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An Overview of Organic Standards and Certification Around the World

*This paper is part of a series of documents written about organic certification, accreditation and related issues. The information contained in this paper came primarily from a thesis written by Erin Sawyer, which is titled *The Economic Impacts of Harmonizing Organic Standards Internationally*. This document seeks to provide an overview of organic standards and certification around the world for individuals not familiar with these processes.*

Introduction

In order to understand how equivalency agreements and harmonization can potentially facilitate trade between Canada and its trading partners, some understanding of organic agriculture and the current state of certification systems around the world is necessary. This paper explains the need for certification and summarizes both domestic and international certification programs in various jurisdictions. The paper begins with an examination of organic standards and the role they play in verifying organic authenticity to consumers. The second section of the paper provides an overview of certification systems around the world, and highlights specific differences between the EU and US systems. The third section of the paper discusses the role of international organizations in organic certification, and the final section is conclusions.

Organic Standards, Labels and Certification Processes

Standards and Labels

Organic production and processing is based on strict standards, and information pertaining to these standards is conveyed by labels. Standards and labels instill confidence in consumers, lend credibility to organic claims, provide protection to the organic industry, and lower transaction costs¹.

Organic standards differ between nations and regions. Prior to the involvement of government bodies, individual private organizations or farmer-based groups established standards with which to guide their production practices. As technology and consumer demands changed, these standards were updated. As governments become more involved in the organic industry, national standards are becoming more prevalent. National standards can be voluntary or

¹ Transaction costs can be defined as costs associated with carrying out an exchange. These costs include searching for a partner to exchange with, and negotiating, monitoring and enforcing the terms of exchange.

mandatory; however, most regulations require producers to be registered with an approved, independent certification body before they can label their product as “organic”. Facilitating trade is the primary motivation for government involvement in the regulation of organic standards.

In general, labels are instruments that convey information to consumers regarding standards. In the case of organic foods, labels indicate to consumers that a product was produced using organic techniques, in accordance with an organic standard. Organic products are credence goods, which means that consumers cannot tell how the product was produced even after purchase and consumption of the good. Labels are therefore used to inform consumers of the organic qualities of a product prior to purchase, and to justify the price premium that organic goods receive. Standards and labels can increase consumer confidence in the organic industry and can help protect and promote the industry.

Standardization also helps to reduce transaction costs by creating a common and identifiable definition of the term “organic”. This reduces search and monitoring costs associated with verifying organic authenticity (McCluskey 2000). In a case where many standards prevail in a market, consumers must spend time determining the standard(s) that they prefer. In this regard, a single standard would reduce consumer confusion and may encourage increased participation in the organic market. In a similar way, reductions in transaction costs also apply to importers, as a single standard would eliminate the need to verify numerous certification standards.

In the context of the global organic industry, it is important to remember that organic standards differ depending on the technical, philosophical and cost factors present in a country or region (Lohr and Krissoff 2002). Casella (1996b, p.5) states that “organic standards reflect the needs of the groups that expressed them”. If the needs and groups differ, then so will the standards. It is also believed that organic standards should reflect the environmental conditions of the region. Therefore, standards that are considered good for a Saskatchewan farmer may not be appropriate for a farmer in Sub-Saharan Africa. Although such differences are expected by the organic industry, they can limit access to markets and inhibit international trade.

It is evident from this discussion that standards and labels are necessary for the survival of the organic industry. While a unified or national standard helps protect the term “organic”, as well as provide information and reduce costs to consumers, the fact that standards differ across borders may make them difficult to harmonize. Currently, more emphasis is placed on conferring equivalency rather than harmonization. Equivalency allows goods from different countries to be treated equally even though standards followed when producing those goods may not be identical.

Organic Certification

In the context of the organic industry, certification can be defined as the process by which the organic attributes of products are authenticated prior to being purchased. Price premiums earned on organic products can entice non-organic producers to mislabel their

conventional products as organic in order to increase returns. Consumers may be aware of potential mislabeling and may refrain from purchasing organic products unless some guarantee is provided. Certification by an independent body enables consumers to verify that a product conforms to specific standards.

