



Canada
Organic trade association

Association pour le commerce
Biologique
du Canada

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP



With upheaval and uncertainty comes the opportunity to reimagine what is possible. 2020 has relentlessly provided us with such opportunities. COVID-19 has brought intense challenges and profound hardships to so many. This global crisis has shone a light on the frailties of many of our systems, our interconnectedness, and the urgent need to work together. I believe we have greater clarity than ever that things must change. COTA is committed to being a part of this change with you - our members.

As a COTA member, I am deeply grateful for the resilience, agility and commitment COTA displayed during the pandemic. We did not stop supporting our members with crucial resources, timely data, and opportunities to engage and learn. We connected stakeholders along the supply chain to tackle important sector issues such as Maintaining Organic Integrity and Glyphosate pollution. We continued to assemble provincial and national organic organizations to unite and strengthen our collective voice. We connected with our partners in Government and policymakers to advocate at every opportunity to strengthen and grow Canada Organic. COTA is also finding new ways to connect with consumers with programs like '21 Reasons Why' and our plans for a National Organic Campus program. The steady growth of Organic across all categories tells us people are hungry for the changes that Organic offers. COTA will continue to innovate and reimagine new opportunities to meet the evolving needs of all our members.

In the midst of all of the uncertainty of last year, COTA embarked on refining our Vision and Mission statement. North stars are needed now more than ever.

Vision

Thriving, resilient communities and ecosystems that are rooted in organic's holistic principles and practices.

Mission

We promote and protect the organic sector and encourage the universal adoption of organic.

Statement of Principle

With farming as the foundation of organic, COTA acts as a cultivator, connector, and advocate for organic in Canada and abroad.

I hope these words resonate with you. You might notice a bolder tone. For me this mission reflects what we know to be true- organic is part of the solution! The principles of 'Health, Ecology, Fairness and Care' and the collective efforts, knowledge, expertise and spirit of our members will be at the heart of this transformation.

Thank you for your continued support of COTA.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maureen'.

Maureen Kirkpatrick, President, COTA Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tia Loftsgard'.

Tia Loftsgard, Executive Director, COTA

MARKET ACCESS

With the market disruptions of 2020 starting to fade from the extreme stance it experienced early on in the pandemic, the organic industry adapted to a new normal. Innovation and adaptability emerged out of challenges, with some unexpected results impacting market access programs. COTA launched a national program that increased industry export knowledge and gave opportunities to Canadian companies to directly access global buyers, as well as learn about export markets and become export ready.



COTA debuted a Virtual Business to Business Buyer Mission program in 2020. Members benefited greatly from an online delivery model connecting them to 16 buyers over three sessions. 58 members participated in these sessions in the Fall of 2020, and Winter of 2021. Thanks to the online meeting model, COTA was able to build business using this virtual avenue, navigating 17 time zones, for the benefit of organic trade. Buyers participated from Japan, France, Germany, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Netherlands, South Korea, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The estimated value of sales achieved through this program was \$400,000 of new business.

Trade Events:

COTA's members seemed divided into two camps on participating in virtual tradeshow. While some members loved the ease of participating from the comfort of one's home office, other members struggled to find business connections without the physical presence of a bustling venue, and the encounters that happen with in-person events.

COTA pivoted trade show support funds to support virtual attendance at a variety of trade events. Yet, members choose to participate at a much lower rate which allowed COTA to reallocate funding into other worthwhile marketing initiatives such as the delivery of the [2021 Organic Market Report](#) and additional programs such as the export support fund.

Export Support Fund:

Organic manufacturers saw challenges in getting their samples in the hands of buyers during the pandemic without physical trade events being possible. COTA quickly responded and sought to fill that gap with a newly minted [Export Support Fund](#). The fund was designed to support companies shipping samples globally, and proved a key piece in mitigating the effect of rising shipping costs, delivery delays and costly sample product damage in the sales pipeline. COTA provided over \$14,500 in funding support to organic vendors, generating nearly \$1.2 million in organic sales.

Online Outreach:

Throughout 2020 and 2021, COTA continued leading on pandemic relief, market intelligence and regulatory updates, through speaking engagements highlighting the position of the Canadian organic market in the world, export opportunities, equivalency arrangement overviews, funding support mechanisms, trends in the domestic and international markets and future growth of the sector.

CANADA ORGANIC STATISTICS



OPERATORS

There are over 7.6K certified organic operations in Canada, up from 7.5K in 2019.



ACRES

Canada is currently comprised of 4M certified organic acres. Up from 3.4M acres in 2019.



