces greening which makes the potatoes inedible.
- I am passionate about being a certified organic farm, but I never feel like anything is really done to improve the industry. I feel like its lots of surveys being filled out with very little change happening from year to year.
- Thank you for your continued work on organics on all areas.
- Keep up the great work of consulting farmers that are actively trying to put the organic practices into play
- The organic sector needs to find a way to reach out and encourage more farmers to become certified. Unfortunately with the increasing beareaucracy of organic regulations and certifiers, the opposite might be happening. Small-scale young farmers in particular often do not see the value of organic certification as most of the organic certifiers (and the organic regulations) are so geared toward large-scale commodity production that they no longer seem relevant to farmers with smaller diverse farms that market most of their products direct to consumers.
- It is this multitude of organic CSA, on-farm, and farmer's market growers that are the base and the face of organic for most consumers in Canada and unfortunately these are the very farmers being driven out of organic by the implemetation of increasingly bureaucratic certification systems. They don't need rigid, internationally accredited, third-party, certification schemes. They want a friendly, encouraging, certification system that is peer-reviewed and engages them in a community of organic growers who share ideas and resources.
- We could really use a national certifier that understands and reaches out to those smaller producers with appropriate certification processes and costs that makes sense in that context. The model currently used by "Certified Naturally Grown" could be adapted to small-scale organic in Canada and called something like "Canada Local Organic".

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- Maybe COG could start this initiative and target participation in this lower cost, more appropriate scale of certification to farms that sell direct to consumer or restaurants. Farms who grow beyond that scale of production could then transition to a conventional form of third-party certifier when they want to access organic markets beyond direct-to-consumer/restaurants. In this way Canada Local Organic could also become a stepping stone for more new farmers to Canada Organic in the future.
- I trust there will always be producers using moral methods to conduct agricultural interests.
- I hope we are all doing a great thing! I hope it shapes not just our future, but THE future. I believe it is the best way forward.
- I hope organic food will be an association between producers and consumers.
- To reiterate - outdoor field grown organic Cannabis should be considered an organic crop in Canada (so they can stop calling indoor produced cannabis: organic). Also the loose use of the term 'organic' in Ont and Alberta is very problematic
- Our organization advocates for farm animal welfare. We encourage those who choose to eat animal products to select higher welfare products. One certification we recommend is Organic. While organics has less animal welfare focus than other available higher welfare certifications (Certified Humane, Animal Welfare Approved, Global Animal Partnership), we are encouraged that each update includes stronger animal welfare standards and each farmer has an on-site assessment to demonstrate they are doing what they say (conventional farms are not independently inspected). We participate in the public comment period and encourage our supporters to do so as well. We also nominate someone to the livestock technical committee to speak for animal welfare throughout the standard update process.
- We will continue to promote organics as it offers welfare benefits over conventional farming but are excited to see organic take a stronger position on animal welfare.
- Very hard to find markets for purchasing and selling. It's all great to transition but then we have a hard time knowing where to get our inputs and sell our crops.
- It would be nice from time to time to have non bias information.
- There are organic pesticides that are worse for the bees and the environment than conventional!
- Organic does not mean pesticide free!
- Organic does not mean necessarily good for the environment!
- Be "the mouse that roars". Never give up as more people are making a deeper connection to the food they eat and their health. COVID-19 has helped reinforce the direct link.
- Nothing at this time.
- This is a new journey for me and I must say that everyone I have communicated with has been very, very helpful.

