



Welcome to “ON Organic”

Hugh Martin, Organic Crop Production Program Lead, OMAFRA

Welcome to the April 2009 issue of ON Organic. Ready or not spring is here. I hope your plans are well established for the season. A good plan needs to prepare for the normal and be flexible enough to accommodate everything else.

Thanks to Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO) and Organic Council of Ontario (OCO) for forwarding this on to their email lists, and I encourage you to share it with other colleagues who may find it useful. Thanks to those who answered our newsletter survey to give us suggestions and I again encourage everyone to give us your comments on the newsletter. http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=xCbv_2fnzWobFF7m1DwXbijw_3d_3d

Subscription to this newsletter is easy and no cost. For details go to the webpage: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/subscribe/index.html#organic>

The newsletter is also posted on the OMAFRA website at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/organic/news/news-organic.html>

The French version of these newsletters is available at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/french/crops/organic/news/news-organic.html>

The OMAFRA Organic pages are linked from <http://www.ontario.ca/organic> and <http://www.ontario.ca/biologique>

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Canada Organic Office Website

The Canada Organic Office (COO) of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) recently updated its Organic Products Regulations website <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/orgbio.shtml>, featuring essential information on the upcoming regulations and enforcement policy, including:

- An official list of Conformity Verification Bodies (“accreditors”) which have applied to the agency to carry out the assessments of Certifiers under the new program;
- A draft Stream of Commerce and Enforcement Policy, which describes how the CFIA will enforce products over the initial 24 months following implementation.

The deadline for comments on the federal organic regulation is April 29, 2009. Address your comments (pro and con) to the Canadian Organic Office at OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca

The website also includes valuable resources, such as a copy of the government's cost benefit analysis for regulating the organic sector, questions and answers on the 2009 organic regulations, links to the regulations, standards and Canadian statistics.

Growing High Yielding Organic Soybeans

By Hugh Martin, Organic Crop Production Program Lead, OMAFRA

In a recent article in the OMAFRA CropTalk newsletter Horst Bohner, OMAFRA Soybean Specialist listed ten ideas to increase soybean yields. I want to include them here with some comments (*in brackets*) to adapt them for organic crops.

Good Rotation - For a 100% yield potential, soybeans should only be grown 1 out of 4 years. A corn/soy/wheat rotation is also excellent and provides a 98% potential. Ontario research has shown rotation can increase yields 4.2 bu/ac. (*A good crop rotation is a basic foundation of any crop program.*)

High Yielding Full Season Varieties - Check the soybean variety trial brochure (www.gosoy.ca) before picking a variety. For example, OAC Wallace yields 8 bu/ac more than OAC Bayfield. (*Some growers will use a shorter season variety to allow fall wheat or spelt planting.*)

Early Planting - An early-May planting date compared to

late-May will provide about 3.8 bu/ac extra yield. (*Organic soybean growers typically need to plant late May as part of their weed control program, a necessary trade-off.*)

Narrow Rows at the Right Seeding Rate

194,000 seeds/acre in 7.5" rows, 177,000 seeds/acre in 15" rows. Narrow rows can increase yields 3.5 bu per acre. (*Most organic soybean growers plant wider rows as part of their weed control program to allow row cultivation. 20" rows would likely be ideal but many have equipment that is better suited for 30" rows. I would recommend 160,000 seeds/acre, which is higher than many 30" recommendations and allows for plant losses due to emergence problems and mechanical injury from weeding equipment. This should give a final plant population of approximately 120,000 plants per acre*)

Inoculants – Response (perhaps 1 bu/ac) is likely to be higher if soils are sandy, pH is low, or the field has not been in soybeans for at least 5 years. (*Make sure the inoculant product is permitted by your CB.*)

Timely Weed Control - *This is especially important in organic. Plan a multi-technique approach (good management last year, early tillage this spring, harrowing/rotary hoe before and after planting, row-cultivation and a walk through the fields to get critical weeds. In my experience the difference between good weed control and poor in organic soybeans can be 10 bu/ac.)*

