

**Canadian Organic Growers  
Annual General Meeting  
August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
6:00 pm – 9:30 pm**

**Attending:**

Laura Telford – COG Executive Director  
Arnold Taylor – COG President  
Dennis Medaglia – Collins & Barrow  
Michel Saumur – Canada Organic Office  
Janet & Arn Snyder  
Tom Walsh  
Nicole Chartrand – COG Library Volunteer  
Torry Reid – GUO Ottawa  
Margaret & David Townson  
Robert Battistela  
Colin Lundy – GUO Ottawa  
Jeanie Warnock  
John (from Almonte)  
Dick Smith  
Carrie Ann Watson  
Tarik Malik  
Danielle Chabassol

**Agenda**

- 1. Welcome from Arnold Taylor – COG President**
- 2. Q&A with Dennis Medaglia from Collins & Barrow**
- 3. Q&A with Michel Saumur from the Canada Organic Office**
- 4. Q&A with Laura Telford & Arnold Taylor from COG**

**1. Welcome from COG President – Arnold Taylor**

Arnold welcomes everyone to the meeting. He is very excited about the future of organics in Canada now that we have a federal regulation and our own organic standard. Feels that we need to make a move to educate consumers.

**2. Q&A with Dennis Medaglia from Collins & Barrow**

i) COG has an officially bilingual name: Cultivons Biologique Canada

ii) Dennis quickly explains each page of the 2008 financial statements. The main concern that is expressed is that the statement is based solely on COG National projects, despite the fact that the chapters are legally included in the organization. This is a problem

because technically we are violating accounting practices by not auditing the financial activities of our chapters.

Although it is not uncommon for non-profits to violate this accounting practice, COG should make a move to consolidate its chapters in order to have a complete picture of the organization. If there was ever a problem, the COG Board of Directors would be held accountable.

Consolidating will cost more and requires due diligence from chapters, but the focus could be on the Ottawa and Perth-Waterloo-Wellington chapters since they are responsible for the bulk of the chapter revenue.

iii) Can volunteer work be quantified and included in the financial statement?

Quantifying volunteer work only serves to increase the revenue for funders but has no effect on the bottom line. It is also difficult to determine the value of a person's time, therefore the only volunteer work that is recorded is if it has been done by a contractor who has a pre-determined value for their work. Regular volunteer work is not acknowledged in this way. Revenue Canada will not issue tax receipts for services, only for goods.

iv) Laura wants to focus on increasing COG's core revenue because project funding does nothing to build the organization's financial sustainability. This is the main reason why COG wants to move away from being perceived as a fee-for-service organization and towards a donations-based organization that is working for a social good.

**Motion to accept 2008 financial statement by Carrie Ann Watson. Seconded by Arn Snyder. All in favour.**

**Motion to accept Collins & Barrow as auditors for 2009 by Margaret Townson. Seconded by Jeanie Warnock. All in favour.**

### **3. Q&A with Michel Saumur from the Canada Organic Office**

Michel: Since 2003, the CFIA has had over 300 meetings & consultations with producers, processors, retailers & distributors etc. to find out what the organic sector wants. They asked the government to put forward the money to establish a federal regulation, and to establish the Canada Organic Office (COO).

The Organic Products Regulations have 3 objectives:

i) Protect the Canadian Consumer

The organic sector has a product that Canadians want to buy. It's a growing want, and people are willing to pay more money for it. This creates a situation where consumers could be taken advantage of by fraudulent claims.

## ii) Protect the Organic Producers

Under a voluntary regime, organic producers who are properly following the standard are not protected from other producers who are not.

## iii) Establish a Monitoring Process

A monitoring process will help determine the difference between a true organic claim and a fraudulent organic claim.

### Questions:

i) Colin: voiced concern on behalf of several organic meat producers in the Ottawa area that an unnamed certifying body is requiring that livestock be slaughtered and butchered in a certified organic abattoir. Since there is no such abattoir in the area, these producers fear that they will lose their organic certification.

Michel: the abattoir and/or transportation of livestock is considered to be a part of the operation, and therefore the producer is required to make sure that these services comply with the standard. The abattoir and/or transportation does not need to be certified organic, but it does need to comply with the organic standard so that the producer can ensure that organic integrity has been maintained.

