



ACORN

Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network
Issue 20, Spring 2006

AT THIS TIME, MANY OF YOU ARE VERY BUSY in your greenhouses, prepping your seedlings and planting your fields. It's also time to consider other important business decisions, like marketing and human resources.

For example, there's still time to get new farm and market signage and refresh the old signs. Signs are tangible items, whose value will last far beyond dollars spent on conventional advertising, like newspaper ads.

At the recent Maritime Marketing Caravan, one producer spoke of the countless number of customers who had come to his farm market because of the strategic signs he'd placed on the nearby roads. He advised people to buy the best signs they could afford to attract people and signify high value.

You should also be thinking of summer help. Students have finished up school and many are eager to find a job that will provide them with education and experience which isn't in a call centre! Colleges and universities all have career centres and will post your ads for free. You can also put a posting on the ACORN and OACC websites for free too. Put a sign

up at the local farmer's market and tell your customers. Make sure to spell out the additional perks of organic farm life, which may be of more value than money—on-farm accommodation, great food, learning to grow the great food, organizing the farmer's market stall etc.—these jobs are experiential and you just can't find that in a classroom.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the three Maritime Provinces for their support of ACORN. At the ACORN conference, it was announced that we would receive continued core funding from PEI, New Brunswick and new funding from Nova Scotia. This support is much needed and will assist the organic industry over the next four years.

ACORN's will be creating a self-sustaining plan over the coming months to present to our government funding partners by March 2007. We will need your help in achieving this goal—so if you have any ideas, please contact us.

All the best for a prosperous season ahead,
Beth

Regional Certification Body— Your Input is Requested

AS YOU MAY HAVE READ IN OUR NEWSLETTER or heard of at the conference, ACORN is leading a feasibility study on the creation of a locally-based organic certification body. This study was requested by MCOG and NSOGA, as they look to the requirements of the impending national organic regulation (where "organic" would require being certified by an accredited organization).

We know that organic producers and processors want an organization that is local and affordable, and that is what our consultants have been working on. A very important part of this study is getting the industry's feedback, so we would like to invite you to attend a regional meeting and have your say.

Dates & Times:

Tuesday, May 23, 7-9pm
AgriTech Park, Administration Bldg.,
90 Research Dr., Truro, NS

Wednesday, May 24, 9-11am
NBDAFA Office, 381 Killam Dr., Moncton, NB
(behind the Coliseum)

Wednesday, May 24, 7-9pm
NBDAFA Office, 850 Lincoln Road.,
Fredericton, NB (use the front doors)

Thursday, May 25, 7-9pm
Charlottetown Research Station, 440 University
Avenue, Charlottetown, PEI

Sunday, May 28, 3:30-5:30pm
Kentville Research Station, 32 Main St., Kentville, NS

For more information, please contact ACORN at 1-866-322-2676, or check the website—www.acornorganic.org

at issue:

MEET THE ACORN BOARD OF DIRECTORS.....	2
ACORN CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW A SUCCESS!.....	3
FIRST INTERNATIONAL APPLE AND PEAR SYMPOSIUM	3
MARITIME MARKETING CARAVAN.....	4-5
MONEY FOR NOTHING AND GET CHICKS FOR FREE	6
UP-DATE: THE CANADIAN ORGANIC REGULATION	7
UPDATE: THE CANADIAN ORGANIC STANDARD	7
REGIONAL PRESENTATIONS	7
IT'S CENSUS TIME.....	7
BATTLING PESTS AND WEEDS—ORGANICALLY!.....	8

Meet the ACORN Board of Directors

Jeremy Frith was born and raised on a family fruit, vegetable and dairy farm in Bermuda. He farmed there organically for ten years before coming to live in Canada in 1981. Jeremy now farms 5 acres of NSOGA certified organic vegetables in The Meadow, St. Ann's, Cape Breton, and has an award-winning 400 acre woodlot—his other passion being forestry. Jeremy practices integrated ecosystem management.

Tony Grant is a husband and father of two living in Oak Mountain, NB, two miles from the Speerville Flour Mill. He is a reformed conventional eater who has found better health and quality of life since switching his diet to whole and organic foods. Tony has been working at the Speerville Flour Mill (certified by MCOG) for almost two years now, specializing in sales, product procurement, and process analysis.