Fertilizer and Manure - Phosphorous (P) and potassium (K) should be applied according to a soil test. However, manure can provide yield gains even if soil test levels are adequate. Research indicates that fertility can affect yield by up to 6 bu/ac. (*Organic farmers more typically use manure or compost instead of purchased fertilizers but it is important not let P and K levels get too low. Manure applications should be managed for the whole crop rotation and it may be more appropriate to apply it before corn or fall cereal crops. Some evidence now indicates there are more soybean aphid problems in soils with low soil potassium levels.*)

Appropriate Tillage - When compaction is a problem, tillage is necessary for good yields. If the soil is in good shape, tillage will provide little yield response. (*In organic soybeans, tillage is generally needed to manage weeds. Several passes of spring tillage 1-2 weeks apart can help to reduce early weed flushes of annual weeds before planting.*)

Horst's tips on insect and disease management and seed treatments are less critical for organic since we do have choices for products to use. In many cases a good rotation, resistant variety, good seed quality, and overall good crop management can help to reduce the need for these pesticide products.

To see the original article on non-organic soybeans go to <http://www.omafr.gov.on.ca/english/crops/field/news/croptalk/2009/ct-0309a2.htm>

Choosing the Right Cover Crop

By Anne Verhallen - Soil Management Specialist,
OMAFRA

Cover crops are a common soil management practice for many horticultural growers. There are lots of good reasons to use cover crops but it is often hard to put a dollar value on the return from growing cover crops. Cover crops are part of a system of soil maintenance - particularly important on the lighter, lower organic matter soils.

Know what you want to achieve with a cover crop and select the best one for the job!

Function of the Cover Crop	Best Choices for Cover Crops
Nitrogen production	Red clover, peas, vetch
Nitrogen scavenging	Fall uptake - Oilseed radish and other brassicas, oats Winter/spring uptake - rye, winter wheat
Weed suppression	Oilseed radish and other brassicas, winter rye Organic growers also like buckwheat for this
Nematode suppression	Note: variety and nematode specific! Cutlass Mustard Sudans/Sorghums - Sordan 79, Trudan 8 Pearl Millet - CFPM 101 Marigold - Crackerjack, Creole Oilseed radish - Adagio, Colonel
Soil structure building	Oats, overwintered winter rye
Compaction busting	Alfalfa, sweet clover
Biomass return to soil	Fall - oats, oilseed radish Summer - millets, sorghum, sudan
Erosion protection i.e. wind, water	Winter rye, winter wheat, ryegrass (well established)

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/hort/news/hortmatt/2007/18hrt07a2.htm>

Farming Organically

Hugh Martin - Organic Crop Production Program Lead/
OMAFRA

Recent statistics are showing continued growth in the number of organic farmers in Ontario. In 2007, there were 569 certified organic farms in Ontario with approximately 100,000

acres of crops and pasture. This land was 48% in grain and oilseed crops, 40% in hay and pasture, and about 5% in fruit, vegetables and herb crops. The balance includes maple, nut trees, etc. Certified organic farming represents about 1% of the farmland and 1% of the farms in Ontario.

Economics

Organic corn, soybeans and wheat are priced similar to last year and slightly more than double the 2009 prices of their conventional counterparts. Organic crops yield about 75% of the conventional crops, depending on crop, management skills, weather, etc. Organic crops often have net returns per acre of at least double their conventional counterparts, and in some cases more than that.

Marketing of organic crops will take some research to seek out the dealers you want to work with. There are numerous buyers for organic grains. Organic prices are not tied to the Chicago Board of Trade, so there tends to be more stability in the market. Prices are affected by supply and demand of organic commodities, but for many years supply has not been able to meet demand. Even in the current market, prices have been stable and market demand is still strong.

Certification

For field crops, certification is generally required by buyers. This is true of both processing buyers for food products, as well as feed buyers. Organic livestock must be fed certified feed if the livestock are certified organic. Certification costs range from \$500 to \$1,000 or more per year per farm, depending on the size and complexity of the farm. Good production records are required as part of the certification and annual inspection process. However, these records are very similar to what is required for other traceability programs. As of June 30, 2009, certification will be part of the new Canada Organic Regime that will be managed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Organic certification bodies will be accredited to manage the certification process.

