

# About the COABC

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## What is COABC?

The Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC) is an umbrella association for certification bodies which provides certification accreditation and leadership in the development of organic food production throughout British Columbia and Canada. The COABC was created in 1993 under the Agri-Food Choice and Quality Act of British Columbia to administer the BC Certified Organic Program, to ensure program credibility, facilitate domestic and international trade, and to promote the overall growth of the organic food community in BC.

## Accreditation

The COABC accredits agencies who inspect and certify organic operations. There are currently 11 accredited certifying bodies in BC. Some are regionally accredited specializing in local distribution while others are also ISO 17011 accredited allowing their members to participate in cross-border trade.

## Certification

Organic certification provides consumers with the assurance that organic operators are meeting organic production standards. The COABC ensures the integrity of the "BC Certified Organic" certification and its accompanying checkmark symbol.

## Standards

The COABC enforces compliance with the national Canada Organic Standard, ensuring a credible organic designation for local consumers and an accepted certification program for BC produced organic exports. See the COABC link to standards: [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/Standards/](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/Standards/)

## The Voice of Organics in BC

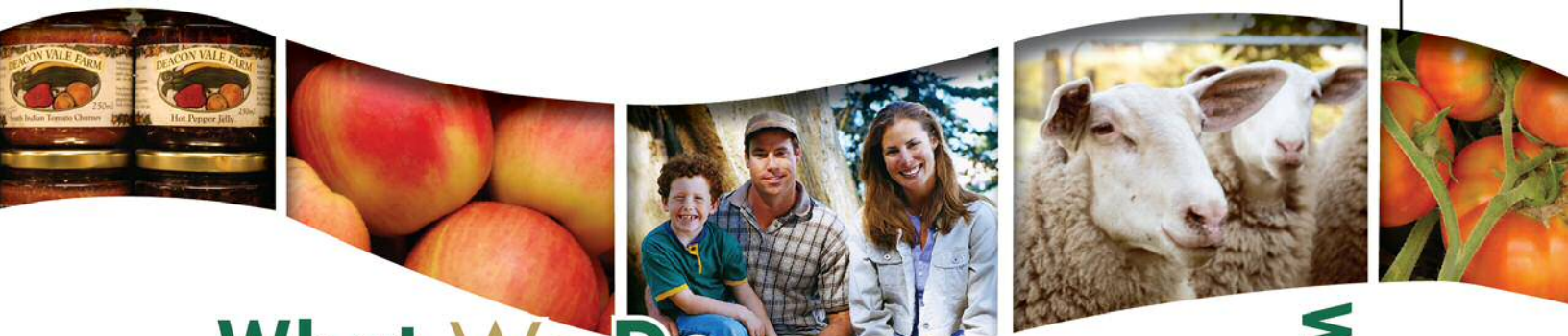
The COABC is committed to promoting the importance of organic agriculture which helps ensure the long-term health and vitality of our region. The COABC seeks to educate farmers transitioning to organic production; advocate for organic consumption; provide current research and vital information for consumers, producers, stakeholders and the media; and interface with federal and provincial governments, and various organic sector stakeholders.

Good for You, Good for the Environment

202-3002 32nd Ave, Vernon, BC, V1T 2L7

Phone: 250-260-4429 Fax: 250-260-4436

[www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca)



# What We Do

# What We Do

With the sales of organic products continuing to grow, consumers' concern for food-safety and reducing the environmental footprint, upholding the national Canada Organic Standard and ensuring the credibility of the "British Columbia Certified Organic" label has never been more important.

## COABC Provides

- **Accreditation** to member agencies who inspect and certify organic farms throughout BC
- Administration of the **BC Certified Organic Program**
- Marketing tools and promotional support for certified organic operators
- **Leadership** in national organic standards
- Up-to-date industry information via the COABC web-site, Cyber-help, e-news, and staff support
- Networking and sharing opportunities for stakeholders
- An **Online directory** of local suppliers and growers
- Representation to the **Ministry of Agriculture** in matters relating to the Agri-Food Choice and Quality Act of British Columbia
- Access to the **Organic Sector Development Program**, a multi-million dollar federal-provincial fund that encourages research and development to encourage and facilitate organic production
- **Research Fund** programs helping to match project funding partners' investments and agencies

## COABC Connects

- Organic growers and farmers, processors, handlers, wholesalers, distributors and retailers
- Consumers with organic producers
- Local and global producers with stakeholders
- Directly with provincial and federal governments

## COABC Educates

- Through **Cyber-Help**, the most popular on-line organic resource in **Western Canada**
- By circulating the quarterly journal, the **BC Organic Grower**
- Through its comprehensive **Website**
- By employing qualified staff to respond to calls

## COABC Communicates

- Local and provincial events and issues
- Regulatory and industry updates

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## Sponsorship Programs



**Become a COABC Sponsor and cultivate the growth of certified organic food and agriculture throughout British Columbia.**

The Certified Organic Associations of BC relies on generous financial partnerships with allied organizations to support our operations and essential programs. This is your opportunity to expose your brand to a large and growing target market.

