

STARTER KIT



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pivot
transition to organic grains

THE ORGANIC ADVANTAGE

Consumers are hungry for organics. Since 2006, the Canadian organic food market has tripled in value. With more than 20 million consumers buying organic products weekly, it's clear that consumers have bought into this healthier and more sustainable lifestyle.

As an organic farmer, you'll rely on energy-efficient and cost-effective fertilizers and pesticides, such as manure and legumes. And, when it comes to harvest time, your organic crops will be worth much more than their conventional counterparts. Combine these lowered costs and price premiums, and you uncover a healthier bottom line.



\$2.8 BN

in annual Canadian organic food sales



\$458 MN

in annual Canadian organic exports



58%

of Canadian consumers buy organic products every week



Demand for organic products has been growing at 20% per year yet we haven't seen an increase in organic producers over the past 3 years.

*Source:
Organic Advantage. Grain Production, Organic Value Chain Roundtable*

5 REASONS WHY TRANSITIONING TO ORGANIC GRAIN MAKES BUSINESS SENSE

Lower costs, increased profitability.

1

Inputs like synthetic fertilizer and pesticides are not relied upon.

2

Less investment per acre to grow an organic crop.

3

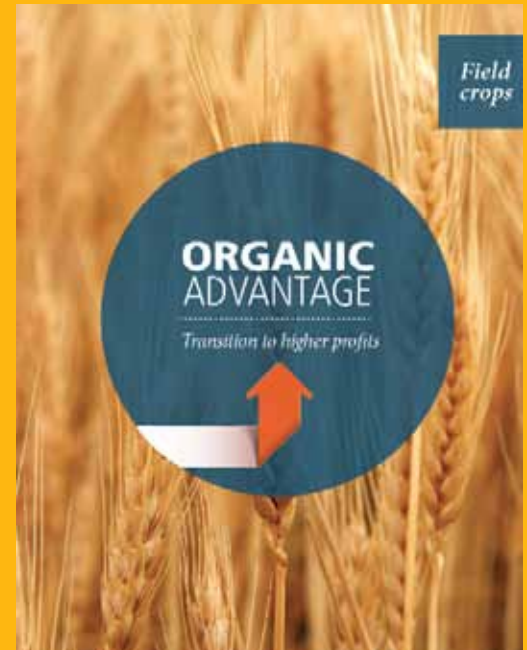
30% and 50% less energy is required per acre when all energy sources are accounted for.

4

High quality organic crops receive premium prices (generally 1.5 – 3.0 times higher than those for conventional)

5

Combining lower costs with price premiums results in a healthier bottom line.



[Download the full report](#)

Source:
Organic Advantage. Grain Production, Organic Value Chain Roundtable

The economic advantages of entering the organic market.
W. Hamm & H. Martin (revised January 2015)



MAKE A NATURAL PROGRESSION

The decision is yours. You don't have to convert your whole farm at once. Many producers start with one or two fields, and create a plan to transition their whole farm over time.

Or on the other hand, you may choose to make a faster transition and take advantage of higher profit margins.

Whatever you choose, Pivot has the knowledge base and resources to help your farm become more profitable.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Interested in becoming an organic farmer? Your transition has the potential to protect and improve your farm's soil health, protect the environment, and support your family through improved profitability.

SUCCESSFUL PRODUCTION PRACTICES

Soil Fertility in Organic Farming

It all starts with building healthy soil. Successful organic farming is based on using carefully planned multi-year crop rotations and boosting soil organic matter with green manuring and adding compost. We are ready to help guide you, with the latest research and excellent resources on best management practices for organic production.

But What About The Weeds?!

It's true that weed management is probably the biggest challenge faced by organic producers. While an organic field will never be 100% weed-free, the organic approach involves a suite of techniques to prevent weeds from adversely affecting crop yields. Successful management techniques for weed control include crop rotation, careful timing of tillage and/or seeding, innovative tillage methods, clipping tall weeds growing above shorter crops, intercropping, etc. We are ready to share many resources in the form of research and stores to help you learn more about how can manage weeds on your farm, based on the success of other farmers like you.

