

# E-News

June 2010

## WHAT'S NEW

### Standards Interpretation Committee (SIC)

The SIC's response to the first round of interpretation questions is now posted on the COO website: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/comqueste.shtml>; the public and organic stakeholders may comment until July 7th at [OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca](mailto:OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca).

The SIC is meeting monthly; questions needing interpretation should be sent to the COO at: [OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca](mailto:OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca).

### Equivalency Agreements

#### **Canada-EU**

The EU assessed the Canada Organic Regime, May 6-12. The EU delegation carried out an assessment of the control system and the monitoring and enforcement of the regulation. Delegates also audited certification bodies and operators and concluded that operators have a solid understanding of organic standards and procedures. The COO thanks the operators and managers that have cooperated with them. CAN-EU variances were not discussed. Seven critical variances were identified last November and documents were exchanged; the COO got positive feedback but has nothing official to report. The COO did not discuss the CAN-US Equivalency Agreement with EU delegates but they are aware that the US and EU are meeting at the end of June to initiate discussion on an equivalency agreement. The EU audit of the Canadian system went well and a report will be generated soon. Canada will review the EU system at the end of June.

#### **Canada-US**

The COO and NOP met in December 2009; the COO submitted minutes of the meeting and a plan of action a few days later. The NOP response was received May 7 and another discussion is scheduled for May 20. The 8-page minutes submitted by the COO were condensed into 2 pages by NOP managers. The COO wants to consolidate what is agreed upon before publishing more information.

The COO will perform the NOP peer review in August; the COO needs to get proper information about what does not work with US. An official form has been created to get the appropriate information on sensitive issues.

### Complaints Submission Form

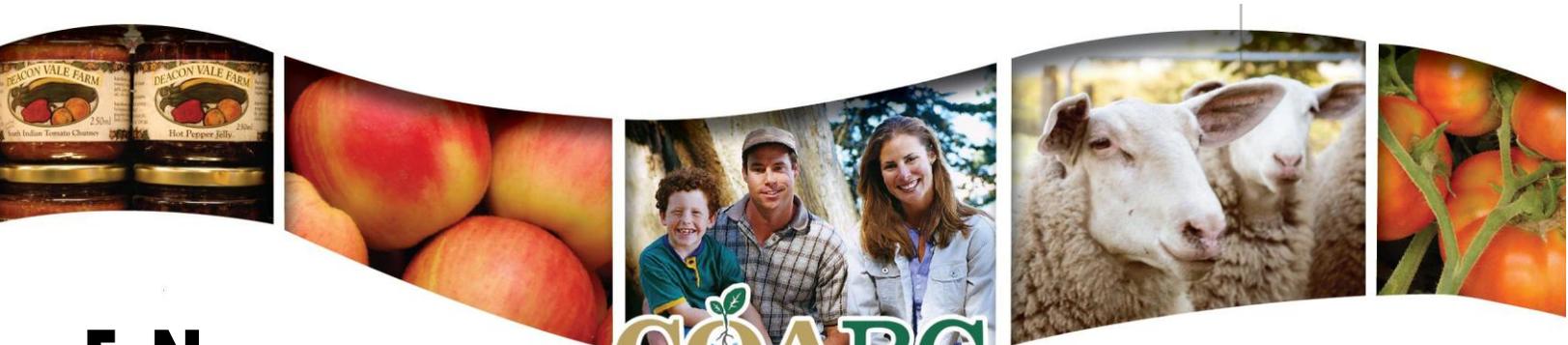
Canada Organic Office complaint submission form can be found at

<http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/programs/cor.php>

For complaints against an interprovincial traded product see the COO complaint form at

<http://certifiedorganic.bc.ca/programs/cor.php>

Complaints on this form are to be directed to the Canada Organic Office directly [OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca](mailto:OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca).



# E-News



June 2010

## Drought Conditions Email list

The Ministry of Environment's is building a region-specific email list for people who would like to receive communications on local drought conditions and responses. **Please email Rachel Boston, at [Rachel.Boston@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Rachel.Boston@gov.bc.ca) if you would like to be on this list.**

## HST on Logo Products

Whether you like it or not, we will be required to charge HST on logo products starting July 1st. Beat the HST and get your logo products early.

