

## **Certification Orientation**

Saturday, November 24, 2012

Georgian Room, (9:00am – 4:30pm)

## **Workshop: Organic Production 101 (10:30 – 11:30)**

### **Speaker: ROXANNE BEAVERS, (ACORN)**

Roxanne Beavers works with ACORN to assist growers in transitioning to organic agriculture or growing their existing organic farm in a project funded by the National Research Council. She is ACORN's representative on the technical committee for the Canadian Organic Standards, and has worked as a researcher, an organic inspector and a market gardener.

### **Executive Summary**

Through a slide presentation, Roxanne discusses the unique attributes of organic farms, the process of organic certification, and how you can learn more about organic production.

### **Details**

#### **Welcome, Background (slide 2, 3, 4)**

ACORN (Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network) is an organization formed to support organic farmers. It provides information and education on its website about certification including a database of products to use on an organic farm.

Previous to 2009, Canadian Organic Standards was voluntary but as of June 30, 2009 The Organic Product Regulations (OPR) was put into place making the Canadian Organic Standards mandatory. This was in response to a need to become compliant with international trading standards.

The two documents, produced by the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB), that represent these standards are:

- ☞ CGSB-32.310 Organic Standard (COS)
- ☞ CGSB-32.311 Permitted Substances List (PSL)

#### **General Principles (slide 5, 6)**

There are 7 general principals that the standard provides practical methods to help achieve these principals

### **What the Standards Don't Cover (slide 7)**

The standards do not cover labeling, enforcement or products other than food and feed. These areas are the responsibility of the Certification Body and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

### **Regulations (slide 8)**

The standards apply to products crossing the borders (provincial or national). In province the Labeling Act applies and organic claims must be authentic i.e. follow the standards.

### **Acronym Check 1 (slide 9)**

CGSB – Canadian General Standards Board

COS – Canadian Organic Standard

PSL – Permitted Substances List

CFIA – Canadian Food Inspection Agency

COO – Canada Organic Office (of CFIA)

OPR – Organic Product Regulations

COR – CANADIAN ORGANIC REGIME

### **Sections of the Standard (slide 10)**

The sections of the Standard include: scope, definitions, organic plan, specific requirements: (crops, livestock, maple, honey, sprouts, greenhouse, wild crops) and preparation and handling of organic products.

### **Permitted Substances (slide 11)**

Permitted substances cover: crop production aids and materials, soil amendments and crop nutrition, livestock feed, feed additives and supplements, health care products and production aids, processing allowed non-organic food additives & ingredients and cleaners, disinfectants, and sanitizers.

### **What's Not Allowed (1.4.1) (slide 12)**

Found in the section Prohibited Substances, 1.4.1

### **What's Unique about Organic Farming (slide 13)**

Organic farming looks at animal welfare considerations and living conditions. There is no use of Genetically Modified Organisms or technologies, use of synthetic fertilizers or pest / weed control. It monitors long and diverse crop rotations, relies on composts and cover crops to build soil and integrated systems – livestock & crops.

### **Overview of Certification Process (slide 14)**

The Certification process should include; an Application to a Certification Body, Review (is application complete?), Inspection, Review and Decision.

### **Transition (slide 15)**

The transition will take 3 years from conventional unless no prohibited substances were used during that period, then can transition in 1 year. An application to the Certifying Body should be made 15 months prior to a plan to market crops as organic.

There is no transition period for processing.

Transition for Livestock varies; day old chicks can be conventional as long as they are fed organic from the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of life, but a Dairy cow will have to be fed organic feed for 1 year. The mother cow cannot be sold as organic beef.

The annual cost starts around \$600+ up for higher sales, land area.

### **Organic Plan (slide 16)**

The organic plan is a description of methods used on farm and includes transition, preparation, handling and management practices (Sect. 4)

The plan should include a description of the operation – crops, acreage, projected yields, field maps and field history, rotation plan and more!

### **Recordkeeping (slide 17)**

The records should demonstrate that the Organic Plan is being followed and enable traceability. Records should be useful both for your operation and for the certification process and be ongoing i.e. maintained for 5 years.

### **Inspection (slide 18)**

Inspection is an annual process. It compares observations of your operation with requirements of the Standard/PSL. It reviews production areas and your farm records and reports back to the Certifying Body who make the certification decision. OCP = Organic Control Point.

### **Who are certifiers (slide 19)**

When choosing a certifier some considerations include: structure, cost, location, expertise, communication and markets. You will want to also include certification to other standards - export? We now have equivalency with US and EU. Japan, Korea, other regions – need different certification.

There are programs in New Brunswick and PEI that cover up to 70% of the fee. Some fees are based on gross sales rather than acreage.

A question was asked whether you could change certifiers and the answer is yes. Refer to ACORN's site on how to choose a certifier.

### **Acronym Check 2 (slide 20)**

CBs - Certification Bodies include: ACO – Atlantic Certified Organic, CSI - Centre for Systems Integration, OCIA – Organic Crop Improvement Agency, Ecocert, ProCert

IOIA – International Organic Inspectors Association

OMRI – Organic Materials Review Institute

NOP – National Organic Program (US)

### **Resources (slide 21, 22)**

Refer to [www.acornorganic.org](http://www.acornorganic.org) for Online resources: certification FAQs, sector specific info (greenhouses, berry and grains), resources on cover cropping, organic inputs, equipment and supplies.

### **Provincial Specialists (Slide 23)**

- ☞ Nova Scotia: Dr. Av Singh (Perennia) and Claire Hanlon Smith (Dept of Agriculture)
- ☞ New Brunswick: Claude Berthélemé
- ☞ Prince Edward Island: Susan MacKinnon

### **Other Groups (slide 24, 25)**

- ☞ COG - Canadian Organic Growers, NB Chapter
- ☞ OACC - Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada
- ☞ Local Federations of Agriculture
- ☞ OFC – Organic Federation of Canada
- ☞ OCNS – Organic Council of Nova Scotia
- ☞ Provincial ACORN Chapters Newfoundland and New Brunswick
- ☞ OTA – Organic Trade Association
- ☞ PEICOPC- Certified Organic Provincial Chapter

### **Learning More (slide 26)**

- ☞ ACORN's Grow a Farmer – internships and mentorships
- ☞ WWOOF – willing workers on organic farms
- ☞ OACC Distance education classes
- ☞ Online transition course through the Rodale Institute

☞ eOrganic webinars