

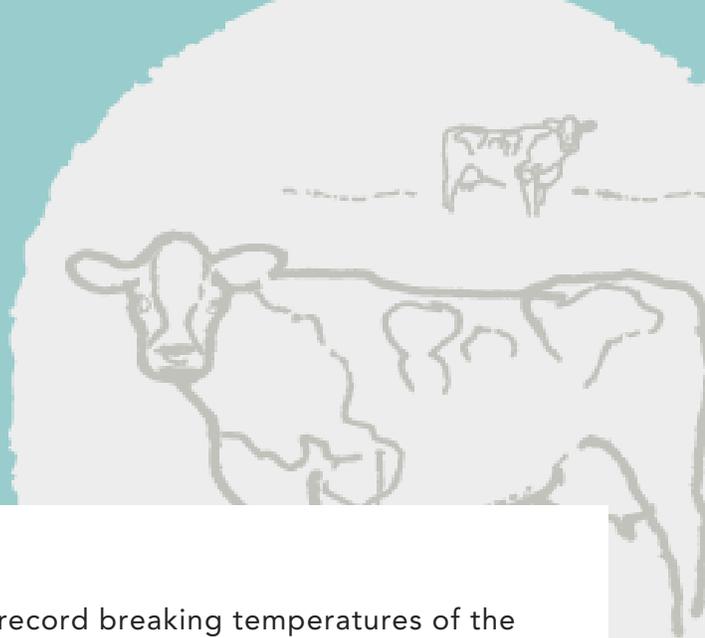
# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2021



  
**ORGANIC BC**

# A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP



2021 was another very challenging year. We had the record breaking temperatures of the heat dome, massive wildfires, historic flooding, prolonged freezing, the ongoing pandemic—all these factors presented many challenges and caused major supply chain disruptions. They also highlighted, more starkly than ever before, the importance of organic agriculture and the urgent need for a more environmentally conscious, truly sustainable and regenerative food system. Every part of the system, from the soil to the businesses to the farmers themselves, must be resilient and adaptable.

Organic BC must also be resilient. We are very excited about the progress we've made this year towards unifying and growing the organic sector in BC. The rebranding of COABC to Organic BC is one of the first steps towards this goal. And with most of our certification bodies using iCertify, operators in our province now have a stable online platform for their certification needs. We are also excited to (hopefully soon!) introduce a new official mark for the BC Certified Organic Program!

Midway through the year, the Fraser Valley Organic Producers Association (FVOPA) told us they had made the difficult decision to leave Organic BC to be accredited by another conformity verification body. FVOPA's longtime support and involvement in Organic BC, and the countless years of dedication and expertise by many volunteers, have had an enormous impact on organics in the province. We are grateful for all of their contributions.

The staff, board, many volunteers, and contractors who work so hard to run and build Organic BC have done incredible work during this time of intense change. We extend our deep gratitude to them and to every organic producer in BC. We encourage you all to stay engaged in the organic community, whether it's at your CB level, with Organic BC, or with a local or national organization.

**Heather Stretch & Niklaus Forstbauer, Co-Presidents**

# A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP



Another year has gone by and the trials our food system and food producers have faced could be considered surreal, with tremendous effects on our work, our personal lives, and our communities. There has never been a more critical time for organic agriculture to be part of the solution to building resilient food systems.

Organic BC accomplished a lot in the last year—most exciting is our new brand, and having welcomed more producers to organic certification. We have also initiated a fulsome review of the organization's structure and services to clarify our purpose, ensure our sustainability, and strengthen our capacity so we can best serve the organic sector moving forward.

BC's network of organic operators is unique in that it spans across the food system and includes all commodities. Each producer that adheres to organic principles holds tremendous knowledge that is helping us mitigate and adapt to climate change, and contributing to BC's regional economies and healthy food systems. This network is moving forward by supporting and inspiring each other, sharing innovative ideas, and celebrating what we have and all that has been accomplished.

I am so grateful for our community of volunteers, sponsors, founders, the ministry and the team at Organic BC. Each of you contribute much to this important work, either directly through your farming practices, by providing insight and expertise, through membership fees, or sector engagement. Every contribution makes a difference and has been integral in the growth of organic agriculture in BC. Thank you!

