



*PEI Certified*  
**Organic Producers**  
*Co-operative*

## Certification Assistance Rebate Program

### Final Report

2025 Program Year

Reporting Period: October 2025 – February 2026

Report Date: March 2026

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# 1. Executive Summary

The 2025 Certification Assistance Rebate Program was administered by the PEI Certified Organic Producers Cooperative (COPC) on behalf of the Province of Prince Edward Island through the Organic Industry Development Program (OIDP).

The program provides partial reimbursement of annual organic certification costs for certified and in-transition producers. In 2025, Prince Edward Island had twenty (20) certified organic farms, eighteen (18) of which participated.

## Program Highlights (2025)

- Total certified organic farms in PEI: 20
- Participating farms: 18
- Participation rate: 90%
- Total certified acreage represented: 6,147.6 acres
- Total certification fees paid (participants): \$42,585.90
- Total rebate funding distributed: \$13,287.91
- Average certification cost per farm: \$2,365.88
- Average rebate per farm: \$738.22
- Farms receiving the maximum rebate: 16 of 18 (89%)

These figures reflect strong participation and continued reliance on the program as a component of farm financial planning for organic operations.

Participating farms represent a broad cross-section of production systems, including grains and oilseeds, forage, potatoes, vegetables, fruit, and livestock.

Historical data indicates a decline in participating farms since 2016 alongside significant increases in certification costs.

While structured as a 75% reimbursement up to \$750, rising certification costs mean the rebate now offsets approximately 31% of average certification costs.

The program provides meaningful financial support while reinforcing verified organic production and market integrity within the province.

# 2. Program Overview

Organic certification is mandatory for producers marketing products as organic in interprovincial and international trade. It requires annual inspection and compliance with the Canadian Organic Standards and represents a recurring operating cost for farms of all sizes.

## 2025 Program Structure

Under the 2025 structure, eligible certified and in-transition producers were reimbursed 75% of their annual certification fees to a maximum of \$750 per operation.

To receive reimbursement, applicants were required to:

- Complete the Certification Assistance Application Form
- Provide a copy of their organic certificate
- Submit proof of payment
- Maintain membership in good standing with the PEI COPC

Applications were accepted from October 2025 through February 28, 2026. The application window aligned with the majority of certification renewal cycles. All applications were reviewed for completeness prior to payment approval. Payments were issued on a rolling basis upon verification of documentation. The PEI COPC administered promotion, intake, verification, payment processing, reporting, and issuance of AGR-1 forms.

While no new in-transition operations were reported in 2025, at least one participating certified farm reported additional acreage in transition toward organic certification, indicating incremental expansion within existing operations.

## 3. Participation & Financial Outcomes

### 3.1 Participation

Prince Edward Island had twenty (20) certified organic operations in 2025, eighteen (18) of which participated in the Certification Assistance Rebate Program, representing 90% of the province's certified organic sector.

Two certified operations elected not to participate for reasons unrelated to program design or administration.

Table 1. Participation Summary Table	
Item	Number
Total Certified Organic Farms (PEI)	20
Participating Farms	18
Participation Rate	90%
Farms Receiving Maximum Rebate	16 (89% of participants)

This level of participation indicates that the program reaches virtually the entire certified organic sector within the province.

### 3.2 Certification Bodies

Based on certification data received directly from accredited certification bodies, Prince Edward Island had twenty (20) certified organic farms in 2025. The distribution of certified farms by certifying body is summarized below.

Table 2. Certification Bodies		
Certifying Body	Number of Organic Farms	% of Organic Farms
Pro-Cert	12	60%
EcoCert	5	28%
TCO	3	17%

### 3.3 Certification Costs

Participating farms reported a combined total of \$42,585.90 in certification fees for the 2025 production year.

- Average certification cost per participating farm: \$2,365.88
- Total sector certification costs (including non-participants): \$45,116.07

Most participating farms incurred certification costs well above the program's \$750 cap.

