

Quick Facts About Canada's Organic Sector

What it is

Organic agriculture is a holistic production system designed to optimize productivity and fitness of diverse communities within the agroecosystem, including soil organisms, plants, livestock and people. The principal goal of organic production is to develop enterprises that are sustainable and harmonious with the environment.

What is isn't

Organic agriculture does not allow the use of:

- Synthetic pesticides, including fungicides, insecticides, rodenticides, defoliant, desiccants and wood preservatives
- Synthetic fertilizers
- Materials and products produced from genetic engineering
- Sewage sludge
- Synthetic growth regulators (hormones)
- Synthetic veterinary drugs, including antibiotics and parasiticides
- Irradiation
- Synthetic processing substances, aids and ingredients, and additions to food including sulphates, nitrates and nitrites
- Equipment, packaging materials and storage containers, or bins that contain a synthetic fungicide, preservative or fumigant
- Genetically modified organisms

Standards and Regulations

Canada has had a national organic standard in place since 1999. Recently, in anticipation of a new federal organic regulation, the organic sector worked with the Canadian General Standards Board to update the national organic standard.

Industry Facts

- Organics is the fastest growing sector in agriculture, with sales increasing at 20% per year.
- In 2005, the last year for which there are statistics, Canada had 3618 certified organic producers. Another 241 farmers were making the transition from conventional to organic farming.
- Over 1.3 million acres (530,919 ha) of land in Canada is used to grow organic food. Another 118,500 acres (47,955 ha) is 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%, layers by 20% and broilers by 56%.