

Volume 4, Number 2

Spring 2001



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COABC, #8A, 100 Kalamalka Lake Rd.  
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# President's Report

by Linda Edwards

Welcome to our time of fondest dream and worst nightmare!

The dream has always been to see more of the world "going organic". Well, it has! More

and more producers are turning to organic production as an option and more and more consumers seek out the products.

The nightmare is that it isn't evolving without change and with change, there is stress. Our higher visibility has resulted in more scrutiny about what we do and how we do it. There is pressure for greater accountability often in forms we are not sure we deserve and/or are comfortable with. It has also resulted in the need to work out our relationship with mainstream agriculture. This is manifesting itself in regard to the marketing boards and a lot of time and energy is going into trying to find workable solutions.

Many of us have also entered into the global organic marketplace and have to establish our credentials there. It is called ISO 65 compliant or equivalent and a great deal of time and energy is pouring into that. A consumer in England wants to know when she buys one of my apples that it has been grown under conditions equal to those of an apple grown in England. Paddy Doherty pulled off a minor miracle by establishing COABC equivalency with the UK. Now there is only the rest of Europe, the US, Japan and Loblaws! See Brian Mennell's report about our efforts to establish a federal mechanism to assist with this. This is a process that is important not only for those who export. It will also protect local organic growers and consumers who wish to buy organic from organic product which does not meet our standards entering our market place.

Also certification, once a simple problem for volunteers to do in a certifying body that only had a dozen members, is now unmanageable as memberships double and triple and more.

As agreed at our AGM, we will set up a new Certifying Body under the COABC umbrella for members who wish to export and for Certifying Bodies who wish to stop handling their own day-to-day certification. This all falls under what we call "restructuring" and is in the capable hands of Paddy Doherty.

Maintenance of the standards is also a current and on-going concern. They are the part of over-all status and reputation of COABC that is so important if we want to function with credibility and acceptance in the market place and to be effective politically. We must never forget how much of what we do in making a living depends on consumer's perception and their confidence in us. It is very impressive how many people have volunteered to work on the Standards on an on-going basis. Rick Llewlyn is the contact person for livestock issues, Rochelle Eisen and Sarah Davidson for Processing and Greenhouse Standards and I am for the time being for Crops. Please call us if you want to be involved.

There are many other active areas. An able committee is working in regard to political and procedural issues in regard to GMOs. We are establishing working liaisons with other groups such as the SPCA. The Organic Advisory Service will soon be underway. A full time organic extension specialist should be hired and working with us probably by May. We are hopeful that this will assist us to achieve many of our educational and research objectives.

Finally, just a comment about the AGM. So many have commented on how wonderfully energizing it was to meet and work with such a large group of committed and talented people. Our thanks to all who contributed so much to the meetings as a whole and to the organizers (Jovanka especially) who made everything run so smoothly!

Thank-you too, to Glenn Wakeling who led us so ably for the past year. I am only beginning to realize how demanding it must have been and am so glad you are still on the Board with us. ✓

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# An Organic Marketing Board?

by Susan Moore, Sudoa Farm

## Guest Editorial

*This is an excerpt from a letter to CBC Radio's Daybreak program.*

The certified organic agricultural industry is recognized world wide as a distinct commodity - the United Kingdom, U.S.DA, and our own B.C. Government are among governments giving us this recognition.

Certified Organic Livestock production prohibits many of the practices used every day by large producers: overcrowding, caging, routine medication treatments, growth and appetite stimulants among them. No organic producer can support, directly or indirectly, these practices and maintain their credibility. Organic standards are driven both by personal conviction and consumer demand.

With regard to Mr. Reid and the production of B.C. Certified Organic Eggs, I understand that Mr. Reid is a large producer within this specialty but is a minimal producer within the supply of eggs to consumers. Mr. Reid has worked over many years to develop his business in response to consumer demand. During this time the established egg production industry of B.C. had no interest in listening to consumers, no interest in assisting the government of B.C. in developing standards for organic production and, in fact, denigrated and ridiculed the B.C. Certified egg production standards as not viable.

Why is the Egg Marketing Board being so aggressive? The only reason that I can think of is that they are afraid that Mr. Reid and the other Certified Organic egg producers of B.C. will erode their market control.

The best solution I have is to allow the B.C. Certified Organic Agricultural Industry to establish their own Marketing System. Part of this system would be the orderly production and marketing of certified organic eggs and these would be produced within a quota agreed on, but not purchased from the B.C. Egg Marketing Board, which would not carry a monetary value.

The agricultural industry of B.C. has many organizations from marketing boards to producers associations working to support large and small farmers in B.C. We do not need bullies within this or any sector of our society. It is time to recognize our differences and recognize the need for each sector to operate its own specialty. An organic egg is a different product. The continuity of the availability of high quality food for B.C. consumers must not be compromised by fear and insecurity. We need instead to work together to protect our food supply and support all our farmers.



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*Editorial Assistance  
This Issue*  
Paddy Doherty  
Rochelle Eisen  
Linda Edwards  
Rebecca Kneen

*Letters & submissions*  
should be sent to:  
Cathleen Kneen, Editor  
S6 C27 RR#1  
Sorrento BC V0E 2W0  
phone/fax: 250-675-4866  
cathleen@ramshorn.bc.ca

**Advertising** (rates & copy) & non-member **subscriptions** (\$20/year) to:  
Shelly Chvala, Administrator  
COABC  
#8-A 100 Kalamalka Lake Rd.  
Vernon BC V1T 9G1  
phone: 250-260-4429  
fax: 250-260-4436  
coabc@bcgrizzly.com

For general information or to contact your local Certifying Body, call Shelly at the office in Vernon – or check our website:  
**www.CertifiedOrganic.bc.ca**

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# Report from AGM 2001

by Cathleen Kneen (with notes from Abra Brynne, Mary Forstbauer, Bob McCoubrey)

Complete minutes available on request. Please see sidebars for items which were Deferred, Tabled & sent to Committees for further development.

Organic Certifying bodies around the world have been challenged by the new rules for international trade and COABC is no exception. In addition to this issue, the COABC at its AGM (February 13-14 in Abbotsford) also faced a daunting list of proposed amendments to the BC Organic Standard; some extremely controversial questions such as the certification of hydroponic greenhouse production; and a response to the BC Egg Marketing Board's attack on Fred Reid in particular and Certified Organic egg production in general. (Not to mention fenceposts.) To everyone's delight (and possibly also surprise) we got through it all with respect and good humour.

Recognizing that it would be impossible to deal with every item on the Standards revisions list in the AGM context, an early order of business was to agree to a process for coming to agreement on such matters. See "Fair Decisions", page 5. See sidebars throughout this story for details on committees, tabled standards revisions, and materials lists.

It was agreed that further regulation of CCA treated posts be deferred for one year until issues can be clarified, and that the Board work to develop educational material for the BC Organic Grower concerning economical alternatives to CCA treated posts.

The motion to permit federally inspected plants to slaughter (first on the line), cut and wrap certified organic meat where there is no certified organic slaughter facility was tabled.

## Labelling

[Rochelle Eisen and Sarah Davidson] all of the proposals as listed in the BCOG Vol 4 #1 and on the COABC website were passed, with the following exceptions, and a number of items tabled for more discussion (again, see sidebars).

## Section 9.8

The sentence starting "COABC member's batch lots may be processed" is changed to: "COABC member's batch lots may be processed by a non certified organic co-processing facility, as long as an application is submitted and the processing is verified at least once a year at a time that an organic batch is being processed and that an audit trail is maintained."

## Section 9.8.2, organic claims

The meeting agreed to reject the national organic standards "contains X% certified organic Y".



Past President Glenn Wakeling reports on the year, with Mary Forstbauer and Abra Brynne taking notes.

Under **Regulated**, the wording is changed to: "If herbs and/or spices are constituents of any products, they may be listed as 'spices' and/or 'herbs'. In such cases the complete and actual mixture must be available to the Verification officer of the Certifying agency for verification purposes."

## Greenhouse Standards

[Rochelle and Sarah] agreed as circulated up to 8.3.8 (in-soil) with the following changes:

### 8.3.7.2

Eliminate sentence in required: "In an emergency, such as a power failure"

### 8.3.7.5

Add Crop rotation and companion planting to list.

### 8.3.7.7

Delete section; instead, refer to water quality standard in 8.3.3.

