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THE ORGANIC FEDERATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

Notes from COO Liaison Committee Meeting of October 17th 2011

Present: Priscilla Reimer (MOA), Kelly Monaghan (Chair of CGSB TC & PSL WG), Dave Lockman (ProCert), Dag Falck (Nature's Path), Joanne Jackson Johnson (GoOFY/Yukon), Tomas Nimmo (Guelph Conference), Matthew Holmes (COTA), Arnold Taylor (SOD), Ted Zettel (OCO/OFC), Mark Schuessler (CGSB), Lucie Gionet (UPA), Sally Blackman (CPMA), Kasey Moktesuma (QAI), Susan Smith (BC Ag Min), Claire Hanlon-Smith (NS Gov), Nicole Boudreau (OFC)

COO – CFIA : Michel Saumur (COO), Elizabeth Corrigan (COO), Valeriya Staykova, (COO), Mélissa Landry (COO), Dennis Doermer (AAFC), Bob Watts (AAFC), Yves Lacroix (CFIA)

The Canada Organic Office (COO)

Michel Saumur congratulates the sector and wishes a happy Organic Week to all participants; the COO welcomes two new employees: Mélissa Landry, COO Program Coordinator, and Manuela Souverain, administrative assistant.

The COO moved to a new directorate, the Labelling and Claim Directorate, that will do a review of its services and activities that will engage the sector early 2012; the Organic Regime is cited as an example that the CFIA wants to replicate.

Organic Week

Matthew Holmes gives an overview of the Organic Week; COTA partnered with COG and 28 sponsors; OFC is also communicating information and communiqués. The support of the sector is broadening, with hundreds of events organized by retailers, chefs, community groups, farmers markets. The list of events is posted on [Organic Week website](#). A special feature on organics was published October 14 by the Globe and Mail. Social medias such as Facebook and Twitter are very active. Holmes also spoke about the [Foodstock](#) event that gathered 30,000 people in Ontario to stop a mega quarry project that would destroy 2,316 acres of prime agricultural land in Dufferin County, Ontario.

Organic week also includes the Parliament Day, October 18, when 35 to 40 organic stakeholders will meet on Parliament Hill. The day begins at 8:30 a.m. with Elizabeth May, OC and MP, Leader of the Green Party of Canada as the keynote speaker on the environment. Various event & meeting options are organized throughout the day, with an evening organic reception in Centre Block, Parliament Hill, hosted by the Hon. Senator Carolyn Stewart-Olsen.

Canadian Organic Standards (COS)

The Standards Interpretation Committee is meeting regularly and a new set of Questions and Answers is ready to be posted for the 60 day comment period. Nominations have been sent for the replacement of the terms of the four Committee members ending early December. Deadline is November 4th.

It is voting time for Organic Aquaculture Committee; the goal is to have 50% affirmative votes from the whole Committee to have a clear decision. Actually, less than 50% of all members have voted.

Accreditation – Certification

Valeriya Staykova reports that audits of CVBs are progressing as planned. The COO will meet with CVBs October 27th and 28th and will have its 3rd meeting with CBs December 7th. It allows CBs to talk about various issues; amendments to the Operating Manual should be made by March 2012. CVBs and CBs working groups' meetings assure consistency of the certification process and are very beneficial.

Funding of standards revision

Ted Zettel chairs a Task Force on funding of COS revision, under the OVCRT. The TF has developed terms of reference for the proposition of a study assessing long-term mechanism for funding standards maintenance; public, private and hybrid funding scenarios would be assessed. But there are actually no funds available for this project that is still in queue. Ted also met with Daniel Miller, the director of the Labelling and Claim Directorate to discuss about the issue of the long-term maintenance of the COS; new to his position, Miller was very attentive to the exposure of the organic sector perspective; Ted also discussed about the monitoring of the intraprovincial organic market that CFIA refused to engage in when solicited by Manitoba government. The confusion about natural and organic claims was also discussed. Discussions to resume soon.

International Equivalency Arrangements

Canada/US

The NOP has posted [a special page about the equivalency agreement with Canada](#); the COO is very satisfied with the content of that page.

Canada/EU

The COO is preparing a technical document about the Canada/EU Equivalency Agreement and invites the sector to send their comments and concerns about this agreement. It will help the COO target and fix potential problems.

COO Communication Activities

Yves Lacroix, CFIA Communications Officer, has developed an organic brochure targeted to consumers; this e-fact sheet was drafted with the help of the Market Development Working Group of the OVCRT and should be available soon. The COO already issued communiqués to announce the end of the Stream of Commerce Policy, the Canada/EU Equivalency Agreement and the notifications of certification suspensions or cancellations.

Organic Value Chain Round Table

The upcoming meeting of the Organic Value Chain Round Table (OVCRT) will last three days (November 14-16).

The agenda is as follows:

- **November 14th pm:** AAFC consultation to seek industry input on low level presence policy (of unauthorized genetically modified (GM) events).
- **November 15th** – General agenda – updates from the four OVCRT working groups; presentations on risk management and the branding initiative.
- **November 16th** - Strategic session – look at where we've been during the past 5 years, review relevancy of working groups, and map out a plan for the next 5 years.

List of OVCRT members: <http://www.ats-sea.agr.gc.ca/rt-tr/org-bio-mem-eng.htm>

Members are coming from different categories; candidates must be nominated by current members. New members are welcome; time investment for members may vary from a few hours per month to much more for members that are participating to working groups. Mandate of Tomas Nimmo, industry co-chair, is ending soon.

Next Conference Call: When Announced