As will be seen later on in this document, certification programs have evolved differently around the world. In countries without national regulatory program, producers can often choose from many different certifiers, each with their own set of standards. In countries with a national program, producers must choose among certifiers that have been accredited through a national accreditation body, be it private or public. Firms can also choose to be certified through foreign entities (Lohr and Krissoff 2002). Foreign entities can include certification bodies within importing countries or international certification organizations. In order to increase market access for their producers, it is quite common for local certification bodies to have partnerships with international bodies (Jacobsen 2002). This partnership can facilitate the smooth flow of products across borders.

Rapid growth in international trade in organic products has led exporters to develop improved certification strategies in an attempt to reduce transaction costs. According to Lohr and Krissoff (2002), these strategies include:

- using an independent local certifier accredited under the international certification process standards of ISO guide 65 (discussed more fully later in section 2.6.3)
- using a local branch of an accredited international certifier
- using local certifiers that have partnered with accredited international entities
- using an international certifier or an entity in the importing country approved for 3rd party certifications
- subcontracting to processors or distributors certified in the importing country

Many certification agencies are accredited by a national government body or an international organization. Accreditation ensures that the certification agency is complying with the standards it set out to enforce. When a certification agency has not developed its own standards, it will be accredited by accreditors whose standards it has adopted.

Certification around the World

Certification programs, like standards, also differ around the world. This section of the paper summarizes the different government certification systems in Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, the European Union (EU) and the United States (US). These countries were chosen due to their significant role in the world organic market.

Australia

The value of organic production in Australia has increased from \$28 million to \$250 million between 1990 and 1999. The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), which is a division of the department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia, oversees organic certification in Australia. AQIS operates its organic certification program under the legal framework provided by the Export

Control Act of 1982 and the Export Control Orders of 1997. Australia was one of the first countries to establish national standards for organics. The National Standards for Organic and Biodynamic Produce were published in 1992 by the Organic Product Advisory Council (OPAC). The standards were initially implemented to regulate the export market for organics, however, in 1998, a second edition was published and implemented that regulates domestic production and consumption (Australian Quarantine and Inspection Services 1998). Australia has been granted equivalency status by the EU and is on the Article 11 list².

The certification procedure in Australia proceeds as follows. AQIS approves and audits private inspection agencies. Each private inspection body submits its own private standards or "Quality Management Manual" to AQIS who then ensures that the standards meet the minimum requirements laid out by the National Standards. If the standards receive the approval of AQIS, the inspection agency is registered as an "Approved Certifying Organization" and is issued a "Quality Management Certificate". These certifying organizations are audited annually by AQIS. If the body is found lacking in some area AQIS will file "Corrective Action Requests" with the certification agent. In turn, certifying agents also inspect producers annually, usually around the same time each year and never unannounced.

Canada

The organic market is expanding in Canada, with the number of organic producers

increasing by 100% between 1995 and 2003 (Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, 2004). As a result of the industry's growth, Canada implemented a national organic standard in 1999 that is administered by the Standards Council of Canada. The standard differs from most other government standards in that it is voluntary rather than mandatory. It is based on the guidelines developed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission for the "Production, Processing, Marketing and Labelling of Organically Produced Foods" and the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) uses ISO 65 as its basis for accreditation (Bradley 2002). It should be noted that the voluntary Canadian standards apply only to domestic production and there is no regulation of imported organics.

Due to the voluntary nature of Canada's organic standards, there has been little movement by organic certifiers to become accredited under the national program. The accreditation costs are high, and there are currently few benefits from joining the national program. The base application fee is \$15,000 CDN. In addition, it costs \$1,000 per day for each government employee who works on documents related to the application. If certifying agencies applied prior to December 31, 2003, they were eligible to receive a 50% reimbursement of up to \$25,000. After a body has been approved there is an annual fee of \$9,000 plus 0.0025 multiplied by the certification body's gross annual revenue, with fees not to exceed \$45,000 (Bradley 2002). There are approximately 45 organic certifying organizations practicing in Canada (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2002). Two provinces, Quebec and British Columbia, have established provincial

² The Article 11 list is a list of countries and certifying agencies that have been granted equivalency by the EU. A more thorough explanation will be given later in section 2.5.3.

accreditation bodies. Certifiers in these provinces, respectively, must be accredited with the Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia or the Conseil d'Accréditation du Québec. The remainder of the Canadian provinces do not have regulations requiring that products labeled "organic" abide by strict production practices.

