

ORGANIC VEGETABLE PRODUCTION FINAL PROJECT REPORT



Successful 1 Acre Organic
Vegetable Farm in the
Similkameen Valley

Organic Farming Institute of BC

Box 247, Keremeos, BC , V0X 1N0

Contact Person: Kevin Klippenstein , Chair

Email: info@ofibc.org

PROJECT FUNDERS

We would like to thank our funders. Without their support, this important project would not have been possible.

Thank You!

SOUTHERN INTERIOR BEETLE ACTION COALITION



Southern Interior
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE TRUST



ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

The Organic Farming Institute of British Columbia (OFIBC) began as a local, grassroots initiative and has grown to province-wide proportions. The OFIBC’s Mission is to expand and improve the use of organic food production methods by providing highly effective and accessible training through online and on farm education.

The OFIBC was initiated because of a long-held concept for a centre of excellence in organic, sustainable farming and research that would utilize the storehouse of expertise in the Similkameen organic farming community. The practice of, and research into organic farming principles, including biological and botanical pest controls, has a long and venerable history in the Similkameen Valley. Cawston is registered as the “Organic Farming Capital of Canada” and organic certification was pioneered here when, in 1986, the Similkameen Okanagan Organic Producers Association began certifying organic production.

With 40% of the farms in Cawston certified organic, the Similkameen Valley is the ideal home for the OFIBC. In context, across Canada 1.6% and in B.C 2% of farms are certified organic. Cawston farmers were also innovative leaders in combining land conservation with organic farming. The Land Conservancy’s pilot project for Partners in Conservation began with 16 organic farmers in the Cawston area. This Program supports good land stewardship for the benefit of both agriculture and conservation and is successful throughout B.C.

The OFIBC has both online and on farm courses available. These courses are written by experienced organic farmers for both new and existing farmers. In addition to teaching the very best organic farming practices, OFIBC training familiarizes students with the transition to organic methods and the certification process. OFIBC courses are equally beneficial to growers who may not choose to become certified organic but desire a better understanding of soil management, nutrient cycles and farming practices.

CURRENT COURSE OFFERINGS

Online Training

ORG 101 Introduction to Organic Soil Management and Nutrient Cycles

ORG 102 Organic Soil Management Practices & Transitioning to organic methods

ORG 103 Organic Vegetable Production

Field Training

ORG 101-F Organic Soil Management Field Training

ORG 103-F Organic Vegetable Production

FUTURE TRAINING COURSES

The Business of Organic Farming

Organic Viticulture

Organic Greenhouse Production

THE PROJECT

Organic Farming Expertise for Future Generations

The OFIBC's project is the much needed development of both a comprehensive online training course and a field training course on **Organic Vegetable Production**.

The **online theory** is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can be accessed by anyone with a good internet connection. By utilizing the internet and having shorter, realistic time frames for course completion the OFIBC is able to service people who need to learn from home and combine studies with work, parenting, farming or other commitments. This course can be completed in 40 to 60 hours and can be worked on when it is convenient for the student. Students have access to an OFIBC online instructor who is knowledgeable in the practice and science of organic principles.

The **field training** component is led by one of our knowledgeable and experienced instructors and the classroom is on several successful farms in the Cawston area. Students receive a comprehensive field guide on Organic Vegetable Production and have the opportunity to experience first hand common and innovative farming techniques.

The content has been meticulously researched and very well written. The developers have ensured that it is an engaging and interactive course by utilizing a variety of learning mediums:

- * Reading material in pdf format
- * Illustrations and photos
- * Learning games
- * Quizzes and assignments
- * Audio files and videos
- * Additional links and resources



Students who complete the requirements for any of OFIBC's online or in field training courses will receive a Certificate of Completion.



