

SWOT ANALYSIS

Supply chains secured and reimagined



For growers Dino Mastronardi, left and son Dean Mastronardi, right, the day-to-day Leamington, Ontario operations for the Topline brand of English cucumbers are all-consuming. It's the job of Dino DiLaudo, centre, to be aware of opportunities and threats in the marketplace in his role of vice-president, sales and marketing for Westmoreland Sales. About 25 per cent of their cucumber crop is destined for the United States where the International Trade Commission is examining the impact of imported cucumbers on seasonal markets. Photo taken pre-pandemic in February 2020 by Glenn Lowson.

KAREN DAVIDSON

The Americans are crunching our cucumbers – the numbers, not the vegetables. The U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC) recently heard an array of American, Mexican and Canadian experts who analyzed the flow of cucumbers and squash being imported into the U.S. Squash may not be a sizeable Canadian export, but cucumbers are.

The Ontario greenhouse cucumber crop had a farmgate value of \$339 million in 2020, with just over half exported outside of the province, much of it to the United States.

“I’ve never had a fear that greenhouse-grown cucumbers were being sold for less than slicers,” comments Dino DiLaudo, vice-president sales and marketing for Westmoreland Sales, referring to field-grown cukes. “Our long English cucumbers and mini seedless cucumbers have a strong market.”

In fact, the Westmoreland Sales Group is so confident of their Canadian cucumber market that they have added 25 acres of new greenhouse construction in Leamington, Ontario with new plantings for June. The Westmoreland Topline greenhouse grower is less exposed to the U.S. market, with about 25 per cent of production sold to American customers.

This is not the case for other greenhouse growers, however, which is why the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers (OGVG) had Glen Snoek, its marketing and economic policy analyst presenting testimony at the virtual USITC on April 8. For starters, it’s important to note that the Canadian cucumber market subdivides into greenhouse-grown, field-grown and pickling markets.

As Snoek explained, “Canadian greenhouse production does not generally interfere with the most important harvest periods for Georgia and Florida and generally complements them. Canadian seedless cucumbers are very different from American field cucumbers and command a

higher price in retail stores. Seedless cucumbers offer a different consumer experience and have dramatically expanded the snack category, beyond a salad or meal ingredient. Long English seedless and mini-cucumbers are not a direct substitute for American field-grown cucumbers.”

Representing the field cohort, Ron Van Damme, vice-chair, Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers, explained that Canada is an important element of a North American pickle-production value chain. “Our raw cucumbers are processed by American factories and sent back to Canada for sale,” said Van Damme.

Continued on page 3



AT PRESS TIME...

Truck drivers to be vaccinated in North Dakota

Manitoba’s premier Brian Pallister has inked a deal with North Dakota governor Doug Burgum for up to 4,000 truckers to be vaccinated on southward-bound trips. The vaccination site was started April 21 at Drayton, North Dakota, about 50 kilometres south of the international border.

The state will be providing the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines with proof of immunization to be shared with the Manitoba government.

Sixty-two Manitoba truck drivers were vaccinated on opening day.

Federal budget fails to include financial protection program

The first federal budget in two years reveals continued funding to support quarantine costs of temporary foreign workers – until August 31, 2021 -- but neglects to include a financial protection program for produce sellers.

That’s the analysis of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) which has consistently reiterated the importance of a financial protection tool for market stability, particularly during the pandemic when some companies are unstable.

“While we appreciate the federal government’s focus on



Photo courtesy of North Dakota Department of Health.

COVID-19 recovery, the failure to implement a financial protection mechanism in the form of improved bankruptcy protections remains a critical gap for Canadian fresh produce sellers,” said Ron Lemaire, CPMA president. “Especially as we navigate the third wave of the pandemic and look to transition into economic recovery, it is crucial that the government provide all possible, no-cost safeguards for our essential supply chain and ensure Canadians can continue to access fresh fruit and vegetable products for their families.”

In other highlights, CPMA lauded the extension of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy, as well as investments in infrastructure and innovation initiatives.

The federal government will continue to provide \$1,500 per worker in costs associated with quarantine until June 15, 2021 however that support will drop to \$750 per worker until the program ends August 31, 2021.

Additional support will also be available, up to \$2,000 per

worker, to employers to help offset a portion of costs associated with workers who are required to quarantine at a government-approved facility because they cannot travel by private means directly to their place of quarantine.

“As long as the Quarantine Act is in place, we are lobbying the federal government for continued support,” says Bill George, chair, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association. “Costs for growers have not gone down. It’s certainly costing growers more to administrate the 10-day COVID testing. When test results don’t come back on time, there are more hotel quarantine costs.”

With the program slated to end in August, apple growers will be disproportionately affected because many of their temporary foreign workers arrive just in time for fall harvest. The OFVGA has communicated this reality to the federal minister for consideration.

For more detail, visit [www.budget.gc.ca](http://www.budget.gc.ca).

NEWSMAKERS

The Canadian Produce Marketing Association has named **John Anderson**, chair, CEO and managing partner of The Oppenheimer Group, as the recipient of the 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award. Anderson joined Oppy in 1975 when the company was a single office produce sales operation. Since then, the company has become a leading grower, marketer, and distributor of fresh produce, generating a billion dollars in sales each year. His contributions to the produce industry have earned him several professional awards including The Packer’s Canadian Produce Man of the Year and The Packer’s U.S. Produce Marketer of the Year – making him the only person to win this prestigious publication’s awards in the United States and Canada.



John Anderson

**Josh Mosiondz** is Ontario’s new minor use coordinator based in Guelph, Ontario. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in environmental sciences from the University of Guelph. He’s worked with the Pest Management Regulatory Agency as an assistant regional pesticide officer. He’s also worked with OMAFRA, performing cultivar, biopesticide, plant growth regulator, insect biocontrol and insect monitoring trials and surveys across Ontario. He’s being mentored until end of June by **Jim Chaput** who is retiring after 20 years in the role.



Josh Mosiondz

The BC Cranberry Marketing Commission welcomes a new chair to the board: **Kalpna Solanki**. She succeeds **Jack Brown** who held the role for nine years. Her appointment is for a one-year term until March 10, 2022.

Congratulations to **Luci Faas**, one of 10 Women in Produce nominees to be recognized by the Canadian Produce Marketing Association. As a product development specialist for Nature Fresh Farms, she identified a home-compostable cucumber wrap.

The Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council (OACC) has announced a new executive team. **Maaïke Campbell**, representing Ontario Pork, will assume the chair’s role. She is joined by first vice-chair **Mike Chromczak**, representing the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association and the Asparagus Farmers of Ontario. Second vice-chair is **Lloyd Crowe**, representing the Grain Farmers of Ontario. Together, this broad group of associations represents \$10 billion in farmgate sales and the interests of non-supply managed commodity groups.

Best wishes to **Kathy Macpherson**, vice president for research and policy, Greenbelt Foundation, who is retiring mid-May. Since 2008, she’s profiled the diversity of agriculture in the Greenbelt and initiated the valuation of ecological goods and services in the region.

The Prince Edward Island Potato Board welcomes **Emmanuel Okpetu** as the new market information officer. The Holland College graduate was working in communications and customer service before coming on board.

Two titans of Canada’s grocery world passed this spring. **Donald Sobey**, 87, passed on March 24, 2021. **W. Galen Weston** (80) passed on April 12, the patriarch of the family that owns Loblaws.

Food and Beverage Ontario welcomes a new CEO in **Chris Conway**. He is an experienced leader in advocacy and government relations, having led three associations, most recently as CEO for Career Colleges Ontario. **Norm Beal** is stepping down to devote more time to his Peninsula Ridge Estates Winery.

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COVER STORY

# Supply chains secured and reimagined

Continued from page 1

Further testimony was provided by Andre Solymosi, general manager, British Columbia Vegetable Marketing Commission and Jocelyn Gibouleau, president of Québec-based Les Productions Margiric Inc. The Canadian contingent was led overall by Mathieu Boucher, deputy director of Agriculture Canada’s horticulture division. An important factor regarding the hearing was that the Commission was not investigating unfair trade practices, but only mandated to report back on the impact of imports on U.S. growers and supply chains.

Testimony was heard from more than 30 witnesses including the Florida Agriculture Commissioner and the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas. The hearing’s report is expected to be tabled by no later than December 7, 2021.

Interestingly, these fact-finding investigations were already underway when President Joe Biden issued an executive order on February 24, 2021 to evaluate current and future risks to America’s supply chains. Despite the global war against COVID-19 raging on, the United States remains focussed on gathering intelligence on the strength of its union – and that of its critical partners.

Embedded in the president’s direction to his cabinet secretaries, including agriculture secretary Tom Vilsack, is the request to examine if allies and partners are also identifying and prioritizing the flow of critical goods and materials. The scope is to target risks beyond pandemic and other biological threats to include impacts from climate change and geopolitical and economic competition.

“When this executive order was published we said, ‘Yikes, what is this?’” says Al Mussell, research lead for Agri-Food Economic Systems, Guelph, Ontario.

“I don’t think this is innocuous at all. Protectionism plays about equally well with Trump Republicans and AOC Democrats,” referring to the left-leaning New York congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and her following.

U.S. agriculture secretary Tom Vilsack has asked for reporting by May 21 regarding his department’s efforts to improve and reimagine supply chains. He specifically wants to “identify food system, supply-chain bottlenecks and vulnerabilities that may provide insights into the competitive and fair markets landscape.”

There is no doubt the global pandemic has challenged pre-existing assumptions about how food is produced and distributed, so it’s not surprising that a SWOT analysis – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats -- is underway to protect U.S. national interests.

“This is prudent management,” says Al Mussell. “What is more troubling is the billions of *ad hoc* payments to farms which are becoming routine, first to compensate for Chinese levies on American produce, then for COVID recovery. For Canadians, it takes very detailed economic analysis to track the impacts.”

Joe Sbrocchi, OGVG general manager, points out that trade is a national issue affecting all Canadian product shipped into the United States. Accordingly, Canada’s response to these U.S. trade investigations is being coordinated through the Canadian Horticultural Council as well as Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Global Affairs Canada.

“It seems to me that through this lens of exploring the supply chains that feed Americans, the United States will see a strength provided in the trading block that



These field cucumbers are destined for pickles. Photo by Krystle VanRoboys.

the USMCA brings to the table,” says Sbrocchi.

That governments are now ‘woke’ to food sovereignty should come as no surprise to Canadian growers. What will be a shock, however, is if grower associations don’t have the resources to deploy against trade protectionism when COVID has all but emptied their cupboard.

The Grower goes “Behind the Scenes” with Al Mussell, research lead, Agri-Food Economic Systems. He shares his perspective of the U.S. International Trade Commission investigations into several horticultural commodities and the more recent president’s executive order to review supply chains. This series is sponsored by BASF Agricultural Solutions.



