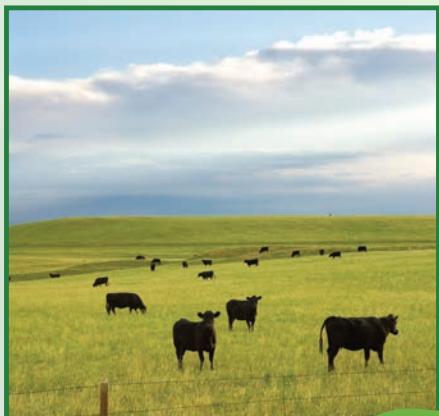


# NATIONAL ORGANIC ACTION PLAN FOR CANADA

Strategic Framework for the Growth of Canada's Organic Sector



October 2025

## PARTNERS

This document was compiled by the Canadian Organic Alliance, comprising the Canada Organic Trade Association, Canadian Organic Growers and the Organic Federation of Canada.

We thank the many organic sector stakeholders who contributed their insights and feedback to the development of this plan. We extend our gratitude to Paul Holmbeck of Holmbeck EcoConsult and World Board member in IFOAM - Organics International for his expertise and guidance throughout the process.

The following organizations partnered in developing the Organic Action Plan and will continue – along with many others – to support its coordination, implementation, and shared progress across Canada.

Canada Organic Trade Association  
Canadian Organic Growers  
Organic Federation of Canada  
Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network  
Canadian Organic Seafood Association  
Filière biologique du Québec  
Growers of Organic Food Yukon  
Manitoba Organics  
Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada, Dalhousie University

Organic Alberta  
Organic BC  
Organic Council of Ontario  
Organic Nova Scotia  
PEI Certified Organic Producers Cooperative  
Responsible Organic Customer Association  
SaskOrganics  
Union des producteurs agricoles

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To learn more, contact the members of the Canadian Organic Alliance:

**Canada Organic Trade Association**  
[info@canada-organic.ca](mailto:info@canada-organic.ca)

**Canadian Organic Growers**  
[info@cog.ca](mailto:info@cog.ca)

**Organic Federation of Canada**  
[info@organicfederation.ca](mailto:info@organicfederation.ca)



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## ABOUT THE ORGANIC ACTION PLAN

The Organic Action Plan (OAP) is a national framework designed to guide policy alignment, program development, and coordinated investment in Canada's organic sector. It presents a comprehensive set of actions to expand organic production and markets and ensure that Canada reaps the full benefits of a thriving sector. The OAP is a foundational document inviting collaboration between governments, producers, processors, and other stakeholders to co-develop detailed strategic implementation plans. As a living document, it will evolve over time to reflect progress, changing contexts, and emerging opportunities, with the goal of delivering lasting benefits for Canada's economy, communities, public health, and environment.



# PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

## UNLOCKING THE ORGANIC OPPORTUNITY FOR CANADA

Canada's food and farming systems face mounting pressures - from global market disruptions and trade barriers to thin farm margins, food security challenges, and accelerating climate change and biodiversity loss. Building a resilient, sustainable agriculture and food system is now an urgent national priority.

Organic agriculture and aquaculture are proven, practical solutions. They deliver measurable benefits for farm profitability, rural prosperity, soil health and environmental outcomes. A new Canadian report finds that organic agriculture increases farm net returns while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, sustaining soil health, and improving biodiversity.<sup>1</sup>

*As a regulated, third-party-verified, and globally recognized system, organic is an established tool the Canadian government already has at its disposal to advance national goals for economic growth, trade diversification, food security, public health, biodiversity, and climate.*

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Despite these benefits, Canada has no policy



 *Canada has no policy framework today to support the development of organic farming and markets. As a result, while demand is rising, domestic production has stalled, and competitors are filling the gap.*

The Canadian organic market reached \$9.75 billion in 2024, growing more than eight percent since 2023 and ranking fifth in a growing global market.<sup>2</sup> Yet, domestic production has stalled, forcing processors and retailers to rely increasingly on imports from countries investing far more in their organic sectors. The United States (U.S.) invests eight times more per acre on organics than Canada, while the European Union (EU) invests over 200 times more.<sup>3</sup>

With the Indo-Pacific organic market projected to double by 2029, and the U.S. and European markets to more than double by 2033, Canada faces a major trade diversification opportunity.<sup>4</sup> With a reputation for quality and strong regulatory foundation, Canada is well-positioned to capture a greater share of the €136 billion<sup>5</sup> (in 2023, approximately \$200 billion CAD) global organic market and strengthen its competitiveness in high-growth regions. Without a coordinated plan, we risk losing market share and missing the economic, environmental, and social benefits that organic can deliver.

framework today to support the development of organic production and markets. As a result, while demand is rising, domestic production is not keeping pace, and competitors are filling the gap.

The Canadian organic market reached \$9.75 billion in 2024, growing more than eight percent since 2023 and ranking fifth in a growing

## THE ORGANIC ACTION PLAN

The Organic Action Plan (OAP) for Canada responds to this gap. Developed by the Canadian Organic Alliance with broad input from producers, processors, retailers, certifiers, researchers, partner organizations and other stakeholders, the OAP outlines a national



policy framework and shared vision to position organic food and farming as a driver of Canada's sustainable agri-food economy.

This document establishes the rationale, core elements, and policy tools needed to guide collaborative action across federal, provincial, and territorial jurisdictions, based on recognition of the positive contributions of organic practices.

Drawing on international best practices, the OAP integrates supply-side ("push"), demand-side ("pull"), and cross-cutting infrastructure measures. It is organized around these three pillars and outlines 16 key actions that together provide a shared roadmap for:

- 1. Production growth** – expanding research, extension, and transition supports to increase domestic supply and productivity.
- 2. Market development** – strengthening domestic and export markets through public procurement, processing and distribution infrastructure, while ensuring affordable consumer access.
- 3. Policy alignment** – establishing clear federal leadership, a supportive regulatory and data environment, and coordinated action across all levels of government.

