



The

STATE OF ORGANICS

Federal-Provincial-Territorial
Performance Report 2018

Canada Organic Trade Association

December 2018





The State of Organics: Federal-Provincial-Territorial Performance Report 2018

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	<p>The Canada Organic Trade Association is the membership-based trade association for the organic sector in Canada, representing growers, shippers, processors, certifiers, farmers' associations, distributors, importers, exporters, consultants, retailers and all points along the organic value chain. Visit us at: www.canada-organic.ca</p>
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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Acronyms	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
<i>Highlights.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Recommendations.....</i>	<i>4</i>
INTRODUCTION	6
METHODOLOGY	6
FINDINGS	6
<i>Federal Government.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>British Columbia</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Alberta</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Saskatchewan.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Manitoba</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Ontario.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Québec.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Atlantic Provinces</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>The Territories.....</i>	<i>15</i>
Recommendations.....	15
REFERENCES.....	17



Acronyms

AAFC	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
ACORN	Atlantic Canada Organic Regional Network
BC	British Columbia
CARTV	Conseil des appellations réservées et des termes valorisants
CB	Certification Body
CFIA	Canadian Food Inspection Agency
CGSB	Canadian General Standards Board
COABC	Certified Organic Association of British Columbia
COR	Canada Organic Regime
COTA	Canada Organic Trade Association
CVB	Conformity Verification Body
EU	European Union
FPT	Federal-Provincial-Territorial
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoOFY	Growers of Organic Food Yukon
HS	Harmonized System
MPP	Member of Provincial Parliament
NDP	New Democratic Party
NOP	National Organic Program
NSDA	Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture
OACC	Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada
OAPA	Ontario Agricultural Products Act
OFC	Organic Federation of Canada
OMAFRA	Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
OPR	Organic Products Regulations
OSDS	Ontario Sector Development Specialist
PEI	Prince Edward Island
SCC	Standards Council of Canada
SCIC	Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Program
SFCR	Safe Food for Canadians Regulations
STEP	Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership
US	United States of America
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following on the Canada Organic Trade Association's (COTA) benchmark report, *The State of Organics: Federal-Provincial-Territorial Performance Report 2017*, the 2018 *State of Organics* report provides key updates on the support for organics at the federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) levels. Similar to COTA's 2017 report, this report describes the most current forms of support for the organic sector from FPT jurisdictions, focusing on four categories: Regulation and Enforcement, Production Supports, Market Supports and Data Collection.

While the 2017 report provided grades for each category of support within all the jurisdictions, the 2018 report is focused primarily on detailed summaries and updates of the various jurisdictions on these four categories. It is recognized that changes to government regulations and the development of robust government-funded support programs take time, so COTA has chosen to evaluate the FPT governments through a grading system every three years in our annual *State of Organics* report. The 2018 report has found that while progress in certain areas has been made since July 2017, much of the sector's concerns remain.

Highlights

Federal government yet to take ownership of its ownership | With the Canadian Organic Standards set for review every five years, the organic sector continues to request full funding from the government on an ongoing basis. The federal government contributed \$542,555 to update the standards for 2020, but only after immense advocacy and negotiating efforts on the part of the organic industry. Since the standards are owned by the government, it is the government's responsibility to ensure the standards are reviewed every five years. Industry continues to contribute in-kind expertise but should not have to bear responsibility for a legislatively-referenced, government-owned standard.

British Columbia and Alberta embrace provincial regulations for organics | Since the release of the 2017 *State of Organics* report, British Columbia (BC) joined company with Québec, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick by codifying regulations for organics. Alberta's Local Food Sector Act encompasses regulations for organics and is expected to come into force in 2019. Saskatchewan, Ontario, Prince Edward Island (PEI), Newfoundland and Labrador and the Territories have yet to adopt provincial organic regulations, meaning they cannot enforce or regulate intra-provincial/territorial organic claims, resulting in issues of organic integrity on products fraudulently claiming to be organic that are sold within these borders.