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CROSS COUNTRY DIGEST

BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC boosts spending on agriculture

British Columbia released its 2021 budget on April 20, increasing its annual core budget for the ministry of agriculture, food and fisheries by 4.65 per cent from \$95.4 million to \$99.8 million.

This lift is primarily directed to expand work on the Buy BC, Feed BC and Grow BC initiatives. According to the BC Agriculture Council, that’s \$3.41 million for each of the next three years for a total of \$10 million.

From a COVID-19 pandemic perspective, there are supports to B.C. farmers including \$35

million earmarked for 2021/2022 for the centralized quarantine program to house temporary farm workers close to the Vancouver airport upon arrival. This strategy has been helpful in keeping workers and farm communities safe, while removing logistical hurdles for growers.

Deeper in the B.C. budget, line items can be found with \$7 million being carried over from last year’s budget to support food hubs, farm innovation and food processing. An additional \$7.5 million will be directed towards agritech initiatives.

“There’s no fine detail for the agricultural budget, but over time, I expect there to be support for the stabilization initiative,” says Glen Lucas, general manager, BC Fruit Growers’ Association, referring to the tree fruit industry. “We’re hoping to get the apple industry back on track, and certainly the cherry industry has had its weather challenges in the last two years.”

“Within the framework of all the challenges that the BC government is facing, we’re feeling positive about the emphasis on food security and



future opportunities for the apple sector,” says Lucas. “The benefits from the agritech and food hub initiatives will be ongoing.”

British Columbia’s fresh fruit,

vegetable and potato sector had a farmgate value of \$1.128 billion in 2019.

ALBERTA

Alberta is declared free of potato cyst nematode

After more than a decade of testing, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has declared that Alberta is free from potato cyst nematode (PCN), a soil-borne pest. Was this yield-robbing pest ever there? In 2007,

CFIA placed two fields under surveillance on suspicions and restricted seed movement from those farms.

Other Alberta growers were able to resume export seed sales to the U.S. as of January 2009, but

the question mark over the potential presence of PCN impacted international sales. The CFIA has now removed restrictions after all 2020 tests came back negative.

“This opens the door to resume trade talks with countries



interested in buying our seed,” says Terence Hochstein, executive director, Potato Growers of Alberta. “We’ve had delegations from Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia.”

PCN-free status comes after years of team efforts between the affected farm, the Government of Alberta, Potato Growers of Alberta, Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) programming and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). More than \$200,000 in

Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) Surveillance Program funding was dedicated to restoring disease-free status. This funding helped cover costs for farm inputs, including seed, as testing requires a crop is grown and then verified disease-free.

The Alberta seed potato sector has a farmgate value of about \$90 million earned from 12,000 acres.

Photo courtesy Potato Growers of Alberta





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CANADA

Minimum wage rates increase in five provinces

On May 1, 2021, Quebec’s minimum wage rises to \$13.50 per hour. The increase is part of a patchwork of rate increases this spring across Canada.

Effective date	Province	Rate/hour
April 1, 2021	Prince Edward Island	\$13.00
	Nova Scotia	\$12.95
	New Brunswick	\$11.75
May 1, 2021	Québec	\$13.50
June 1, 2021	British Columbia	\$15.20

Source: Retail Council of Canada



CROSS COUNTRY DIGEST

QUÉBEC

The Québec strawberry basket is now 100% recyclable

Strawberry and raspberry growers in Québec are proud to showcase their latest Les Fraîches du Québec one liter basket, now made entirely of recyclable cardboard.

“Each year, our producers fill more than 10 million baskets of beautiful local strawberries in Québec’s fields,” says Jennifer Crawford, executive director, fraises et framboises du Québec. “In the past year, we worked with our container manufacturing partners to optimize our basket by eliminating the plastic handle. We now have several basket models designed and manufactured in Québec that are 100% recyclable.”

The province’s 500 strawberry and raspberry growers know that consumers are concerned about resource depletion, pollution and waste management. Consumers desire locally grown berries, but they also want better packaging to reduce impact on the environment.

Without the plastic handle, the strawberry basket avoids the production of 327 tons of CO2 per year.

The new basket won an award in January 2021 for eco-initiatives in packaging.

“We are proud of this step forward and we know that this is important to our consumers,” says Crawford.



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

New Water Act welcomed by agriculture

The Prince Edward Island Potato Board is welcoming news that the provincial government has proclaimed the Water Act which comes into force on June 16, 2021. This legislation consolidates current policies while creating new rules for groundwater allocation, protection of riparian and aquatic habitats, discharges into fresh and marine water environments and water quality targets.

At the same time, research will move forward by the Canadian Rivers Institute and the University of Prince Edward Island. The plan is to install high-capacity irrigation wells on four P.E.I. farms

and measure the impact their use has on the local watershed over four years.

According to the *PEI Potato News*, March/April 2021 edition, farmers are confident that this project will confirm for fellow Islanders that responsible use of high-capacity wells for supplemental irrigation can occur without detrimental effects to household wells or flows to rivers and streams.

The development of a supplemental irrigation strategy for PEI is considered an immediate priority



COVID-19 RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYERS OF TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS



The OFVGA has new resources available for farm employers to help them meet their occupational health and safety requirements during COVID-19.

Resources for workers are available in English, Spanish and Thai on the following subjects:

- COVID-19 Health & Safety
- Emergency & Non-Emergency Healthcare
- Vaccines
- Income Supports
- ArriveCan
- Switch Health

Most resources have corresponding videos that provide verbal explanation for workers. Video playlists by language are available on OFVGA’s Farm and Worker Resources YouTube channel.

Resources and videos can be accessed at [ofvga.org/covid-19](https://ofvga.org/covid-19)





FRESH WEEK

CPMA names New Product Showcase Awards winners

During Fresh Week, April 12-16, the Canadian Produce Marketing Association announced five winners in the categories of Best New Product, Packaging Innovation, Best Snackable Product, Organic Product, New Technology. Winners were chosen among 56 products from 42 companies.

“At CPMA we are committed to providing our industry members with tools and resources they need to grow their businesses and New Product Showcase is one of them,” said Ron Lemaire, CPMA president. “Our showcase has facilitated the introduction of countless products to the market by giving them valuable visibility before, during and after our Convention and Trade Show.”



Best New Product: The Star Group’s New Inspired Salads

“Our Inspired Salads are designed by Canadian top chefs and crafted with premium ingredients and freshly made dressings. They truly are salads that inspire your taste buds,” said Kelly Shabatowski, commercial director of Inspired Greens.

The lineup of Inspired Salads is built on a foundation of Inspired Greens lettuce that is greenhouse-grown with no pesticides year-round. The salads are hand made in Calgary, Alberta with many locally sourced ingredients. The recipes include Avocado Toast Salad with red wine vinaigrette dressing, Mexican Burrito Bowl with jalapeno lime vinaigrette dressing, Modern Caesar with garlic dill dressing and Superfood Salad with lemon honey dressing.

The hexagon packaging separates the salad components for freshness and extended shelf life as well as reduces plastic up to 30 per cent with the use of top seal.



Packaging Innovation: Mucci Farms’ Naked Leaf Living Basil

The Naked Leaf Living Basil Sleeve joins Simple Snack, Cutecumber Poppers and Paper Top Seal to become the fourth package produced by Mucci Farms in four years to be recognized by the industry for sustainability. The latest innovation reduces plastic by 50 per cent by converting half of the package to paper.

“There’s a worldwide effort to be more environmentally friendly and we knew this package checked all of the boxes,” said Fernanda Albuquerque, packaging development manager. The sleeve can be taken apart to place plastic in the plastic stream and paper in the paper stream for recycling. Additionally, the exterior pot is re-usable or recyclable, and the interior growing pot is 100 per cent compostable.

“Not only is the package sustainable, but the product is unique as it’s living basil that comes with the root intact which allows you to water it as you would a plant, and pick leaves as you go,” said Emily Murracas, director of marketing. “Our talented design team did a great job of bringing the aesthetic to the sleeve which certainly stands out on store shelves.”



Best Snackable Product: LOOP Mission’s Probiotic Sodas

According to LOOP Mission, 58 per cent of food produced in Canada is lost or wasted, and about a third of that wasted food could be rescued. LOOP is working to solve this issue by repurposing these outcasts. Their new line of Probiotic Sodas, contains 40 per cent fresh pressed juice from rescued fruits and veggies and 2+ billion probiotics.



Organic Product: EarthFresh’s Organic Golden, Red & Russet Potatoes

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WORKER HEALTH

# Dedicated vaccination days for TFWs

KAREN DAVIDSON

Vaccination rollouts are a patchwork quilt in Ontario, totally dependent on local health units. In Niagara, the approach has been proactive, vaccinating tree fruit workers from Tregunno Farms on March 22. The success of that pilot led to vaccinating temporary foreign workers in a planned blitz on April 24 and 25 in St. Catharines.

At press time, the Niagara Region Health Unit reported that it had reached maximum capacity with 3,050 workers from 152 farms for its worker-only blitz.

Another pilot was held in Haldimand-Norfolk in March with workers from EZ Grow Farms.

“There was some slight apprehension about receiving the vaccine, but in the end, 95 per cent of our workers were vaccinated,” reports Dusty Zamecnik, EZ Grow Farms and chair of the agricultural advisory board for Norfolk.

