



ACORN

Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network
Issue 23, Winter 2007

IT'S THAT MIDDLE-TIME OF THE YEAR: vegetables are out of the ground and the maple sap hasn't started running yet. It's time to start planning for next season and reflecting on the season we've just had. For many growers, difficult and varying weather conditions presented a challenge this year, but the resilience of our farmers and strong market demand have kept organic agriculture moving forward in Atlantic Canada.

For the ACORN office, it has been an active fall season: our regional organic workshops were a huge success, with approximately 275 people coming out to attend the nine sessions that were offered in Fredericton, Charlottetown and Truro. The workshops proved so popular that the ACORN board has already begun planning the next round in 2007—and we'll be sure to keep you informed!

Of course, the best way to keep abreast of ACORN's many activities is to get involved in them. See page 8 for our February workshops on US organic market opportunities—but register soon, the deadline for registration is January 18.

Inside this issue, you'll also find more information and registration materials for the 2007 ACORN conference and trade show in March. The 2007 conference returns to Cornwall, PEI and will have some great speakers, information-packed workshops and excellent trade show and networking opportunities. We're also excited to be partnering with the PEI Organic Dairy Club to hold a one-day organic dairy symposium in conjunction with the conference. If you haven't been to an ACORN conference recently, don't miss this one! I look forward to seeing you there.

Matthew (Acting Director)

President's Report ACORN Feasibility Study on an Accredited Certifying Body

By Alan Stewart, ACORN President

ABOUT ONE YEAR AGO, ACORN undertook a process to determine possible ways to make our organization more sustainable. One of the concepts that arose was the possibility of ACORN getting into the certification business. Given the impending Federal Regulations, this concept resonated with the two Maritime-based Certification Bodies. MCOG and NSOGA asked ACORN to undertake a feasibility study to determine whether an Accredited Certification Body would be in the best interests of the Maritime organic community in general, and MCOG, NSOGA and ACORN in particular. The steering committee which oversaw the project was as follows:

- NSOGA: Angela Patterson, President
- MCOG: Larry Slipp
- ACORN: Alan Stewart, President
- OCIA (NB): Clark Phillips
- ACORN past-president: Fred Dollar

ACOA funding was secured, and Gardner Pinfold Consulting Economists were contracted to carry out the study. Of particular interest to the Maritime organic community was the consensus achieved during Gardner Pinfold's consultation with the industry.

Consensus Achieved During Consultations:

As part of each consultation meeting areas of consensus related to the future of organic certifications were discussed. Although each session had its own key themes emerge, the following were the items of which consistent consensus were noted.

Consensus Points:

- ACORN should encourage all regional provinces to negotiate same MOU's. (now appears that these will not be required)
- Small producers should be protected and allowed to sell product in own province.
- It would be good to have an Atlantic-based certifying body.
- System must be affordable recognizing that certifying costs will rise for MCOG & NSOGA members.
- Regional control and influence on national standard is important.
- Potential of MOFGA (Maine) model of delivery an area of disagreement.
- ACORN needs to survive.
- Consumer recognition is important.
- Important to ensure whatever model is pursued be feasible
- To do nothing is not an option, "for profits" will fill void.

It should also be noted that on the negative side, the concern was raised (not a consensus) that by virtue of ACORN becoming a certifying body, it would raise some conflict of interest issues in relation to its current role. Gardner Pinfold analyzed this scenario, with the following result.

"It is our view that using a model such as MOFGA, an independent arms-length certifying body could be established with the necessary measures put in place to ensure conflicts of interest do not emerge. It must be recognized that measures must be sufficient to satisfy accreditors."

Upon completion of the Feasibility Study, the Steering Committee unanimously endorsed the concept of the creation of a new Maritime-based and -controlled Accredited Certification

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President's Report on ACORN Feasibility Study on Accredited Certifying Body

Continued from page 1

Body. What has "complicated" this process is the revelation by the National Standards that small producers/processors engaging solely in intra-provincial trade do not require accredited certification. This presents a challenge, in that we may be "arming" ourselves for a battle that may not even occur.