Rupert Jannasch has worked as an agricultural researcher, farm writer, and Executive Director of R.E.A.P. (Resource Efficient Agricultural Production) Canada over the past 15 years. Beginning in 1988, he was one of the first organic inspectors in Atlantic Canada. Rupert now grows hay, greenhouse crops, and highbush blueberries in Summerville, Hants Co., NS.

Joyce Kelly, along with her husband Mike, grow 4-5 acres of fruit and veggies on their farm Natures Bounty, in Dromore, PEI. They sell at the Charlottetown Farmers market, in a unique partnership with Joyce's siblings Margie Loo (Elderflower Organic Farm) and Raymond Loo (Springwillow Farms). Nature's Trust is certified through MCOG and this year will be the 10th year of certification. Joyce is continuing in her role as the ACORN Secretary for 2006-2007 and is Conference Chair of the 2007 ACORN Conference in PEI.

Andrew Kernohan grows OCIA, NOP, and CAAQ certified organic field crops in Parrsboro, Cumberland Co., NS, and pastures some conventional beef cattle. He became interested in organics through teaching a course on agricultural and environmental ethics at the NSAC. Andrew is also an adjunct professor of philosophy at Dalhousie,

and in the winter he conducts philosophical research. See his Open Access book on the meaning of life, *A Guide for the Godless*, at <http://myweb.dal.ca/kernohan/godless>.

Doug Nichols, his wife Marlene Wilson-Nichols, and their four children own Apple Lane Farm Inc. in Berwick, NS. They are producers on 33 hectares of apples, 2 hectares of pears and of 2500 hogs per annum. Since 2001 they have operated a parallel operation with currently 16% of the apple production as certified organic by OCPP-ProCert. Doug is the 2006-2007 Treasurer of ACORN.

Gary Ogle and his wife Karen, along with their two sons, Liam and Nigel, operated an organic market garden for 15 years on Grahams Road, PEI, first certifying with OCIA in 1991. Gary served as a board member, newsletter editor and president of OCIA-PEI, and later as a PEI chapter chairperson for MCOG, and a board member for the Prince Edward Island Certified Organic Producers Co-op (PEICOP). Gary is currently employed at Veseys Seeds as Art Director and as supervisor of trials and of the organic department.

Melba Rabinowitz, and her husband Mike, own and operate Organic Farm, one of two organically certified vegetable farms in Newfoundland and Labrador. Organic Farm began as hobby farm over twelve years ago and now have a CSA, on-site gardening store, vegetable market, and supply a wide range of vegetables to restaurants and stores. Melba is a retired ED of Daybreak Parent Child Centre, a charity that provided service for disadvantaged families and their children. She is active in food security, anti-poverty and infant mental health organizations.

Larry Slipp, BSc.Ag., is a 7th generation farmer and owner/operator of Slipp Farms 1784 Ltd., along with his mother, Annie Slipp, and life partner, Tonya Wiesner. Larry is also a father to three children. Slipp Farms' 1800-acre farm/woodlot is located in Central Hampstead, on the Saint John River, and was first certified by MCOG in 1998 for chicken. Today, it exclusively a certified organic mixed farm producing chicken, beef, pork, turkey, eggs, herbs and vegetables along with grains and forages. Larry has volunteered countless

hours to organic organizations and is entering his fourth year as a Director of MCOG and ACORN (of which, he is currently Vice-President).

Alan Stewart has been involved in the certified organic scene since the late eighties, with OCIA (NS) and then NSOGA. Along with his family, Alan operates Stewart Organic Farm, a 100-acre family farm near Wolfville, with beef, apples and blueberries being the main crops. Alan was Conference Chair of the 2006 ACORN Conference in Wolfville, NS, is the new ACORN President for 2006-2007.

Janet Wallace is the editor of The Canadian Organic Grower magazine and has edited three books for Canadian Organic Growers. She has a small mixed farm near Margaretsville, NS, predominantly for home-consumption. Janet has been involved in the organic community for more than fifteen years, and was the coordinator of NSOGA for several years.

2007 ACORN Conference

Mark your calendars for March 1-3, 2007!

