

Ontario Organic Strategic Plan 2010-2014

March 2010

Organic Council of Ontario

Forward:

The Organic Council of Ontario is a membership-based non-profit association representing the organic sector in Ontario. OCO's membership consists of farmers, processors, marketers, distributors, certifiers, retailers and others within the organic sector in Ontario.

This Council's mission is:

To **champion** the development and growth of organics in Ontario

To **represent** and advocate on behalf of stakeholders to government, NGOs and academia

To **consult** with and create linkages within this stakeholder group

To **protect** the integrity of the organic brand

The Organic Council of Ontario's vision is to see all stakeholders united in meeting the demand for organics in Ontario.

Ontario has incredible potential to be a leader in organics. The organic market is one of the fastest growing food sectors in Canada, with an estimated retail growth of 15-25% per annum. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental and health impacts of food production systems, making this evident through the massive growth in demand for organic products. Only one percent of Ontario's agricultural acreage is in organic production and with approximately 600 certified growers captures only 15% of the organic marketplace.

Overcoming the present obstacles is achievable. Closing the gap in terms of primary production extension services, processing and distribution infrastructure, research and development and marketing support will lead the way towards an increase in domestic market share. With a partnered approach, we believe reaching a targeted two-fold market share increase for Ontario organic production by 2013 can be met. We feel that the organic sector should be supported as an important aspect of sustainable agricultural policy.

On behalf of the Organic Council of Ontario, I would like to thank all of the stakeholders who have lent their support to the development of the Ontario Organic Strategy 2010-2014.

Matt LeBeau

Chair, Organic Council of Ontario

March 2010

Acknowledgements:

In preparing this document, the Council drew on the suggestions and recommendations received from stakeholders in the industry and government. In particular, the Council wishes to acknowledge and express appreciation for two industry submissions: *Ontario Goes Organic: How to Access Canada's Growing Billion Dollar Market for Organic Food* and the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada, and *Grow Local Organic: Food Strategy for Ontario Value-added Processing* from the World Wildlife Fund Canada. OCO also wishes to acknowledge the excellent recommendations for organic markets in the OMAFRA 2007 Minister's Strategic Advisory Committee report and the 2009 George Morris Centre Organic Report, and OMAFRA's 2009 Ontario Organics Consumer Uses and Attitudes Study

Executive Summary

Organic farming has a positive role to play in the future of Ontario agriculture. The statistics that are available indicate that the organic market is currently the strongest growth category in the food industry, with 15-25% annual growth. The organic market accounts for about 1-2% of the retail food market, with \$1.1-1.3 billion in Canadian retail sales. ACNielsen reported growth in the organic sector in Ontario was 24% from 2005 to 2006- consistent with statistics for over a decade.

In 2008, Ontario had 680 certified organic farms, and 113,685 certified organic cropland acres in production (13% increase from 2007). In 2008 Ontario had about 18.3% of the certified organic farms and approximately 7.5% of the certified organic acreage in Canada. Anne Macey reported for Canadian Organic Growers that in 2005 Ontario had 155 certified organic processors and handlers, 21.5% of the total organic processors in Canada.

The Ontario Organic strategic plan 2010-2014 sets out priorities to help Ontario farmers supply over 30% of Ontario's organic consumption by 2015, up from the currently estimated 15%. This measured approach is designed to allow for gradual but sustained growth that coordinates supply and demand expansion so that infrastructure is effectively built and farm gate prices do not swing wildly. This approach anticipates that most growth will occur in small to medium sized farms and processing operations. At the time of review in January 2010, progress would be made toward the following 5-year targets:

- move from 15% of consumption met by domestic production to 30%
- represent double its percentage of the total food and beverage market, from roughly 1% to nearly 2%
- experience a doubling of crop acres in organic
- experience a doubling of animals in organic production
- witness a doubling of processing capacity

Supply increases would come from a combination of new organic farms and expansion of scale among existing organic operations. On the processing side, increased capacity would come largely from conventional processors being certified to operate limited organic lines. Regarding new organic operations, many farms are already organic but not certified, or in the process of transition, and many companies are working with conventional producers to gradually bring them into their organic supply chain. Additionally, some new entrants to farming would enter organic production directly.

