

Transitioning to Organic Production

Identifying Key Risks and Finding Resources to Mitigate

Source: "Transitioning to Organic: A Risk-Based Analysis". For more information visit www.cog.ca

Key Risks

Understanding Certification Process

A grower may not be able to access resources required to successfully navigate the certification process, including selection of a certifying body.

Record Keeping

Insufficient or inaccurate records may lead to a crop not being certified. The burden of record keeping may lead to a grower not completing transition process.

Weed Management

A grower may not be able to access the resources required to adequately maintain control of weeds and other pests.

Non-Allowable Inputs

A lack of clarity on inputs allowed for organic certification may lead to a crop not being certified.

Few Buyers

Growers relying initially on a single buyer may lose their market if the purchasing business fails. The anticipated organic market premiums may not come to fruition.

Medium Risks

Parallel Production

Growers may not be aware that production of the same crop both conventionally and with organic practices may lead to not being certified.

Maintaining Yield

A grower may not be able to maintain sufficient yield for profit, due to farm-specific circumstances or unavailability of extension resources.

Peer Stigma

Many transitioning growers face stigma from other growers in their neighbourhood, with possible social detachment a personal risk.

Maintaining Cash Flow

Products during transitional years may result in lower revenue due to lower yield or quality, or sometimes being difficult to market at all.

Access to Capital

Profits generated from organic crops may not be sufficient to cover the high capital investment required for transitioning.

The Risks of Transitioning: Informed by Organic Growers

This collaborative effort between COG and provincial organic grower organizations across Canada set out to identify the key risks and challenges for Canadian growers transitioning to organic.

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Objective: identify risks to transitioners	on-farm visits	focus group discussions	focus group participants	identified risks

Risk Mitigation: Resources for Growers



ask us about Transitional Resource Referral

Other Risks

Fertility Management

A grower may find maintaining adequate nutrient levels a challenge when unfamiliar with organic production practices.

Access to Inputs

Growers may have challenges accessing organic seed and fertilizer (or organic feed for livestock) at cost-effective pricing.

Access to Labour

Growers may have difficulty accessing sufficient labour for organic management practices.

Market Channel Development

Growers may have difficulty accessing markets, experience price volatility, or need to change/develop marketing channels.