

Canada Announces Voluntary Transparency Initiative for Gene-Edited Seed Products

Organic Farmers Face Significant Risk

Ottawa, ON (May 4th, 2023) - [Canadian Organic Growers \(COG\)](#),

Yesterday, Honourable Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau announced a decision to allow new genetically engineered (GE) seeds to be released into Canada without a mandatory disclosure system, putting Canadian organic farmers at risk of losing their organic certifications.

Organic farmers require mandatory disclosure of gene-edited Seeds. To maintain their certification, organic farmers must be able to prove that the seeds they use are free from any contamination, including genetic engineering which is prohibited in the Canadian Organic Standards. Under this new voluntary system announced yesterday by Canada, organic farmers will not be able to meet this requirement and face the significant risk of losing their certification by inadvertently using undisclosed GE seed products. Farmers have the right to choose to grow food that meets the needs of their consumer without fear of contamination by undisclosed genetic engineered seed products.

“Mandatory transparency of GE seeds is one of the most significant issues organic farmers are facing today,” states Allison Squires, a certified organic farmer based in Saskatchewan and President of the Canadian Organic Growers. “Without it, the integrity of organic production in Canada is severely threatened. Both farmers and consumers will soon be faced with the real possibility of no longer being able to grow and consume non-genetically engineered, certified organic food.”

During the technical committee process, representatives from Canadian Organic Growers participated alongside our organic sector partners to represent the interests of organic farmers across the country. We asked for mandatory notification and transparency of any and all gene edited seed products so that organic farmers can be assured that the seed they use is free from contamination and safe to use in organic production. This process did not yield results based on the solutions set forth by Canadian Organic Growers and the organic sector. In addition to following an aggressive timeline, the technical committee limited its scope to focus on using a voluntary database managed by the seed industry despite consistent pushback from organic sector participants who highlighted this approach as highly problematic. Without this necessary government ownership and oversight, the seed industry is now positioned to control Canadian access to information on GE seed and immediate measures need to be taken to improve basic transparency tools.

We have been very clear from the beginning that this voluntary initiative would not provide the organic sector with the transparency that it needs. The concerns of organic farmers were not heard or addressed in this process and as a result we do not support the conclusions as they are detailed in this [report](#). We call on the government to listen to organic farmers and continue to work towards providing them with the transparency that they need to protect their right to hold organic certification in Canada.

Organic agriculture is an internationally recognized model of food production that is guided by principles of sustainability, regulated standards and driven by consumer demand - domestically and globally. Farmers who produce food in an organic system choose to do so without the interference of practices such as chemical use and genetic engineering. Organic farming by its very necessity is a driver of innovative and sustainable farming and food production techniques. Organic farmers have been the pioneers in such areas as biodiversity, soil health, cover cropping and crop rotations allowing them to produce quality food while also minimizing their impact on the environment.

ABOUT CANADIAN ORGANIC GROWERS

Canadian Organic Growers (COG) - a registered charity established in 1976 - is Canada's leading national, organic and regenerative member-driven organization dedicated to supporting farmers in their path to certification and adoption of more climate-friendly practices. COG provides training, educational resources, networking opportunities, and leadership to help build an agricultural system that empowers farmers, enhances human health, builds community and mitigates climate change while increasing Canadian food security. In collaboration with its national network, COG also engages in advocacy to advance the policy priorities of the organic sector. We work to ensure that Canada's organic and regenerative farmers, gardeners, and consumers are represented in our pursuit to advance the organic sector.

To learn more about Canadian Organic Growers, visit their website at www.cog.ca. To follow COG:

- Instagram: [CanadianOrganic](https://www.instagram.com/CanadianOrganic)
- Facebook: [CanadianOrganic](https://www.facebook.com/CanadianOrganic)
- Twitter: [CanadianOrganic](https://twitter.com/CanadianOrganic)
- TikTok: [CanadianOrganic](https://www.tiktok.com/@CanadianOrganic)
- LinkedIn: [Canadian Organic Growers](https://www.linkedin.com/company/CanadianOrganicGrowers)

For more information, please contact: Jenna Spencer
Director of Marketing and Communications, Canadian Organic Growers jenna.spencer@cog.ca