Québec continues to outshine other jurisdictions in support for organics | As the 2017 report demonstrated, Québec sets the trends in Canada regarding government support for the organic sector. With its ongoing exemplary regulations, organic production and market supports, and data collection, it now adds to the mix an Organic Agricultural Complex as part of the organic training program at Cégep de Victoriaville. As well, Québec set a goal of doubling its organic acreage in its Agri-Food Policy Statement for 2018-2025, based on the province's total organic cultivated area from 2015.

Recommendations

The report concludes with three similar recommendations to the 2017 report. The first recommendation is to ensure that **all provinces and territories adopt organic regulations** that are equivalent to, or more robust than, the federal organic regulations. Progress has been made on this front since the 2017 report, but several provinces continue to lag behind, leaving the regulatory landscape fragmented across the country and



resulting in consumer confusion and distrust. The second recommendation is for the different levels of government to invest in **expanded and improved organic data collection systems**. While the federal government has made minor investments in organic data collection since the 2017 report, progress has yet to be made toward financing an organic data collection plan federally, and several provinces lack any data collection system for organics. The final recommendation is for **permanent core funding from the government for the Canadian Organic Standards**. This will provide Canada's organic sector with the same government support obtained by the organic sectors that Canada has signed bilateral equivalency arrangements with.¹

¹ In addition to Canada's five equivalency arrangement partners, other governments provide full funding toward the maintenance of their respective organic standards, including Australia's.



INTRODUCTION

Canada's organic industry continues to show impressive growth across the sector, including grocery market sales, food service sales, value-added goods manufacturing and primary production acreage. In 2017, the organic market share reached 2.6% of total grocery sales for food and beverages – up significantly from the 1.7% recorded in 2012. An industry that has long been considered niche, organics is expanding at a much faster rate than conventional agricultural and agri-food industries, and is attracting increasing investment domestically and internationally.

The objective of this report is to evaluate the FPT governments' support for organics and highlight key recommendations for improvement. By evaluating existing programs and levels of support, the report serves as a resource for those encouraging organic sector development in their provinces and territories, and for those encouraging such development federally. This report is the second pan-Canadian assessment of government support of the organic sector in Canada. COTA will annually release an updated *State of Organics* report, providing the sector and government with a gauge of how the FPT governments are supporting, or creating barriers for, the organic sector's growth, and with key recommendations on solutions to assist the sector's continued growth.

METHODOLOGY

An Organic FPT Task Force led by COTA provided key input in order to produce the report. FPT Task Force members were invited to comment on a draft version of the report and, where necessary, correspond with provincial government officials to ensure accuracy was obtained. The updates collected were based on the same four performance categories used in the 2017 report: **Regulation and Enforcement**, **Production Supports**, **Market Supports**, and **Data Collection**.

Regulations and Enforcement are the backbone of a credible organic sector. Government investment in organic-specific **Market Supports** help companies access organic markets domestically and abroad. **Production Supports** can increase supply by supporting producers through financial assistance, business risk management tools, research and extension services. **Data Collection** is essential for informed decision-making and planning for businesses, supporting organizations and policy makers.

FINDINGS

Federal Government

In 2009, the Organic Products Regulations (OPR) came into force. The OPR applies to food, feed and seed that has an organic claim and is being sold between provinces or territories, is being imported or exported, or is displaying the federally owned and regulated Canada Organic logo. On January 15, 2019, the **Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR)** — following from the Safe Food for Canadians Act which passed in 2012 — will come into force. These regulations will incorporate the Canadian Organic Standards by reference, as the OPR did, and will replace the OPR.

Chapter 13 of the SFCR, much like the OPR, requires organic products to be certified according to the Canadian Organic Standards. All standards are established with industry input through the Canadian General



Standards Board (CGSB), in accordance with the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) procedures. Under the OPR, the standards that were incorporated by reference include two national standards: CAN/CGSB 32.310, *Principles and Management Standards*, and CAN/CGSB 32.311, *Permitted Substances List*. Under the SFCR, there is a third organic standard that will be incorporated by reference: CAN/CGSB 32.312, *Organic production systems, Aquaculture – General principles, management standards and permitted substances lists*.