Colin will follow up with Michel to further clear up this issue and perhaps organize to circulate a document to the CB's from the COO.

ii) Cost of Certification: was there funding for QC and BC to develop their own provincial standards and subsidize the cost of certification for their producers?

Laura: BC has a low risk system of certification where producers that only sell intra-provincially can certify every 3 years instead of annually, however they cannot use the federal organic logo. This reduces the certification cost by 1/3. Manitoba has a program for new farmers to have their certification costs partially subsidized.

Michel: There is pressure on the ministries of agriculture in each province to regulate organic products that are grown and sold intra-provincially.

iii) David: How are products certified organic if they are imported from countries that we do not have equivalency agreements with (eg China)?

Michel: These countries must comply with Canadian requirements and be certified by a CB that is accredited by the CFIA-COO. The goal is to create a level playing field.

\*Note that 80% of organic products are imported.

Producers can export organic products that are certified to another standard (eg Japan) as long as 100% of their product is for export. Otherwise they must also be certified to the COS.

The National Organic Program (NOP) is no longer issuing certification to Canadian producers.

iv) Colin: What happens when organic products arrive at the border?

Michel: Chemical residue testing, inspection of organic claim and of the proper use of the federal logo. If GMO or chemicals have been found, then a follow up by the CB is necessary to see what the problem is – Canada has a zero tolerance policy for GMO and chemicals in organic products.

Consumers want reassurance, and the COO is trying to provide it with proper inspection and labelling.

#### **4. Q&A with Laura Telford & Arnold Taylor from COG**

i) Danielle presents the results of the ballot vote for membership and by-law changes as well as for the Board of Directors election.

Total number of ballots received: 188

Membership Changes: 177 YES, 9 NO

By-Law Changes: 180 YES, 4 NO

BOD Election:

Geneviève Grossenbacher: 163

Lorraine Beaudette: 157

Sheila Hamilton: 155

Vivian Vilich: 138

Laird Herbert: 126

Thomas Oommen: 122

Kevin Hamilton: 121

The four candidates with the most votes have been accepted to the COG BOD.

ii) Laura: the benefit of being a part of COG is not the magazine or the e-news, or any service that we provide. The benefit is that we provide a social good, and by supporting us, people are helping us with the solution instead of perpetuating the problem.

iii) Laura: Growing Up Organic is a transition project that aims to help farmers make the transition to organic and find them guaranteed markets. Too much focus has been placed on developing the institutions and the farmers weren't ready.

The new focus of GUO is to convince farmers to produce organic food for local markets, and to transition to organic production in groups by working on skills development

(possibly in co-ops). Benefits of co-ops: co-setting prices, sharing knowledge, equipment & marketing.

Arnold: Groups of up to 10 farms can be certified under one organic system plan.

Growing Up Organic means that everyone is growing into organics together, but we need to make sure that the supply & demand are balanced.

GUO efforts will be focused on the prairies because of the environmental impact and domestic food supply problems there. What are the problems with each producer? Do they need one on one extension help? What are they lacking to transition?

Questions:

i) Tarik: Where does COG hope to be next year?

Laura & Arnold: - Increased membership  
- Outreach to consumers  
- Covering core costs  
- Closer to being a sustainable organization

ii) Who is the Ontario Chapter Rep?

Laura: Mike Tremblay is no longer the Ontario Chapter Rep. We need to put a call out to the chapters to find a new rep.

Carrie: offers to be the rep but Laura says that the rep must be elected by the Ontario chapters. Carrie will serve as interim rep until the Ontario chapters can elect someone.

**Action: COG needs to put a call out to the Ontario Chapters to elect a new rep.**

iii) Margaret: People are starting to question the food they eat, the water they drink and the air they breathe. Of these 3 things, food is the easiest thing for people to change.

Laura: Yes, we need to get the word out to farmers that there is a lot of consumer awareness and demand for organic food. These changes take time.

iv) Colin: What about consumer confusion between local & organic? How do we communicate about local chemical use? We need to educate consumers about brand recognition and the benefits of local AND organic.

Laura: We do need to continue educating people about organics, but we need to step back from battling the local food movement because it will eventually collapse and organic will still be there. Soil matters!

END