Currently, to obtain certification in Canada³, a farmer must complete an application form that includes specific details of the farm operation. An organic inspector then inspects the farm. The inspector's report is passed on to a certification committee who reviews the file and makes a decision based on the findings. If approved, the producer is given a producer number to be used on all bills of lading and labels (Saskatchewan Organic Directorate 2002).

In order to become accredited by the Standards Council of Canada, the certification body must first make an informal inquiry about becoming accredited and then submit an application package. There is a pre-assessment and then upon completion of the application the SCC notifies the applicant of any deficiencies. An on-site assessment is conducted in order to ensure compliance with the SCC standards. The SCC Director of Conformity Assessment then reviews the application and decides whether or not to recommend the applicant to the Board of Directors, with whom the final decision rests.

³ This information is from the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate. There may be slight differences across certification bodies-both private and public, i.e. COABC and Conseil d'Accréditation du Québec.

The European Union

Europe represents one of the fastest growing markets for organic products in the world, expanding by approximately 25% per year (McDonald, 2001). Basic regulations for the European Union's (EU) organic standards are laid out in Council Regulation No. 2092/91, which was adopted in June 1991 (European Commission 2001). These standards are fashioned after the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement's (IFOAM) Basic Standards. Within the EU, each member state must establish an inspection system that can be run by either private or public inspection or certification bodies or both (Jacobsen 2002). The Regulation gives guidelines for the production of organic crops in the EU (European Commission 2001). Regulation (EEC) No. 1804/1999 applies to organic livestock products (European Commission 2001). Upon implementation of these regulations by the European Commission, it became illegal to sell non-certified organic products in the EU (Barrett et al. 2002).

There are several ways an organic exporter can sell products in the EU. First, the exporter's domestic government can establish an equivalency agreement with the EU. Once equivalency has been negotiated, the country will be placed on the Article 11 list (granted "third country" status). As of July 2002, there were only 7 countries on this list: Argentina, Australia, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Israel, New Zealand and Hungary (Jacobsen 2002). Until December 31st 2005, organic goods from countries not on the article 11 list can still be imported into the EU using one of two methods. Article 11(6) states that individual member countries have the right to issue import permits

for specific consignments from countries not on the article 11 list, on a case by case basis, depending on their adherence to the EU standard. Article 11(7) also allows a member state to add a 'third country inspection body' to the Article 11 list. This has been interpreted differently by member states, however, as some claim that it implies that inspection agencies from countries not on the article 11 list can be approved, while others claim that it means that only individual inspection bodies from countries on the list can be approved (Barrett et al. 2002).

Japan

Japan's organic market was estimated to be worth US \$2.5 billion in retail sales in 2000 (Food and Agriculture Organization 2003). Organic food in Japan is classified into three categories: Naturally Grown Chickens, Organic Agricultural Products and Organic Agricultural Products Processed Food (Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries 2000a). In April 2001, the Japanese government implemented its new organic regulations for plant-based products (Jacobsen 2002). Organic products must carry the mark of the Japanese Agriculture Standard (JAS) (Jacobsen 2002). Moreover, certification bodies must become Registered Certification Organizations (RCOs) under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. These RCOs certify production process managers, manufacturers, and importers. RCOs are also required to educate farm managers on the certification and inspection process so that producers can carry out the correct grading (Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries 2000a).