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- This survey is quite long.
- as a gardener/consumer ... not certain that all questions are relevant to me!
- Increased communication between organizations and certifiers is crucial for fraud prevention and industry development.
- I want to stress that the new generation has much less respect for the organic brand than those over 45.
- We need to stop preaching to the choir and get into the heads of the younger generation and dispel myths about organic.
- Repeated non-compliances should be taken more seriously by certifiers. Producers and processors suffer few to no consequences.
- The ever increasing burden of rules and regulatory requirements both from certifying bodies and government bodies ei CFIA, local health unit etc.
- I love farming! Thanks for your help.
- The problems today are still the same problems in supply chain that we encountered 25 years ago when we started. Organizations have come and gone, more products on the shelves in stores (alot USDA). The markets that exist become localized to one or two individuals controlling the sales for all farmers in Manitoba regarding meat. Progress with the meat markets/processing are still an issue and leaning more toward a "natural" market. Grain sales were limited with China not importing grain. Small quantities of grain seem to be an issue for transporting. On a positive note, there is growing demand for the products and more awareness. It is very slow to keep momentum on any venture... We look forward to new opportunities and keep trying to be creative to make a business out of a lifestyle.
- Organic production provides an opportunity for the Canadian agriculture sector, particularly given its higher margins and increasing consumer demand for organic food, both domestically and abroad.
- Environmental realities and consumer demand are driving producers to look at integrating more sustainable practices into their production systems. There is interest in conventional agriculture through the adoption of regenerative agriculture practices. Opportunities exist in creating relationships with these producers to collaboratively build a stronger and more sustainable agricultural system within Canada founded on these shared regenerative principles.
- we need to gain the public trust ..... they see a "spray-free or all natural" as the same and the organic brand is just a right to gouge.
- It seems there is a large diversity of what an organic producer should be. The organic organizations need to become focused on production of quality produced product and not become embroiled in debate if organic is better than conventional. The market will decide.

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- The Organic Round Table and its programs will be deeply missed by the industry as it will limit the opportunity for collaboration, sharing of information and execution of programming. The Government is very short sighted by eliminating this structure and is doing a serious disservice to the industry
- high organic animal feed prices are the number one reason people do not choose to certify their livestock. Followed closely by the lack of mobile slaughter facilities. The slaughter rules need to be changed and allow for small operations to slaughter, butcher, wrap more easily or for more certified organic mobile facilities. This will encourage small biodiverse farms to grow some certified organic livestock and can increase local organic meat supplies.
- Thanks for asking!!
- Please take our responses to heart. We have been certified organic for 19 years, but are seriously considering dropping our certification. We are a tiny producer and the costs are high, both in dollars and time. Our re-application this year took more than 10 hours and was 67 pages! We are low-risk. This was ridiculous!
- We confronted a non-certified grower who said his product was "organic". We had a long conversation where I tried to convince him to certify and he contended that it was expensive and onerous. He was right. We are considering dropping out.
- Thank you for this survey that seems to allow us to voice our thoughts. Again, please take them to heart.
- Please focus on the carbon capture potential regenerative farming techniques bring. We are in so much trouble with climate change, global warming, oxygen depletion, etc. Regenerative agriculture offers serious help in addressing all of these issues and the financial benefits for farmers are huge - but it is up against the powerful forces of multinationals, the traditional education system and "this is the way we've always done it" mind sets. The current crop insurance programs de-insentify experimentation and the current debt load of many farmers make creating any changes on the farm far too risky to undertake. We need outside of the box thinking and the government to help support farmers to make the changes that will benefit us all. I fear we don't have a lot of time to screw around with this. The longer we delay - the greater the risk we will reach a point that will make any remediation very difficult or impossible.
- I answered these as a producer however I am a tiny scale farmer and so many of the Qs do not apply but I could not specify this.
- The biggest problem with this sector is the ongoing provincial and federal government support of big ag plain and simple. In NS the lip service paid to small farmers is insulting and despicable.
- Is there a way to stop the farmers market producers from marketing "spray free"? We are more accurately herbicide and pesticide free, but often spray beneficial nutrients.
- These mixed messages are confusing to consumers and discredit the industry.



