

GROWERS OF ORGANIC FOOD YUKON  
(GoOFY)

CHAIR'S REPORT 2016-17



As I write the 2016-17 Chair's report for GoOFY, seeds are being organized and the first planted. A cold start to spring may have held us back a little but like most farmers in Yukon, adapting and taking things in stride is an essential skill to succeeding. It's hard to believe that our membership can accomplish so much in such a short meeting season. People always say it's the growing season that's so short, but what GoOFY achieves from October to May every year is equally as impressive.

So much of GoOFY's reach is not only about what we do as a membership but also what we do as individuals and community members to broaden the reaches of organic agricultural practices. Not only is it a technique, it is also a guiding philosophy and a true statement about what we want to see in the world. GoOFY has been and will continue to be an essential voice in raising the profile of local production and providing much needed support to navigating the realm of agriculture in Yukon to new and old farmers alike.

GoOFY continues to put its energy into representation on both local and national committees. Bart and Joanne both sit on the Yukon Agriculture Research Committee (YARC) and help the committee oversee and approve research projects with the Agriculture Branch. Bart sits as a director on the Board of Directors with the Fireweed Community Market Society and helps represent the needs of local farmers. A number of members attend Food Network Yukon (FNY) meetings every 6 weeks, facilitated by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and the Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research. FNY is an excellent place to keep our ear to the ground and help interject the perspectives of local organic producers and find ways that we can support the access of affordable, good for all community members. We are also very pleased to be renewing our ties with the Yukon Agriculture Association and have the pleasure of collaborating with Executive Director, Jennifer Hall as a member of GoOFY.

Sheila has been a dedicated voice on the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee (AIAC) for many years. GoOFY members recognize that this role hasn't always been without its challenges given the prominent perspectives of conventional farming practices on the committee. Sheila has decided to step away from her role with AIAC and Tom will take her place, although she will remain his substitute. On behalf of GoOFY members, we thank Sheila for her time, diligence and articulate approach to keeping issues important to local organic producers on the menu.

For the past several years, Joanne has been our representation with the Organic Federation of Canada (OFC). OFC is the group who looks after the standards and plays

an important coordinating role in organic research across the country. With her term coming to an end, I'd personally like to applaud her for her commitment and dedication to being an excellent intermediary between national organic movement and GoOFY members. Her role with OFC has helped GoOFY stay linked to other organic organizations across Canada. Thank you, Joanne for your energy and thanks to Bart for stepping up to take on the role of OFC representative for Yukon.

Besides our member's commitment to the committees mentioned above, GoOFY was also able to support two of its members, Kim and Mary to attend the Circumpolar Conference in Iceland in fall of 2016. Joanne recently attended the annual COABC Conference and Bart was funded to attend the Agriculture Ministers Conference in Calgary for a single day in July. This meeting was the Federal-Territorial-Provincial gathering aimed at, among other things, an appraisal of the future plans for Growing Forward 3.

Kids on the Farm, is about to roll into another full season. Sarah's passions to see KoF succeed, in addition to her extraordinary organizational skills have made the program a well-oiled machine. Despite funding uncertainty for seasons beyond 2017, the GoOFY membership has unanimously agreed to be the backbone organization to make sure that Kids on the Farm will endure. We look forward to another season jam-packed full of tours that will benefit so many Yukon kids and farmers in the Whitehorse-area.

Lastly, GoOFY members have put notable efforts into the dialogue around GM crops from many different angles. For example Barbara has been pursuing the need for GMO labeling, and Tom and Brian, GM Alfalfa. GoOFY will likely put a great deal more energy into keeping these issues at the forefront. Tom's strong connection to CBAN, the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, as Chair of their steering committee has armed GoOFY with the necessary information and the backing of a national organization to move ahead with our education and advocacy. Thanks to Tom for his tremendous efforts in compiling all of the relevant information and records of local conversations to-date.

Reflecting on work done over the past year is strongly linked to all of the work to be done moving forward. GoOFY hopes to be a continued presence around the table in discussions about policies impacting Yukon agriculture. In addition, we look forward to contributing our thoughts to the Agriculture Branch's revisions to the ***Vision for Yukon Agriculture*** policy and continuing the education and advocacy needed with all levels of government, with other farmers and of course, with our consumers. I'm confident I can speak on behalf of our members when I say GoOFY remains committed to feeding people good food, good ideas and the encouragement needed to keep growing.

Happy planting,



Kate Mechan  
Chair, GoOFY