Rich experience with organic policy in other jurisdictions shows that a coordinated approach with balanced push and pull measures is essential for sustained production and market growth. In some regions or contexts across Canada's diverse landscape, market opportunities exceed supply; in others, demand must be strengthened before production can expand. These differences highlight that Canada needs a national framework that tackles both supply and demand constraints while reflecting regional priorities. Operators of all scales and market channels face distinct challenges in entering and succeeding in the organic sector. A unified strategy is required to lower barriers, streamline regulation, and enhance competitiveness so Canada's organic production base can meet growing domestic and global demand.



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## VISION AND OUTCOMES

The OAP envisions that organic agriculture, aquaculture, and food production thrive as part of the Canadian agri-food landscape. Specific targets and performance indicators will be co-developed during implementation, and progress will be tracked through a dedicated monitoring and evaluation framework. The OAP envisions that:

1. The Canadian organic sector is a major component of the Canadian food and agriculture system.
2. Governments recognize and invest in the positive economic, environmental, and social benefits of organic production systems.
3. Organic producers achieve fair livelihoods, and the adoption of organic production systems contributes to rural revitalization.
4. Organic farming provides a model for environmental and climate innovation, and Canada's system is recognized globally as best in class.
5. Organic is widely understood by Canadians as a verified sustainable production system.
6. Organic foods are accessible and affordable for all Canadians.
7. The organic processing sector is vibrant.

## HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

The OAP provides a common framework to guide policy alignment, program design, and coordinated public and private investment. It is not an implementation plan but the foundation for one – presenting a fulsome range of actions that could form a national organic policy framework and laying the foundation for co-development of implementation plans with governments and sector partners. Readers are encouraged to interpret this document as:

- A national roadmap outlining what is needed to grow organic production and markets in Canada;



- A call for a national organic policy framework and a menu of actions that governments and partners can adapt to their contexts; and
- A collaborative platform for governments, producers, processors, and stakeholders to align priorities and investments.

## FROM FRAMEWORK TO ACTION

Following publication, detailed implementation plans will be co-developed by the sector and governments, identifying specific priorities and measurable actions. The OAP recommends establishing national goals for organic acreage, market development, and environmental outcomes, to be set collaboratively with governments and supported by improved data access. Designed as an evergreen document, the OAP will be reviewed and updated regularly as progress is made, contexts evolve, and new opportunities emerge.

A strong national policy framework for organic food and farming – supported by aligned provincial and territorial strategies – will enhance Canada’s competitiveness, strengthen farm livelihoods, and advance national goals for climate action, biodiversity, and food security. Without decisive action, Canada risks falling further behind global competitors and missing a critical opportunity to lead in organic innovation, sustainability, and market growth. The OAP is both a call to action and an invitation: for governments, farmers, and partners to work together to expand organic production, grow markets, and deliver lasting benefits for Canada’s economy, communities, public health, and environment.





# BACKGROUND



## BUILDING ON A STRONG FOUNDATION

Organic agriculture and aquaculture are food production systems that support healthy ecosystems, strengthen farm resilience, and deliver trusted food to Canadians and global markets. Rooted in Indigenous food systems that have long prioritized balance, biodiversity, and reciprocal relationships with land, water, and living beings, today's organic sector builds on these principles while integrating new scientific, regulatory, and market-based tools to support sustainability and food system resilience.

Certified organic production in Canada is federally regulated under the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, third-party verified according to the Canadian Organic Standards, and internationally recognized through nine organic equivalency arrangements with 35 trading partners representing over 90% of the global organic market.<sup>6</sup> Canada currently has three national standards for organic agriculture (CAN/CGSB-32.310/32.311) and organic aquaculture (CAN/CGSB 32.312). Canada's organic regulatory system was established in 2009 with the *Organic Products Regulations*, later incorporated into the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations* in 2018. The aquaculture standards were incorporated in 2019. This system defines clear standards, ensures compliance, and enables access to premium markets while meeting consumer demand for transparency and sustainability.

## CLOSING THE GAP: FROM REGULATION TO STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

Despite this strong regulatory foundation, Canada's approach to organic has focused primarily on enforcement rather than strategic sector development. While consumer demand has surged, public investment and policy tools to support growth have not kept pace with either the sector's needs or its potential. Expansion efforts – including standards maintenance, trade development, and extension – have been driven largely by the industry itself, without a reliable funding mechanism.

In contrast, key trading partners such as the EU and U.S. have integrated organic food and farming into broader agricultural policies, adopting strategies and actively supporting sector growth, providing transition supports, and investing in research, market development, and supply chain infrastructure. The EU's Farm

to Fork Strategy targets 25% of farmland under organic management by 2030 through new investment and regulatory reforms, reshaping competitiveness and market access for Canada and globally.<sup>7</sup> In 2022, the U.S. Department of Agriculture launched its largest single investment in organic – a US \$300 million, five-year Organic Transition Initiative supporting production, market development, and risk management.<sup>8</sup> Without comparable leadership, Canada risks falling further behind.

## NATIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR GROWTH

Canada has the potential to be a global leader in producing high-quality organic products, supported by its favourable climate, fertile soils, strong quality assurance, and robust logistics. Organic is not limited to niche markets – it is a cross-sector production system that can add value and opportunity across all scales and commodities, from grains and pulses to livestock, horticulture, and aquaculture. This versatility positions organic as a key contributor to Canada's domestic food security and agricultural export goals. Yet supply continues to lag behind both global and domestic demand, forcing Canadian processors to rely on imports and struggle to secure consistent ingredients across multiple commodities.

After 15 years of regulatory oversight, rising demand and intensifying global competition make it clear that Canada must build on this existing foundation by adopting an approach of active organic sector development – supported by new tools, investment, and coordinated leadership. The OAP for Canada provides the framework to achieve this.