In Japan, in order to qualify to be an inspector or certifier, one must have attained a certain level of education within a specific field (Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries 2000b). Inspectors conduct an initial inspection, as well as annual inspections. Two or more people are required for inspections, depending on the size of the site, whereas only one person is needed to judge the application (Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries 2000b). If an applicant is certified, the head of the Certification Organization will then issue the certificate (Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries 2000a). Certification is granted for each individual field rather than the farm as a whole. Once a field is certified, the farmer can raise organic crops (Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries 2000a). Oddly, an RCO has the authority to grant certification standing but does not have the ability to cancel it. In order to cancel a certification, the RCO must report the infraction to the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries who will then take the appropriate action (Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries 2000a).

Under the Japanese system, it is possible for foreign bodies to become Registered Certification Organizations. However, the organization must be in a country that has negotiated equivalency with Japan. Both the U.S. and the EU are recognized as being equivalent by Japan's MAFF; the EU for organic production and certification and the US for plant-based organic products. The EU's standing permits certification bodies to apply for direct recognition of their certification programs, while

US products can be labeled as organic in Japan (Jacobsen 2002).

New Zealand

The organic industry in New Zealand is divided into two sectors; the first targets the export market and the second, the domestic market (New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries 1997). There are four certification bodies within New Zealand. BioGro and AgriQuality certify large organic producers, while Aotearoa certifies small-scale organic producers and Demeter certifies biodynamic producers (biodynamic agriculture promotes sowing, cultivation and harvesting timed to cosmic rhythms) (US Foreign Agricultural Service 2000). Both AgriQuality and BioGro's certification programs are based on ISO 65 (US Foreign Agricultural Service 2000).

BioGro's current certification system involves an annual inspection by an inspector⁴. The results of the inspection are then discussed at a meeting of regional inspectors where decisions are made collectively regarding the certification status of the property (New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 1997). The Board of Directors can make changes to the standards at any time, however, every two years a review is conducted and all participants are invited to submit suggested revisions (New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 1997).

Until 2001, the government in New Zealand had little involvement in the development of the organic industry. There were ongoing discussions with the Ministry of

Agriculture and Forestry regarding "the need for MAF Regulatory Authority assistance in providing government to government recognition of the certifying agencies" (New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 1997). As well, the Ministry of Commerce and the certification bodies had discussed the need for protection of the term "organic" in food labelling (New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 1997).

In March 2001, MAF released a draft of their proposed official assurance program for organic products (New Zealand Food and Safety Authority 2001). The program is targeted at organic exports destined for the EU. In 2002, the New Zealand Food Safety Authority launched its Assurance Programme for Organic Products (New Zealand Food and Safety Authority 2002). In July 2002, New Zealand succeeded in gaining third country status with the EU (Jacobsen 2002). This guarantees access to the European market for New Zealand exports. Japan is also a key market for New Zealand's exports, and private certification bodies are trying to create relationships with Japanese certifying organizations to ensure New Zealand products meet the new Japanese regulations (US Foreign Agricultural Service 2000).

The United States

The United States' National Organic Program (NOP) was implemented in 2002. Its rules require all but the smallest producers and handlers (those with under \$5000 in annual sales) to be certified by a state or private accredited certification body (Economic Research Service 2002). The United States Department of Agriculture will accredit state, private and foreign organizations or persons who

⁴ There was little information on AgriQuality's certification program, but as both systems are based on ISO 65, it is expected to be similar.

comply with the NOP regulations for the production and certification of organic agriculture (USDA 2003a).

According to the NOP, a person wishing to receive or maintain organic certification must have an up-to-date organic production system plan, must permit on-site inspections, must maintain all applicable records for at least 5 years, and immediately notify their certification agent if a prohibited substance is applied (USDA 2003b). An initial inspection is performed, followed by annual inspections thereafter. The certification body can also conduct additional unannounced inspections. After the initial inspection, the certifying agent will notify the operator if they have received certification. If they have not, they will receive a notice of noncompliance or a denial of certification. If a notice of noncompliance is issued, the producer can correct the problem and reapply either with the same certification firm or with a different agency, however, the notification of noncompliance must be included in the application. A producer applying for certification is also able to withdraw their application at any time. Once certified, organic certification will continue until it is surrendered, suspended or revoked (USDA 2003b).

