



Manitoba Organic Alliance

Manitoba Organic Alliance Strategic Plan 2021

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Introduction and Strategic Planning Process

Manitoba Organic Alliance carried out their strategic planning process in phases to ensure sufficient time and resources were invested into the development of a comprehensive strategy that would guide the organization into the future. This plan should be reviewed in 2-3 years' time.

Facilitators Leanne Tibbatts and Leanne Sprung, Rural Leadership Specialists with Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development, led the participants through the planning process.

Strategic Direction

Mission

Represent, promote and grow Manitoba's organic sector through knowledge sharing, advocacy, and market development.

Vision

A strong, resilient and united organic sector based on the foundational principles of organic agriculture- health, ecology, fairness and care.

Our Commitment

- Grow the organic industry
- Shape the future of organics in Manitoba and Canada
- Positively impact organic businesses and farm operations
- Foster networking opportunities within the organic community
- Collaborate to support producers to learn & develop skills (best management practices)

The Definition of Organic Agriculture

Organic Agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic Agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved. (www.ifoam.bio)

Core Values

Core values are the underlying principles or philosophies that guide the work of the organization. These values outline what is important and symbolize the organization's beliefs. They help to create a strong internal culture.

- Teamwork & Relationship Building – We support each other and bring the organic community together to collaborate, network and achieve our goals.
- Transparency & Open Communication – We welcome two-way communication with members. We are committed to listen to diverse perspectives.
- Integrity – We make ethical decisions and operate with mutual respect, trust and accountability.
- Professionalism – We take pride in our work.

The Principles of Organic Agriculture

Principle of health – Organic agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plants, animals, humans and the planet as one and indivisible.

Principle of ecology – Organic agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.

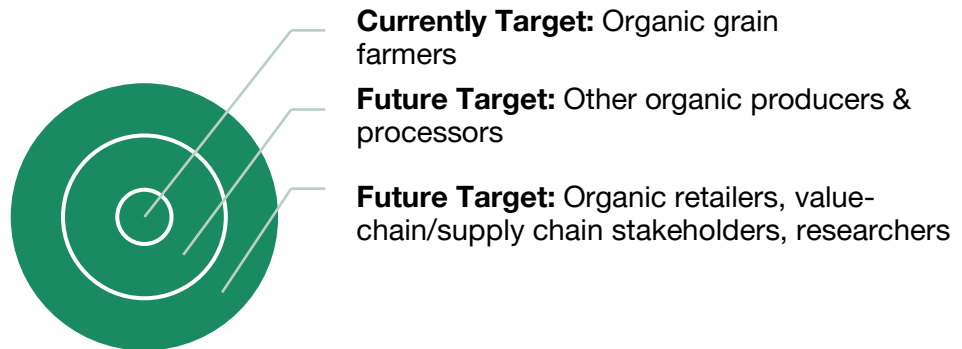
Principle of fairness – Organic agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.

Principle of care – Organic agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment.

"With this plan MOA has laid out a focused strategy for strengthening the organic sector with community building and knowledge transfer at its core."

Liz Karpinchick, MOA Chair

Strategic Analysis



Trends Influencing the Organic Sector

- Increasing consumer demand for organic products
- Healthy living / healthy food choices movement
- Increase in plant protein consumption (ex: pea processing in MB)
- Shift to regenerative agriculture
- Focus on local, ethical and transparent food systems
- Advancements in technology and equipment
- Market fluctuations and opportunities to market organic products

Table 1. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats: SWOT Analysis of MOA

Strengths	Weaknesses
<i>What we're good at/what's currently working.</i>	<i>What we want to fix/strengthen.</i>
<p>Provided valuable educational extension events, conferences, farm field tours, webinars, podcasts</p> <p>Offered networking opportunities for farmers, buyers, processors, and organic community</p> <p>Provided leadership within the industry</p> <p>Engaged producers and grower to support MOA initiatives</p> <p>Secured and maintained government support for industry initiatives including check-off and crop insurance programs</p> <p>Included diverse people and skills represented on the MOA board</p>	<p>Incongruence between workload and human resource capacity/time</p> <p>Uncertainty related to Manitoba Agriculture & Resources Development staff time (Laura's position) to support organic initiatives</p> <p>Sustainable funding to support initiatives and advance goals</p> <p>Advocacy – need to be the voice for the organic sector, e.g., with the Minister of Agriculture and within organic community.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<i>What we think we'll be good at/future directions in the industry.</i>	<i>What will hinder our growth?</i>
<p>Establish vision for future with clear priorities and goals</p> <p>Fund development strategy to support staffing and deliverables</p> <p>Build a professional reputation as respectable point of contact for organic sector</p> <p>Engage board to take on leadership roles to further MOA initiatives</p>	<p>Unreliable funding sources and grant opportunities depending on the political climate</p> <p>Reliance on volunteer engagement</p> <p>Minimal community engagement and developing of the organic consumer market within the province</p>

Use check-off funds to advance MOA priorities

Strategic Priorities

Priority 1: Extension Education

Goal: Foster opportunities for members and the organic community to network and learn about production practices and innovative research results.