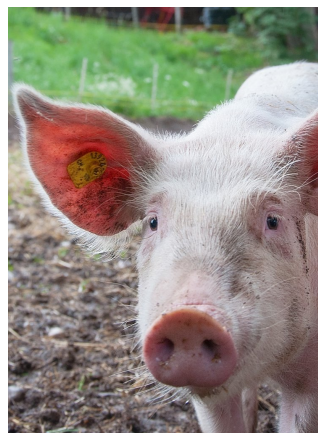
PRODUCERS

There are over 5.9K organic producers in Canada, up from 5.6K in 2019.



PROCESSORS

There are currently 1.8K certified organic processors in Canada, up from 1.7K in 2019.

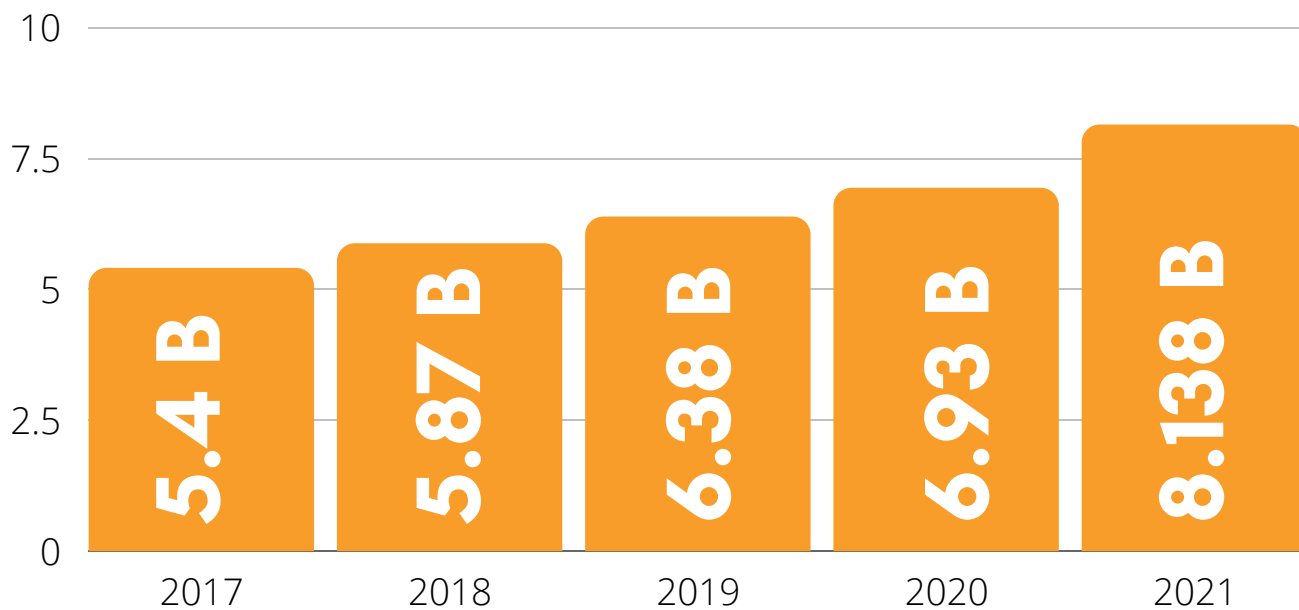


LIVESTOCK

There are currently 799 certified livestock producers with a minimal decrease of -1.4% since 2019.

TOTAL MARKET SALES

Up 50.7% since 2017



(Canadian dollars)

