

Transitioning to Organic Field Crop Production

March 5th, 2008



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Seven Important Principles

(taken from the National Organic Standards)

- **Protect the environment, avoid soil degradation, eliminate reliance on synthetically-based compounds, decrease polluting activities,**
- **Encourage soil health and fertility ... with crop rotations, compost, manure, green manure crops,**
- **Encourage biological diversity within the farm and its surroundings with mixed farming, crop rotations, wildlife protection,**
- **Recycling materials and resources with adequate manure & compost management, and use off-farm inputs only when required,**



Seven Important Principles

- 5) **Provide attentive care to animals in order to promote their health and respect their behavioral needs,**
- 6) **Maintain the organic integrity and vital qualities of organic food,**
- 7) **Rely on renewable and local resources.**



What is Organic Agriculture, continued

- **A holistic method of producing crops or raising livestock, by working with fundamental biological systems, by adopting sound preventive strategies, and when required, by using naturally occurring materials.**

The system does not allow the use of synthetic pesticides, and synthetic chemical fertilizers. The system also prohibits the use of antibiotics*, growth regulators, genetically modified crops and irradiation.



What is Organic Agriculture, continued

It is more than ...

- **No synthetic pesticides ?**
- **No synthetic chemical fertilizers ?**
- **No antibiotics ?**
- **No GMOs**
- **Like the 50's ?**



Organic farming is not a ZERO input system



Soil Amendments Options

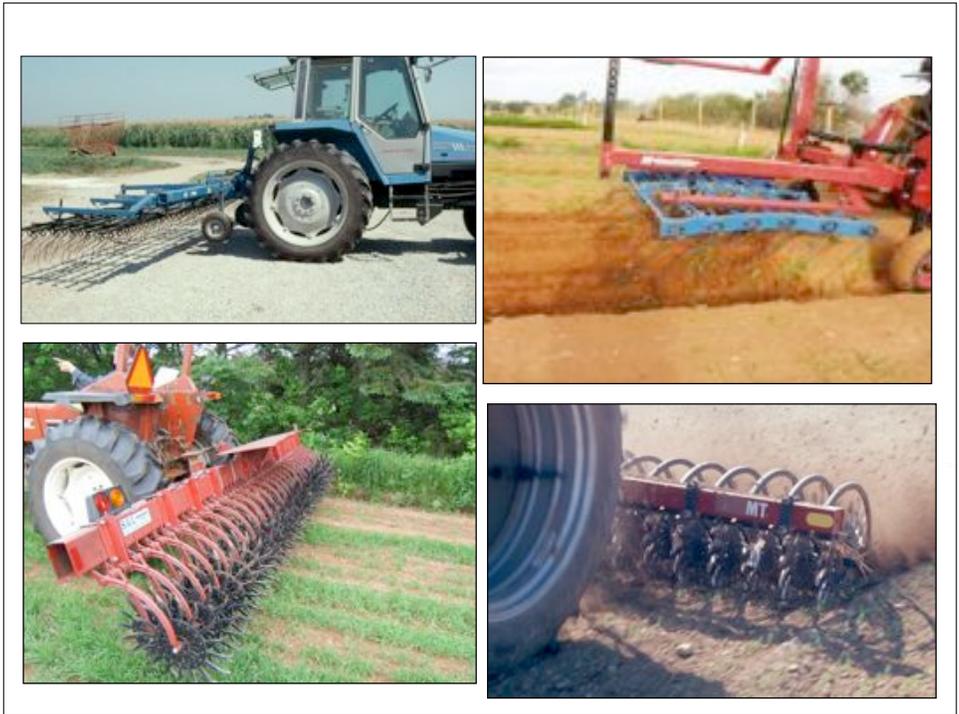
| Organic Materials | | Rock powders: |
|---|--------------------------------|---|
| Green manure crops, | fish products (hydrolysate, | Cacitic limestone Dolomitic limesotne |
| Manure Granulated manure | biological inoculants, | rock phosphate (0-3-0), |
| Compost (manure/crops/seafood) | organic acids | K-Mag (0-0-22-0-11-22) |
| Compost tea | | gypsum(22%Ca,16%S) |
| Several meals (fish, crab, alfalfa, ...) | | greensand (0-0-7), basalt, epsom salt, |



Weed Control Options:

Mechanical weeders (Flex-tine, rotary hoe, cultivators, sweeps), **Cultural practices** (Crop rotations, cover crop “smothering crop”, fallows, mowing) and **flamers**, etc.







