

## Canadian Standards Interpretation Committee New Comment Period

**What are the restrictions to the offspring if a non-organic animal is bred using embryo transfer and brought onto an organic farm?**

**Is the use of a microwave oven in organic food preparation compliant with the Standard?**

**Does the prohibition against using both the organic and non-organic form of an ingredient (8.2.5) apply to different varieties of grapes used in a wine, or different flours (e.g. barley and wheat) used to bake a single bread?**

The Organic Standards Interpretation Committee (SIC) provides interpretive guidance to the Canada Organic Office on issues related to the National Standards for Organic Agriculture (CAN/CGSB 32.310 and CAN/CGSB 32.311). [Click here](#) to see the proposed answers to various questions raised by organic stakeholders, regarding the National Standards for Organic Agriculture.

**The proposed responses are subject to a 60-day comment period from June 4<sup>th</sup> to August 4<sup>th</sup> 2014.**

All comments regarding these answers should be sent to [OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca](mailto:OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca)

### Archives - Final Questions and Answers

All final questions and answers will be posted on the [OFC website](#) (as a pdf or listed).

## Funding of the Canadian Organic Standards Review

### Calendar and pace of work

### in compliance with approved project by AAFC

The Technical Committee on Organic Agriculture (TC) has met twice to discuss the proposed modifications to the Canadian Organic Standards. The OFC has [posted two reports](#) on these meetings. The next step: the public comment period, when all stakeholders will have an opportunity to issue their comments on the modifications recommended by the TC. The CGSB will soon confirm the dates for the comment period.

The funding for the COS review complies with the budget forecast. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has agreed to contribute \$297,000 if the sector matches this funding with a contribution of \$82,000, and the financial statement for the first year of the review is conclusive. The incurred expenses correspond to the budget, and the fundraising campaign has met the objectives for 2013-2014. The 2014-2015 year appears promising.

The OFC will relaunch its fundraising campaign in order to reach objectives for the current year, and invites all stakeholders to support the COS review. Our objective is to collect \$40,000 in 2014-2015. The minimum contribution amount is set at \$500.00.

Join us and contact the OFC!

**All of the sponsors are listed [on the OFC website](#)**

Read more on [OFC website](#).



Jenny Hillard, surrounded by Jacques Dallaire and Linda Labrecque

An interview with Jenny Hillard

## Organics, Standards and Consumers

Jenny Hillard has attended meetings of the Technical Committee on Organic Agriculture since many years. She represents an association that speaks on behalf of consumers. The OFC presents her personal view.

**You represent the Consumer Interest Alliance Inc; can you briefly describe the mission of this alliance?**

The Consumer Interest Alliance Inc. (CIAI) is an emerging working coalition of members deeply concerned with consumer interest through cooperation, discussion and representation with other players in the Canadian economy.

CIAI has been established to fill the existing gaps in the representation of consumer interests by development of research-based positions. CIAI **does** consumer research, submissions, and representation in the following areas:

- Food and Agriculture
- Health - as it relates to Food and Agriculture
- Financial Services
- Environment - as it relates to Food and Agriculture
- Standards - National and International

Consumer work and issues in other areas of interest will be undertaken when the Board judges that the need is of high priority and qualified volunteers are available to do the work. All CIAI representation work is done by volunteers. We operate from a "virtual" office to minimize overheads and hire staff on contract as needed for administrative or research tasks.

**Can you describe what is your specific task and how it is related to your voting status on the Organic Technical Committee?**

My fancy title is "Research Director" - which basically means that I put in hours of volunteer time writing up project proposals, requesting financial support for consumer representatives to attend critical meetings and nominating CIAI reps to various committees. I have been involved in the consumer movement since 1974 - previous to that I was involved with environmental groups but my interests were focused on packaging, waste reduction, littering etc. so the consumer movement was a better fit. I have been involved as a consumer representative in Federal and Provincial Government food and agriculture related committees for 25 years and in standards development since the early 80s. This background is why the CIAI Board nominated me for this committee and why the Consumer Council of Canada is confident that I can also represent them when their representative is unable to attend.

