
NEWS RELEASE COMMUNIQUÉ

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Ministry of Agriculture
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

New online tool to help certify next generation of organic farmers

VICTORIA – A new on-line system will help new entrants achieve certified organic status, as B.C. farmers continue to meet the consumer demand for certified organic B.C. foods.

The Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC) will lead the development of an Organic Online System, through \$117,000 in funding from the governments of Canada and British Columbia. COABC will conduct consultations and outreach with growers and stakeholders over the coming months to ensure that the project considers stakeholder needs. A pilot of the system will launch in 2017, with full implementation scheduled for January 2018.

The system will save farmers' time through a more efficient and streamlined process and also be used as a source for sector-wide data to help provide ongoing, reliable, up-to-date statistics about the sector. The accurate data will better indicate the opportunities within the organic sector for new and expanding growers, and support the planning of business growth and increased revenues. The data will also be used to help identify opportunities in value-added food production and encourage strategic growth.

The B.C. government will require all food and beverage products marketed as "organic" in B.C. to be certified under either a provincial or national certification program by 2018. These new measures will help B.C. consumers make more informed choices about local organic foods and potentially contribute to the B.C. Agrifood and Seafood Strategic Growth Plan's goal of increasing overall sector revenues to \$15 billion per year by 2020.

Sept. 17-25 is being celebrated as Canada's National Organic Week, the largest annual celebration of organic food, farming and agrifood products across the country. Organic Week promotes organic practices by raising the profile of the B.C. Certified Organic checkmark and informing consumers about the wide range of organic products available throughout British Columbia.

The \$117,000 in federal and provincial government funding was delivered through programs offered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC.

Quotes:

Lawrence MacAulay, federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food –

"As Canada celebrates National Organic Week, our government is proud to support the development of a new Organic Online System. This system is a great example of how we can use technology and data to enhance Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry, which will help the farmers and producers of organic food in British Columbia be more prosperous and competitive."

Norm Letnick, B.C. Minister for Agriculture –

"The development of Organic Online System will help more B.C. farmers meet the growing demand for local, certified organic products, and support opportunities and growth for small businesses. By becoming certified, new entrants to organics are joining a brand of recognized standards that consumers can purchase with certainty, and joining more than 650 B.C. farms producing, or transitioning to producing, COABC-certified organic goods."

Carmen Wakeling, president, Certified Organic Associations of BC –

"The Certified Organic Associations of BC is excited to be spearheading this project to help smooth the transition of new entrants to the B.C. organic sector and streamline the process for existing operators. We are looking forward to the benefits this new online system will bring to the sector."

Arzeena Hamir, board member, Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC –

"Certified organic production is one of the fastest growing sectors in B.C. and with the new mandatory regulations supported by the Province, certification bodies have seen a large increase in new registrations. As an organic grower and IAF Board member myself, I am pleased to see that the industry is innovating and streamlining to make registration and record keeping easier for both new and established growers. Congratulations to the Certified Organic Association of BC for their grant."

Quick Facts:

- COABC members include about 560 farms producing certified organic goods and around 100 farms in transition to producing certified organic goods.
- The B.C. organic sector is varied and includes livestock, dairy, vegetables, fruit and berries, and spice and herb producers, grains and seeds and many specialty value-added products.
- The B.C. government will require all food and beverage products marketed as "organic" in B.C. to be certified under either a provincial or national certification program by 2018.
- By helping B.C. consumers make more informed choices, these new measures will contribute to the BC Agrifood and Seafood Strategic Growth Plan goal of increasing overall sector revenues to \$15 billion per year by 2020.

Learn More:

- Organic week is Sept 17-25: www.organicweek.ca
- Certified Organic Associations of BC: www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca
- B.C. government January 2015 announcement requiring certification for organic producers: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/stories/plans-underway-to-grow-bc-organic-sector>

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