

THE ORGANIC FEDERATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

April 2008

Welcome!

The Organic Federation of Canada mandate is to ensure excellent standards and regulations that will stimulate the growth of Canada's organic sector. We are very pleased to send you the first OFC newsletter, which includes a report on the last CGSB Committee on Organic Agriculture meeting, held in Gatineau at the beginning of April, and a short resume of how the National Organic Standards are being revised.

We also invite you to visit the OFC website www.organicfederation.ca to learn more about the OFC's mandate and activities, targeted to create a prosperous organic industry. Have a pleasant read!

Updating the National Organic Standards

At the request of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) is revising the national standard for organic agriculture. The Canadian General Standards Board is a federal body charged with overseeing the development of all types of federal standards that are developed and maintained by committees of volunteers, who are experts in their fields, working according to the CGSB process.

For the organic standards update, this volunteer committee is called the Standards Committee on Organic Agriculture. This group of more than 100 representatives from across the Canadian organic community includes consumers, growers, processors, traders, agriculture specialists and government representatives.

Working groups focused on crops, livestock, processing and permitted substances are researching and preparing amendments to the Standard via emails and teleconferences. Their background work is then presented to meetings of the full Standards Committee, which has met three times to date in this round of revisions. The committee discusses the amendments, which are approved or placed on a working list for future discussions.

Once approved, the amendments are integrated into the standards official text. This official version of the amendments is then circulated for ballot, with the Standards Committee voting by mail. Once the ballot approval is completed, amendments are sent to the Standards Council of Canada for formal ratification.



Agriculture and
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Canada

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) is pleased to participate in this project. AAFC is committed to working with industry partners to increase public awareness of the importance of the agriculture and agri-food industry to Canada. Opinions expressed in this document are those of the Organic Federation of Canada and not necessarily those of AAFC.

Organic Federation of Canada

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The Ninth Meeting of the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) Committee on Organic Agriculture in Gatineau Quebec March 31st to April 2nd, 2008

by Janine. G. Gibson

The Standards Committee which is composed of organic sector representatives from all categories (as determined by CGSB policies), were balanced into topic Working Groups, and met in Gatineau to reach consensus on as many proposals as possible. The Working Groups have been researching and preparing for this next ballot via email and regular teleconference discussions. The need to have a Standards Council of Canada ratified organic standard for the implementation of the upcoming Regulation felt pressing to all members. The work of reviewing and addressing the previous ballot concerns has revealed many new topics requiring updating. They began by discussing a proposed method for introducing new work items to the review process.

With this process, committee members are not hampered by working only with past negative comments on the ballots, all of which must be addressed to ensure the inclusive processes of the CGSB standards updating procedures are met. With this innovation, the committee can assess priorities and address urgent items in a timely manner, providing a clear, democratic method to respond to new issues rather than doing so only via a negative vote on a ballot, which delays the entire process. A new committee was struck of the Chairs of all Working Groups (**Anne Macey**- Livestock, **Dag Falck**- Permitted Substances Lists, **Matt Holmes**- Processing, **J.W. Hamm** -Crops, **Jean Duval**-Chair), a representative from the Federal Government (TBD), a Consumer Representative (TBD) and the secretary will assist in the process of establishing priorities.

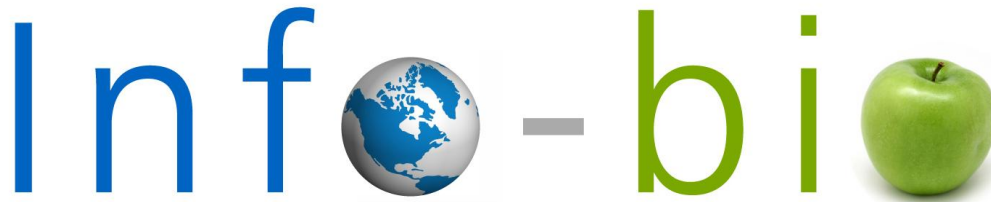
Updates on the CGSB process used to revise the national standards for organic agriculture can be found at the following address:

http://www.pwgsc.gc.ca/cgsb/on_the_net/organic/faq-e.html

Permitted Substances Lists

The work of the Permitted Substances Lists (PSL) subgroups, ratified by the entire Technical Committee, began with Animal Health Inputs and included

