



PEI Certified
Organic Producers
Co-operative

ACORN
Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network

PEI Organic Update, April 2010



**COPC
President's
Message, 2010**

COPC would like to express their appreciation to the past Directors (Melissa Mullen, Alan Hicken, and Derek Campbell who donated their **TIME**, **PATIENCE** and **COMMITMENT** to a much stronger organic industry on PEI.

The New Year has started and with it we have four new directors who have accepted the challenge for the next three years to work within our vision and begin to focus and set direction for 2010.

You will hear, in detail, our short and long-term goals. As a board we have three main focuses:

- Industry Workshops
- Board Marketing / Promotions
- Board project / Research

Each of these areas will be practical with applications to meet your needs as an organic farmer. You will be hearing up-

On behalf of the board, Roy and I have started on farm visits. Our goal is to be on every farm on

PEI within the year to meet with you on your turf and hear your concerns, ideas along with any questions you may have.

COPC President, Stephen Cousins We will be calling to set up visiting times that suit your schedule, let us—together—be a united voice for the organic industry on PEI.



**Executive Director,
Roy Genge**

COPC's objective is to have everyone working together, by means of working meetings and discussions with COPC Directors, as well as being involved in **Workshops, Marketing & Promotions and Projects & Research Committees** to achieve our goals and objectives.

**MEMBERS UNITED CAN FORTIFY
SELF-CONFIDENCE**

ACORN Celebrates 10 years with PEI Conference

ACORN's Annual Conference, held at the Rodd Charlottetown, enjoyed crowds of approximately 400 people. PEI's Minister of Agriculture, Hon. George Webster and ACORN's first Executive Director, Kevin Jeffries, kicked-off the plenary session—marking PEI's commitment and passion for organics.

The sold out trade show included exhibitors like Willsie's from Ontario and Johnny's Selected Seeds from Maine, as well as local suppliers, such as PEI Fish Fertilizers.

All the food served at the conference was organic, with a majority from PEI (see ACORN newsletter for details). And wasn't that cake something else!

Thanks PEI for a great time!



Dianna Linder's celebratory cake was amazing!

Register Now!

Interested in exploring a value-added idea for organics?

ACORN is holding a two-day intensive workshop at the Dutch Inn on April 26 & 27th. Gary Morton will lead the workshop, providing detailed information to take your idea from dream to dollars.

Cost is just \$60 (includes lunch), but pre-registration is required. Call ACORN at 1-866-322-2676.

Funded in part by the PEI ADAPT Council and Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada.

Farmers of the Year Award 2009: Barnyard Organics

Mark Bernard likes to think of his organic farm as the ‘buckle of the potato belt’, tucked away in beautiful Freetown, PEI. When asked what he produces he is likely to say, “Organic grains, for organic livestock feed”, but there is a lot more to this operation than that simple answer.

It began when Mark left Freetown, for the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, knowing that his dad was retiring from the life of a potato farmer and leaving the future of the farm up to him.

It was at NSAC that Mark began to consider organics and became convinced that farming organically was more sustainable on all accounts. Mark brought home more than a passion for organics from NSAC; he also met his wife, Sally there as well. She has brought her own farming background with her in the form of livestock. Mark and Sally continue to build and expand their farm, Barnyard Organics, paying particular attention to their ecological footprint and the quality of their products. Working with fertility options to maximize utilization of valuable nutrients, expanding buffer zones and planting more and more trees each year are just a few of the conscious steps that Mark takes annually to enhance the value of their soil.

The 550 acre, fully certified organic operation produces soybeans, grains, hay, sunflowers, lamb, chicken and eggs, but also maintains a grain cleaning operation and a soybean roaster,

especially for the organic market. With customers from around the Maritimes, much of the organic livestock in the region

could very well be enjoying Barnyard Organics quality grains.

On the livestock side of things, Mark and Sally take great pride in being able to produce all of the feed for their chickens and sheep, confident in the superiority of their grains and hay and knowing exactly where everything comes from. Sally currently keeps about 25 ewes and feeds a number of lambs each year for the fresh lamb market, selling directly to customers, with the ability to offer custom orders. Barnyard Organics livestock are all pasture-raised, and the chickens are no exception, spending their days basking the sun, pecking away at insect and grass. The chickens are always a huge success, leading to more birds out on the pasture every year.

Mark’s parents still live on the farm, and his father, Wendell, is a great help. “It seems to me,” Mark says, “I’m farming more and more like my grandfather did, which generally seems more sustainable and more viable.”

While the couple is busy on the farm, they are also involved in their community. Mark worked for a number of years with the



Mark, Sally, Lucy and Wilson Bernard, certified organic since 2006

Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada and has been closely involved with the PEI Certified Organic Producers Coop, Atlantic Certified Organic and also sits on the Environmental Advisory Council for PEI. Sally sits on the boards for ACORN and the National Farmers Union and is the music director for the Sunday school program at Summerside Presbyterian Church. Mark and Sally are proud to be building a farm with a sustainable future for generations to come and their children, Lucy and Wilson are already showing a love of agriculture. Instilling that love of farming in their children is perhaps their proudest accomplishment of all.



COPC 2010 Board Members



Back Row: L-R: Fred Dollar, Brian MacKay, Gary Hughes, Stephen Cousins
Front Row: L-R: Joyce Kelly, Amanda Walsh, Stewart MacRae

COPC has a relatively new board starting out this year and President, Stephen Cousins (Shepherd's Farm)—a newcomer himself—would like to welcome each of these new directors to PEI Certified Organic Producers Cooperative:

Amanda Walsh (Red Soil Organics) is taking over the Secretary position. Amanda is also a director on ACORN's board.

Fred Dollar (Kentdale Farms), Brian MacKay (Red Isle Organics) and Stewart MacRae (MacRae Farms) are all serving as new directors on the COPC board this year.