The inclusion of the aquaculture standards by reference will enable products adhering to these standards — which were originally developed in 2012 but have since been revised in 2018 — permission to use the Canada Organic logo and be federally regulated by the CFIA. The aquaculture standards will go from being a voluntary standard to a mandatory standard, with a phase-in period of two years. With the incorporation by reference of CAN/CGSB 32.312 into the SFCR, seafood as well as fruits and vegetables grown in an aquaponic system and certified in accordance with the standards will be allowed to be sold and marketed with the Canada Organic logo.

While the federal government is to be applauded for establishing a regulation that incorporates by reference three organic standards, the regulatory framework continues to limit Canadian organic products within the narrow scope of food, feed and seed for use toward human consumption. This reinforces the disadvantage of the Canadian organic sector as compared to other jurisdictions, which regulate a broader spectrum of products that are certified to organic standards.

For instance, the United States (US) — Canada's largest trading partner for organics — regulates the organic certification of shea butter (which is used in body creams and cosmetics) due to their agricultural production standards including all agriculturally-grown products. The European Union (EU) — Canada's second-largest trading partner for organics — recently broadened the scope of its organic regulations to include cotton, wool and hides.

As the federal government has taken the position that they will not provide ongoing, full funding of the technical reviews of the Canadian Organic Standards, industry has been left in a precarious situation. According to the government's SCC, every five years, federal standards require a technical review. For industry to fund standards reviews of a federal standard entails significant resources to internally fundraise towards a process that should ultimately be the responsibility of the federal government.

After extensive lobbying from industry throughout 2017, in January 2018, the federal government committed \$250,000 towards the organic standards review process, and in September 2018 committed an additional \$292,555 towards the review (which is due in 2020). While the sector is grateful for the federal government's contributions, it is critical for the government to commit to **permanent core funding** for the standards reviews, in order for the sector to remain competitive with our largest trading partners, whose respective governments all fund their organic standards reviews.

It is important to correct the common misunderstanding regarding ownership of the Canadian Organic Standards. The standards are not a private standard as government representatives often assert, but rather, a National Standard of Canada. Since the standards are incorporated by reference into legislation, and since they are owned by the CGSB, they are the legal responsibility of the federal government. Industry is eager to participate in the standards reviews and continue to offer in-kind expertise for such reviews, but expects government, either the federal government alone or an FPT partnership, to put into place a full and ongoing publicly-financed funding mechanism to ensure the standards are reviewed.



In Canada, there is no department or program dedicated exclusively to organics at the federal level. This is in contrast to the US, whose [National Organic Program](#) (NOP) is housed within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), yet interacts with various departments to ensure coordination at the federal level. NOP funds are used to review the national standards, accredit certifying bodies, ensure organic integrity, facilitate organic equivalency arrangements with other countries, run the national database of organic operations, facilitate market access and more. In addition, the USDA Conservation Department runs extension programs and offers transition subsidies and the US Census coordinates a data collection plan for organic with the NOP.

Organic sector specialists exist at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has staff dedicated to the organic enforcement file. However, an identifiable inter-departmental team continues to be needed to keep pace with the industry's growth and to eliminate regulatory burdens. There appears to be no federal strategy or policy for organics due to this lack of coordination at a federal level.

The CFIA is legally responsible for the Canada Organic Regime (COR), which consists of the federal regulations for organics. Through designating Certification Verification Bodies (CVBs) to accredit the Certification Bodies (CB), the CBs come under the purview of the CFIA. The CFIA monitors operations whose organic certification has been cancelled, posting a list of de-certified operations on the [CFIA's website](#). The CFIA, perhaps in coordination with other departments, should establish a public database of organic operators similar to the [Organic INTEGRITY database](#) in the US, in the interests of full transparency and public verification by anyone interested.