The 2007 conference will be held at the Howard Johnson's Dutch Inn, in Cornwall, PEI (just before Charlottetown).

This is where the previous PEI conference took place, making it the first time we will be returning to a hotel for the second time; and we're thinking that it will make things run more smoothly—as we all know what we're doing. The hotel is also affordable, rural, experienced with organic food (they worked out the kinks last time), and has plenty of space for the trade show and workshops.

We're thinking our theme will be related to soil, as it was such a popular topic at this year's conference. So if you'd like to be involved in the conference planning or if you have an idea for a workshop, please contact us.

ACORN Conference and Trade Show a Success!

HELD AT THE OLD ORCHARD INN, IN Wolfville, NS, participants traveled from across the Maritimes to attend workshops, network, and eat great organic food.

On Thursday evening, Costas Halavrezos of CBC's Maritime Noon, moderated a panel discussion on organics. This sold out event featured renowned speakers Debra Boyle (Pro Organics), Janine Gibson (COG), Isabelle Joncas (Equiterre), and Norbert Kungl (Selwood Green Farm). Following the lively discussion, decadent organic desserts were served and the annual silent auction took place. Excerpts from the event were aired daily on Maritime Noon the following week, concluding with a call-in on buying organic (featuring guests Frazer Hunter, NSFA, Ralph Martin, OACC, and Beth McMahon, ACORN).

Janine Gibson, organic inspector and President of the Canadian Organic Growers, provided this year's keynote. The sold out event was held during Friday lunch, following the Gerrit Loo Award presentation to Neil Van Nostrand.

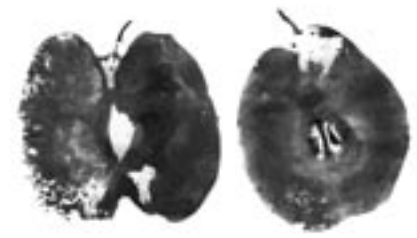
The sold out trade show held centre stage in the beautiful Blomidon Room, overlooking the Inn's orchard. Exhibitors were pleased with the enthusiasm of the participants. Partners in Employment, a new exhibitor, wrote to say "Thank you for the great conference and exposure to the farmers and their endeavors. I believe we made some great connections and it was well worth it."

On Saturday, the Wolfville Farmers Market set-up in the Old Orchard Inn's heritage barn and the public came in droves. Free workshops were offered and a Seedy Saturday took place in the conference centre. That afternoon, local organic farm tours were taken of Boates Farm and Pioneer Gardens.

All in all, it was a very successful event thanks to the many volunteers, sponsors, food and silent auction donors, exhibitors and participants. A special thanks to Alan Stewart, conference chair, Allison Grant, food committee chair, Jocelyn Pringle, coordinator, and the entire conference committee.



Janine Gibson presents her keynote address "Organic Prosperity—Rooted in Community"



First International Apple and Pear Symposium

By Dr. Ralph Martin

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL ORGANIC Apple and Pear Symposium was held at the Old Orchard Inn in Wolfville, NS, from Feb. 28 to March 2, 2006 and overlapped with the ACORN conference.

There were two keynote addresses by Dr. Franko Weibel, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL, Switzerland) and Dr. Curt Rom, University of Arkansas (USA). Attendees also heard sixteen oral scientific presentations and a panel discussion with four organic apple farmers—Doug Nichols (NS), Mike Hutton (NB), Pat Johnson (ON) and Steve Meyerhans (Maine).

The symposium was attended by 70 scientists and observers, including farmers, and several attendees of the ACORN conference on March 2nd. Twelve scientific poster presentations were available for the Symposium and ACORN registrants to view. The Abstracts and most of the presentations will be posted on the OACC website (www.oacc.info) for ongoing access. Researchers will meet again in Switzerland in 2007. Farmers made contacts with experts and can solicit information from them as they try new methods discussed at the symposium.



Maritime Marketing Caravan

By Beth McMahon

On March 15-16, I attended the Maritime Marketing Caravan in Memramcook, NB. It was a very interesting conference, attended mostly by small-scale, conventional agricultural entrepreneurs (there were a few organic producers though) from PEI, NS, and NB. Despite growing methods, the information presented was relevant to everyone—focusing on innovative family farm success stories from across Canada. The emphasis was on farm tourism, farm markets, word-of-mouth advertising and cooperative partnerships. The following are my notes on three great presentations:

Get excited or get out of business.