Pests and Diseases

Improving soil quality, making use of crop rotations and encouraging the presence of beneficial insects helps organic producers reduce pests and prevent disease. We can help by sharing a variety of resources so you have the management knowledge you'll need.

We highly recommend that you attend workshops, conferences or other producer training sessions. The information you can glean by talking with your peers and researchers is invaluable.

GETTING CONNECTED

Keep up to date on upcoming events and workshops at www.pivotandgrow.com.



BECOMING CERTIFIED

Transitioning from conventional to organic takes 36 months from the last application of a prohibited substance to when a certified organic crop can be harvested. This typically means two or three years of transitional crops following the last conventional crop before the first certified organic crop is harvested depending on when during the growing season the last prohibited substance was applied. If it was in the spring, it may be two years and if it was in the fall it would be closer to three years.



THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Each organic farmer must certify with an accredited certification body. The certification body oversees the certification process and verifies that organic products are compliant with the Canadian Organic Standards.

Maintaining certification year-to-year requires annually providing the certifier with your detailed production plan, having an inspection and reviewing of your business. Aspects of your business that are found non-compliant with the organic standard must be resolved before your business can be granted organic status by the certifier.

TRANSITION PERIOD = TIME BETWEEN THE START OF ORGANIC MANAGEMENT AND CERTIFICATION

LAND MUST BE FREE FROM SUBSTANCES PROHIBITED IN ORGANIC PRODUCTION FOR 36 MONTHS PRIOR TO THE INITIAL HARVEST OF AN ORGANIC CROP

CHOOSE A CERTIFYING BODY

Submit your application to a certification body no later than 15 months before you intend to market your first organic harvest.

BEGIN ORGANIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Depending on input & management history transition period may be shortened

YOUR INPUT AND MANAGEMENT HISTORY MATTER, THE SOONER ORGANIC MANAGEMENT BEGINS, THE SOONER YOU CAN ACHIEVE ORGANIC STATUS.



CERTIFYING BODIES

AOPA – Alberta Organic Producers Association

Contact: Kathy Petterson
1-780-939-5808
aopa@cruzinternet.com
www.albertaorganicproducers.org

CCPB

Contact:
+39 071 7916311
cpb@ccpb.it
http://www.ccpb.it/

CSI

Contact: Danielle Fletcher
dfletcher@csi-ics.com
1-855-831-1313 (Western Provinces)
www.csi-ics.com

ECOCERT

Contact: Jennifer and Natalie Bromm
1-306-665-9072
jennifer.bromm@ecocert.com
natalie.bromm@ecocert.com
www.ecocertcanada.com

GOA – Global Organic Alliance

Contact:
Betty Kananen
1-937-593-1232
goaorg@centurylink.net
www.goa-online.org

ICS – International Certification Services

Contact:
1-701-486-3578
info@ics-intl.com
www.ics-intl.com

LETIS

Contact: Ingrid Clausen
iclausen@letis.org
http://www.letis.org/

OCIA International-Canada

Contact: Marg Laberge
1-780-851-9482
mlaberge@ocia.org
www.ocia.org

OPAM – Organic Producers Association of Manitoba

Contact:
1-204-567-3745
info@opam-mb.com
www.opam-mb.com

Oregon Tilth

Contact:
1-877-378-0690
organic@tilth.org
https://tilth.org/

PACS Certified Organic – Pacific Agricultural Certification Society

Contact:
1-250-558-7927
admin@pacscertifiedorganic.ca
www.pacscertifiedorganic.ca

Pro-Cert Organic Systems

Contact:
1-306-382-1299
info@pro-cert.org
www.pro-cert.org

QAI - Quality Assurance International

Contact:
1-858-200-9708
qai@qai-inc.com
www.qai-inc.com

TCO Cert - Trans Canada Organic Certification Services

Contact: Art Hesje
1-306-682-3126
info@tcocert.ca
www.TCOCert.ca

ORGANIC STANDARDS

Canada's Organic Standards are Federal regulations that provide organic certification requirements. The standards, which cover production practices and permitted substances, are updated every five years.