An important role played by the CFIA's Import and Export Division is that of negotiating and signing organic equivalency arrangements with Canada's key organic trading partners. Equivalency arrangements enable the certification of a product in country A to be considered certified organic in country B based on the recognition of equivalent standards and regulatory enforcement systems between the two countries. Sometimes there are major variances included in these arrangements to ensure Canada's standards are upheld. Canada has equivalency arrangements with the US, the EU, Switzerland, Japan and Costa Rica. Currently, the CFIA is in discussions with Mexico and South Korea to determine if an organic equivalency arrangement may be possible in the future.

The CFIA also regulates the use of the **Canada Organic legend (logo)**. It is permitted to be used on products that have 95% or greater organic content and that have been certified according to the COR by an accredited CB. The logo can only be applied to the packaging of products that fall within the scope of the CFIA (food for human consumption, feed and seed). Products outside of this scope with an organic claim — such as body care products, natural health products, supplements, cosmetics, pet foods and textiles — are ineligible to use the logo.

Although provinces and territories lead much of the direct investment into production support and market support, these have often been funded through the federal-provincial/territorial agreements (formerly called Growing Forward, now the [Canadian Agricultural Partnership](#)). The Canadian Agricultural Partnership is a 5-year \$3 billion federal commitment to Canadian agriculture and agri-food. The program operates under a 60:40 (60% federal, 40% provincial/territorial) funding arrangement. Many of the programs mentioned in the following sections are made possible by federal funding.





On the issue of data collection, very little has changed since the publication of the original *State of Organics* report. Despite years of advocacy on the part of Canada's organic sector for a federally-financed, robust and comprehensive data collection plan, funding has yet to be earmarked for this important aspect of the sector's needs. As a result, organics' contributions to Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and export goals are unable to be accurately captured. Harmonized System (HS) codes, which have been essential for the organic sector to track the import and export of organic goods, continue to exist in small numbers. HS code tracking must be bolstered, or alternative and equally helpful measures of trade statistics must be incorporated into a comprehensive national data collection plan for organics.

The organic sector is very pleased by the 2018 federal funding announcement for the *Organic Science Cluster III: Connecting Environmental Sustainability with the Science of Organic Production – 2018-2023*. This funding of \$8.3 million, which is administered by the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada (OACC) and in collaboration with the Organic Federation of Canada (OFC), provides funding for 28 science activities across the country.

British Columbia

On September 1, 2018, after lengthy efforts by the organic sector, [BC's organic regulation](#) came into force, making it the fifth province to enact regulations towards the marketing and selling of organic products. This means that companies marketing their products as organic without up-to-date certification could face a financial penalty by the provincial government.

Operators will be able to certify their products through a certifier that is a member of the Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia (COABC) or through one of the federally-accredited certification bodies.



British
Columbia
Certified
Organic

These products must bear either or both of the BC Certified Organic checkmark logo and the Canada Organic logo if they contain 95% or more organic ingredients, but any amount of ingredients listed must list the CB on the label.

In October 2017, the BC Ministry of Agriculture created a full-time Organic Specialist role, which was previously a part-time position. The Organic Specialist role includes collaboration with national, provincial, and local organizations along the organic value chain to support the growth of organics in BC. Continued support and stewardship of the transition to mandatory organic certification in BC is also currently a key component of the role.

The establishment of the BC organic logo has been a successful marketing campaign, having gained recognition province-wide. There is a new 'Buy BC' program funded by the provincial government and administered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation, that can be leveraged by organic organizations and operations. However, the Buy BC program is not specific to organics.

In preparation for this year's regulatory change, Growing Forward 2 funded the creation of a database to provide more accurate data on the BC organic sector. This initiative saw the creation of the first phase of an inclusive database for BC, but much work is still needed to ensure the final product is effective for all users. Outside of this initiative, there is little government funding for organic production, sales or acreage data projects.