Pete Lockett, Pete's Frootique

"Get excited or get out of business," was Pete Lockett's advice for attendees. Pete's presentation focused on his top tips for success:

- Create Excitement – don't spend your money on conventional advertising. Look for something that's going to create a buzz and have people talking about you. Customers love a surprise, so do something out of the ordinary. Vehicles are a great promotional tool, just make sure they are clean, bright, and driver's friendly.
- Win Their Hearts, Not Just Their Wallets – listen, anticipate a customer's needs, give samples when they are looking at something and explain it to them, and make them smile. "We are now in the 'experiential' phase of customer relations and the next phase will be 'authenticity', like local and artisan food. Be ready."
- There are No Shortcuts to Quality
- Carve Out a Niche – you gotta be first, best or different.

- Build From the Inside Out – staff training is essential. Give your staff information on sales, set targets, build confidence and have a high level of communication.
- Nurture Solid Relationships, including those with suppliers and children (he gives all the kids a treat).
- Move Swiftly "we are all in the business of change". Always challenge the process.
- Business Demands Will Never Cease, so don't let them stop you from making time for your family and people you love.

Mark Saunders, Saunders Farm

"Director of Fun", Mark Saunders provided an interesting overview of his family farm's transformation from a u-pick strawberry farm to an agri-tourism operation.

Saunders Farm is an award-winning 100-acre family-run farm 30 minutes from downtown Ottawa. At their peak in 1982, Saunder's Farm had 25-acres of u-pick strawberries, but sales were steadily declining and so Mark's dad started the "Haunting Season" in 1992 to attract people to the farm. According to an article on their website (www.saundersfarm.com/articles/hauntedharvest%20Westjet.pdf):

"Haunted hayrides were the first attraction offered on the farm and remain one of the most popular draws. As the years progressed, many new attractions were added such as scary stage shows, a barn of terror, and pumpkin launchers. And to lure visitors to the farm during the summer and autumn the Saunders' planted the largest collection of hedge mazes in North America.

During the daytime, Halloween activities on the Saunders Farm are geared towards families and young children, with puppet shows,

a monster parade, and the Hurricane Pumpkin, a giant 15-foot-high inflatable pumpkin that small kids can enter and chase around balloons. At night, the fear factor is ratcheted up. The farm is transformed into "The Big Scare" and is not recommended for kids under eight."

The Haunting Season now accounts for 60% of the farm's revenue. Mark started by charging \$5/person, but now it's \$17/adult and \$12 for kids 2-10 years old. They also charge \$8-10 per pumpkin, and people pay it, because they are "in the mood". Last year, they had over 100,000 attendees!

During the summer months Saunders Farm hosts corporate picnics and retreats and its mazes are open as a summer tourist destination. In December, Saunders Farm is open for cut-your-own Christmas trees and corporate parties.

Why are farm events so popular? People are disconnected from the farm and looking for a reconnection; people are looking for an "authentic" experience; people are taking shorter vacations and want the maximum experience; guests must actively participate; and families need time together and "this is where memories are made".

*train your staff well,
cultivate friends
with the media,
and offer what
people are looking for.*

Is it for you? You must be passionate, like people, and be looking for alternative revenue.

If yes, then Mark's advice is to train your staff well, cultivate friends with the media, and offer what people are looking for: food, washrooms, clean site, nice landscaping,

entertainment, parking, and friendly service. Think about what you can offer, then “start small and exceed customer expectations”.

♦♦♦♦

Leona Staples, Innisfail Growers Association

One particularly interesting presentation was given by Leona Staples, of the Innisfail Growers Association, Alberta.

In 1993, five produce farms developed a collective approach to serving the farmers market circuit and providing each other support. The farms are as far apart as 2.5 hours and have booths at 20 markets/week in the summer season.

