Analysis of the organic beef markets in Ontario and Alberta: Comparative case studies

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ABSTRACT

Consumers are increasingly interested in paying a higher premium for alternative food, such as natural and organic products, and governments are increasingly interested in sustainable agricultural practices that preserve the ability of future generations to produce food. The organic movement continues to grow due to consumer health and environmental concerns. This study examines the evolution of the organic beef sector in Canada, focusing on two case studies: an area in Alberta and an area in Ontario. By interviewing stakeholders in the organic beef industry in both regions and supporting the stakeholder accounts with a literature review, comparisons are made pertaining to the viable market options that each region faces. Alberta is one of the leading producers of organic beef in the country, while Ontario produces much less, but Alberta has a lower level of organic consumers than Ontario. This leads to the need for Alberta producers to market their beef elsewhere, mainly in British Columbia and the United States. The county in the study has greater access to urban and local markets with high levels of organic consumer activity and thus has logistic advantages in the selling of their beef. These two cases represent contrasting market and policy needs, though regulation and certification requirements are nation-wide.