CANADA'S GLOBAL POSITIONING



IN 10 YEARS, CANADIAN
ORGANIC ACREAGE HAS
GROWN **87.7%**

2.3%

OF CANADIAN
ACREAGE
IS ORGANIC



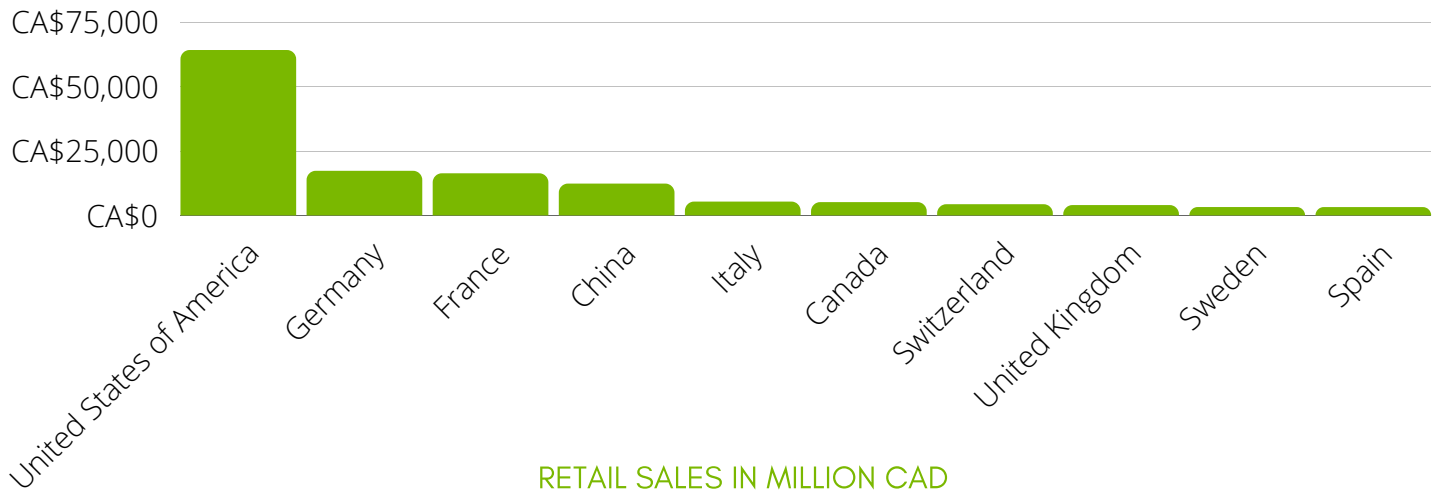
CANADA RANKS **11TH**
ON LAND UNDER
ORGANIC PRODUCTION

CANADA IS THE **SECOND**
LARGEST CROP PRODUCER
GLOBALLY



CANADA'S GLOBAL POSITIONING

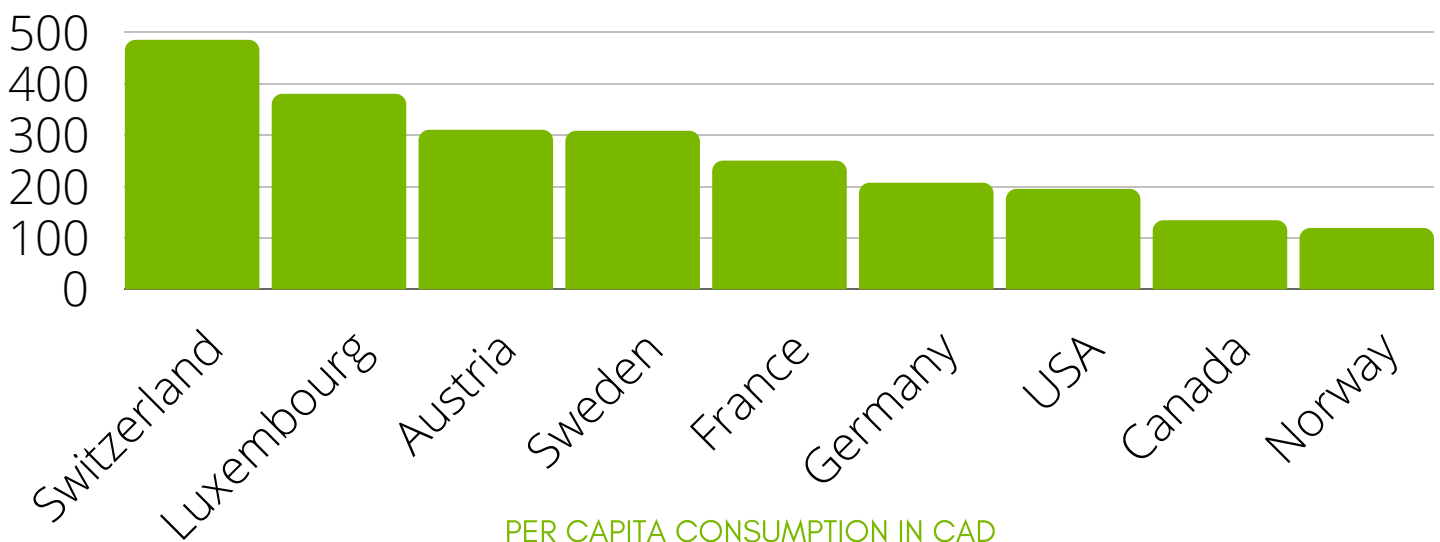
THE TEN COUNTRIES WITH THE LARGEST MARKETS FOR ORGANIC FOOD 2019



CANADA IS 6TH LARGEST ORGANIC MARKET GLOBALLY AND RANKS 9TH HIGHEST PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION



THE TEN COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION 2019



CONSUMER EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

New Campaigns to Deepen Consumer's Familiarity and Trust of Organic

COTA launched a new consumer education campaign titled [21 Days to Organic](#). Through this sampling program, COTA's goal raised the profile of organic by outlining 21 benefits of organic through influencers, media partners, consumers, community partners and a nation-wide social media campaign. Consumers spread the word on their social media once they receive their monthly organic pack which allowed COTA to continue building our national network of organic supporters. The program was wildly successful – the pack sold out in first two months within days!

COTA launched its very own [TikTok](#) under the Choose Canada Organic banner. The social media platform took off in 2020 and more and more companies are joining the app. The Choose Canada Organic TikTok gained over 3300 views on the account and we will continue building out our online presence on this popular site. We kicked off its launch with an Organic Week TikTok recipe contest and fun videos. Stay tuned for more fun TikTok content!

Organic Week 2020

This year COTA spearheaded the OrganicWeek.ca website redesign as it was time for a fresh new engaging platform. The new and improved website boasts a modern design with an updated layout, navigation and content. OrganicWeek.ca is home to organic facts, content and more, see the newly redesigned website [here!](#)

Over the years, Canada's Organic Week has become the landmark opportunity for raising awareness of the far-reaching impacts of organic farming, both for human health as well as for the environment. From September 7th - 14th, Canada celebrated the 12th anniversary of Organic Week – the nation's largest celebration of organic food, farming and products! Despite the challenges of COVID-19, Organic Week sponsors and supporters rose to the occasion resulting in a fun, educational, and participatory Organic Week. The 2020 campaign was further fortified by the dedicated support of 18 regional sponsors. In this year's campaign alone, Organic Week raked in over a million readers in paid advertising, a nine-page printed feature in the Globe & Mail, as well as boasting over 1,700 consumer contest entries. Over 1000 promotional kits were distributed to stores across the country- a process that was streamlined with the help of participating Canadian organic distributors: Everland, United Natural Foods (UNFI), and Horizon Distributors. Retailers were also encouraged to download and use Organic Week's free digital assets, including campaign logos, imagery, social media graphics, email signatures, and more in both official languages. As Canada's largest official celebration of organic food and farming, Organic Week once again prevailed as the best marketing initiative to promote organic in solidarity as an industry.

Organic Week 2022 is scheduled for September 12-18th!

I CHOOSE organic.
MY TRUSTED FOOD SOURCE

NO CHEMICAL FERTILIZERS
NO SYNTHETIC PESTICIDES
SAFE AND CLEAN WATER SOURCES
NO CHEMICAL PESTICIDES FREE RANGE
CLEAN WATER SOURCES
REGENERATIVE SOIL HEALTH
NO SEWAGE SLUDGE
BIODIVERSITY
NO ROUTINE ANTIBIOTIC USE
FREE
NO IRRADIATION
NO HORMONE INJECTIONS
SAFE AND CLEAN WATER SOURCES
BIODIVERSITY
NO IRRADIATION
POLLINATORS
NO ROUTINE ANTIBIOTIC USE
NO HORMONE INJECTIONS
FREE RANGE

je CHOISIS BIO
MA SOURCE FIABLE DE NOURRITURE.

QUALITÉ DE L'EAU QUALITÉ DE L'AIR
BIODIVERSITÉ RÉGÉNÉRATIVE
VITALITÉ DES SOLS SANS-OGM
NON-IRRADIÉS VITALITÉ DES SOLS
RÉGÉNÉRATIVE SANS-
CULTIVARS ADAPTÉS
COMPOSTS ET ENGRAIS VERTS
RESPECT DES CYCLES NATURELS
SANS PESTICIDES DE SYNTHÈSE
QUALITÉ DE L'EAU VITALITÉ DES SOLS
SANS PESTICIDE CHIMIQUE
SANS ENGRAIS CHIMIQUES
SANS-OGM
POLLINISATEURS
BIODIVERSITÉ RÉGÉNÉRATIVE
BIEN-ÊTRE ANIMAL
RESPECT DES CYCLES NATURELS
PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT
SANS- CULTIVARS ADAPTÉS
OGM NON-IRRADIÉS

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS & REGULATORY AFFAIRS

International Organic Equivalency Arrangements

It is almost unbelievable that COTA's Technical Advisory Committee on Organic Equivalencies achieved three new arrangements in one year (let alone during a pandemic)! Never before have two equivalencies happened in one year, let alone three! Japan's equivalency arrangement was expanded to include livestock standards, and two new arrangements were signed with Taiwan and the United Kingdom (due to Brexit).