How It Works:

- ♦ Each grower specialized in a few particular high quality products. Growers are responsible for quality, packaging and supply management.
- ♦ Growers are paid 65% of their product sales on a weekly basis. At the end of the year, after all the other expenses are paid, the growers split the profit (it’s about 10% of sales).
- ♦ The association hires and markets collectively.
- ♦ Each farm gets two votes – one for each spouse.
- ♦ The association does not own anything, keeping the structure simple. Any larger items are owned by an individual and rented to the association, including delivery trucks and storage warehouse.

Leona attributes the success of the association to their proactive communication: All the grower members meet one evening a week during the high season and discuss finances and staffing, plus any other critical issues. In the winter, they meet regularly to discuss larger issues and future planning.

They also have a written policy and procedure manual, which is updated in the winter. This sets the rules and future thinking, “as it’s better to deal with issues this way, then wait until its personal.”

Staff communications and training are essential elements of success. At the beginning of each season, staff and their families are picked-up and taken to the farms for detailed farm tours (they aren’t paid for this). Staff then take ownership of the farms and refer to “our farm” when talking to customers (as the farmers don’t have time to go to market, but they do if short staffed). Staff also have regular meetings, produce tastings, and updates (ie. so they know strawberries are coming next week).

**customers are given
free samples,
provided with detailed
growing information
and food prep advice.**

The association places a very high value on building long-term customer commitment. To ensure this, market customers are given free samples, provided with detailed growing information and food prep advice, and given replacement product if something they bought didn’t meet their expectations.

Advantages: growers can become efficient at what they are growing by specializing; they share equipment and buy in bulk; members share information, costs and risks; better cash flow; moral support; providing a future for their family farm. Overall, Leona has found that “working together grows farms fast”.

Disadvantages: time commitment—about 20-30 hours/week (but they are hiring more staff with more management responsibili-

ties); doing business with friends is always risky (so that’s why the policy manual is essential); financial risk (so financials are reviewed on weekly basis); no permanency, as the association owns nothing.

The Innisfail Growers Association is now entering a new phase in its existence—taking on a year-round market, and looking at investing in storage facilities. The majority of members see the association as a long-term strategy for their succession planning and Leona is hopeful that the farm will be run by her boys—making it a fourth generation family farm.

If you want to know more about the Innisfail Growers Association, Leona encourages anyone to contact her—she’s very open to questions.



Money for Nothing and Get Chicks for Free

WELL IT'S NOT QUITE AS SIMPLE AS THAT, but in Tatamagouche, NS, where they have produced their own currency, residents can purchase baby chicks, as well as a whole variety of other goods and services without using Canadian dollars.

In 2004, Rob Assels and Lesley Longhorn began a weekly documentary film night at the old creamery building. By the end of the first year the audience wanted to get involved in protecting its community from rural disintegration. The group determined that many of the problems faced by rural communities everywhere stem from there not being enough currency. The problem is compounded by the fact that the little money that is there is quickly extracted by banks and big box stores. In the Tatamagouche area \$150 million is earned annually, but over \$130 million is spent outside the community.

"People want to support their local businesses," says Assels, "but they have so little cash they have to make it stretch as far as they can." It turns out however, that if a community issues its own currency, residents are only too eager to support their neighbours' businesses. "We own an organic grocery store in Tatamagouche. A large part of our business was supplying tourists and cottagers with what was perceived as expensive food. The local population couldn't afford our products. We didn't just want to be a food source for the wealthy. Since the local currency was issued, the sale of certified organic products to local residents has increased dramatically."

Local currencies and Local Economic Trading Systems (LETS) are well documented. It was Jamey Coughlin of the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture that provided Assels and Longhorn with the background informa-

tion that helped them launch the program in Tatamagouche. The community designed a system that was unique to its geography and demographic make up. Av Singh, who is both a resident of the area and a member of program, helped encourage agricultural producers to get involved. The Co-operative Secretariat through the CDI program provided funds to investigate and document the model, which launched in June 2005 with 20 members.

The program works by issuing a line of credit of \$500 to each member. The currency takes the form of a cheque, which is only accepted by other members. When a transaction takes place a cheque is written. At the end of the month an accountant tallies up all the credits and debits and issues account statements to the members showing what available credit they have left. Some accounts go up, some go down, but all the money stays in the community. Wal-Mart won't accept it.