### 8.3.7.9 split operations

Separate greenhouses required, not impermeable wall.

Delete 8.3.7.9.i)

### 8.3.7.9.iv)

All greenhouses must be labelled according to production methods as organic and non-organic.

There was then a lively discussion on the acceptability of the use of soil-less media. It was finally agreed that "in principle, food crops need to be grown in living soil". The definition of living soil, eg. native soil vs. mixed organic matter, will be worked out through further discussion; as will the issue of soil on the ground vs. in bags or on raised beds or benches. It was suggested that for the purposes of verification, "living soil" could be defined as having a Carbon to Nitrogen ratio of less than 30:1. This meant that both 8.3.8.1 and 8.3.8.2 were defeated, along with the section on labelling.

## Livestock Materials List

[Anne Macey] Agreed to accept the changes as proposed with the exceptions of Amino acids (remain "regulated"), antibiotics and rotenone (tabled).

## Crop Production Standards

[Linda Edwards] passed as printed in the Grower with the following exceptions:

3.9 section in parentheses is deleted

4.2.7. *withdrawn.*

“Transition period is described as 36 months from the last prohibited input. One year of the transition period must be in a certification program.”

6.6.4.4

Clarification: “final sale” means when it leaves the possession of the producer

8.2.9. and 8.2.10

Remove “financial records” and “and labour expenses”.

8.2.9 and 8.2.10

Change wording of final sale as in 6.6.4.4 above.

8.3.2

Defer the movement of seed potatoes and transplants that are not organically produced to regulated for one more year and require proof of trying to obtain organic plants.

8.4.2.5

Add: “Regulated: no natural light housing for pullets with external access for 6 hours.”

Withdraw 8.4.2.6.

8.2.3 *Buffer Zones*

Strike resolution in favour of the new application process which includes a neighbour declaration.

*GMO management plan*

The non-use of GMOs form is included in new application process for neighbour declaration.

*Blood and Bone Meal*

After considerable discussion, it was finally agreed to leave them as allowed materials, on a split vote.

Audit Committee

[Brian Mennell] The CB Audits have been completed and the auditor was impressed with the level of competency all three CBs showed, although they could strengthen their written procedures. Each audited CB will receive a draft report and may wish to make some changes. The Auditor questioned the level of expertise on CB certification committees for conducting processor and handling certifications.

The ISO65 standard has to do with the process of certification, and in particular requires an “arms-length” certification process. This means that our process of local certification committees will not pass muster for export. The Audit Committee has been working with Brian Roberts from MAFF to bring us up to the ISO65 standard. Brian Roberts

Continued on page 6...

## Fair Decisions

motion from OPACK – adopted

An accurate and fair assessment of Standards and/or Materials Lists is sometimes beyond the expertise of a Certifying Body, i.e. OPACK tree fruit growers in regard to livestock standards, COPA grain and livestock growers in regard to tree fruit production, most Certifying Bodies in regard to Processing Standards, etc. In such cases, no such assessment should be expected.

Instead, to ensure that appropriate and high standards are maintained, the COABC Board of Directors will establish a team of competent people who will monitor and review material relating to Crops, Livestock and Processing Standards on an on-going basis and who will make submissions to committees and /or Certifying Bodies of persons knowledgeable in the specific areas. In turn these committees and Certifying Bodies will make submissions to AGMs when changes are needed. Every Certifying Body and/or member would reserve the right to comment and be heard on any and all standards if they so desire.

The persons who so ably reviewed the Livestock and Processing Materials Lists and Standards, if they will agree, will be this team and they will also be asked to assume responsibility for Crops Materials Lists and Standards. A committee of the COABC and the team should be struck to develop a budget and avenues of possible funding.

Finally, the COABC and the team would be charged with ensuring that any changes that are made to the Materials Lists and/or standards will not become an issue for equivalency agreements or acceptance or do anything that would negatively affect COABC credibility and acceptance in the market place.

*Process proposal:*

- (1) a proposal is developed by a working group of people who care about the particular issue (see above)
- (2) it is circulated by email to everyone on the list with a time limit for responses
- (3) one person from each CB takes responsibility for ensuring that members who are not on email get the information in a timely manner (i.e. with enough time to respond)
- (4) the working group collates the responses and comes up with a new proposal
- (5) the procedure is repeated until consensus is achieved
- (6) the consensus proposal is approved by the Board. ✓

## Seedy Saturday in Prince George

Saturday, April 28th in the Keith Gordon Room of the Prince George Library  
10:30 am to 3:00 pm.

Table fee \$10.00 Snacks and beverages available.

Contact Jovanka Djordjevich  
Tel: (250) 564-3859

has also developed a working manual on procedure and policy for BC for ISO65, which is to be reviewed by COABC membership. At present, the organization in Canada which is capable of accrediting to ISO standards is the Standards Council of Canada.

F.A.R.M.

[Bob McCoubrey] The F.A.R.M. council is our avenue into the BC Ag Council (BCAC). COABC is considered an "issue" group by the BCAC at this time; agreed that we should continue as members of F.A.R.M. and work to become familiar with the issues of the other members so as to build alliances.

Soil and Vegetable Manuals

[Hermann Bruns]. The committee will be surveying producers to determine their needs before proceeding with this project. \$5000 was included in the budget for the development of vegetable guides. They will look into the possibility of using the expertise and some time of the new Crop Specialist with MAFF as well as university students to develop specific technical papers as needed on both soils and vegetable production issues.

COAB

[Paddy Doherty] Paddy was happy to resign as treasurer of this national body when he was hired by COABC. Although the COAB received very clear direction from the Alymer meeting., he found it very difficult to access the president or executive directors.

Brian Mennell will represent BC on COAB, trying to convince it to be more open and inclusive, as it seems to be the logical body to establish and certify to national standards. We need a national body which understands that its members are the farmers, to deal with certification and to maintain the Standard, and above all to become a democratic, transparent organization. (see page 23)



Shelly Chvala

OAS report

[Paddy] (see page 20)

Staff Team Report

[Shelly Chvala] (available on request)

Application Forms Committee Report

[Shelly Chvala, Andrea Turner, Rochelle Eisen] A standardized application form is now available and on the COABC website.

It can be downloaded and mailed to the appropriate CB of a producer's choice. The auditor believes it will meet international criteria for certification. A standardized renewal application form is in the works, probably not in time for 2001.

Election of Officers

[Glenn Wakeling] Note that only current members of the Board, i.e. CB reps, are eligible to serve, but Officer positions are held by individuals. Suggested that dates of AGMs be harmonized so that the next year's CB reps can attend the COABC AGM.

Board meeting minutes will be posted on the COABC website for all to read. Suggestions that the BC Organic Grower could contain regional updates. Also suggested that Paddy develop a one page history for new growers.

Cuba

A brief presentation from Ron Pither pointed out that in very difficult times Cuba has learned organic processes to feed their people, with 45% of the food produced within cities. They have some amazing research and technical information that we could benefit from.

Restructuring

"Like trying to handle jello without a bowl."

Paddy comments on COAB

A panel presentation from Nick Orton, Marina Buchan, Anne Macey, and Paddy Doherty gave the meeting a solid grounding in the politics of the national and global organic certification movement. After discussion, it was agreed that COABC should have a certification arm which can take over certification to ISO65 for producers who wish to export and for CBs who want to get out of the certification business. This body, tentatively named BC Certified Organic Producers Society, or BC-COPS, will be ready for the 2002 season. (see page 12)

It was also agreed that the Board will explore a mandatory program for the use of the word "organic" in BC and nationally.

Marketing Boards

[Fred Reid] Fred gave an impassioned report which included background on our negotiations with the Marketing Board for recognition of the unique nature of Certified Organic products. It appears that Fred will have to go to court to defend himself against the Egg Marketing Board, and he requested support. The AGM decided not to take the lead role in legal action that may be required in the struggle between organic egg producers and the BC Egg

**New officers for 2001:**

- President: Linda Edwards
- Co-Vice Presidents: Roger Breed, Fred Reid
- Secretary: Mary Forstbauer
- Treasurer: Bob McCoubrey
- FARM rep: Dave Friend
- COAB rep: Brian Mennell
- Environmental/Consumer rep: Cathleen Kneen
- COABC rep to Cuba: Ron Pither

Marketing Board but to engage in public education and to collect money for a legal defence fund that will be turned over to organic egg producers, should they decide to take legal action.

