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Welcome to "ON Organic"

Hugh Martin, Organic Crop Production Program Lead, OMAFRA

Welcome to the September 2009 issue of ON Organic. I feel autumn in the air. Harvesting, marketing, cover crops, fall tillage, and planning for next year are some of the issues at top of mind. Bugs have had their share, too late to worry about weeds, hopefully the frost will hold off a couple weeks.

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. As always we welcome your comments.

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>

The ON Organic Team

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Linda Cooper – OMAFRA, Client Service Representative

Be Connected and Grow your Business

By Dorene Collins, Marketing and Customer Service Program Lead, OMAFRA

Do you have a website to promote your products? Do you use the internet and email to connect with both customers and suppliers? If not – what are you waiting for – new and existing customers are constantly seeking new products and services over the internet. Whether you operate a large commercial organic operation, sell at a farmers' market or operate a CSA, being 'connected' should be part of your marketing plan to ensure future growth in customers and sales.

Examples of unique web marketing:

- A CSA operator can email share subscribers weekly to inform them what products will be in their weekly basket.
- Pick-Your-Own operations with 'webcams' out in the field to transmit the stage of the crop and weather conditions to help consumers decide when to visit.
- An internet blog that build customer loyalty and drives business.

Companies use e-business to...

- Communicate internally
- Organize their business
- Market their business
- Find business information
- Buy and sell products and services for customers or distributors online.
- Schedule shipments
- Bank online
- Access government programs and services

Fast Facts: Can you afford to overlook them?

- Statistics indicate a growing trend towards e-business.
- The majority of Canadians and Ontarians use the Internet.
- Of those Canadians using the Internet, many use it to find information about products and services.
- Over half use it for online shopping.
- The vast majority of all firms in Canada have Internet access.
- About one-third of small firms and a large majority of medium-sized firms have a website presence.
- Over one-third of small firms and the majority of medium-sized firms purchase online.
- About ten percent of small and medium-sized firms sell their products and services online.
- Canada is one of the most Internet-connected countries in the world, but the small business sector lags behind the U.S. in e-business adoption.

Fast Facts Source: Industry Canada

The toolkit focuses an entire section on 'Creating a Web Presence'. The following were cited as the five pitfalls to avoid when creating a website:

1. A cluttered website.
2. Not being able to find information.
3. Not having the right information
4. Failing to highlight the benefits of your products and services
5. Outdated information about your business and products

Once you have created your website, you need to market it. This can be done by putting your website and email address on all your promotional materials and products. Examples: business cards, brochures, flyers, signs, media ads, vehicles, food packaging, etc. You can also submit your website to search engines and on-line directories along with reciprocal links with other businesses and associations. More recent marketing techniques include using business blogs and social network sites.

The 'Creating a Web Presence' section of the toolkit concludes with 'Five Secrets of Website Success':

1. Your website is interesting and informative
2. It is easy to find information on your website
3. Your website meets your customers needs
4. Keep your website current

Market your website

To download a complete copy of the toolkit 'How you can profit from e-Business' visit: www.sbe.gov.on.ca

Underground Farm Storage of Root Vegetables

By Hugh Fraser, P.Eng., Agricultural Engineer, OMAFRA, Vineland

There is renewed interest for information about on-farm underground storage of small, commercial volumes of vegetables (mainly root vegetables). This type of storage fits with typical volumes produced on smaller acreages, or Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) farms. This article points out things you need to consider and is based on information from several sources, including an excellent publication entitled *Home Vegetable Storage* from Alberta Agriculture [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex50](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex50)

Underground root vegetable storages have been around for centuries because they mimic the conditions occurring in the soil where the root vegetables grew in the first place:

Cool, stable temperatures: Average earth temperatures about 1 m and deeper below the soil surface are steady at about 5°C, depending on date and location, or about the same as water in nearby wells. Root vegetables such as beets, carrots, parsnips, turnips and radishes want to be stored at 0 – 1°C, while table potatoes want it a little warmer at about 5°C. Temperature control is the single most important feature of any cold storage, regardless of storage size, but for underground storages for several crops, storage temperature often must be a compromise.