Fast forward to April 2006. There are now 52 members in the program including: electricians, carpenters, backhoe, automotive repairs, upholstering, restaurants, firewood, art gallery, blacksmith, golf, and legal services. From an agricultural perspective there is certified organic animal feed, certified organic meat and vegetables, livestock, farm labour, a diesel mechanic and a grocery store. There is also a newspaper that Assels and Longhorn started which helps promote local production and consumption. A radio station should be up and running this summer.

Members of the program expect to complete over \$120,000 in transaction over the next year. Assels notes that since the program launched

the grocery store has discontinued five lines of products that used to be purchased from Ontario Natural Food Co-op and replaced them with "our community's food paid for with our community's money".

"If that \$120,000 was spent at Sobeys it would be gone from the community. Our currency is still here to be traded again. Members of the program are eating far more organic food and our store can't compete with SuperStore on price—we're more expensive, but local currency holders would rather spend the extra in local currency than see their Canadian dollars disappear."

The group also has its own bank with \$25,000 in local currency available for no-interest loans. This fall (Oct 4-6) it is launching the Tatamagouche Film Festival, which will bring members of the documentary film industry, the co-operative movement, and rural development experts together for what Assels calls a "beer-fuelled discussion of sustainable small communities".

"We're very pleased the co-op movement has embraced this. The Nova Scotia Co-op Council, Speerville Flour Mill, Just Us! Coffee, and the Northumberland Media Co-op are just a few of the sponsors we have acquired to date. It promises to be a lot of fun. We have directors and producers coming from across Atlantic Canada and we have some incredible films."

People interested in learning more about local currencies or the Tatamagouche Film Festival can contact Rob Assels at rob@tatafilmfest.ca.

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Up-Date: The Canadian Organic Regulation

AT THE GUELPH ORGANIC CONFERENCE, the federal task force (OTF) working on implementing the new organic regulation provided a detailed presentation on the regulation.

The Organic Regulatory Committee (ORC) was told that the OTF had begun focus testing on five “official marks” for the logo development and there will be a large awareness campaign of the new regulation. The OTF is also working on the Quality Manual, which would become the backbone of the regulation.

The regulation will cover agricultural products—not fibres, pet food, cosmetics, or landscaping. It will include a standard for aquaculture.

“Organic” will be a protected label

(so if you say a product is organic, it must be certified organic), and any vague statements, such as “Grown using organic standards”, will also be enforceable under the regulation.

When the regulation goes to the Gazette for publication (hopefully very soon—before the next newsletter), you will find it at <http://canadagazette.gc.ca/index-e.html>. There will then be a review period and the regulation will be sent to the US and EU for comments.

In attendance at the Guelph meeting from Atlantic Canada were Raymond Loo, PEI, Clark Phillips, ACORN, and Beth McMahon, ACORN. All three were pleased with the information and progress of the regulation.

Update: The Canadian Organic Standard

ISSUES ARISING FROM THE LAST BALLOT ON the standard have been reviewed and larger issues of concern placed on a “future work list”. The Canadian General Standards Board asked the technical committee to respond by April 7th if there was any disagreement with any of the proposed actions.

Paddy Doherty, Coordinator of the Canadian Organic Initiative, writes “Though it feels anticlimactic, this is actually a historic moment in the development of the standard. We are (essentially) through the consensus process—after April 7th the standard becomes a final draft and proceeds to “Second Level Approval Stage.” This stage is managed by the “Panel on Process Assurance” and is an internal CGSB procedure—at this point, the standard is out of our hands. I am optimistic we may see a completed standard by June.”

To view a copy of the proposed standard, go to www.oacc.info/std_canadian.html

Regional Presentations

IT'S BEEN A BUSY FEW MONTHS, NOT ONLY with the conference and symposium, but also offering regional presentations on organics.

In New Brunswick, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, and ACORN, have presented two industry updates—one in Fredericton and the other in Bouctouche. These provided an update on the organic standard, regulation, plus a presentation and slide show on the Maine organic farm tour from this past autumn. At these two meetings, there were approximately 30 attendees.

On February 20th, the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, Agri-Futures and AgraPoint, sponsored an organic workshop in Cape Breton. Attended primarily by producers interested in transitioning, the presentation provided information on the

organic standard, regulation, and certifying process. Dr. Av Singh, AgraPoint, provided technical information on soil, pests, weeds, and other growing basics. With over 25 participants, ACORN is planning a follow-up workshop in the fall.

