

## **BC Farm Writers Association**

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COABC-OSDP

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Vernon, BC V1T 2N1

Delivered by Email to Paddy Doherty

Attention Paddy Doherty

### **Verification of Project Completion & Project Report For Project #I-093**

The BC Farm Writers Association is pleased to report the completion of the Organic Tour Portion of the **2008 Canadian Farm Writers Federation annual conference**, held in Courtenay, BC, Oct. 3.

#### **OVERVIEW**

The CFWF hosts an annual conference which moves around the country. The conference format includes 1-2 days of tours followed by a day of seminars and an awards banquet. The BCFWA hosted the 2008 conference in Courtenay, Oct 2-4, using the theme "Growing Beyond the Ordinary."

In our OSDP application we noted BC leads the way in organic agriculture, saying "it would be remiss not to include it in our conference, particularly given our theme. We believe it is essential to show agricultural journalists just how successful organic agriculture is."

The farm tours were an essential component of the conference and we applied for support from the OSDP on the basis that we would include an organic component in our tours. We originally projected about 80 attendees from across the country, representing agricultural and non-agricultural media, agricultural marketing firms, government and agri-business. To accommodate about 80 participants, we planned to hire two busses and conduct two farm tours on Fri, Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>, each of which would include one certified organic farm. Eatmore Sprouts and Hazelmere Farms were contacted in late 2007 and both agreed to participate in the farm tours and provide tour participants with a general overview of organic agriculture and a specific look at their operations.

We created a website and heavily promoted the conference across Canada. Our pre-promotion included a listing of all confirmed tour stops with breakdowns of which farms were on which tours so attendees could preselect a tour to suit their particular interest. Hazelmere Farms (Tour A) and Eatmore Sprouts (Tour B) appeared in the promotion from the outset and were each identified as certified organic farms.

By mid-September, it was clear our conference was generating much more interest than expected. We actually ended up with 118 full conference registrations as well as another 38 people who attended only certain parts of the conference. Our committee decided to add a third tour (at almost the last minute). We reduced the number of stops on each tour from five to four,

thus allowing more time for each stop. One stop from each of the initial tours was moved to the new tour (Tour C) and arranged for two additional farms to fill out the third tour. One of the additions was Pattison Farms, a certified organic vegetable farm, thus ensuring that all three tours included an organic component.

Our website was revised to include all three tours and provision made for registrants to change their tour preferences in light of the new option. We also prepared a conference booklet which included contact information (name, phone number and email address) for each tour stop to enable participants to contact the farmer for follow-up if required.

The week of the conference, Eatmore Sprouts and Hazelmere Farm informed us they would not be participating in the tours because Monsanto was also among the conference sponsors. Despite intense efforts by our conference chair and Agrifood Comox Valley executive director John Watson to get them to reconsider, Eatmore and Hazelmere refused. Over a year of conference planning went out the window overnight. At that late date, it was impossible to replace them with alternate farms and we ended up juggling our tours and taking all three tours to Natural Pastures Cheese, which had been scheduled to be on only Tour C. While Natural Pastures promotes itself as a “natural” artisan cheese producer, it is definitely not organic.

Unfortunately, we were therefore unable to deliver the promised organic component on two of our three farm tours but stress this was through no fault of our own. First, we did not promise OSDP or anyone else exclusive sponsorship. Second, we did not hide any of our sponsors. They were all listed on our website as soon as confirmations were received. As both confirmations were received early, both OSDP and Monsanto were included in the initial list of sponsors. If this was to be an issue, we feel it could have and should have been brought to our attention long before the week of the conference so we had time to make appropriate alternate arrangements. Third, each conference component was attributed to specific sponsors. The farm tours were attributed to the Organic Sector Development Program and the three other sponsors we had listed on our funding application. Monsanto’s sponsorship was attributed to the CFWF awards banquet which took place the following day. That was appropriate as Monsanto is also the base sponsor of the CFWF awards program.