Weed and Nitrogen Management

The biggest production issues for organic field crop farmers are weed management, and nitrogen management in corn and cereals. The key to successfully managing weeds is to have a good crop rotation. Secondly, be timely with mechanical weed control, starting right after planting before the crop emerges. For corn and soybeans, this requires weekly passes over the field with a rotary hoe, weeder harrow or inter-row cultivation. This will likely cost less in total than a typical herbicide program. The third step is to be able to walk the fields with a hoe as needed to eliminate weedy patches and outbreaks or troublesome weeds. The key is to keep on top of your weeds and to prevent weeds from going to seed as much as possible.

Nitrogen is largely managed with cover crops such as red clover. Red clover is fairly easy to establish on most organic farms. Farms with access to manure can also use it to supplement the nitrogen and maintain phosphorous and potassium if those nutrients are low. However, high rates of manure are discouraged in order to minimize weed pressure and environmental issues.

Have a good look at organic. The sector has grown 15-20% per year for over 20 years. It takes some effort but your successes can be very rewarding.

Survey on Regulatory Impediments

The Organic Federation of Canada wants to learn more about the regulatory impediments encountered by organics products operators during the crucial marketing phase at the provincial, national and international levels.

Identifying regulatory impediments is the first step to finding appropriate solutions that support organic marketing initiatives.

Organics products operators are invited to comment before April 30 by responding to the questionnaire at Organic Federation of Canada <http://www.organicfederation.ca/index.html>.

Please note that the National Organic Standard and the Canadian Organic Regulation are not included in the scope of the present survey.

Ontario Companies Invited to Compete for Olympic Business

Could your company win a portion of the billions that will be spent on goods and services for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games? Find out by registering online <http://2010commercecentre.com/BusinessNetwork/Default.aspx> as a supplier to the Games.

The Vancouver Organizing Committee wants as many companies as possible from all provinces to register as members of the 2010 Business Network, as many B.C. suppliers are unable to meet the increasing demand for products and services related to Olympic activities. Registration allows you to showcase and promote your business to Games-related buyers.

Programs

Ontario Rural Summer Jobs Program

Apply now to create summer jobs for rural youth! The 2009 Ontario Rural Summer Jobs Service http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/rsj/rsj_index.htm is now accepting applications from employers. Businesses and community organizations in rural Ontario can receive a hiring incentive of \$2 per hour to create student employment. The program enables rural students to gain enhanced skills and work experience.

What qualifies as a rural business? If your business or community group is located in a town, small city or rural township with a population of 100,000 or less, you are probably eligible to apply to this program.

How does the program work? The program provides financial assistance to employers who create jobs for students between the ages of 14 and 24. If you are employing a student with a disability, the age threshold increases to age 29. Employers can benefit from the program for up to 16 weeks. To qualify, the student employment must be created sometime during the six-month period from April 1 to September 30.

How do I apply? You may apply either online or by printing the application form <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/rsj/onlineappform.pdf> and mailing or faxing it to Rural Summer Jobs Service at fax: (519) 826-4336. **The application deadline is April 17.** For more information, call 1-866-306-7827 or e-mail rsjs.omafra@ontario.ca.

Ontario Market Investment Fund (OMIF)

Promote local foods with the Ontario Market Investment Fund (OMIF)

Agri-food industry stakeholders and local food networks are invited to apply for funding to increase consumer awareness of Ontario foods and encourage Ontarians to buy locally. The provincial government will fund up to 50 per cent of your project's eligible cost. The maximum grant is \$100,000 per approved project.

Collaboration and partnerships are required. Eligible applicants include strategic alliances between individuals, businesses, farmers, processors, industry associations and community organizations, including not-for-profits and/or municipalities. Project activities may include market research, market development, communication initiatives, and consumer or trade events. See the OMIF website for a list of approved projects <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/domestic/omif/omif.html>.

Application forms are available online at www.ontario.ca/omif or by calling the Agricultural Information Contact Centre at 1-877-424-1300 or OMAFRA at 1-888-588-4111.

New Publications

Ontario CropIPM

We are very excited to announce that Ontario CropIPM, our interactive IPM training program is now online!

You can find it in English at <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/IPM/english/index.html>,

And in French at <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/IPM/french/index.html>.

Ontario CropIPM is an interactive educational tool to improve your knowledge of Integrated Pest Management in Ontario crops. Growers, scouts and consultants will be able to learn about insects, diseases, disorders, and weeds by:

- searching photo galleries,
- using identification keys,
- consulting pest scouting calendars,
- comparing photos of often-confused pests,
- learning about soil diagnostics and herbicide injury,
- referring to glossaries,
- and checking additional resources.