- Removing references to “ensuring all **Livestock Health Inputs** are registered with the **Veterinary Drug Directorate (VDD)**”. The VDD has not yet implemented a method for approval of products needed for organic use such as homeopathic and related natural animal health remedies like tinctures, which are not registered as veterinary drugs. Their Director recommended we remove the phrase, which also meets ISO requirements to not entrench Canadian structures.
- The annotation for **oxytocin** was amended to ensure clarity with the withdrawal period (14 days) for slaughter stock, which retain their organic status given the restricted use of this naturally occurring hormone.
- **Milk replacer** must be from organic sources unless it is not commercially available and then, only for emergency use and only without antibiotics and animal by-products. (Note: the thorny issue of who determines commercial availability has not been addressed)
- **Clorohexidine teat dips** are allowed only as a post milking cleaner and then, only when other teat dips have been shown to have lost effectiveness.
- **Plants and plants by-products**: Includes plant preparations of aquatic or terrestrial plants or parts of plants, such as cover crops, green manures, crop wastes, hay, leaves and straw. Parts of plants used as soil amendments and foliar feeds are permitted. Crop wastes that potentially contain significant levels of pesticide contaminants are prohibited. Only substances listed in par. 6.4.1 and 6.6 in CAN/CGSB 32.311 may be used in the processing of plant by-products. Plant by-products not meeting this restriction may be used as compost feedstuffs.



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- **Formulants** listed in the PSL can only be used in conjunction with substances listed in par. 4.3. Only formulants that are classified by PMRA in Regulatory Note REG 2007-04 as List 4A or 4B or that are non-synthetic may be used in substances in par. 4.3 that are applied directly to crops. Formulants classified as List 3 may be used with passive pheromone dispensers. Formulants classified as List 1 or List 2 are prohibited.

A brief summary of Crop input changes includes the removal of **latex paint** from the PSL and the inclusion of synthetic pheromones for insect lures.

Under Processing aids;

- **cellulose** has been added as a filtering agent;
- **calcium hydroxide** (lime) has been added as a clarifier (processing aid) and added to table 6.4.1 (Food Additives);
- **calcium chloride** was authorized for use in milk products, fat products, fruits and vegetables, soybean products;
- **egg whites** as clarifying agents now have to be organic .

Labeling

All references to labeling have been removed from table 6.5 as labeling is to be discussed in the Canadian Regulation only. An in depth discussion was held on the effects of removing the labeling requirements and its impact on the products that are in 70% - 95% organic range. Some support was expressed for moving toward the simpler European system of labeling where there is only the "organic" category rather than the labelling options of "made with" and "100% organic".

Extensive format revisions were made to 32:311 (The PSL) and its various tables and categories. Section 11 "Requirements for Adding to or Amending the PSL" was also thoroughly reviewed and rewritten. Given the removal of the Previous Section 10 on

Labelling now covered by the Regulation, the old Section 11 is now Section 10.

The **Crop Working Group** discussed changes in **manure source requirements** such as source and likelihood of prohibited input contamination. Discussions include sourcing only from organic farms, measuring residues (such as heavy metals & GEOs) in manures, accepting manure from non land based industrial livestock holdings. No final decisions have yet been reached as more research is needed to build consensus.

The **definition of soil** was adjusted and the prohibition against **hydroponics and aeroponics** was clarified and confirmed. All references to certification, selling and labelling have been removed from throughout the documents to meet the ISO requirements to do so. According to our trade agreements, other countries can not be held to our solely Canadian structures. ISO standards requirements such as those ratified by the Standards Council of Canada, tend to be geared to supporting international trade requirements.