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- I really wish that certification bodies would more actively participate in the data collection and sharing.
- The organic sector is going to have to face the fact that like conventional agriculture, organic grain producers (like me) are largely in the business of using land to turn fossil fuel (diesel fuel) into food. That clearly isn't sustainable, especially considering the effects of fossil fuel burning on climate change. Changes are needed so that organic grain production becomes a net producer of energy rather than a net consumer. Renewable energy use has to be increased to power field operations and eventually small scale robotics might be useful. We will need a lot more public investment in organic production methods if a truly sustainable way of farming is to be developed. Humanity's future on the planet depends on it.
- Yes, Canadian certifiers need to accept OMRI input reviews (to COR) for organics. Our certifier ...ProCert does not
- OMRI has a very rigorous and user friendly process for evaluating and reviewing organic inputs that is done in a realistic and time effective way. Their search engine to find and choose inputs is also excellent. Meanwhile Canadian certifiers have a terrible process that is very subjective and do not leverage learning from past input evaluations to inform decisions on a new input under review. So trying to get an input approved can become a major science project that is not cost-effective or realistic to an input supplier. An example is compost made from food waste collected from restaurants grocers etc. Evaluation of any pesticides that could be in the food has been narrowed down to a short list of six with OMRI based on research, whereas Canadian certifiers require the applicant to look at any or all pesticides that could be in the food to rule them out and present all this research. I.e there is no transfer of information between projects. Each person is reinventing the wheel.
- The bottom line is there is an organization that has an excellent process for doing this and there is no reason that our Canadian certifiers should not be accepting their reviews. All they need to do is audit their processes. It's politics and it's organic farmers and input suppliers that lose.
- I understand the need for traceability and record-keeping, but it is sucking the life out of the organic movement. In addition to the other stressors and time requirements of farming, for a diversified farm to do record keeping for the ins and outs of every single product is enough to make most forego certification. Direct-market operations don't often see the value in the process or the cost of it.
- I find that meat producers are not considered much in organic....other than animal welfare. This is very frustrating.
- Keep up the good work!
- The burden should be on the conventional industry.
- The world is upside down.
- Organic farm prices are going down. In the wrong direction. They should be rising.

# 2021 Organic Sector Survey/ Enquête sur le secteur biologique

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### Question 42

- Organic food must become seen as a viable alternative to food and production, not as a replacement for intensive conventional production. It is similar to making a decision on what kind of car to buy; there are lots of brands all with great virtues it is consumer preference only, not scaremongering, that will enhance the production and uptake of organic
- I know numerous small farm operations who adhere strictly to organic standards based on the integrity of their personal values but who will not become certified organic because it is too costly, too time consuming and too top-down hierarchical. Maybe it has to be that way to prevent fraud. Someone made the point that the onus should be on conventional farms to disclose what harmful elements are in their products, not on organic farmers to prove what is not in theirs. The farms I am referring to are small enough to do direct sales with their customers, who trust them. And many consumers have no idea what inputs non-organic farmers use anyway, so they have no reason to spend more money on something just because it is certified organic. It doesn't help me to go to the extra expense of time and money to be certified organic when people don't know that I don't use chemical de-wormers but my neighbour does. And the lambs have only ewes' milk and not soy formula like the farm down the road who feeds their quadruplet lambs that way. I am not going to point out the differences between what I'm doing and what my neighbour is doing. From the road, the farms look very similar. Is there documentation about allowable chemical residues in meat?
- It would be great to have educational resources available to elementary, jr. high, and high school teachers. This way the kids and teachers are learning about organics and then are able to share that with their parents. Hopefully, this means that a kid's introduction to organics is a trusted and positive voice.
- In the prairies, we need more independent agronomists. In Alberta, the Alberta government let go of all of the provincial agronomists who provided unbiased information to farmers. It was a critical resource. With these agronomists let go, the only place farmers can get their agronomy information is from extension groups and chemical companies.
- The National Food Policy Advisory Committee was just formed and I don't believe there is an organic voice on the committee or at least an organic or ecological prairie voice. I think this group has a lot of potential so it would be great to make sure the voices of organic farmers are heard on this committee.
- OFA and other farm organizations need to have dedicated representation for our sector. If you ask OFA, they'll say run for one of the regional representative positions, which is impossible when all your neighbours are conventional producers.
- A lot of public are supportive of the organic industry but they do not want to pay higher prices. The buy Walmart philosophy.