As part of the Feasibility Study, the author outlined an Action Plan to form an Accredited Certification Body. On December 14, 2006, the ACORN board met in Truro to begin this process.

In spite of the fact that the new regulation removes the need for accredited certification for those conducting intra-provincial trade, the Board was unanimous in its desire to press on with a single CB to serve all producers/processors regardless of scale of operation.

As in the case during the consultative process, the minority opinion regarding conflict of interest was raised, suggesting that ACORN should not be directly involved in the new Certification Body. This opinion made it difficult to achieve consensus on the question of Governance. The conflict-of-interest counter opinion, which was also delineated by Gardner Pinfold (see above) was also expressed. It was decided to set this issue aside and begin the process of outlining the factors that we

would like to see considered in the creation of a new Maritime-based Certification Body. When this model is fleshed out, then we would be better equipped to make the decision as to ACORN's role in its governance.

The following is the outline of the main attributes that are to be considered when the model for our new regional CB is developed:

- CB will supply affordable and accessible services to all growers and processors in Atlantic Canada, regardless of size or commodity.
- ~ delivery model will be as simple as possible
- CB Governance model will be simple
- ~ "sole proprietorship" as opposed to coop
- CB will be compliant with ISO 65 protocols
- CB will foster volunteerism
- CB will include a peer review process for those that desire it
- ~ peer review will be done in parallel to ISO 65 certification, not as a replacement to ISO 65.
- CB will achieve and maintain credibility with consumers and industry

With this outline firmly in hand, the Board began the process of fleshing out the concept, a job that will continue over the next few months. It should

be noted that the new CB will not be battling standards development and review, nor will it have to decide on the nature and time frame of application forms, etc. In the past, these issues beset other start-up situations. However the need to adhere to ISO 65 protocols, the new Quality Systems Manual, and the new Federal Organic Regulations, mean that these issues have been already dealt with. The major hurdle for the new CB will be its familiarization with these protocols and how to implement them.

It is my hope that we will have a proposal in hand by end of March 2007. At that time we should be able to make a sound business decision as to whether a new regional CB is feasible. It is also my hope that the original plans of one year ago will be realized, in that as part of an evolving ACORN, an ACORN which wants to be relevant and sustainable, we will be proud parents of a new regional Certifying Body. In light of the recent CFIA determination that intra-provincial trade not require an accredited certification, it is also my hope that our new CB will serve the interests of these folks as well by offering some clarity in the marketplace around the concept of certified organics. Lest we forget, it was this very need that created the push for certification in the first place, a "mere" twenty years ago.

Thanks for "Growing with ACORN"!

MANY THANKS TO THOSE OF YOU WHO generously donated to ACORN's recent fundraising and membership campaign—it has been a great success. Special thanks also go out to Vesey's Seeds for donating the organic baby leaf lettuce seed that was included with each letter. For those of you who didn't get to it yet,

consider donating to ACORN today: your support is what allows us to continue to be the Voice of Organics in Atlantic Canada!

As part of our effort to become more self-sufficient, ACORN has applied for support to conduct a five-year sustainable funding plan. Our provin-

cial core funders have already indicated that their support for ACORN is being scaled back over the next three years. ACORN's sustainable funding plan will help us to continue to represent and advocate for organics in Atlantic Canada. At time of printing, two of the three Maritime ACAAF councils (NBAC and ADAPT) have approved ACORN's application for funding; the third council is currently considering our joint application. More to come.



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Speakers You Won't Want to Miss!

Bob Burke founded Natural Products Consulting in early 1998. Prior to that he was Vice President of Sales and Corporate Development for Stonyfield Farm Yogurt (1986-1998). During his tenure, the company grew from approximately \$1 million to \$43 million in sales, achieved national and international distribution, and became well known as a leader in socially and environmentally responsible business practices. Bob has been active in the Organic Trade Association, and as an outside board member of Equal Exchange, a worker owned co-op that practices fair trade with third world farmer co-ops. Currently he is an outside director of the Nantucket Harvest Company, Inc. and EcoFish, a leading brand of sustainably harvested and safe seafood products. In 2004, Bob was named one of the "Top 25 Business Builders" of the Natural Products Industry by Natural Foods Merchandiser Magazine.