High humidity: Damp, but not soaking wet, soil surrounding the outside of the storage is best since root vegetables want storage at 95%+ relative humidity, since they themselves are 90 – 95% water. Otherwise, they'll shrivel over time and be unsaleable. It is virtually impossible to put water back into root vegetables after they've dried out. Keeping a shallow layer of water on the floor of the storage, or using blankets or burlap bags to wick water out of a bucket into the air also helps. Make sure vegetables do not contact any water on the floor.

Ventilation: Healthy soils can breathe and root vegetables also need to breathe in an environment with oxygen around them, and where carbon dioxide, heat, odours and contaminants can escape to the outside air. Only a small amount of ventilation is needed, perhaps 5% of the time, either intermittently, or a little all the time.

Darkness: Root vegetables growing in soil do not see the sun, nor should they in storage. It is important to keep lights at a minimum in storages for root vegetables.

Compatibility: Some vegetables simply do not store well with some other produce. For instance, apples and pears give off a lot of ethylene, which in turn makes carrots bitter, and onions can impart off-odours to other produce.

The objective is to construct a functional, low-cost, small storage for perhaps 1,000 to 10,000 kg of good quality root vegetables. Volumes smaller than might as well be stored in a large refrigerator, while volumes larger than this start to make a convention refrigerated storage seem more attractive. Poor quality produce will not improve in storage, so it is important to start with healthy vegetables that aren't cracked, bruised, or partially decayed. Some possible storage ideas include (see below from the Alberta Agriculture publication):

1. Root cellars with an access building overhead (see figure 1)
2. Large diameter culverts, 45 gallon plastic drums, or well-casings dug vertically (see figure 2)

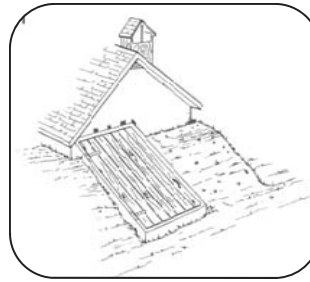


Figure 1

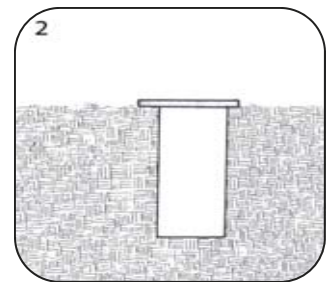


Figure 2

3. Large, used chest freezers buried into the ground with bales on top for insulation (see figure 3)
4. Large diameter steel/plastic/concrete culverts dug horizontally into a side hill (see figure 4)

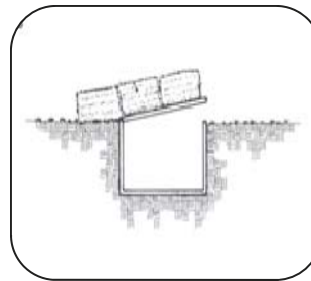


Figure 3

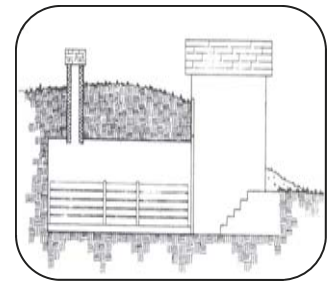


Figure 4

Other things to keep in mind:

- storages must be rodent proof
- inexpensive remote temperature sensors are available to let you know from the comfort of your office/home what is happening inside the storage at all times
- air must circulate around the produce, so try using vented reusable plastic containers which stack and won't steal moisture away from the produce or harbour disease microorganisms. The stackable, vented container in the picture below (showing oranges!) is about 24" long x 16" wide x 7" high and will hold about 25 kg of potatoes (photo courtesy of IPL Inc. website) (see figure 5)
- Do not use any construction materials that have been treated such as railway ties, or pressure-treated wood.