Please join us in promoting a healthier, more vital and prosperous region by becoming a sponsor of COABC. Our diverse sponsorship programs include value-added sponsor benefits and comprehensive exposure. For more information, and to reserve your exclusive sponsorship opportunity, please contact the COABC Sponsorship Administrator, Jen Gamble at 250-260-4429.

In addition to sponsorship COABC offers advertising in their journal that is distributed to over 700 organic producers in B.C. For more information about advertising please call the COABC office: 250-260-4429.

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# Sponsorship Programs

## **Sector Quarterly Journal BC Organic Grower (BCOG)**

It goes out to close to 700 subscribers in the BC organic sector including all members of the organizations belonging to the Certified Organic Association of British Columbia. The BCOG has been in print for over 10 years and is well respected in the sector. It is a source of technical learning and sector information, including research updates and events. Your support will help keep this valuable tool available and support more cutting-edge content.

## **Annual Conference**

This is the organic sector event of the year! This fun and educational opportunity has become a tradition which includes special speakers, workshops, networking and social events. All COABC members, organic agricultural enthusiasts, and the general public are invited. Advertising for the conference has a reach of over 1,142,000. Your support makes this event possible!

## **Website**

When people are looking for BC organics they discover our website first! The website traffic averages 12,000,000 per month and is continually increasing. Our website includes a user-friendly database of certified products and producers, how to become certified, local events, learning options and so much more. COABC members, those thinking of becoming certified and consumers have come to rely on this site! Being a sponsor of the COABC website represents a partnership with people who are working to provide healthy food, from healthy soil, with sustainable practices.

## **Cyber-help for Organic Farmers**

One of the best online farming resources in BC and across Canada! It experiences an average of 11,000 page views monthly and has over 60 relevant incoming links from web sites and blogs. It is #1 ranking on Google for organic farming news, organic fruit prices, organic companies, and organic seed sources searches. Our objective is to encourage organic food production in Canada by improving accessibility to quality organic farming content online. Visit [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca) to learn more. Your support will increase our capacity to provide more current information, answer more Q&A and provide more up-to-date coverage of Canadian farming networking opportunities.

## **Pacific Agricultural Show (PAS)**

The PAS is an annual event which attracts over 7500 farmers and producers from across BC, Alberta and the Pacific Northwest. It is the largest BC agricultural show with over 200 exhibitors, high-end educational sessions and infinite networking possibilities. As the sponsor for this event you will make it possible for COABC to provide an organic presence in the agriculture sector of BC.

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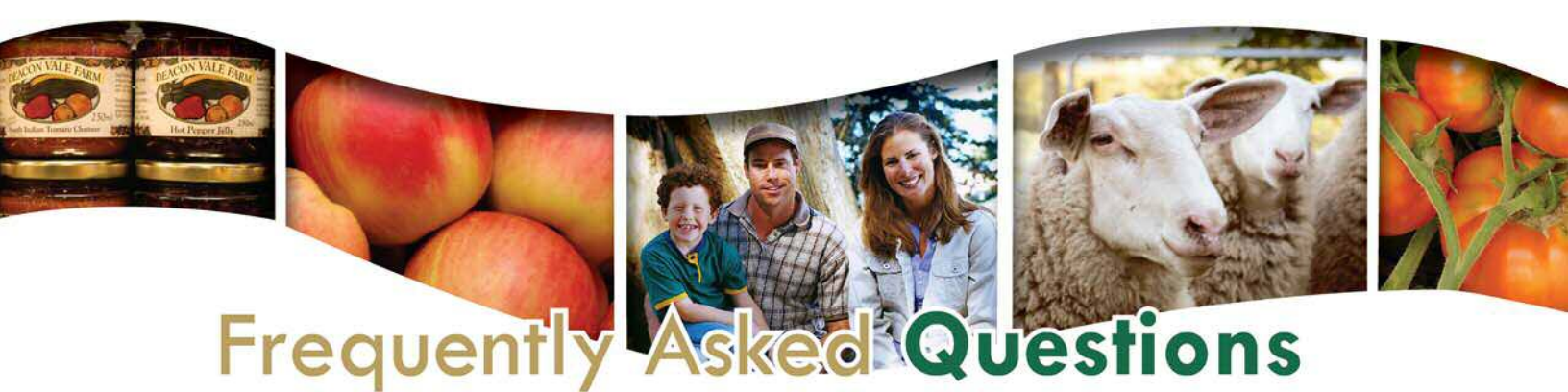