COURSE OUTLINE

ORG 103 Organic Vegetable Production							
Module 1: Introduction to Organic Vegetable Production		Module 2: Business Aspects and Marketing of Organic Vegetables			Module 3: Basics of Plant Growth, Nutrients and Soils		
Module 4: Planning and Preparation							
Farm Mapping		Crop Planning		Crop Rotations		Interplanting / Companion Planting	
Module 5: Field Preparation and Management							
Irrigation		Cultivation Tips	Seeing and Transplanting Tips		Mulching		Season Extension
Module 6: Daily Maintenance							
Weed Control				Daily Maintenance Tips			
Module 7: Growing Guides							
Alliums	Brassicas	Legumes	Tomatoes Potatoes Eggplant Peppers	Curcubits	Greens	Artichoke	Asparagus
Harvest & Post-Harvest Tips							



COURSE DEVELOPMENT TEAM



Lee McFadyen is the subject matter expert and principal author for this course. Co-founder and operator of Mariposa Organic Farm (established in 1962), Lee has many years of practical experience applying the science of organic principles to everyday farm management. She was a Founding Member of the Similkameen Okanagan Organic Producers Association (SOOPA) and chaired its first Standards Committee. Lee's experience led to her authoring and developing the first continuing education course on organic farming given at the Keremeos and Penticton Campus of Okanagan College. She sat as a member of the Certified Organic Association of British Columbia's Board of Directors, (COABC) and during this time chaired the COABC Standards Review Committee. While a member of the COABC Organic Advisory Committee, Lee traveled to diverse farming communities throughout BC advising new farmers, farmers transitioning to organic methods and farmers who simply wanted a better understanding of their site, soil, and potential. During 2003-2004 she participated in the South Asia Canada Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture, which culminated in traveling to India and Nepal to discuss the role organic principles play in the future of farming. Currently, Lee sits on the UBC Farm Advisory Committee.



Jacques LeCavalier is the principal designer for this course. His small e-learning company developed OFIBC's first two courses, and was actively involved in every stage of the development of OFIBC's Strategic Plan and Business Plan. Jacques has a degree in Agricultural Engineering and is currently developing an organic vineyard in the Similkameen Valley. He has provided educational strategy, design, evaluation, delivery and technology-related services to NGO's, or private or public sector organizations including OFIBC, The Consensus Institute, Wageningen International (Bénin), Alberta Environment, The Natural Step, Nissan Japan, the Québec Ministry of Immigration and Cultural communities, Pembina Institute and others.



Gabi Cursons is a content reviewer and contributor for this course. Alongside her husband Dave, Gabi is a long-time organic farmer and owner of Dumpling Dale Organic Farm, nestled in the Similkameen Valley, in the town of Cawston, BC. Gabi and Dave produce a wide variety of organic vegetables on this farm, including zucchini and squash. They have created a living example of how organic farming can foster biological diversity and productivity within a small amount of space. Gabi and Dave cultivate a wide variety of ground crops on their one acre property, and foster native plants in the areas that are not in production. Gabi also teaches organic farming and gardening courses and workshops, and contributes her time and considerable knowledge to a variety of agriculture, sustainability and conservation initiatives.



THE PROJECT

Driving Factors Behind the Project:

⇒ Cawston, BC is the “Organic Farming Capital of Canada”, where 40% of farms are certified organic while other farmers practice organic methods but choose not to certify. The accumulated practical expertise and success of organic food production in this region is an invaluable source of knowledge. This project captures that knowledge and uses it to increase the organic sector capacity of BC as outlined in the BC Organic Sector Strategic Plan. Increasing organic sector capacity is necessary to meet consumer demand. In Canada, organic food sales doubled from 2006 to 2008 and global demand continues to increase. Currently Canada is not able to meet domestic demand for organic products so there is an opportunity for new and existing farmers to be part of the solution.

⇒ OFIBC strives to positively affect Economic Development in the Similkameen and Southern Interior of BC. The project contributes to the sustainability of rural farming communities through diversification of farming activities. The OFIBC hires farming knowledge experts to assist in both the development and delivery of the courses which complements farming activities and provides alternate sources of income for existing and experienced farmers.

⇒ Communities in the Southern Interior and all over BC have been hit hard by the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic and small scale vegetable production may be an alternative use for some of these lands. This course can also be a skills retraining option for those that find themselves out of work due to the Mountain Pine Beetle.



