

December 24, 2018

Leigh Miller  
Technical Specialist for Chemical Residues  
Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Samantha Piquette, MSc  
Chemical Residue Monitoring Specialist  
Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Dear Ms. Miller and Ms. Piquette,

As stakeholders in Canada's organic sector, we are contacting you with regard to the current monitoring and surveillance programs being conducted by the CFIA on organic products, and the testing mandated of Certification Bodies (CBs) by the CFIA under certain circumstances.

Glyphosate is not a permitted substance under the Canadian Organic Standards, but unfortunately, it does appear at times in trace quantities in organic products. Glyphosate is the most widely sold pesticide in Canada according to the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA). Because of its widespread use, it is present throughout the environment. As a result, organic producers are unable to always avoid trace contamination in organic products.

As the government is aware, glyphosate appears in rainwater and in other parts of the water supply. It is also found in soil, which can be blown onto organic fields. And of course, in spite of buffer zones between conventional and organic operations, drift from the application of glyphosate-based herbicides can end up on organic fields, thereby contaminating organic farmers' crops.

As per CFIA Directive 14-01, CBs are expected to conduct sampling and testing for chemical residues of their clients' products based on a risk assessment. For the CBs' testing, the CFIA states that "Analytical methods used to detect the specific substance must have a limit of detection at or below 0.01 parts per million (ppm)." Labs used by CBs have a limit of detection of 0.01 ppm for glyphosate, but not lower. They also have a margin of error of 0.02 ppm for glyphosate.

The CFIA conducts its own sampling and testing of organic goods from its monitoring and surveillance programs, and in this testing, it tests for glyphosate residues. If through the CFIA's testing – which is reportedly able to detect glyphosate residue levels below 0.01 ppm – glyphosate is found in levels below 0.01 ppm, the CB shall inform the operator that residues are present, and at the next scheduled inspection, the CB shall assess why the residues were present and *may* sample for chemical residues.

If the CFIA's testing finds glyphosate residues between 0.01 ppm and 0.1 ppm (or 5% of an applicable MRL if specified), the CB is mandated to sample products currently available at the operation or production site for chemical residues no later than the next scheduled inspection. However, due to the

0.02 ppm margin of error in lab testing for glyphosate, organic operators could be required to pay directly for costly testing when in reality their residues are below 0.01 ppm.

According to the data we have, the vast majority of CFIA testing results of organic products that tested positive for glyphosate residues were near the lab detection limit of 0.01 ppm (86% of residues were below 0.03 ppm). Since there is a margin of error of 0.02 ppm, we believe that it is unfair for any products testing below 0.03 ppm by the CFIA to be subjected to further mandatory testing by the operator's CB.

According to Pro-Cert's data, less than 20% of the products that tested positive to glyphosate by the CFIA tested positive to glyphosate by Pro-Cert in their follow-up investigation. Since the cost of the testing often falls to the operator, this has resulted in expensive and unnecessary testing for organic operators whose products may or may not be exhibiting minute traces of glyphosate residues; residues that are very likely the result of contamination through application from conventional operators.

We believe that it is unjust for organic operators to be subject to mandatory testing by their CBs when the CFIA finds glyphosate residues within the labs' margin of error of 0.02 ppm. CBs may charge their clients directly for this testing, or indirectly through higher service fees if this testing is incorporated into the CBs' overall costs. Either way, organic operators are bearing the costs of this testing.

Since glyphosate is registered in Canada for use as a pre-harvest perennial weed control, and is very commonly used as a desiccant by conventional operators, it is impossible for all organic operators to entirely avoid contamination. While it is of utmost importance to maintain the integrity of organic products and ensure that the standards are followed, measures must not be taken that cause undue and unfair financial hardship for organic operators, who are often the victims of spray drift and/or background environmental contamination.

**We kindly request that the CFIA's Directive 14-01 be amended to reflect the margin of error on lab testing for glyphosate, and that any product tested by the CFIA that shows glyphosate residues below 0.03 ppm should not be required to face further testing by the CB.**

If the Canadian government wishes to continue to permit the use of glyphosate by conventional operators, then it must recognize the systemic environmental contamination that its continued application is causing, and the impacts this has on the unintended targets of its application.

By amending Directive 14-01, the CFIA would be lessening the enormous toll that glyphosate contamination has had on organic operators in Canada.

**We also kindly request that the CFIA share with us its data related to glyphosate testing.** It is important for the organic sector to access this data so that we can understand better the levels of glyphosate residues that we should expect to see from spray drift and environmental contamination on organic products, vs. the levels found on conventional products through the direct application of glyphosate-based herbicides.

We look forward to working with you on these issues.

Sincerely,



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The following list of organic stakeholders wish to express their support for this letter:

B. Terfloth + Cie (Canada) Inc.  
Cranimals  
Daybreak Mill  
I&W Research Inc.  
Manitoba Organic Alliance  
One Degree Organic Foods  
Organic Alberta  
SaskOrganics