**Eva-Lena Lang, Executive Director**

# ACCREDITATION

The core work of the Accreditation Board is to perform the vital task of accrediting and/or recommending accreditation for member certification bodies. This procedure is critical to the BCCOP and COR programs and is accomplished with utmost regard to quality control.

**9**

certification  
bodies

**712**

operators certified  
or in transition

**52%**

operators certified  
to BCCOP

**58%**

operators  
certified to COR

**7%**

operators in  
transition

## UPDATES

### Retired

Anne Macey and DeLisa Lewis. We extend our gratitude for all they have contributed and wish both of them well in all their future endeavours.

### New rep

In January of 2021, Dwight Brown, Inspection/Certification representative joined the Accreditation Board.

### Position removed

The Province removed the AFF ex-officio position from the Accreditation Board. We thank Carolyn Teasdale for her time and expertise.

## FINANCES

The 2021 budget was set at \$147,000, an increase from the 2020 budget of \$139,800. Due to the pandemic, many of the budgeted expenses for travel to conduct audits and in-person meetings were not incurred in 2021.





Sweet Acres Farm

# ACCREDITATION ACTIVITIES

## COVID-19 SUPPORT

During this pandemic, our focus was support to certifying bodies. This included updating procedures and guidelines to maintain integral accreditation and certification programs.

## TRAINING AND INFORMATION SESSIONS

The 2021 Roundtable (CB/CC/VO training session) was held virtually in conjunction with the Organic BC conference and included sessions on the Canadian Organic Standard 2020 updates, sampling, mass balance exercises, and updates for BCCOP and COR requirements.

## IMPARTIALITY COMMITTEE

The Impartiality Committee met twice in 2021 and reported to the Board of Directors that all COR accreditation decisions were made impartially.

## SURVEILLANCE AUDITS

Audits conducted included: COR surveillance audits of PACS and FVOPA, regional program audits & reviews, COABC Accreditation Board (AB) internal audit, and a witness audit on the AB, conducted by the CFIA. The witness audit found that the COABC accreditation program remains in compliance to the CFIA's COR requirements as a certification verification body (CVB).

## APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

The COABC AB received two complaints in 2021. As of December 31, 2021, one complaint was resolved, and one remained open. One appeal was received and was resolved.



# GOVERNMENT AND SECTOR RELATIONS

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Over the course of many years, Organic BC has developed collaborative relationships with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Fisheries (AFF), partner organizations and academic institutions. These relationships are pivotal in the work we do and are especially critical as we advocate for all scales of farmers who are facing the outcomes of the changing climate.

### Key focus areas for 2021

- Labour issues
- Agri-climate solutions
- Agri-recovery and agri-stability programs
- Accessible food safety and crop insurance programs
- Support for certification bodies and verification officer training
- GE deregulation
- Funding for Canada Organic Standards

### New memberships

In 2021, Organic BC became a member of Farmers for Climate Solutions and the Canada Organic Trade Association.

### Highlights

- We received a Knowledge Transfer Program grant to produce a virtual field days video series focused on soil health (not launched until 2022 due to climate crisis).
- We partnered with Kwantlen Polytechnic Institute, who finalized their research on developing a program for Organic Extension Services in BC.
- In the fall we presented at the Ministry's RegenBC Conference and attended BC Agriculture Council Agriculture Days, where we voiced sector concerns and discussed opportunities to strengthen regional food systems.

### Industry Support

We are fortunate to have a dedicated Organic Industry Specialist within the Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Fisheries (AFF) that meets regularly with the Organic BC executive director to discuss how we can best support and grow the sector, and how we can also support the ministry in accomplishing their goals. We are very grateful for the support from AFF that allowed us to rebrand and launch a new website, complete a preliminary review of licensing the BC Certified Organic Program symbol (logo), and initiate a structural and fee review of Organic BC.



## ORGANIC FEDERATION OF CANADA (OFC)

As always, the Organic Federation of Canada (OFC) continues to work to deepen and safeguard the Canada Organic Standards, and to foster organic science research.