Organic crop insurance is available for some sub-sectors, such as organic tree fruit operators, but is not widespread and does not work well for small, mixed operations.



Alberta

In 2018, the Alberta government passed Bill 7, the [Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act](#), which regulates organic products that are grown and sold within the province of Alberta. As this report goes to print, the province is still developing the regulation, but it is set to come into effect on April 1, 2019. The Act ensures that everyone who uses the term “organic” to sell products in Alberta is certified to the federal organic agricultural standards. Albertan consumers can now have complete confidence in the word “organic”, as the provincial regulation requires products to be certified to the Canadian Organic Standards.

Alberta has a full-time organic business development officer and has had this position for two decades. However, there is limited expertise in the government for organic agronomic support. At least one full-time organic agronomist position, or training for all current agronomists, is needed for supporting the growth and level of interest shown by producers in organic production and production techniques.

Alberta made significant headway with the development of an organic crop insurance program in 2016. The program regulates Alberta's main organic crops including oats, wheat, and barley, as well as rye and triticale. The program has seen fairly significant uptake since its launch in March 2016 and is an important factor in helping organic producers mitigate risk. However, there is still a gap for transitioning farmers who currently fall outside organic and conventional crop insurance programs. The three-year transition to organic certification includes several major risk factors, and is a time when farmers would benefit greatly from government-supported risk mitigation programs.

Alberta has a strong agricultural marketing program that can be accessed by organic businesses but is not organic specific. This is also true of programs to support growth in the processing sector. These present an opportunity for sector development, but illustrate the lack of organic-specific measures and programming needed to drive growth in the sector.

Alberta currently does not have a data collection strategy for the organic sector.

Saskatchewan

The Government of Saskatchewan has not adopted organic provincial regulations, despite the province having the largest amount of organic acreage in the country. Without a regulation, there is the potential for false or misleading claims, which compromises the integrity of the Canadian organic brand. Saskatchewan is one of four remaining provinces that has not adopted any regulation for organics.

The Ministry of Agriculture's Crops and Irrigation Branch has one full-time specialist who provides technical advice to organic and transitioning producers regarding agronomic best practices to ensure they have access to the latest research, product information and Ministry services. This year, the Ministry's Market Development Unit, Trade and Value Added, prepared a report entitled *Overview of Organic Food Opportunities in the US & Canada*. The findings in the report will help direct the development of the organic value-added processing sector in the province, one of SaskOrganic's (the provincial organic industry association) strategic priorities.

Saskatchewan stands out for its organic crop insurance program, offered through the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC). This program covers 23 organic field crops, including wheat, oats, barley, pulses



and oilseeds. The program is available to certified organic farmers and addresses the special risk and higher crop values associated with organic production. SCIC's organic insurance program is heralded as the best across the country for the extent of its coverage.

The Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership (STEP) is 75% funded by the provincial government. Agriculture is one of the export sectors supported by STEP. STEP regularly organizes an exhibit at BIOFACH and Natural Products Expo West, two of the largest organic trade shows in the world. This provides STEP members the opportunity to have a booth within the STEP pavilion, thereby building capacity in the organic sector, as well as promoting the sector in the global marketplace. STEP also provides its members with organic market intelligence reports and other services to promote and grow the organic export market.

Currently, Saskatchewan does not have a data collection plan for the organic sector.

Manitoba

In 2013, the [Organic Agricultural Products Act](#) (OAPA) came into force in Manitoba with the associated regulations coming into effect later on. This made Manitoba the first province to pass a provincial organic law since the federal regulation was passed in 2009. While BC and Québec have laws that predate the federal OPR in which the word "organic" is controlled and defined, Manitoba is the first province to pass a law that mirrors the federal regulations. The OAPA has increased the public credibility of organics by requiring that all organic claims be supported with organic certification.