It was agreed that we as COABC recognize that certified organic product is distinct, that it is not appropriate to lump it in with other commodities, that we morally support the ability of all organic farms to market their product as a distinct commodity under the Natural Products Marketing Act without hindrance.

2001 Budget

[Bob McCoubrey] The 2001 budget totalling \$215,690.00 was adopted. The treasurer pointed out that COABC fees only fund about 1/2 of the core services provided by the organization. The balance of core services and all projects are funded from government grants and accumulated surplus from past years. Unless further grants can be secured, next year will require increased fees or reduced levels of service. There are rumours of future funding from government, however the treasurer was asked to bring a proposal to the Board by November of 2001 to address the issue of sustainable funding of the organization; with the proposal to include recommendations for fee increases.

AGM 2002

Suggested that we focus our energies on IFOAM 2002 (see page 10) and keep the AGM low key.




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**Items Tabled for on-going discussion:**

Definitions

3.9 Handling as element of on-farm processing  
Handling in general

Administration/Process

6.7/8 Inactive status  
6.2 Appeal process  
7+ On-site audit, etc  
6.3.2 & 8.2.1 Parallel production

4.4.1 Administration fees

graduated fee scale proposal:

\$50 fee for up to \$35,000 (\$50,000) gross farm sales  
\$100 fee up to \$75,000  
\$200 fee up to \$200,00  
\$400 fee over \$200,000

Processing Materials

Amino acids  
Anti-coagulant rodenticides  
Sulfites (wine)  
Gelatin  
Natural flavours & Colourings  
Modified starch

Livestock

8.4.1.7/8 Antibiotics in dairy animals (equivalency)  
8.4.1.11 Slaughter facilities

Greenhouses

Clarity on split operations  
Transition for greenhouses  
Definitions: "native" soil/living medium  
8.3.8 a) raised benches in greenhouse growing

Crop Management

8.3.5 Rotenone

Land & Resource Management

8.2.6 Manure  
8.3.3 & 8.4.1.3 Water (All Sections of the Guide)

GMO committee

General Issues

Alternatives: CCA posts; seed potatoes; transplants.  
Co-packing agreements and inspections  
Equivalency with other CBs



*Committees have been struck on most of these issues: contact your COABC rep to join any committee you are interested in, and join the ongoing discussions on the listserv.*

*COABC Listserv information and registration is available on our website <www.CertifiedOrganic.bc.ca>*

# Manure Management

by Keith Boulter

I have been around farm animals all of my life, growing up on a mixed farm in Alberta, at a time of transition from 'natural' farming to 'modern chemical' farming. I took 2 years of Ag. College training with a focus on chemical farming. Returning to the family farm in 1966 I assumed management and tried some of what I'd 'learned'. We used chemical fertilizer on grain fields for several years; and I sprayed with 2-4D once. I felt a very strong wrongness in chemical methods and have been farming organically since 1968.

In most situations that I have encountered, soil humus levels are of fundamental importance. Well-decomposed, humus rich, animal wastes containing bedding waste is an incredibly good soil conditioner for soil health and plant growth. In appropriate amounts, liquid manures, while not containing much humus, can contribute to fertility, similar to a fish fertilizer application.

Appropriate manure use would seem to vary from farm to farm and even from field to field or crop to crop. The more rotted the compost, the better. Larger amounts may be needed to build poor or worn-out soil than to maintain it. Livestock naturally spread their manure 'uncomposted'.

Decomposition of waste materials takes several forms - aerobic and anaerobic bacterial breakdown, and breakdown from ultra-violet light rays. E. coli bacteria are inherent in all animals (including humans) and, it would seem, are necessary for our functioning. (E. Coli 0H157, the strain involved in Walkerton, is an aberration that may indicate major imbalances.)

My experience with green manures and livestock manures leads me to agree with Sir Albert Howard writing in *An Agricultural Testament* and in *Soil and Health*: that fertility is influenced by contributions from both the plant and animal kingdoms. While it is true that fertility can be obtained without livestock input (soil animal life providing the animal kingdom fraction), their use can contribute to a healthy and balanced fertility.

My understanding of traditional organic processes involves several types and aspects of decomposition or composting. Our present COABC standards only recognize thermophilic decomposition. While an ideal thermophilic composting will kill most pathogens, it is tricky to execute in its perfection. I would question whether it is necessary for all applications - it would seem that the care and consideration given to most vegetables would be different from corn as a food crop, and that pasture or hay crops for livestock would be different again.

I would be more comfortable with a focus on promotion of preferred practices rather than rigid one-size-fits-all prohibitions. Some discriminatory flexibility for our farmers and our certification bodies would seem to lead to more positive feelings on these issues. A question of balance again?

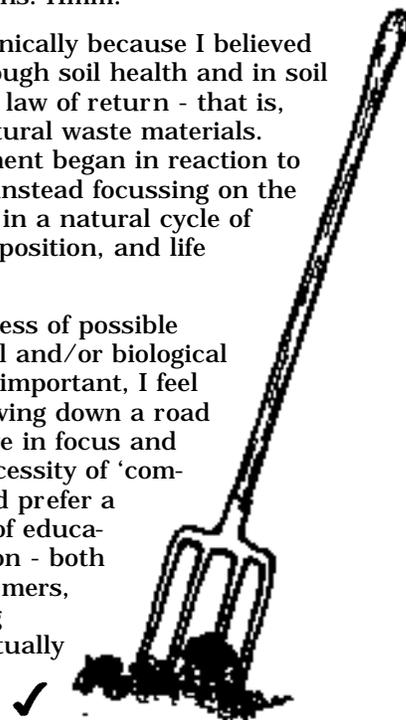
Things get a little muckier as we encounter the issue of GMOs and its effects on manure, particularly for those organic growers who don't have animals and would like to use animal manures in some form. While I would like to see Common Sense and Science in these issues, most of us have questioned so-called 'science' as it has affected organics at one time or other. Do GMOs that may be in non-organic feeds come through the animal in a form to detrimentally affect future crops? And if so will composting change that? Will ultra-violet light? Time? It's a thorny question, with very little hard science applied to it as yet.

Balance  
is of fundamental  
importance.

Consider the Ps and Qs of the issue - Practicality, Paranoia, Precautionary Principle, Questions, Questions. Hmm.

I have farmed organically because I believed in food quality through soil health and in soil health through the law of return - that is, the recycling of natural waste materials. The organic movement began in reaction to reductive science, instead focussing on the processes involved in a natural cycle of life, growth, decomposition, and life again.

Thus while awareness of possible sources of chemical and/or biological contamination are important, I feel cautious about moving down a road that's also reductive in focus and may lead to the necessity of 'compost police'. I would prefer a positive approach of education and information - both for ourselves as farmers, and the consuming public we are eventually speaking to.



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# Liquid Manure & Organics

*Dr. John Paul, Transform Compost Systems*

Liquid manure is an excellent source of nutrients for plant growth. Research has shown that up to 50% of the nitrogen in liquid dairy cattle manure is in the ammonium form - and is as readily available as fertilizer nitrogen. With liquid hog manure, there is even a higher percentage of readily available nitrogen, compared with liquid dairy manure.

[However,] liquid manure application results in loss of earthworms. Have you ever seen seagulls feeding on earthworms following an application of liquid manure? Earthworms come to the surface in response to increased soil moisture - as they would following a rain. A manure application also results in potentially toxic concentrations of volatile fatty acids and ammonia. When the earthworms come to the surface, they are eaten by seagulls, or they die in pools of liquid manure. Loss of earthworms results in a compacted soil. A compacted soil doesn't drain as well, which means that soil organisms and plant roots do not grow as well. The soil simply is not as healthy when liquid manure is used extensively.

There are also other factors to consider in relation to using liquid manure from conventional farms. Are there antibiotics in the manure? Are there other substances that are not consistent with organic agriculture? What about E. coli and other potentially pathogenic bacteria? There are some areas that are

considering a ban on raw manure application for fruit and vegetable production because of pathogen concerns. ...

Liquid manure found on farms today is not the same as the farmyard manure of years ago. A liquid manure handling system has less loss of nutrients to the ground or the air than the older solid manure handling systems. Nutrients in farmyard manure were often leached out by the rain, and were at risk of polluting surface and groundwater. Farmyard manure usually had more aerobic decomposition, and did not accumulate high concentrations of ammonium and volatile fatty acids. The management system is totally different and the resulting manure product is also totally different.