Ontario CropIPM includes modules for:

- Brassicas, Cucurbits, Peppers, Strawberries, Sweet corn,
- Tomatoes

We expect to be adding more crops as time goes on.

The CD version is available for purchase at <https://www.publications.serviceontario.ca/ecom/MasterServlet/GetItemDetailsHandler?iN=AF141&qty=1&viewMode=3&loggedIN=false&JavaScript=y>. This is nice for those who don't have high-speed internet access.

Agronomy Guide for Field Crops, Publication 811 (order number 0811E)

The new cost is \$30.00. This revised and improved 2009 edition (over 300 pages) contains an index and tabs so readers can easily locate the various chapters; there is also an extensive colour plate section at the back of the book.

Integrated Pest Management for Apples, Publication 310 (order number 0310E)

The new cost is \$50.00. This revised 2009 edition (over 200 pages) is four-colour throughout.

Leek Moth – A Pest of Allium Crops (order number 08-009 is a new, 8-page, colour factsheet) and is available on the website <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/08-009.htm>.

All OMAFRA Publications can be ordered from the OMAFRA website <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/products/>

Events

Seminar for New Exporters

June 2—3, 2009

The PROFIT (Program to Raise Ontario Foods International Trade) Seminar, run by the Ontario Food Exports Unit, addresses the basics of international marketing and is a practical hands-on guide to penetrating the U.S. market. Held in Toronto and Buffalo over a two day period, this seminar features over 15 speakers including key FDA contacts. PROFIT is scheduled once a year, (this year is June 2 – 3). The cost is \$350 per person which includes all meals, materials, transportation and accommodations. Topics discussed include:

- Export financing
- Product labeling
- Trademarks
- US tax laws
- US food brokerage
- US food distribution
- US Food & Drug regulations (including an overview of the new FDA Bioterrorism Regulations effective December 12, 2003)
- US Customs
- US customs brokerage

For more information or to receive a registration form, please contact Kathryn Liotta at 1-888-466-2372, ext 6-4018.

Food meets Function the science and business of functional foods

June 17 and 18, 2009

Best Western Lamplighter Inn and Conference Centre
London, Ontario, Canada

Featured speakers include:

Dr. Linda Tapsell, Professor of Human Nutrition at the University of Wollongong, Australia speaking about *Functional Foods to Benefit Public Health*.

Kim McKinnon, Vice President, The Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors speaking on *The Grocery Store Experience 2015 - how consumers will shop for health and food*.

Dr. Ariel Fenster, Office for Science and Society, McGill University speaking on the subject of *Foods or Supplements: Which should you be putting on your plate*.

Al Mussell, PhD, M.Sc. Senior Research Associate at the George Morris Centre speaking about *A New Partnership-from Producer to Dietitian to Consumer-Implications for Health Care if we don't succeed*.

Day 1 Breakout Sessions:

Session 1: Improving Human Health with Functional Foods – What the consumer needs to know.

Session 2: Creating Enhanced Products – Feeds and Formulas!

Session 3: Opportunities in Retail and Processing

Day 2: Breakout Sessions:

Session 1: Marketing Health through Food –Successful Strategies

Session 2: Top 5 Emerging Ideas in Functional Foods

For detailed agenda and registration information go to www.foodmeetsfunction.ca

Other Organic Events

There are also a number of other Organic Events scheduled. Go to the following links for more details:

EFAO - http://www.efao.ca/pages/courses_workshops.html

COG - <http://www.cog.ca/events.php>

OCO - <http://www.organiccouncil.ca/content.sz?cid=34>

Links to Organic Agriculture Information

Organic Council of Ontario (OCO)

<http://www.organiccouncil.ca>

Canadian Organic Growers (COG)

<http://www.cog.ca>

OMAFRA Organic Agriculture

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/organic/organic.html>

Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO)

<http://www.efao.ca>

Organic Agricultural Centre of Canada (OACC)

<http://www.oacc.info>

Agricultural Information Contact Centre: 1-877-424-1300

E-mail: ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca

Northern Ontario Regional Office: 1-800-461-6132

www.ontario.ca/omafra