This strategy contains the initiatives recommended by OCO to be undertaken over 3 years by both industry and public sector organizations, organized under 6 themes. These themes are a reflection of a value-chain approach to development by supporting and developing all components of this chain concurrently. These elements are deemed equally important, and are thus not laid out in any order of priority.

(a) Information Systems Management the Ontario Organic Sector

The organic sector in Ontario has been challenged by a shortage of reliable data on organic markets. The Canadian Organic Growers and more recently ACNielsen and the Canadian census have provided some statistics, however a comprehensive picture of the Ontario organic sector is not readily available. This strategic plan addresses this issue with a recommendation for information systems management and sector analysis to continue to build an understanding of the state of the organic industry in Ontario

(b) Increasing Organic Production in Ontario

Knowledge transfer programs, extension of business risk management programmes, identification of barriers to organic production, access to transition advisory services and inclusion under environmental goods and services programmes will encourage the growth of existing organic farming operations and provide additional supports for transitioning farms.

(c) Increasing Organic Processing Capacity in Ontario

This plan identifies the need for data on Ontario organic ingredients and sourcing information to facilitate sourcing for new products. To ensure support for processors interested in offering organic co-packing services, this plan includes recommendations for the development of knowledge transfer programmes and transitional grant programmes for processors.

(d) Marketing Ontario Organics

As consumer demand currently outstrips supply, it is crucial that consumers are able to identify local, Ontario organic products in the marketplace. Building an organic component into the existing Foodland Ontario program would enable Ontario organic products to take advantage of this Ontario food marketing strategy. Additionally, the new federal organic regulations add a new layer in building consumers confidence in the organic brand. A promotion and awareness campaign will ensure that consumers understand the new organic regulations and accompanying Canada Organic logo.

(e) Research and Development of the Organic Sector

Research and Development spans across all of the priority areas. Access to timely, state of the art research is essential in order for the Ontario organic sector to stay competitive. New funding for organic research is a necessary component of strategic development for the organic industry in Ontario.

(f) Certification Advocacy: Protecting the Integrity of the Organic Brand

In recent years, certified organic farmers, processors and sellers have experienced competitive pressure from “local” and “natural” categories. Consumer confusion has increased in light of these claims. Lack of a cohesive response by the Sector is seeing market share erode for the first time since certification began some 30 years ago. At the same time, businesses seeing an opportunity for organic market share that operate within the conventional food system have an interest in putting pressure on the CFIA to change the rules in order to lower the cost of production- at the expense of our hard won Standards. OCO sees a significant role for the Sector in protecting the integrity of our Organic Brand.

(G) Member Engagement

OCO membership expect value for their support of our industry association. Membership benefits include: a representative voice with Federal and Provincial governments, information on organic regulation and certification, access to an organic sector database, updates on government's organic initiatives, relationship building across the organic value-chain, improving access to government funding and grants and participation in building organic infrastructure in Ontario.

(H) Organizational Health

OCO requires strong organizational health in order to maintain priorities, ensure sound management of member and partner resources, and deliver on the expectations the Sector places with OCO- including stewarding the Ontario Organic Strategic Plan.

The development of the organic sector should reflect both the current market demands and where the market is heading. Facilitating the growth of the Ontario organic industry to meet this demand is an incredible economic, environmental and agricultural opportunity with benefits to all Ontarians. This Ontario Organic Strategic Plan focuses on barriers to the growth of the Ontario organic sector, to enable high-quality, competitive Ontario products access to this excellent market opportunity.