Critical Organic Standards Updates

During 2019 and 2020, we played a critical role on the Technical Committee for the 2020 updated Organic Standards 2020 revision, leading the Fairness Working Group. We are very pleased to have the new standards ready for adoption by the industry and the role that we played in helping to improve the standards and inform the industry of the changes forthcoming for December 2021 compliance. Canada proudly continues to improve, innovate and modernize our standards with the strong role of industry. COTA also sits on a post-mortem committee to discuss how to improve the organic standards revision process and ensure integrity in the governance of the standard setting process for the 2025 Organic Standards Review.

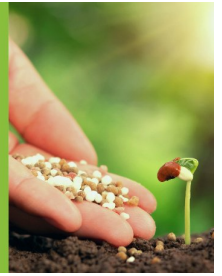
What Replaced the Organic Roundtable?

And finally, COTA secured two seats on the new Government Roundtables established by the Federal Government. The *Agile Regulations Roundtable* and the *Consumer Demand & Market Trends Roundtable* are two areas that we will be ensuring a strong organic voice is at the table. We will be consulting our members and holding meetings to gain your insights to bring to the federal government on these topics.



INDUSTRY INITIATIVES

support
organic
change
fund



COTA proudly launched the 2nd year of the **Organic Transition Fund** via COTA's Support Organic Change Fund. The program assists farmers transitioning to organic and/or increasing their organic farm production area/adding livestock. The program reimburses producers up to a maximum of \$1000 for costs associated with organic certification. 2020 allowed 41 new farmers, representing 6167 acres to not face the cost of organic certification alone. The program covered 64.18% of total certification costs for producers, and has supported 12% of Canada's transitioning producers over the program's duration. In 2021, a new total of 95 farmers were funded, driving more and more of Canada's farmland towards certified organic!

COTA received a \$770,000 grant from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada for 2021-2023 through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership to fund sector priority activities. These activities include building market access for organic (by match making programs for members to meet with international buyers through virtual meetings coordinated by COTA and trade events). Also included in this funding envelope are resources dedicated to COTA's work on organic equivalency arrangements, retailer education, member education, organic integrity and trade issues and a large export program in which we fund our members to export their products abroad with financial assistance.

COTA released its **Canadian Organic Market: Trends and Opportunities 2021 Report**. The report is the third comprehensive market report providing insights on consumer behaviour and perceptions, category sales growth and market share and as well as import / export trade data to provide valuable insights for the industry. With government funding secured for 2021-2023, we aim to release 2022 and 2023 Organic Market reports.