⇒ While some crops (I.E. grains) are better suited to larger scale farming, vegetable crops are ideally suited to small scale farming in areas not suitable for grain or tree fruit production. Vegetable farms can be intensive and do not need to be large to be profitable and organic methods are ideally suited to this approach. Climate and terrain not suitable for other crops can, when well managed, be reasonably easily adapted to organic vegetable production. These factors make vegetable production a realistic alternative crop in many areas impacted by mountain pine beetle.

⇒ The OFIBC recognizes the need to train potential young farmers using practical and innovative techniques supported by scientific research. The average age of farmers in British Columbia in 2011 was 55.7 and in 2006 it was 53.6. Nationally, in 2011 the average age was 54.0 years and in 2006 it was 52.0.

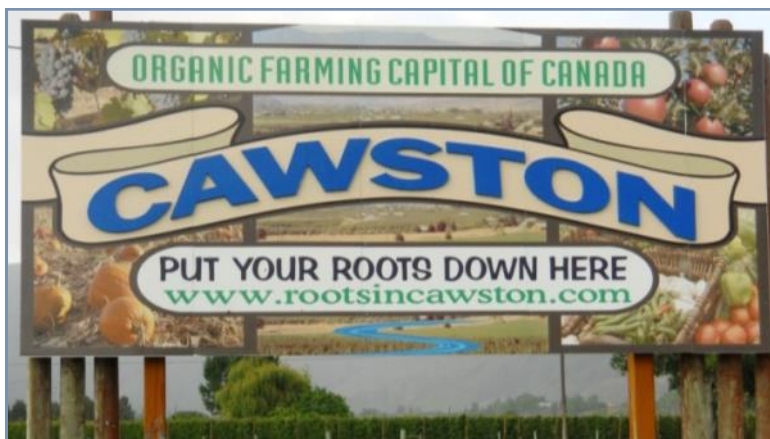


MOVING FORWARD

To kick start the OFIBC's **Marketing Plan**, representatives attended the Education and Career Fair in Kelowna in March 2013. The number of high school students and attendees from the public who stopped by the booth and shared their interest and concerns with local, organic and sustainable food production was very encouraging. Several colleges expressed interest in the OFIBC program and the new course. Projects with two colleges have an estimated launch date in early 2014. Their feedback supports the OFIBC goal to provide online training and skills retraining through shorter courses which can be completed from home.



OFIBC Board and Staff have made great contacts during the last year and created several strategic alliances that will help promote the new course and gain exposure as an organization. Many connections have been made in both the forestry and farming industry, as well as with other community organizations that have similar and complimentary purposes. These connections will increase now that the course is complete.



A dialogue has been started and is on going with the Regional District of the Okanagan Similkameen and the Similkameen Valley Planning Society. Both groups were in favour of the OFIBC taking ownership of the rootsincawston.com domain as well as the incorporation of the trademarked tagline "Organic Farming Capital of Canada" into the OFIBC's marketing and community relations campaign. This increased exposure for the Similkameen Valley will have a positive effect in other areas such as tourism.

Initial Economic Development Outcomes:

This project has provided four people with steady part time work and has allowed the OFIBC to keep investing in the economic development of the local communities. Newspaper and radio advertising, insurance, promotional items, and other simple requirements such as day to day supplies and services continue to be purchased. Local companies or contractors are chosen whenever possible to ensure that the money and jobs are kept in our communities. The OFIBC's efforts are also creating increased awareness of the benefits and importance of purchasing local, organically grown food and supporting our local farmers. As the project plan continues and more strategic alliances and partnerships are developed, there will be more significant economic development impacts.

Organic Farming Expertise for Future Generations

We Love BC Farmers!

BC Association of Farmers' Markets campaign

BC Farmers' Appreciation Week

September 8—15, 2013

The Organic Farming Institute of BC organized over 20 young helpers to colour and hand deliver over 50 Thank You cards to the Farmers at the Penticton Farmers Market.

Being a farmer is a viable career option—and the OFIBC is getting children and youth involved and inspired early!



Organic Farming Institute of BC

Box 247, Keremeos, BC , V0X 1N0

Contact Person: Kevin Klippenstein , Chair

Email: info@ofibc.org