Buses with temporary foreign workers were lined up at a community clinic in Delhi, Ontario on April 23. Sarah Page,

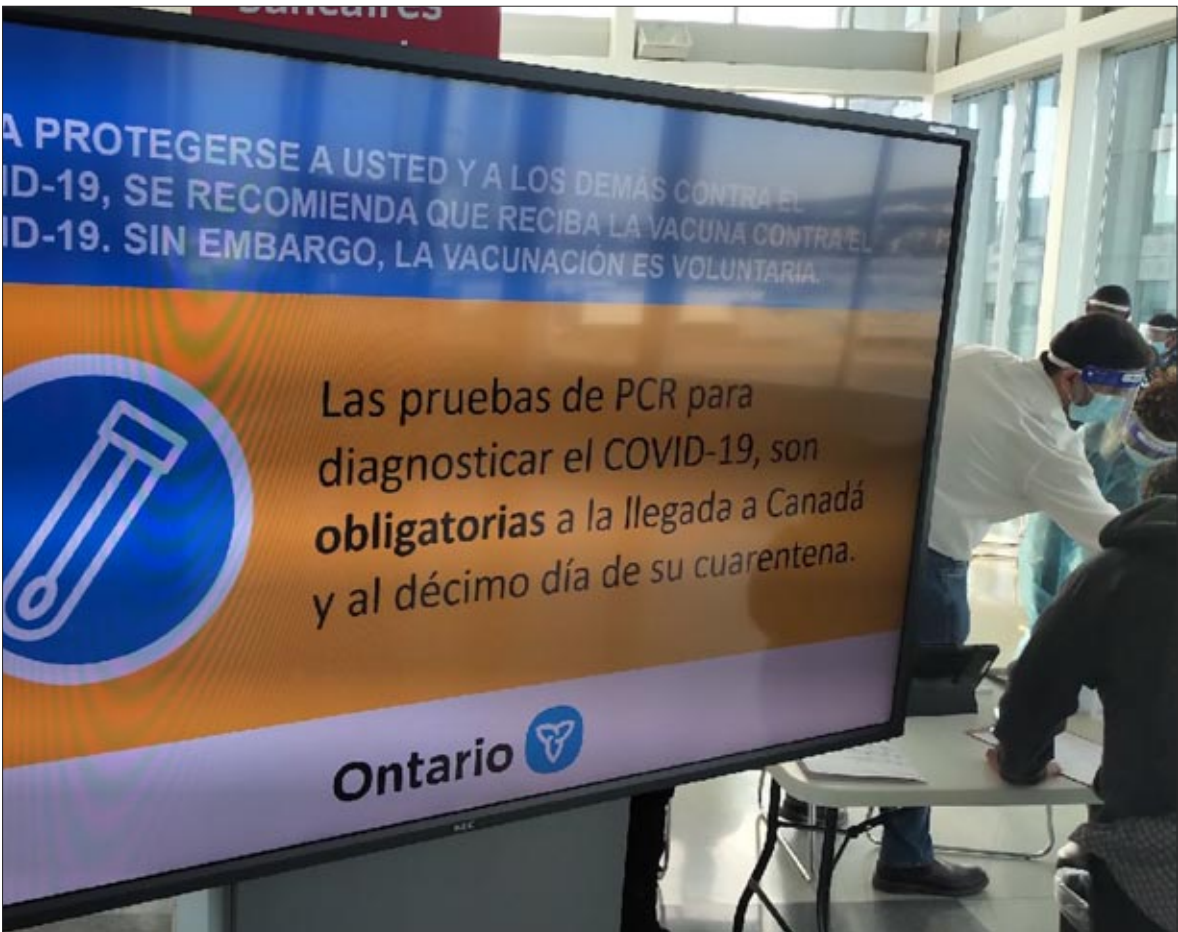
coordinator for vaccination rollout in Haldimand-Norfolk, confirmed that it was the fourth clinic dedicated to TFWs in the month of April. Translators are on hand to assist with any language problems.

“We have vaccinated about 1,000 TFWs so far. That’s about a quarter of the workers in our county,” said Page. “Many workers are getting their vaccines upon arrival at the (Toronto) airport, so we’ll be focusing more on second doses moving forward.”

Jody Mott, executive director, Holland Marsh Growers’ Association, reports that 90 per cent of the TFWs in the area were vaccinated by April 24.

The public’s awareness of protecting TFWs rose when the Ontario government launched a pilot vaccination site at Toronto Pearson International Airport, starting with a charter flight from Mexico City on April 10. Spanish translators, information pamphlets and health officials were on hand to assist about 220 temporary foreign workers (TFWs). One of the key messages is that the vaccine is voluntary.

The workers were transported



from the airport terminal to a dedicated, secure vaccination site, a short distance from the airport. Translation supports and snacks were available for workers. About 95 per cent of the workers from that first flight consented to a vaccine. A few workers had already received vaccines in their home country. Seasonal workers continue to arrive on chartered

flights, not only from Mexico City, but from Trinidad and Jamaica. To date, it’s been noted that Mexican workers are more likely to consent to the vaccine than those from the Caribbean.

In further news, the Canadian government announced that as of April 23, 2021, travellers arriving in Canada will be required to have a day-8 COVID test, rather

than day-10. The rationale is to help identify positive cases and allow sequencing of variants of concern sooner. Ostensibly, this will ensure results are received by the end of the 14-day quarantine period, although Ontario and Quebec growers have reported many problems with timeliness of test results from the provincial provider, Switch Health.



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

A pandemic makes strange bedfellows



Pearson International Airport. At that time, I never once thought that I would spend a Saturday there watching people get vaccinated.

On April 10, that's exactly what I did. It was a milestone day for our sector -- the first day of airport COVID-19 vaccinations for seasonal agricultural workers arriving on a flight from Mexico.

It was a rather unusual group of stakeholders that came together that Saturday to make

that first airport vaccination clinic a reality: staff from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), Ministry of Health, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA), Switch Health, Pearson Airport and the Mexican Consulate, as well as the on-site CanAg team, nurses, translators, bus drivers, cleaners, security, and, of course, the workers themselves.

The day was a success due to the collective planning, coordination, and determination of everyone involved, and while we were all sharing ideas on how we can improve the process for subsequent clinics, there was also pride in what was accomplished by working together. It's just one example of how our sector now works closely with so many more partners and stakeholders than we did even 18 months ago - many of whom had never worked with horticulture before, nor had they been on our radar as possible collaborators.

Before COVID, our key

government partners were Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and OMAFRA and we had solid working relationships with allied organizations, such as the Canadian Horticultural Council, Canadian Produce Marketing Association, Canadian Federation of Agriculture and others right across the sector.

But there is nothing like a crisis to bring unlikely people together for a common cause. As the pandemic continued to expand, so has our network of partners and stakeholders. Last year, we began working closely with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Health to address farmer and worker health and safety in our sector.

This year, as we prepared for a new season and new rules for incoming workers, we also find ourselves collaborating with health units, with officials from Pearson Airport and with staff from Switch Health about everything from streamlining communications to growers to offering input on how to best

flow people through vaccination sites.

Over the winter months, we received funding from OMAFRA to develop resources for temporary foreign workers that are not only available in a variety of languages but are also culturally appropriate to ensure information is as clear and easy to understand as possible.

All of a sudden, our staff found themselves creating YouTube videos in three languages and working with Thai and Spanish translators on posters, ads and information sheets. And we now have health units contacting us and using our resources - all new relationships our organization never had before but are proving to be incredibly valuable as we continue to collectively work our way through the pandemic.

New people, businesses and organizations are learning about the horticulture industry, gaining a greater understanding of our sector and its needs, and working with us to reach growers.

For example, in April 2020, the full-page ad on the outside back cover of **The Grower** was for vineyard equipment. This year, that same space was filled by a supplier of Canadian-made PPE.

Many seasonal workers last year limited their interaction with local communities, preferring to stay on-farm as much as possible. CIBC launched a pilot project with greenhouse workers in Leamington that lets workers use a mobile app to send money to an international bank account or lets recipients pick up their cash locally - a service now being rolled out across the country.

As a lobby and advocacy organization, our strength lies in our relationships. A pandemic does make for strange bedfellows, as the saying goes, and these new relationships with non-traditional stakeholders may well be one of the lasting positive outcomes of this pandemic for our sector.

WEATHER VANE



Cheers to cherry blossoms and the charms of Niagara. For a red-tailed hawk's view of these Ontario orchards and vineyards, go to the recently launched three-hour documentary by TVO.org: Tripping the Niagara.

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SCENE ON TWITTER

Ontario’s spring snowstorm in photos



“So this happened last night (April 20) @manitreefarms. This blanket of snow is maybe not a bad thing. I’ll you know.”

~ Brian Rideout, Manitree Fruit Farms  
Blenheim, Ontario



“We’re thinking we’re going to need some snow tires for our asparagus harvesters . . . and a heck of a lot of little sweaters for our stalks. Welcome Spring!”

~ Charles Welsh, Welsh Bros.  
Scotland, Ontario

FEDERAL BUDGET

Cheers to the wine industry

The federal budget pledges \$101 million over two years, starting in 2022-2023, to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to implement a program for the wine sector that will support wineries in adapting to ongoing and emerging challenges, in line with Canada’s trade obligations.

Wine Growers Ontario (WGO) and partners across the country worked together with senior federal officials to develop a trade legal wine grower support program. In July 2020, the federal government announced that it would terminate the excise duty exemption program, which was implemented in 2006 and supported investment in more than 400 grape wineries, stimulated 40 million litres of new wine production, and in 2020 contributed almost \$5 billion annually to the national economy.

“The budget announcement is key to the future success of the Ontario wine industry,” said Aaron Dobbin, president and CEO of WGO. “The loss of the excise duty exemption would have been devastating without such a program in place. We know how valuable this program is for the future of our industry and we look forward to ensuring that this program is in place long past the two years announced today.”

The Wine Growers Ontario along with the national association and partners in British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Québec have worked tirelessly with federal officials to develop a winery support program that is trade legal and will benefit our industry, Dobbin concluded.



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### Production Insurance coverage for your vegetables

Spring Policy renewals are in the mail now, and you have until May 31 to make coverage changes. If you are considering Production Insurance for the first time, contact Agricorp to sign up.

#### New for 2021

**On-farm labour disruptions due to COVID-19** – For the 2021 program year, coverage has been extended for production losses caused by on-farm labour disruptions due to COVID-19.

**Same insurance. New look.** – To make it easier to do business with us, your renewal notice and Contract of Insurance have been refreshed. You may have also noticed that your renewal package has been refreshed and contains fewer forms this year, making it easier for you to participate.

**Save time. Report your vegetable acres online.**

Join thousands of farmers who report online. Online acreage reporting is available after May 1 right on our homepage by clicking “Report your acres online” or going directly to [agricorp.com/acreage](http://agricorp.com/acreage). All you need is your Agricorp ID.

**You can now report these vegetable acres on agricorp.com:**

- Fresh vegetables (average farm yield basis)
  - Onions (seed, set, Spanish), potatoes, rutabagas
- Processing vegetables (average farm yield basis)
  - Butternut squash, carrots, potatoes, rutabagas

If you have acreage-loss coverage, you can also report online with our new acreage report form, available at [agricorp.com/acreage](http://agricorp.com/acreage).

#### Everything you need to know about your policy is on [agricorp.com](http://agricorp.com)

Agricorp.com has all the information you need to participate. Simply select your commodity on the homepage to find program information for your operation. Agricorp.com has:

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- ▶ **Important dates**  
(e.g., planting and reporting acres and yield)
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And much more!

#### AgriStability program changes

AgriStability provides affordable, whole farm coverage. Recent program changes offer you even more support:

- ▶ Removal of the Reference Margin Limit (RML), effective for the 2020 program year, increases the level of support for farms with lower allowable expenses.
- ▶ The deadline to enrol in AgriStability for 2021 has been extended to June 30, giving farmers more time and flexibility to make business decisions and assess their program coverage needs.

Stay tuned to [agricorp.com](http://agricorp.com) for more information about AgriStability.