Table 3. Financial Summary Table	
Metric	Amount
Total Certification Fees (Participants)	\$42,585.90
Total PEI Organic Farm Certification Fees	45,116.07
Average Certification Cost per Participating Farm	\$2365.88

### 3.4 Rebate Distribution

A total of \$13,287.91 in rebate funding was distributed.

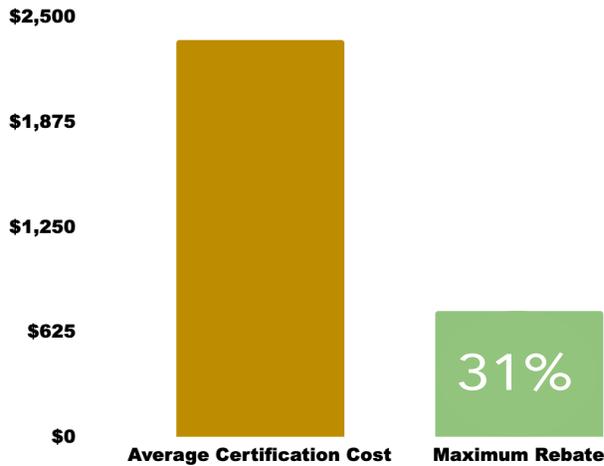
Sixteen (16) farms received the maximum \$750 rebate. Two farms received partial rebates of \$620.41 and \$667.50, making the average rebate per participating farm \$738.22.

When measured against total certification costs reported by participating farms, the rebate offset approximately 31.2% of certification expenses.

Across all participating farms, \$42,585.90 in certification fees were reported, and \$13,287.91 was distributed in rebate funding — offsetting approximately 31.2% of total reported certification costs.

Chart 1. Rebate vs. Cost

### Rebate vs. Cost



## 4. Organic Acreage Overview

### 4.1 Total Certified Acreage

Metric	Value
Total Certified Acres	6147.6
Number of Farms	18
Average Acres per Farm	341.5

Total certified acreage among participating farms in 2025 was 6,147.6 acres, representing 90% of certified operations in the province.

Average acreage per farm: 341.5 acres

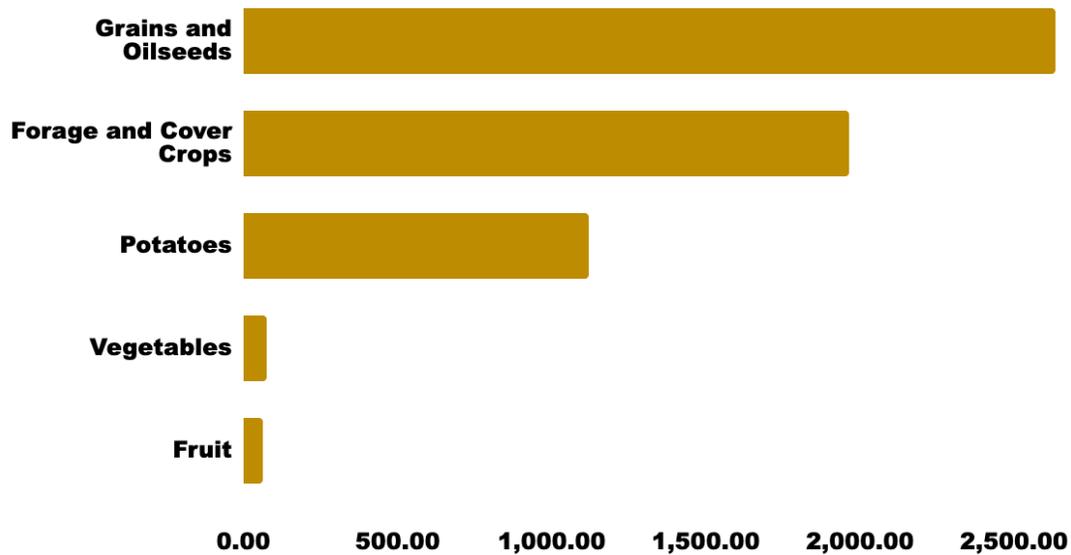
Farm sizes ranged from small-scale intensive operations to large broad-acre field crop systems.