A liquid manure system is still one of the best strategies for recycling nutrients in the manure. For conventional dairy farmers who have a large enough landbase on which to utilize their manure effectively, a liquid manure system is cost effective and efficient....

[The requirement] that manure be composted, or that raw manure is not applied to a crop grown for market is based on the need to kill potential pathogens in the manure, kill weed seeds, and stabilize the nutrients so that there is not a large load of soluble nutrients applied to the soil... [An organic dairy farm therefore may decide not to use a liquid manure system] because the nutrients have not been stabilized, and potential harmful substances have not been denatured by the heating during the composting process. ✓



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# IFOAM 2002: Cultivating Communities

14th Organic World Congress August 21-24, 2002 in BC

## Call for Contributions

Canadian organizers of the 2002 Organic World Congress are broadening the appeal of what was traditionally the biennial scientific conference of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). The theme of the August 2002 congress in Victoria is "Cultivating Communities". In recognition of organic agriculture's increasingly important role in food and fibre production, the congress will examine the many opportunities and challenges that accompany the evolution of a farming movement, whether that be into a new global production system or a diversity of locally based food systems.

The Congress provides an opportunity for presenting the latest research, and also a forum for dialogue, debate and the exchange of ideas and experiences. In 2002 there will be greater emphasis on interactive sessions and more farmer participation, and less emphasis on submission of a formal paper. The IFOAM 'Organics in the Supermarket Seminar' and 'Food Processing Seminar' will be incorporated into the main Congress program. New additions include eco-forestry, aquaculture, a special symposium to identify issues crucial to the non-industrialized world, and a session using Open Space Technology to explore possibilities for new approaches and connections.

Contributions are invited from farmers, researchers, processors, traders, policy makers, certifiers, NGOs working on food, agriculture and development issues, activists and others working in areas relevant to the themes and topics identified. Contributions can be based on practical experience or research and be in the form of papers, posters, case studies, or topics for debate. The Program Committee will make the selection and have the final say on form of presentation. The average length of oral presentations is 15 minutes but some may be selected for a longer contribution.

The program will be organized around three main themes. (See right for details.) Please provide description of your proposed contribution, in English or accompanied by an English translation if in French or Spanish. It should not exceed 300 words. Research abstracts should contain aims, methods, results and conclusions of the study. Other contributions

should clearly identify the topic and issues which are being addressed. The program committee will inform you by February 28, 2002 whether or not your contribution is accepted and provide detailed instructions for submitting a final version for publication in the proceedings.

## IFOAM 2002 Events

- Pre and post congress Tours;
- International Congress on Organic Viticulture 20-21 Aug;
- 14th Organic World Congress 21-24 Aug;
- 4th Organic World Exhibition 24-25 Aug;
- IFOAM General Assembly 26-28 Aug.

## 7th International Organic Viticulture and Wine Congress

Contributions are also invited for the 7th International Organic Viticulture and Wine Congress, to be held August 20 & 21, 2002. A focus of this Congress will be the effect of production techniques on the sensory quality of organic wine including soil management, plant protection, and enological intervention. Please provide the information as requested above, clearly indicating that it is a contribution to the Wine Congress.

## How to submit a contribution

- Via the website
- Via email as part of the message NOT as an attachment
- By Mail or Fax

Please include the following:

- Your name & title • Organization
- Postal address • Email • telephone • fax
- Title of contribution
- Theme (A, B or C) and topic number (under theme).
- Whether based on research or practical experience,
- Preferred type of presentation (oral presentation, poster, video) and preferred type of session (technical, workshop discussion group, other),
- Preferred language of oral presentation -French, English or Spanish (simultaneous translation will not be available for all parallel sessions).

## Themes & Topics

### Organic production & environmental responsibilities

1. Crop production;
2. Animal husbandry;
3. Farming systems;
4. Agro- forestry;
5. Eco-forestry;
6. Aquaculture;
7. Energy, water, and climate issues;
8. Biodiversity, landscape design and ecosystem services.

### Redesigning food systems

1. Fair & ethical trade;
2. Industrial versus community models;
3. Marketing (global, local & regional);
4. Food security;
5. Food safety;
6. Labelling, standards and certification.

### People & the process of change

1. Education and training;
2. Rural development;
3. Policy development;
4. Social stewardship & gender issues;
5. Nutrition, food quality & health;
6. Food processing
7. Seed production and plant breeding, GMOs.

**Registration information will be available October 2001. The deadline for submission is November 7, 2001.**

**For more information about IFOAM 2002 "Cultivating Communities"**

IFOAM 2002, c/o Building 20, 8801 East Saanich Road Sidney BC, V8L 1H3, Canada

Tel: 250-655-5662 • fax: 250- 655-5657 • email <ifoam2002@cog.ca> • website: www.cog.ca/ifoam2002

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## Bio-Dynamic AGM April 21/22, 2001

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Registration information on the COABC web site under BD events.

Keynote speaker Walter Goldstein;  
farm tours,  
organic meals,  
music,  
dinner speaker (Natalie Forstbauer)  
on site day care,  
book sales,  
produce sales



You are invited to bring an ice-cream pail of soil from your farm or garden, marked with your name, for soil type comparison and discussion.

A few quotes from an address by Walter Goldstein on Organic Matter Management, printed in the Winter 2000-01 issue of The Stirring Stick.

“ Though organic matter generally makes up less than 5% of a soil, it is crucial for maintaining soil structure...

“ The formation of quality organic matter is fostered by 1) growing perennial forage crops which possess large quantities of fine roots; and 2) the use of organic manure, including green manure and especially animal manure. Perennials form more roots than annuals, and in part the formation of active organic matter is thought to depend on the decomposition of roots. Research also suggests that organic residues have different effects on the accumulation or active organic matter. Straw and green manures have relatively less effect than animal manures and compost.

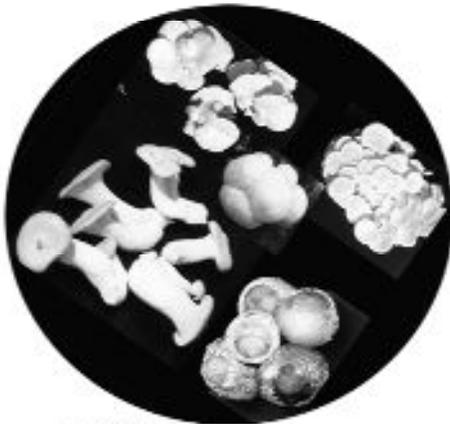
“ ... biodynamic preparations ... are actually growth regulators consisting of fermented materials that are used as field sprays or in manure or compost piles. ... These preparations are used in small amounts but their use has been shown to stimulate crop growth, especially in early stages of development. These growth regulators might increase the chance of success and sustainability of the alternative system by increasing the stability of yields, by stimulating root growth, and by increasing supplies of active organic matter ...

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# Restructuring COABC

by Paddy Doherty

International regulations are requiring organic certification systems to upgrade their programs. This is happening in Quebec, in the US and in the EU. B.C. must also bring its certification/accreditation program into compliance with international standards if our members are to continue exporting organic products. The recognised standard is the International Standards Organisation, (ISO) standard number 65.

In order to accomplish this upgrade, the COABC asked for and received a one-time grant of \$45,000 from the BCMAFF. This money will be used to:

1. research options for accreditation,
2. for industry consultation,
3. for implementation.

Accomplished to date:

✓ Upgrading of the COABC accreditation process to accommodate on-site audits of farms, rather than files (required by ISO65).

✓ Recognition of the B.C. Certified Organic program by the UK Register of Organic Food Standards - equivalent to the EN45011 system.

✓ Wide consultation with organic growers about the changes required, the options available and the local effects of such changes.

There is a strong mandate from the COABC AGM to develop a province-wide certification body in order to provide professional service to the organic market and to facilitate international trade.

There is also a strong mandate from the COABC AGM to move to a mandatory program for organic marketing in B.C. At present, subscribing to the B.C. Certified Organic program is voluntary, meaning that we have no control over imported organic product. Under a mandatory system, we can reasonably demand that imported product must meet our minimum standard.