Elements

1. Information Systems Management for the Ontario Organic Sector

Objective: Provide quality information to the Sector and to consumers by identifying information gaps and work with funders and Sector Organizations to collate and/ or generate data

Description:

The Ontario organic sector is without any comprehensive sector profile analysis. This lack of knowledge limits the opportunities to build alliances and develop value-chains within Ontario by Ontario agri-food businesses. Other competitor jurisdictions such as California have centralized information resources that assist producers and processors in partnering and forging new business relationships in an efficient and timely manner. Noted in the Strategic Advisory Committee Report is a recommendation to build structural understanding of the organic sector in Ontario to support new value chain development and business opportunities.

Potential Partners:

Organic Council of Ontario, OMAFRA, Canadian Organic Growers, Organic Trade Association, Canadian Health Food Association, Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada, Sustain Ontario

1.1 Develop comprehensive Organic Sector Database

Objective: Support the expansion of organics in Ontario by providing information to assist networking along the organic value chain

Description: Network with partner organizations to collate existing data and determine criteria for data collection based on input from Sector

1.1.1 Development of comprehensive database, by sector

1.1.2 Development of ingredient and co-packer database

1.2 Develop sectoral market analysis

Objective: Provide relevant, timely data to support market-based planning for the organic value chain

Description: In order to expand production, plan co-packing opportunities, or test-market a new finished product, organic businesses have to have some data to support their business planning efforts. Centralizing the generic information for the Sector could facilitate growth within the Sector and an “access point” for businesses that struggle to navigate certification and production planning.

1.3 Develop value chain analysis

Objective: Support the growth of the Organic Sector by Educating the Sector using full Value Chain data

Description: Transparency along the value chain will support the growth of Sector by helping production meet demand, and marketing match production. The value chain analysis would be an annual, useful guide

based on what sold in the previous seasons where and for what price. It might address which fringe season crops could be marketed. For example, a business would be able to make recommendations for marketable crops based on demographic and geographic indicators collected as part of the value chain analysis.

1.3.1 Identify import replacement opportunities

1.3.2 Identify Supply & Demand Gaps for Producers

1.3.3 Identify information gaps for the Organic Sector

2. Increasing Organic Production in Ontario

Objective: A key objective of this Strategic Plan is to grow domestic production of organics consumed in Ontario from 15% to 30%

Description: Organic farming is more than the absence of certain practices. Organic by neglect is often the result of simply not having enough expertise to manage a farm organically. Increasing production and converting acreage that remains in organic certification means supporting knowledge transfer efforts. Peer to peer learning, workshops, one on one advisory services, and farm tours all serve to increase production by ensuring beneficial management practices are shared and supported amongst the organic farm community.

2.1 Knowledge Transfer programs

Objective: To increase production by increasing the availability and accessibility of knowledge transfer programs for organic and transitioning to organic producers

Description: The growth of the organic sector in Ontario requires that new entrants to organic farming have access to adequate support systems and programs. A review of the issues and barriers for new entrants is necessary to determine the priorities for supports to new entrants. Organizations such as FarmON Alliance, CRAFT, EFAO and FarmStart could be included in further strategic planning for Knowledge Transfer programming.

Potential Partners on Knowledge Transfer Programs (2.1.1 through 2.1.3): Organic Council of Ontario, OMAFRA, Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario, Canadian Organic Growers, Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training in Ontario (CRAFT), FarmStart and others including industry partners

2.1.1 Producer production clubs

Description:

Producer production clubs are composed of organic producers in a region who come together periodically to share their production experiences and learn about new developments. Also referred to as Study Clubs, these groups enable experienced organic producers to transfer knowledge to new entrants, and provide a needed support system for organic producers. This system of ongoing farmer-to-farmer communication has proven highly successful in other jurisdictions, and is noted as a recommendation from the Minister's Strategic Advisory Committee in 2007. The Ontario model is designed to meet the specific needs of regional

participants. To function effectively, production clubs require significant coordination, communication and farmer outreach. A pilot project in 2008/09 verified the planning by implementing recommendations with success.