What is “Organic Certification”

- **The organic certification is a system that certifies that products are grown or processed according to well defined standards. In December 2008, the CGSB National Organic Standards will be the reference Standards in Canada.**
- **Under this system, farmers and processors are required to keep detailed records on production, processing, marketing and sales. These records will ensure traceability and integrity.**
- **Third Party Independent Inspectors inspect annually the operation, verify records, and see if the standards are met. Subsequently, the inspector will provide the certification agencies with comprehensive report and recommendations.**
- **If the standards are met, the certification agency will issue a certificate to the operator.**

Organic Standards

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Organic Regulations



Organic Standards

- **National Organic Standards**
 - 1st Standards: Released in 1999** (voluntary)
 - 2nd Edition announced in Dec 06**
 - includes two documents:
 - a) *General Principles & Management Standards*
 - b) *Permitted Substance List (PSL)*





Organic Products Regulations (OPR)

Provides a legal framework (managed by CFIA) that will oversee:

- The Canadian certification system
- The Canada organic label

Announced in Dec 06

Will be fully implemented by Dec 08

Under the Organic Products Regulations, the Canadian Organic Standards will become mandatory for stakeholders who are involved in inter-provincial and import/export activities.

What does the OPR say:

- If you plan to sell organic products inter-provincially or trade internationally, the Regulations will oversee your certification system
 - Your certification agency must to be accredited by a CFIA recognized accreditor
 - You must meet the CGSB Organic Standards
- If you plan to use the Canada Organic Logo, you must be under the regulations “must be certified by a recognized accredited certification agency”.

A screenshot of a news article from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency website. The page features a header with the agency's name and logo, and a main title: "New Regulations to Protect Canadian Consumers and Support Growth of Organic Products Industry". The article text discusses the implementation of organic product regulations, mentioning the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board. It states that the regulations will protect consumers against false organic claims and support the organic industry's growth. The article also mentions that the Canada Organic logo will be permitted for use only in those food products certified as meeting the revised Canadian standard for organic production and that contain at least 95 percent organic ingredients. The article concludes by stating that these regulations are a result of comprehensive national consultations which began in 2003.

Canada Food Inspection Agency Agence canadienne d'inspection des aliments

Canada

CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY
www.inspection.gc.ca

New Regulations to Protect Canadian Consumers and Support Growth of Organic Products Industry

Ottawa, December 22, 2006 - The Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, announced final publication of the Organic Products Regulations that will protect consumers against false organic claims and will govern the use of a new Canada Organic logo.

"Through these regulations, Canada's new Government is providing a competitive advantage for the Canadian organic sector and protecting consumers," said Minister Strahl. "Not only will Canadians be protected against deceptive and misleading claims on organic products, but the organic industry's capacity to respond to international and domestic market opportunities will be strengthened."

Phase-in over the next few years, the Canada Organic logo will be permitted for use only in 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.

Canada now joins more than 40 other countries worldwide with organic regulations.

These regulations are a result of comprehensive national consultations which began in 2003.

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The Organic Products Regulations may be obtained on the www.inspection.gc.ca or the [Canada Canada website](http://www.canadaparis.gc.ca) of www.canadaparis.gc.ca.