The Canadian
Organic Market



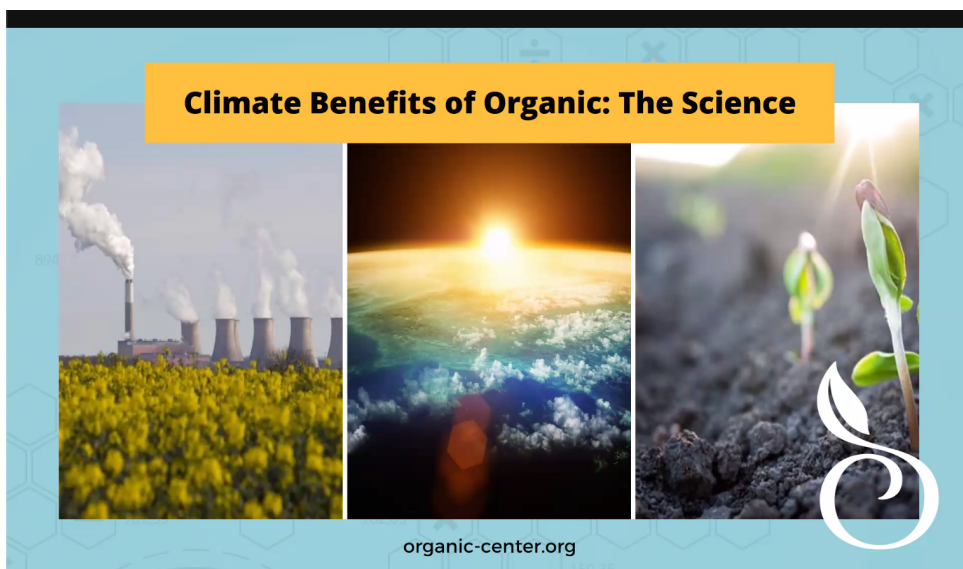
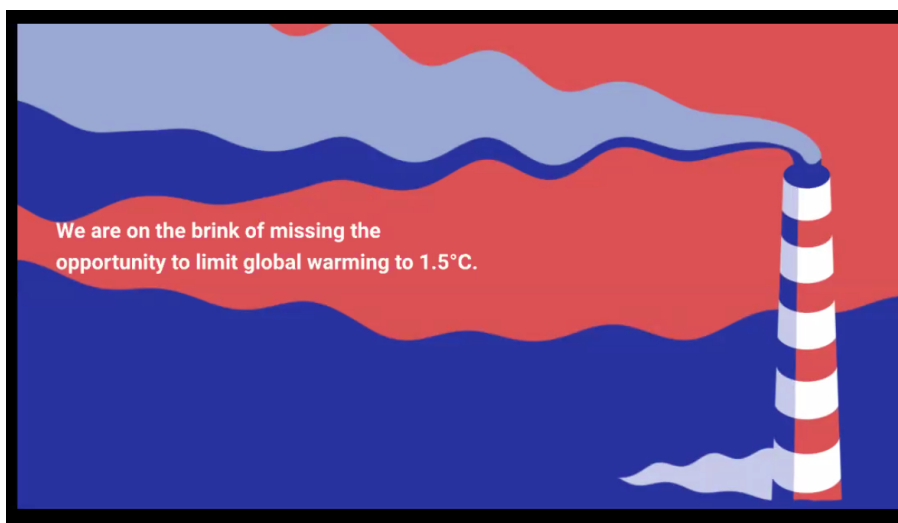
Mel Sylvestre from Grounded Acres Farm, an organic transition program recipient

ORGANIC SUMMIT

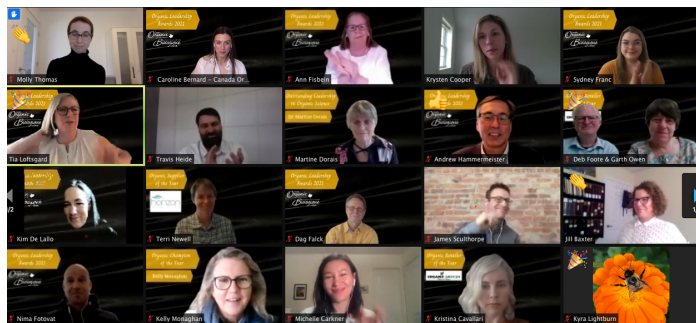
COTA hosted its flagship event, *The Organic Summit: Organic and Climate Change* from November 16 – 20, 2020. The star-studded line-up of speakers virtually connecting from as far away as Australia, Finland and California. This event included participatory workshops to move the needle forward for organic through our lobby and advocacy efforts in light of the Organic Roundtable being discontinued.



For the first time, the Organic Summit was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to the incredible tools available, we were able to host 15 webinars to attendees around the world. With nearly 100 attendees, the 2020 Organic Summit offered intriguing perspectives and cutting-edge research on the contribution organic lends to mitigating and adapting to the inevitable climate change our world is experiencing. Using the existing [COTA YouTube channel](#), it was possible to get the messaging and programming out to a much wider audience and strengthen our followers on this critical and hot topic of climate change.



HONOURING OUR MEMBERS



The raison d'être for COTA is to promote and protect organic in Canada and Canadian organic abroad. The association works for organic, and it is the members who are the cornerstone of that work. Thank you for your foundational support! From the member-run Board of Directors, committees of the board, and specifically enacted taskforces, to all our members-in-good-standing, it is members who underpin the vision and keep the association accountable.

COTA invites all those enterprises working in organic to join our table both for representation and also to benefit from our funding envelopes. Organic needs promotion at all levels of government and support in the marketplace. Building the membership base contributes to COTA's stability which, in turn, enables excellence in program delivery that feeds the mission to promote and protect organic. With a breadth of sectors represented in the membership, there is always room to grow. That's why we work diligently to recruit and retain members. In the past fiscal cycle, 25 new members have joined the roster.

We listen hard to the members and respond. During these unprecedented times of the global pandemic, COTA has been working tirelessly with regulatory bodies to advocate for the smooth functioning of organic trading relationships both domestically and internationally. Through needs surveys, letters to government bodies, and News Flash updates, members have had a solid partner in COTA to solve problems and get through this together.