Organic farming in B.C. continues to grow past our expectations. There are many demands on the B.C. Certified Organic program and changes will have to be made to keep pace. Though the future COABC may look different than the present organisation, the commitment to the principles of organic farming will remain.



# Death and taxes

by Ron Pither

## an introduction to Land Trusts & Covenants

*There are huge pressures on farmers and landowners to abandon their operations: piecemeal rural subdivision and increasing property assessments, attractive offers from developers, burdensome taxes on death, and the increasingly high cost of buying out family members. The fragmentation of the rural community from these pressures creates serious social, ecological and economic problems. How can these pressures be countered? Perhaps the most fruitful strategy is to build partnerships, an alliance of agricultural and conservation communities.*

Nobody likes to think about dying, and farmers are no exception. Nevertheless, farmers have a unique responsibility to plan for what will happen to their land when they die. Indeed, proper planning for transferring the farm to the next generation can even confer some benefit to the present generation.

“a conservation covenant could be considered more secure than an ALR designation”

However, only 30% of Canadians have written wills, and furthermore less than 5% of farmers have a written farm succession or inter-generational transfer plan.

The successful transfer of farms from one generation to the next is important to the prosperity of sustainable agriculture. Adequate estate planning can reduce current and future tax liabilities, and thus help to preserve the heritage of family homes or farms.

Good estate/farm succession planning can also enrich natural heritage conservation for lifeforms beyond just us humans through increased donations, endowments, conservation covenants and land stewardship plans. The intergenerational wealth transfer for BC in the next two decades is estimated at \$100 billion. Just think of what could be done for landtrusts/conservancies with just 1% of that in the next decade!

It is not, however, easy for families to choose options and reach their own decisions in order to preserve their lands, and family heritage and har-



*Restructuring need not be painful...*

mony. The Income Tax Act is a complex 2,000 page torture document, and the very notion of tax consequences associated with protecting private land can send a chill into the heart of the most altruistic farmer. Fortunately, there is help.

The National Advisory Committee on Family Farm Succession website <www.farmsuccession.com> has a national directory with myriad resources to help farmers in transition; it addresses the emotional side of transferring a farm business in addition to financial, tax and legal matters. There is an introductory *BC Estate Planning Checklist for Farm Families* (available from MAFF), aptly subtitled "...approaching the porcupine".

Over 40 BC Land Trusts have formed in the last ten years to preserve or enhance various habitats and species, sometimes alongside or within working farms, ranches or forests. Most are part of the Land Trust Alliance of BC (LTA), which has a full time Executive Director, seminars and workshop materials, and an excellent website (<www.landtrustalliance.bc.ca>) with many links to local programs. A single farm may need more lands added to it to create an effective conservation zone. BC land trusts and conservancy organizations are learning how to structure partnerships with land owners in a variety of ways to protect habitat and restrict development practices that could damage critical land features. For example:

 The Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust arranges financial incentives for farmers growing certain crops or for retaining wildlife areas which might be termed a voluntary stewardship contract program, without tax benefits.

 The Cowichan Community Land Trust stewardship programs have resulted in voluntary stewardship commitments by over 200 private landowners owning 1100 hectares of land.

The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC) holds Reynolds SRanch on the Fraser leased back to the current ranching family, encompassing 1,000 Ac and 75,000 Ac of tenured land in one of the most endangered ecosystems in Canada.

 TLC also has the world famous ecoforestry site, Wildwood, to be preserved as a working sustainable forest.

Other groups have arrangements that specify limits to future activities, such as subdivision, registered on land title by way of conservation covenant, and qualifying for a tax credit for the donor. A sustainable Forest Management Plan can be part of a conservation covenant, whilst designating certain areas for protection. Turtle Island Earth Stewards (TIES) refers some of its agreements with agricultural landholders to the use of only Certified Organic agriculture regimes.

continued on page 14...



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### Covenants

Conservation covenants are a key, and relatively new, stewardship technique in the Canadian conservation toolbox, following a decade of legal reforms pushed by ENGOs. A conservation covenant is a voluntary agreement to conserve lands or features relating to it. It is an agreement between a private land owner and a designated conservation or community organization, registered on the land title, and legally binding on future owners of the property. A conservation covenant may include provisions that restrict the use of, or require improvements to be maintained on the property, for the protection of natural, historical, cultural, architectural, environmental, heritage, scientific, wildlife or plant-life values. They are inexpensive alternatives to faltering government acquisitions of parks, and as for farmland, a conservation covenant could be considered more secure than an ALR designation. Increasingly non-governmental organizations are becoming willing to hold, monitor, and be entrusted with covenants on private lands in order to assist in preservation, and facilitate financial returns to donors wishing to realize land management ethics and conservation visions.

*Preserving Working Ranches In the Canadian West* is undoubtedly the best and most recent introductory manual on this subject. This manual, available from TLC (<[www.conservancy.bc.ca](http://www.conservancy.bc.ca)>), describes how landowners are setting up land trusts and community associations to steer conservation in their region. It outlines the estate planning tools and innovative land management strategies that can be used by financial planners to help farmers pass land on as viable agricultural units to heirs and other operators. It discusses unlocking kids from untenable ownership situations, allowing for future "development" while protecting the agricultural land base and your ownership rights, and the financial benefits and personal life vision realized from protecting your land. It gives sample calculations using conservation covenants in succession/estate planning. It helps decipher Rollovers to Spouses, Children or Grandchildren, Family Farm Corps, Farm Partnerships, and Family Trusts, and resulting tax gains. Leasebacks, Partial Sale, Conservation Buyers and much more are outlined in a most readable manner for the layperson. The manual also has an excellent appendix glossary of terms, resource directory and bibliography.

Another useful publication is *Greening Your Title, a Guide To Best Practices For Conservation Covenants* from West Coast Environmental Law Association <[www.wcel.org](http://www.wcel.org)>. Their *Tax Implications Of Gifts To*

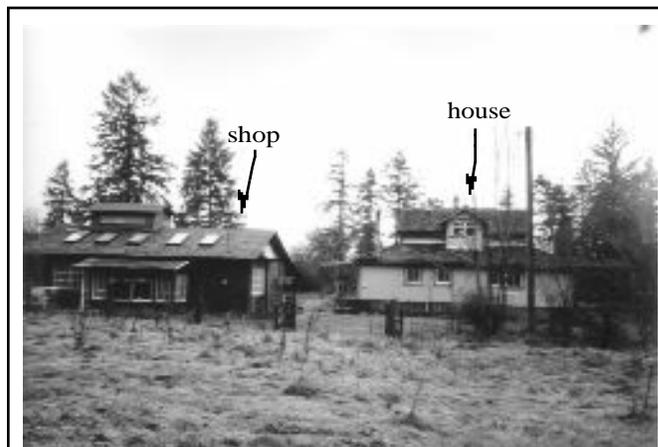
Family harmony is strengthened by such mindful and heartfelt recipes for the future generation.

*Protect Private Land*, entitled *Giving It Away*, is also a must read if you're serious about exploring farmland futures, conservation, and their fit within a sustainable agriculture.

Peace of mind regarding the sustainable use of your land in the future is not the only benefit to structuring a conservation covenant; there is also the tax credit benefit potential for landowners using these financial planning tools. Canadian tax law requires an appraisal as a basis for obtaining benefits regarding conservation covenants. A technical aid is *Conservation Easement Valuation and Taxation* report # 97-1 of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (Canada).

Decisions affecting the ownership and use of your property should only be made after careful consideration and professional consultation. All parties involved in the legal protection of a specific parcel of land should seek legal and tax advice at the earliest opportunity. With these resources, however, you can have a large part in designing your own strategies.

*Ron Pither is a founding director of LTS-BC and IOPA Certified Organic farmer.*



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## Preserving farmland biodiversity

by Margarete Tumbach

Working cooperatively with members of the agricultural community, The Land Conservancy is developing "The Conservation Label Partners Program" to raise the profile of those agriculturalists who are committed to habitat conservation.

While agricultural development has itself encroached on natural systems, in many cases, patches of undeveloped, privately owned agricultural lands now represent the last vestige of habitat for many native species. Many producers are committed to caring for the natural features of their properties. However, many times, they lack the time, finances, technical and community support to continue and to enhance the stewardship of their properties.