Joyce Kelly (Nature's Bounty) is serving as Treasurer for another term and Gary Hughes (Hughes Hill Farm), is back as a director

COPC Workplan for 2010

Industry Workshops

- Controlling Blight in Potatoes & Tomatoes (for Farmers and Gardeners) – June 16
 - Greenhouses production – summer 2010 in conjunction with Twilight Meeting 1
 - Twilight Meetings at various farms.
- Growers are encouraged to participate in tours to farms during the summer and fall months for networking and meeting with other organic growers – June 18

Projects and Research

- Update Producer Locator Map
- Strengthen relationship with ACORN

Proposed Regulatory Committee

- Organic Federation of Canada (OFC)
- PEI Organic Regulation

As the industry grows and take shape we see the need for a **Regulatory Committee / Board** within the cooperative to review all industry issues and to work with Government to establish standards for the Island producers and processors

ACORN's PEI Board Members

Sally Bernard: info@barnyardorganics.ca
Tina Davies: emmerdaleorganics@hotmail.com
Amanda Walsh: redsoilorganics@gmail.com

We also say farewell and thank you to Gary Ogle, for his four years on the ACORN board—you'll be missed!

Organic Regulation and Standards

Roy Genge has become the Island representative (Director) for the Organic Federation of Canada (OFC) giving our voice to those beyond PEI.

The OFC is the organic voice on issues relating to the national regulations. If you have any questions or concerns, contact Roy at email@organicpei.com or 894-9999.

Roxanne Beavers is the Atlantic Canadian voting representative on the body that changes and approves the organic standards. If you have questions or concerns, contact her at roxannebeavers@yahoo.com.

For more details on the standards revisions, see the ACORN newsletter.

MEMBERSHIPS ARE NOW DUE FOR 2010

PEI COPC (for certified organic producers/processors, or those in transition) \$25

ACORN (available to anyone interested in organics) \$30

Best Deal \$50 for COPC and ACORN

Make cheques payable to PEI COPC and mail to:

PEI COPC 420 University Ave, Suite 110. Charlottetown, PE, C1A 7Z5

CSA's and Veggie Box Programs Take Hold in PEI

By Beth McMahon

The CSA movement is growing in PEI. There are at least five CSA type programs in PEI—many certified organic—and interest in the model is growing.

Hughes Hill Farm is the newest CSA program in the province. It's certified organic veggie box will be available to twenty members for 20-weeks, with pick up at the farm or at the Charlottetown Farmers Market.

"It's a way to expand our farm sales, as well as provide some seed money," said owner Gary Hughes.

CSA "veteran" Becky Townshend (Fortune Organics), is just back from BC, where she worked in the Athlete's Village in Whistler, and is now feeling the pressure of the impending growing season.

Townsend is expecting her program to remain stable this year, with approximately 40 boxes per week for 10 weeks. Unlike most CSAs, her program is week-to-week, in order to allow cottagers to participate for shorter durations. Popular items are beets and most stir-fry vegetables. Townsend will also add strawberries to her offerings for 2010.

At Jen and Derek's Farm, the CSA will remain steady with 40 shares delivered to Charlottetown and Summerside. Members pay for their 18 weeks at the start of the season and have choice of a small or large box.

"Last year the lettuce mix, French beans, and cherry tomatoes were very popular," says Jen.

This year, their CSA will also offer local honey and Tim Dixon's beef as a monthly option, as well as

Barnyard Organics certified organic meat when available.

Naomi Cousins, the youngest CSA operator in PEI (she's just 17), started out last year with 23 shares and will be growing to 40 or more this year. Her 17-week program has one delivery day/week in Charlottetown and may grow to two days, to help balance the work out. All the work is done by Cousins, with help from her sister when needed.

"Last year, I had to explain to prospective members that it "wasn't like going to the supermarket and choosing what to buy, and people were okay with this. They liked supporting local *and organic and a young farmer*," said Cousins. "Members loved the cherry tomatoes and occasional box of strawberries in their boxes".

Laura Leigh Organic farms is embarking on a new CSA program for meat. Six-month commitments are requested for any of the nine program options (ie. mixed selection, all beef, all pork, all chicken etc.). It's certainly a new approach to the CSA model—and one that could help boost profitability to many direct marketing farms across the region.

Kathy Ware and Brian MacKay (Red Isle Farms) developed a year round week-to-week box program after being approached by the Heart & Stroke's Healthy Eating program in 2009. With drop-offs in Kensington and Summerside, Ware and MacKay provide about 50 boxes/week to families in the area, and hope to grow that number in the coming year.

"At this time of year, we've got potatoes, carrots, cabbage, freshly dug parsnips, Margie Loo's alfalfa sprouts, and free range eggs," says Ware. Their program requires members to pay one week in advance, allowing the farm to plan ahead, but not limiting a family's ability to pay in requesting a full season's share. Ware and MacKay also provide a newsletter and recipes to help families understand and appreciate their veggies to the fullest value.

ACORN lists all known CSA's in their database (<http://acornorganic.org/acorn/databaseregional.html>), so if you know of a program that we've missed, please let us know! Call 1-866-322-2676 or email admin@acornorganic.org.

CSA Resources

ACORN has a CSA manual based on Maritime models and information. To download a copy, go to <http://acornorganic.org/pdf/CSAmanual.pdf> It is a big file, so if you'd prefer, you can purchase a print copy for \$10 from ACORN (including postage).

We've also got the full CSA workshop presentation from the 2007 ACORN conference in PEI on youtube at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYpUh6RUV_Y&feature=related

There's more too, so contact ACORN for extra information if you're really keen on the issue—admin@acornorganic.org or 1-866-322-2676