

ORGANIC FOOD AND WINE

REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Natural health products popular with Canadians

Vitamins and minerals, herbal remedies, probiotics and homeopathic and traditional medicines fall into the category of natural health products (NHPs). Their ingredients and purposes vary but they share common characteristics: they are available over the counter, their medicinal ingredients must be derived from a natural source and they must be approved by Health Canada to be sold in this country.

At least 10,000 retail outlets in Canada sell NHPs, from pharmacies and health food stores to mainstream supermarkets, and Canadians clearly find them valuable. The natural health industry has annual sales of \$3-billion and more than 70 per cent of Canadians use NHPs – 45 per cent of them on a daily basis.

“For many Canadians, NHPs are part of their healthy lifestyle,” says Helen Sherrard, president of the Canadian Health Food Association (CHFA), which represents

“Canadians use these products for many reasons – preventing or treating an illness or condition, reducing health risks and maintaining good health.”

Helen Sherrard
is president CHFA



Sold over the counter, natural health products are used to maintain or improve overall health. PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

the natural health sector.

“Canadians use these products for many reasons – preventing or treating an illness or condition, reducing health risks and maintaining good health.”

The market includes NHPs made with organically grown natural ingredients. Some consumers choose to buy organic products to support environmentally sustainable farming

practices and humane animal welfare, says Ms. Sherrard.

In 2011, CHFA commissioned a national, online Ipsos Reid survey and gained additional insights into Canadians' allegiance to NHPs.

“Among Canadian consumers of NHPs, 80 per cent indicated these products were ‘somewhat or very important’ to their family. The survey also demonstrated

that the vast majority of Canadian consumers, 71 per cent, consider NHPs to be safe,” says Ms. Sherrard.

The safety of NHPs, along with their efficacy and the accuracy of health claims, is currently regulated under Canada's *Food and Drugs Act*, which positions NHPs as a subset of drugs.

In 1998, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health concluded that NHPs, being neither food nor drugs, should be defined separately in the Act. “The industry has been waiting for 14 years for this recommendation to be enacted,” says the CHFA president. Ideally, the association would like to see a new *Natural Health Products Act* – and the Ipsos Reid survey found that 7 in 10 Canadians support that idea.

“We recognize that legislative change takes time,” says Ms. Sherrard. “In the meantime, we are working with the federal government on ways to make the regulatory system more efficient, so that the rules continue to ensure that NHPs are safe and effective but that consumers can still access the products they need.”

EDUCATION

The Canadian School of Natural Nutrition has a visionary approach to preventive health care – believing there is a link between food, its source and a healthy consumer. As such, the CSNN supports organic farming, and along with its students and graduates, is an ambassador for a green, healthy lifestyle. CSNN's Natural Nutrition Program is a progressive and practical science-based program leading to the R.H.N.™ designation.



TOURNE SOL CO-OPERATIVE

Organic practices are the foundation of a successful co-op farm in Quebec

The roots of the Tourne-Sol Co-operative Farm began in 2000 at McGill University, where a group of students in agricultural and environmental programs built friendships and discovered shared values and goals.

“We all had a passion for the environment and agriculture's role in creating social and food justice,” says Daniel Brisebois,

one of the five owner-workers of the 12-acre farm in Les Cèdres, Quebec, 60 kilometres west of Montreal. “By the time we graduated, we knew we wanted to be organic farmers.”

After working independently for a time, the five – including two couples – came together to establish Tourne-Sol in 2004. Products include 50 varieties of vegetables, as well as fresh herbs,

cut flowers and dried herbal teas and seeds – all certified organic. The co-op hires apprentices each year to train other young people wanting to farm organically.

One of the core elements of the business is a community-supported agriculture program. “Customers pay in advance for a weekly basket of vegetables throughout the growing season,” explains Mr. Brisebois. “This gives us some upfront funds to cover early-season costs and provides families with very fresh local produce.”

Co-operative farms are quite rare in Canada, he says, but in his view, the advantages are numerous. “Although we plant, weed and harvest together, we each develop expertise in different crops and divide up the business tasks.”

Sharing the responsibilities gives the owner-workers a more balanced life, he adds. “And we're all gratified to be involved in the type of farming that produces a healthy soil ecosystem as well as high-quality, healthy foods.”

“Always Leave the Earth Better Than You Found it.”

~ Rupert Stephens



The words of our founder's Dad flavour everything we do at Nature's Path. That's why our family-run company has been making delicious, organic products for over 25 years. That means no GMO's, no chemical herbicides or pesticides, and no synthetic preservatives or additives. No way.

Eat well. Do good.
naturespath.com



@naturespath facebook.com/naturespath

Online?



Interested in organic foods?

OrganicBiologique.ca.

STANDARDS

Production principles aim to support a healthier world

Organic production is based on principles that aim to increase the quality and durability of the environment through specific management and production methods. They also focus on ensuring the humane treatment of animals.

The general principles of organic production that form Canada's national organic standards include:

1. Protecting the environment, minimizing soil degradation and erosion, decreasing pollution, optimizing biological productivity and promoting a sound state of health.
2. Maintaining long-term soil fertility by optimizing conditions for biological activity within the soil.
3. Maintaining biological diversity within the system.
4. Recycling materials and resources to the greatest extent possible within the enterprise.
5. Providing attentive care that promotes the health and meets the behavioural needs of livestock.
6. Emphasizing careful processing and handling methods to maintain the organic integrity and vital qualities of food products at all stages of production.
7. Relying on renewable resources in locally organized agricultural systems.

BC Organic Ambrosia
Gift from Nature

COMING SOON
Available from OCTOBER – APRIL

Savour the honeyed sweetness and juicy crunch of Organic Ambrosia!

Organic Ambrosia is a sweet, low acid apple that is slow to brown when sliced. Ideal for snacks, salads and desserts.

Ask your local grocer for BC Organic Ambrosia – the Original Ambrosia.



Get the full story on Ambrosia at www.organicambrosiaapple.ca

© owned by Wilfrid and Sally Mennell and used under license by the New Varieties Development Council Organic Ambrosia Growers. Photo by Lane Jones Photography.