

Organic Production in Ontario

Producers are highly committed stakeholders in Ontario’s organic system – half of them have been certified organic for over 10 years!ⁱ While they are the largest number of stakeholders in the organic sector, they earn the lowest revenues. Half (49%) of the province’s organic growers report sales under \$100,000. Indeed one quarter of producers sell less than \$50,000 per year. This contrasts sharply with the organic stakeholders working beyond the farm gate where half of the handlers, processors and retailers report gross annual sales over \$1M. This report takes a closer look at certified organic producers – the crops they produce and the land they manage.

Canadian Organic Growers (COG) has had the foresight to track the growth in certified organic farms since 1992 using data obtained from Certification Bodies (CBs).ⁱⁱ While the data are sometimes incomplete, the information is the most comprehensive available. In 2011, the Organic Council of Ontario (OCO) collaborated with COG to obtain production data from CBs operating in Ontario. For the first time, we are able to look at organic production in different areas of the province.ⁱⁱⁱ The information in this report is from 2010 (unless noted otherwise).^{iv}



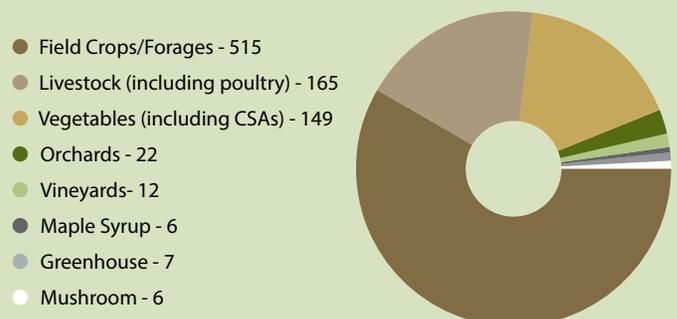
Farms and Farm Types

- Ontario’s organic farms make up only 1.2% of all farms in the province but 18% of certified organic farms in Canada.
- According to CB records, 33 farms were transitioning in 2010. It is interesting that the 2011 farm census shows 146 transitioning farms. The census figure seems inflated – and likely reflects a poor general understanding of the meaning of transition.
- There have been changes in the relative proportion of different types of organic farms. Since 2005:
 - Fruit and vegetable operations have remained stable – but vineyard operations have doubled
 - Livestock operations have increased by 17% - and most of this increase is due to dairy farms which have increased by over 70%
 - There are twice as many field crop farms as either livestock or horticulture farms. Field crop production continues to increase - 40% more farms are producing organic field crops (including forages and green manures), partly explained by the increase in dairy farms.

Number of Organic Farms in Ontario



Type of Farm Enterprises - Number of Operators



Organic Acreage and Crops

- There are 123,328 acres under certified organic production in the province. While the number of operators is down slightly, acres under organic management have increased 6.7% since 2009.
- An additional 5732 acres are in transition.
- In addition to managed acres, there are 11,632 acres in organic wild land (maple forests, wild berries, wild crafting and woodlots, ponds & wetlands on organic farms).

Certified and Transitional Acres in Ontario – 2010

	Eastern	Central/Metro	Western	Northern	Ontario Total
Certified	31,641	11,518	76,761	3,408	123,328
Transitional	735	425	4,235	337	5,732
Wild land	5,066	1,150	4,975	441	11,632

Grains and Oilseeds – 73,131 acres

- Soybeans and spelt are the most important organic cash crops, accounting for 30% of the total field crop acreage
- Corn is also an important crop – but the relative proportion for human versus livestock consumption is not known

Vegetables, Herbs & Mushrooms – 2,678 acres

- Little is known about the acreage of different vegetable crops as they are sometimes reported under the general category of ‘vegetables.’ We estimate that the field vegetables produced in the greatest amounts are potatoes, herbs, garlic, squash, asparagus, mushrooms, sweet potatoes and onions
- There are 9 acres of greenhouse crops – tomatoes and cucumbers

Fruits and Nuts – 1,516 acres

- Includes 884 acres of tree fruits – mostly apples, 542 acres of wine grapes and 57 acres of small fruits

Livestock – produced by 165 organic livestock enterprises:

- Pigs and sows are the most commonly produced animals on Ontario’s organic farms with 15,112 head in 2010
- Dairy cattle follow with 6,956 head and beef cattle at 3,459 head
- Livestock production also includes 1,351 sheep and 250 dairy goats
- Poultry production includes 380,512 meatbirds/broilers, 166,719 laying hens, 1,650 turkeys