# COABC Sponsor

# Benefits Grid



	<i>Diamond</i>	<i>Platinum</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Silver</i>	<i>Bronze</i>	<i>Donations</i>
	\$10000	\$5000+	\$2500+	\$1000+	\$500+	\$100 - \$500
<b>Sector Journal BC Organic Grower</b>						
Full page colour ad on back Cover 1 issues (1 spot)	X					
Full page colour ad inside 4 issues	X	X				
½ page b/w ad inside 4 issues			X			
¼ page b/w ad inside 4 issues				X		
Business card b/w ad inside 4 issues					X	
Logo or name on Partners page	X	X	X	X	X	
<b>Annual Conference</b>						
Logo recognition on banners, signage and annual report cover	X	X				
Trade show booth variety of sizes	X	X	X			
Logo recognition on Partner marquee	X	X	X	X		
Logo or name on Partners Page	X	X	X	X	X	X
VIP Conference Passes	4 passes	2 passes	2 passes	1 pass	2 Feast	
<b>Web Site</b>						
Logo on home page for 1 year	X					
Link to your organization	X	X	X	X	X	
Name or logo on Partners web page	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Cyber-Help</b>						
Sponsor brand page 1 year	X	X				
Logo & write up on Partners Page	X	X	X	X	X	
<b>Pacific Agricultural Show</b>						
Main Sponsor on display booth & on handouts	X	X	X	X	X	
Name or Logo on Partners Page	X	X	X	X	X	X



# Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. What is organic certification?**

A. Organic certification is the process undertaken to verify organic agricultural products have been grown, stored, processed, handled and marketed in accordance with precise technical specifications (standards). Once a certification body has verified conformity with organic standards, the product can be labeled as such and this label serves as assurance that the essential elements constituting an "organic" product have been met. It is important to note that an organic label applies to a production process claim as opposed to a product quality claim.

**Q. What is involved with obtaining organic certification for my operation?**

A. You need to join a certification body (CB) which will supply the certification package including standards and procedures. The certification package also includes an organic system plan for you to complete and submit to the CB where it is reviewed, approved and then assigned to a verification officer (VO). The VO completes an inspection of farm or facilities to verify that organic practices such as long-term soil management, buffering between organic farms and neighboring conventional farms, and recordkeeping are being followed. Processing inspections include a review of the facility's cleaning and pest control methods, product profiles, ingredient transportation and storage, recordkeeping and audit control.

**Q. Where do I find contact information for COABC certification bodies?**

A. Depending on where you farm or process, there may be one or several organic certifications agencies that serve your region. There are eleven organic certifying agencies accredited through the Certified Organic Association of BC, some of which work solely within their bioregion, while others conduct organic certifications throughout the province. See the enclosed contact sheet or visit the COABC website [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca).

**Q. How long does it take to become certified?**

A. This depends on the type of operation (farm vs processing) and the land use history of the farming site. It takes 36 months for locations which have used a prohibited substance on cropland. If no-prohibited substances have been used, it will only take one year of transition. Breeding herds need 12 months but can transition simultaneously to land in its final year of transition. Processing operations can be certified as soon as the verification process is complete and the CB issues a certificate. Ask your CB for additional requirements.

**Q. How much does certification cost?**

A. A membership may range from \$25 to \$500 per year depending upon the CB. Other costs will be charged to cover certification expenses including the on-site verification inspection and the certification review process. Some CBs have flat rates, but will charge additional fees for more extensive files, while others charge hourly for their certification services. Hourly rates can be as much as \$50/hour or more.