### 4.2 Acreage by Crop Category

To provide a clearer overview of sector composition, reported crops were grouped into broader production categories.

Chart 2. Acreage by Production

## Acreage by Production Category



Category	Acres	% of Total Organic Acreage
Grains and Oilseeds	2,634.1	42.8%
Forage and Cover Crops	1,968.0	32.0%
Potatoes	1,121.0	18.2%
Vegetables	73.45	1.2%
Fruit	60.25	1.0%

Certified acreage remains concentrated in broad-acre field crop systems. Grains and oilseeds account for the largest share of total acreage, followed by forage systems and cover crops. Potato production continues to represent a significant component of certified organic production in the province. Vegetable production occupies a relatively small acreage footprint but contributes to direct-market diversification. Fruit acreage, primarily blueberries from a single operation, represents a distinct perennial category.

## 4.3 Livestock

Participating farms reported certified livestock activity in 2025, including approximately 150 laying hens and one beef herd of approximately 120 head. Organic livestock certification extends beyond land base and crop production. It requires compliance with animal welfare standards, organic feed sourcing, pasture management requirements, detailed recordkeeping, and, where applicable, certified processing and slaughter facilities.

Livestock certification introduces multiple layers of verification, including certified pasture and forage acreage, certified feed systems, and compliance with national organic animal care standards. As a result, certified livestock operations represent a higher level of operational complexity and regulatory oversight within the sector. Certified livestock production is supported by organic forage and pasture acreage included in the sector totals reported above.

The presence of certified livestock activity therefore reflects not only product diversification, but also deeper integration of organic standards across production, animal care, and processing stages within Prince Edward Island's certified organic system.

## 4.4 Interpreting Acreage Data

Acreage reflects land use distribution, not economic value. High-value crops such as vegetables, fruit, and livestock typically generate greater revenue per acre than broad-acre systems.

The acreage data should therefore be interpreted as structural rather than economic.

While the pre-and-proceeding sections describe the structure and distribution of certified organic production within the sector, it is also useful to situate this activity within the broader agricultural landscape of Prince Edward Island.

## 4.5 Certified Organic Production in Provincial Context

According to the 2021 Census of Agriculture, Prince Edward Island reports approximately 1,319,717 acres of total farmland. The 6,147.6 certified organic acres reported by participating farms in 2025 account for approximately 0.47% of the province's total farmland.

This figure provides context for understanding the scale of certified organic production relative to overall agricultural land use within the province.

## 4.6 Geographic & Acreage Distribution by County

Certified organic operations participating in the 2025 program were located across all three counties in Prince Edward Island. The table below summarizes both the number of participating farms and the distribution of certified organic acreage by county.

While farm participation is relatively balanced across regions, the distribution of certified acreage varies more significantly, reflecting differences in farm size and production scale.

County	Number of Farms	% of Participating Farms	Acreage Total	% of Total Acreage
Kings	9	50%	4147.6	67.5%
Prince	5	28%	930	15.1%
Queens	4	22%	1070	17.4%

The concentration of acreage in Kings County reflects the presence of several larger broad-acre field crop operations within that region.