Forages, Green Manure – 44,645 acres^{vi}

- Most of this acreage (89% or 39,841 acres) is planted to hay and pasture



Number of animals, bee hives and poultry - 2010

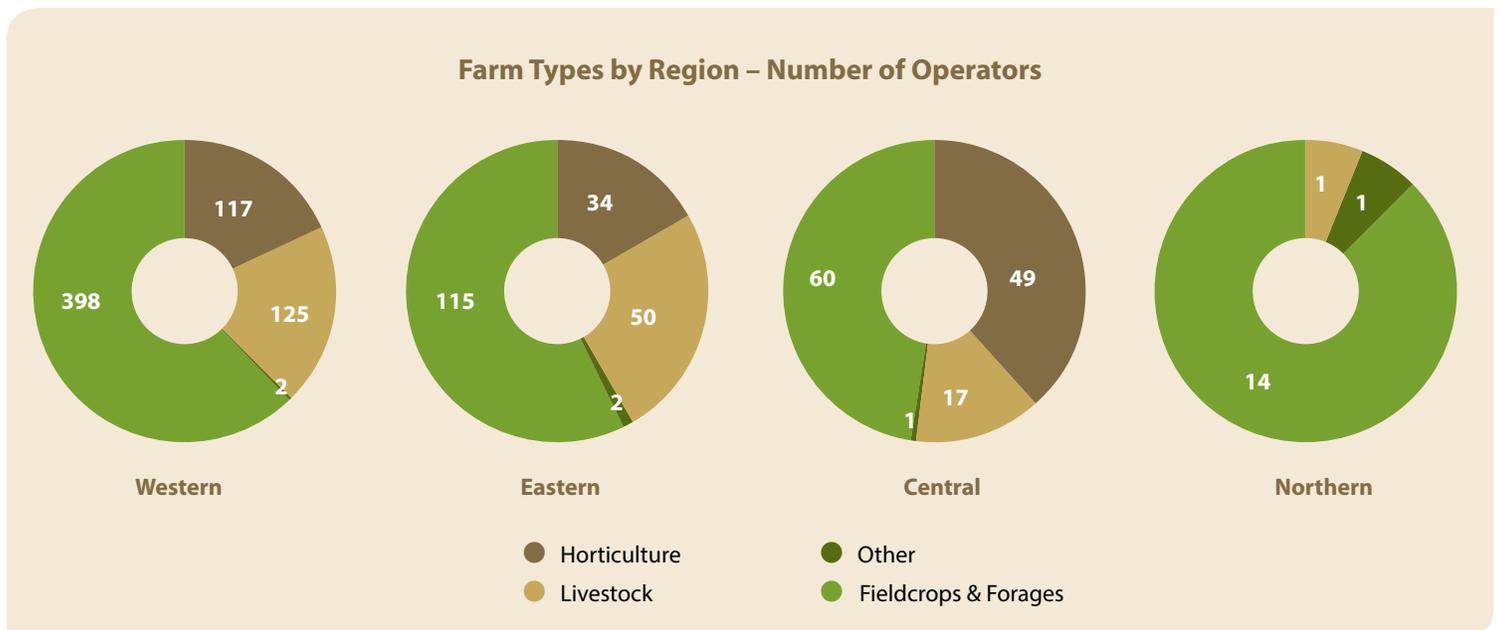
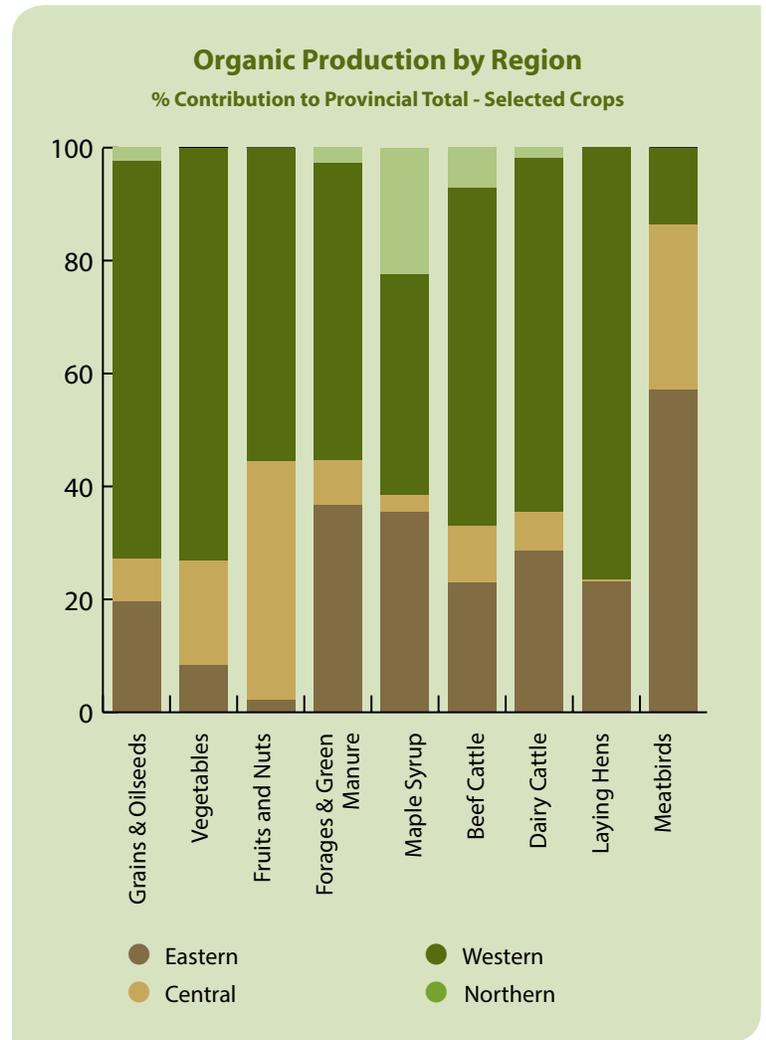
Livestock type	Eastern	Central	Western	Northern	Ontario total
Beef Cattle	793	347	2074	245	3459
Dairy Cattle	1991	474	4365	126	6956
Dairy Goats			250		250
Sheep	286	267	798		1351
Sows			355		355
Pigs	11		14,746		14,757
Bee hives		85			85
Poultry Type					
Layers	38,635	584	127,500		166,719
Meatbirds/ Broilers	217,733	110,673	52,106		380,512
Turkeys	152	130	1368		1650
Ducks	14		8		22