The OAPA adopts the federal definition of "organic", references the federal standards and relies on the same system of federally-accredited CBs to ensure that operators comply with organic standards. The OAPA applies to all food products grown, processed and sold in Manitoba that claim to be organic. Similar to the federal system, Manitoba's approach to enforcement is complaints-based. Currently, enforcement mechanisms within the Act are under-employed as a result of insufficient funds.

The organic sector is supported by the provincial government's employment of an organic development specialist and by a university-based organic research program. There is a focus on understanding what it takes to build an agricultural sector. Provincial staff's support of organics has broadened to include sector development and marketing. The Organic Sector Development Specialist's (OSDS) primary role is to identify obstacles to sector growth and create programs to overcome these obstacles. The OSDS tracks organic production, processing, handling and crops planted, and keeps a list of organic buyers, input suppliers, seed cleaners, abattoirs and others.

Manitoba also deserves recognition for the implementation of an organic crop insurance program. However, producers claim that the program fails to cover the input costs of modern organic practices. The Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation's Organic Insurance Program offers organic crop insurance for three field crops. Producers have requested that the program be updated using the data collected by Manitoba Agriculture and be made equivalent to the organic insurance program available in neighbouring Saskatchewan.

Ontario

Ontario has yet to enact a provincial regulation for organic products, despite having the largest market for organics in Canada. Presently, any organic product made and sold within Ontario's borders is not subject to



universally subject to standards and enforcement, meaning that products can claim to be organic without having an organic certificate or being subject to inspection. This creates an unlevel playing field amongst local producers and weakens public trust and integrity for organics among consumers.

Under the previous provincial government, Bill 153 was introduced by Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP) Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth) and by Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario MPP Sylvia Jones (Dufferin-Caledon). Bill 153 — An Act to regulate the labelling and certification of organic products — passed through first and second reading, but did not pass its way further through the Ontario Legislative Assembly due to the 2018 provincial elections. The previous government also held “listening sessions” with the organic industry in December 2017 to learn more about the barriers and opportunities for growth in the sector.

On November 12th, 2018, the same bill was introduced in Queen’s Park as [Bill 54](#) by Conservative MPP Jim McDonnell (Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry). Although introduced by an MPP from the governing party, the bill is again a Private Member’s Bill, so the chances of it passing are unknown.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) divides the organic portfolio among staff. There is no staff specifically dedicated to supporting the organic sector.

In 2011, Foodland Ontario, OMAFRA’s buy local program, introduced a marketing strategy for Ontario organic products including voluntary use of the Foodland Ontario Organic logo. It may be used where the product meets the national organic Standards and the Foodland Ontario Standards. According to OMAFRA’s Business Development Branch, the program has been successful at securing licensing agreements as compared to the regular mark. However, additional work is required in promoting this brand.



Production and market data in Ontario is extremely limited. In previous years, when Ontario had a dedicated organic specialist, organic data collection and analysis received limited provincial support through public funds and OMAFRA staff time. Limited data is available on organic field crops that are insured through Agricorp Ontario, a government agency that delivers crop insurance and business risk management programs.

Québec

Québec continues to have the strongest government support systems for the organic sector in the country. Québec’s Loi sur les appellations réservées (the Act Respecting Reserved Designations) came into force in 2000, making Québec the first province to regulate organic production through its own standards. The verification of standards is enforced by the Conseil des appellations réservées et des termes valorisants (CARTV), an independent public authority partially funded (55%) by the Québec Ministry of Agriculture. In 2012, Québec adopted the national organic standards, which are referred to in addition to Québec-specific requirements for regulating organics.



In 2013, CARTV, the Filière biologique du Québec and the Conseil de promotion de l'agroalimentaire québécois (Aliments du Québec) concluded a partnership to create a version of the Aliments du Québec logo for organic products. Food production and processing businesses can now clearly identify the geographical origin of their organic products. The

use of the logo is voluntary.