## 5. Sector Composition & Structure

### 5.1 Farm Size Distribution

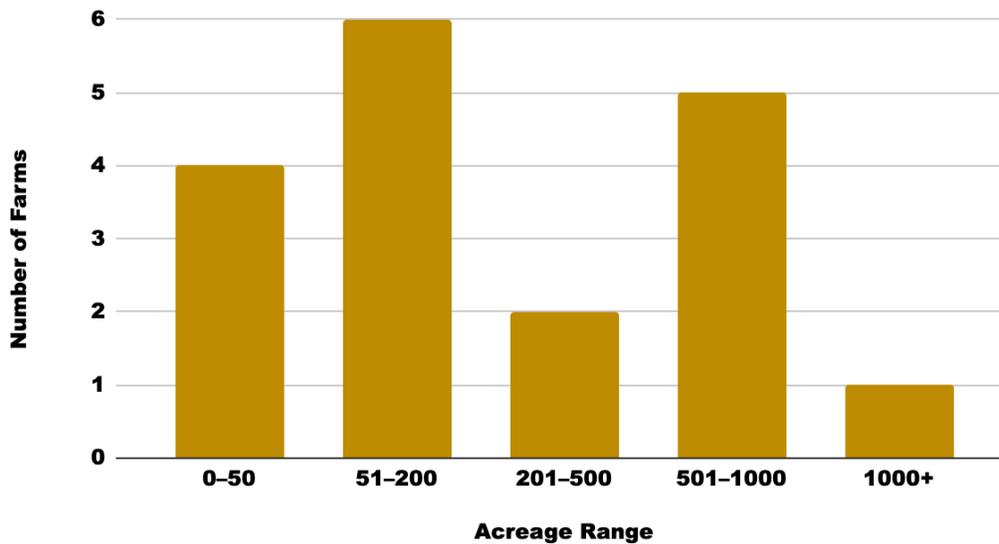
The eighteen (18) participating farms ranged in size from small-scale operations under 10 acres to large broad-acre farms exceeding 1,400 acres.

Certified acreage remains concentrated among a small number of larger operations. While small and mid-sized farms are present, the majority of certified acreage is held by larger field crop operations.

This distribution aligns with the acreage data presented in Section 4, reflecting the continued importance of broad-acre production within Prince Edward Island's certified organic sector.

Chart 3. Number of Farms by Acreage Range

### Number of Farms vs. Acreage Range

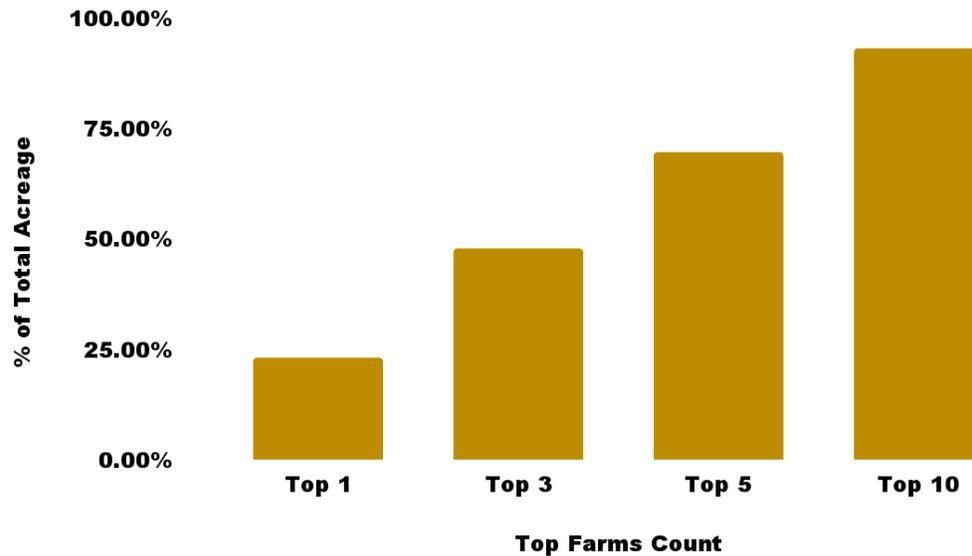


## 5.2 Acreage Concentration

Although small farms contribute to sector diversity and regional presence, a significant portion of certified organic acreage is concentrated among a limited number of larger operations. This distribution has implications for overall production capacity, market supply stability, and exposure to sector-level risk within the province’s organic sector.