### Challenges in the past year:

- The lack of regulation regarding labelling of genetically modified foods and seeds is a huge issue, with the Canadian Biotech Action Network (CBAN) leading the movement to protect organic farmers by ensuring seeds are labelled. Follow the action at [CBAN's website](#).
- The OFC has been advocating for more than a decade for permanent funding of the Canadian Organic Standards, but the current federal government is actually abandoning funding for this essential regulatory reference. The Canadian General Standards Board is a government body responsible for issuing the Canadian Organic Standards (COS), and it requires that standards are reviewed and revised every 5 years. The review process of the 2020 COS begins soon, and it will require a lot of resources.

Please consider signing and sharing the [OFC Petition](#) asking the government to fund the review of the Canadian Organic Standards!

### Organic Science Cluster 3 (OSC3)

OSC3 is now complete and the reports are available online at the [OFC website](#). With an overarching focus on soil, there's lots of interest for all kinds of organic farmers all over the country. Submissions for Cluster 4 are now underway—the program funds several million dollars worth of organic research in successive three year cycles, so there are a lot of fascinating projects to work through!

### A more unified voice

Another positive development is that the three national organic bodies—the OFC, Canadian Organic Growers (COG) and Canada Organic Trade Alliance (COTA)—will be working more closely together to ensure a unified voice with the federal government and a more streamlined funding flow.



Peninsula Kiwi

## **BC AGRICULTURE COUNCIL (BCAC)**

The organic sector has a strong and respected voice at BCAC. We work closely together on issues of climate, regenerative agriculture and the growth of organic agriculture in BC.

### **2021 BCAC Award for Excellence in Agricultural Leadership**

This was awarded to Carmen Wakeling of Eatmore Sprouts & Greens. It was a proud moment for the organic sector as Carmen was honoured for her many years of hard work and dedication to agriculture in the province.

### **New executive director and priority issues**

Midway through the year, Danielle Synotte was selected to replace Reg Enns as BCAC's Executive Director. Around the same time, the Board of Directors and staff met to create a strategic vision and identify priority issues for the organization for the next 3 years. These priority issues include water security, labour supply, land use, activism and on-farm programs.

### **BC Ag Days**

This annual event went online in October 2021. Organic BC ED Eva-Lena Lang and co-presidents Heather Stretch and Niklaus Forstbauer attended various meetings with MLAs and senior government staff. Organic BC was granted a private meeting with Agriculture Minister Lana Popham and her staff to discuss issues directly related to the organic sector.

### **Disaster relief**

In November, the BC Ag Council took a leading role in assisting farmers during and in the aftermath of the catastrophic flood. A Flood Donation Fund, to be distributed to affected farmers, was established as a part of the outpouring of support from the public.

# WEBSITE & REBRANDING

With the website and rebrand launched in July 2021, this was a huge year of change for us! But it's been great—there are so many new opportunities to explore. Now that we've settled in, we will continue to focus on unleashing the potential and telling the story of organics in BC.

We invite you to explore our website, get involved in the #thisisorganicbc community on social media, and celebrate with us as we continue to champion and advocate for a healthy, diverse and resilient food system.



## HIGHLIGHTS & KUDOS



A giant thanks to our creative, engaged and oh-so patient Branding Committee, who helped guide the new Organic BC branding, and to our designer, Sandra Hanson, for her incredible work.



Thanks to everyone who contributed words, photos and messaging to the new website. We couldn't have done it without you. Haven't checked out the new website yet? Visit [organicbc.org](https://organicbc.org) to learn more about our organization and organics, and to browse our new directory, post a job, listen to our podcast and more.



Our monthly newsletter now has a refreshed look, courtesy of the recent Organic BC rebrand. It's attracted quite a few external subscribers and has a higher engagement rate than ever.



We rebranded our social accounts to @thisisorganicbc. The new brand was extremely well received on our social platforms and we have experienced a higher level of growth and engagement than ever before. In 2021, we gained nearly 500 new Instagram followers!



# OUTREACH

## Pacific Agriculture Show

From January 28-30, over 100 people visited our online booth at the virtual edition of the Pacific Agriculture Show.