Moreover, little business incentive exists for farmers to contribute to habitat conservation. Organic and transitional farmers have shown their commitment to a more environmentally sound form of production. While philosophically supportive of habitat conservation, organic certification standards in British Columbia do not require the preservation of existing important habitat areas as criteria for certification.

The Conservation Label Partners Program aims to forge a mutually beneficial relationship between conservation and agriculture in BC. Working cooperatively with The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC), participants become involved in conservation initiatives aimed at protecting, restoring, and enhancing important habitat both on and off the farm. In recognition of their contribution towards nature preservation, participating producers may use the Conservation Partner label on their produce boxes. The label will be supplemented with information about the program provided to all levels of the market. In some cases, significant tax incentives also exist.

TLC plans to pilot the program in the Similkameen Valley this summer with hopes of expansion to the rest of the province within the next few years. Currently, TLC staff is working with growers of the Similkameen Valley to develop standards for the program. With the support of consumers and farmers, the labelling project has the potential to contribute enormously to the preservation of BC's limited farmland, and the protection of our precious natural places.

For more information please contact  
The Land Conservancy of BC at (250)-492-0173 or  
<penticton@conservancy.bc.ca>

## The BC Society for Pigs, Cows and Avians?

What does the BC SPCA have to do with farm animals? Contrary to public perception, plenty.

Although cats, dogs and animal shelters may spring to mind, the Society was formed in 1895 over concerns for the treatment of "pit-ponies" working in coal mines. The BC SPCA has always been concerned with farm animals and it is only relatively recently that the Society has taken on animal control contracts and become the cat-and-dog organization we associate them with today.

With SPCA support, BC now leads the country in establishing a labelling program designed to address farm animal welfare

### Farm

animal welfare is becoming a global concern, and is an issue the organic industry has always taken very seriously.

issues and give consumers a choice regarding the animal products they buy. Farm animal welfare is becoming a global concern, and is an issue the organic industry has always taken very seriously. Across the European

Union, farm animal welfare standards are on the rise and animal welfare lobbyists are pushing for legislative change. Australia and New Zealand are not far behind. Closer to home, the American Humane Association has launched its program Free Farmed, a labelling and accreditation program based on UK's Freedom Food.

The SPCA is developing practical humane standards for the raising, transport and slaughter of farm animals that embrace the Five Freedoms. Probably the most compromised by modern confinement farming is the fifth: "Freedom to express normal behaviour." The program strives to improve farm animal welfare, create public awareness and provide economic incentive for BC producers to improve their husbandry practices. The BC SPCA is working with producers, veterinarians and animal welfare experts to raise the welfare standards in BC and, eventually, across Canada.

This is a timely move. The 1997 Trends in Canada Survey reported that 37 per cent of consumers refused to purchase animal products where the ethical treatment of animals was in question. Consumers are becoming savvier. Catastrophes such as Mad Cow Disease in the UK and the Walkerton water crisis in Ontario have brought agriculture and food production to the forefront of many consumers' minds. Consumers want to know that their food was produced ethically, sustainably, and preferably locally. British Columbia has an enviable agriculture industry, unique in the sense

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...continued from page 15

that many farms are owned and operated by families. The BC SPCA believes that the agriculture industry should capitalize on this.

The BC SPCA conducted a survey of 600 grocery shoppers last August to gauge purchase motivations, consumer knowledge of farming practices and the strength of animal welfare issues motivating animal product purchases. The results? Eighty five per cent of the 600 respondents stated that they wish there was a way to determine that animals used in food they buy were treated humanely. In contrast, only 34 per cent believe that this is actually the case. The consumers were asked to rank their reasons for buying organic foods as important, slightly important and not important. Animal welfare ranked fourth at 84 per cent, above fresher (81 per cent) and taste (78 per cent).

Seventy four per cent of the grocery shoppers who stated they are influenced by the certified organic program agree that overall they eat fewer animal products than they did 5 years ago. In addition, ninety one per cent of the consumers who agree that certified organic programs influence their grocery purchases do want a way to determine that the animals used in the food they buy were treated humanely.

The BC SPCA has held discussions with the BC Association for Regenerative Agriculture (BCARA) and the Certified Organic Association of BC (COABC). Several areas where the programs complement each other have been highlighted, with the potential to create cooperative efforts in public education, marketing, and a shared investment in inspections and monitoring. The BC SPCA believes organic livestock producers take exceptional care of their animals and would exceed the labelling program's standards - they deserve recognition for both organic and animal welfare practices. The BC SPCA is pleased to have been invited to sit on COABC's livestock standards committee, and looks forward to seeing how the two standards (COABC and BC SPCA) could fit together. While each program would be different and separate, the BC SPCA is committed to working with the organic industry to promote farm animal welfare.

What are the next steps? The BC SPCA and the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) met with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to discuss the development of a humane labelling program in Canada. CFIA is willing to work on the labelling program with both groups as the agency continues to develop a national consultation concerning Canada's labelling policies. For their part, CFHS and the BC SPCA have pledged to assist with CFIA's review. The BC SPCA will continue to move ahead, and plans to launch their labelling program under the provincial Food Choice and Disclosure Act this summer.

The organic industry has made great strides in BC agriculture, raising the awareness and importance of sustainable food practices to BC consumers. The BC SPCA looks forward to continuing a relationship with COABC and all its members - highlighting BC agriculture and all that is has to share - locally, nationally and internationally.

For more information please visit the BC SPCA's web-site at [www.spca.bc.ca/farm](http://www.spca.bc.ca/farm). ✓

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## Who Buys Organics?

by Cathleen Kneen

A 1991 market segment study reported in Meat & Poultry, 2/01, shows that the market for Certified Organic foods may be higher than has been assumed. Their research showed 35% of consumers are what they called "Belly Fillers" - price driven and don't care about anything else. 15% were "Tree Huggers" - want natural and organic foods. But then there were 20% "Straight Arrows" whose major concern is high quality, 21% "Sweathogs" who are concerned about fat, cholesterol and carbohydrates, and a further 9% described as "Mr. Cleans" who want only pure and unadulterated food products.

This study implies that 65% of consumers whose major concerns are quality and purity are natural markets for Certified Organic products. Indeed, with the food scares around BSE and antibiotic resistance, foot-and-mouth and GMOs, in the last 10 years, the Belly Filler category has probably eroded further.

The important element is clearly quality. Our Certified Organic products must be visibly of higher quality - in terms of purity, lack of adulteration, taste and texture, presentation. Our customers must be able to see that we are working to the highest standards possible. That is the only way we can continue to earn a premium price for the Checkmarked products. ✓



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## Providing for that Rainy Day

by Linda Edwards

### NISA, or Double Your Money ...

The purpose of NISA (the Net Income Stabilization Account) is to help producers deal with bad years. Participants deposit money annually into their own individual accounts. This can be up to 3% of your Eligible Net Sales (ENS) This includes packaging and sales costs. For example, if your ENS is \$30,000 you would be able to deposit \$900. The federal and provincial governments would then deposit a matching contribution of \$900.

There are two ways you can get access to the funds. One, called the Stabilization Trigger, allows you to withdraw from your account if your farm's gross margin (net sales from all agricultural commodities minus eligible expenses) falls below your average gross margin for the previous 5 years. The other is the Minimum Income Trigger which allows withdrawal when your income from all sources falls below \$20,000 (\$35,000 for a family).

You can also take the full amount anytime you want or within 5 years after you retire from farming.

All NISA deposits earn a 3% interest bonus over and above the regular interest paid by financial institutions. Generally, qualifying commodities include all primary agricultural products except those covered by supply management (dairy, poultry and eggs).

To find out more call 1-800-665-6472.

### Whole Farm Insurance

The Whole Farm Insurance Pilot Program is designed to provide a measure of stability against a dramatic drop in a farm's "program margin" - the difference between allowable farm revenue and expenses, otherwise known as your average income - in the current year compared to an average of the farm's average income for either the previous 3 years or 3 out of 5 of the past years with the highest and lowest year taken out. The program will make a payment to bring you up to 70% of this figure.

For example if your average margin was \$ 30,000 and your income dropped below 70% of that (\$21,000) to say \$15,000 then this program would pay you \$6,000 to bring you up to 70% of your average income.