2.1.2 Development and delivery of organic production courses

Description:

Currently, a number of short courses targeted to farmers are offered by several sector associations. These courses are essential as a resource to new and existing organic farmers. Delivery of existing courses should be expanded to better service farmers across the province. Additionally, new courses should be developed to address the current needs of organic farmers, including courses addressing transition to organic production and more advanced production issues.

2.1.3 Producer mentorship training and program delivery

Description:

A mentorship program involves local, knowledgeable farmers who provide support to other farmers on production issues. This occurs through on-farm visits and by telephone on an as-needed basis. This program financially assists mentors to work one-on-one with farmers.

2.2 Study to identify barriers to transitioning to organic production

Objective:

To identify the barriers for farmers transitioning to organic production

Description:

In order to address potential barriers of transitioning an operation to organic production, it is essential that these barriers be better understood within the Ontario organic framework. A review of the potential systemic, economic and technical barriers should be reviewed to provide information for future areas of program development.

2.3 Transition Advisory Services

Objective:

To provide support in addressing the barriers for farmers transitioning to organic production

Description:

In order to address potential barriers of transitioning an operation to organic production, Ontario farmers need financial supports and technical supports. Failure of organic farms is often due to organic management “by neglect”. By ensuring strong technical and business planning supports for transitioning farmers we recognize organic management is not intuitive but a green technology.

Potential Partners:

Organic Council of Ontario, OMAFRA, Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario, Canadian Organic Growers, general farm organizations

2.4 Extend Environmental Goods and Services Programmes to include Organic Production

Objective:

To ensure that organic production is included as a practice under the Environmental Farm Plan and other Environmental Goods and Services Programmes including Carbon Credits and other systems for measuring and rewarding organic benefits

Description:

There is a growing body of scientific data demonstrating the environmental benefits of organic farming, including biodiversity enhancement, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, carbon sequestration, and water quality improvements. These benefits should be reflected by including organic production as a practice under Environmental Goods and Services Programmes such as the Environmental Farm Plan.

Potential Partners:

Organic Council of Ontario, OMAFRA, Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario, Canadian Organic Growers, Industry partners, Environmental Organizations, Carbon Offset Businesses

3. Increasing organic processing capacity in Ontario

3.1 Comparative Gap Analysis of Processing Sector, over time

Objective: provide leadership by developing baseline data with partner organizations and support member stakeholders of all scales of processing to identify barriers, solutions and opportunities for increasing processing in Ontario

Description: Opening dialogue amongst relatively small producers and processors results in co-operation, business supports and potential costumers. Processors would benefit from structured meet and greets, invitational events and other networking opportunities.

Potential Partners:

Organic Council of Ontario, OMAFRA, industry Partners, COG, OTA

3.2 Processor short course on transitioning to organic

Objective:

To increase availability and accessibility of knowledge transfer programs for new and existing organic processors

Description:

Some processors have been taking inspection courses as a substitute for a dedicated processor short course. We propose the development of a two-day short course for processors, that builds from existing HACCP style courses to integrate organic practices and record keeping. The course could be developed by an existing NGO or a certifier with extensive experience with processor certification and a willingness to train to general requirements of the industry (as opposed to the specific requirements of that agency). Other courses could be developed as required. The course(s) could be offered in association with a processor association such as the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors or could be tailored to individual firms. Active outreach would be required to promote the availability of new courses to existing and potential organic processors.

3.3 Processor Needs Assessment

Objective: Consult with the Sector to determine a strategy for the development of the Organic Food Processing Sector

Description:

The identification of processor supports requires further consultation to better understand issues and priorities for program development. A processing sub-committee for strategic planning is recommended, along with a consultation process to identify issues and recommendations for program development.

3.4 Outreach to Conventional Sector re: organic options

Objective: Engage conventional processors and provide information on organic production

Description:

Making use of existing infrastructure is the fastest way to grow the Sector. Conventional processing lines that can be adapted for organic runs must be explored.