While we recognize Monsanto’s and organic’s vision of agriculture are diametrically opposed, we do not apologize for including Monsanto among our conference sponsors. Monsanto has been a long and valued supporter of the CFWF and its conferences, including previous conferences in BC, but its involvement has not determined the content of the conference.

In fact, it is precisely because of the involvement of Monsanto that we deliberately pursued the involvement of organic agriculture in the conference. It was our effort to present a balanced conference and a balanced perspective of agriculture. An email I (David Schmidt) sent to COABC president Peter Johnston Sep 12, 2008, encouraging him to attend the conference (on a complimentary basis) highlights our aims:

*“It would also be worthwhile for the COABC president to attend. From my perspective, the most important part of you being on the tours, at the sessions and in the hospitality suite is your availability as a resource person if the farmwriters do have questions about organics. You are both "local" to the Courtenay area and COABC president so you should be able to cover off a lot of questions. Keep in mind that at least 75 percent of the people at the conference will not be from BC so they won't know the local situation at all.*

*I therefore also suggested to Paddy that COABC ensure there is someone at each of the organic tour stops to describe the organic movement and the new organic regime. I'm sure it will*

*generate a lot of questions. I like to think I have a pretty good grip on organics but I doubt if I am in the majority among our group. Once you decide which tour you want to go on, you might want to ensure someone equally informed is available at the organic stops on the other two tours. If the hosts are well-versed on the organic movement as well as their own operation it may not be necessary to have anyone else there. You probably have first-hand knowledge of each of the three organic operations we will be visiting so you would know better than I whether that is the case.”*

All we can provide is the opportunity for organic agriculture to present itself. It is up to the organic sector and its producers to recognize that and to take full advantage of the opportunity by making its best case in front of the journalists who will carry that message further. We believe OSDP’s decision to support the conference recognizes that and it is truly unfortunate that individual producers ruined that effort by refusing to participate. This action did not hurt Monsanto but it did hurt the conference and the organic agriculture industry.

## **DELIVERABLES**

### **Increased Exposure for Organic Agriculture among Agricultural Communicators**

As stated above, one goal of our conference was to include organic agriculture. We wanted to give agricultural communicators a greater insight into organics and provide an opportunity for interaction with the sector. We certainly delivered the communicators. Our conference was extremely well-attended and included representatives, including editors and publishers, of almost all the major agricultural publications in Canada.

However, the cancellation of the two organic farms we were set to visit meant we were not able to present most of the communicators with an on-the-ground view of organic agriculture and led to some disappointed tour participants. I can personally attest to this as the main reason I chose Tour B was to visit Eatmore Sprouts. I had looked forward to writing an article on the farm for Country Life in BC but that did not occur.

I was not alone. A comment on our conference evaluation form reads: *“What I find disappointing is that a tour stop eg)Hazelmeare Farms can withdraw at the last minute with no consultation since they have received all the promotion and publicity – they owe us! I paid money to attend the conference as proposed!”*

While our application to OSDP only promised organic involvement in the conference tours, we note organic agriculture was also referenced by several of the speakers on Saturday. Our keynote speaker was Brent Warner, godfather of direct farm marketing and agritourism in BC and now the executive director of Farmers Markets Canada. Warner pointed out how important organic agriculture is in these particular sectors. Our speakers also included Herb Barbolet, one of the founders of the BC Association of Regenerative Agriculture; Jon Steinman, host of ‘Deconstructing Dinner,’ an unabashably pro-organic radio and pod-cast; and Tom Henry, editor/publisher of ‘Small Farm Canada,’ a based-in-BC national publication with a strong organic focus.