Klaas and Mary-Howell Martens. With their 3 children, Klaas and Mary-Howell

Martens farm 1400 acres of organic corn, soybeans, small grains (spelt, wheat, oats, barley, triticale, rye) and processing vegetables (red kidney beans, sauerkraut cabbage, snap beans, sweet corn). They also own and operate Lakeview Organic Grain, an organic feed mill and seed operation that serves most of the organic dairy farmers in New York. Additionally, they speak at conferences around North America and Mary-Howell has written numerous articles on organic farming issues for the Rodale Institute's New Farm webmagazine.

Gary Zimmer is a farmer, author, agribusinessman and educator dedicated to biological agriculture. He is recognized around the world for his dedication to improving farming through restoring soils and has spoken to farmers and agribusiness professionals all across the U.S. and in Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. For the past 25 years, Gary has been evaluating farming practices as a consultant, on his family's farm,

and as president of Midwestern Bio-Ag, a biological farming consulting company located in Blue Mounds, Wis. He operates the Bio-Ag Learning Center, where biological farming practices and agricultural products are field-tested. The Zimmer family's Otter Creek Organic Farm, which includes a 200-cow organic dairy, also utilizes the ideas Gary has gleaned over a lifetime spent studying agriculture. His focus remains on the soil as the source of nutrients: how healthy soils produce healthy plants for healthy livestock and healthy humans.

John Cleary is the Dairy Pool Coordinator with Organic Valley Farmers Co-op. Formed in 1988, Organic Valley is the largest and most successful organic farmer cooperative in the United States. The co-op is farmer-owned and manages the hugely successful Organic Valley brand of organic products. John will speak about the ways in which the cooperative model can be used to increase product marketability while directly benefiting individual farmers.

Organic Dairy Symposium – Thursday, March 1, 2007

THIS YEAR, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE annual conference and trade show, ACORN and the PEI Organic Dairy Club will hold a special one-day Organic Dairy Symposium. This symposium on organic dairy issues will include speakers from Quebec and Ontario organic dairy cooperatives, talks on Maritime issues, transitioning, soil and nutrient needs, marketing and production, and will feature headliner speakers John Cleary (Organic Valley Farmers Co-op) and Ted Zettel (Organic Meadow). Please see the

symposium, conference and trade show agenda included with this newsletter for more information.

Registration for the Organic Dairy Symposium is separate from conference registration but includes the Thursday night conference kick-off event, led by renowned dairy and soil expert Gary Zimmer (MidWestern BioAg), who will also take part in the symposium's afternoon panel discussion. Dairy farmers should note that

the full ACORN conference will also have workshops of interest to them, including soil health and micronutrients, organic livestock feed production, grains and cereals, and marketing talks from numerous organic specialists.

The Organic Dairy Symposium is sponsored by the PEI ADAPT Council and PEI Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Purity Dairy Limited and Amalgamated Dairies Limited (ADL).

