

5. Summary of British Columbia Organic Industry

British Columbia has a wide diversity of organic farms, distributed throughout every region of the province. The Similkameen Valley has more organic producers than any other region. With over 60% of the farmers in the region producing organically, the Similkameen markets itself as ‘The Organic Capital of Canada’. The Fraser Valley follows closely in number of producers, and is home to almost all types of organic enterprises. The Okanagan, and southern Vancouver Island also have large concentrations of organic producers. British Columbia’s organic industry is rapidly growing. Numbers of certified producers increased by 9.5% from 2004 to 2005 and more transitional farmers were reported in British Columbia than in any other province

Industry Snapshot - BC Organics in 2005

BC Organic Farmers

- Number certified: 482
- Percentage of total farmers in province: 2.8%
- Percentage of organic farmers in Canada: 13%
- Number in transition: 108
- Value of production: \$29.1 million

BC Organic Processing & Handling

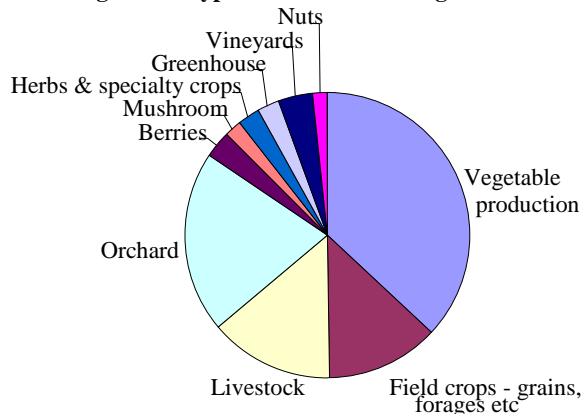
- Certified processors: 103
- Certified handlers & traders: 57
- Percentage of organic processing and handling in Canada: 20%

Acreage

- Acreage in production: 13,387 ha
- Additional acreage in program: 100,541 ha acres (wild lands and range)
- Transitional acreage: 3,557 ha

A unique feature of the British Columbia organic industry is its penetration of the multitude of agricultural sectors in the province. Wide diversity on individual farms is another trait of many organic farms, which will often produce multiple commodities, and combine both horticultural and animal production units. Organic farmers are active members of the British Columbia agricultural community, and often present a strong voice on agricultural and other issues in their own local communities.

Figure 5.1 Type of BC Certified Organic Farm Enterprise 2005



Specific data on the value of the British Columbia organic market is not readily available. In keeping with the national market, demand for organic food in British Columbia outpaces production. Most retailers and wholesalers prioritize sourcing product from British Columbia when it is in season, and there is strong demand from consumers for locally produced food. A significant portion of British Columbia’s organic farmers sell their product directly to consumers, bypassing the wholesale market entirely.

The British Columbia Organic Consumer

- Over 50 % of British Columbian shoppers have purchased some form of organic food product
- Consumers are most motivated to buy organics because of their taste and because they consider the absence of chemicals a health and nutritional benefit.
- Organic consumers from British Columbia tend to be slightly younger, have some form of post secondary education and earn more than the average household income.
- Fruits and vegetables are the most commonly purchased organic products, followed by dairy/eggs and grains/cereal products.

Source: Synovate (2003) COABC Market Survey

For 2005, the estimated value of production in British Columbia from certified organic farms was \$29.1 million. This estimate includes small scale on-farm processing, but no other forms of added value from the organic processing industry such as organic food product lines (i.e. processed dairy products). The following tables summarize production in British Columbia's certified organic sectors. For more detailed information on individual sectors, see the organic [Horticulture](#) and [Animal](#) Production sections of this report.

Table 5.1 Area of Certified Organic Crops on British Columbia Farms in 2005

| Crop | Area (ha) |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Vegetables | 926 |
| Tree Fruit | 441 |
| Grains | 981 |
| Nuts | 62 |
| Berries | 56 |
| Herbs | 132 |
| Pasture and Hay | 9037 |

Table 5.2 Certified Organic Animal Products in 2005

| Type | Head | # of farms |
|--------------|--------|------------|
| Layers | 71208 | 48 |
| Broilers | 123021 | 20 |
| Turkeys | 1166 | 3 |
| Ducks | 362 | 4 |
| Sheep | 2920 | 9 |
| Beef Cattle | 2374 | 21 |
| Dairy Cattle | 1,823 | 6 |
| Dairy Goats | 564 | 5 |
| Pigs | 578 | 6 |
| Bison | 88 | 2 |
| Deer | 14 | 1 |