The Livestock Working Group:

- Specified transitional feed as preferred over non organic feed for less than a ten day period, when organic feed might be temporarily unavailable in the event of a local, farm scale catastrophe like a fire.
- Given that some veterinary drugs necessary for health management (e.g. antiinflammatories, corticosteroids) are not on our PSL, a 14 day withdrawal period or double the label requirement withdrawal period, whichever is longer, was created before products from treated animals can be considered organic.
- Reference to antibiotic free vaccines has been removed as all vaccines now contain antibiotics in small amounts.
- Only hutches with access to an enclosed yard or run are now allowed for dairy calves.
- A new statement under Prohibited Methods was added. Cloned farm animals and their descendants are prohibited. A producer shall know the lineage of any non-organic animal brought into organic production.
- **Force feeding** of ducks and geese is now clearly prohibited.
- The prohibition against keeping **poultry** in cages was clarified to specify battery or row cages in layer barns.



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- Following a national poll of organic dairy farmers, the **milk** withdrawal period following emergency antibiotic intervention was increased from 14 to 30 days.
- Stocking densities for **turkeys and rabbits** were updated for both indoor and outdoor areas. Keeping rabbits in cages is now clearly not permitted.
- New sections specific to species for livestock living conditions were part of that sections reorganization. The section 6.1.3 was amended to include a requirement that 30% of the total **forage for mature ruminants** must come from grazing.

Processing Working Group

The **Emergency Pest or Disease treatment** paragraph has been amended to include an informative note urging operators to contact their certifiers in the event of governmental applications of any prohibited substances. It was noted all accredited certifiers require an affidavit from operators to that effect. All labelling requirements are now in the Regulation, having been removed from the Standard.

During the discussion of several of the previous topics, the inspector representative was asked to indicate by which methods an inspector might verify specific requirements being considered.

Next Steps

The second ballot from all committee members is due into the CGSB offices by April 16th. There will be a third ballot to affirm the proposed amendments made to the standard, in response to the second ballot “no voters”. There may also be a fourth ballot, though a fourth in person meeting appears unlikely at this time. Unless new resources are attained it is unlikely the Standard maintenance and SCC ratification can be finished within 2008. A published version of the standard, with amendments from the ballot, may be available between December 08 and March of 09.

A **Stream of Commerce Policy** is being negotiated, between the **Canadian Organic Office (COO) of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)** and the **Organic Federation of Canada (OFC)**. This Policy will determine how and to what degree our sector and the COO shall proceed with implementation of the regulation (Planned for December 08) until we have a Standards Council of Canada (SCC) ratified standard to use.

Canadian Organic Growers has contracted **Paddy Doherty** and **Anne Macey** to write a **Guidance Document** to accompany the standard, which will likely be available by the time of the publication of the standard.

Mike Le Clair of **Agriculture and Agri Food Canada (AAFC)** is chairing a committee researching funding options for future standards maintenance activities, provincially and federally. The OFC is discussing their role in this regard. This volunteer organic standards technical committee is time consuming and demanding of expertise. Quebec ensures this type of work is funded, not volunteer, which is far more time efficient. OFC is researching suitable structures for future efforts.

All Technical Committee work groups form around their expertise in addressing specific work list items, developed in response to Canadians written concerns about their organic standard. The CGSB role must be funded before their policies can support this inclusive, democratic process. The organic sector could develop another “shepherd of the standard” but at what cost and what duplication of effort? We are a bilingual country and translation is expensive and time consuming. The Standards Council of Canada validating our standard in some ways promotes our international trade. One of the challenges we face in making our voluntary standard into a mandatory standard, (both federally and provincially) is to what degree do Canadians want to balance local production for local consumption with production for international trade.

In the next Info-Bio newsletter:

- **OFC program for developing provincial/territorial organic sectors**
- **Follow-up on Standards and Regulations**
- **Canadian e-newsletters about organics**

If you have suggestions or comments, we want to hear them!

Contact OFC at info@organicfederation.ca