Regional Differences

- Western Ontario has the largest number of certified organic operators, acres in organic management, and transitional operators. This region leads the province in the production of most organic products. Western Ontario accounts for:
 - 70% of grains and oilseeds
 - 73% of vegetables, herbs and mushrooms
 - 88% of tree fruits
 - 62% of small fruits
 - 97% of organic nursery crops
 - 60% beef cattle, 62% of dairy cattle, 100% of goats, 99% of pigs, 76% of layers

There are however, a few areas where production is dominated by other regions:

- Eastern Ontario produces 87% of the buckwheat in the province (1,282 acres) and 66% of the wild blueberries (1.21 acres). This area of the province also matches Western Ontario in terms of certified wild land and land in hay and pasture.
- Central Ontario produces 97% of the province's organic wine grapes (526 acres) and 100% of the beehives.
- While Western Ontario has most of the laying hens, it has only 14% of the meat birds – 57% and 30% of meatbirds are raised in Eastern and Central Ontario respectively.



Putting it all together...

- As Ontario's organic sector grows we need to grow our data too! We need CBs to keep information in consistent ways so we can better track production.
- Regions are diverse - each has its unique production profile. We need to tailor support programs based on this.
- Field crops & forages, dairy cattle and wine grapes are the enterprises that have experienced the most growth. Not surprisingly, they are the crops for which we have well developed value chains after the farm gate. Developing stronger value networks for fruits and vegetables, and other livestock could stimulate production in regions where it is currently weak.
- CSAs and other direct-marketing organic farms are under-represented in the data reported here because we are relying on data from CBs. We estimate that only half of these operators are certified.



About OCO

The Organic Council of Ontario (OCO) is a non profit association representing all members throughout the value chain including producers, processors, marketers, distributors, suppliers, certifiers, retailers, restaurants and others to provide leadership and support the continued growth of Ontario's organic sector.

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- See other reports in this series posted at: <http://www.organiccouncil.ca/category/research>
- These reports are all available on the Canadian Organic Growers website at: <http://www.cog.ca/our-work/organic-statistics/>
- We defined different regions of the province by postal code: Western – “N” postal codes, Eastern – “K” postal codes, Northern – “P” postal codes, and Central Ontario - which includes L postal codes and Metro.
- The full report – “Certified Organic Production in Ontario, 2010”, prepared for OCO by Anne Macey is available on the OCO website at: <http://www.organiccouncil.ca/category/research>
- There are several issues with these poultry numbers. One CB reported square footage of poultry rather than number of birds, so this is an estimate based on maximum density as per the standards. Also in addition to these numbers, there will be pullets raised as replacement flocks.
- This figure does not include land used for cash crops that is in green manure cover for part of the year