CARTV also has a [public directory](#) showing both certified and de-certified lists of all operation types, products, location and business name, as well as housing data on organic acreage. This system continues to serve as a role model for other regions in Canada looking to create stronger regulatory, enforcement and data tracking mechanisms.

Québec leads the way in government programming and financing for the organic sector. At the unveiling of Québec's new [Agri-Food Policy Statement for 2018-2025](#), the provincial government announced an investment of \$7 million over five years in support of the development of the organic sector, which is in addition to the \$10.5 million already announced in the provincial budget in March 2018.

A key piece of this support is the Programme d'appui pour la conversion à l'agriculture biologique. Funding for this program is confirmed until 2022. It supports farmers in their transition to organic production. The program offers two forms of assistance (up to a maximum of \$40,000 per business):

- Grants of up to \$20,000 for the transition of vegetable, maple and apiculture operations; and
- Grants of up to \$20,000 to cover 50% of expenses related to construction or modification of livestock facilities that are required to meet organic standards.

In the Agri-Food Policy Statement for 2018-2015, Québec set a goal of doubling its organic acreage based on the province's total organic cultivated area from 2015. The province is well on its way to reaching its goal of doubling organic acreage by 2025 from the 2015 numbers.

Additional supports related to extension, crop insurance and research make Québec's organic farmers some of the most well-supported in the country. Québec takes a unique approach to extension services where organic farmers or those in transition can apply to have 85% of agrologist consultant fees reimbursed. The province has organic crop insurance programs in development (e.g., maple, grain and hay). Through the Prime-Vert program, governmental support is also available for equipment purchases specific to organic farm management.

The leading institution in organic training, the Cégep de Victoriaville, inaugurated their brand new Institut national d'agriculture biologique in 2018 — a \$16 million government investment. Besides housing numerous organic research projects, continuing education programs for farmers and an organic vegetable farm incubator, this new infrastructure will host the institution's formal Agricultural business management and technology collegial program, targeted specifically towards organic production.² The program reached full capacity for the fall of 2018, having welcomed 220 new students.

² For more information, see: "Organic Farming Training: Get your hands dirty in Quebec, a new program for farmers" by Laura Beeston. Maclean's, January 12th 2018: <https://www.macleans.ca/education/organic-farming-program-cegep/>



In terms of market support, the Filière biologique du Québec leads a [digital information campaign](#) for organic products originating within the province, which launched in 2016. The implementation of this campaign was made possible thanks to the support of the Government of Québec and private partners. In 2018, government funding for the campaign was renewed.

Since 2014, L'Union des producteurs Agricole has coordinated the Table de développement de la production biologique (Organic Production Development Roundtable), which gathers producers' associations and regional groups in partnership with supporting organizations and government bodies. This group of leaders in organic production aims to optimize the efforts currently devoted to the development and marketing of organic products.

Atlantic Provinces

While the Atlantic Provinces may have smaller markets, they have a vibrant network of organic operations and organizations. The Atlantic Canada Organic Regional Network (ACORN) provides critical cross-jurisdictional support that is often funded by provincial governments.

Of the four maritime provinces, only New Brunswick ([2014](#)) and Nova Scotia ([2015](#)) have adopted provincial organic regulations which both reference the federal standards. New Brunswick has since implemented an operational complaints-based enforcement system, whereas in Nova Scotia implementation of the enforcement system is delayed as a result of shifting enforcement responsibilities from the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture (NSDA) to the Department of Environment. However, the NSDA has developed a helpful [educational plan](#) for the enforcement of their regulation.

While the NSDA has removed organic-specific support, they started the [Small Farm Accelerator Program](#) for any farm with revenue between \$10,000 and \$60,000. To be eligible, the farm must submit a business plan, but they can use funds from this program for a wide variety of support, such as transition fees or mentoring fees, if that's what they feel is most necessary for their operation. They can also use this program for season extension infrastructure support, among other items. This program therefore suits the needs of many of the small organic mixed vegetable operations in Nova Scotia.

