



Number of document(s): **1**

Document creation date: **January 23, 2007**

Created by: **Ms Karen Caruana, Osprey-Media**

Organic farming more than a hobby
Belleville Intelligencer (ON) - January 8, 2007..... 2

The Intelligencer

Belleville Intelligencer (ON)

Local, Monday, January 8, 2007, p. 2

Family gives up city lights to produce herbal tea

Organic farming more than a hobby

Samantha Craggs

The Intelligencer

SPRINGBROOK - If Karen Caruana had her way, everyone would be farming like her.

Refugees of hectic urban living, Caruana, her husband Matt and children Martin and Thomas have fled to St. Mark's Road, where they pledged chemical and pesticide-free production of herbal tea, culinary herbs and body care products.

"It was no issue for us. It was what we wanted to do," she said of the organic element. "It's just what we believe in."

While organic farming requires a change in mindset from conventional farming, consumers are gradually catching on, said Achim Mohssen-Beyk, president of the Quinte Organic Farmers' Co-operative. And slowly but surely, the local group of about 12 producers are stretching across the province.

Take the Caruanas, for example. They purchased their 100-acre farm about two years ago after falling in love with its old brick house that hadn't been inhabited for decades. Along with it is an old cheese factory, built in 1907, which serves as a place to mix the herbs. While their herbal tea isn't making them rich - yet - the media attention they have received alone brings one or two customers per month down the muddy road to check it out.

It is this sort of homegrown, trustworthy approach that is bringing consumers to the organic side, said

Mohssen-Beyk.

"People get more and more aware of environmental issues, and farming is one part of it," said Mohssen-Beyk, who raises rabbits, chickens, quail and other animals organically near Picton. "When more people started having severe sicknesses, people started to want to know where their food was coming from."

Right now, most of the business done by the local co-op is not in this area, Mohssen-Beyk said. The bulk of their business is done at two farmers' markets in Toronto. The co-op is also represented at the Belleville market. A new market, Cobourg, is being added this year.

To Mohssen-Beyk, organic farming is nothing less than "the only way we're going to have a food system in the future." Heavy chemicals and genetically modified seeds are wreaking havoc on the land, he said, and agribusiness is not a friend to the farmer.

"Farmers cannot rely on the government," he said. "We have to help ourselves. And dealing with restaurants and grocery stores, it doesn't work. They don't understand things like growing seasons. They just want profit."

Growing seasons are becoming second nature to Caruana, who grew up on a small hobby farm in Markham. In Toronto, she worked for a large software company that changed hands three times and ended

up with an American firm. Each time, she said, she was less and less sure who she was working for.

Her new life "is as opposite as you can get," she said. "I didn't get dirty hands at my old job." While she has always been a calm person, "this is a different type of calm."

At Dave Harry's farm near Stirling, his crops include corn and soybean. Organic farming, he said, is not something he would recommend to everyone. Distributing his product, he said, also takes him as far as Quebec City and Lake Huron.

"There are all kinds of markets," he said. "They're not local markets. That's the downside."

Harry feels the organic market is picking up speed as people become more conscious of the environment and nutrition.

"I should've been into it sooner," he said. "It's not a fad by any means. If you're in it for the money, you're in it for the wrong reasons."

Mohssen-Beyk is bothered by the increase in organic products brought in from China for big box stores, which he said is missing the point and confuses consumers. Part of the co-op's mandate is education, which farmers do person by person whenever they can.

Caruana sees a bright future for organic farming, and a slowly spreading but lasting market.

"I hope so," she said. "We're out here to make a go of it."

Figure:

Intelligencer photo by Samantha Craggs

Karen Caruana, left, with sons Martin and Thomas, moved to the Springbrook area with her family about two years ago to establish PorcupineCreek Farm. The Caruanas are members of the Quinte Organic Farmers' Co-operative, which is slowly building a following, although not in this area.

© 2007 *Belleville Intelligencer (ON)*. All rights reserved.



news-20070108-CJ-0004

This certificat is issued to Ms Karen Caruana for personal and temporary display. It is strictly prohibited to reproduce or redistribute this document.

End date: 2007-01-24

The present document and its usage are protected under these international copyright laws and conventions.

[Back to list of articles](#)