USDA NOP Label



Canada Organic Label



Organic Certifiers in Atl. Canada

- Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA-NB)
- Ecocert Canada / Garantie Bio.
- OCPP / PRO-Cert Canada In.
- Maritime Certified Organic Growers Co-op (MCOG)
- Nova Scotia Organic Growers Association (NSOGA)
- Global Organic Alliance Inc.
- Center of Systems Integrated (CSI)
- (QMI)



Certification Bodies

Accredited



Global Organic Alliance, Inc.

Non-Accredited



Certification Fees

- **Fee variable depending on:**
 - **Type of operation**
 - **Size of operation:** amount of sales, # of fields, # of crops,
 - **Complexity of the operation:** parallel production, equipment co-mingling, multi-commodity, processing,
 - **Certification agencies**
- **Fee structures are now very transparent**

Organic Stakeholder Groups

- **ACORN (Atl Canadian Organic Regional Network)**
- **OACC (Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada- Truro)**
- **Organic Grain and Oilseed Network**
- **MCOG and OCIA (Organic Certifiers)**
- **Falls Brook Centre (FBC)**
- **Canadian Organic Growers**



How to get started ...

- **Understand the basics of organic agriculture and the CGSB National Organic Standards.**
- **What are the market opportunities for the crops you plan to grow?** Who are the buyers? What are the prices? Can the crop be grown successfully? Is there a local market? What are the long term market perspectives?
- **Determine if organic is really for you.** Are the organic principles something that you can adhere too? Is the record keeping doable?



How to get started ... continued

- **Business Planning “Is it feasible?”**
 - Consider reasonable yields and prices “COP”.
Depressed yields are often observed in early transition and no organic premiums until the crops are certified.
 - Determine investments needed to get started.
- **Prepare a transitional plan “on paper”**
 - Identify production and marketing barriers and possible solutions and related expenses.
 - Identify human resources and input suppliers.
 - Identify potential buyers.



How to get started ... continued

- **Identify a certification agency and make initiate contact as soon as possible.**
- **Identify factors that may threaten your certification:**
Environmental pollution, pesticide spray drift, un-sympathetic neighbours, gmo crops, co-mingling of equipment, accidental contamination, and errors made while in parallel production.
- **Determine buffer zones and the ones which have the highest risk of getting contaminated.**
- **Develop management plan for those buffer zones that include cropping.**



How to get started ... continued

Consider good agronomy

- Determine the length of the transition period needed. Give yourself sufficient time before converting the entire farm to organic production.
 - Consider a slow and well thought-out transition.
 - A field by field transition approach is often wise.
- Understand your soils, their limitation and ways to improve them:
 - drainage, pH and fertility, weed issues
 - identify soil inputs needed and sources
- Identify crops that are suitable.
- Develop possible crop rotations and fertilization plans.
- Identify pests & diseases and control measures



Weed Control Options:

Mechanical weeders:

Flex-tine, rotary hoe, cultivators, sweeps.

Cultural practices:

Crop rotations, cover crop “smothering crop”, fallows, and mowing,

Flamers, ...



How to get started ... continued

- **Avoid common mistakes:**
 - Underestimating the need for a good transitional & marketing plan.
 - Underestimating the need to fully comprehend the National Organic Standards and PSL.
 - Failing to think “holistic” & “prevention” and failing to develop sustainable crop rotations. Organic is not about input replacement (from synthetic to organic input)



Useful Websites:

- **NBDAA website (organic section)**
<http://www.gnb.ca/0174/0174index-e.asp>
- **Organic Agriculture Center of Canada (OACC)**
<http://www.organicagcentre.ca/>
- **Agri-reseau/ Agriculture biologique**
<http://www.agrireseau.qc.ca/agriculturebiologique/>
- **Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA)**
<http://www.attra.org/>
- **Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network (ACORN)**
<http://www.acornorganic.org>
- **Canadian Organic Growers (COG)**
<http://www.cog.ca/>



Internet:
Key word “Organic Transition”



Directory of Allowable Organic input
<http://www.acornorganic.org/acorn/index.html>



Thank you