Table 2. Extension Education Strategies and Expected Results

STRATEGY	EXPECTED RESULTS
Webinar Series/Workshop: Offer 1-day workshop or 3-5 webinars annually on practical production and research topics.	Farmers are provided with best practice information to increase farm profitability. Attendance to be monitored to compare with previous events to assess audience and reach.
Prairie Organics Conference: Host and lead the organization of bi-annual profitable event.	Build capacity of organic community through knowledge transfer and networking.
Farm Field Tours: Coordinate and host 3 tours to highlight production methods and/or new research.	Inspire innovation and application of successful approaches within business practices.
Podcasts: Collaborate with prairie provinces to develop and produce 3-5 recordings.	Engage broad audience of organic grain farmers and deliver information-rich segments.
Ag Days Workshop: Offer education and showcase organic production methods and research results.	
Agronomy Consultations: Offer and organize subsidized agronomic advise to individual farmers (pending funding).	

<p>Cost-share BMPs: Provide subsidies to farmers for implementing practices to improve their soil health and ecological outcomes (pending funding).</p>	
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Priority 2: Communications & Marketing

Goal: Profile MOA as a professional point of contact for the organic sector that advocates on behalf of the organic sector.

Table 3. Communications & Marketing Strategies and Expected Results

STRATEGY	EXPECTED RESULTS
Communication Plan / Strategy: Utilize social platforms, newsletter, website and events to consistently advance MOA priorities.	Develop awareness and brand recognition for MOA.
Advocacy with Government: Participate in an annual meeting with the Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development and another with MASC.	Advocate for organic sector, discuss MOA priorities and projects, industry needs, and government priorities.
Newsletter: Develop and circulate electronic information (monthly)	Increase awareness of MOA events and other issues relating to the organic sector in Manitoba.
Website: Communicate with members and organic community through online presence.	MOA recognized as reputable and professional point of contact for organic community.
Organic Week: Promote messaging from COG and / or event to highlight organic sector.	Promote existing national material to our networks. This is a lower priority item unless a member who has capacity in September coordinates this.

Priority 3: Governance & Board Operations

Goal: Enhance governance and leadership capacity to advance the organization's strategic plan.

Table 4. Governance & Board Operations Strategies and Expected Results

STRATEGY	EXPECTED RESULTS
Formalize Committee Structure: Outline responsibilities and increase board engagement.	Fully engaged leadership team with direct involvement on one or more committees.
Board Training: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. board roles and responsibilities 2. fundraising & writing grants 	Build director capacity and confidence in listed areas.
Fund Development Strategy: Build awareness of fund streams and grant opportunities that correlate with the strategic plan.	Long-term financial sustainability and relationship development.
Policy Development: Draft policies to establish guidelines related to operations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Human Resources policies 2. Conflict of Interest 3. Confidentiality 4. Codes of Conduct 	Clear rules for the organization and staff to follow to achieve compliance.
Collaborate with Prairie Provinces: Meet with AB & SK organizations to discuss their model and opportunities to work together. PODF	Efficient delivery model, expanded partnerships and collaboration.
Collaborate with national organizations: Canadian Organic Growers (COG)*, OFC and Farmers for Climate Solutions	

Other Priorities: Research & Market Development

Goal: Identify research needs based on farmer input, facilitate connections between processors and researchers and advocate for organic research in Manitoba.

Table 5. Research Strategies and Expected Results

STRATEGY	EXPECTED RESULTS
Farmer Survey: Identify research priorities using a “scoping survey” – pending funding.	Data to support identified needs related to research projects.
Liaise with local research institutes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Crop Diversification Centres 2. University of Manitoba 3. Natural Systems Agriculture 4. Manitoba Crop Alliance 	Research results to develop best practices. Link research needs and research institutions via the check-off fund.

Goal: Facilitate opportunities for buyers and sellers to explore relationship to further business interests.