You can order on line <http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/products/orderform.php> or print out an order form <http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/products/orderform.pdf>

## BCAC Submission Water Act Modernization:

The BCAC and its member organizations were active participants in the *Water Act* modernization consultation process recently undertaken by the Ministry of Environment. A central theme of both the input provided at the public meetings and the BCAC submission into the process was that the future food security needs of the province is a societal responsibility that will depend upon our ability to maintain the productive capacity of our agricultural lands over the long-term. The Agricultural Land Reserve was created to protect agriculture lands for food and agricultural production, which is of little value if reasonable access to affordable water is not assured. The foremost BCAC recommendation was for the Province to establish as a fundamental priority and key principle explicitly recognized in a modernized *Water Act* – *a safe, secure, affordable and adequate water supply for livestock and crop production on all agricultural lands in BC, both within and outside the ALR.*

The remainder of the BCAC submission underscored agriculture's priorities within the context of the four goals of the process as outlined in BC's *Water Act* Modernization Discussion Paper. It was also highlighted that amending this crucial legislation has enormous direct implications on the income and livelihood of literally thousands of farm and ranch family businesses across BC. In this context, it was also recommended that the BCAC be given the opportunity to provide further substantive input to the changes being contemplated by the provincial government as it moves to the next Phase of its modernization of the *Water Act* process. MoE's consultation plan had indicated that there would be no further dialogue after the initial input was received. A copy of the BCAC submission can be found on the BCAC website at:

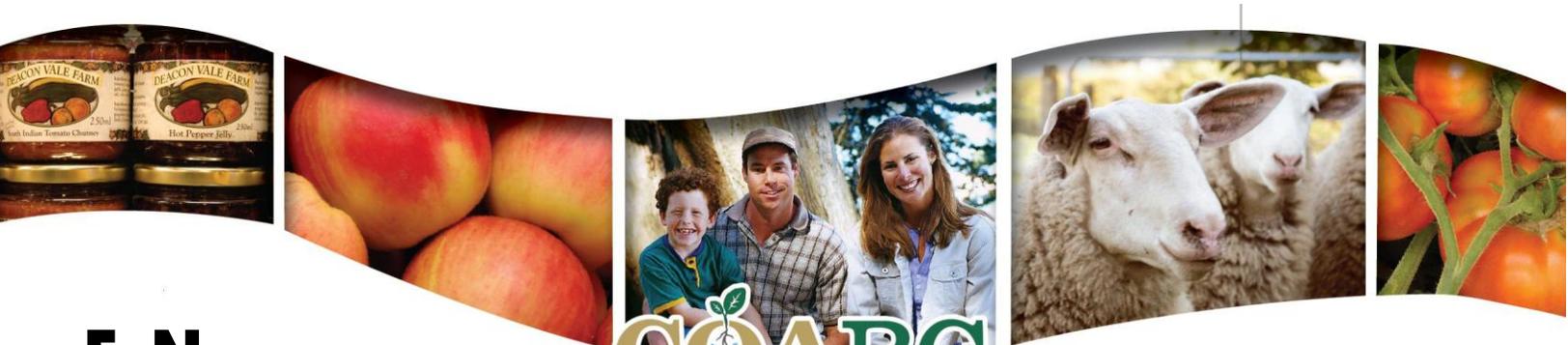
[http://www.bcac.bc.ca/index.php?page\\_id=5](http://www.bcac.bc.ca/index.php?page_id=5)

## BC Value Chain Initiative

The Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia recently launched the "BC Value Chain Initiative" to work with agri-food groups and individuals wishing to move from their price-sensitive commodity business model to a value-driven one.

Value chains succeed by satisfying consumers' food buying preferences and result in more revenues and higher margins.

How can value chains make a difference? In the commodity supply chain, everyone is "on their own" and the relationship with the next link is purely transactional. In most cases, prices are first dictated by the retailer or food service operator and then pushed downward one link at a time with a "take it or leave it" attitude.



# E-News



June 2010

In a value chain, a product is produced, processed and marketed by separate companies with expertise in each area. By partnering closely and communicating at a deep enough level; they ensure that information from the market place gets to the links in the chain where the consumer-driven changes need to be made. This information sharing is far cheaper than inventory. The partnerships created in a value chain mean the risks and rewards of fulfilling market demand are shared across the chain. This allows for a quick response to changing consumer needs while keeping the value of the product high and in demand.

Farmers are beginning to discover that value chains are one of the better solutions to getting out of the commodity trap, where someone else dictates your prices. It takes work, time and trust to join together with other producers, processors, retailers and food service operators to produce and brand a differentiated product that consumers will buy at a premium. But the rewards are worth it.

IAF's new service can assist you with the early stages of agri-food value chain development. Facilitated group sessions and coaching services are available at no charge to interested parties. Funding for this initiative is provided through the former federal-provincial Safety Nets framework.

For more information about the BC Value Chain Initiative, visit the IAF website at [www.iafbc.ca](http://www.iafbc.ca) or contact the coordinator, Bill Henderson by email ([bhenderson@iafbc.ca](mailto:bhenderson@iafbc.ca)) or phone (250 356-1675).

