

Summary

National Organic Action Plan for Canada – Proposed Framework

A focused plan is needed to ensure that our future food system includes a strong foundation in organic agriculture.

The proposed Organic Action Plan (OAP) is a comprehensive long-term plan that recognizes the important role that organic plays in the future of sustainable agriculture in Canada.

The plan should address the following:

A. Production supports

A1. Growing domestic production capacity

- Technical and knowledge transfer
- Financial and capital supports

A2. Building human capital to support production

- Education and capacity building
- Extension services and advisory support

A3. Mitigating risk for organic farmers¹

- Financial supports and risk insurance
- Climate and technology
- Expand or adapt policy options to better accommodate organic crops and production systems
- Supply chain protections

A4. Growing the next generation of organic farmers¹

- Support existing farmers to transition to organic by establishing a National Organic Transition Program
- Financial and market supports
- Support new and aspiring entrants

B. Organization and structure for growth

B1. Setting ambitious targets for growth

- Production targets to meet export demand and import substitution
- Organic market growth targets in primary channels (e.g., retail, food service, short sales)
- Federal funding targets for organic. Any provincial flowthrough funding should align with national targets

B2. Enhancing collaboration across the sector

- Activate national, provincial and local organic organizations to help implement national policies
- Facilitate whole supply chain discussions
- Permanent committee to follow up on Organic Action Plan

B3. Developing human resource capacity in government

- Dedicated unit at AAFC similar to USDA National Organic Program
- Sufficient provincial government staff support
- CFIA enforcement staff in line with organic growth

B4. Integrating organic into other national policies and departments

- E.g. Agriculture & Agri-food Canada, Environment & Climate Change Canada, Innovation, Science & industry, Health, Export Promotion & International Trade, Rural Economic Development

C. Market supports

C1. Growing market for organic

- Raise consumer awareness and promote the Canada Organic Brand, organic farming and products at home and abroad
- Develop a national communications strategy for organic
- Boost domestic demand by strengthening collaboration between retailers and suppliers
- Boost international market development

¹ Organic farmers refers to those who are compliant to the COS.

- Support and promote public procurement of organic products
- Raise awareness of export opportunities

- Support data needs related to consumer and market trends that translate to business opportunities and consumption

D. Regulation and enforcement

D1. Modernizing regulatory framework

- Work with provinces to ensure that all organic products sold intra-provincially, inter-provincially or internationally meet the federal regulations
- Improve safeguards for compliance in Canada to the COR and COS, including a strong Canada Organic office inspection team
- Ensure ongoing public funding for the review and interpretation of the Canadian Organic Standards
- Revise the Canadian regulations to expand product scope of organic
- Allow for a long-term funding model for organic sector organizations

D2. Building regulatory enforcement capacity

- Safeguard the integrity and consumer trust of the organic brand by enforcing robust regulations and addressing fraud in the sector
- Database to better track organic status claims and to increase traceability of the organic supply chain
- Enhanced digital technologies for organic traceability
- Increased personnel for enforcement
- Education and targeted workshops on food fraud prevention

D3. Expanding organic equivalency arrangements

- Increased capacity to oversee and modernize current and new equivalency arrangements/agreements.

E. Data supports

E1. Collecting production data

- Support data needs related to development and transition to organic

E2. Collecting market data

F. Research with impact

F1. Prioritizing organic research

- Improve environmental performance of Canadian agriculture while capturing organic markets
- Increase productivity and farm-gate revenue of organic producers through innovation
- Enhance resiliency of agriculture by developing ecological solutions to climate change and socially driven issues

F2. Investing in organic research and transfer of scientific outcomes

- Mandate specific research allotments for organic research at the federal level
- Require research agencies to better coordinate on organic research and extension.
- Ensure that AAFC recognizes organic research priorities in its budget justification and studies the feasibility of certifying more research land as organic.
- Reduce or waive industry cash matching contributions needed to leverage federal and provincial programs.

F3. Transferring scientific outcomes and promoting adoption

- Increase investments in organic extension programs that can be easily transferred to farmers
- Support training of organic extension specialists and consultants to apply new research.
- Provide incentive/support programs for hiring of organic consulting/extension professionals.

G. Education

G1. Educating and increasing familiarity with organic agriculture

- Curricula and training program development
- Collaboration
- Diversity, equity and inclusion