

Chair's Report 2009 Growers of Organic Food Yukon-COG

Well, looking back on previous years, I find that I have nothing to complain or rant about this year. In many areas, it was full steam ahead. At my farm, I looked forward to doing the things that had worked in previous years, and anticipated some success. Well, the weather co-operated and with the help of one full time intern and several WWOOFers during the season, the chickens grew well, the garden produced and we had the most amazing break of hot dry weather to get the hay off. The GoOFers as a group also seemed to get good production in vegetables and livestock this season.

This year, we have four farms Certified Organic and two in transition. Quite an achievement as we celebrate the installation of the Canadian Organic Standards. In conjunction with this event, the Organic Federation of Canada supported our project to present a one day conference in late February, called "Why Organic". At Terra Madre 2006, I met Pam Irving, communications person for Going Organic Alberta. I gave her one of the Fireweed Market cookbooks and she wrote a review in The Canadian Organic Grower. Because she was on my list of contacts, I wrote to her asking for a source of rock powder fertilizer and she put me in touch with Robert and Steven Snider in Alberta. Then I found out that Steve had been named Alberta's Young Farmer of the Year in 2003. He is also President of Going Organic Alberta. I was organizing our conference and thought he would be a good guest speaker. Well, he came and spoke and made it an interesting and informative day. Of course, it wasn't only our organization that I wanted to reach with this speaker. We are happy to have a lot of support from the Agriculture Branch of course I want to put them in touch with successful organic growers and their methods, wherever they are.

With regard to the Canadian Organic Standards, the Growing Forward Program (a Yukon –Canada program) has supported GoOFY's application to fund our participation in the OFC for four years. Claire Desmarais is our rep with Tom Rudge as alternate and Matt Ball as ex officio member.

We were also able to get Rochelle Eisen, long time organic inspector with PACS to come up to do inspections and to allow Claire Desmarais, our inspector, to attend the inspections as observer to become better versed in the new standards.

GoOFY has maintained its representation on other boards and committees as in previous years.

-Brian Lendrum is our COG rep

-Shiela Alexandrovich on the Industry Advisory Committee

-Susan Ross and Leslie Peters on the Meat Processing Committee

-Cain Vangel on the Board of Directors of YAA

-JJJ on the GF committee

-Joan Norberg and Cain Vangel on CAP committee

-Simone Rudge, Joan Norberg on the Fireweed Market Board

-Tom Rudge and Joan Norberg on Food Secure Canada

-Tom Rudge on Canadian Biotechnology Action Network

Roland and Mary Girouard attended the Horticulture Growers Trade Show in Abbotsford in 2009

I feel that it is important to either have a speaker or conference here, or to go out to attend one, to keep informed on all aspects of organic production.

A milestone reached by GoOFY this year was the completion of the Legume Culture Study. The technician, Jodi Crewe is preparing the final report for 2009 and a contractor will be hired to produce an analysis of the data gathered over the past five years. We look forward to this analysis and to using the data to practice the culture of legumes on our farms. Personally, I have already taken the performance of red clover and sweet clover on the plot here as an inspiration to seed those two on an area adjacent to the garden. The technicians, who seeded plots, took samples and recorded data over the past five years were: Karen Digby, Cain Vangel and Jodi Crewe. Brian Lendrum is the Project Manager and thanks go to Garret Gillespie for initiation of the project. The participating farms are: Aurora Mountain, Lendrum Ross, Dowdell Digby and M'Clintock Valley.

In the area of production, Susan Ross has completed the poultry processing summary for the 2009 season and we find that production over last year is down slightly for chickens, up for turkeys and up over all for organic birds. No ducks and geese were processed using the mobile equipment this year.

Along with our focus on growing things and raising things, we market them, and the Fireweed Market is our main venue at the moment. In the future, there may be other infrastructure to help us to get products to the consumers—inspected food processing facilities, year round markets or co-ops and I hope we will continue to work with other groups to make these things happen, if they are feasible.

In the area of growing and marketing success, this time In the Klondike, I want to I want to congratulate our former technician, Karen Digby and her partner Grant Dowdell for being named Farmers of the Year, 2009.

Finally, the ongoing mandate of COG and therefore GoOFY is to advocate and educate about organic production. Claire Desmarais has recently approached the Agriculture Branch to get an organic Master Gardener course into the works. Our focus on food security includes home and community gardeners, and they should have the option of learning to grow without synthetic fertilizers and pesticides and with full knowledge of what organic methods are.

Thanks for your support.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Jackson Johnson

November 14, 2009