## Organic Week

Some highlights from Organic Week, which took place from Sept. 13 - 19: We released the Organic BC podcast to the public! And, we sponsored a BC Ag in the Classroom organic Cook-Along event featuring Molly Thurston of Claremont Ranch Organics and Dion Wiebe of Rosdown Farms & Natural Foods.

## BC Organic Grower

The BC Organic Grower is an excellent way for Organic BC's members to stay informed, and to celebrate organic farmers and food producers. The print magazine reaches over 800 growers and is distributed at events throughout the year. Online, articles from 2021 were viewed over 10,500 times.

In 2021, all issues were guided by the overarching theme of cultivating wisdom in a time of changing climate and a global pandemic.

Thank you to all the producers and experts who share their words and wisdom.



# EXTENSION

## ORGANIC BC PODCASTS

The Organic BC podcast is an educational resource for farmers, gardeners, processors and other members of the organic food and farming community in British Columbia and beyond! It features conversations with farmers, eaters, academics, scientists and authors about the philosophy, practice, and politics of organic food.



**Tune in at:**

[organicbc.org/podcast](https://organicbc.org/podcast)

## BC ORGANIC CONFERENCE

Our 2021 conference took place on February 28, 2021 and was entirely virtual (we hoped we would be able to carry out some socially distanced farm tours, but alas). Conference attendees had early access to 40-plus podcasts spanning all aspects of food systems and organic farming in BC as well as a chance to bid on some fantastically creative items in the silent auction.



**Read the full conference recap in the BC Organic Grower:**

[bcorganicgrower.ca/2021/04/2021-bc-organic-conference-recap](https://bcorganicgrower.ca/2021/04/2021-bc-organic-conference-recap)



### 2021 BC Organic Conference Photo Contest Winners

L-R: Forstbauer Farm, Spray Creek Ranch, Big Rock Ranch



# iCERTIFY

## **DATABASE OF INPUT PRODUCTS**

The long-anticipated iCertify update included the release of the new input approval request process and searchable database of approved products for our membership. There are almost 300 products in the system already. Each operator can now maintain a live approved list of products for their own operation, which can easily be referenced during inspections.

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## **TRAINING AND INFORMATION SESSIONS**

We held multiple training sessions on this new feature, as well as general use training for new users. Throughout the year, all regional CBs onboarded, with many making iCertify mandatory for use. Training then shifted to administrators in order to ensure the CRM was being used optimally and processes were clear. Support continues to be available to all users via [icertify@organicbc.org](mailto:icertify@organicbc.org) with one-on-one training and support as needed.

