

6.1 Organic

The organic industry is an emerging sector of the food industry. Fast growing consumer demand is pushing the expansion of acreage in many crops grown in British Columbia.

Organic production is a system of production that uses methods that minimize the impact on the environment. The primary focus is to maintain a healthy soil and develop a balanced farm ecosystem that is environmentally sustainable.

This guide contains information about environmentally sustainable grape production practices. A good working knowledge about the life cycle and early identification of pest problems as well as sound monitoring procedures for pests is necessary in any vineyard enterprise, but particularly so to maximize the benefits of pest control in organic viticulture. Information and procedures for cultural and biological control of pests is included in this guide where appropriate. Pest control recommendations that minimize the use of pesticides have been used for many years in British Columbia grape production. Organic grape producers will find much information of value in this management guide.

Specific grape production techniques are required to meet the requirements of the various organic certification associations. Farm management standards acceptable to certifying members of the Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia (COABC) are defined in the BC Organic Agriculture Products Certification Regulation, *Operation Policies and Farm Management Standards* publication. Each organic association may have other specific requirements for certification.

“Certified Organic” means that a product has been produced in accordance with specific guidelines and organic standards as established by a certifying agency.

“*British Columbia Certified Organic*” means that a product has been produced according to guidelines and standards established by the COABC, in collaboration with the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia

The Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia (COABC) is an umbrella organization for a majority of the provincial organic associations.

The Association (COABC) is designated under the provincial Food Choice and Quality Act to implement the certification and accreditation program. As program administrator and auditor, COABC assesses the eligibility of certification agencies and certifies that their individual members meet the production standards.

Provincial Accreditation Agency

Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC)
Phone (250) 260 4429 Fax (250) 260 4436
Email: office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca

Addresses and contacts of the various Organic Associations are posted on the COABC web site

<http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/cb/index.php>

Sources of organic information on the web

One of the best collections of continuously updated organic documents is at the Provincial *Infobasket* site. It contains useful links to production, marketing and certification information.

<http://www.kmwpp.ca/> is the homepage. From there you can navigate to the organic page or the grape page. Navigation is sometimes a bit complex, with many embedded subfolders.

Another BC site is maintained by the COABC at <http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/>

UC Davis maintains a site with very good information and lots of links at <http://www.sarep.ucdavis.edu/>

6.2 Sustainable

The British Columbia Sustainable Winegrowing Program (BC SWP) aims to foster grape and wine production that enhances environmental quality and the resource base on which the industry depends, is economically viable, and improves quality of life for growers, producers, and society as a whole. The BC Wine Grape Council Sustainable Practices Committee, with the assistance of Insight Environmental Consulting, designed the BC SWP based on a number of compatible programs from other regions and with considerable input from BC industry members and researchers.

The BC SWP will bring many benefits to the industry. The practices contained in the program will help users to increase quality while cutting operating costs. The program will provide a means to compare current practices within and between regions, to identify areas that need improvement, and to quantify those improvements. It will provide a formal means of recognizing industry achievements and communicating those achievements to a growing market of consumers whose buying habits are increasingly influenced by the sustainability of a product. Overall, the program will lead to a viable, competitive and continually improving wine grape industry in British Columbia.

The BC SWP has two components, the guidebook and the assessment, which are organized into the following main topics: setting your sustainability foundation; ecosystem management; viticultural management; soil and nutrition management; water management; pest management; and employees, neighbours and community relations.

The guidebook is a resource. It provides an introduction to the topics of the assessment, and for those who require more information it is cross referenced to the Environmental Farm Plan and the Best Practices Guide. The guidebook also lists resources related to each main topic for those who are interested in further detail. The guidebook is organized so that the reader can consult a self contained section on any given topic as needed.

The assessment is the key to the program. The assessment questions reinforce awareness of the environmental, economic and social issues that affect vineyards and wineries. The scoring system provides a snapshot of areas of excellence and areas that need improvement. The assessment is cross-referenced to the guidebook for ease of use.

Participation in the program is voluntary and a self-assessment approach will be used for the next few years. After widespread adoption is achieved, third party assessment and certification will be sought to reinforce the credibility of the program and ensure it is setting high and verifiable standards for sustainability.