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FARM & FOOD CARE ONTARIO

# Garden-in-a-Box pilot aims to build public trust through shared values and experiences

MADELINE RODRIGUE

If COVID-19 can be said to have started one positive movement last spring, it was the explosion of interest in gardening at home. With food shortages and many regular pastimes shut down, people headed outdoors and tried to get their hands dirty by growing their own food for the first time.

A report from Dalhousie University’s Agri-Food Analytics Lab, which examined the prevalence and varieties of attitudes to home food gardening in Canada during the pandemic, found that 51 per cent of respondents grew at least one type of vegetable or fruit. And of those, 17.4 per cent started growing food at home for the first time during the pandemic.

Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO) recognized this movement as an opportunity to build public trust through the shared experience of growing food. This spring, FFCO launched the Garden-in-a-Box pilot project to build common ground between

gardeners and Ontario’s farmers by highlighting the similarities and differences between gardening at home and growing crops on the agricultural scale.

The sold-out garden kits, totaling 500, included vegetable seeds, a seedling starter greenhouse, gardening journal, gardening gloves and other resources such as the latest edition of The Real Dirt on Farming. A portion of the proceeds went to Feed Ontario and helped to provide the equivalent of 15,000 meals to Ontarians in need.

Purchasers are being invited to join a Farm & Food Care Garden Club on Facebook, which now has 350 members and counting. The garden club will be a place for garden enthusiasts, of all experience levels, to gather and share their challenges and triumphs throughout the 2021 gardening season. Here, FFCO will offer helpful advice, regular contests and informational events hosted by industry experts. Vermicomposting, pest management and vegetable preservation workshops are

among the events scheduled. Upon joining the group, members were asked what vegetable-growing topics they wished to learn more about. Insects and diseases, seasonal availability, soil health and fertilizer use were the top responses.

“This initiative aims to engage Ontarians where they’re at and open a channel for meaningful dialogue about how food is grown and produced,” said Alicia Becker, community engagement manager for FFCO. “Together with farmers across Ontario our gardeners will experience the joys and challenges of growing food. Alongside the tips and tricks shared to help gardeners experience success we have some really tangible opportunities to help our garden club connect to the experiences of Ontario farming families and the integrity of their practices,” she added.

According to research by the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (CCFI), 93 per cent of Canadian consumers say they know little or nothing about farming practices, and 36 per cent are unsure if Canada’s food



system is on the right track. The good news? CCFI data also show that farmers are the most trusted stakeholders across the food system and largely because Canadians believe that farmers share their values. And they’re right. Farmers want to grow safe, delicious and nutritious food for Canadians and their families – and lots of it. Leading with these shared values is three to five times more important to building trust than sharing facts or demonstrating technical skills and expertise. However, many consumers have nostalgic ideas about what farming should look like. They may also have negative associations with the practices and tools of modern agriculture.

What they might not realize is that many of the practices and principles used in gardening are also implemented in modern agriculture, only at a much larger scale with more advanced equipment and technologies. The goals are similar too, to protect the crop, improve the soil or increase yield, among others. Crop planning and rotation, soil testing and amendments, pest management, varietal selection are just some of the practices that have applications in both gardening and agriculture. It’s on these shared goals and experiences that the Garden-in-a-Box project will build appreciation for the hard work, care and innovation

that farmers put into growing food and for the availability, quality and choice on Ontario grocery store shelves.

Thus far, the Garden-in-a-Box pilot project has received support from CropLife Canada, Six-by-Sixteen/OFA, Ontario Bean Growers and John Deere. FFCO also recruited a team of ambassadors with strong connections to agriculture or gardening experience. These ambassadors will be growing along with garden club members, and will share their experiences, making time to engage with other members, respond to questions and create a welcoming space for dialogue. FFCO is pleased to have Western Fair District’s Dan Lizmore growing the kit in their learning garden, along with Greens on Queen out of Cambridge who grows a plot for their local food bank. Our other ambassadors include: Lucia Lilibourne and family of Strathroy, Melyse Renwick and family of Wheatley, Jakob and Stephanie Vogel of Monkland Ontario.

FFCO is optimistic about the future of this pilot and has received numerous inquiries about availability of boxes in the future.

*Madeline Rodrigue is communications manager for Farm & Food Care Ontario.*

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COMING EVENTS 2021	
May	Census of Agriculture
May 1-5	International Strawberry Symposium VIRTUAL
May 5	AgScape Annual General Meeting VIRTUAL
May 30-June 3	11th World Potato Congress, Dublin, Ireland POSTPONED to May 30-June 2, 2022
June 24-26	United Fresh Convention and Expo, Los Angeles, CA CANCELLED
July 26-29	Potato Association of America Annual Meeting, VIRTUAL
July 31	Food Canada Day
Aug 11-12	AgriExpo, Grands Falls, NB
Sept 7-9	Macfrut, Rimini Expo Centre, Italy
Sept 8-10	Federal-provincial-territorial agriculture ministers' conference, Guelph, ON
Sept 23-27	Canadian Farm Writers' Federation Annual General Meeting, Windsor, ON



RETAIL NAVIGATOR

Supplier-retailer relationships



PETER CHAPMAN

Recently Sobeys and Food Health Consumer Products Canada (FHCP) released a proposed Grocery Supply Code of Practice for Canada. This document is designed to set parameters for the relationship between suppliers and retailers. We know the relationship has been a challenging one for many. The animosity is stronger in the grocery department, but there is no doubt perishable departments see their share of issues.

With the consolidation we have experienced in the food industry, there are fewer retailers between suppliers and consumers than ever. This shifts the power in the value chain to those who control access to the consumer. In cities with produce terminal markets there are some options, but most other markets’ access to consumers is through a major retailer or food service distributor.

Why do we need a code of practice?

There are a number of issues that have been simmering and every once in a while, they boil over to really frustrate people (usually suppliers). These issues are often created by decisions coming from the retailers or are related to retailers’ execution of programs. One challenge for suppliers is they do not have a lot of options. In a consolidated market, many are concerned about the risk of losing a customer so they perceive they have no recourse but to accept the decision and figure out how to pay for it.

The first issue is retailers changing the rules once agreements are in place. In 2020 Walmart, United Grocers (buying group that includes Metro, Save On and other retailers) and Loblaw all told suppliers they would be implementing a new fee to reduce cost of goods. Walmart and Loblaw related these fees to initiatives in their business they believe will provide suppliers with more volume and the United Grocers expectation was to get the same discount others were getting to maintain a level playing field. This was primarily in the grocery department. This was not the first time this had happened.

Compliance fines are another

frustration for suppliers. Retailers have implemented numerous fines related to the distribution network. Late deliveries, issues with packing slips etc. are now costing suppliers considerable money. The fines were implemented arbitrarily. Contesting them is more difficult than climbing Everest, and in some cases, suppliers believe the retailer’s own distribution center issues cause their delivery to be late.

Payment terms are a third issue that have caused problems in the industry. Retailers take advantage of discounts but continue to pay in 45-60 days. This can put significant cash flow pressure on suppliers and inhibit their ability to make investments and innovate. It also adds costs to service any short-term debt.

There are always two sides to a story so we do have to keep that in mind. Suppliers are not always perfect and when they do have issues, retailers do not always appreciate the impact on their customers. Service level issues do add costs for retailers and also make their entire operation less efficient. When you have staff scheduled for a distribution center or a store and product does not show up when it should, they cannot do the work and it has an impact on the bottom line. Yes, they can do other things but it is not how the plan was built and it does have an impact.

Suppliers also do not always see retailers as customers. Many see them as an intermediary between their great product and the consumer. From someone who has worked on both sides, this does cause issues. There are costs to running stores and when suppliers complain about the excessive margins, their complaint does not do much to build a relationship.

Do these issues justify changing agreements after they are made or slowing down payments? No, but they do help to turn up the heat under the simmering pot.

We did see more collaboration in 2020 when there was a common enemy, the pandemic. Suppliers and retailers did work together better. The focus on getting product to stores to feed Canadians was probably a breath of fresh air for both parties.

What does the code of practice include?

The proposed code of practice does include a better definition of how suppliers and retailers will do business together.

The Code is rooted in five guiding principles:

1. To promote fair dealing at all times and in all commercial relationships between retailers and suppliers

2. To promote mutually-beneficial relationships where retailers and suppliers recognize each other’s need for commercial certainty

3. To promote transparency between retailers and suppliers

4. To provide for an effective, equitable mechanism for resolving commercial disputes

5. To promote the efficiency, sustainability and competitiveness of the Canadian grocery supply chain, as well as to ensure that it delivers value and innovation to Canadian consumers  
*Source: www.corporate.sobeys.com*

There are 14 sections to the code, outlining how the two parties will operate. Items such as payments and deductions and variation to supply agreements each get their own section.

One of the positive aspects of the code of practice is they have included an escalation process. In the current environment it is very difficult for suppliers to get resolution to any conflicts.

Will it work?

In my conversations with suppliers the common response seems to be “time will tell.” Sobeys have taken a leadership position to work with FHCP on this and be very public about their desire for this to be the new rules of engagement. It does separate Sobeys from the other retailers.

It is interesting they decided to launch this with a relatively small part of the Canadian food industry on board. We don’t know if the other retailers were solicited or not and what their response will be. It might be a challenge to get them to adopt a ‘Sobeys’ program. It would also be interesting to understand if other industry associations were contacted such as the Canadian Produce Marketing Association. If we estimate FHCP members comprise 50 per cent of Sobeys’ sales and Sobeys have a

25 per cent market share nationally, then this code only applies to 12.5% of our industry. We will keep watching to see how all of the stakeholders react.

*Peter Chapman is a retail consultant, professional speaker and the author of A la Cart—a suppliers’ guide to retailer’s priorities. Peter is based in Halifax, N.S. where he is the principal at SKUFood. Peter works with producers and processors to help them get their products on the shelf and into the shopping cart.*



FOCUS: IRRIGATION AND WATER MANAGEMENT

Niagara fruit growers: short on water, tall in ambition



Photo by Denis Cahill.



Photo by Glenn Lowson

KAREN DAVIDSON

Wedged between Lake Ontario, Lake Erie and the Niagara River, fruit growers overwhelmingly support building more irrigation infrastructure. In recent summers, they have been short on water, within sight of some of the biggest fresh water bodies in the world.

To be sustainable long-term, about 150 growers are supporting the Niagara Irrigation Strategy which is propelled by a working group that reports to the Niagara Region’s Agricultural Policy Action Committee. Partners in this monumental task include: Niagara Region, Town of Lincoln, Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, City of St. Catharines, Ontario Tender Fruit Growers, Grape Growers of Ontario and the Niagara Federation of Agriculture.

This area is part of the provincially mandated Greenbelt Plan which means that the land is devoted to agriculture and can’t fall to urban development. To be the most productive on that land, water is key for plant health, fruit sizing and wine quality.

