

BC Organic Regulations: A Tool Kit for Farmers' Market Managers

This document is a practical tool kit for market managers to understand and support new certified organic marketing requirements.

On September 1st 2018, the B.C. government implemented new regulations regarding organic labelling.

Now, all products sold in B.C. that are marketed as, or use the word “organic”, must be certified through either provincial or federal programs. For consumers, the new regulations provide increased confidence that they are buying food that is produced according to certified organic standards. For producers, new rules clear up any confusion about what can and cannot be labelled as organic.



Example of uniform signage used by Vancouver Farmers' Markets

The regulations apply to any goods that are currently certifiable in B.C. such as food and beverage products, flowers, and seed. Processors who have not been certified cannot label their products as organic. However, they can use the word “organic” in the ingredients list (e.g.: organic flour, organic raisins, salt) provided they have obtained proof that the producers of those ingredients have been certified and the ingredient list follows all CFIA regulations including font, location, and legibility requirements. The word organic cannot be included anywhere else on the labelling of the product, including any claims saying “made with organic ingredients” or using the ingredients list in an inappropriate location (ie. putting it on your market banner). Due diligence means that proof of certification is necessary. All forms of the term “organic” fall under the new regulation so phrases like “Uncertified Organic, or Organic Practices” cannot be used. Any uncertified operators who claim their goods are organic face penalties, and possibly a \$350 fine.

For Market Managers:

Farmers' market managers have a chance to help both vendors and market customers by supporting procedures that make it easy to identify certified organic producers. Note that farmers' markets are not liable for claims made by their vendors.

The following is a brief step-by-step guide to help farmers' markets support the new organics labelling regulations, and applies to farmers, producers, and vendors selling prepared foods at farmers' markets:

1. Familiarize yourself with the [2018 Organic Policy Update](#).
2. Any vendors who wish to market their products as organic should submit proof of their certification to market staff, and should keep copies of this certification in their stall during sales hours. Vendors can choose to display their certification or keep it on hand if anyone inquires.
3. Do not allow anyone to display or use the word “organic” in their marketing if they do not have the proper certification to back up their claims.
4. Rely on the expertise of approved certification bodies (see list at the end of this guide). Do not try to make assessments of organic content on your own. This is especially important for prepared food products, where certification can be confusing.
5. Change any necessary market rules regarding who can and cannot use the word “organic” in their marketing.
6. Consider creating a uniform sign to inform customers that a vendor has organic certification on file with your market. Include your market’s logo as a shorthand way to signify that the market has verified a vendor’s organic certification. Vendors can display these signs to help consumers identify growers who are certified organic (see above for an example from Vancouver Farmers Markets). This makes it easy for customers to quickly identify which vendors are certified organic.

Check for either of the following symbols of certification:



For products marketing exclusively in B.C.



For products marketed beyond B.C.

Current B.C. Certification Bodies
(Available on the [Certified Organic Associations of B.C. website](#))

BCARA (COR)
British Columbia Association for
Regenerative Agriculture
<http://bcara.ca/>

FVOPA (COR)
Fraser Valley Organic Producers
www.fvopa.ca

KOGS (Regional)
Kootenay Organic Growers Society
<http://kogs.bc.ca/>

NOOA (Regional)
North Okanagan Organic Association
www.nooa.ca

SOOPA (Regional)
Similkameen Okanagan Organic Producers
Association
www.soopa.ca

BDASBC (Regional)
Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Society of British
Columbia
www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/cb/bdasbc.php

IOPA (Regional)
Islands Organic Producers Association
www.iopa.ca

LEOGA (Regional)
Living Earth Organic Growers
www.leoga.ca

PACS (COR)
Pacific Agricultural Certification Society
www.pacscertifiedorganic.ca

Most farmers' market vendors will be certified in BC only. For a complete list of federal certification bodies you can review the CFIA certification website.

Dealing with Violations or Complaints

Any concerns or complaints should be forwarded to the Ministry of Agriculture by contacting 1 (888) 221-7141, or AgriServiceBC@gov.bc.ca where staff can determine if the complaint warrants further investigation.

This document was created by the B.C. Association of Farmers' Markets and B.C. Ministry of Agriculture:

