

Association, with representation from organic seafood producers across Canada, has submitted standards to the OTF for inclusion in the National Organic Regulation.

11. Sector Advantages

Strong Domestic Market for British Columbia Product

British Columbia represents one of the best markets for British Columbia certified organic product. There is significant loyalty from consumers for local product, and the demand for organics continues to outpace supply. British Columbians are the most likely consumers in Canada to make organic purchases on a regular basis. Estimated growth rates of 20% for the Canadian organic market are bolstered by many factors, including:

- Growing consumer concern over food safety issues; many consumers see organics as an accountable food source.
- Consumers rate health and nutritional quality very highly in choosing foods and equate the chemical and GMO free image of organics with these attributes.
- Consumers are increasingly concerned about the environment and associate organic production with good environmental stewardship.

Environmental Benefits

The process of organic management (requirements for minimal inputs and management to build soil health) can have merits in terms of reducing agricultural impacts to the environment. The organic sector can use this to its benefit when marketing certified organic products both locally and abroad.

British Columbia Certified Organic Program

The provincially legislated accreditation program in British Columbia provides confidence to consumers that organic products with the *British Columbia Certified Organic* label are produced under a clearly defined set of rules. The BCCOP, recognized internationally, has placed the British Columbia organic industry at the forefront in the development of a National Organic Program.

High Degree of Diversification

The organic industry in British Columbia produces a wide variety of products, and markets them through many different channels. The consumers of organic products are also becoming more diversified as different demographics buy into different aspects of organic management, production, and marketing.

Growing Conditions and Location

The main growing regions in British Columbia have a moderate climate relative to other regions of Canada, fertile land, and access to ample water.²⁹ In general, there is also good access to major markets, transportation and distribution facilities.²⁹

Value Added Products

There is enormous potential for value-added organic products that address changing trends in the food industry. Fresh-cut and processed convenience foods, ethnic and specialty products, health foods and snack foods are being developed in the processed vegetable market.

Regulated Marketing System

Regulated marketing is a system of programs which controls the supply of commodity goods by establishing market need, then matching production and demand. The intent of supply management is to avoid food surpluses, maintain price stability, ensure producers market access, and avoid market volatility. Organic commodities under regulated marketing systems include potatoes, cows' milk, chicken – eggs and meat, and turkey.

12. Research Activities

British Columbia Organic Sector Development Program (OSDP)

The OSDP is based on the goals of the COABC Strategic Plan (2002) and manages a fund of \$1 million to be allocated to projects that fulfill priorities of the program. The fund comes from the Agri-Food Futures Fund (AFFF) (see section 13.2). Any person or organization with an interest in the organic sector may apply provided the project addresses one of the following priorities:

- 45-65% of the fund allocated to projects addressing production capacity for organic agriculture
- 30-40% towards marketplace development and promotion
- 5-10% towards organic environmental stewardship

AFFF OSDP funds are awarded up to a 50:50 (project applicant/AFFF OSDP) cost shared basis. Generally, funding is provided on the condition that matching industry funds are put towards the project. The fund can not be used for capital costs or to fund business start-up costs.

Applicant information, and reports on completed OSDP research projects can be viewed on the COABC website: <http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/programs/osdp.htm>

Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada (OACC)

OACC coordinates and collaboratively develops research projects and web-based courses in organic agriculture in affiliation with agricultural schools at the universities of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Guelph, McGill, and Laval and the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC). The OACC also collaborates in research with AAFC researchers across Canada. The OACC has national offices at NSAC, and at the University of Saskatchewan.

For more information about the OACC, see their website: www.organicagcentre.ca