

# **New food certification agency in Quebec**

In Quebec, three certification programs have existed: M.A.B., O.C.I.A. and Demeter. Through the years, without any government recognition, they have acquired credibility with consumers of organic products.

M.A.P.A.Q. and these organizations negotiated a provincial system of certification that would integrate existing labels. Two conditions were essential: a distinct organic label and mandatory compliance.

On May 31, 1990, Michel Pagé, the Quebec Minister of Agriculture announced the creation of a "control" system for different agricultural products under the logo of QUEBEC VRAI. The three organic certification organizations did not feel that this system respected the actual conditions in the organic industry and refused to support it.

Following more negotiations, the Minister accepted a logo for the exclusive use of the organic industry within the context of the QUEBEC VRAI program. The logo complies with the organizations' demand for a distinct organic label. However the Ministry refuses to demand mandatory compliance. M.A.B., O.C.I.A. and DEMETER deem this necessary to avoid the term organic being diluted as we have seen done with the terms ecological and natural.

The logo is the exclusive property of the Ministry and its use will be controlled by L'ORGANISME POUR LE CONTROLE DE L'INTEGRITE DES PRODUITS BIOLOGIQUES (O.C.I.B.). Agricultural products covered in the 1990 certification include field and greenhouse crops, animal products and processed milk and cereal products.

The O.C.I.B. is an independent, non-profit corporation exempt of any commercial interest. It's role will be to manage organic certification in Quebec, represent the certification industry at the provincial and federal government levels and establish reciprocally accepted certification norms with other organizations at the international level.

The O.C.I.B. will be composed of 14 persons representing farmers, the founding certification organizations, consumer associations, the health industry, professionals, distributors and processors of organic products and researchers. A certification committee will execute the certification program, the "rules" committee will establish certification

norms and a Bureau of Certification will oversee each application and carry out regular inspections.

The O.C.I.B. will receive financial support from M.A.P.A.Q. for three years starting in 1990. As of April 1993, the O.C.I.B. will finance itself exclusively from applicants' fees.

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