Everyone Loves A Charade
(All Farmer, Aug. 22, 2000)
by Daron Letts

Working for an agricultural bi-weekly on PEI, I rarely see the need or opportunity to participate in media scrums (informal interviews in which a group of journalists pose brief, impromptu questions to government officials).

However, I made a last minute decision to attend the public event held in his backyard to see that farming activities away from marginal zones helps to direct farming activities away from marginal zones. The use of composted manure, rather than crop protection (such as waxes). No sewage sludge is allowed on certified organic land. No Genetically Modified Organisms can be used. No growth hormones can be used in meat production. Food irradiation is not allowed as a food preservation process.

Farms that operate under the certified organic system must meet a strict code of standards that are established on the national level. These standards outline all aspects of food production from the field to the store shelf. Each farm is also inspected by a third party inspector who ensures that the standards are being met or surpassed.

In view of the recent decision by the government of Prince Edward Island to look at the issue of banning chemicals in agriculture in support of organic farming, it is perhaps timely to look at just what farming organically means.

The Canadian General Standards Board of Canada defines organic agriculture as “a holistic system of production designed to optimize the productivity and fitness of diverse communities within the ecosystem, including soil organisms, plants, livestock and people. The principle goal of organic agriculture is to develop productive enterprises that are sustainable and harmonious to the environment.”

For some of the more common pests and diseases, farmers can use various methods to manage them. Some examples include:

- Crop rotation: Growing different crops in the same field every year can help break the life cycle of pests and diseases.
- Organic pesticides: Using natural substances like neem oil or soap can be effective in controlling pests.
- Organic fertilizers: Using materials like compost or manure can improve soil health and reduce the need for synthetic fertilizers.

The benefits of buying certified organic produce and meat include:

- Reduced exposure to chemicals in our food. Consuming organically produced food decreases exposure to chemicals in our food consumed.
- More local employment can be created. The water table is likely to be safer from contaminants. Consuming organically produced food decreases exposure to chemicals in our food supply.
- Nutrients and for food dollar buying power. The benefits of buying certified organic produce and meat include:

In the case of pesticides, organic farmers use natural substances like neem oil or soap to control pests. Organic fertilizers, such as compost or manure, are used to improve soil health without synthetic fertilizers.

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