# PILLAR 1: ACCELERATE GROWTH AND INNOVATION IN ORGANIC PRODUCTION

## Production

Despite growing demand, Canada is losing ground in organic production. Expanding domestic acreage and operators is essential to meet demand, reduce reliance on organic imports, and advance Canada's economic, environmental, and climate goals. A dependable domestic supply of organic products remains a major constraint to growth across the value chain. Policy must support producers in tackling key barriers – including knowledge transfer gaps, financial and technical risks, and transition challenges – while investing in productivity, profitability, and innovation. Tailored support is needed for farms of all sizes, from small- to large-scale, and stages, from new entrants to established operations seeking to expand.

## 1.1 EXPAND EDUCATION, EXTENSION, AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Organic agriculture is knowledge-intensive, yet Canada faces a critical shortage of trained advisors, agronomists, and extension specialists to support farmers in adopting organic management and practices. This gap limits farmers' ability to reduce input costs, improve soil health, and successfully transition to or expand organic production. Investing in organic extension, transition advisory services, and peer-to-peer learning is essential to scale organic agriculture and provides value to all producers.



*Investing in organic extension, transition advisory services, and peer-to-peer learning is essential to scale organic agriculture and provides value to all producers*

### SECTOR ACTIONS:

1. Develop a national organic extension network – including producers, organizations, agronomists, educators, companies, and researchers – to provide research-based education aligned with Canadian Organic Standards, expanded training, and community-based, farmer-led peer learning. Expand communities of practice and networks of organic incubator farms to deliver hands-on training in production, business, and human resources.



2. Provide tools and support to help farmers enhance financial, agronomic, and environmental performance, and navigate regulations and certification; including centralized practical guides for organic transition, production, processing, marketing, and the promotion of soil health, biodiversity, nutrient cycling, water restoration, and farm resilience.
3. Partner with post-secondary institutions to expand education in organic production and value-added sectors, aligned with industry needs.
4. Develop and standardize data frameworks to support on-farm benchmarking and decision-making, focused on soil health, and assist producers with data collection and long-term tracking.
5. Facilitate cross-collaborative exchange opportunities between organic and non-organic farmers.

#### **GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:**

6. Establish and fund a National Organic Extension Program to:
  - a. Support farmer education, extension, mentoring, and on-farm advisory services, including transition advisory services (e.g. conversion checks, farm systems planning, certification guidance, transition monitoring, and market training);
  - b. Include a cost-share component reimbursing certified and transitioning farmers for 50% of agronomist or agrologist consulting fees;



## 1.2 INVEST IN ORGANIC RESEARCH TO DRIVE INNOVATION AND IMPACT

Investing in organic research drives innovation in low-input, climate-resilient farming practices that improve soil health, biodiversity, and profitability – benefiting both organic and non-organic producers. Canada's organic sector has developed a participatory process for setting national research priorities and coordinated efforts through the Organic Science Cluster, one of the most diverse AgriScience initiatives. However, the lack of a clear funding mechanism continues to constrain matching contributions and long-term planning. Sustained and increased federal investment is needed to advance organic research, strengthen knowledge transfer, and scale solutions that improve productivity, profitability, and environmental performance across Canadian agriculture.

### SECTOR ACTIONS:

7. Streamline the national organic research priority-setting process, ensuring alignment through a coordinated project selection process.
8. Establish a national organic research secretariat at the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada to coordinate research dissemination and strengthen links between research, extension, and on-farm application. Share findings broadly across the agriculture sector.

9. Develop robust Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) frameworks and tools to accurately measure and support the full multifunctional impacts of organic and diversified farming systems.

### GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

10. Increase funding for organic research, including through the Agri-Science Program, to address the broad scope of organic agriculture and national organic research priorities.
11. Waive or reduce industry cash matching contributions for organic sector research to leverage federal and provincial programs for at least five years, or until a dedicated organic funding mechanism is established.
12. Conduct a comprehensive scientific review of organic research – public and private, domestic and international – on environmental performance, productivity, farm income, and resilience, to inform evidence-based policy and program development.

*Sustained and increased federal investment is needed to advance organic research, strengthen knowledge transfer, and scale solutions that improve productivity, profitability, and environmental performance across Canadian agriculture.*



- 13.** Integrate organic priorities into Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's research agenda, programs, and research stations, and expand access to Agri-Science and related programs for organic research.
- 14.** Invest in long-term organic trials in all provinces and territories in partnership with federal, provincial, and academic institutions.
- 15.** Expand support for Living Labs and other farmer-led research initiatives, and ensure the inclusion of organic farms and research priorities.
- 16.** Invest in technology development and transfer tailored to organic practices and systems.

## 1.3 DE-RISK ORGANIC TRANSITION AND PRODUCTION

Organic farming faces distinct financial and agronomic risks that are not adequately addressed by existing programs or financial systems. Transitioning to organic farming is financially and technically challenging, with lower short-term returns and limited support despite clear long-term benefits. During the transition period required by the Canadian Organic Standards, farmers must adapt practices and equipment, navigate a steep learning curve, and often experience reduced yields – while still receiving conventional prices. Further, public and private financiers and insurers often overlook the unique risks and context of organic production, leading to inadequate

coverage and support. Proven mechanisms like transition payments, improved insurance and financing options, and certification cost-share have successfully reduced barriers and driven adoption in other jurisdictions. These mechanisms have been successfully adopted in some Canadian provinces.