Since the establishment of the NOP, the US requires that all agricultural products sold, labeled or represented as organic in the US must be certified by a USDA accredited certifying agent, with two exceptions. First, foreign government bodies can apply for USDA Recognition of a Foreign Governments Conformity Assessment Program. Presently, this recognition has been granted to New Zealand's MAF, the Conseil d'Accréditation du Québec, the

Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia, UKROFS (United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards) and the government of Denmark (USDA 2003c). There are ongoing negotiations to permit additional bodies into this category. Second, USDA accreditation is not needed if equivalency has been determined. The US is presently working to establish equivalency with four jurisdictions: Japan, the European Union, India and Australia (USDA 2003c).

Differences in Organic Regulations in the US vs. the EU

Certification processes in the US and the EU are similar; however, there are several differences in standards that may make it difficult for equivalency to be established. These include differences in consumer perceptions, differences in farm practices, differences in defining terms and differences in the specificity of the standards.

The US primarily focuses on regulating the final organic product. This differs from the EU approach of regulating the entire production process (Haniotis 2000). US policies tend to be supply driven (i.e. demanded by the producer), while the EU policies are driven by consumer demands. There is a great divide between consumer perceptions of government bodies in the EU and in the US. US consumers tend to trust the government, while recent food safety scares have led EU consumers to become more risk averse on issues of food safety and more distrustful of the government (Haniotis 2000).

There are also differences between production standards. The EU prohibits growing organic and non-organic crops of the same variety on the same production unit; the US does

not. The NOP requires producers to notify certifiers immediately if prohibited substances are applied; the EU does not. In order to determine what statement can be used on the label, the US has provided clear guidelines for the calculation of the “organicness” of the product while the EU does not (Riddle and Coody 2002). Under the US system, at least 95% of the total ingredients must be organic, while under EU regulations only 95% of agricultural ingredients must be organic (Riddle and Coody 2002). This EU method of calculation may therefore result in products being labeled organic when less than 95% of the total ingredients are actually produced organically. Finally, the EU has less specific evaluation criteria for crop and livestock products than does the US. This lack of specificity could result in less restrictive criteria.

International Organizations

In addition to the national organizations discussed above, many international organizations are central to regulating the global organic industry. This trend is expected to continue, as global trade in organic products is increasing. Specifically, there are four organizations that are directly involved in organic standards and certification processes. These organizations include the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CODEX), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN/FAO). This section of the paper examines the roles that each of these international organizations play in the development of the organic industry.

International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) was established in France in 1972. In general terms, it is a non-profit organization that aims to be a worldwide umbrella organization of the organic agriculture movement (IFOAM 2003). Specifically, it aims to assist in the exchange of knowledge and expertise, represent the organic movement internationally, set and revise basic standards and contribute towards an international guarantee of organic quality (IFOAM 2003). In 1992, IFOAM established the IFOAM Accreditation Program to accredit certifying bodies active in certifying organic agriculture around the world (Commins 2002).

Since 1997, this accreditation program has been run by the International Organic Accreditation Service (IOAS) an independent accreditation non-profit organization (Commins 2002). The IOAS is a service company and one of its stated aims is “to make its services available to outside interested parties including government agencies involved in the establishment of state and supranational regulations” (Commins 2002). The IFOAM seal was launched in 1999 and designates the accreditation status of certification bodies around the world (Commins 2002).

An IOAS inspector will visit certification bodies wishing to become accredited through the IOAS. The inspection examines the documentation and workplace of the certifier. Upon receipt of the inspector’s report, an accreditation committee will be responsible for accreditation decisions and for monitoring the

continued compliance of accredited certification bodies (Commins 2002).

There are several advantages to IFOAM's accreditation program. Most notably, the IOAS is able to draw on expertise from all over the world, it eliminates the worry about trusting certifiers in foreign countries because it is not associated with any one country and it has no territory (except organic territory) to protect (Commins 2002).

