

33 Organic Certification

Resource Kit for Nova Scotia Farmers

Organic Farming

Organic agriculture is a holistic system of production designed to optimize the productivity and fitness of diverse communities within the agroecosystem, including soil organisms, plants, livestock, and people. The principle goal of organic agriculture is to develop productive enterprises that are sustainable and harmonious with the environment.

There is a growing number of consumers who support organic agriculture for environmental, health and social reasons and are willing to pay a premium price for organic products. Becoming 'certified organic' allows farmers to capture a premium price in local and national marketplaces.

What does 'Certified Organic' mean?

'Certified Organic' assures the consumer that three basic criteria have been met:

1. Production has met regulated standards;
2. A yearly inspection has been passed; and
3. An audit trail has been kept.

Standards

'Certified Organic' assures the consumer that the product has been produced according to regulated standards, which include production without the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, sewage sludge, irradiation to preserve food, genetically modified organisms or genetically engineered seed/stock. Livestock are not subjected to intensive feedlots, antibiotics, medicated feed or growth hormones. Farmers also judiciously employ management techniques such as well-designed crop rotations, replenishment of organic matter, use of green manures and composting.

While specifics may change between certifying bodies, Canada has national standards that define organic agriculture. Certifying bodies will assure at least this minimum is maintained for products produced under this system. Many certifying bodies maintain standards higher than the minimum qualifications required in Canada and maintain standards equivalent to or

higher than international standards. For more detailed regarding standards, refer to the Canadian General Standards Board and the various certifying bodies listed below.

Inspection

When a product is labeled 'Certified Organic' the consumer can trust that there has been a carefully monitored transitional period on the farm/production facility during which all organic standards have been met or exceeded and that each farm/production facility is certified each and every year thereafter. Farms can lose their certification if they fail to meet any one of the standards. Certification would be reinstated as soon as the inspector and the certification board were satisfied the problem was resolved and the standards maintained. Inspection is carried out by trained, independent inspectors who can request, for example, that the grower provide soil, water and plant tissue tests.

Audit Trail

'Certified Organic' products must have an audit trail to endure that a product can be traced back to the producer and to the records detailing how that product was produced.

Regional Certification Bodies

In the Maritimes, there are many options for choosing an organic certifying body. Below are contacts for the various organizations. We recommend that you contact several of these to get an information package so you can make an informed decision. It's also a good idea to speak to some clients directly.

Atlantic Certified Organic (ACO) Co-operative

Administrator: Angela Patterson

PO Box 40 Canning, NS B0P 1H0

Tel: 1-888-375-9190, 902-582-3275; Fax: 902-582-3299

E-mail: info@atlanticcertifiedorganic.ca

Website: www.atlanticcertifiedorganic.ca

Centre for Systems Integration (CSI)

200-240 Catherine St., Ottawa, ON, K2P 2G8

Tel: 1-800-516-3300; Fax: 613-236-7000

E-mail: info@csi-ics.com

Website: www.csi-ics.com/organic/services/organic-certification

Ecocert Canada

71 St-Onésime, Lévis, QC, G6V 5Z4

Tel: 1-855-246-9383; Fax: 418-838-9823

E-mail: info.canada@ecocert.com; Website: www.ecocertcanada.com

Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA)

517 Main St. Box 3429

Humboldt, SK, S0K 2A0

Tel: 306-682-3126; Fax: 306-682-3127

E-mail: info@ocia.org; Website: www.ocia.org

Pro-Cert Organics Inc.

PO Box 74, 2311 Elm Tree Road

Cambray, ON, K0M 1E0

Tel: 705-374-5602; Fax: 705-374-5604

E-mail: infoebo@pro-cert.org; Website: www.pro-cert.org

Quality Assurance International (QAI)

Tel: 1-858-200-9708

Email: jlackie@qai-ince.com

Website: www.qai-inc.com/services/producer.asp

For general information about organic certification, contact the Atlantic Canada Organic Regional Network (ACORN) by visiting www.acornorganic.org or calling 1-866-32-ACORN (22676).

Local Sustainable Certification

There is also a certification body in Canada that certifies food as sustainable and local, called Local Food Plus. This allows consumers, who wish to support local farmers, to be certain that products were produced locally and using sustainable farming methods. For more information, see www.localfoodplus.ca or call the Certification Manager at 705-320-9579 or 416-699-6070 ext. 228.

[Note: Most of the information in this fact sheet was taken from the website of the [Atlantic Canada Organic Regional Network \(ACORN\)](http://www.acornorganic.org) and used with permission. It was compiled by Rebecca Sooksom, THINKFARM Resource Coordinator, Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, March 2010. Updated by Rebecca Sooksom, December 2013.]