This is also a federal/provincial program . To find out more call 1-888-343-1064. ✓

# Common Potato Problems

*Paddy Doherty*

Here are some problems common to many organic potato growers. If you have found a solution on your farm, please write a letter to the BCOG and let us know about it. Most of the knowledge about organic farming will remain in individual farms unless we spread it around (like compost).

## Common Scab

Common scab is familiar to most organic potato growers because of our dependence on animal manure for crop nutrition. A severe infection reduces yield. The consumer doesn't like to buy scabby potatoes; they are unsightly and wasteful because the scabs must be cut out.

The scabs vary from slight russetting of the skin to very rough, corky areas that may be raised, pitted, or superficial. They first appear as minute reddish or brownish surface lesions on the young tubers, usually around the breathing pores. As the lesions increase in size they become dark and develop into the typical, raised, scablike areas. The scabs may be single, or several, or many may join together to form a large, corky mass. Other root crops such as turnips, sugar beets, garden beets, and radishes are also affected by common scab.

Common Scab is caused by a soil-borne bacterium (*Streptomyces scabies*). The scab occurs on the tubers, stems, stolons and roots. The bacterium can overwinter in infected seedpieces and contaminated soil. The organism can live for a long time in the soil. Potatoes grown in soil that has never been cropped before are sometimes severely scabbed. It thrives in soil when the pH range is 5.5 to 7.5. Also, the organism can be spread by contaminated manure if infected tubers have been fed to livestock.

The amount of scab that develops is influenced by the kind and amount of organic matter in the soil, and the acidity, moisture, aeration, and temperature of the soil. Manure applied to the soil usually favours scab. The organism may persist for many years in fields that have been heavily manured or in sites of old barnyards.

The organism infects growing tubers through the

lenticles or through wounds caused by mechanical damage or by insect feeding. Continuous cropping of potatoes increases scab severity. Scab is usually worse in dry rather than moist soils.

## Management

Some varieties of potatoes are more resistant to scab than others. Ask your local District Agriculturist to suggest varieties that grown well in your climate and have some scab resistance. Plant only disease-free seed in scab-free soil. Because scab favours alkaline soils, do not add lime to your potato fields. If lime is needed to grow a legume crop, apply the lime in the fall after harvesting the potato crop. Do not lime the soil again until after another crop of potatoes is grown. The amount of lime applied should be determined by soil analysis.

If your potato land is already alkaline, you can add sulphur to increase acidity. Be careful not to make the soil too acid. Use only well composted manure to enrich your soil and use it sparingly. Apply it in the fall and ensure it is well worked into the soil. Rotate your potato crop with a no-host crop such as alfalfa, soybeans, rye, or buckwheat. Plough these crops into the soil as an alternative to adding compost. Three to five year rotations between potatoes is recommended for the prevention of scab. Some organic gardeners have found that a crop of Fall Rye, ploughed under before planting potatoes, aids in controlling scab.

You can use irrigation for scab control. The most important time to add water is just when the tubers start to form and for about three to four weeks thereafter.

## Tuber Flea Beetle (*Epitrix tuberis* Gentner)

Adults are little black beetles, about 1/16 of inch long. They are called, 'Flea' Beetles because they jump around when they're disturbed. They don't seem to fly much. The larvae are white, with brown heads and are 1/2 inch long.

The adult beetles nibble on the underside of the potato foliage, leaving a 'shot hole' pattern. There may be thousands of them on a single plant. Unless the leaf damage is severe, there is no reduction in crop yield. The larvae dig fine tunnels in the potato tuber. These appear as rough pimples and cracks and resemble common potato scab. The two problems can be differentiated because scab produces raised lesions, while flea beetle damage is more smooth.



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As with common scab, the marketability of the infected potatoes is reduced because of the unsightly texture and appearance. Infected potatoes show spots or brown discoloration below the skin when peeled, (how you know it's Flea Beetle) therefore requiring extra-thick peeling. Commercial potatoes seldom show this problem as the fields will have been monitored and treated.

The adult Flea Beetle overwinters in the soil and emerges from early May to late June. Each female lays about 90 eggs in the soil near developing tubers. The larvae will feed for three weeks on the tubers and pupate in the soil. There are up to three overlapping generations per season.

## **Management**

Some organic farmers use rotenone dust on the adult beetles but admit it is not very effective. Because the adults beetles overwinter in the soil around weedy vegetation, your control program should eradicate winter habitat. This may include ploughing in all crop and weed residue after harvest, and frequent cultivation during the growing season. Maintaining a cleared area around your potato field may keep flea beetles away from your crop (they don't travel far) but this hasn't been proven.

Rodale suggests planting extra-thick crops and thin-

ning after the danger of infestation is passed. This is supposed to work because the Flea Beetles don't like shade. He also suggests planting shade-giving crops near the potatoes. Rodale maintains that garlic spray will drive Flea Beetles away, but there is no empirical evidence to support this.

Linda Edwards has had excellent results controlling Flea Beetle by mulching her potatoes with a layer of straw. It seems that the adult Flea Beetle lays its eggs on the straw, rather than the potato plant, and the larvae either doesn't hatch, or hatches but doesn't thrive. In any case, she maintains that this method eliminates Flea Beetle damage. Mulching with straw would be a challenge for potato crops of any size, but could be accomplished with the use of ginseng (straw spreading) equipment and could possibly reduce weeding costs while adding organic matter.

## **Cutworms**

Cutworms will eat new and even old tubers, chewing great hunks out of them. This problem is usually a result of planting potatoes in recently turned sod. Sod is the habitat for many species of beetle cutworms and they will persist in the cultivated soil, eating whatever is handy. Ploughing potato fields in the late summer or fall, and keeping the ground cultivated, will alleviate this problem. ✓

# Organic Advisory Service

by Paddy Doherty

The OAS is now ready for operation on a limited scale. That is, we haven't received much money from Investment Agriculture for this project (\$8,250) but we are going ahead regardless.

## How it works :

The program was originally conceived to provide assistance to conventional farmers converting to organic agriculture, and to emerging organic farmers (persons who have never been farmers), but it is open to anyone who feels they could benefit from it. The only requirement for Advisor Farm Visits, is that you must have a farm (or be a processor or handler) to be visited.

Anyone interested in having an Organic Advisor visit their farm to speak with them about organic farming should call the Toll-free Organic Help-line 1-866-992-2627. The OAS will send you a package of material about organic farming in general. You should then return the Request Form with a cheque for \$25 and an advisor will contact you within 30 days. Please be patient while we get the service up and running. We have some excellent advisors in the southern half of the province, but exactly none have applied from Salmon Arm North. So, if you live North of Kamloops, (some of us do) you may have to wait until we persuade more farmers to act as Advisors.

## Coming Soon: Telephone Consultations

Later this year, telephone consultations will be available. This part of the OAS is open only to organic farmers, processors or handlers enrolled in the B.C. Certified Organic program. Simply call the Organic Help-line with a specific request about a specific production problem. The OAS will arrange to have an Advisor call you back within 24 hours (theoretically). These consultations are expected to last no more than fifteen minutes and you are expected to have done some research on your own before calling the OAS.

Pamphlets advertising the OAS are available from Paddy Doherty at 250-747-3287 ✓



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# Ban GE Crops!

COABC GMO Committee

*In the Speech from the Throne, the BC Government stated its intention to "introduce legislation requiring the labelling of foods sold in British Columbia that contain genetically-engineered organisms. Consumers have a fundamental right to know what is in their food."*

*The COABC GMO Committee is writing to the Premier in support of this move, but emphasizing that we feel that the choice to grow food free of GE traits is also essential.*

“As Certified Organic producers we are becoming increasingly threatened with Genetically Engineered crop production in proximity to our organic fields. Contamination from pollen drift is a real and well documented problem. In particular, Bt corn is depriving some producers of the option of growing corn organically. There is no agronomic justification for the presence of Bt corn in BC, since the corn borer against which it is supposed to defend the crop is not a problem here. Bt potatoes are hardly an issue since to the best of our knowledge less than one acre of them was grown in BC last year, and according to the Wall Street Journal (14/3/01) Monsanto will not be selling its GE potatoes after this season.

## GMO Committee contacts:

Anne Warren (250) 835-8332  
Cathleen Kneen (250) 675-4866  
*All interested members are encouraged to join!*

“This is an issue for all farmers, not just Certified Organic farmers. More than a year ago the BC Vegetable

Marketing Commission, for example, stated “Growers do not have access to any genetically modified potato or vegetable seeds that will resist any of the diseases or pests that are indigenous to BC. Therefore BC producers have no financial reason whatsoever to incur the additional cost of growing varieties that have been genetically modified.”