Figure 5

Production Insurance for Organic Crops

Agricorp offers Production Insurance options for organic winter wheat, organic winter spelt and organic soybeans which reflect the premium prices that organic farmers receive for their product. Production Insurance (PI) protects Ontario farmers from yield reductions and crop losses due to adverse weather, insects, and disease.

Eligibility

To participate in the organic insurance plan, the land on which the crop is grown must be certified by an accredited certification body in the current crop year. A copy of the certificate must be provided to Agricorp. All wheat acres or all spelt acres must be insured. Planting wheat following a wheat crop is not insurable. Wheat following a corn crop is only insurable if recommended farm management practices are followed. Check with Agricorp for details.

Enrolment

To apply for PI for organic winter wheat and organic winter spelt, contact Agricorp by **November 1, 2009** at 1-888-247-4999, Monday to Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. The deadline to apply for PI for organic soybeans is **May 1, 2010**.

For more information visit our website at www.agricorp.com or call Agricorp at 1-888-247-4999.

Planting Deadlines

For 2009, OMAFRA has published an updated CHU-M1 map to replace the CHU map that has been in place for several years. Agricorp will be using this map beginning with the 2010 fall-seeded crops. The new map has roughly added 150-200 CHUs to most growing areas of Ontario. Planting deadlines for these crops varies with region.

For areas west of Belleville with > 2900 crop heat units (CHU): deadline is Oct 31

For areas west of Belleville with < 2900 CHU – Oct 20

East of Belleville and >2900 CHU - Oct 10

East of Belleville and < 2900 CHU – Oct 1

Premium Rates for Organic Winter Wheat and Organic Winter Spelt Plans

Premium rates are cost shared with the federal and provincial governments. For most insurance plans producers pay 40 percent of the required premium. The charts below outline the customer's share of the premium. Premium rates for organic soybeans will be available in the early spring.

Customer Based Premium Rates (\$/acre) for the 2010 crop year

Coverage Level	Organic Winter Wheat	Organic Winter Spelt
75%	\$5.53	\$5.07
80%	\$6.95	\$6.37
85%	\$8.60	\$7.88
90%	\$10.71	\$9.81

Fixed Claim Prices and Reseeding Benefits for the 2010 crop year

	Organic Winter Wheat	Organic Winter Spelt
Claim Price	\$8.31 per bushel	\$0.35 per kg
Reseeding Benefit	\$90 per acre	\$90 per acre

2009 Ontario Winter Wheat Performance Trials

Each year the Ontario Cereal Crops Committee summarizes the research done on cereal varieties in Ontario. The 2009 winter wheat information is summarized at <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/wwperf-09.htm> or the PDF file at <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/wwperf-09.pdf>

For organic growers they should look at these to determine which varieties have the best yield ratings but pay particular attention to the fusarium ratings. Fusarium infections occur just after heading and is largely a disease that is only a problem when there are moderate temperatures and wet weather during this period. The best protection for organic wheat producers is to pick a moderately resistant variety. This will not eliminate the disease but it will reduce the infections in those years when there is a problem. Fortunately this year levels were low in most areas but in many years it can be a serious problem and reduces the grade price and potential markets for the grain. To reduce the diseases you should also never plant wheat after wheat, spelt or, corn.

Vienna and Wonder varieties have been favorites in the past but now 25R51 is also a variety to be considered in the soft red winter wheat category. Ava is a newer soft white winter heat variety of interest. In addition to fusarium, rust has also been a problem in some areas.

Collection Program for Obsolete Pesticides, Animal Health Products and Used Sharps

Coming to a Community Near you this October!

A well-established obsolete pesticide collection program is being expanded this year to also provide farmers with safe disposal for unused animal health products and sharps. This first-of-its-kind program is taking place October 20 - 22 as part of an Ontario government-supported Great Lakes Basin water quality initiative that offers farmers a way to recycle these items.

How it Works

As part of this project, farmers will be able to bring their obsolete agricultural pesticides, unused animal health products and used sharps (needles, syringes and scalpel blades) to a series of 16 collection sites across the province for safe and environmentally responsible disposal. The service is free of charge for farmers.