**DOWNLOAD THE
CANADIAN ORGANIC
PRODUCTION STANDARD**



**DOWNLOAD THE
PERMITTED SUBSTANCES
LISTS**



HOW TO DEVELOP AN ORGANIC PLAN

WHAT IS AN ORGANIC PLAN AND WHY DO I NEED ONE?

Section 4 of the Canadian Organic Standard (COS) requires all organic operators to have an organic plan which provides details related to transition, production, preparation and management. Creating an organic plan can be a valuable exercise for your overall business planning and management.

The organic certification bodies have made building an organic plan easy for you – they have designed their questionnaires to gather all of the information required by the COS. In addition to asking you detailed questions, they will also provide a list of supporting documentation required.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN AN ORGANIC PLAN?

- **A MAP OF THE FARM**
- **FIELD HISTORIES**
- **INPUT DETAILS**
- **PRODUCTION PRACTICES**
- **CONTAMINATION RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**
- **RECORD KEEPING**
- **PLANNED SCHEDULE FOR TRANSITIONING**

YOUR PRACTICES & PROCEDURES

Describe your farm, answering questions such as the following:

- What crops will you plant this year? What crop rotations, and/or intercropping is taking place on your farm this year?
- What soil building methods will you implement this year?
- What weed and pest problems do you anticipate, and how will you manage them?
- What strategies will you use to protect your crops from being contaminated or commingling with non-organic sources, both in the field, in storage and in transport?
- Where do you source your seed?
- If you irrigate, is your water source compliant with the organic standard?
- What kind of living conditions do you have for your livestock?
- What do you feed them?
- How do you ensure they stay healthy?
- What do you do if they get sick?

Your organic plan must be updated every year to reflect changes in your management practices, any problems you may have had, and what you did to help solve those problems.

RECORD-KEEPING

Keeping good records is the foundation for an organic plan. It doesn't have to be daunting. The most crucial thing is that you must be able to provide documentation that what you are doing in your operation complies with the standard.

Record keeping is a matter of creating a habit and style that works for you: you can keep a daily log or use a calendar to write down what you've done each day, for example, or use a spreadsheet.

The documentation trail must be able to be used to track each organic crop, in terms of the seed used, the fields planted, any equipment or materials involved in planting, harvesting, handling, storage and transport. Your records are the basis for verifying that you've done everything possible to protect the organic integrity of your crops at each stage those crops were under your control. If you are a livestock producer you will keep birth and feed records as well as tracking any treatments you may have used, either homeopathic or other. These records must be kept for at least 5 years.

When an organic inspector comes to your farm for its annual inspection, he or she is tasked with confirming if your records accurately represent the activity taking place on your farm. The organic inspector will visit your fields and barns, and look at your equipment and storage facilities as part of verifying if you are following the standard and maintaining organic integrity throughout your production process.

COSTS TO TRANSITION

*Transition and production costs will vary from farm to farm.
Calculating and knowing your costs will help you determine your transition plan.*



**COSTS OF
PRODUCTION**

**CERTIFICATION
COSTS**

**PRICE
EXPECTATIONS**

*Find cost of production resources and current organic prices at
www.pivotandgrow.com*

FARMER STORIES

Visit www.pivotandgrow.com to read stories of farmers who have made the transition from conventional to organic grain production. Learn about their success, challenges, and experience.



SCOTT OLSEN, MAYERTHORPE AB

The biggest thing to overcome is everyone telling you it's a bad idea. They say "you won't get any grain, you might get 15 bushels of nothing but weeds". My dad was old school and I pushed him to grow canola and use fertilizer, and we didn't have success, and now I'm paying for that decision. Now, he's very involved in the organic farm and likes it. "



SCOTT BEATON, ROSSER MB

My biggest success has been the season long green manure we grew last year. I first planted a Faba bean, soy, pea, oat, and radish mix in June. Then I worked under 7 weeks after, then re-seeded pea, oat, sunflower, radish mix, as a catch crop which was then winter killed. In terms of bio mass produced and weed control, it looked very good."

