

**Federal-Provincial-Territorial Pre-Ministerial Conference Stakeholder Session - June 28, 2016.**

<p><b>Organization:</b></p>	<p>Organic Council of Ontario</p>
<p>- Please provide a concise summary of your perspective, and your key message to Minister Leal.  <i>Bullet Points are the preferred format.</i>  <i>Please keep each summary and message section to 300 words or less.</i></p>	
<p><b>Question 1: Feedback on GF2</b></p> <p>What is working well under GF2?</p> <p>If you could make changes to GF2, what would they be?</p>	<p>-We were happy to see that groups focused on sustainability and climate change adaptation/mitigation received funding. This has not always been the case in the past.</p> <p>-In general, GF2 monies have been difficult to access for ecologically-focused organizations and projects.</p> <p>-50:50 matching and lack of any upfront fund payments put significant constraints on small non-profits with limited budgets and cash flow. This leads to a funding bias towards larger industry organizations and/or businesses with significant capital.</p> <p>-Suggest we reinstitute the 75% capacity building funding (it is difficult for small NGOs to come up with the 50% matching); allow contributions to overhead and existing staff which are essential to conducting successful projects and creating real impact for Ontario's agricultural sector.</p>
<p><b>Question 2: The Next Policy Framework</b></p> <p>What would you like to see in the next policy framework?</p>	<p>-AAC board requirements should include a representative from ecological/sustainable/organic perspective</p> <p>-Specific and dedicated funds to support transition from conventional agriculture to organic should be part of the next agricultural policy framework. Transition supports in the form of certification subsidies or payments to offset the lack of organic premium during transition years are critical in order to incentivize the growth of the organic sector. A specific fund for this should be set aside as the organic industry in Canada is facing fierce competition from the US and other markets.</p>

*-Specific and dedicated funds for the organic sector should make up 3-5% of total agricultural policy framework funding to ensure that the total amount of funds matches the sector's growth requirements over the next five years. Since organic agriculture is currently roughly 2% of all agriculture, we suggest 3-5% of ag policy monies be dedicated to organic to help grow this nascent industry with huge economic potential.*

*-There should be funding parity between provinces. For example, in New Brunswick, the province matched funding from GF2 to support certification subsidies for all organic growers as part of an organic development strategy. The subsidies would be pay for up to 70% of certification costs over 3 years with up to a maximum of \$700.00. This was a great incentive for small scale organic farms to become certified. PEI's government supported a similar program. Recently, the Quebec government has funded a \$9 million dollar growth strategy over 3 years in Quebec, with a portion of those funds going to support organic certification costs for farms in transition. However, this kind of support from the Ontario provincial government is lacking.*

*-There should be some flexibility on matching funds for trade associations and/or organizations under a specific size (i.e. under 4 staff people) as is provided through AAFC grants (will allow for an 80-20 match). 50:50 matching funding requirements put a strain on the base operations of organizations that have limited funding and thus limit project capacity*

*-The requirement that consultants be hired instead of staff in non-profits is also a major barrier to organizations who are struggling to keep well-qualified project staff. This requirement should be restructured to allow for incremental addition of hours to operational staff at small non-profits.*

*-Environmental Farm Plan should reward farmers who continue to use ecological or organic farming practices (i.e practices that benefit the environment), rather than just those farmers who are making changes. Otherwise, explore tying cost share payments to improvements in soil health. Ralph Martin at the University of Guelph is working on this. Soil organic matter increases carbon*

	<p><i>sequestration and water retention improving climate change adaptation and mitigation. Climate change carbon credits should be tied to improvements in and/or high soil organic matter based on soil profile type.</i></p>
<p><b>Question 3: International Trade</b></p> <p><i>Are there specific international trade opportunities or challenges you would like to raise in the context of trade agreements, market development and/or market access?</i></p>	<p><i>-Organic Equivalency agreements are critical to the expansion of Canada's organic markets</i></p> <p><i>-We are concerned about the adoption of Genetically Engineered products with no economic impact assessment addressing the impact on international trade (i.e. GE alfalfa being commercialized in Eastern Canada without addressing contamination issues when Japan imports from Canada and has no tolerance for GE)</i></p> <p><i>-Special attention should be paid to the registration of organic inputs and varieties suited to organic production as the market share of organic is expanding both domestically and internationally.</i></p> <p><i>-Competition from the US and other jurisdictions is growing significantly. Canadian governmental supports should match those of other jurisdictions.</i></p> <p><i>-The Canadian and Ontario food brands are well respected globally. We should be leveraging that reputation to raise awareness of and improve margins by promoting the Canada Organic and Foodland Ontario Organic labels abroad as well as supporting industry to meet global demands.</i></p>