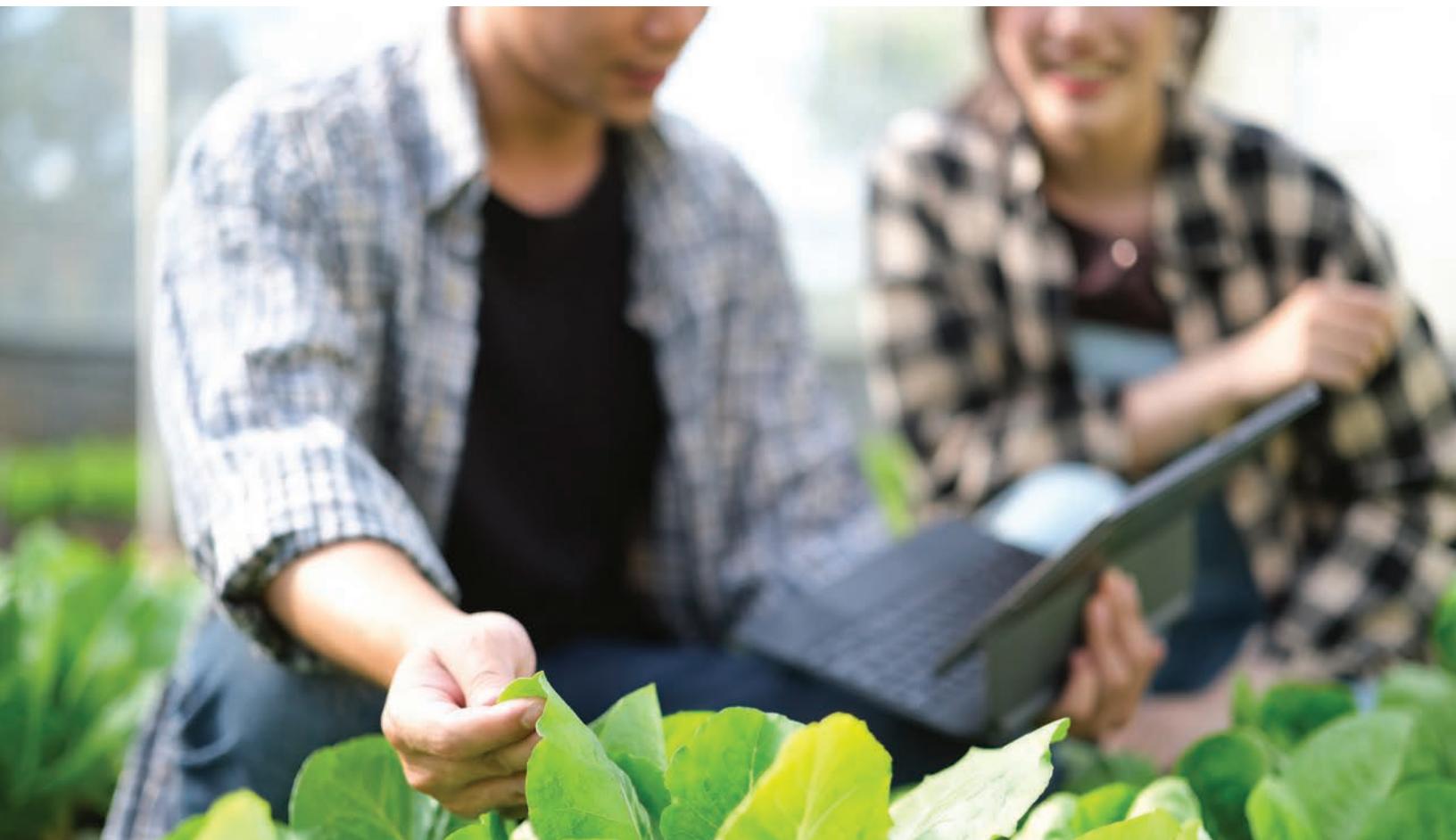
### SECTOR ACTIONS:

- 17.** Share data on organic farming's risk profile and environmental benefits with financial and insurance institutions to improve understanding and promote incentives such as favourable credit terms. Advocate for government incentives that encourage financial institutions to invest in organic and sustainable agriculture.

### GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 18.** Offer cost-share payments to producers to offset organic transition costs.
- 19.** Provide cost-share for up to 100% of organic certification fees, with priority for small or socially disadvantaged producers.
- 20.** Offer targeted funding to organic producers to access consulting services and implement context-specific strategies that improve productivity, profitability, and environmental performance. Include an on-farm research component to assess the outcomes of stacked practices on a range of outcomes on participating farms.

- 21.** Compensate organic farmers for additional costs incurred to mitigate risks and meet the Canadian Organic Standards, such as buffer zone establishment and testing for pesticide residues or GMO contamination.
- 22.** Adapt crop insurance and other Business Risk Management programs to reflect the unique risks and costs of organic production. Develop organic-specific insurance products in all provinces and territories that account for organic pricing and practices, provide training for insurance providers on organic systems, and explore premium assistance for transitioning producers.
- 23.** Ensure all government and incentive programs are accessible to organic farmers, including new and young entrants. Expand initiatives such as the On-Farm Climate Action Fund and the Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program to reward early adopters and those implementing multiple sustainable practices.
- 24.** Provide financial recognition for ecosystem services delivered through organic practices, such as payment for ecosystem services based on certified organic production areas.



## 1.4 IMPROVE ACCESS TO ORGANIC SEED AND OTHER INPUTS

Organic producers face persistent challenges accessing key inputs including organic seed, organic fertilizers, and specialized equipment, many of which are not available domestically in adequate quantity or quality. As a result, in many cases, producers rely on imported or non-organic seed—permitted under strict conditions when organic seed is unavailable and where seed is untreated with prohibited substances. Expanding input availability and accessibility across all regions and ensuring consistent input verification for compliance with the Canadian Organic Standards are essential to strengthening organic production, ensuring organic integrity, and removing barriers to growth.

### SECTOR ACTIONS:

- 25.** Educate and support farm input suppliers in sourcing inputs that comply with organic production requirements.
- 26.** Improve consistency of input approval process across certification bodies and create tools to help organic operators easily identify approved inputs.

### GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 27.** Expand access to organic seed by investing in domestic seed research and participatory plant breeding programs focused on organic and ecological seed varieties that enhance regional adaptation and climate resilience. Collaborate with the organic sector, research institutions, and government to support this work.

- 28.** Develop tools (e.g. research into rapid and affordable test kits) for producers to protect and maintain the integrity of organic and non-genetically engineered seed, as defined by the Canadian Organic Standards.