It’s an exciting project,” says Bill Schenck, a St. Catharines, Ontario grape grower and chair of the working group. “We need to give growers the tools to compete.”

The vision for more robust water delivery dates back to 2005 when an engineering report put a price tag of \$100 million on irrigation infrastructure west of the Welland Canal. That dollar figure doused ambitions temporarily. Water shortages in the summers of 2016 and 2017, and general acknowledgement of climate change, have reignited the will to build access to more water and to better manage the



This close-up of a drip irrigation system in a vineyard shows the pressure gauge, valve and drip line. Photo by Rebecca Shortt, OMAFRA.

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resource.

As Schenck explains, this multi-year process considers a wide swath of stakeholders, including greenhouses and nurseries as well as grape and tender fruit growers. Consultant Hugh Fraser has been interviewing multiple landowners to gauge support. The growers surrounding St. Catharines do not have access to a gravity-fed water system. Unfortunately, Ontario Power Generation is not interested in becoming a partner in such a system at this time.

At the west end of Niagara-on-the-Lake, growers realize that an open-ditch piping system is not working as efficiently anymore because of environmental issues caused by phragmites. Some of these growers currently use drip irrigation to more accurately distribute water to plant roots but overhead irrigation is used as well. For this district there are additional growers looking for access to the system. In order to meet those needs a new source point of water access will be required. That’s the next step for engineers to ponder.

The most likely area to be brought on board is “Lincoln,” home to 15 Mile Creek, 16 Mile Creek and Twenty Mile Creek, the second-largest watershed in the region emptying into Jordan Harbour and ultimately Lake Ontario. The steering committee is currently working with 50 growers in this area to develop an engineering report by the end of 2021.

In terms of what’s doable in the short term, the Lincoln infrastructure project is a timely vision. The stewardship of water is in sync with climate-change policy at federal and provincial levels. The federal government announced hundreds of millions in 2020 to expand irrigation in Saskatchewan and Alberta to encourage more agricultural growth in specialty crops. In Alberta alone, the provincial government pledged \$244 million and the members of eight

irrigation districts earmarked \$163 million. The remaining \$407 million will be loaned by the Canadian Infrastructure Bank.

With the fall 2020 announcement of this model, the Niagara working group has reached out to both Ontario and federal agricultural ministers to explore funding models.

“We don’t want to reinvent the wheel,” says Schenck. “We’re aware of the success of Leamington Area Drip Irrigation Incorporated whereby 13 processing tomato farmers built 40 kilometres of pipeline from Lake Erie.”

The workload of managing monthly minutes, letter-writing campaigns and stakeholder communications is such that a second person must be hired beyond the administrative services of Sarah Marshall at the Ontario Tender Fruit Board. How to set up a private energy utility board is next on the “to do” list.



FOCUS: IRRIGATION AND WATER MANAGEMENT

Forging ahead in Alberta’s irrigation alley

KAREN DAVIDSON

It’s a pity that the 2021 Census of Agriculture to be conducted in May won’t capture the enormous scope of the new irrigation infrastructure to be built on the prairies. More than \$830 million is pledged between federal and provincial governments as well as eight irrigation districts in southern Alberta.

For a trend line, look back to 2016 statistics which revealed that of the 1.21 million acres irrigated in Canada, Alberta was home to 71 per cent.

The St. Mary River Irrigation District (SMRID) straddling 350 kilometres on an east-west axis from Lethbridge to Medicine Hat is the largest irrigation district in Canada. According to David Westwood, SMRID general manager, there will be no fewer than 26 modernization projects underway in spring 2021, converting open canals into buried pipelines and doubling capacity of the existing Chin reservoir. Up to 100,000 acre feet of water storage will be created.

“This is all happening under a

compressed timeline between now and spring 2025,” says Westwood.

At present there are 412,000 acres under irrigation for crops as diverse as potatoes, mint, timothy hay and cereals. What the expansion means is that growers will have comfort in water security during drier years. But it also means that the increased footprint of irrigated acres may encourage growers to acquire new water rights and to convert dryland into potato land.

The benefits for the potato sector and its allied, value-added industries can’t be underestimated. Thomas McDade, agricultural director for Potato Growers of Alberta, points out that the potato sector will become more sustainable by extending the potato rotation, potentially from four to five years, while pivoting to other money-making crops.

“It’s not that any more water will be created but certainly the capacity to store water and to use the resource more efficiently will be,” says McDade.

He’s a frequent observer of the snow-pack reports generated by Alberta Environment and Parks



that compares seasonal data year-to-year. The 2021 Rocky Mountain snow pack, he notes, is average at best. This is why the potato sector is looking forward to four new off-stream reservoirs as well as buried canals which will reduce losses due to evaporation.

Dr. Willemijn Appels is well positioned to lead the industry as the Mueller Applied Research Chair in Irrigation Science at Lethbridge College. As such, she

is focussed on:

- A project funded by Research Driven Agricultural Research (RDAR) and directed by producers to analyze and improve irrigation management with moisture-available water maps created with microwave radiometers. Potatoes are one crop targeted for research, but wheat, sugar beets and barley will also be studied.

- A new subsurface drip irrigation facility to be built to study water and nutrient management of Alberta crops. This study will collaborate with the southern irrigation district.
- Plot-scale projects requested by industry partners

“We are hoping to develop this facility into a smart-farm test site for irrigation technology,” says Appels.

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FOCUS: IRRIGATION AND WATER MANAGEMENT

Pre-harvest testing of leafy greens to reduce E. coli outbreaks



KAREN DAVIDSON

Three key trends are identified by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in its analysis of *E. coli* outbreaks linked to leafy greens: reoccurring strain, reoccurring region and reoccurring issues with activities on adjacent land. The most recent fall 2020 outbreak originated in the central coast of California, encompassing the Salinas Valley

and Santa Maria growing region. Two years ago, the California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement (LGMA) board voted to strengthen mandatory food safety practices required on farms. Growers were directed to no longer use untreated surface water for overhead irrigation of leafy greens prior to harvest. But these practices and others did not prevent contaminated produce from reaching consumers. The most recent FDA

RESPONDING TO OUTBREAKS: FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS UPDATES

ADJACENT LANDS	Issued LGMA Preharvest Testing Guidance document for crops grown with animals present on adjacent lands (Spring 2021)
	Pre-harvest testing to become a requirement (Summer 2021*)
	Adjacent Land Risk Assessment Tool launch (Summer 2021*)
	Increased required buffer distance (2018) so that fields must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>at least 1,200 feet from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) with 1,000 – 80,000 animals</li><li>at least 1 mile from CAFOs with more than 80,000 animals</li></ul>
WATER	Water used for overhead application of crop treatments must meet Type A microbial quality standards (2020)
	New best practices for furrow and drip irrigation water (2020)
	New approach to agricultural water (2019): <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Risk assessment required for sources, storage and delivery systems</li><li>Risk-based water classifications (Type A &amp; Type B)</li><li>Type B water that touches the edible portion of a crop within 21 days of harvest must be treated to meet the following microbial quality standard: <i>There must be no detectable generic E. coli in at least 2 of 3 samples. One sample can have up to 10 MPN of generic E. coli</i></li></ol>
SOIL	Major revision to Soil Amendments & Crop Inputs requirements (Summer 2021*)
ENVIRONMENT	Additional environmental assessment required for unusual weather events like flooding, frost or wind, similar to what the Yuma region experienced (2018)
HARVEST	Required harvesters to prevent cut end of product from contacting the ground (2020)
	Best practices for cleaning and sanitizing harvest equipment, containers, tools and bathroom facilities became requirements (2020)
	Updated equipment sanitation requirements (2018): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>When changing fields or commodities: clean and sanitize</li><li>End of the day: clean and sanitize</li><li>Before harvest each day: inspect and clean or sanitize again if necessary</li></ul>
TRACEABILITY	Formalized requirement for lot data to aid traceback investigations (2018)
ROOT CAUSE	Root Cause Analysis required (Summer 2021*)

\*proposed

The AQUA Wetland System (AWS)  
“A constructed wetland for treatment of various agricultural waste waters and sanitary sewage”

This sub-surface, vertical flow constructed wetland consists of sand & gravel cells planted with moisture tolerant plant species. Water is pumped vertically from cell to cell. There is no open or standing water and the system is designed to operate winter and summer. Treatment of wastewater occurs through physical filtration & biological degradation. Plants shade & insulate the cells, preventing algae growth. Provides tertiary treatment for BOD5, CBOD5 and TSS as well nitrogen and phosphorus removal.

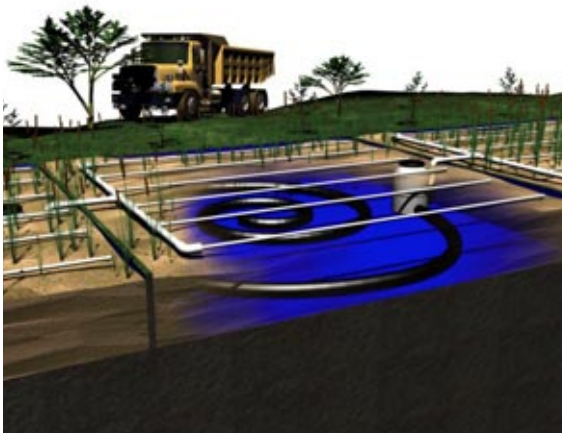
The Aqua wetland System has received numerous approvals by the Ontario Ministry of Environment (ECA process) and Health Canada for treatment of many different types of wastewater, including sanitary sewage, mushroom farm run-off water, greenhouse irrigation leachate water, winery & distillery process water and milkhouse wash water. Approved by the Region of Niagara under the Ontario Building Code (OBC) to provide tertiary treatment of winery & distillery washwater combined with sanitary sewage.

Recent projects include:

- 1) treatment of sanitary sewage / process water at Lepp Distillery, NOTL, ON (OBC permit)
- 2) treatment of nutrient laden stormwater run off at the Agromart fertilizer terminals, Belton, ON (ECA permit)
- 3) treatment & re-use of green house irrigation leachate water, Niagara & Haldimand (ECA permit)

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investigation found the outbreak strain in a sample of cattle feces collected on a roadside about 1.3 miles upslope from a produce farm. As FDA notes, the proximity of cattle has been repeatedly demonstrated to be a persistent source of the pathogenic *E. coli* 0157:H7.

In an April 2021 report, Frank Yiannas, FDA deputy commissioner for food policy and response, writes that this *E. coli* strain is a reasonably foreseeable hazard. And that risk-based preventive measures must be put in place.

On April 20, the California LGMA board endorsed new pre-harvest testing of leafy greens products when risk assessments deem it necessary, specifically when grown in proximity to animals.