“Crops free of GMO are in demand locally and globally. If our Government acted now and expressed the will of the people by banning the sale of GE seed, GE field trials and GE crop production, we could continue to be a thriving and growing sector of the agricultural economy. To guarantee our exports, all BC farmers need to be able to prove that their crops are free of GE contamination. The simplest way to do this is to ban the production of GE crops in the province.

*In our letter, which was sent on March 23, we asked the Government to move quickly — before crops are planted — to institute a moratorium on the planting of GE corn and potatoes in BC. This would be a prelude to the announced legislation on labelling and would save this year's corn and potato crop.* ✓



**At Jerseyland we are supporters of the Checkmark symbol. We have a policy that we will NOT support out of country, out of province or private certifiers for our processing supplies, where there are COABC members offering products. We feel that this is the high road and encourage all COABC Checkmark users to follow our example.**

**We have found that BC Certified strawberries, blueberries, spices and herbs for our yogurts and cheeses are far fresher, tastier and supports a neighbour organic farmer. Many certified products from elsewhere or privately certified have differing standards than our COABC standards, which we feel are second to none in the world.**

**To our loyal customers: Support British Columbia Certified Organic. Ask your suppliers of organic products, “Do you buy BC Certified Organic First?”**

**Ric & Vickie Llewellyn**

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# Seed Saving 101

by Patrick Steiner, Stellar Seeds

If you are interested in experimenting with seedsaving at your farm or home, you need not fear that it is too difficult or technical for a beginner to accomplish. Many seeds are easy to save and with a little planning you can grow your own high quality seeds to plant next year or share with friends and neighbours. A few basic points need to be considered:

 Make sure the seeds you plant are open-pollinated, not hybrids. Open-pollinated seeds will breed true - that is to say they will produce a plant like the one from which they have been saved. If you save seed from hybrid plants they may revert to one of the parent strains, or a funny mixture that is neither fully one nor the other. In short, you can't be assured of what you will get if you save hybrid seed, nor can you be assured they will germinate properly.

 Observe recommended isolation distances in order to ensure varietal purity. Varietal purity means we are confident that the particular characteristics that differentiate, for example, one variety of tomato from another are maintained. To achieve this plant your crop far enough away from similar crops to avoid cross-pollination. Depending on your proximity to neighbours you may have to find out what they are growing before you can plan to save seed of certain crops. A basic guide follows.

Tomatoes, Lettuce.....15 ft.
Beans.....20 ft.
Peas, Eggplant.....50 ft.
Peppers.....500 ft.
Cucumbers, Melons, Radish, Turnip, Cabbage, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Kale, Winter & Summer Squash.....1/2 mile
Carrots, Onions.....2 miles
Spinach, Corn, Beets,.....3 miles

source: *Abundant Life Seed Foundation*

For any plants which are biennials such as most roots and brassicas you need only observe isolation distances for that plant in the year in which it will flower.

 Use close observation to determine which plants are healthiest and conform most to that variety's particular characteristics. Cull plants which are off-types, or seem less vigorous. This practice is called roguing and it is your main process for genetic selection. Allowing some variation in a variety's characteristics can be beneficial as it maintains diversity in the gene pool of that plant. Bear in mind that the seeds you select will carry the genetic information from the plant that you saved them from. For this reason don't save seed from double-fruited or mis-shapen tomatoes, thick-

necked onions, lettuces that bolt too fast, or beets whose crown is not compact, etc. Always keep in mind the ideal qualities of the plant you are saving seed for and select accordingly.

These crops should receive all the treatment that a regular crop receives. Good soil preparation, adequate moisture, weed management, etc. Healthy, vigorous plants produce healthy, vigorous seeds.

These are the basic requirements for growing seeds. Notes on harvesting can be found online at [www.seedsavers.org](http://www.seedsavers.org), or in two easily accessible publications *How To Save Your Own Vegetable Seed* published by Seeds of Diversity Canada, or *Seed to Seed* published by Seed Savers Exchange.

Alternatively, stay tuned to BCOG for *Seedsaving 101 - Part II: seedharvesting and storage*. If you have any questions regarding this information contact [info@stellarseeds.com](mailto:info@stellarseeds.com) ✓

## Seeds Available

**W.J. Boughen & Sons Ltd.** (fruit trees)  
604 884-1284 [BCARA]

**David and Emily Carr** (Medicinal Herbs)  
250 545-0598 [NOOA]

**Echo Valley Organics** (Heritage seeds)  
250 653-0036 [IOPA]

**Kurtz Road Organics** (Garlic)  
250 499-5750 [SOOPA]

**Living Organic**  
250 962-8066 [COPA]

**Mary Alice Johnson**  
250 642-3671 [IOPA]

**Planting Seeds Project**, Mojave Kaplan  
(Vegetables, herbs, flowers, dye plants, bulk available. Will contract grow and purchase from other seed growers.)  
250 455-2392 (STOPA/COPA)

**Raven's Hill Ranch** (Vegetables)  
250 558-5039 [NOOA]

**Salt Spring Seeds**  
250 537-5269 [IOPA]

**Smiling Hobo Farm** (red clover, alfalfa)  
780 928-2128 [PROPA]

**Sunshine Farm** (vegetables)  
250 764-4810 [NOOA]

**Stellar Seeds**, Patrick Steiner (vegetables, flowers, herbs)  
250 675-3309 [OCPP]

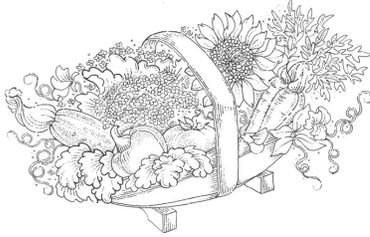
**Two Wings Farm** (heirloom seeds)  
250 478-3794 [IOPA]

**Venables Organic Farm** (Tree fruit nursery stock)  
250 499-2649 [SOOPA]

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**Farm Internship Opportunity** Coop household. Beautiful wilderness setting. Learn hands-on, organic gardening, goat-herding and cheese-making. Work for stay, minimum one month, prefer north/west folk who can visit first. All ages and cultures welcome. Drop-in impossible, please write or e-mail for more info. Yalakom Coop, Box 678, Lillooet BC V0K 1V0 [Touchands@hotmail.com](mailto:Touchands@hotmail.com)

**Land for lease** 2-5 ac. or less for organic garden. Highway frontage on West TCH ten minutes from Kamloops in Cherry Creek. Lots of sun and water. Also interested in putting up greenhouses for winter. Shelley (250) 828-6774

## COAB Report

by Brian Mennell

The Canadian Organic Advisory Board Annual General Meeting, held in Edmonton March 8 and 9, was a far cry from the COABC AGM. Attendance was low and the organization is in disarray. There is less than \$1000 in the bank, and the Executive Director has not been paid for three months. However, the umbrella certification agency, the "Secretariat" is about 85% of the way to meet the Standard Council of Canada requirements for accreditation. A trademark must be registered separately and that may take 8 to 10 months. The key limiting factor at the moment for SCC approval is for the organization to show financial solvency, which will require the Secretariat to find \$60-100 K over the next year. The federal government has refused to finance some of the costs of the Secretariat through the CARD funds, nor will the Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada move forward with support or funding in an arena of discontent.

Three resolutions resulted from these discussions:

- ☞ COAB will focus on the tasks of an inclusive organic sector advisory board.
- ☞ The certification Secretariat will be transferred to a not-for-profit, public sector cooperative with shares available to all organic certification bodies in Canada for \$1.00.
- ☞ COAB intends to make available the COAB corporate trademark "Canada Organic" to certifiers or independent organic organizations, who follow equivalent or better certification to the Canadian National Standards.

Membership fees in COAB will be set at \$75 for individuals, sustaining membership at \$50, non profit \$1000, Government agency \$5000, corporate A \$1000, corporate B \$5000, students \$50 (plus GST).

Now it is up to the board and committees to see they can turn the organization around and make it perform to its name. ✓



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### Jim Bartlett

Keremeos Store Manager

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Fax: 250-499-2960

Info Line: 250-498-3011

[svalley@vip.net](mailto:svalley@vip.net)