4. Marketing Ontario Organics

4.1 Develop a marketing strategy that identifies Ontario organic product under the Foodland Ontario Banner

Objective:

To encourage consumers to choose Certified Organic products produced and processed in Ontario

Description:

OCO offers its full support to the Buy Ontario/Foodland expansion initiative. We agree that promoting homegrown, locally-produced and processed products makes sense from an environmental, ecological and socio-economic perspective. Organic is a very specific product designation, and consumers focus on this element when purchasing organic products. Building an organic component into the Foodland Ontario program would enable Ontario organic products to take advantage of this Ontario food marketing strategy.

4.1.1 Develop marketing tools, messaging and coop ad opportunities for OCO Foodland Organic members

4.1.2 Marketing Strategy Implementation

4.1.3 Regional identification within the Foodland Brand

4.2 Promote the new federal organic regulations in a provincial organic communication plan

Objective: Ensure the Canada Organic Logo and the standards the logo represents becomes a recognized and trusted symbol amongst both Sector participants and consumers.

Description:

The new Federal Organic Regulation came into effect in June of 2009. Communication to consumers on the

new regulations and the logo are essential to raise consumer awareness about these changes. Ontario should needs to incorporate promotion and awareness of the new federal organic regulation into a provincial communications plan. A Marketing Ontario Advisory was convened in January of 2009 to begin this work. Efforts must complement the Brand Architecture developed through the Organic Value Chain Round Table.

Potential Partners for Marketing Ontario Organics:

Organic Council of Ontario, Foodland Ontario, Organic Trade Association, Canadian Health Food Association, Canadian Organic Growers, Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors; Organic Value Chain Round Table

Broad Project Categories:

4.2.1 Develop merchandising tools

4.2.2 Retailer and Consumer education

4.2.3 Increased retail sector engagement

4.3 Animating non-retail/direct to consumer

Objective: Encourage the development of local and organic, diverse food distribution channels and increase access by consumers to these distributors

Description:

There are numerous non-retail distribution channels that need to be better understood as potential market opportunities for organic producers and processors, including farmers' markets, buying groups, community-supported agriculture, U-pick operations, street-side food stands, farm shops and internet sales.

It is recommended that OCO establish a small producer caucus within OCO in order to keep in touch with this groups' needs.

4.4 Champion the adoption of an Ontario Regulation to protect organic integrity and increase market share

Objective: Work with OMAFRA to adopt a Provincial Regulation to require certification for any organic claim on food sold intra or inter provincially

Description: After several years of hard won gains by the Sector, our Canada Organic Standard falls short of regulating Intra Provincial trade. Working with OMAFRA to develop a Provincial Regulation provides clarity and trust in the marketplace. Activities include reviewing other jurisdictions' management of intra provincial trade in organic foods.

4.4.1 Work with colleagues across Canada to address small lot certification needs within COS

4.5 Represent Ontario to Organic Value Chain Round Table

Objective: Provide a bridge between Provincial voices and the OVCRT and represent the interests of Ontario Organic enterprises

Description: Participate in annual meetings and on subcommittees or task forces as requested by the Board or the OVCRT.

5. Research and Development for the Organic Sector

5.1 Increasing funding for organic research

Objective:

Increase the number of organic research projects and dedicated organic research funding

Description:

As noted in the Strategic Advisory Committee Report, OMAFRA needs to enhance its organic research. This commitment compliments knowledge transfer program objectives to provide new entry farmers and current organic growers with timely, state of the art research to stay competitive. We recommend development of a strategy that defines organic research with its own defined priority setting process. OMAFRA support is needed to include organic sector research needs in the next Canada Ontario Research and Development program and develop policy for inclusion of organic research in provincial research processes and structures. The sector will work with OMAFRA to develop organic research priorities.

The Organic Sector is the first to receive Federal Science Cluster funding, and OCO will provide input to this group based on consultations within the Sector in Ontario.

Potential Partners:

Organic Council of Ontario, OMAFRA, AAFC, Ontario Organic Research Advisory Committee, Industry partners During the development of this strategic plan, several areas were identified as warranting additional information and consultation in order to identify issues and priorities. The additional considerations below require further consultation with stakeholders before priorities can be set.