## ONGOING

### Workplace Training for Innovation Pilot Program:

If you are contemplating training for any of your staff, you should check into this program – your company may be eligible for up to \$1,500 per worker up to a maximum of \$5,000 per business. The key aspect of the program is the employer's choice to identify and choose employee training that will assist them to:

- a. improve productivity;
- b. support the introduction of new technology, machinery/equipment or work processes;
- c. enhance international competitiveness; and/or
- d. Introduce innovative training and workplace strategies to increase the long term competitiveness of the organization and its workforce.

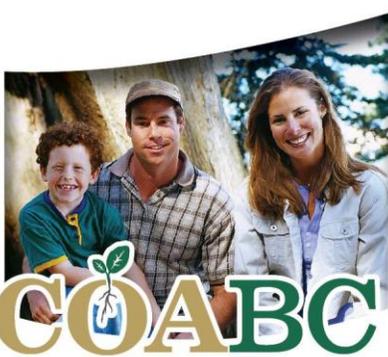
It is expected that this training will assist in positioning the employer for economic recovery. For more information, please go to the following site: [http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/workplace\\_training\\_program](http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/workplace_training_program)

*Note: The COABC applied for this program and received some funding for a couple of workshops under the approve productivity initiative. The application process is easy and approval turn around time was quick - about 2 weeks!*

### CHC OFFS Manuals

On Farm Food Safety Manuals are available on the CHC member website.

*If you do not have the CHC member password for COABC please contact Kristy at [office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca)*



# E-News



June 2010

## BC Organic Grower – Spread the Word!

1. Do you have a website?
2. With minimal effort on your part are you willing to help spread the word about the BC Organic Grower?

Web Banners are now available from the office to add to your website which can be linked directly to the BC Organic Grower subscription page. This is a great way to support the BC Organic Grower and spread the word. Please contact Sarah at [admin@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:admin@certifiedorganic.bc.ca) for more information.



## Reminder – shipping in and out of Province

For certified organic operators who wish to ship outside the province (nationally or internationally) don't forget that you now must be certified under under ISO rather than the provincial BC certified organic program.

## Sponsorship Program

Who do you connect with in your daily life that may be interested in sponsoring the COABC? Health professionals, organisations that want to make an environmentally friendly statement, distributors etc...If you or a contact is interested in supporting the COABC contact Sarah Clark at [admin@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:admin@certifiedorganic.bc.ca) or (250) 260-4429.

## INTERESTING

### **Saving Fuel on the Farm by Making Hay**

***A new look at crop rotation could cut energy use for agriculture (Ed Note: Not new for organic farmers)***

From National Geographic Daily News on line.

How much fuel went into producing the food on your plate? Chances are, it was a lot more energy than you will ever get out of eating that meal.

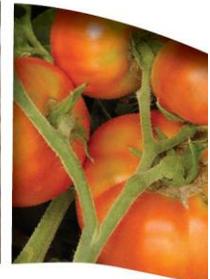
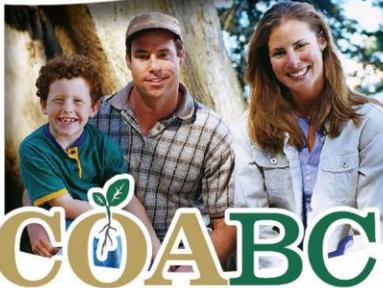
By some estimates, it takes about 10 calories of fossil fuels to get each calorie of food from farm to fork in the American food system. But it doesn't have to be that way, according to a study published Monday in the May/June edition of *Agronomy Journal*. (See related, "[FUTURE FARMS: High-Rise, Beach Pod, and Pyramid Pictures](#)")

Farmers can slash their fossil fuel use, while still growing bumper crops and turning a profit—all with the help of a little more crop rotation, concluded the team of researchers from Iowa State University after a six-year study.

In tests on a research farm in Iowa, the team mixed oats, alfalfa, and other crops into the rotation along with corn and soybeans, the two mainstays of the U.S. Corn Belt.

### **Fertilizing naturally**

With a more diverse set of crops, the farms needed only a fraction of the normal amounts of synthetic fertilizers and herbicides, both of which are typically manufactured from natural gas. One key was using



# E-News

June 2010

alfalfa, which captures nitrogen from the air and stores it in the soil. Thanks to this natural fertilization, the fields planted with alfalfa needed only about one-quarter the usual amount of nitrogen from chemical fertilizers.

The approach would be a major departure for most U.S. grain farms, which are accustomed to a two-year rotation—planting corn one year and soy the next, then repeating the cycle.

Agronomy professor Matt Liebman and a team of researchers at Iowa State University found that a farm could cut its fossil fuel use in half by shifting to a four-year cycle—adding a year of another grain, such as oats, and a year of alfalfa, a legume, to the typical corn-soy rotation.