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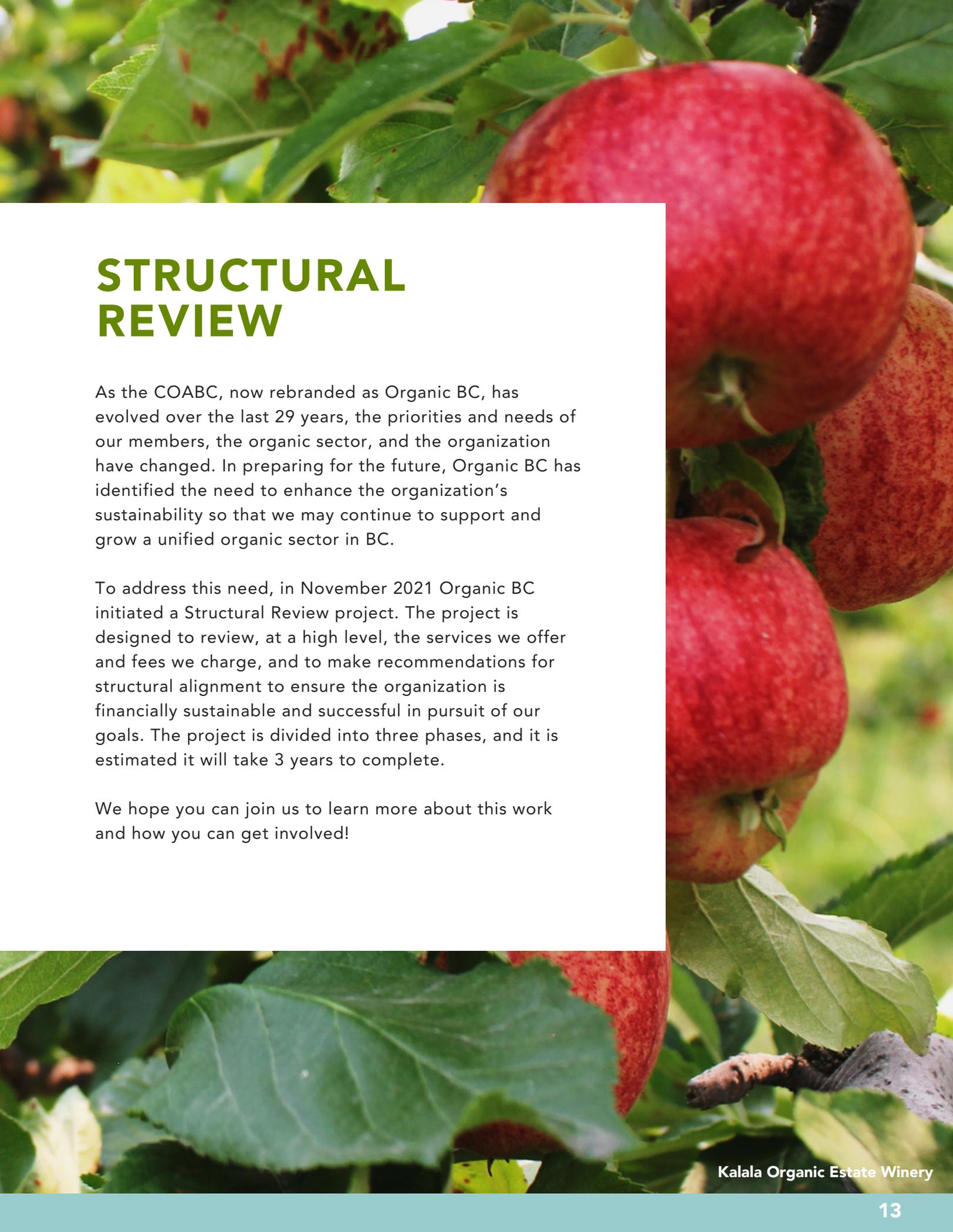
## **WEBSITE SYNC**

Specific data in our CRM is now directly connected to the Organic BC website directory, providing accurate product listings and real-time operation status.

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## **UBC COLLABORATION**

The collaboration with UBC's farm management software, LiteFarm, is complete. LiteFarm can now export management data into various pre-made record templates needed within iCertify to verify organic compliance. Additionally, it is accessible by inspectors and designed to allow for volume and traceback audits.



# STRUCTURAL REVIEW

As the COABC, now rebranded as Organic BC, has evolved over the last 29 years, the priorities and needs of our members, the organic sector, and the organization have changed. In preparing for the future, Organic BC has identified the need to enhance the organization's sustainability so that we may continue to support and grow a unified organic sector in BC.

To address this need, in November 2021 Organic BC initiated a Structural Review project. The project is designed to review, at a high level, the services we offer and fees we charge, and to make recommendations for structural alignment to ensure the organization is financially sustainable and successful in pursuit of our goals. The project is divided into three phases, and it is estimated it will take 3 years to complete.