Chart 4. Cumulative Acreage Concentration Table

## Cumulative Acreage Concentration Table



Certified organic acreage in Prince Edward Island is distributed unevenly across participating operations. The largest single farm represents approximately 23% of total certified acreage. The top three farms account for nearly 48% of total acreage, while the top five represent approximately 70%. The top ten farms together account for over 90% of certified organic acreage reported in 2025.

This concentration underscores the structural importance of larger broad-acre operations within the province's certified organic production system, while smaller and mid-sized farms continue to play an important role in diversification and community presence.

This level of acreage concentration means that sector-wide acreage trends are significantly influenced by the certification decisions of a small number of larger operations.

## 6. Historical Sector Trends (2016-2025)

To better understand current sector conditions, it is useful to examine historical trends in certified organic acreage, farm participation, and certification costs over time.

Table 7. Historical Sector Indicators (2016–2025)

Year	Total Certified Acres	Participating Farms	Average Certification Cost	Average Acres per Farm
2016	8,378.05	51	\$1,127.00	164
2017	10,387.45	45	\$1,230.69	231
2018	7,842.20	38	\$1,075.17	206
2019	11,704.23	44	\$1,343.59	266
2020	11,364.00	40	\$1,522.42	284
2022	9,456.70	30	\$1,530.90	315
2023	3,623.40	14	\$2,190.00	259
2025	6,147.60	18	\$2,365.88	341

*Note: 2021 data unavailable. The rebate program was not administered by PEI COPC in 2024.*

## 6.1 Acreage & Participation Trends

Between 2016 and 2019, certified organic acreage fluctuated between approximately 7,800 and 11,700 acres, with peak acreage recorded in 2019. Following 2020, both acreage and participating farm numbers declined significantly, reaching a low point in 2023 with 3,623 acres and 14 participating farms. While acreage and participation partially rebounded in 2025, both remain below historical highs, with total certified acreage decreasing from a 2019 peak of 11,704 acres to 6,148 acres in 2025.

Over the ten-year period represented, participating farms declined from 51 in 2016 to 18 in 2025, and as low as 14 in 2023.

## 6.2 Farm Size & Structural Shifts

Average acreage per participating farm has increased over time. In 2016, the average participating farm represented approximately 164 acres. By 2025, this figure had risen to 341 acres per farm.

This shift reflects a structural trend toward larger-scale operations maintaining certification, while smaller and mid-sized farms appear to have exited certification at higher rates in recent years. The data indicates consolidation within the certified organic sector, with total acreage increasingly concentrated among fewer operations.

### 6.3 Certification Cost Escalation

Over the same period, certification costs have increased substantially. The average certification cost rose from \$1,127 in 2016 to \$2,365.88 in 2025 — an increase of more than 110% over nine years.

More recent changes have been particularly significant. Average costs increased from \$1,530.90 in 2022 to \$2,190.00 in 2023, and further to \$2,365.88 in 2025.

Rising certification expenses may be influencing certification decisions, particularly for smaller-scale operations.

### 6.4 Rebate Cap in Context

The maximum rebate available under the Certification Assistance Program increased from \$550 to \$750 between 2020 and 2022. This adjustment improved the proportion of certification costs offset by the program at that time.

In 2020, when the cap was \$550, the average certification cost was \$1,522.42, meaning the rebate covered approximately 36% of average costs. Following the increase to \$750, the rebate represented approximately 49% of average certification expenses in 2022.

However, continued escalation in certification costs has reduced that proportion. By 2025, with an average certification cost of \$2,365.88, the \$750 cap represents approximately 31.2% of average expenses.

While the cap adjustment in 2022 improved cost alignment, recent trends indicate that certification expenses have continued to increase at a pace that outstrips program limits. Ongoing monitoring of certification cost trends may help ensure continued alignment between program support and sector conditions.