## 1.5 GROW THE NEXT GENERATION OF ORGANIC FARMERS

Canada faces a well-documented farm succession challenge that also impacts the future of organic farming. Many new and prospective organic farmers are likely to be operating at smaller scales and without family farm backgrounds, yet most existing succession programs focus on traditional family transfers. As a generational shift in agriculture coincides with rising interest in ecological farming, coordinated efforts are needed to increase access to land, capital, training, and support systems.

Targeted investment – particularly in existing organizations that offer land access and matching, and mentorship – will be essential to capture this opportunity and ensure a pipeline of new organic producers.



*As a generational shift in agriculture coincides with rising interest in ecological farming, coordinated efforts are needed to increase access to land, capital, training, and support systems.*

### SECTOR ACTIONS:

**29.** Expand and coordinate programs for new organic producers, including land matching, technical assistance, and support for succession and farmer-to-farmer transitions, cooperative models, and long-term lease arrangements, including through farmland trusts. Ensure integration with broader startup support services.

**30.** Strengthen the organic workforce by promoting career opportunities, establishing clear advancement pathways, and supporting employee development through ongoing training and mentorship.

**31.** Create organic land trusts and incorporate organic guidelines into existing land trusts to increase access to certified organic land for new entrants and transitioning farms.

**32.** Ensure first-year, young, and aspiring organic farmers have timely access to information about federal and provincial grants and loans to support farmland acquisition.

### GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

**33.** Fund programs and organizations that support new entrants to organic agriculture, including on-farm apprenticeships, land matching, and tailored new entrant support services, including for youth, Indigenous, and newcomer farmers.

**34.** Expand access to a robust Temporary Foreign Worker Program for organic operators, and ensure an efficient application and administrative process.

**35.** Develop a dedicated regulatory pathway within Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to support the entry of newcomer farmers into organic agriculture.

**36.** Introduce tax credits for certified organic land and for landowners who offer long-term leases to organic producers.







## PILLAR 2: GROW ORGANIC MARKETS AND DEMAND

### Market Development

Ensuring a stable market for the end-products of organic agriculture is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the sector. Strategic collaboration between government and industry can build market readiness, expand access, and ensure the integrity and credibility of Canadian organic products. With targeted investment, clear messaging, and stronger value-chain connections, Canada can position organic as a driver of climate resilience, public health, and economic opportunity—both domestically and globally.

### 2.1 ESTABLISH FUNDING MECHANISMS FOR MARKET DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

A dedicated Organic Market Development Fund would address a long-standing gap in sector support by providing stable funding for promotion and marketing. This fund would help level the playing field for organic producers and businesses, enabling strategic investments in processing, value-chain development, and consumer education to accelerate growth and competitiveness. Collaboration with commissions, marketing boards, and other public and private partners could further enhance market reach and leverage additional investment.

#### SECTOR ACTIONS:

37. Leverage Marketing Board Funding to support organic market development activities.

#### GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

38. Establish an Organic Market Development Fund to ensure fair market access to target markets and build consumer trust in organic products. This fund will support consumer awareness and education, market information and analysis, organic processing and distribution capacity, value-chain collaboration, and partnerships with retail and food service sectors for market development.



## 2.2 INCREASE PROCESSING CAPACITY, REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS AND SUPPLY CHAIN COLLABORATION TO EXPAND MARKET ACCESS

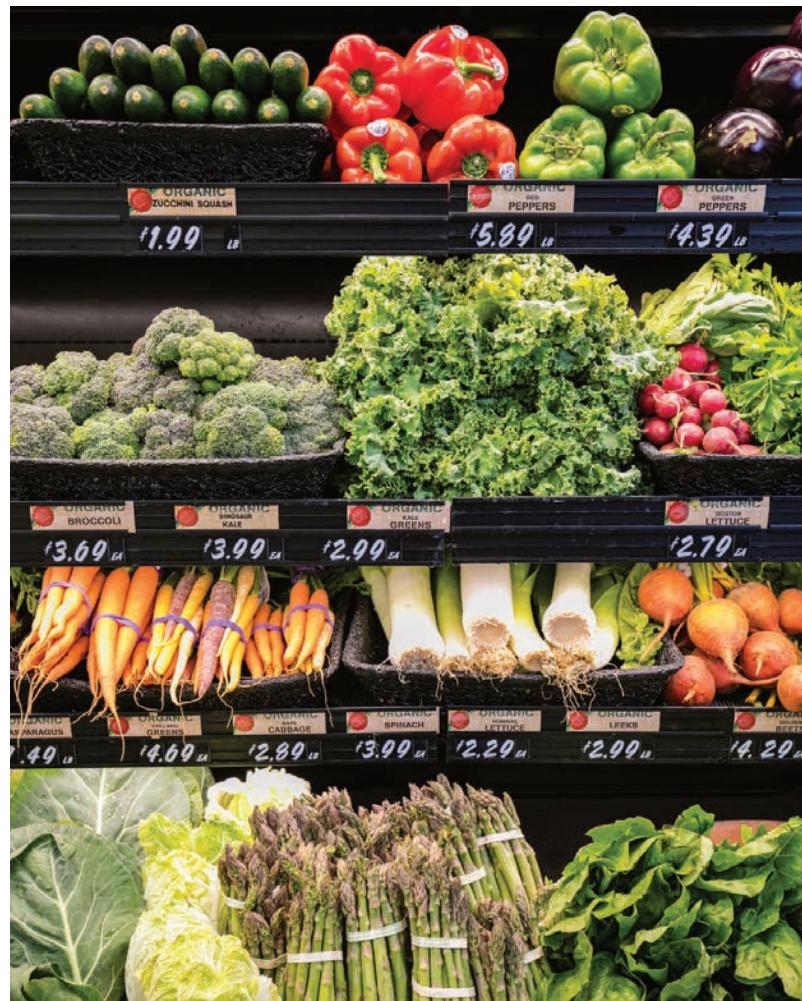
Canada's organic sector faces bottlenecks in processing and distribution, limiting the availability of value-added products and weakening supply chain resilience. Investing in regional infrastructure and fostering collaboration across the value chain will reduce reliance on imports, improve logistics, and ensure that organic integrity is maintained from farm to shelf.