“We are endorsing pre-harvest testing in direct response to FDA’s recent report on *E. coli* outbreaks associated with lettuce in 2020, which identified the recurring *E. coli* strain implicated in this outbreak to be a reasonably foreseeable hazard. We want to send a clear message to FDA that our industry is, in fact, taking additional measures to prevent outbreaks,” said Dan Sutton, chair of the California LGMA.

The LGMA board endorsed several other updates to the food safety standards being developed by its technical committee and expected to become a requirement

in the coming months. Projects currently under development include:

- An adjacent land risk assessment tool
- Root cause analysis requirement for high-risk food safety incidents
- Major revision to existing standards for soil amendments and crop inputs

As Sutton says, these are important tools that have been in development for several months and they represent input from food safety experts and researchers throughout the industry.

Note that the LGMA program requires growers to test their water because it can be a carrier of pathogens. The new requirements now include additional safeguards that ensure farmers do the following: categorize the source of the water; consider how and when water is applied to the crop; conduct testing to assure the water is safe for the intended use; sanitize water if necessary; and verify that all of the above precautions have been taken.

“We alone cannot fix this issue,” writes Yiannas. “Industry leadership and collaboration among growers, processors, retailers, state partners and the broader agricultural community is critical to reducing foodborne illnesses.”

For detailed resources, link here: [lgmatech.com/resources/](http://lgmatech.com/resources/)



CROP PROTECTION

# Report from the 19th Annual National Pest Management Priority Setting Exercise

JIM CHAPUT

As we have all experienced this past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we see the world, how we interact with one another and how we operate on a week to week and month to month basis. The fall 2020 provincial minor use process through to and including the 2021 national minor use priority-setting meetings normally held in March was replaced by a virtual process.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Pest Management Centre (AAFC-PMC) and the Provincial Minor Use Coordinators (PMUCs) facilitated the 19th national minor use priority setting exercise virtually over the course of several weeks from early February (registrant presentations) to late March with the collaboration of our registrant, grower and crop specialist stakeholders.

The virtual meetings brought together a wide range of participants from across Canada including university and federal researchers, crop extension specialists, provincial specialists, minor use coordinators, registrants, PMRA representatives, growers and grower organization representatives, processing companies and other stakeholders.

The purpose of these meetings was to review the top minor use priorities identified by each of the provinces for all crops including ornamentals and to establish the top priority projects for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Pest Management Centre (AAFC-PMC) to do work on in 2022. Although still limited in some aspects of their work, AAFC-PMC indicated to stakeholders that they would be able to select up to 10 entomology, up to 10 pathology and up to 10 weed management projects along with five regional upgrades, two organic priorities and six IPM projects. Of these six IPM projects, PMC will select one after a detailed merit analysis.

Six full days of Zoom meetings at five hours per day was a bit grueling but this was spread out over five weeks. There was a three-week break between the selection of the B priorities and the final cut of A priorities, which gave stakeholders much needed time to caucus nationally and with registrants of potential solutions. The final two days took several rounds of intense scrutiny and some excellent work by AAFC-PMC and their virtual meeting facilitator to narrow down the list as well as typical Canadian collaboration among grower representatives and

stakeholders. The process culminated in a robust and prioritized set of the final projects addressing an array of pest management issues across Canada.

The discussions, collaborations and decisions made at these meetings demonstrated the critical needs producers have and how the system can work to address them even in times of pandemic. Growers, researchers, registrants, provincial specialists and other stakeholders worked to reach consensus and negotiate needs. Despite the limitations of virtual meetings, the process was completed and now the next step is for AAFC-PMC to complete

the minor use submissions that were agreed upon. Additionally, the provinces also must follow up on a number of potential submissions and rationales for minor use needs.

The following table summarizes the projects agreed upon for 2022. Ideally, these projects will be submitted to the PMRA by AAFC-PMC, and the data requirements completed in 2023-2024. Ideally, registration decisions for these will likely occur in late 2024 and 2025.

*Jim Chaput is the provincial minor use coordinator, for OMAFRA.*



Pear buds. Photo by Brian Rideout.

CROP/ CROP GROUP	PEST(S)	PRODUCT SOLUTION	ACTIVE INGREDIENT SOLUTION	REGISTRANT
WEED SCIENCE				
Carrots	Weeds	Goal (1/2 rate)	oxyfluorfen	Nufarm
Raspberry	Weeds	Tergeo	tiafenacil	ISK
Blueberry	Weeds	Tergeo	tiafenacil	ISK
Edible Honeysuckle	Grassy weeds	Assure II	quizalop-ethyl	AmVac
Buckwheat	Weeds	Valtera	flumioxazin	Valent
Bromegrass	Crop lodging management	Manipulator	chlormequat chloride	Belchim
Hemp	Grassy weeds	Select	clethodim	UPL
ENTOMOLOGY				
Carrots	Wireworms	Cimegra	broflanilide	BASF
Radish	Wireworms (efficacy to be done on CRM rutabaga)	Cimegra	broflanilide	BASF
Onions, dry	Onion maggot	Cimegra	broflanilide	BASF
GH Lettuce	Fungus gnats	Distance	pyriproxyfen	Valent
Tomato, field (fresh)	TPB, stink bugs	Rimon	novaluron	Adama
Edible honeysuckle	Grubs	Verimark	cyantraniliprole	FMC
GH Strawberry	Thrips	Delegate	spinetoram	Corteva
PLANT PATHOLOGY				
Onion, dry	Bacterial diseases	Kasumin	kasugamycin	UPL
Spinach	Pythium	Torrent	cyazofamid	ISK
GH Cucumber	Fusarium stem rot	Senator	thiohanate-methyl	Nisso
Pears	Fireblight	Apogee	prohexadione-Ca	BASF
Raspberry	Nematodes	Salibro	fluazaindolizine	Corteva
Grapes	Root/trunk rots	Senator	thiohanate-methyl	Nisso
GH Strawberry	Powdery mildew	Gatten	flutianil	OAT
Ornamentals, GH	Fusarium	Posterity	pydiflumetofen	Syngenta
ORGANIC				
Potatoes	Tuber flea beetle (west); labeled pests (east)	Pyganic	pyrethrins	MGK
Cabbage	Labeled pests	Pyganic	pyrethrins	MGK
REGIONAL UPGRADE PROJECTS				
Cranberry (ATL)	Weeds	Prism	rimsulfuron	Corteva
Shallots (QC)	Weeds	Frontier Max	dimethenamid-p	BASF
Mint (ON)	Powdery mildew	Miravis Prime	pydiflumetofen + fludioxonil	Syngenta
Coriander (PR)	Blossom blight	Miravis Neo	pydiflumetofen + azoxystrobin + propiconazole	Syngenta
Apples (BC)	Scab	Serifel	Bacillus amyloliquefaciens	BASF
IPM PROJECTS				
• 6 Projects were selected representing a variety of IPM project proposals and after PMC merit analysis and discussion with the PMUCs, one will be chosen to go forward as a PMC project				



Agricultural Information Contact Centre: 1-877-424-1300  
ontario.ca/crops

# Ontario Berry Grower

Ministry of Agriculture,  
Food and Rural Affairs



## Monitoring for spotted wing drosophila, 2021

DR. WENDY McFADDEN-SMITH and ERICA PATE

Growers in Ontario can do their own monitoring for spotted wing drosophila (SWD) through the Agriculture and Food Laboratory, University of Guelph. A project funded by Niagara Peninsula Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, Ontario Tender Fruit Growers, Grape Growers of Ontario and Eastern Ontario Berry Growers Association supported a research project to develop the methodology to not just identify SWD in samples but to quantify it. The molecular method allows for detection of a single SWD in a sample with 1000 non-SWD flies with 97 per cent accuracy.

It is very important for growers to monitor for spotted wing drosophila (SWD) on their own farm to determine when it is necessary to begin a spray program. Once SWD is identified and ripe fruit is present it is time to spray. Monitoring will help growers confirm SWD presence before the population really builds and in time to begin an effective management program. For on-farm monitoring growers need practical, effective tools that are not time-consuming or labour-intensive.

Set up three to four, liquid-based traps in shaded areas around the field to monitor SWD. Set up the traps when fruit start to turn colour and continue until SWD has been identified (Figure 1). Each trap should be baited and have 100ml of mouthwash. These traps should be collected every week and the contents sent to the Agriculture and Food Laboratory, University of Guelph. The contents of multiple traps can be combined into a single sample for testing. Commercial traps and lures can be purchased from a number of suppliers, listed below.

In comparison trials, Scentry lures have given the best results (Figure 2). If you prefer, you can make your own traps but make sure there's a way to suspend the lure above the collection medium. Mouthwash (instead of plain water or apple cider vinegar) proved a much superior collection medium in the traps as it effectively preserved samples and reduced contamination that interferes with the test.

The price is \$80 per sample for 10 or more samples submitted as a batch. For batches of less than 10 samples, a setup fee of \$100 will apply. The turnaround time from sample receipt to reporting results will be two to three business days. Ensure that shipping containers are leak-

proof and ship by courier to avoid delays.

Trap and lure suppliers:  
Alpha Scents, Inc.  
West Linn, OR  
Phone: 503-342-8611  
Website: [www.alphascents.com/spotted-wing-drosophila.html](http://www.alphascents.com/spotted-wing-drosophila.html)  
• Alpha-scents lure

Great Lakes IPM Inc.  
Vestaburg, MI  
e-mail: [glipm@greatlakesipm.com](mailto:glipm@greatlakesipm.com)  
website: [www.greatlakesipm.com/lures](http://www.greatlakesipm.com/lures)

Scentry Biologicals Inc.  
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• Trece (Pherocon) lure.

*Dr. Wendy McFadden-Smith is tender fruit and grape IPM specialist & Erica Pate is fruit specialist for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.*



Figure 1. A home made trap using peanut butter jar. Entry holes covered with drywall seam tape. Red duct tape is important as a visual attractant for SWD.



Figure 2. Scentry lure for spotted wing drosophila.

## Round table to be held for 2021 pick-your-own

Join us for a round table discussion on operating berry and apple pick-your-own this season. This Zoom meeting will include an overview of the guidelines as well as a round table discussion with growers. After changing the way growers operate pick-your-own operations in 2020, this meeting is a chance to talk about what worked and what didn't, ask

questions, and share your experiences to prepare growers for a successful and safe 2021 season.

When: May 18, 2021, 7:00 PM  
Registration is required. Contact Kevin Schooley ([kevinschooley@bell.net](mailto:kevinschooley@bell.net)) or Erica Pate ([erica.pate@ontario.ca](mailto:erica.pate@ontario.ca)) to register.



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ONTARIO BERRY NEWS

# Diagnosing blueberry injury

ERICA PATE

Injury to blueberry canes and shoots can be hard to diagnose. While growers are finishing pruning blueberries and later on throughout the season you may come across different cane issues. There are different diseases that can affect blueberries, and it can be challenging to determine what the issue is. Often the main canker diseases seen are Phomopsis or Fusicoccum canker.