**Q. Do I have to apply every year?**

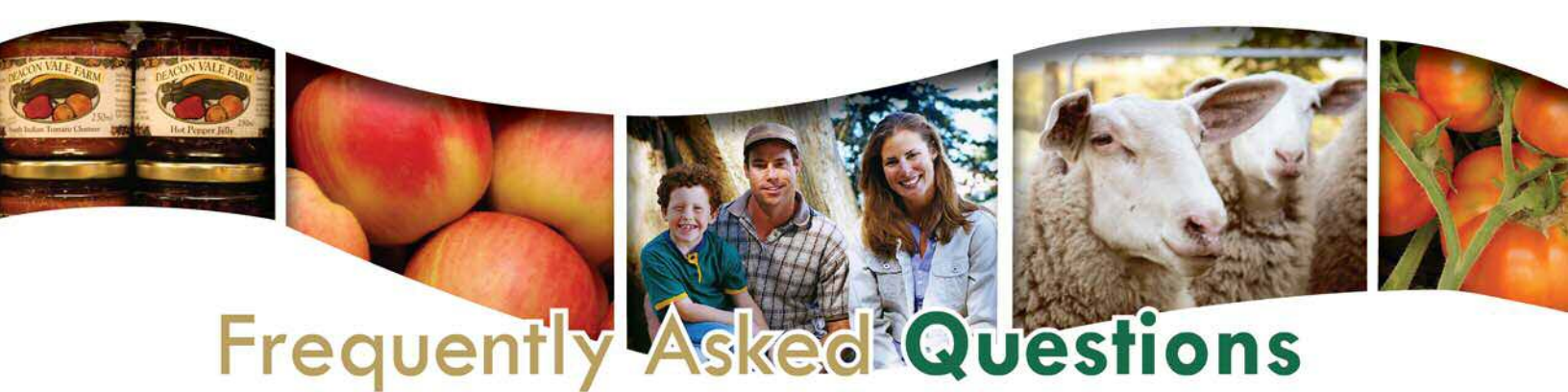
A. Organic certification is done on an annual basis and is the responsibility of the member to insure reapplication dates are met.

**Q. What are the benefits of being certified through COABC?**

A. COABC is accredited to deliver both the British Columbia Certified Organic Program as well as the Canada Organic Regime. Depending on the product and the level of certification you are seeking you may have the option to use the BCCOP Checkmark trademark and use of the phrase "British Columbia Certified Organic" as well the Canada Organic logo on your packaging, promotional and marketing materials.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Who is available to answer questions and what support is available to me?**

A. You can ask your CB, the Organic Extension Agent or call the COABC office where you will find staff who can direct you to the right services. The COABC Listserve, your local agrologist and local organic producers can help as well. The BC Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Food has organic specialists, there is access to private consultants and you may also want to find a mentor farmer.

The COABC website supports the user-friendly portal "Cyber-Help". It is the most popular on-line organic resource in Western Canada containing current information relevant to organic producers and farmers. COABC publishes a quarterly magazine, the BC Organic Grower, hosts a comprehensive website, sells pertinent manuals and offers regional workshops and training events. COABC also hosts an Annual Conference which provides learning opportunities and has connections and links with other education and information providers.

**Q. Are there networking opportunities within the association or with other organic organizations?**

A. Yes. There is an annual conference for networking and sharing information. The listserv and magazine are also effective networking tools. We help you connect locally and globally with other organic groups.

**Q. Will information on my products be accessible by visitors to the website?**

A. Yes, there is an on-line directory to help locate local suppliers & growers.

**Q. There are many myths surrounding organic food. Do you offer education to the public?**

A. Yes, the COABC staff responds by identifying reliable information sources.

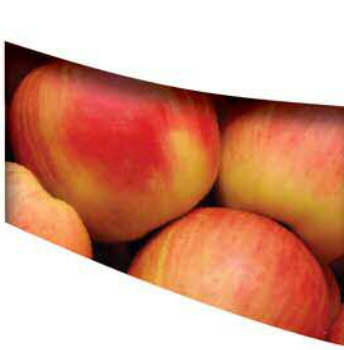
**Q. Can COABC help me with research and development?**

A. There is support available according to preset criteria for research and development through a COABC program, the Organic Sector Development Project, and the COABC Research Fund.

**Q. Are there any advertising opportunities?**

A. Yes, advertising is available in the COABC journal that is distributed to over 700 organic producers in B.C. COABC has recently started a Sponsorship Program which benefits funding partners with a variety of advertising opportunities including a presence at the largest Western Canada agriculture show, the Pacific Agriculture Show.

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## Contact Us

**We look forward to your inquiries!**

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