These low-energy fields produced as many calories worth of crops, and generated about the same amount of money. "Our interest was not just how much corn we might be able to produce, but how much income might be generated on the farm," Liebman said.

The alternative approach required planning, labor, and one other important element—livestock. The researchers fed cows on corn, oats, and the hay from alfalfa, and then spread the cows' manure back on the fields. This contributed to fossil fuel savings by further reducing the need for synthetic fertilizers to provide received key nutrients like potassium and phosphorous.

"Manure is an excellent way to recycle these back to the fields," Liebman said. (See related, "[Cow Manure, Other Homegrown Energy Powering U.S. Farms](#)")

However, the alternative methods did take twice as much labor, the study found. "We're not talking about huge amounts of back-breaking toil," Liebman said. "It's driving a tractor, and cutting hay, and then raking and baling it—and that's all done with machinery."

## Incentive to Change

These complex rotations of crops have many benefits besides saving fossil fuels, said crop scientist Bill Deen of the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada. The approach increases soil carbon levels and reduces erosion, he said.

There is a downside, however: "While complex rotations are desirable, there is limited market incentive to use them," Deen said, because there's a small market for crops such as alfalfa.

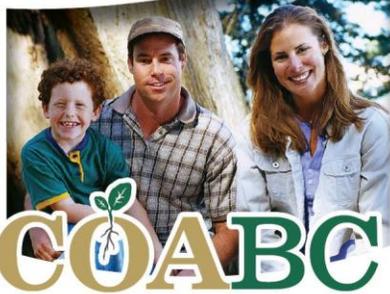
Deen said that another approach to saving fossil fuels is to grow alfalfa and other plants as "cover crops," which are left on the field rather than being harvested. "I think cover crops make more sense than trying to introduce crops with limited market opportunity," Deen said.

Liebman's team notes that Iowa had a long history of farms that mixed crop and livestock production. But a combination of low energy prices and high labor costs contributed to the adoption of the conventional two-year corn and soybean rotation the researchers conclude.

But grain farmers have found their reliance on fossil fuels can turn costly when oil prices spike. Also, farmers have been watching closely the possibility of federal action on global warming, which could cause fossil fuel prices to rise even more.

The Iowa State researchers argue that if fossil energy prices rise, but crop values don't keep up, farmers might have the incentive they need to shift to a more diversified cropping system.

"As fossil energy becomes more expensive," Liebman said, "the conventional systems will be at a disadvantage."



# E-News

June 2010

## Organic Database

[www.organicdb.ca](http://www.organicdb.ca) is a new online database for consumers to food organic products. Check it out.

## EVENTS

### 2011 Pacific Ag Show

The dates for the Pacific Agriculture Show will be January 27-29, 2011.

The move this year from our usual mid February dates was in response to the Olympics booking all the local hotels. We had intended on returning to the February dates. However, the input from many exhibitors, producers and those involved in the agriculture community, was strongly in favor of continuing with the late January dates.

We are pleased that we are able to make this move permanent and look forward to growing and improving the Show.

For planning purposes the future dates for Pac Ag will be:

January 27-29, 2011

January 26-28, 2012

January 24-26, 2013

January 23-25, 2014



## DON'T FORGET

### Newsletters for supporting organizations

BC Agriculture Council under the Community Agriculture seat. [http://www.bcac.bc.ca/index.php?page\\_id=2](http://www.bcac.bc.ca/index.php?page_id=2)

BCSPCA Find out what is happening at the BCSPCA at <http://www.spca.bc.ca/news-and-events/newsletters/>

### Got an Organic Question?

Try **Cyber-help** <http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/index.html> or contact Rochelle Eisen, BC's organic extension agent at [extension@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:extension@certifiedorganic.bc.ca)

### Cyberhelp looking for a few good images.

You may have noticed a few more images on the *Cyber-Help* site. In recent months we've deliberately sought to add interest, information and appeal in this way. However, it's not that easy to come by good and available photos. I've used a few of my own but, not being a farmer, my supply is limited.

So, this is a request for any pictures you have that might be relevant on the site. If you want credit and/or copyright, we will oblige. And we will all enjoy the benefits as we use the site.

File size? The larger, the better. (my e-mail service will accept up to 14MB per e-mail) I'm pretty good with Photoshop so you can send even those that don't look that good. Relevance is more important in this context, anyway. We'll use them as and when we find the right place so will probably not use everything we receive but will keep a file to draw from. So start sending and let's see how we do. Contact Jeffrey at [jn@jnweb.com](mailto:jn@jnweb.com)

**If you change your address or contact information send it to your CB office as soon as possible so that you don't miss out on receiving a BCOG and other materials.**