Phomopsis canker and twig blight are caused by the fungus *Phomopsis vaccinii*. Phomopsis canker and twig blight will result in rapid wilting and dying of the blueberry canes, twigs and flowers (Figure 1). Symptoms can appear suddenly, with rapid wilting of the canes and leaves turning reddish-brown and remaining attached to the cane -- also known as ‘flagging’ (Figure 2). Symptoms can often show up on a single cane on a plant (Figure 3).

The fungus is spread during cool, wet weather beginning at bud swell. Look for tip dieback and brown and silver cankers with small pinpoint sized fruiting bodies (pycnidia). The cankers will encircle the cane and become flattened, killing tissue above the canker.



Figure 1 Blossom blight from phomopsis

Fusicoccum canker, or Godronia canker, also causes stem dieback. This disease is caused by *Fusicoccum putrefaciens*. To distinguish between *Fusicoccum* and *Phomopsis* look for a red-brown round lesion around a leaf scar to identify *Fusicoccum*. The margin of the lesion will stay red and darker than the grey center. *Fusicoccum* canker often infects young stems more than mature canes. Look for cankers on one- to two-year-old canes

around a leaf bud. Cankers are often found lower on the canes, close to the crown.

Both *Phomopsis* and *Fusicoccum* overwinter in cankers on stems and are spread by splashing rain. Although we have already had warm temperatures this spring, if there is cool, rainy weather be prepared to see more cane and twig blight infection.

Winter injury can also result in damage to stems and buds. Winter injury will often damage



Figure 2 Blossom blight from phomopsis

flower buds first. These buds will be brown and dead before the season starts. Further into the season you may see injury to older canes as well. These canes may not grow normally and may not leaf out, eventually dying as the season continues. Winter injury will cause damage to a certain point on the cane -- below this there is normal growth.

If you are seeing canker symptoms in your field, prune out and burn the diseased canes.



Figure 3 Phomopsis canker infecting a single stem

Avoid damaging canes as this can make the plant more susceptible to infection. Fungicides can also be applied from green tip to petal fall for *Phomopsis* control.

Thorough pruning can also contribute to disease management by increasing airflow in the canopy and reducing leaf wetness, which is needed for infection to occur.

## Roadmap for reducing labour challenges in berry production

KEVIN SCHOOLEY

Thanks to funding from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Berry Growers of Ontario (BGO) have looked at labour-saving innovations as well as practices that might limit the spread of COVID-19 between workers. BGO contracted Vineland Research and Innovation Centre (Vineland) to do the project research.

Because BGO represents blueberry, raspberry and strawberry growers, innovations for all three crops were investigated. Several growers were interviewed followed by research into what production systems are currently available and what could be executed in the near future. The Vineland report looks at many avenues of innovation including new growing systems, automation and other opportunities that have potential to reduce pressure on labour.

Innovations include table-top strawberries and long-cane raspberry production. Each of these production systems has the opportunity to reduce labour needs overall and at the same time produce high-quality fruit.

Automation looks at advances in mechanical harvesters for blueberries and raspberries that boast quality that can be used for the fresh market as opposed to older machines where fruit is destined for processing. Robotic harvesters for fresh strawberries show promise but they may not be affordable for small-acreage growers in Ontario.

Robotic harvesting of strawberries is likely still a number of years away but we are seeing robotic harvest aids that can assist in moving picked fruit from the field after it is hand harvested. UV-C light-equipped robots can be used for insect and disease control. These robots are very close to market, with one of the prototypes designed with small growers in mind. Drones appear to have many applications including scouting fields for pests, spraying pesticides and distributing beneficial mites and insects.

Researching and discovering innovations like these have shown that there are many opportunities on the horizon to help berry growers reduce labour costs. For a copy of the full report, contact: [info@ontarioberries.com](mailto:info@ontarioberries.com)

*Kevin Schooley is general manager, Berry Growers of Ontario.*



Table-top strawberries



Long-cane raspberries. Photos by Glenn Lowson.



GREENHOUSE BITS AND BITES

# More strawberries to be grown in greenhouses

Nature Fresh Farms is expanding beyond greenhouse-grown tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers into hanging fruit: strawberries.

With help from their longstanding growing partner Cielo Vista, the Leamington, Ontario greenhouse grower will be expanding from one trial acre to 16 acres of strawberries, a project that's expected to be complete in the fall of 2021.

"Partnering with Cielo Vista for our strawberry program was an easy decision," said Niels

Klapwijk, director of procurement. "We have been extremely happy with the quality and flavour we've been able to grow, which is why we are expanding the program."

Strawberries have been under trial and development for two years said Matt Quiring, director of sales.

With strawberries listed as one of the top fruit imports into Canada, Nature Fresh Farms says that it's logical to reduce food miles through increased local production and offering a

superior quality product.

"Our objective is to enrich consumer lives by providing sustainably grown fresh local produce like our greenhouse-grown strawberries," shared vice president John Ketler. "With the success of this commodity, we see the potential progression of the strawberry program while opening new opportunities for future berry varieties."

Source: Nature Fresh Farms April 15, 2021 news release



# Nature Fresh Farms launches Waste Me Not program

Crooked cucumbers, bruised tomatoes or misshapen peppers still hold nutritional value. That value been recognized by Nature Fresh Farms under their new program for imperfect produce: Waste Me Not.

"We believe it's important to ensure that nutritious and delicious produce does not go to waste," shared Ray Wowryk, director of business development. "By creating this program, we are helping our retailers with a ready-made waste reduction alternative."

Since volume of this type of product is

not predictable, the program cannot be guaranteed to supply specific quantities and will depend on the product grown. However, Nature Fresh Farms says that the unpredictability is outweighed by the fact that their quality and freshness is worth rescuing and sharing with consumers, making the most of all their product grown.

"Sustainability is at the center of everything we do at Nature Fresh Farms. Not only does this encompass our packaging and growing processes but also

that the food we grow gets utilized completely," explained the director of sales, Matt Quiring. "The Waste Me Not program helps us to reduce waste while allowing us to better service the price focused shoppers looking for quality tasting products at a discounted price and let our retail partners bring in some incremental sales to the category."

Source: Nature Fresh Farms April 13, 2021 news release



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BITES AND BITES

# New information and benefit program for Ontario market vendors

Farmers’ Markets Ontario (FMO) is launching a Market Vendor Membership program for the 4,000 to 5,000 vendors who sell at the province’s 180 member markets. These vendors include farmers, bakers, local food makers, artists and craftspeople. One of the benefits of the program is liability insurance for vendors.

“We have long heard that the lack of affordable liability insurance coverage is a barrier for people wishing to sell at markets,” says Catherine Clarke,

FMO executive director. “The advent of on-demand online insurance addresses that.”

FMO has partnered with Duuo Insurance to offer flexible insurance coverage options, specifically for vendors, starting at single-day coverage for \$12.

For more information, [www.farmersmarketsontario.com](http://www.farmersmarketsontario.com) or contact: Catherine Clark, [Catherine.Clark@farmersmarketsontario.com](mailto:Catherine.Clark@farmersmarketsontario.com) or call 613-475-4769



# Ontario’s Agri-tech Innovation Program

Ontario agriculture minister Ernie Hardeman has announced the Agri-tech Innovation Program— a \$22 million cost-share program that will help farming operations and processor businesses adopt innovative and new technologies. The intake period for applications is May 17, 2021 to June 21, 2021.

Subject to program eligibility criteria, applications for funding could include advanced technologies such as optical grading and sorting systems in vegetable processing or automated, robotic vineyard pruning robots. Ontario will also invest in high-impact social projects for agri-food workers as part of this component.

The intake announced April

21 is the second stage of the Agri-food Prevention and Control Innovation Program announced in Ontario’s fall 2020 budget. Under a separate stage of this broader program, the Sector Innovation Road Mapping program, up to \$1.4 million was provided to agri-food organizations to identify the best path forward for agri-food businesses looking to implement innovative technical solutions and develop best practices for adoption of such technologies.

The Agri-tech Innovation Program will provide substantial incentives in two separate streams:

- The Early Adopters stream will foster adoption of advanced technology to modernize

businesses that are not yet widely adopted within the sector (e.g., production or automation technology); the province will cover 35 per cent of the project cost to a maximum of \$100,000. This stream is designed for significant projects with a minimum value of \$150,000.

• Phase three of the program will focus on truly innovative projects, where the innovation is new to Ontario, North America or the specific sector (e.g., prototyping/customization of an autonomous farm harvesting equipment). The projects will involve piloting or demonstrating the technology and will need to be a collaboration between at least two businesses/organizations.

Organizations that are being

funded to prepare sector innovation road maps under the Agri-food Prevention and Control Innovation Program include: Asparagus Farmers of Ontario, Berry Growers of Ontario, Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Flowers Canada Ontario, Food and Beverage Ontario, Garlic Growers Association of Ontario, Grape Growers of Ontario, Holland Marsh Growers’ Association, Landscape Ontario, Meat and Poultry Ontario, Ontario Apple Growers (partnering with Ontario Tender Fruit Growers), Ontario Aquaculture Association, Ontario Ginseng Growers Association, Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers, Ontario Sheep Farmers, Poultry Industry Council and



Vineland Research and Innovation Centre (working with the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers).


Source: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs April 21, 2021 news release



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If you are interested in this opportunity please send your resume to [jobs@highlandfarms.on.ca](mailto:jobs@highlandfarms.on.ca)

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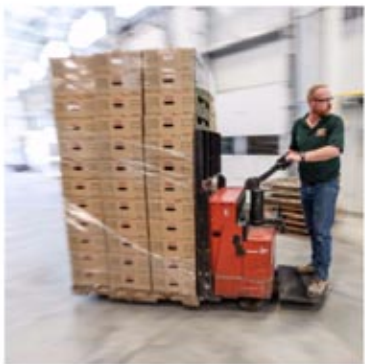
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CROP PROTECTION

# Lowering pesticide use in Québec: should government act or react?

LUC BÉRUBÉ

In the early '90s, the Québec government got into a strategy to reduce the use of pesticides, especially in agriculture. Many actions were conducted to help growers lower the use of pesticides. With 80 per cent of the total pesticides used by agriculture, the spotlight has been directed on growers. Over time, the desired results were not achieved. Thus, the Québec ministry of environment put in place, two years ago, the obligation for growers to have a prescription to purchase pesticides containing some active ingredient.

Since the 2019 growing season, Québec's growers must get an agronomic prescription to purchase pesticides containing either atrazine, chlorpyrifos, imidacloprid, thiamethoxam and clothianidin as active ingredient. Prescriptions must be signed by an agronomist and must be showed at time of purchase. Without this prescription, no buying or order is possible. This needs to be done every year because prescriptions are valid for a single crop season.