THURSDAY, MARCH 1ST – ORGANIC DAIRY SYMPOSIUM AND ACORN CONFERENCE

9:00 — 9:20	Organic Dairy Symposium <u>Registration</u> (all sessions in North River room)		
9:20 — 10:30	Welcome – Roger Henry Organic Dairy: What is the Future? Market Diversity and Longevity – John Cleary , Dairy Pool Coordinator, Organic Valley Farmers Co-op		
10:30 — 11:00	Refreshment Break		
11:00 — 12:00	Organic Dairy in Quebec: Structure, Transition Costs and Premiums Nelson Paradis , Farm Management Specialist, Coordinator of Lac St Jean organic dairy club		
12:00 — 1:00	Lunch Break Regional Organic Dairy Developments – Jim Bradley , ADL and others		
1:00 — 2:30	Managing Soil Fertility on Organic Dairy Farms – Derek Lynch , NSAC Crop Rotations for Maritime Dairy Farms – Ted Zettel , Organic Meadow		
2:30 — 3:00	Refreshment Break		
3:00 — 5:00	Effective Transition: Panel of 4 speakers: John Cleary – What Works in Northeast US; Nelson Paradis – Successful Techniques in Quebec; Gary Zimmer – More Options; Fraser Hunter – My Experience in NS		
6:30 — 9:00	ACORN Conference Registration for evening session and full conference		Trade Show set up
7:00 — 9:30	ACORN Conference Kick-Off (North River) Hon. Jim Bagnall , PEI Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture Gary Zimmer , Midwestern BioAg		
FRIDAY, MARCH 2ND – ACORN CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW			
7:30 — 8:30	<u>Registration</u> in lobby		Trade Show set up
8:30 — 10:00	<u>Opening Session</u> (North River) Welcome and conference overview: Alan Stewart , ACORN President Michel Saumur , Canada Organic Office John Cleary , Organic Valley Farmers Co-op		Trade Show Opens
10:00 — 10:30	Refreshment Break		Trade Show Visit
10:30 — 12:00	<u>Soil & Production</u> Lupines, Flax trials – Andy Hammermeister Cereal tillage research – Mark Bernard	<u>Marketing</u> Managing your market gardens for CSAs – David Greenberg	Organic Pork Production and Networking Session 1 Trade Show
12:00 — 12:30			Trade Show Visit

12:30 — 1:30	Lunch Buffet				Trade Show
1:30 — 2:30	<u>Soil & Production</u> What makes healthy soil? – Tim Livingstone hosted by Gary Zimmer	<u>Marketing</u> Handling and Marketing of Grains – Mary-Howell and Klaas Martens	Organic Pork Production and Networking Session 2		
2:30 — 3:00	Refreshment Break				Trade Show Visit
3:00 — 4:30	<u>Group session</u> (North River): Bob Burke – Market opportunities and growth in organics Marketing talk sponsored by AAFC		Organic Pork Production and Networking Session 3		
4:45 — 6:30			OACC Advisory Forum Hosted by Ralph Martin		Trade Show Closed
7:00 — 9:00	Organic Buffet Dinner, Keynote Address, Gerrit Loo Award and Silent Auction. Keynote: Mary-Howell and Klaas Martens				
9:00 — 12:00	Social Time: cash bar and céilidh (bring your instruments!)				
SATURDAY, MARCH 3RD – ACORN CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW					
7:30 — 8:30	Breakfast buffet				
7:45 — 9:15	ACORN's Annual General Meeting 7:45 – 9:15				
9:30 — 10:30	<u>Soil & Production</u> Carrot mowing for white mould – Rick Peters Results of OACC Carrot and Broccoli Cultivar trials – Roxanne Beavers	<u>Marketing</u> Selling to restaurants and kitchens – Ann Doyle Selling to retailers – Allison Grant	9:30 – 12:30 Seedy Saturday and Organics for Gardeners Workshop		Trade Show
10:30 — 12:00	<u>Soil & Production</u> Weed control for field crops – Mary-Howell and Klaas Martens	<u>Marketing</u> Record-keeping for streamlined certification – Rowena Hopkins and Roxanne Beavers	Other Events and Activities: Brainstorming Roundtable on setting up an organic apprenticeship program for PEI: with Andrea Berry and Ellen Trainor Informal roundtable meeting of organic inspectors Grower Meet-and-Greet session with Speerville Flour Mill Informal visit to the Charlottetown Farmer's Market		
12:15 — 1:00	Lunch Buffet				
1:00 — 2:30	<u>Soil & Production</u> Mineral, Plant and field Management – Gary Zimmer	<u>Marketing</u> Business start-up: Leveraging your organic advantage – Jamey Coughlin Business planning for growth – Gary Morton			
2:30 — 3:00	Refreshment Break				Trade Show Visit
3:00 — 4:30	<u>Wrap-up Plenary Session:</u> PEI ADAPT Council – Phil Ferraro A New Organic Regulation for Canada: What it Means for You – Canadian Organic Regulation Council (CORC)				Trade Show closes at 5:00pm

Seedy Saturday and “Organics for Gardeners” Workshop

SATURDAY MARCH 3RD, 2007, 9:30–12:30pm. Last year’s “Seedy Saturday” event was so successful we’ve brought it back for another year! The Seedy Saturday seed exchange will take place in conjunction with the ACORN annual conference and public trade show, at the Howard Johnson Dutch Inn in Cornwall, PEI. Anyone interested in seeds is welcome—whether you have years of experience and pounds of seeds, a handful of seeds, or perhaps you just want to buy some heirloom seed for your home garden.