ACORN is very interested in providing more specific regional workshops in the coming year, in coordination with provincial specialists. Topics will be announced in the next newsletter and will be scheduled for the fall, with at least one workshop per province.

Av Singh has already planned for workshops on “Introduction to Organics” in Yarmouth, Digby and Lawrencetown in the coming months. For more information on these, please contact Dennis Moerman, Agricultural Resource Coordinator, at 902-837-5162 or email moermade@gov.ns.ca.

It's Census Time

WHEN FARM OPERATORS COMPLETE THEIR 2006 Census of Agriculture questionnaire on May 16, 2006, they will be updating Canada's definitive national agricultural profile. The co-operation of those producing organic products in completing their census forms is now more important than ever before. For 2006, the questionnaire has an expanded organics section that will gather information on certified, transitional and uncertified organic production.

On May 16, 2006, add your voice to those of Canada's organic producers by counting yourself in on the Census of Agriculture. For more information please contact Gaye Ward by telephone at (613) 951-3172 or by e-mail at gaye.ward@statcan.ca.



Have Your Say

ACORN is thinking about organizing a fun fall event in 2007—perhaps a harvest dinner (maybe something like Feast of Fields) or a weekend event celebrating organic living and rural skills, such as Maine’s incredibly successful Common Ground Fair? We welcome your input, ideas and enthusiasm. Let us know what you think:

Beth at ACORN, 1-877-32-ACORN or admin@acornorganic.org

Janet Wallace, 902-825-2432 or jwallace@ns.sympatico.ca

Larry Slipp, 506-488-8904 or slippfms@nbnet.nb.ca

Battling Pests and Weeds – Organically!

THINK YOU MAY HAVE BLACK CUTWORM? Or maybe you have Burdock? But not really sure what to do about it?

Check out ACORN’s new and improved Grower’s Database!

You may know its earlier form as the “Allowable Inputs Database”, but it’s now been expanded to include two new databases on pests and weeds in the Atlantic Canada region.

These two modules include pictures of the pest’s developmental stages to help you identify what you’ve got. There’s information on the growth/life cycle, scientific name, host, bioregion, damage, management and how to control the pest or weed.

“It’s the only database of its kind and so we are very fortunate to have it specifically for our region,” explains Beth McMahon, ACORN Executive Director. “The information on pests and weeds is linked to the inputs database, so all the information is fully integrated and easy to use.”

In order to encourage all growers to use the new tool and reduce agricultural chemicals in Atlantic Canada, ACORN has distributed 9,000 postcards in Rural Delivery, and there is one enclosed with this newsletter. We would also encourage you to share this resource with your friends and neighbours and encourage more sustainable agriculture.

This database is free for anyone to use—just go to www.acornorganic.org and select “Grower’s Database”.

Funding for this project was provided by the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, the PEI Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, and EcoAction (an Environment Canada program). The database was created by Rob Assels and Galloway Systems.

ACORN Updates its Website

WITH BRIGHT COLOURS AND PHOTOS of organic agricultural products, ACORN has updated its website to reflect the vibrant organic community in Atlantic Canada.

Designed by Aaron Harpell, Hammerhead Designs, the site was inspired by the new ACORN brochure. “We wanted to liven up the image of organics in the region, replacing the old brown barn theme with real pictures of real food and farmers,” said Harpell.

Making the site more user-friendly was also critical.

“There’s a lot of information on the ACORN website,” said Beth McMahon, ACORN

Executive Director. “We looked at what information people were visiting most and made that front and centre; the other information is contained in the menu headings at the top.”

What is unique about the website, is that the different information is presented on the left-hand side of the screen and the rest of the website always stays the same. This means that the user doesn’t have to go back to the home page to find what they are looking for—it’s always available at the click of a mouse!

To visit the new ACORN website see www.acornorganic.org

Organic Farmers Needed

SEASPRAY ATLANTIC ORGANIC FARMERS Cooperative is looking for certified organic growers that can provide high quality and reliable volumes. If interested please contact Allison Grant, Project Coordinator, at 902-798-7997 or email seasprayatlantic@hotmail.com