In October 1999, IFOAM Accredited Certification Bodies signed a multi-lateral agreement (MLA) that created a mechanism to allow acceptance of products between the various certification bodies (Simmons 2002). The acceptance is based on the fact that all bodies certified through IFOAM must have standards at least equivalent to the IFOAM Basic Standards (Simmons 2002). All signatories of this agreement have agreed to process request for exchanges of organic products within 48 hours. This MLA can be considered a first step towards harmonization of organic certification systems.

Codex Alimentarius Commission

The Codex Alimentarius Commission was established in 1962 as a joint Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)/World Health Organization (WHO) intergovernmental body. Its objectives include protecting consumer health and facilitating international trade in food through the harmonization of food standards (Doyran 2002). The term Codex Alimentarius is Latin meaning food law or code. The Codex is a consortium of scientists from all over the world who work together to establish international standards. The Technical Barriers to Trade

Agreement of the World Trade Organization requires member countries to harmonize national standards with international standards when they exist. There are, however, exceptions to this provision. For example, adoption is not expected when the international standard would be inappropriate or ineffective in the national setting (Doyran 2002). It is understood among member countries that the WTO may use these guidelines established by the Codex to settle trade disputes over differing standards.

Two committees of the Codex Commission are responsible for developing guidelines on the production and certification of organic products, including the Committee on Food Labelling and the Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (Jacobsen 2002). The Codex Committee on Food Labelling initially developed the Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Marketing and Labelling of Organically Produced Foods (Food and Agriculture Organization 2001). The purpose of these guidelines is to facilitate harmonization of organic certification at the international level and to assist governments who wish to create regulations for organic production (Food and Agriculture Organization 2001). These guidelines were adopted in the 23rd session of Codex in 1999; however, livestock and livestock products were initially exempted from the guidelines. It was not until the 24th session, in 2001, that guidelines concerning livestock, livestock products, bee-keeping and bee products were included. The Principles for Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification state that import requirements should be based on the principles of equivalency and transparency, which are also two of the

major principles of the WTO (Food and Agriculture Organization 2001).

The development of standards for organic production and trade by Codex could be an important step in the formation of a common understanding of the term “organic”. With the creation of its guidelines, Codex hopes to contribute to the harmonization of provisions for production, certification, identification and labelling of organically grown produce and to help facilitate mutual recognition of national certification programs (Food and Agriculture Organization 2001).

International Organization of Standardization (ISO)

The International Organization for Standardization or ISO (which means equal in Greek) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies from more than 140 countries (International Organization for Standardization 2003). It was established in 1947 and is a non-governmental organization whose primary goals are “to facilitate international exchange of goods and services and to develop cooperation in the spheres of intellectual, scientific, technological and economic activity” (International Organization for Standardization 2003). While ISO has not published guides or standards relating specifically to organic production, many nations use ISO Guide 65: “General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems”, which was implemented in 1996, when developing national certification programs (Jacobsen 2002). This cohesion helps facilitate equivalency negotiations between countries.

UN/FAO

The United Nations’ Conference on Trade and Development and the Food and Agriculture Organization have joined forces with IFOAM to create the International Task Force of Harmonization and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture (ITF). The first meeting of this task force was held on February 18, 2003 in Nürnberg, Germany (ITF, 2003). There it was determined that the ITF will review the existing standards, regulations and conformity assessment systems of the global organic industry (International Task Force 2003). The examination will assess the impact that variances in organic programs may have on trade in organic agricultural products, as well as inspect the models and mechanisms of equivalence and mutual recognition, and will determine the extent to which international harmonization has already occurred (International Task Force 2003).

International organizations are playing a major role in the development of organic standards and certification programs around the globe. Many countries and certification bodies model their standards after those of IFOAM or ISO. This replication creates similarities between certification systems across borders, which should facilitate the international harmonization of organic certification.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a summary of existing certification programs around the world and has attempted to demonstrate the importance of standards and certification programs to the organic industry. Many players within the Canadian organic industry are calling for the

negotiation of equivalency agreements and/or the harmonization of certification programs in order to facilitate trade. The voluntary nature of Canada's organic standard might prevent this from occurring, however, as most of Canada's trading partners have mandatory standards in place.