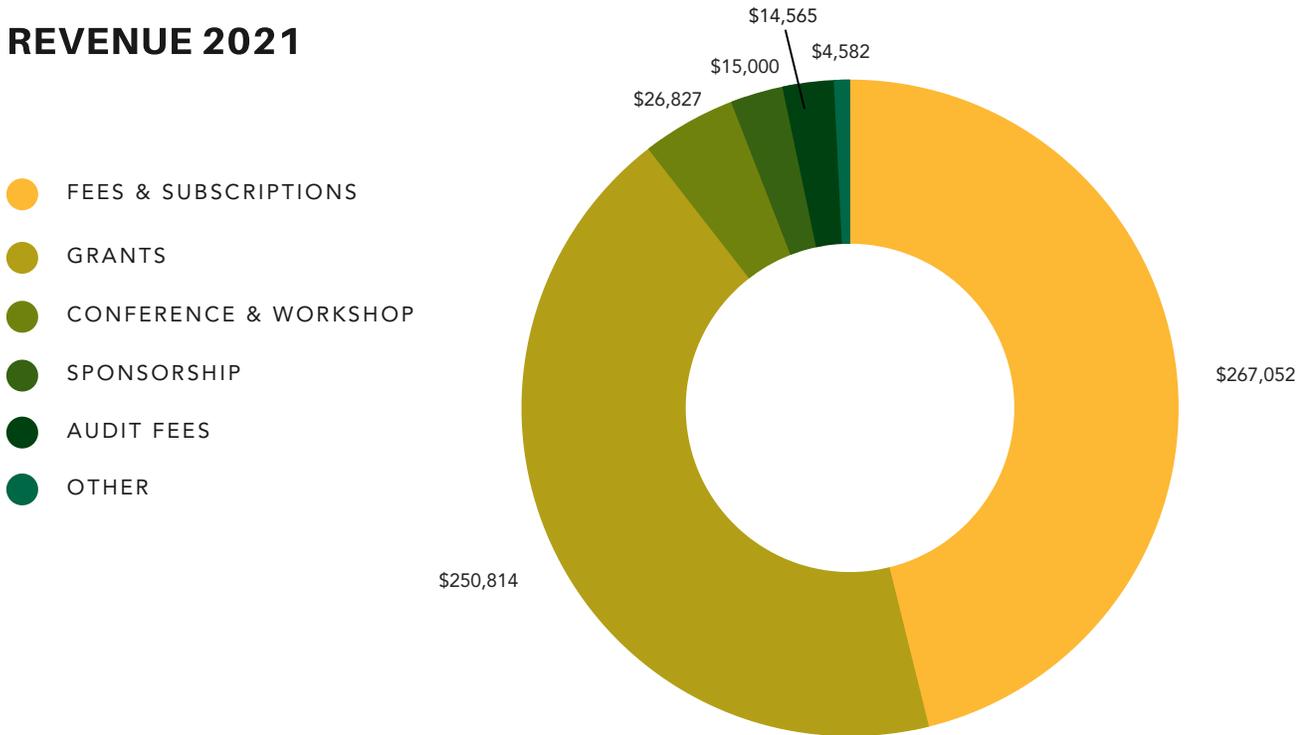
We hope you can join us to learn more about this work and how you can get involved!

