

4. British Columbia Organic Farming Statistics – Methodology

The statistics presented in this Overview were obtained from the Canadian Organic Growers (COG) 2005 report, “Certified Organic Production in Canada 2005” and the 2004 report.¹⁷ For the COG reports all CBs operating in Canada were asked to report numbers and types of certified operations, acreage and production values. Wherever possible, CBs were asked to separate out areas devoted to individual crops. However, much of the area reported remains at a general level (such as mixed vegetables). Some individual producers in British Columbia were contacted to clarify information provided by their CBs, and additional information on the regional distribution of certified producers was obtained from the COABC website.

Several difficulties in reporting accurate statistics on organic crop production in British Columbia should be taken into account before interpreting the presented data.

- Organic management requires crop rotation and, consequently the area devoted to certified organic crops is constantly changing throughout the province. Some organic farms produce different crops each year in a cycle so as to maintain their rotations. As such, year to year comparisons for growth in individual crops may be inaccurate.
- Additionally, many farms certify their entire property. However, not all of this area is under agricultural production. CBs are able to separate out non-productive areas in many cases; however, it is likely that the productive areas on some farms are not reported correctly resulting in an overestimate for some crop figures.
- As with any form of agriculture, farmers produce their crops in varying degrees of intensity, depending on the type of management and farm location. The areas of crops reported do not necessarily translate directly to yields.

Farm numbers shown in tables throughout this document indicate the number of farms known to be growing the specified crop or raising a type of livestock, not a number of separate farm operations that can be totaled. Farms growing multiple crops may be included in several categories. Although farm numbers may overlap, the area of crops reported is a total for the province. However, when an area devoted to a specific crop has been separated out, there may be additional acreage of that crop included at a more general level in one of the ‘mixed’ categories. For instance, there are certainly more than 3 ha of certified organic beets grown in British Columbia (see Table 6.1), as this is a very common crop on organic farms catering to farmers markets. However, farmers producing beets in relatively small quantities would include beet plantings in the mixed vegetable category.

Information on the structure and function of individual sectors within organics was obtained through personal communications with certified organic farmers, handlers and other industry members in British Columbia and reflects the situation in 2005. Research and writing services were provided by Jeff Nimmo; the participation and willingness of industry members to share their knowledge with him is greatly appreciated.