

August 17, 2020

Countdown to the publication of the 2020 Canadian Organic Standards

The weekly preview

Parallel production – a hotly debated subject

Whenever the standard has been revised, the subject of parallel production has been hotly debated. The Crop Working Group attempted to introduce flexibility to the prohibition on parallel production of annual crops in Canada during the 2015 revision work but did not convince the voting members of the Technical Committee on Organic Agriculture. Consequently, parallel production of annual crops remained prohibited in the 2015 standard.

The subject was re-evaluated in the 2020 revision work and again there was a fierce debate. The 2015 arguments to allow parallel production were brought back in the discussions of the Crop Working Group, including the following:

- Canadian producers are at a disadvantage compared to U.S. producers who are permitted to produce identical organic and non-organic crops;
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- the production of annual crops is one of the few types of production for which parallel production is prohibited (it is permitted for perennial crops, in livestock production, in the preparation of organic food, etc.); and
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- producers can circumvent the prohibition by creating separate legal entities and the certification body cannot then supervise the production of the separate non-organic holding.

However, others expressed their concern that allowing parallel production could lead to non-organic products being sold as organic, due either to fraud or accidental mixing of products.

In 2020, the Technical Committee added a new exception. In subclause 5.1.4, for existing organic farms, parallel production is allowed during the last 24 months of the transition of land added to the farm.

PARALLEL PRODUCTION – ONE ORGANIC OPERATION DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS OF TRANSITION

ORGANIC FIELD



BUFFER
ZONE

NON-ORGANIC FIELD



It is essential that the crops are completely separated at harvest and storage. Meticulous records must be kept, and the transitional crop can only be sold or considered as non-organic. In addition, the transition plan must be described in detail in the organic plan.

Consider, for example, a certified organic grain farm that increases its acreage by renting a neighbouring non-organic field. During the first transition year of the leased field, the organic farm must grow crops that are visually distinguishable from organic crops. For example, six-row barley can be planted in the field in transition while two-row barley is grown in the organic field. During the last 24 months of transition, the farmer will be able to grow identical crops on both the organic fields and the fields in transition.

However, it is essential that the crops are completely separated at harvest and storage. Meticulous records must be kept. The transitional crop is considered and sold as non-organic. In addition, the transition plan must be described in detail in the organic plan.

❧The revised clause ❧

5.1.4 The operation can be converted one production unit at a time, and each converted production unit shall respect the requirements of this standard. The exception to this norm, parallel production, is only allowed in the following cases:

- a) annual crops harvested during the final 24 months of the transition period when fields are added to existing operations;
- b) perennial crops (already planted);
- c) agricultural research facilities; and
- d) production of seed, vegetative propagating materials and transplants.

Organic production systems: general principles and management standards.

CAN/CGSB-32.310.

Draft approved August 4th, 2020

by the CGSB Technical Committee on Organic Agriculture.



Discover the science behind
organic farming,
one podcast at a time



A Bug War to Produce Organic Strawberries

In organic strawberry fields in Quebec, there is a war going on: a bug war.

Drs. Caroline Provost and François Dumont describe how the damsel bug (*Nabis americana*) and the minute pirate bug (*Orius insidiosus*) are used as mercenaries to control the tarnished plant bug. It's a riveting story of violence ("Nabis attacked the tarnished plant bug like a tiger attacks a sheep"), cannibalism and organic farming.

To listen (in French), [click here](#)

To read the English transcript, [click here](#)

A petition to sign to the Government of Canada to:

1. Implement quantifiable targets to transition to organics;
2. Offer education and financial support to Canadians to increase organic agriculture and food processing, giving all Canadians better access; and
3. Require government buildings to purchase organics and protect Canadians health from the dangers of conventional farming processes while healing the environment.

The deadline is August 22. An easy click and it is done!

<https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Sign/e-2455>