### SECTOR ACTIONS:

- 39.** Establish and expand regional value-chain partnerships to enhance communication, coordination, and collaboration among producers, processors, distributors, and retailers, supporting industry growth and maintaining organic integrity throughout the value chain.
- 40.** Expand domestic processing capacity among manufacturers to add more Canadian organic value-added products to the product range available in Canada.
- 41.** Expand innovative organic product offerings by supporting product development and commercialization, value-added processing capacity, and supply chain collaborations for organic operators.
- 42.** Stimulate innovation and visibility in the organic sector through awards recognizing excellence in production, product development, collaboration, and sales.

**43.** Grow local and regional markets by promoting direct sales opportunities, strengthening links between farmers and consumers, and prioritizing Canadian organic production to meet domestic demand.

**44.** Conduct matchmaking between producers and brands to expand market opportunities domestically and internationally.



## GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 45.** Provide financial incentives to increase organic processing capacity, supporting new or expanded aggregation, processing, handling, storage, marketing, and distribution infrastructure for organic products and commodities – creating reliable market pathways for producers of all scales, including purchase and installation of equipment.
- 46.** Invest in local and regional food system infrastructure by funding producers and markets that strengthen Canadian organic supply that meets local demand, and aligning efforts with provincial local food strategies.
- 47.** Identify domestic and international market opportunities for producers and brands through reports, environmental scans, and matchmaking services.
- 48.** Ensure adequate transportation and logistics infrastructure for organic products to access both domestic and international markets while maintaining organic integrity.
- 49.** Ensure that federal investments in food security and controlled-environment agriculture (e.g., greenhouses and extended-season systems) include organic operations compliant with the Canadian Organic Standards.

## 2.3 RAISE CONSUMER AWARENESS AND CONFIDENCE IN ORGANIC VALUE

Educating consumers about the full value of organic is essential to growing demand and building long-term trust. Many Canadians are unaware of organic's broader contributions

to environmental protection, climate resilience, animal welfare, and community well-being. A national communications strategy can help bridge this gap—highlighting not only

the benefits of organic but also its relevance and accessibility to consumers. Public investment in awareness and education campaigns is critical to shifting perceptions around organic value, making organic a more informed and attainable choice for all.



*Educating consumers about the full value of organic is essential to growing demand and building long-term trust.*

## SECTOR ACTIONS:

- 50.** Implement a coordinated national communications strategy to enhance public understanding of what the Canada Organic certification logo represents, highlighting the role and value of organic in building a resilient food system adapted to climate and economic challenges.

- 51.** Regularly monitor and report on consumer perception trends and purchasing behaviours, and provide advisory support on value-added strategies for processors and retailers.
- 52.** Integrate food literacy and organic education into school curricula and youth programs, emphasizing the environmental, health, and local economic benefits of organic food and farming.



#### GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 53.** Allocate annual funding to promote the Canada Organic Brand and raise consumer awareness of the benefits of organic farming for the environment, climate, animal welfare, local economies, and food security. Provide 100% financing for awareness and trust-building campaigns until 2030.

## 2.4 ENGAGE WITH RETAIL ACTORS TO ACCELERATE ORGANIC SALES

Retailers are critical partners in expanding consumer access to organic products. Strategic collaboration can increase shelf space, enhance merchandising, and elevate storytelling—boosting visibility, availability, accessibility, and long-term sales growth.

#### SECTOR ACTIONS:

- 54.** Develop and build new partnerships with retail actors to increase market access for producers and manufacturers while growing organic sales and footprint at the retail level. Establish a national framework to provide merchandising support, and help retailers to expand organic product assortments, enhance organic marketing and product presentations in-store and online, and effectively communicate the benefits of organic products to consumers.
- 55.** Partner with retailers, organic businesses, and other value chain actors to improve the affordability of organic products in ways that support consumer understanding and reinforce the value of organic across the supply chain.

#### GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

N/A

## 2.5 STRENGTHEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROCUREMENT OF ORGANIC PRODUCTS

By leveraging their purchasing power, governments and businesses can create stable demand that delivers public benefits alongside economic growth. Public procurement of organic food supports nutritious diets, local economic development, and climate and biodiversity goals – objectives already reflected in aligned Canadian policies. In other jurisdictions, public procurement has been a major driver of organic sector growth, giving organic businesses the confidence to invest, innovate, and expand. This demand stability reduces market volatility, supports long-term planning, and encourages more producers to transition to organic practices. Public institutions can lead by example, while private sector commitments can scale impact across supply chains.

### SECTOR ACTIONS:

- 56.** Research successful public procurement models (including tenders promoting organics) and kitchen conversions in Canadian public and private food service, as well as in other jurisdictions.
- 57.** Develop a model and build capacity for a nationwide educational initiative to support the transition to organic, climate-friendly, and healthier meals in public sector kitchens, and increasing organic procurement strategies.

- 58.** Create and launch an organic cuisine label program for restaurants, hotels, public sector canteens, hospitals, and other public institutions.

### GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 59.** Launch and fund a National Strategy for Organic Public Procurement, including national goals for organic in public sector kitchens and incentivizing provincial action through co-financing for local organic public procurement initiatives.
- 60.** Incorporate organic procurement into relevant national, provincial, and local policies and programs, including the National School Food Policy and Program.



## 2.6 SUPPORT ORGANIC EXPORT PROMOTIONS THROUGH COLLABORATION

A unified approach to advance Canada's organic export strategy strengthens global competitiveness, builds market readiness, and ensures the credibility of Canadian organic products abroad. Government support amplifies industry efforts, while industry insights guide effective promotion. Together, they open new markets, protect organic integrity, and drive long-term sector growth, with a goal of maintaining and expanding export markets without creating additional costs for organic producers.

### SECTOR ACTIONS:

- 61.** Foster collaboration among organic processors and traders for joint export promotions of Canadian organic products, such as trade missions and trade shows.
- 62.** Develop export market intelligence to enhance awareness and export readiness for Canadian businesses, helping them identify and harness international trade opportunities for organic products.

### GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

**63.** Promote organic exports, including by including organic products in Canadian flagship trade shows.

**64.** Continue to negotiate new and maintain existing organic equivalency arrangements and agreements.

**65.** Fund testing to ensure organic integrity and protect access to international markets.

*A unified approach to advance Canada's organic export strategy strengthens global competitiveness, builds market readiness, and ensures the credibility of Canadian organic products abroad.*





## PILLAR 3: STRENGTHEN POLICY, REGULATORY, AND DATA INFRASTRUCTURE

**Cross-cutting Infrastructure**

**Unlocking the full potential of Canada's organic sector requires a coordinated framework. This includes foundational reforms to build institutional capacity within government and the sector, modernize governance, and improve access to reliable data. By strengthening policy, regulatory, and data infrastructure, Canada can foster a thriving organic ecosystem that is competitive globally, aligned with national priorities, and resilient in the face of environmental and economic challenges. These actions will help balance supply and demand and enable a self-sustaining financial model that drives innovation and growth.**

### 3.1 ESTABLISH POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR ORGANIC FOOD AND FARMING

Canada's lack of a national policy framework for organic production puts producers and food businesses at a competitive disadvantage compared to peers including in the U.S. and EU. Establishing a clear federal policy direction and supportive regulatory environment are essential steps to unlock the sector's full economic and environmental potential, improve farm livelihoods, and meet growing demand for organic food.

Organic agriculture and aquaculture align with federal priorities on climate, health, and economic development, and must be included in future food and farming policy.

#### SECTOR ACTIONS:

**66.** Recommend priorities and production and market targets for growth based on available statistics.

#### GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

**67.** Create a dedicated organic mandate within Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to lead domestic and global growth, coordinate across departments, and implement a new policy framework.

*Establishing a clear federal policy direction and supportive regulatory environment are essential steps to unlock the sector's full economic and environmental potential.*



**68.** Establish an interdepartmental task force (including AAFC, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Health Canada, CFIA, Statistics Canada, Global Affairs Canada, industry) to set national goals for organic growth, including farm area, operators, sales, procurement, and exports.

**69.** Conduct a cross-government policy review to align climate, biodiversity, food security, and procurement goals with support for organic farming, transition, research, and markets. Integrate organic into national strategies as a tool to advance international commitments (e.g., Sustainable Development Goals, Biodiversity Protocols, Nationally Determined Contributions).

**70.** Establish a Council for Organic Food and Farming, a permanent government-industry advisory body, to advise the Minister of Agriculture, monitor organic policies, develop action plans, and foster ongoing collaboration and problem-solving.

## 3.2 LAUNCH AN ORGANIC DATA STRATEGY

Canada lacks publicly available data on key basic organic metrics, putting the sector at a disadvantage compared to competitor jurisdictions like the U.S. and EU, where tools such as the Organic Integrity Database and TRACES support market development, transparency, and enforcement. While the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Statistics Canada collect some

organic data, much of it remains inaccessible to the sector, limiting business planning, policy development, and international competitiveness. Publicly available, standardized organic data is foundational to enable smart on-farm and supply chain decisions, support sector competitiveness and growth, and strengthen integrity.

### SECTOR ACTIONS:

**71.** Identify data needs and gaps that impact informed decision-making and growth in the organic sector as well as mechanisms for data analysis and diffusion.

### GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

**72.** Establish a coordinated, interdepartmental approach to collect and publicly share comprehensive organic data – including on production, supply chains, pricing, markets, labour, and trade – with sustained funding for system upgrades and maintenance.

**73.** Create a government-managed publicly-available Organic Authenticity Database, updated and published annually, to support organic integrity.

**74.** Update HS-OGD (Harmonized System-Other Government Department) codes in AIRS (Automated Import Reference System) to improve tracking of organic import volumes and values.

**75.** Publish annual reports analyzing organic production, trade, and sales by product, province, and sector.



### **3.3 ENSURE ROBUST ORGANIC STANDARDS THAT ARE UP TO DATE AND CREDIBLE**

The Canadian Organic Standards must be reviewed every five years to maintain market access and public trust, yet unlike key trading partners, Canada does not provide stable public funding for this mandatory process. This places undue burden on the sector. Permanent government support would ensure timely updates, safeguard equivalency arrangements, protect market access and consumer trust, and allow the sector to focus on extension and growth. This is a modest investment that underpins billions of dollars in organic sales and trade each year.

#### **SECTOR ACTIONS:**

**76.** Lead the maintenance and update of the Canadian Organic Standards (CAN/CGSB 32.310, 32.311, and 32.312) at least every five years.

#### **GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**77.** Provide complete and permanent funding for the mandatory five-year review of the Canadian Organic Standards (CAN/CGSB 32.310, 32.311, and 32.312) – including interpretation, training, and potential amendments – under the existing sector-led model.



78. Work with the organic sector to maintain an efficient structure for the Canadian Organic Standards review process, and enabling more frequent updates to adapt to emerging needs and innovations.
79. Conduct ongoing updates to the Canada Organic Regime Operating Manual to ensure consistency in the certification process.



## 3.4 DEVELOP ORGANIC CAPACITY IN SECTOR AND GOVERNMENT

Despite rapid growth in the organic sector, federal capacity has declined, with fewer dedicated organic staff at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada than a decade ago—even as the market has grown fivefold (from under \$2 billion a decade ago). Strengthening government and sector capacity is essential to support organic operators, ensure consistent program access, and uphold and enforce strong standards. Targeted investments in staffing, training, and streamlining organizational models will enable the sector to scale effectively, respond to emerging challenges, and maintain Canada's reputation for organic integrity.

### SECTOR ACTIONS:

80. Strengthen organic sector collaboration on strategic priorities across regions and nationally.
81. Explore collaborative organizational models that expand shared capacity and coordination within the organic sector.
82. Develop training materials and provide ongoing training on the Canadian Organic Standards and Canada Organic Regime to new and existing organic businesses.



## GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 83.** Enable a funding mechanism for the organic sector, including to support core functions, build capacity, and support policy implementation in production and markets.
- 84.** Assign dedicated organic specialists (full-time equivalents) at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to adequately support sector development, policy, programs, and growth.
- 85.** Increase Canadian Food Inspection Agency staffing to enhance oversight, enforcement, and management of the Canada Organic Regime.
- 86.** Provide mandatory training on organic food and farming and the Canada Organic Regime for relevant Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Canadian Food Inspection Agency staff, tailored to their roles, and extend this training to other relevant agencies whose policies intersect with organic food and farming.
- 87.** Fund training for public and private agrologists and extension specialists to build capacity for education in organic practices and systems.
- 88.** Invest in workforce development for the organic certification system, including inspector and certifier training, succession planning, and workforce retention.

## 3.5 MODERNIZE THE ORGANIC REGULATORY FRAMEWORK TO SAFEGUARD ORGANIC INTEGRITY

Canada must update its organic regulations to safeguard integrity, enhance enforcement, and support sector growth. A standalone Organic Act and expanded Canada Organic Regime would improve market access, better align with international standards, and enable broader certification across product categories. Harmonized federal and provincial rules are essential to ensure consistent standards nationwide and foster effective public-private collaboration.

## SECTOR ACTIONS:

- 89.** Work across the organic sector to identify regulatory barriers, strengthen fraud prevention, explore funding opportunities, and maintain alignment with key trading partners.

## GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 90.** Pass an Organic Act to strengthen and formalize Canada's organic regulatory framework, improve transparency and enforcement, prevent fraud, harmonize rules, and enable a long-term funding mechanism.
- 91.** Expand the scope of the Canada Organic Regime to certify currently excluded products (beyond food, feed, and seed), such as textiles, cosmetics, pet food, and natural health products.

**92.** Encourage all provinces and territories to adopt organic regulations aligned with the Canada Organic Regime to ensure organic products sold within and across jurisdictions meet consistent national standards and integrity.

**93.** Enhance regulatory oversight and transparency of certification activities conducted under the Canada Organic Regime equivalency framework to ensure consistent standards interpretation, uphold certification quality, and maintain public trust in the ‘Canada Organic’ label within Canada and in third countries.

**94.** Streamline the certification process to improve accessibility for diversified small-scale farms.

**95.** Ensure that the Canada Organic certification mark and Canada Organic claim are protected in Canada and other countries.





# IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN AND NEXT STEPS

Successful implementation of the OAP will require strong leadership, coordination, and sustained collaboration among and between governments, producers, industry, and civil society. The Canadian Organic Alliance and its partners are committed to working across the sector and with governments to co-develop a practical and phased implementation roadmap, building on existing sector strengths and public policy tools. Key next steps include:

- Establish a national coordinating mechanism to oversee implementation, sector engagement, and accountability.
- Develop detailed workplans for priority initiatives under each pillar.
- Conduct analysis to quantify the costs and returns of implementing the plan.
- Assess current programs and opportunities, and identify gaps to target new investments effectively.
- Secure funding and partnerships for early action priorities, such as a national organic data strategy, extension tools, and market development initiatives.

*Successful implementation of the Organic Action Plan will require strong leadership, coordination, and sustained collaboration among and between governments, producers, industry, and civil society.*



- Engage provincial and territorial governments to support regionally tailored implementation.
- Develop and launch a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning framework to set targets, establish baselines, track progress, and adapt approaches.

This plan is designed to evolve. Its success will require a coordinated, adaptive approach and collaboration across partners and stakeholders to unlock the full potential of Canada's organic sector.





# CONCLUSION: A PATH FORWARD FOR CANADA'S ORGANIC SECTOR

The Organic Action Plan offers a clear strategy to grow organic food and farming as a cornerstone of Canada's agri-food system, and is grounded in three pillars:

- 1) Accelerate Growth and Innovation in Organic Production,
- 2) Grow Organic Markets and Demand, and
- 3) Strengthen Policy, Regulatory, and Data Infrastructure.

Through public-private partnership, implementing this plan will expand organic's contribution to the national economy, support producers in earning fair livelihoods, and position and develop organic agriculture as a leader in environmental and climate solutions. A strong organic processing sector will create value-added opportunities, while market development efforts will help make organic food more accessible and affordable across all regions of Canada.

The broader adoption of organic systems will also contribute to rural revitalization, fostering economic resilience and community sustainability. By advancing this plan, Canada can ensure that the organic sector plays a central role in building a resilient, equitable, and sustainable future for food, farmers, and communities.

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## ABOUT THE CANADIAN ORGANIC ALLIANCE

The **Canadian Organic Alliance** is a national coalition composed of the Canada Organic Trade Association, Canadian Organic Growers, and the Organic Federation of Canada, which federates the provincial and territorial organic associations. The Alliance unites Canada's organic organizations and represents over 7,500 organic operators across the country—including nearly 6,000 producers and 1,800 processors—who collectively manage 2.6 million acres (as of 2024). Together, they supply a wide range of products and ingredients for nutritious value-added foods and beverages for both local and global markets.



The **Canada Organic Trade Association** is a national industry association with the mission to protect and promote the growth of the organic sector. Its members span the entire organic value chain. Key areas of work: regulatory affairs, market access (domestic and international), organic standards and policy development, advocacy, research, data and consumer education.



**Canadian Organic Growers** provides education, advocacy, and leadership to empower farmers and consumers, enhance health, build community, and mitigate climate change, while increasing Canadian food sovereignty. As Canada's oldest organic and regenerative association, Canadian Organic Growers supports ecologically-based agriculture and advocates for policy and industry development..



The **Organic Federation of Canada** prioritizes improving national regulations to support organic industry development, maintaining and interpreting the Canadian Organic Standards, co-managing the Organic Science Cluster for research and knowledge transfer, and promoting industry growth through information sharing and stakeholder awareness. The provincial and territorial organic associations are the members of the Organic Federation of Canada.