Agricultural pesticide products should have a PCP number on the container, although in cases where the label is no longer present or it is unknown which particular pesticide was in the container, the product should be labeled “pesticide unknown” when it is brought to a collection site. Acceptable animal health products should have a label that contains a Drug Identification Number (DIN).

The program is available to all farmers as long as the products brought in for collection meet the above-noted requirements. Product is collected on a first come, first serve basis until the secure collection totes are full. If you know in advance that you will have a large volume of product to bring in, please call AGCare at 519-837-1326 so that we can make appropriate arrangements for additional collection boxes.

Loose Sharps Not Accepted

Collection sites will not accept pesticides and animal health products in aerosol containers, medicated feed, premise disinfectants, or any household or human use items. Loose sharps will not be accepted – they must be brought in a closed container. Ziploc bags are not acceptable.

Locations

The program will run at the following locations during their respective business hours:

Ailsa Craig: Hensall District Co-operative, 116 Main Street
Arnprior: M&R Feeds and Farm Supply Ltd., 70 Decosta Street
Bethany: Thompsons Limited, 9 Elevator Road
Brodhagen: Hoegy's Farm Supply Ltd., 6777 Perth Line 44
Courtland: Cargill, 159 Talbot Street
Dundalk: Huron Bay Co-operative, 35 Dundalk Street
Harriston: North Wellington Co-operative Services Inc., 56 Margaret Street South
Kitchener: GROWMARK Inc. – Distribution Centre, 1 Chandaria Place, Unit 7
Lancaster: Munro's Agromart Ltd., 6011 Hwy #34
Napanee: O'Neill's Farm Supply, 1 Dairy Avenue
Jordan Station: Vineland Growers Co-operative Ltd., 4150 Jordan Road
Thornloe: Co-op Regionale – Temiskaming Ag Centre, 964027 Development Road, New Liskeard
Orangeville: Holmes Agro Ltd., 473088 County Road 11
Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Co-op Farm Supply, 560 Boundary Drive
Tilbury: Cargill, 23404 Wheatley Road
Vienna: Max Underhill's Farm Supply Ltd., 56532 Calton Line

Background and Funding

Pesticide collection programs have been run in Canada by CropLife Canada since 1998 under the CleanFARMS™ banner. More than 270,000 kilograms of obsolete product have been collected in Ontario during previous collection campaigns in 2001 and 2005. A pilot project collecting just animal health products and used sharps was held at six collection sites in Ontario last fall. This year's expanded program is being run on a trial basis in conjunction with a feasibility study looking at long term, sustainable collection options for these products.

This program is co-ordinated by AGCare with financial support from CropLife Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Other project partners include Ontario Farm Animal Council, Canadian Animal Health Institute, Ontario Veterinary Medical Association and Ontario Agri Business Association.

For More Information

Designated volunteers will be available at each site during the collection period to receive product and answer questions. In advance of the collection days, please contact AGCare at 519-837-1326, email lschaer@agcare.org or visit www.agcare.org

QLIF Integrated Research Project: Advancing Organic and Low-input Food

This is a major European Union research project on organic food and farming. The Integrated Project “Improving quality and safety and reduction of costs in the European organic and low input supply chains” (QLIF) was funded by the European Commission under the 6th Framework Program for Research and Technological Development. The Project Co-ordinator for this research is Prof. Carlo Leifert, University of Newcastle (UNEW), UK. He was also a speaker at the COG conference in Toronto last winter. Expect to see more summaries from this research in the near future.

QLIF started in 2004 with 31 scientific and industry partners and supplemented the consortium with another five partners via open calls. The total budget was 18 million € of which the European Commission contributed 12.4 million €. The duration of the project was five years. The scope of QLIF was on quality and safety of organic and low-input foods in the context of cost efficiency and sound environments. Sixty-one work packages provided conclusive answers based on comprehensive analyses from scientific experiments, socio-economic data and complex modelling. The work was organized in 7 subprojects with interdependent aims. An outline is given on what the Integrated Project QLIF has achieved and what challenges remain in the publication found at http://www.qlif.org/Library/leaflets/folder_0_small.pdf. Individual subproject folders provide a further insight to the outcomes and a substantial amount of QLIF publications are available in the open access database Organic Eprints.