There will be lots of information also available: from Seeds of Diversity Canada’s publications on seed saving to updates on the recent manifesto on seed saving developed at the 2006 Terra Madre international conference in Turin, Italy.

ACORN will also be offering a modestly priced “Organics for Gardeners” workshop for the general public on the morning of Saturday, March 3rd. This will be a great opportunity to learn more about the

principles behind organics and some of the simple ways you can garden organically. Visit the ACORN website for more information: www.acornorganic.org.

We would like to have an idea of how many seed-savers will want a table or to share or sell their seeds at this event. If you are interested in participating, please email admin@acornorganic.org.

Volunteers Needed

ACORN IS NOW ACCEPTING NAMES for volunteers for the 2007 Organic Conference in Cornwall, PE, March 1-3, 2007. In exchange for four hours, we will offer volunteers a day pass of their choice. Positions available are:

- Trade show coordinators
- Silent auction coordinators
- Sponsorship coordinator
- Registration clerks
- Event and Meal Ticket oversight
- Technical Assistance
- Children’s Program

Please let Matthew at ACORN know if you are interested in volunteering, or for more detailed position descriptions (1-866-32-ACORN or admin@acornorganic.org).

Musicians take note!

FOLLOWING THE CONFERENCE BANQUET (Friday, March 2nd), ACORN invites musicians of all skills to get together for an “organic céilidh”. Bring your instruments and music makers and let’s kick up our heels! Have any instruments to share? Why not bring them along and help grow the music!

Where to stay

THE HOWARD JOHNSON’S DUTCH INN is offering ACORN conference attendees a special rate of \$79 per night. Please be sure to indicate that you are coming for the ACORN conference when you make your booking to get this special rate. You can book your room for the conference and trade show by calling the Dutch Inn at 1-800-915-4656.

Thanks to our sponsors!

ACORN WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS EARLY opportunity to thank the PEI ADAPT Council, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Carrot Cache and our other sponsors and key partners in the 2007 conference and trade show.

There are still sponsorship and trade show opportunities available. Take advantage of our variety of sponsorship options—designed for any budget—and increase the profile of your business while reaching this year’s largest concentration of organic consumers, growers, processors and specialists in Atlantic Canada.

ACORN would like to thank Maggie Wright, a student in Holland College’s Graphic Design program who developed this year’s ACORN conference and trade show logo.



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Organic farm for lease / sale

Morgan Farm, located south of Mt-Tremblant, Quebec, produces a variety of organic meats and baked goods sold mainly to direct consumers. Sales are over \$400,000. Owner is at retirement age and is willing to offer advantageous financing to right party. Ideal for couple with farming and administrative experience. Fax or e-mail enquiry with cv to: 819/687-9926, john@fermemorgan.com

Speerville Flour Mill Celebrates 25th Anniversary!

SPEERVILLE, NB - ON A BITTER COLD day in January 1982 with a winter storm moving in, two men in a mechanically-challenged half ton truck drove to Grand Falls, NB to save locally grown, high quality milling wheat destined to become feed had they not intervened. Stu Fleischhaker and George Berthault drove the wheat down to Speerville, NB (near Woodstock) where they employed a community-owned stone mill and ground it into flour. These two adventurers loaded the freshly ground flour back into the truck and immediately delivered it to a health food store in Fredericton. Seventy-two hours and a brake job later, the weary millers returned home to unthaw their residences and celebrate the first sale of Speerville Flour Mill stoneground whole wheat flour.

Twenty-five years later, Speerville Flour Milling Cooperative Ltd. is still operating



on that spirit of determination and ingenuity to bring locally grown products to local markets. We have grown into a bustling enterprise now producing and distributing over 140 different products including flours, cereals, baking mixes, and other locally produced goods in Atlantic Canada, and employing local people in our rural operations. Thanks to the support of our loyal and discerning customers, we are very pleased to celebrate our 25th Anniversary in 2007 and to continue to support sustainable local organic agriculture and healthy lifestyles in the Maritimes. The future is bright and busy for Speerville Flour Mill and we look forward to continued success and support

of our co-operative business for the next twenty-five years!

