

9. Regulations

9.1 *Food Choice and Disclosure Act*

Organic farming falls under the *Food Choice and Disclosure Act*. The Organic Agricultural Products Certification Regulation enables farmers to: obtain a certificate confirming that they are following prescribed production methods; and upon certification, advertise their produce as being certified organic.

The Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia (COABC) is designated under the Act to implement the BCCOP. Organic produce is identified by the phrase “British Columbia Certified Organic” and the checkmark symbol.



9.2 Development of a National Organic Program

After the development of a National Standard for organic agriculture began in the 1996, the drive for a national regulation, which would reference the Standard, was soon to follow. In January 2003, an Organic Regulatory Committee (ORC) was formed to assist the development and implementation of a system for regulating the use of the term “organic” on food products. Members of the organic industry were the driving force behind the formation of the ORC. Industry members felt that a national regulatory framework was necessary to:

- Ensure imported organic products are legitimately produced according to local organic standards;
- Ensure exported Canadian organic products are recognized by other nations;
- Create a national organic logo widely recognized by consumers;
- Provide Canadian certification bodies with legitimate accreditation from a single, internationally recognized standard for organic agriculture.

In British Columbia, the Canadian Organic Initiative Project was developed by the COABC with the view of encouraging the establishment of a national organic regulation. Funding from the organic industry and the provincial and federal governments supported this project.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), and International Trade Canada formed the Organic Production System Task Force (OTF) in November 2004 in response to lobbying by industry (the ORC) and consumers. The mandate of the task force was to develop and implement a national standard and regulation for organic agriculture in consultation with the organic industry and provincial and territorial governments. The standard development process is described in the section [1.4](#). The draft regulation was pre-published in the *Canada Gazette* in September 2006 with a 75 day comment period. The OTF was recently re-structured into what will eventually become a long term bureau in the CFIA called the Canadian Organic Office (COO). The COO will operate the Canadian organic regime and be the authority for the National Organic Regulation, which may be implemented by December 2006.

COI updates are available at the following website:

<http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/programs/coi.htm>

9.3 Other Regulatory Issues

9.3.1 Meat Inspection Regulation

In September 2004, the province of British Columbia enacted a new Meat Inspection Regulation under the *Food Safety Act*. By September 2007, all British Columbia abattoirs that produce meat for human consumption will have to be either provincially or federally licensed. Only meat from livestock slaughtered in a licensed abattoir can be sold for food. All animals slaughtered in licensed abattoirs will be inspected both before and after slaughter. This regulation provides a consistent standard for meat inspection to the entire province.

Unlicensed facilities in many regions of the province will need to be upgraded to meet the new standards. Government acknowledges that slaughter capacity in the regions might be reduced with the implementation of these regulations. To mitigate this risk, BCMAL, BCMOH and the British Columbia Food Processors Association formed the British Columbia Meat Industry Enhancement Strategy (MIES) to assist industry in transitioning to the new regulations. Government provided \$1 million to support an MIES Action Plan designed to help interested stakeholders meet licensing requirements. Additionally, a \$4 million Meat Transition Assistance Program was allocated to address the issue of slaughter capacity in all British Columbia communities. The emphasis of the Meat Transition Assistance Program is on innovative or collaborative solutions, such as small-scale or mobile facilities to meet local needs.

The MIES website will be updated on a frequent basis to inform stakeholders of MIES activities.

MIES website: <http://www.bcfpa.ca/mies.html>

9.3.2 Plant Breeder's Rights Act

The Act, administered by the CFIA, establishes a system for intellectual property rights enabling breeders of new varieties of plants to have the exclusive right to produce and sell propagating material of their new plant varieties. Organic farmers, as well as the Canadian Federation of Agriculture have voiced concerns over amendments to this act which could erode farmer's rights to save seed. Organic farmers are reliant on seed varieties that are free of GE organisms, and those which are adapted to regional growing conditions under organic management rather than seeds reliant on chemical inputs.