

\* Interviews with Laura Telford, Executive Director, Canadian Organic Growers, on the fact sheet below and on the pending *Growing Up Organics* conference in Toronto on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007 can be arranged through Brent Kulba, ECO, 416-972-7401, kulbab(at)huffstrategy.com.

## 2007 Canadian Organics Fact Sheet

### **The Organics sector is the fastest growing part of the Agri-Food industry in Canada**

- Sales are increasing at 25% per year.
- Canada had 3,618 certified organic producers in 2005. Another 241 farmers were making the transition from conventional to organic farming.
- Over 1.3 million acres (530,919 ha) of land in Canada are used to grow organic food. Another 118,500 acres (47,955 ha) are in transition to certification.
- Wheat is Canada's largest organic crop with over 187,000 acres (75,816 ha).
- Organic livestock production is increasing dramatically. From 2004 to 2005, the beef herd increased by 30%, sheep numbers by 19%, laying hens by 20% and poultry by 56%.
- The number of certified organic processors and handlers increased by 47% between 2004 and 2005, with the largest increases observed in British Columbia and Quebec.

### **Organic agriculture bans the use of harmful substances**

- Organic agriculture prevents approximately 1,157,748 kg of synthetic chemicals from entering our environment every year, including synthetic pesticides, fungicides, insecticides, rodenticides, fertilizers and wood preservatives.
- Organic agriculture also bans the use of sewage sludge and materials and products produced from genetic engineering.
- Animals are raised without the use of antibiotics and growth hormones, or other synthetic veterinary drugs.
- Animals consume only 100% organic feed.

### **Organic food has added health benefits**

- Eating organic food reduces the amount of toxic chemicals ingested.
- Organic fruits and vegetables have significantly higher levels of cancer-fighting antioxidants, produced by the plant to help fight off insects and competing plants.
- Organic food production avoids the use of genetically modified organisms.
- Organic food has no synthetic dyes, food additives or preservatives.

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## **Organic agriculture is a holistic system of production**

- The principle goal of organic agriculture is to develop productive enterprises that are sustainable and harmonious with the environment.
- It is designed to optimize the productivity and fitness of diverse communities within the agro-ecosystem, including soil organisms, plants, livestock and people.
- It replenishes and maintains long-term soil fertility by providing optimal conditions for soil biological activity, through crop rotation, tillage and cultivation practices; and by using natural fertilizers.
- It improves surrounding water quality.
- It provides attentive and ethical care that meets both the health and behavioral requirements of livestock.
- It maintains the integrity of organic food and processed products through each step of the process from planting to consumption.
- It reduces energy use in the various stages of production.

## **Certified organic farms and processors must follow a regulated set of standards**

- The federal government passed the Organic Products Regulation on December 14, 2006 (<http://canadagazette.gc.ca/partII/2006/20061221-x6/html/extra-e.html>).
- The new regulation will provide an easily recognizable national logo to identify food that is certified as "Canada Organic," and meets a mandatory standard of organic food production.
- Following a 2 year phase in period, all organic products must be certified organic for inter-provincial and international trade.
- Under the proposed organic regulation, organic certification bodies will be accredited by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency based on the recommendation of approved accreditation bodies.
- Certification bodies ensure that the organic farms or processing facilities that they certify as organic are in compliance with the organic standard.
- Verification is done by trained independent inspectors who visit the farms or processing facilities annually.

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*Canadian Organic Growers (COG), a national charitable organization (13014 0494 RR0001), is Canada's national membership-based education and networking organization representing farmers, gardeners and consumers in all provinces. COG promotes sustainable, organic stewardship of the land, and organic food and fiber.*

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