Table 6. Market Development Strategies and Expected Results

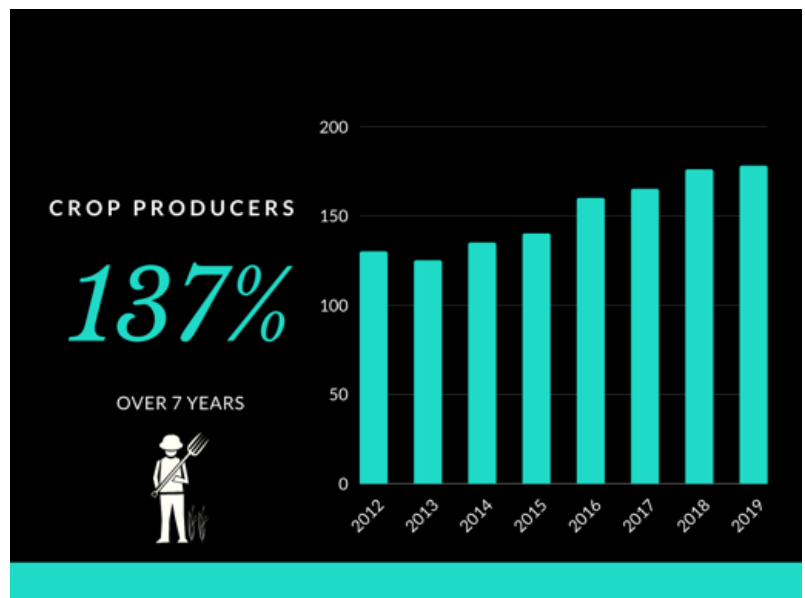
STRATEGY	EXPECTED RESULTS
Buyer/Seller Electronic Platform: administrative role to set up online meetings pending funding.	Established relationships and foster business connections.
Seed Cleaner & Buyer Listings: update listing and distribute to membership (pending funding).	Enhanced awareness.
Business 2 Business Online Meetings: administrative role to set up processor	Established relationships and foster business connections.

and producer meetings (pending funding).

Appendix 1: Background & Organic Sector Profile

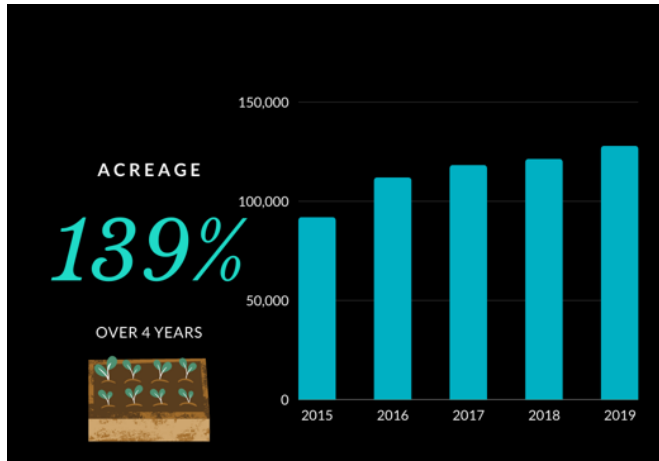
Organic Producers

The global recession 2008-2009 resulted in a significant number of organic producers leaving the sector. Recovery was strong but delayed relative to the general economic recovery. New farmers began to transition to organic starting in the second half of 2012. Most converts came from conventional grain farms. Organic producer numbers increased steadily between 2013 and 2018, levelling out in 2019 with a cooling of the global organic grain market.



Acres

Between 2015 and 2019, organic acres (ac) in Manitoba grew from 91,600 to 127,597 acres, an area roughly equivalent to Manitoba's total dry pea production. The largest production category includes green manures, animal feed/forages and natural areas at 50,102 acres although the category accounted for the fewest organic acres since before 2015. The vast majority of Manitoba's organic producers grow field crops (67,270 ac) with the top five crops by area being: wheat (19,966 ac), oats (11,664 ac), barley (5,211 ac), flax (5,123 ac) and hemp (4,925 ac). Just over 8,000 acres of wild rice



Handlers, importers/exporters and food processors comprised a larger share of certified operators in 2019, doubling from 30 in 2012 to 74 in 2019. This growth represents maturation of the industry with more local seed cleaning, importer/exporter and food processing capacity.

was harvested in 2019, the largest in the country. Manitoba organic producers also grew 1,326 acres of fruits and vegetables.

Support Services



Data Source: Organic Agriculture in the Prairies, Canada Organic Trade Association.

Commissioned by the Prairie Organic Development Fund

Appendix 2

Abbreviations

COG: Canadian Organic Growers

MOA: Manitoba Organic Alliance

Next Steps and Recommendations:

Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development (ARD) staff will continue to support the organization in their planning process and organizational development efforts.

On behalf of ARD we would like to congratulate the organization for undertaking this strategic planning process. We would encourage the organization to:

- € Board must finalize, approve and then implement the strategic plan.

- € Complete the action planning worksheets for all priority areas and be realistic about what the board and staff can manage.

- € Increase the size of specific committees, form an extension committee, and set regular meeting dates. Explore opportunities to engage board members to take on leadership roles at the committee level.

- € Communicate MOA's vision, mission and strategic priorities to members, sponsors and the organic community via publishing these on MOA's website. Seek feedback from these groups periodically to affirm the organization is on track.

- € Connect with other provincial organizations and explore best practices that can be applied to MOA operations.

- € Seek funding/grants/partnerships that correlate with actions and priorities for long-term sustainability.