PEI has the strongest government programming for organic production of the Atlantic provinces as evidenced by the [Organic Industry Development Program](#), which will continue under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. This program continues to offer financial support for organic-specific activities, including purchasing technology or equipment, coaching, funding for organic transition and implementing strategic initiatives, among other supports. New Brunswick no longer has a transition support program, but otherwise has similar government supports as PEI.

Each Maritime province has contributed some support to ACORN's consumer education projects, with the most recent support coming from ACORN's 2017-2018 Consumer Market Research project, which revealed a lack of consumer awareness and brand confusion related to "organic", "natural", and other similar labels.

Newfoundland and Labrador has a very small organic sector, reflective of its population size and agricultural production in general. However, it has some supports for transitioning to organic and for new farmers, which will hopefully enable the sector to continue growing. The Canadian Agricultural Partnership Agreement through the Agriculture Business Program and the Agriculture Land Development Program offer funding for organic certification, market development and organic land development.



The Territories

Organic production is a fairly new sector in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut (collectively, the 'Territories'). According to COTA's most recent data collection, there were an estimated 10 organic operations in the Yukon and Northwest Territories in 2017. The Territories have a limited capacity for agricultural production because of their climate and because their geography limits the competitiveness of processing or manufacturing. As a result, there are no government regulations for organics in the Territories.

The [Growers of Organic Food Yukon](#) (GoOFY) have received funding to cover membership costs for the OFC. Members of GoOFY have received stipends for travel to organic-related events and conferences.

The Yukon government has also supported organic training workshops, and marketing materials for farmers' markets and some of GoOFY's advocacy work. These contributions may appear small in comparison to other regional governments, but they reflect a growing relationship between the government and the relatively small organic farming community.

The Yukon Agriculture Branch (a branch of Energy, Mines and Resources) is incorporating input from the public towards an updated agricultural policy for the territory. A report on the public consultations entitled [Ploughing Towards an Updated Yukon Agriculture Policy](#) reflects the interests of Yukoners in sustainable agriculture. The report includes mention of organic cost supports, promotion of organic production methods, ensuring use of the term "organic" is restricted to certified operators, and research and public education into organic production. The updated policy is expected to be released in the winter.

There are insufficient details to include an analysis of the Northwest Territories or Nunavut. In part, this is due to few (Northwest Territories) or no (Nunavut) certified organic operations within these territories. Progress will continue to be monitored in future reports.

Recommendations

The results of this report reinforce the findings of the benchmark *State of Organics* report from 2017. The main issues that dominated the 2017 analysis persist to this day. The following are three key recommendations:

- **All provinces and territories adopt organic regulations** that are equivalent to, or more robust than, the federal organic regulations. Progress has been made on this front since the 2017 report, but two critical provinces (Saskatchewan and Ontario, with the largest acreage and consumer market respectively) continue to lag behind, creating a fragmented regulatory environment for organics. The federal government should consider providing incentives to provinces and territories for adopting the federal standards.
- **The different levels of government ought to invest in expanded and improved organic data collection systems.** While the federal government has made minor investments in organic data collection since the 2017 report, progress has yet to be made toward financing an organic data collection plan federally, and several provinces lack any data collection system for organics.
- **Permanent core government funding should be provided for the Canadian Organic Standards technical reviews.** This will enable Canada's organic sector to remain current and relevant, maintain



our trading relationships with our equivalency arrangement partners, and try to stay competitive with our major trading partners – all of which provide full and ongoing funding for their respective organic standards technical reviews.

We will continue to monitor progress within FPT governments on support for the organic sector, and will continue to publish a *State of Organics* report annually to document our findings. We hope these reports will be helpful for government officials, industry, and the general public to track developments within the sector, and hold the government and the sector to increasingly high standards so we can all continue to reap the economic, environmental and health benefits of organic production. The potential for even greater growth is clear. Through closer industry and government collaboration, that potential can be realized.



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