5.1.1 Provide briefings and Sectoral priority list for Ontario Research Advisory Committee

5.1.2 Support letters and briefings for Science Cluster on the value of the research for businesses

5.2 Support development of farm-based and processor-based research and mentorship

Objective: Provide opportunities for community-based learning and institution/community partnerships to provide benefits to Sector as a whole

Description: Incredible learning opportunities exist on farm and in the processing plant. The Sector needs to organize and develop supports for businesses in order to increase opportunities for community-based learning/ research that is funded through the institutions.

5.2.1 Network membership with research support programs and university-based research

5.3 Champion environmental research in organic production technologies

Objective: Ensure organic producers receive appropriate supports for production research based on its contribution to improving biodiversity and soil health

Description: The dimple tiller, hoop houses and other low tech/ high productivity technologies are changing the face of organic agriculture. Through targeted research on environmentally sound production technologies (from seed breeding to harvesting to food processing) the Sector can increase productivity.

5.4 Champion environmental impact research – Organics as a Green Technology

Objective: Demonstrate organics as a green technology in order to provide the case for environmental goods and services credits that reflect the impact of organic management specifically

Description: Support for enterprises to access federal dollars for many eco-programs requires demonstrating the investment is in a green technology. Supporting the Sector to describe its activities as “green technology”, and collating the existing literature to support this framing of organic agriculture will help enterprises access “new economy” supports.

5.5 Champion carbon credit and environmental goods and services research

Objective: Support international and national efforts to collate and share data on organic agriculture and environmental goods and service

Description: Rodale Institute reports that organic agriculture may have a greater impact on reducing global warming than re-forestation alone. Ensuring organic producers are able to maximize systems for carbon crediting, environmental goods and services claims and other programs is a priority.

6. Certification Advocacy

Objective: Protecting/Preserving the integrity of the organic brand

Description: Unregulated claims such as “Natural” and “local” threaten to undermine the market for organics, as is the case in the UK. Making the value proposition to the consumer such that they are inspired to support organic agriculture

6.1 Monitor and Enhance the Organic Standard

Objective: Participate on the Technical Review Committee and communicate regularly with CFIA staff about the regulations

Description: The Standard took effect in June of 2009. As a living document, the Standard will be challenged, new information will come to light, and unintended consequences will result inevitably as the Sector moves toward increased harmony. Keeping informed and representing Ontario’s interests in these conversations is essential membership service for OCO.

6.1.1 Support development of Equivalency agreements

6.1.2 Represent Ontario Sector at the Federal level to the OFC

6.2 Reduce Regulatory Barriers for Organic Producers

Objective: Evaluate the regulations in other jurisdictions that conflict with organic production and make recommendations for streamlining processes

Description: Regulations and Policies at the municipal, provincial, marketing board and federal level present challenges for the organic producer. Working with Sectoral partners to identify areas where Policies and Regulations serve as a barrier to organic production and places organic farmers at a competitive disadvantage need to be reviewed.

6.3 Advocate for the protection of the viability of the organic sector in regards to the impact of GMOs

Objective: Ensure choice for farmers throughout Ontario wishing to produce using organic production methods for organic markets at home and abroad at all times

Description:

The organic sector is in jeopardy of losing further foreign markets due to ongoing cross contamination by GMOs. As world markets move increasingly toward GMO-free requirements, Canada is on the wrong track with its lack of both oversight and foresight on the impact of GMOs on other sectors.

Work with partner organizations including NFU, EFAO, COG, Flax Council, and CBAN to pursue Policies and Regulations to protect organic farmers from market losses suffered as a result of cross contamination of organic crops with GMO seeds

Work with partner organizations to increase awareness of GMO alternatives and organic management practices outside the organic community at the producer and consumer levels: FarmStart; Buy Local programs, LFP, Sustain Ontario, Grain Farmers of Ontario, OFA.