### **BC Participation**

BC media participation included

- Agri-Digest - Fran Kay
- BC Holstein News - Gary & Karen Booy
- Country Life in BC - David Schmidt, Bob Collins, Peter Wilding

- Deconstructing Dinner – Jon Steinman
- Sincera Group – Peter van Dongen, Clarice Springford
- Small Farm Canada – Tom Henry, Connie Duivenvoorden
- Western Dairy Farmer – Wendy Holm
- Retired – Tony Greaves

Full conference registrants from BC (non-media):

- Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada – Tamra Leigh, Sarah Godin
- Bank of Montreal – Gord VandeBurgt
- BC Agriculture Council – Christine Koch
- Edible Strategies – Sandra Mark
- Investment Agriculture Foundation – Sandra Tretick
- SFU Centre for Sustainable Community Development – Herb Barbolet
- Unknown Affiliation – Lynne McNamara, Stacey Munro, John Wilson

BC participants partially involved in conference (speakers, tour guides, etc):

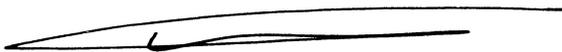
- Lindsay Babineau – BC Ag in the Classroom
- Tim Ball – Rupertsland Research Centre
- Herb Barbolet – Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, SFU
- Jill Hatfield – BC Ministry of Agriculture & Lands
- Niels Holbek – Unknown Affiliation
- Glen Korstrom – Business in Vancouver
- Andrew MacLeod - The Tyee
- Gary Rolston – From the Ground Up
- Brent Warner – Farmers Markets Canada
- John Watson – Comox Valley Economic Development Commission

A number of representatives of the Comox Valley Economic Development Commission also participated in the conference.

I certify the above information is correct and that the project conditions were fulfilled to the best of our ability. I therefore request the balance of the project funding, i.e., \$1,000, be forward as soon as possible.

Thankyou

**BC Farm Writers Association**



David Schmidt  
President

Attachments: Financial Reports

## BC FARM WRITERS ASSOCIATION

OSDP Project # I-093

2008 Canadian Farm Writers Federation Annual Conference Organic Tour

### Financial Report - Income

Contribution Source	Proposal	Actual Cash	In-Kind	Total
<b>Industry Sources</b>				
Registration (organic tour portion)	\$950.00	\$3,540.00		\$3,540.00
BC Egg Marketing Board	\$500.00	\$500.00		\$500.00
BC Chicken Marketing Board	\$500.00	\$500.00		\$500.00
Canadian Turkey Marketing Agency	\$500.00	\$500.00		\$500.00
Conference Cttee (organic tour portion)	\$350.00		\$350.00	\$350.00
Tour Guides	\$0.00		\$600.00	\$600.00
BC Ag Council et al (thankyou gifts)	\$0.00		\$480.00	\$480.00
Subtotal Industry Sources	\$2,800.00	\$5,040.00	\$1,430.00	\$6,470.00
<b>Government Sources</b>				
Subtotal Government Sources	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Other Sources</b>				
Subtotal Other Sources	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
OSDP request (\$1,000 received pre-confer	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$4,800.00</b>	<b>\$7,040.00</b>	<b>\$1,430.00</b>	<b>\$8,470.00</b>

## BC FARM WRITERS ASSOCIATION

OSDP Project # I-093

2008 Canadian Farm Writers Federation Annual Conference Organic Tour

### Financial Report - Expenses

Activity/deliverable	Time Frame	Proposed	Equipment & Supp	Travel	Fees or Consul	Tour Meals	Sub-total Cash	In-kind	Total
Agrifood tours (organic)	Oct 3, 2008	\$2,100.00	\$105.42	\$3,066.21		\$3,058.86	\$6,230.49	\$480.00	\$6,710.49
Promotion	Mar 15-Sep30	\$350.00		\$651.00			\$651.00		\$651.00
Registration	Oct 2, 2008	\$200.00					\$0.00	\$100.00	\$100.00
Organization Exp	Jan 1-Oct 4	\$350.00					\$0.00	\$350.00	\$350.00
Consultants/Guides	Oct 3, 2008	\$1,800.00					\$0.00	\$600.00	\$600.00
<b>Totals</b>		<b>\$4,800.00</b>	<b>\$105.42</b>	<b>\$3,717.21</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$3,058.86</b>	<b>\$6,881.49</b>	<b>\$1,530.00</b>	<b>\$8,411.49</b>