Table 8. Rebate Cap Alignment with Average Certification Costs			
Year	Average Certification Cost	Maximum Rebate	% of Average Cost Covered
2020	\$1,522.42	\$550	36%
2022	\$1,530.90	\$750	49%
2025	\$2,365.88	\$750	31.7%

*Note: The maximum rebate increased from \$550 to \$750 between 2020 and 2022.*

## 6.5 Observations

Historical data from 2016–2025 demonstrates three concurrent trends:

- A reduction in the number of participating certified farms
- A decline in total certified acreage from peak levels
- A sustained increase in certification costs

The partial recovery in participation and acreage in 2025 suggests renewed engagement within the sector. However, the structural shift toward fewer, larger operations and higher certification costs remains a defining feature of the current certified organic landscape in Prince Edward Island. These trends underscore the importance of monitoring both participation levels and cost alignment in future program years. Certification cost escalation has outpaced both acreage growth and participation recovery.

## 7. Processing & Value-Added Infrastructure (Historical Context)

Previous reporting (2023 Final Report) identified certified processing and value-added infrastructure within the province, including feed milling, flour milling, produce packing, frozen vegetable processing, and potato packing facilities. These facilities were not independently verified as part of the 2025 rebate administration but reflect the broader certified organic supply chain capacity within Prince Edward Island.

Table 9. Certified infrastructure (2023)	
Infrastructure Type	Count
Livestock feed mill	1
Flour mill	1
Greenhouse vegetable packing	1
Dried blueberry packing	1
Frozen vegetable processor	1
Potato packing facilities	3

The presence of certified processing and packing infrastructure indicates that the organic sector contributes to value-added supply chains within the province. Certification in these operations supports traceability, market differentiation, and product integrity beyond primary production.

## 8. Broader Sector Context

### 8.1 Certification Integrity & Market Conditions

Organic certification remains the only formally verified mechanism for producers to market products as organic within interprovincial and international markets. Certified operations undergo annual third-party inspection and must adhere to the Canadian Organic Standards.

In recent years, some certified producers have reported increasing marketplace confusion in direct-to-consumer environments. While a number of farms that previously maintained certification continue to operate using organic production practices, not all maintain active third-party certification. In the absence of provincial enforcement of national organic standards for in-province sales, the use of organic terminology in local markets is not regulated in the same manner as in jurisdictions that have formally adopted the standards.

Certified producers incur recurring annual costs to maintain compliance, traceability, and access to verified markets. Producers operating without certification do not assume these same inspection, verification, and compliance costs. While many non-certified producers operate with integrity, the coexistence of certified and non-certified operations using similar terminology can create consumer uncertainty and competitive marketing pressures, particularly in direct-to-consumer settings.

The Certification Assistance Rebate Program provides modest financial support to certified operations and helps mitigate some of the cost differential associated with maintaining formal certification. In this context, certification support plays both a financial and structural role within the sector.

## 8.2 Strategic Role of Certification Support

The organic sector contributes to Prince Edward Island's reputation as a clean, traceable, export-oriented jurisdiction committed to verified agricultural standards.

Supporting certified organic production through cost-sharing mechanisms helps:

- Maintain verified production standards
- Support export market access
- Reinforce product traceability
- Encourage continued participation in certification systems

The rebate program therefore serves not only as a financial support mechanism but also as a structural tool supporting certified market integrity within the province. In a small sector representing less than 1% of provincial farmland, maintaining certification integrity remains central to sector stability and market confidence.

# 9. Administrative Stewardship, Program Delivery & Producer Engagement

## 9.1 Administration

Administering the Certification Assistance Rebate Program requires a meaningful level of operational oversight, but it also provides the PEI COPC with valuable sector communication and relationship-building opportunities.

The annual application process creates a structured point of contact with every certified and in-transition organic producer in the province. Through this process, the PEI COPC confirms operational status, updates acreage information, and gains insight into emerging sector needs

through direct conversations. As a result, program administration functions not only as a financial support mechanism but also as an annual sector-wide point of contact within the certified organic community.