Leading by celebrating is the Annual Organic Leadership Awards which pay tribute to trail blazers in the organic sector. In May 2021, the event pivoted from an in-person event to an online forum, and even inaugurated a social meet-up platform, Kumospace. From pioneers to innovators, the awards shine light on the vital accomplishments of these individuals and enterprises.

Here are the difference-makers for 2020-2021:



Organic Innovator of the Year - Fresh Hemp Foods (Manitoba Harvest)



Organic Retailer of the Year - Organic Grocer



Organic Champion of the Year - Kelly Monaghan (Ash Street Organics)



Organic Supplier of the Year - Horizon Grocery + Wellness



Organic Farmer of the Year - Pfenning's Organic Vegetables



Leadership in Organic Science - Dr. Martine Dorais

FINANCE REPORT



As an association, COTA had to weather the pandemic financial storms much like many of our members. We continued to make solid strides forward while balancing the disruptions due to COVID-19.

While we executed our strategic plan by focusing on priority issues and managing our finances, COTA managed to balance the books by being conservative, diligent and applying for every possible subsidy we could to ride the stormy times. Without \$100,000 in COVID relief funding, we would not have been able to manage.

COTA acquired 25 new members, was successful in securing two government grants for staff (as we had reduced down to only three core staff in April 2020) and locked down the next two years of Agri-Marketing funding of \$770,000 in early 2021.

Compared to 2019/2020, COTA experienced a small 10% decline in revenue due to reduced sponsorship contributions, annual fund donations and our intentionally reduced budget on the Agri-Marketing Program. COTA was approved for \$379,000 for the 2020-2021 Agri-Marketing program but due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and cancellation of trade shows we revised our ask to \$154,000. With revamped goals and projects under the government funding, we were able to redirect the funding to create the 2021 Organic Market Report and other critical data projects.

Expenses decreased 16% from the prior year, mostly due to the decrease in related activities under the Agri-Marketing program and our conservative approach as we weathered the storm of the pandemic along with our members. We did not renew staffing contracts that ended in March 2020 in order to safeguard our financial well-being as an organization due to the many uncertainties that the pandemic brought our way.

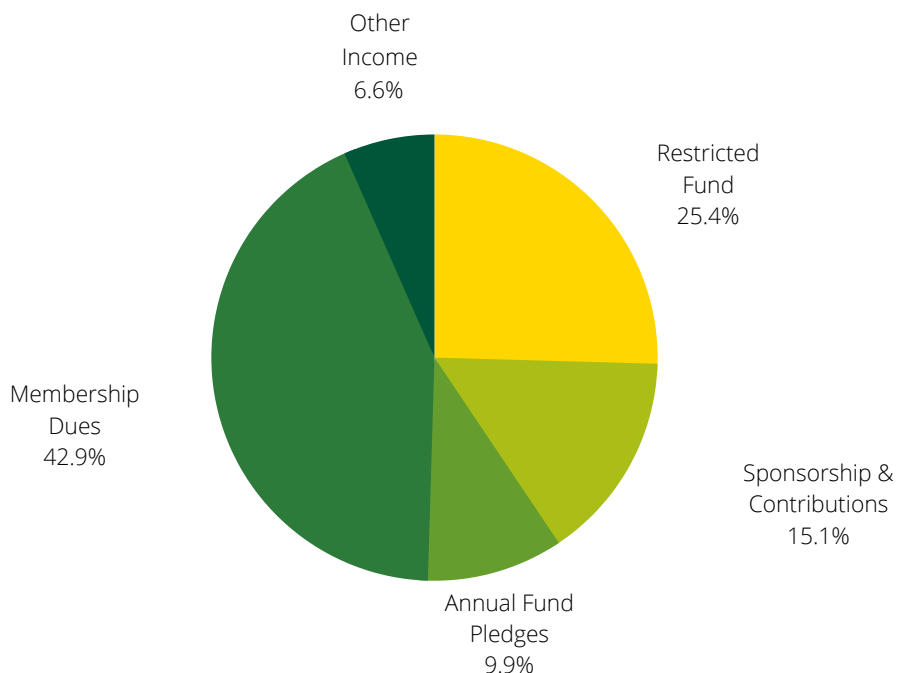
In this fiscal, we felt it was important to start contributing to our goal of increasing our Sustainability Fund to sustain COTA with six months' worth of operating funds in the case of future disruptions as we experienced during pandemic. \$10,000 was contributed as a result. COTA is positioning to weather future storms and be able to continue to meet your needs as your trade association. We will continue to be fiscally prudent, while pushing the envelope on behalf of the organic sector to achieve our collective goals.



