Every company can make their business environment more sustainable by focusing inwardly on operations, community giving, and employee practices. However, much of organic food companies’ ability to scale positive sustainable impacts exists within their supply chains. This study takes a deeper look at how Organically Grown Company (OGC) is activating sustainability in their supply chain through their Supplier Accelerator Program.

Committed to Supplier Success

Eugene, Oregon based OGC is a leading distributor of organic produce in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. Even from afar, their commitment to their suppliers is apparent through a variety of lenses. OGC works with over 300 vendors – and some of those represent 100s of small scale farms. 31% of their total produce purchases are sourced regionally— between Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and British Columbia.

Perhaps even more telling, one of the company’s Five Sustainability Goals is: “Achieve on farm sustainability and small/medium farm viability.” True commitment to this goal is clear when one considers the variety of services that OGC provides specific to individual growers needs throughout their supply chain. For example:

- **Product Marketing:** OGC has created the LADYBUG brand and retail-ready packaging to represent Northwest growers. These materials improve consumer recognition and drive demand via use of produce stickers, boxes, and other branding materials.

- **Packaging Supplies:** Providing packaging supplies for producers not only creates a uniform look for the brand, but it also obtains bulk discounts on supplies that are passed on to growers.

- **In-House Packing:** Performing in-house packing of small fruit such as blueberries – a service that saves individual producers thousands of dollars of infrastructure investment.
- **Policy/Advocacy:** OGC advocates for the tools, inputs, research and resources organic growers need to be successful. This includes informing organic growers of proposed National and Regional organic policy changes and legislative actions that might affect their operations; collecting grower feedback and personal experiences through outreach and surveys to determine how such changes will affect them; and then providing a conduit for growers’ voices to be heard. This latter step is taken by presenting their input in written and oral comments on their behalf.

- **Crop Coordination:** Ensuring OGC supply availability and reducing over-or-under-supply risks to growers through collaborative planning and volume commitments when appropriate.

**Supplier Accelerator Program**

As if these services weren’t already a commitment to supplier success, OGC has taken its commitment a step further by launching its *Supplier Accelerator Program* (SAP) in 2015. The vision for OGC’s SAP is to create lasting changes in the organic supply chain that advance the values of opportunity, partnerships, and health. The program was developed to execute projects that mutually strengthen OGC / farmer partnerships and performance capabilities in an evolving organic market.

Just a few of the SAP projects launched since the start of the program include:

- **Compliance Labeling:** Understanding how to label products correctly is a tricky business. Many standards and best practices exist around how to correctly label produce so it is transparent and traceable, and meets all applicable regulatory requirements. OGC’s SAP has developed resources for growers that explain and provide examples of what labeling should look like, and what information that is required. OGC also provides “ready-to-go” labels for growers that don’t have the resources to develop or print their own.

- **Grower-Handler Online Resources:** OGC recognizes the tremendous and diverse pressures that create demands on growers’ time. To assist growers they created a web portal that strives to streamline the time spent on investigating and meeting some of those demands. The portal provides a single location to access critical grower resources such as produce standards, food safety requirements, labor requirements, and tools for succession planning.
• **Production Partnership:** The presence of OGC growers in the Northwest inspired OGC to work with a leading organic certifier in the Pacific Northwest—Oregon Tilth—to reduce certification fees. For producers who frequently work on small margins, this is a significant bottom-line assist.

**The Results**

These efforts have resulted in initial and long-term, direct and indirect benefits throughout OGC’s values-based supply chain. OGC’s Supplier Accelerator Program has provided support from efficiency and economic savings for growers to simplified processes in OGC’s facilities, and enhanced customer service.

Congratulations Organically Grown Company on being such a bright Leader for Sustainability!