# FINANCIALS

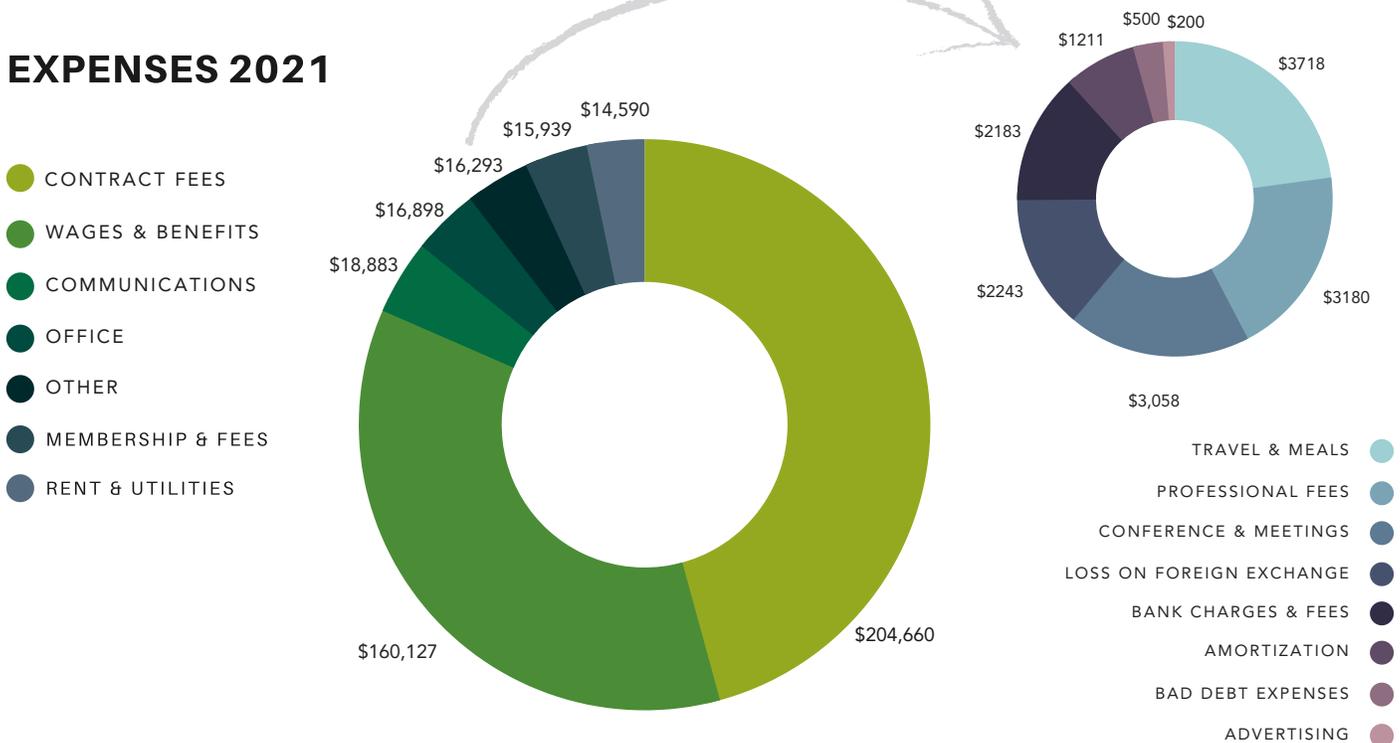


Snowy Mountain Farm

## REVENUE 2021



## EXPENSES 2021



# MEET ORGANIC BC

## 2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Heather Stretch**  
Board Co-President  
IOPA



**Niklaus Forstbauer**  
Board Co-President  
BDASBC



**Ken Smith**  
Board Treasurer  
PACS



**David Janssens**  
Board Secretary  
FVOVA



**Brody Irvine**  
Board Director  
PACS



**Corine Singfield**  
Board Director  
BCARA



**Corry Spitters**  
Board Director  
FVOVA



**Lana Braun**  
Board Director  
KOGS



**Carmen Wakeling**  
Board Director  
PACS



**Danny Turner**  
Board Director  
PACS



**Jordan Marr**  
Board Director  
NOOA



**Robert Vanderlip**  
Board Director  
LEOGA



**Josh Brown**  
Board Director  
SOOPA



**Rebecca Kneen**  
Associate Board Director  
Organic Federation of Canada



**Emma Holmes**  
Associate Board Director Ministry  
of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

## Team



**Eva-Lena Lang**  
Executive Director



**Maureen Loft**  
Accreditation  
Director



**Katie Porter**  
Accreditation  
Administrator



**Mary Paradis**  
Operations  
Coordinator



**Stacey Santos**  
Communications  
Manager



**Kristy Kruschel**  
Office  
Administrator



**Carol Edwards**  
Bookkeeper



**Crystal Arsenault**  
iCertify  
Coordinator



**Moss Dance**  
Designer  
BC Organic Grower



**Darcy Smith**  
Editor  
BC Organic Grower

## ACCREDITATION BOARD



**Dwight Brown**  
Certification &  
Inspection Member



**Rochelle Eisen**  
Certification &  
Inspection Member



**Nadene Gurulé**  
Certification &  
Inspection Member



**Alicia Hudson**  
COR Processor  
Member



**Renee Prasad**  
Consumer &  
Environmental Member



**Nicolas Walser**  
BCCOP & COR  
Producer Member



**Carolyn Teasdale**  
Ex-officio



**DeLisa Lewis**  
BCCOP Producer  
Member

# THANK YOU

## 2021 SPONSORS



## AND A HUGE THANK YOU TO OUR OPERATORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Your contributions support Organic BC and the important work we're doing to create a more sustainable, diverse and resilient food system. We couldn't have done it without you!

Cover photo credit: North Okanagan Land to Table Network