BUYER EXPECTATIONS

Getting started in organic grain production? Meeting buyer expectations, as summarized in 4 points below, will be key to your success.

1. DON'T DECIDE TO GROW A CROP SIMPLY BASED ON PRICE, OR WITHOUT THOROUGH RESEARCH RELEVANT TO YOUR OPERATION.

Your experience might include growing certain conventional grain varieties, or maybe you've heard that prices are excellent for a certain crop. Before jumping in, ask around (buyers are a good place to start) to develop a good understanding of what the market truly seeks and needs. Research all the risks and benefits of growing different highly marketable crops to refine your idea of what your target market should be, based on a range of factors specific to your operation, including: your land area available, weed pressure, available equipment for weed management and harvesting, capacity to pre-clean, etc. Successful organic farmers mitigate risk year-to-year by developing rotations—and their expertise—that involve growing more than one highly marketable crop and break crops, such as alfalfa for seed, that promote long-term fertility and weed control. Among grain varieties, be sure to consider and research high-demand crops that other farmers are not yet growing widely, such as kamut, teff, emer, spelt, etc.

2. BASE YOUR GROWING GOALS AND PLANS ON CURRENT PRICES.

Prices for organic grain crops do generally look attractive; prices do shift, however, year-to-year. Be sure you are growing crops using prices for this growing year: it's worth asking around, checking in with potential buyers before you plant in order to avoid surprises at harvest time. You can also keep up-to-date on organic grain prices by visiting www.pivotandgrow.com

3. THINK "LONG-TERM" IN GETTING INTO RELATIONSHIPS WITH BUYERS.

Strive to be what buyers call a "reliable supplier." Buyers want you to: a) meet volume expectations, b) meet quality expectations (see point 4, below) and c) excel at customer service in your dealings with them. Examples of good customer service include being able to provide a truly representative grain sample when asked, being able to be contacted and respond to requests readily, etc. Commodity markets tend to cycle; when markets get tight, farmers with solid relationships based on their performance (consistently meeting quality, quantity and customer service expectations) will be able to move their grain.

4. MEETING QUALITY EXPECTATIONS IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE.

Your ability to consistently produce grain that meets clear specifications for weight, protein content, cleanliness, etc. will influence your reputation as a "reliable" or "unreliable" seller from a buyer's perspective. Avoid surprises: be knowledgeable about the quality of the grain you are selling. Keep in mind that you'll receive less money for substandard commodities, either because of the costs associated with cleaning/sorting your harvest and/or diverting it to feed markets. Be sure that you are capable of delivering crops that meet intended market expectations—gain experience by growing grain varieties on a smaller area of land before devoting larger acreage to any variety; seek to develop your expertise of how your crop quality and weed pressure shift year-to-year depending on growing conditions. Remember to always verify that your storage and transportation units will not negatively impact your crop quality—for example, improper clean out can lead to commingling of non-organic and organic grain, inadvertent introduction of wheat into hemp intended as a gluten-free crop, etc.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

1 CALL

Call [1-800-245-8341](tel:1-800-245-8341) to get connected with experts in organic grain production, marketing and certification.

3 CHAT

Follow the hashtag [#pivotandgrow](https://twitter.com/pivotandgrow) on social media and participate in conversations about organic grain farming on the Prairies.

2 EMAIL

Email info@pivotandgrow.com with your questions about organic grain production. We'll connect you with our network of experts across the prairies to get your questions answered.

4 CONNECT

Connect with us on Twitter [@pivotandgrow](https://twitter.com/pivotandgrow) or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pivotandgrow. Stay up to date on the latest news and events happening across the Prairies and get resources on organic grain farming.





TELEPHONE: 1-800-245-8341
E-MAIL: INFO@PIVOTANDGROW.COM
WWW.PIVOTANDGROW.COM