QLIF comprises seven subprojects on:

1. Consumer expectations and attitudes
2. Effects of production methods
3. Crop production systems
4. Livestock production systems
5. Processing strategies
6. Transport, trading and retailing
7. Horizontal activities

Information on partners and subprojects is found at the project website www.qlif.org.

A summary of these projects is at http://www.qlif.org/Library/leaflets/folder_0_small.pdf

The website also holds the library for project newsletters and serves as entry to Organic Eprints, where more than 125 publications from the QLIF project are available: <http://orgprints.org/view/projects/eu=5Fqlif.html>

Food Bulletin

New Online Forum Opportunities for EMC Food & Beverage Sector Network

Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium (EMC) is introducing Food & Beverage Internet Forums to help food sector processors and manufacturers share expertise, experiences, suggestions and best practices. There are currently three active forums open and available to members. Participating companies first need to register for online access. Once registered, members can also subscribe to news, blogs and forum items, and receive personal notifications of new content and updated commentary.

For more information or to take part in one of these forums, please contact Bren McKeachnie at bmckeachnie@emccanada.org or visit www.emccanada.org/forums.

New Project to Boost Sustainable Performance of Food & Beverage Processing Sector

A new initiative is under way to help Ontario-based food and beverage manufacturers adopt more environmentally sustainable business practices over the long term. Food & Consumer Products of Canada (FCPC), Guelph Food Technology Centre (GFTC) and the Ontario Centre for Environmental Technology Advancement (OCETA) have joined forces to produce a sustainability framework and tools to help the food and beverage processing sector — particularly small and medium-sized (SME) companies — improve environmental performance.

The project will be implemented in phases over three years:

- Phase 1 will benchmark the superior sustainable performance of leading global companies in the food and beverage sector and develop a comprehensive, customized “how to” framework to guide SME food and beverage processors as they integrate sustainability aspects into their business operations.
- Phase 2 will involve pilot testing the framework and tools (developed in Phase 1) with SME food and beverage companies in Ontario.
- Phase 3 will transfer the pilot program platform across the entire food and beverage sector in Ontario.

Ultimately, the project could help food and beverage processors across Canada become more environmentally sustainable.

The first phase of the project is funded in part through the Food and Beverage Industry Innovation Fund (FBIIF) developed by the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors. FBIIF was jointly funded by OMAFRA and Agriculture and

Agri-Food Canada. The Agricultural Adaptation Council administers the FBIIF, which encourages investment in new, innovative processes, products, and skills development. Other organizations providing funding support and resources for the project include the Ontario Power Authority (OPA) and the City of Toronto.

Training

Guelph Food Technology Centre (GFTC) has a comprehensive and innovative line up of courses for the fall. They include:

- Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP):
 - ◊ HACCP 1: Prerequisite Programs (Sept. 14-15)
 - ◊ HACCP II: Developing your HACCP Plan (Sept. 16-18)
 - ◊ HACCP: A Management Summary (Sept. 28)
- Health Claims Workshop: New Guidance Document (Sept. 10)
- Food as Natural Health Products: Opportunities and Challenges (Sept. 15)
- Webinar — Country of Origin Labelling: The COOL Conundrum (Sept. 18, 1-2 p.m.)
- Implementing SQF 2000 Systems (Sept. 21-22), Toronto
- Halal Foods: Standards and Regulations (Sept. 22)
- Webinar – 5 Steps to Your Environmental and Energy Management Plan (Sept. 25)
- Fundamentals of Wheat Flour Properties (Oct. 20-23)

More information and registration for these and other GFTC courses are available online at <http://www.gftc.ca/coursereg/list.cfm>

Events

Sept. 23 & 24 — GFTC Symposium: Handle with Care, Guelph

This Guelph Food Technology Centre (GFTC) symposium explores gentle processing technologies for the food, functional foods and natural health products industry. An international group of presenters will provide insights on new technologies in extraction, dehydration and non-thermal processing. Learn why these technologies are critical to maintain product integrity and efficacy, as well as applications to key products in food categories, and implications for processing and packaging technologies.

