

Organic Farmer Accreditation

Professional Credentials for a New Generation of Farmers

Presented by Heide Hermary, & Rochelle Eisen

founding members of SOUL

The Society of Organic Urban Land Care

with support from the COABC's OSDP



Who is SOUL? What do we do?

- Cultivate Organic Land care knowledge and practice
 - education, guidelines, standards
- Accreditation and certification for individuals: personal professional qualifications for organic practitioners
 - Accreditation = training + exam
 - Certification = accreditation + additional education + experience

Project background

- The 2012 stakeholder review of the SOUL Organic Land Care Standard revealed:
 - A lack of support for an entire stakeholder group - farmers, particularly in urban settings
 - The Canada Organic Standards doesn't always work well for small scale farmers

SOUL OLC & COS

- ❑ Complimentary, but not mirror standards
- ❑ Structured differently (standard & program)
- ❑ Neither addressed issues of specific concern in urban food production settings

Issues with the Canada Organic Standards

- ❑ Often urban farmers do not have long term tenancy required for transition
- ❑ Often they farm multiple small plots, each needing inspecting – increasing inspection costs

Issues with SOUL OLC

- ❑ The Standard was lacking requirements relevant to land use history, the use and management of manure and compost; all necessary for commercial food production
- ❑ The existing program wasn't relevant to food producers

How to service that gap?

- ✓ SOUL has revised the OLC to include food production
- ✓ SOUL has drafted a program outline to accredit farmers paralleling the SOUL Land Care Practitioner program requiring completion of:
 - ✓ an Organic Farmer Accreditation Course or any course deemed equivalent
 - ✓ an organic food production exam

Samples of changes made to the OLC standard

- Incorporation of an Environmental Toxins component specific to food production
 - establishment of a clean land use history, **or**
 - testing for specific heavy metals, **or**
 - raised beds with uncontaminated soil. Requires a root barrier preventing contact the ground
 - a required BMP for collected water use
 - a required BMP to protect crops from airborne toxins

Samples of changes made to the OLC standard

- For commercial food production
- Manure
 - in residential and urban agricultural settings, thoroughly compost according to the compost requirements in the COS
 - In rural agricultural settings, adhere to the COS
- Compost
 - Adhere to COS

Partnerships and financial support

- ❑ Organic Certification Body partners
 - ❑ IOPA
 - ❑ SOOPA

- ❑ Financial support from the COABC's Organic Sector Development Program

Project Team

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Questions for the audience

Can you identify any other land management / food production issues that have been overlooked and need to be addressed?

Can you see a benefit in becoming an Accredited Organic Farmer?