## 9.2 Program Delivery

Program delivery in 2025 involved coordinated outreach and verification efforts, including:

- Multi-channel communication (email, phone, and mailed application forms for producers without regular email access)
- Individual follow-up to ensure completion of required documentation
- Coordination with certification bodies to confirm certification status
- Verification of proof-of-payment documentation
- Individual payment processing
- Maintenance of structured digital files for audit and reporting purposes
- Preparation and issuance of AGR-1 forms and CRA summary reporting

Issuing AGR-1 forms presented particular challenges this year. Due to inactivity in prior years, the PEI COPC was temporarily unable to access its CRA My Business Account portal to issue forms electronically. As a result, AGR-1 forms were prepared and distributed manually by mail. To improve efficiency in future years, the 2026 application form has already been edited to include a consent section allowing producers to receive AGR-1 forms electronically when permitted.

Communication methods also required flexibility. Many certified producers prefer phone-based communication over email, making direct outreach more effective but more time-intensive. Several producers required additional follow-up to locate proof-of-payment documentation, and in some cases, certification body confirmation required multiple attempts before the appropriate contact was reached. Proactive follow-up — including phone calls and mailed forms — contributed significantly to achieving a 90% participation rate among eligible operations.

Several efficiencies were introduced during the 2025 program year, including the addition of e-transfer payments and strengthened digital tracking procedures. However, delivery of the program continued to require sustained coordination across outreach, documentation verification, payment processing, certification body confirmation, and tax reporting to maintain strong uptake and full compliance.

The current administrative fee structure reflects the substantial time and oversight required to deliver the program responsibly while maintaining strong uptake and full compliance with reporting requirements. The tracking systems and standardized procedures developed during the 2025 program year will improve efficiency in future delivery; however, continued engagement and coordination remain essential to sustaining strong sector uptake and program integrity.

### 9.3 Producer Engagement & Feedback

In addition to administrative oversight, the application process provided structured opportunities for direct engagement with certified producers. Feedback gathered through phone conversations and in-person discussions during the 2025 intake period indicates general satisfaction with program delivery. Producers reported that the application process is clear and manageable, and that payment timelines are reasonable. The introduction of e-transfer was widely adopted, with the majority of participants choosing this option over cheque payment.

Producers indicated that the rebate continues to provide meaningful financial support in the context of rising certification costs. Some noted that the current \$750 cap may no longer reflect the full cost burden faced by larger or more complex operations, including those with substantial acreage or multiple certification scopes.

Discussions also highlighted ongoing marketplace confusion in direct-to-consumer channels regarding the use of organic terminology. In this context, producers viewed the rebate as helping offset part of the cost associated with maintaining verified certification and supporting continued participation in formal certification systems.

## 10. Conclusion & Considerations

The 2025 Certification Assistance Rebate Program remained an important component of organic sector support in Prince Edward Island. With a 90% participation rate and direct outreach to all certified operations during the intake period, the program reinforced both financial support and sector-wide communication.

As certification costs continue to rise, the program remains an important tool in supporting ongoing participation in third-party organic verification systems. Most participating farms now exceed the \$750 cap, meaning the rebate functions as a partial cost offset rather than a proportional reimbursement.

The program also plays a broader structural role. Certified organic production supports Prince Edward Island's agricultural reputation as a clean, traceable, export-oriented jurisdiction. In the absence of in-province adoption of the national organic standards, the rebate program helps offset the full cost burden assumed by certified operations and supports continued engagement in verified production systems.

Looking forward, continued funding of the Certification Assistance Rebate Program will help maintain sector stability and participation in certified organic production. Consideration may also be given to reviewing the rebate cap in relation to rising certification costs to ensure the program continues to reflect current economic realities.

The PEI Certified Organic Producers Cooperative remains committed to administering the program efficiently, transparently, and in full compliance with reporting requirements. The 2025 program year demonstrates that the Certification Assistance Rebate continues to be a practical and valued component of maintaining stability, participation, and verified organic production within Prince Edward Island.