



Call for Mandatory Organic Regulation in BC

Please feel free to share this information with MLA's, MP's and colleagues it is critical to maintain the integrity of the BC Organic Sector.

The Certified Organic Associations of BC would like to make you aware of a critical issue facing our sector that can be alleviated by action from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Provincial Government.

The Certified Organic Associations of BC requests that:

The Provincial Government addresses the unique situation in the BC organic industry by mandating that in order to use the word “Organic” in describing a food or livestock feed product the operator must be certified by an accredited certification body.

Background:

- Mandatory certification in order to use the word organic is common in many jurisdictions. The European Union and the United States have mandatory certification regulations.
- In Canada the federal Organic Product Regulation, implemented June 30, 2009, oversees inter-provincially and internationally (not intra-provincially) traded feed and foodstuff as well as those products using the Canada Organic logo. These goods must all be certified by an accredited body.
- At the provincial level;
 - Quebec fervently regulates the word organic within its boundaries.
 - Manitoba is on the verge of introducing similar provincial legislation.
 - Other provinces are poised to follow suit.
 - In BC, the COABC has been encouraging the provincial government to support the organic industry by making this legislative change.

Currently:

- With the implementation of Canada Organic Regime, the CFIA determined that the word “Organic” was sufficient to describe a certified organic product.
- The CFIA had not taken into consideration the work that had been done under provincial jurisdictions to educate consumers to look for the word certified and had not realized there would be legitimately certified operators who would not be under the Canada Organic Regime.

As a Result:

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- Nationally certified operations can refer to their products only as “organic”
- Any non-organic operation, excepting those in Quebec, regardless of their practices, can refer to their products as “organic”, unless deemed false and misleading by the CFIA.
- Within BC, regionally certified operators can and do continue to use the phrase “certified organic” in an effort to distinguish their products from those making unsubstantiated claims.

This dichotomy has resulted in consumer confusion and a lack of confidence which results in a loss of revenue.

In BC:

The situation in BC is further compounded because for almost 20 years, the organic sector has educated the consumer to choose “certified organic” products as a guarantee of properly certified operations.

Operators certified under the COR stand to lose market share because consumers do not recognize their product as organic.

Unsubstantiated claimants most often do not understand the organic standards, this degrades organic agriculture and creates confusion for the consumer over the definition of organic.

Unsubstantiated organic claims create an uneven playing field and threaten the livelihood of all certified organic operations.

Certified organic operations are a vibrant part of the BC economy, COABC members alone represent approximately \$120,575,000.00 yearly revenue.

Conclusion:

Requiring all food labeled or advertised in BC as organic, to be certified by an accredited certification body would:

- level the playing field between certified organic operators
- create clarity for consumers and protect them from unscrupulous operators.
- prevent unsubstantiated organic claimants from profiting on the work of certified operators without contributing to that work

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