FINANCE REPORT



2020-2021 REVENUE



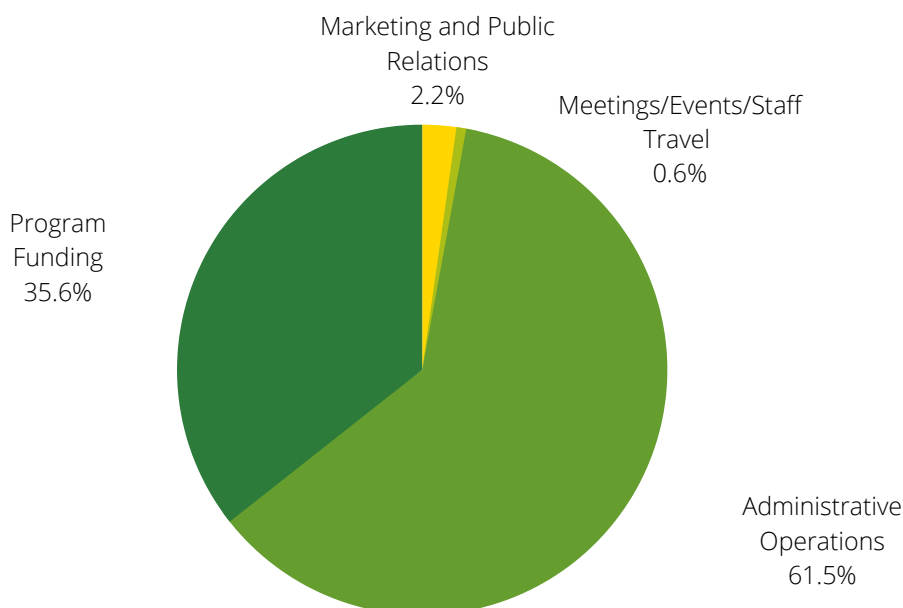
2020-2021 REVENUE

SPONSORSHIPS & CONTRIBUTIONS:	\$120,963
ANNUAL FUND PLEDGES:	\$78,925
MEMBERSHIP DUES:	\$342,756
OTHER INCOME:	\$52,766
RESTRICTED FUND:	\$203,176

2019-2020 EXPENSES

MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS:	\$18,027
MEETINGS/EVENTS/STAFF TRAVEL:	\$5,191
PROGRAM FUNDING:	\$287,265
ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS:	\$495,740

2020-2021 EXPENSES



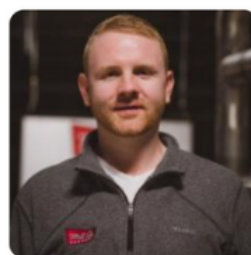
MEET COTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



COTA held our 2020 Annual General Meeting on November October 19, 2020 virtually. With two directors ending their terms, two seats were on the roster at the 2020 election. The COTA Board of Directors said farewell to Dag Falck, who had served on the Board of Directors for nine years and termed out completing three consecutive terms of three years. For six years, Dag filled the role of President of the Board representing Nature's Path Foods. Dag has left a monumental impact on the association and we can't thank him enough for all of his contributions. The board also bid farewell to Steve Abrams, representing Mill Street, serving two years on the COTA board.

The board welcomed two new directors: Nima Fotovat from Riverside Naturals, and Roger McNaughton, from Mill Street. The 2020 Executive Committee was reformulated with Maureen Kirkpatrick (The Big Carrot) taking on the large role of President, James Sculthorpe (Yorkshire Valley Farms) stepping in as Vice President, Marie-Michèle Le Moine (Fruit D'or) as Secretary and Nima Fotovat (Riverside Naturals) as Treasurer.

We can't thank enough and express our gratitude to the wonderful roster of volunteers who have served on our Board and continue to serve, for the betterment of the organic industry and your industry association.



From left to right: **Marie-Michèle Le Moine**, Fruit d'Or, **Maureen Kirkpatrick**, The Big Carrot, **James Sculthorpe**, Yorkshire Valley Farms, and **Roger McNaughton**, Mill Street Brewery.



From left to right: **Nima Fotovat**, Riverside Naturals Foods Ltd, **Tim Rundle**, Creative Salmon, **Jill Baxter**, Barentz, **Marie May**, Cha's Organics, and **Travis Heide**, Organics Canada.