**As per your position, do you perceive that the organic standards really meet consumers' expectations?**

CIAI believes that organic agriculture is a food production system that has less negative environmental impacts than regular production. We do not see organic as a food safety alternative. In fact, for low income consumers, the concept of promoting a requirement to pay the organic premium to get safe food is not something that CIAI can support. The animal welfare that is built into the Canadian documents is an "extra" and probably the area that comes closest to meeting consumers expectations.

For CIAI the key achievement of the organic standard, now that it is covered by regulation, is that a product making an organic claim does actually meet a standard - we no longer have to tell consumers to purchase US certified organic in order to get value for their food dollar.

**Do you feel that organic agriculture is well known and understood?**

I do not believe that the average consumers understands "organic" - many think that it is a production system that uses no chemicals and would be horrified by the number of items on the PSL. Some think it is an animal welfare standard

and many have been lead to believe that it is a process for producing "safer" food. They also think of it as GMO free, without understanding the difference between GM and GE or being aware that inter-species GE is the real concern for most consumers. Unfortunately much of the marketing of organic products tends to encourage a misunderstanding of the actual concept of organic agriculture and the standard.

**What should be better emphasized or explained about organic agriculture to have it better understood by consumers?**

I believe organic producers should always promote organic as an ecologically preferable way to grow crops or raise animals but should avoid promoting the food safety aspect. I don't disagree that organic has less chemical residue but I also do not want consumers to be made nervous about residues within regulated limits on non-organic food because I believe that the regulations in North America are adequate to protect consumer health, even in older consumers, very young consumers and those with compromised immune systems. This sounds like a lot of negatives but it all goes back to concerns about low income consumers. They cannot afford the organic premium (which organic farmers have earned) but we do want to encourage them to eat fruit and vegetables because they are healthy food, even if not organic.

**You have attended many meetings for the development of standards related to agriculture; are you satisfied with the standardization procedures? Do you feel that they guarantee the maintenance of efficient standards?**

I support the ISO based standards development process we use in Canada as a way of developing standards that have input from all stakeholders. I support the use of standards as an alternative to or a good supplement to regulations and other government instruments. The process is thorough and transparent. However, it is a slow and cumbersome process that cannot keep pace with modern technology and whether or not the standards are "efficient" depends on those around the table. I do not believe "efficient" is a term that I would apply to the standardization process. Nothing in the ISO based system is efficient but it is transparent, allows for all stakeholder input and is consensus based. We continually search for a way to make standards development more efficient but without losing all those qualities.



## **Intraprovincial organic market is now regulated in New-Brunswick**

On April 16, 2014, the Government of New-Brunswick began enforcing the new *Organic Grade Regulation - Natural Products Act*, which was "established as the grade for a farm product or a multi-ingredient product that is produced or processed by a person who has a valid organic certification for the product from a certification body." Competent certification bodies should be accredited or recognized by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in accordance with the Organic Products Regulations.

The new rule for New Brunswick states that "...No person shall affix a label to or make an advertisement for a farm product or multi-ingredient product that contains the words "organic", "organically grown", "organically produced" or "organically raised", or similar words, including abbreviations of, symbols for and phonetic renderings of those words, unless the product meets the requirements for the Organic Grade".

New Brunswick is the third province that is regulating the intraprovincial organic market. Quebec and Manitoba also impose mandatory certification of products labeled as organic within their borders. In British-Columbia, certification of organic products is voluntary.

## Organic smile

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### **Adopting organic agriculture to prevent antimicrobial resistance**

The World Health Organization's 2014 report on global surveillance of antimicrobial resistance reveals that antibiotic resistance is no longer a prediction for the future; it is happening right now, across the world, and is putting at risk the ability to treat common infections in the community and hospitals.

The inappropriate use of antimicrobial drugs, including in animal husbandry, favours the emergence and selection of resistant strains, and poor infection prevention and control practices contribute to further emergence and spread of AMR..

“Resistant microorganisms carried by food-producing animals can spread to humans through consumption of contaminated food, from direct contact with animals, or by environmental spread, for example in contaminated water.”

[Read more.](#)

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