For more information, visit GFTC's [website](#).

October 5 & 6 — Ethnic & Specialty Food Expo 2009, including All Things Organic™, Mississauga

The latest in ethnic, specialty and organic products will be on display at this expo to catch the eye and the budget of retail and foodservice buyers. Last year, more than 1,400 buyers

attended this event from Sears, Sam's Club, Costco, Sobeys, Metro, Longo's, Loblaws and Sysco, as well as hundreds of chefs, caterers, restaurant owners and others.

Booth space is \$900 per 10x10 booth with a few spots still available.

This event will also feature educational seminars presented by Guelph Food Technology Centre. Topics include: food blogs; marketing and demographics; the allergen-free market; active intelligent packaging; understanding the Global Safety Initiative; food and taste trends; sustainability; health and wellness; regulatory and nutritional labelling; and resolving food safety and quality issues.

For more information, contact event director Donna Wood at dwood@divcomevents.com or by phone at 1-888-443-6786, Ext. 231 or visit <http://www.ethnicandspecialtyfood.com>

Under the Covers: Underseeding cover crops and more.

Oct. 7th 2009

9 am at OSCIA demonstration site - Northwood Rd. between the Mull and Harwich Roads (in Harwich township - East of Chatham) north of 401, west of Kent Bridge Road.

10:30 am at Ridgetown Campus at the back research plots off of Victoria Rd, north of the Gosnell Line.

Lunch provided after the tour.

Seeding or underseeding the cover crop in a standing seed or sweet corn crop may allow for enough time for sufficient biomass accumulation to minimize erosion and nutrient (N+P) losses. As well, with alfalfa and other legumes there should be a N credit to the following crop. Many different cover crops (alfalfa, vetch, crimson clover, winter pea, oilseed radish, buckwheat, sorghum and other grasses, as well as mixtures) have been tested in field demonstration plots. In addition to underseeding, cover crops were planted after wheat, sweet corn, and cucumbers. Now is a good time to see how the cover crop stand and growth. Funding provided by OSCIA Nutrient Management BMP Demonstration Grant, Seed Corn Growers of Ontario, Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers and OMAFRA.

October 26 & 27 — Grocery Innovations Canada 2009, Toronto

See the latest innovations, learn from industry leaders and check out the future of the grocery industry at Canada's premier grocery conference and trade show. More than 350 exhibiting companies — both home grown and international — will showcase their products, services and equipment.

Specialty pavilions include ethnic fare, first-time exhibitors, and local and provincial processors.

For more information, visit <http://www.groceryinnovations.com>. To find out about special pricing for first time exhibitors visit [Grocery Innovations First Time](#).

October 28 — GFTC Innovation Breakfast: Agri-food for Healthy Aging (Guelph)

Hear what the experts have to say about agri-food, nutrition and healthy aging to explore the needs and opportunities in research and product development for the older adult market. Each speaker and panelist will offer a piece of the big picture of food for healthy aging. Functionality, palatability and anti-aging properties are all key development areas.

Registration is free for GFTC members, and \$50 for non-members. For more information or to register, contact Barb Dillingham at bdillingham@gftc.ca or 519- 821-1246, Ext. 5048.

29th Annual Guelph Organic Conference

Theme: Our Canadian Organic Identity

January 28-31, at University of Guelph see <http://www.guelphorganicconf.ca/> for tentative details on speakers, workshops, Trade Show, etc.



Eco-Farm Day

February 27, 2010 - Ramada Inn, Cornwall Workshops, featured speakers, Trade Show
<http://www.cog.ca/ottawa/ecofarmday/>

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.ontario.ca/organic>

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