7. Member Engagement

7.1 Member Services

Objective: To provide value to the businesses that support our work through service delivery, representation and networking

Description:

Membership benefits include: a representative voice with Federal and Provincial governments, information on organic regulation and certification, access to an organic sector database, updates on government's organic initiatives, relationship building across the organic value-chain, improving access to government funding and grants and participation in building organic infrastructure in Ontario.

7.1.1 Communications

7.1.2 Channel and Voice for Engaged Members

7.1.3 Networking Business Supports

7.2 Annual Ontario Organic Harvest Awards

Objective: To celebrate the achievements of individuals and businesses within the Sector and raise awareness of the contribution our members make to the Province while raising

funds for OCO's work

Description: Create an annual event in Toronto featuring a gourmet meal of Ontario Organic products. Target audience is the committed organic supporter. We will work with a restaurant committed to working with organic foods to develop and promote the event

7.2.1 Engage members in developing industry acknowledgment awards event

7.2.2 Develop scholarship system for Sectors based on annual award results

7.3 Ongoing Board Development

Objective: Ensure the Board understands its roles and responsibilities, and that skills development is seen as a key benefit of participating on the OCO Board

Description:

7.3.1 New Board orientation training

7.3.2 Board Development and Appreciation

7.3.3 Sector representative liase with Sector caucus

7.4 Establish/Development of Sectoral Caucuses

Objective: Increase communications between members and the Board while aiming to reduce unnecessary correspondence

Description: Board members will each Chair the Caucus for their Sector to increase communication and participation of the membership in OCO activities

7.5 Establish/Development of Working Groups

Objective: Establish and maintain active working groups to address specific priorities of the Strategic Plan

Description: OCO membership can support the development of our Sector through their time and skill in supporting the activities of OCO- from Policy development and communications to project development. Engage members as active participants in the direction of their association.

8. Organizational Health

Objective: Ensure a robust, effective organization that provides sound management and leadership to deliver continuity of services membership and OCO's partners have come to expect

Description:

OCO requires strong organizational health in order to maintain priorities, ensure sound management of member and partner resources, and deliver on the expectations the Sector places with OCO- including stewarding the Ontario Organic Strategic Plan

8.1 Develop sound organization infrastructure

Objective:

Description:

8.1.1 Policy and Procedures

8.1.2 HR Committee

(task: develop Staff & Board Roles and Responsibilities, other HR policy)

8.2 Financial Health

Objective:

Description:

8.3 Enhancing Media Relations

Objective: Establish a receptive audience for OCO Press Communications and a Communications Plan for working with the media on campaigns

Description: Increasingly OCO is asked to represent a policy or position amongst the Sector or with the general public. Having firm strategies, templates and processes for communicating with the media is vital to OCO's role as the Sectoral Voice.

Conclusions

The Ontario Organic Strategic Plan 2010-2014 incorporates a value-chain approach to growing the organic sector in Ontario. To be successful, all segments of the value-chain must be addressed and a full package of initiatives must be implemented.

The priorities outlined in this strategy address 5 areas of strategic priority: increasing organic production in Ontario, increasing organic processing in Ontario, marketing Ontario organics to consumers, organic sector analysis and increasing organic research and development. Focusing on all of these elements ensures that even, consistent growth can be achieved within the organic sector in Ontario.

In implementing this 3-year strategy, progress would be made toward achieving the 5-year targets for Ontario: a two-fold market share increase for Ontario organic production, doubling the percentage of the total food and beverage market, doubling the number of organic crop acreage, doubling the number of animals in organic production and doubling the processing capacity in Ontario by 2015.

This Ontario Organic Strategic Plan focuses on barriers to the growth of the Ontario organic sector and recommendations to enable high-quality, competitive Ontario products access to this excellent market opportunity. Facilitating the growth of the Ontario organic industry to meet demand in Ontario is an incredible economic, environmental and agricultural opportunity that will lend strength to the broader infrastructure of Ontario agriculture and to rural farming communities.