Speerville Flour Mill is always looking for new growers: join them at the ACORN Conference and Trade Show, March 1-3, 2007 in Cornwall, PEI to learn more.



Ann Doyle Photo

If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact Speerville Flour Mill in Atlantic Canada TOLL FREE at 1-866-277-6371 or by email at speerville@xplornet.com.



Final Organic Products Regulations Released

ON DECEMBER 21, 2006, THE ORGANIC Products Regulations were released in the Canada Gazette, Part II. The regulations take into consideration the feedback from organic stakeholders on the proposed regulations released in September and include a rationale and responses to many comments that were received during the consultation process. Phased in over the next two years, the Canada Organic logo will be permitted for use only on those food products certified as meeting the

revised Canadian standard for organic production and that contain at least 95 percent organic ingredients. Following this phase-in period, it will be mandatory that all organic products be certified for interprovincial and international trade. Links to the official regulation as well as the newly updated organic standards (Organic Production Systems: General Principles and Management Standards) are available on the ACORN website, www.acornorganic.org.

AGM Notice

Attention all ACORN members!

The Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network Co-op Ltd. will hold its Annual General Meeting on Saturday, March 3, 2007 from 7:45am to 9:15am at the Howard Johnson Dutch Inn in Cornwall, PEI



ACORN's Regional Organic Workshops a Huge Success!

APPROXIMATELY 275 PEOPLE ATTENDED ACORN's fall workshops, and plans are already underway to hold more in 2007. The sessions were held in Fredericton, Charlottetown and Truro, in October, November and December. AgraPoint Organic and Rural Infrastructure Specialist Av Singh, and experienced organic inspector Brian Ives led the first session on "Getting Into Organic Agriculture." Jolly Farmer compost tea specialist and certified SoilFood Web advisor Tim Livingstone and Quebec grower-advisor Anne Weill led the second workshop series on "Building Soil Health and Fertility." The final series of presentations, "Managing Pests and Diseases

Organically," were made by Quebec researcher and lecturer Jean Duval. The workshops were made possible through the support of the Maritime Councils that administer the ACAAF Program and

through the involvement of the Maritime provincial Departments of Agriculture and AgraPoint. Our thanks to them for all of their help.



Above, speakers Tim Livingstone and Anne Weill take questions during the Fredericton Building Soil Health and Fertility workshop.

Special Meet-and-Greet Sessions: US organic market opportunities

LOOKING TO FIND OUT ABOUT WHAT IS happening in the US Organic Marketplace? ACORN is partnering with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canadian Consulate in Chicago to bring a series of one-day workshops to Atlantic Canada. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of this great opportunity to learn more about current opportunities and trends in the US organic marketplace. The sessions will feature speakers from Whole Foods, the Trade Commissioner from Chicago, a US Distributor and the Organic Trade Association, who will provide an overview of the market and discuss current opportunities.

The sessions will be held in Charlottetown on February 12, Fredericton on February 13, and Halifax on February 14. Each seminar will run from 8:30am-3:00pm, will include organic refreshment breaks and lunch, and will be followed by a meet-and-greet session with speakers in the afternoon.

To pre-register for any of the three sessions, call Matthew Holmes at the ACORN office: 1-866-32-ACORN by Thursday January 18, 2007. Only those pre-registered will be able to attend (no day-of registrations). The cost of a session is \$35 (includes organic lunch), payable by cheque or credit card to ACORN.

Comings and Goings

ACORN WOULD LIKE TO THANK LARRY Slipp, MCOG representative on the ACORN board, for his many years of service, volunteerism and strong conviction when it comes to organics. Larry's voice and opinions will be missed at our board meetings and events. We would also like to welcome the incoming MCOG board representative, BW Wildsmith. BW has already jumped right into things and is heavily involved in our many projects currently underway. Good luck Larry, we hope to see you soon! Welcome BW, we're glad to have you with us!