To complete a prescription, the agronomist needs to establish a diagnosis of the problem on the farm to justify the use of these molecules. The professional must consider all the IPM strategies available and their possible introduction for the diagnosis. Alternative strategies need to be recommended when possible. Evaluation of the potential loss is acknowledged to ensure the proper recommendation. At the end, the agronomist can produce a justification needed for a specific situation. This justification is mandatory to make a prescription.

Needs to use one of these molecules are sometimes known beforehand. Since the agronomist performs scouting at the farm, he (or she) encounters the issues. In that case, justification and prescription are easy to produce. Other times, the pest is sporadic, and the need of a treatment is occasional. In that case, the strategy must be established in the crop protection plan and the

elements of a potential justification are already known. If scouting reveals a potential pest problem needing the use of a molecule under restriction, an emergency justification and prescription can be realized. So, prescription can be produced on the spot and justification completed in the next 48 hours. This allows the grower to perform a rapid control without delays.

To manage the agronomists' acts in regard of the restricted molecules, the Ordre des Agronomes du Québec (OAQ) has given guidelines for these professionals. These guidelines must be followed by any agronomist. Furthermore, OAQ strongly recommends that all this work be included in a complete crop protection plan strategy. Let's take Colorado potato beetle (CPB) for example.

The first step is to determine the activity level of CPB on the farm. If activity level is low or moderate, use of neonics is only possible with foliar treatments. With higher levels of insect population and damage, the use of neonics as seed treatment or in furrow can be recommended. In all cases, guidelines strongly recommend use of alternative products and control strategies. Then, if neonics are suitable for the CPB control, justification and prescription are realized in accordance with the crop protection plan. The justification and prescription must include concerned fields (area and location), name and recommended rate of application and the total product needed. If changes occur during season, both documents must be modified. Finally, monitoring the actions is strongly recommended.

Is it worth it? It is too early to answer that question, but it is clear some friction occurs in the field. All that work comes with an additional cost for growers, especially when they are attended by a consultant. Growers need to plan their crop protection strategies (which is a good thing after all) but they can sometimes be challenging. All that work keeps growers' minds open to alternative strategies.



This seed potato field was photographed in Trois-Pistoles on the south shore of the St Lawrence River. Trois-Pistoles is two hours east from Québec City by car. The grower received an agronomic prescription to treat the field with neonics in-furrow.



This drone's perspective shows a canola field needing a prescription for seed treatment with neonics. Photo courtesy Ferme Figali, Québec

Agronomic prescriptions and justifications brought a debate among agronomists in the past few years. A significant part of the debate was the need for independency of the professionals signing prescriptions. Some people think that an agronomist selling fertilizers and pesticides should not complete those documents. Every Québec agronomist must respect the ethic code of OAQ. If not, they can place themselves into conflict.

In my opinion, I do not think it is the real issue. The level of use of pesticides in Québec shows a lack of public financial funds invested in research. Growers,

agronomists and people deserve more money from the governments in research. Everyone wants a maximum of data and information to be able to produce with more efficiency and in respect of the environment. If growers want to be well supported in that direction, there is a lot of work to do in research and in the transfer of the results. Instead, unfortunately, Québec's growers saw, again, a new regulation adding another obligation. Pending the results of that legal strategy, I still have to finish and sign some agronomic justifications and prescriptions for the 2021 season.

Luc Bérubé is a 1997 graduate in agronomy from Laval University, specializing in phytology. Since then, he's been a member of the Ordre des Agronomes du Québec. Since 1999, Bérubé has worked as a consultant with producers within the Pousse-Vert Group which supports nearly 200 agricultural businesses. Advising 30 companies, he specializes in all aspects of potato and berry production. He is part of the plant protection mentor team for club advisors across Québec. Additionally, he is a trainer for certification for the application of pesticides.

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# Linuron herbicide to be continued

The Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) has published its re-evaluation decision regarding the active ingredient linuron, allowing future use of the herbicide with some risk mitigation measures.

Linuron can continue to be used on carrots, parsnips, potatoes, asparagus and shelterbelts. Herbicides containing linuron include Lorox and Afolan F.

To protect human health from exposure, the following risk-reduction measures are required.

- Revised maximum application rates
- Limit pre-emergent and postemergent applications to

carrots to a maximum annual application rate of 1.68 kg a.i./ha.

- Limit pre-emergent and postemergent applications to parsnips to a maximum annual rate of 1.50 kg a.i./ha.
  - Limit pre-emergent application to potatoes to a maximum annual rate of 1.78 kg a.i./ha.
  - Limit pre-emergent or postemergent application to asparagus to a maximum annual application rate of 1.63 kg a.i./ha.
  - Limit dormant stage application to shelterbelts to a maximum annual application rate of 2.16 kg a.i./ha.
- Cancelled uses include:



- Tree fruit (apple, peach, pear, plum/prune, cherry), corn (field and sweet), wheat, barley, oats, soybean, celery, Saskatoon berries, chokecherries, dill, coriander,

- caraway, sweet white lupins, and pre-emergent combined with postharvest application to asparagus.
- Airblast and right-of way

application equipment.

Source: Pest Management Regulatory Agency March 29, 2021 news release

# Excalia fungicide registered for apples

Nufarm, in partnership with Valent Canada, has received registration for Excalia fungicide for the control of scab and powdery mildew in apples and suppression of rhizoctonia crown and root rot in sugar beets.

Excalia, a group 7 SDHI fungicide with the active ingredient indiflin, delivers locally systemic and translaminar action for complete leaf tissue uptake and distribution across the entire leaf surface.

“The key with most diseases is early season preventative treatment,” said Alicia Sebastian, horticulture sales specialist at Nufarm. “For apple growers especially, Excalia is a new tool that helps them get a clean start

to the season and minimize spreading of primary scab and powdery mildew.”

In apples, Excalia must be applied between green tip and petal fall. This fungicide is highly active against the apple scab pathogen and it works to inhibit spore production, spore germination and actively growing fungi. For powdery mildew protection, Excalia must be applied with a silicone surfactant and tank mixes well with other fungicides and foliar nutrients providing flexibility in early season spraying.

There is good supply of Excalia for the 2021 season. Application timing is approaching and growers are encouraged to



book product now. For additional information go to Nufarm.ca or call 1-800-868-5444.

Source: Nufarm March 30, 2021 news release

# Biobest partners with ecoation to drive AI-optimized IPM

Biobest Group NV (Biobest), known for its biological control of pests and disease, and Ecoation Innovative Solutions Inc. (ecoation), a Canadian developer of automated greenhouse management and crop health monitoring technologies, have signed a partnership agreement effective January, 2021. This partnership allows Biobest to offer ecoation’s grower assist solution to its European customer network.

ecoation offers solutions centred around closed-loop integrated pest management (IPM,) providing yield production assessments and crop work quality checks. Within the IPM solution, ecoation technology allows for the

digitization of the IPM workflow, including scouting observations, and real-time pest risk alerts. ecoation delivers insights at a m2 granularity of the greenhouse and provides an essential tool for the rapid data gathering and knowledge distribution needed for optimizing biological control strategies.

will cooperate closely to ensure customers benefit from a seamless experience by offering the equipment and analytics to diagnose improvement opportunities and the means to execute the adjustments.

“The benefits that come from a long, accurate plant health history are similar to those of having the same family doctor since you were young. With



access to ecoation’s IPM insights, Biobest experts will be able to visualize past health concerns in an organized, easy-to-access form as a tool to diagnose current issues and provide next steps,”

says ecoation co-founder and CEO, Dr. Saber Miresmailli. Present in more than 70 countries worldwide, Biobest offers high-quality, biological control agents and bumblebees

for pollination to growers of greenhouse and berry crops.

Source: Biobest/Ecoation March 30, 2021 news release



BITS AND BITES

# Microbe-based nitrogen fixation product to be launched

Corteva Agriscience and Symborg, an expert in microbiological technologies based in Murcia, Spain, have announced a multi-year agreement around a microbe-based nitrogen fixation product in the United States, Canada, Brazil and Argentina.

Symborg is providing an exclusive distribution license to Corteva for the endophytic bacterium *Methylobacterium symbioticum*, which works with the plant to secure needed nitrogen from the atmosphere.

Corteva is leveraging its wide distribution network, market reach and extensive research and development capabilities.

The Corteva product, to be branded as Utrisha N nutrient efficiency optimizer, works in natural field conditions, adapting to the plants’ growth needs and helping to sustainably maximize crop yield potential. It will be available for a broad range of crops, including field and row crops, sugar cane, and turf and ornamental, as well as range and pasture. The agreement also

enables Corteva and Symborg to co-distribute the product in specialty crops on an exclusive basis.


“Corteva Agriscience continues to bring new and innovative solutions to market by offering natural-origin products that work complementarily with our conventional crop protection solutions, such as Optinyte nitrogen stabilizer,” said Susanne Wasson, president, Crop Protection Business Platform, Corteva Agriscience. “We’re excited to work with Symborg to

scale up and maximize sustainable options that help farmers meet changing environmental conditions while keeping their crops productive and healthy.”

This collaboration represents another step forward for Corteva’s expanding global biologicals portfolio, which is dedicated to developing biostimulants, biocontrol and pheromone products with proven, predictable performance. Utrisha N, a BlueN technology powered by Symborg, will provide value through integrated nutrition management

efficiency and enhancing yield potential and sustainability, in line with the Corteva Agriscience 2030 Sustainability Goals.

*Source: Corteva Agriscience April 19, 2021 news release*





## New online training provides an introduction to agriculture

Have you recently hired, or do you know someone who would benefit from learning the basics of working on a farm safely?

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) has launched the **Ontario Agriculture Worker Safety and Awareness Certificate**.

OFA has partnered with the University of Guelph Ridgetown Campus to develop the certificate in collaboration with health and safety partners. The certificate will provide a broad overview of working on a farm, whether an individual is new to agriculture or looking for a refresher course.

**This online certificate offers several e-learning modules, including:**

- A broad overview of health and safety on a farm
- An introduction to farm equipment operation and safety
- An introduction to both crop and livestock farm operations

The modules can be completed all at once in a day or two, or over time at your own pace.

Want to ensure that everyone is safe and confident working on your farm? Register today! Visit [feedingyourfuture.ca/agri-training](https://feedingyourfuture.ca/agri-training).

**OFA: Supporting Ontario’s farm workforce.**

This project was funded by the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a five-year federal-provincial-territorial initiative.



# Cleanfarms kicks off annual plastic jug recycling

The annual agricultural plastic jug recycling program is about to start again, says Cleanfarms, the national stewardship organization.

Cleanfarms’ program for empty containers runs from May to October coast to coast, and during that time more than 1,100 collection locations work with Cleanfarms accepting millions of empty plastic containers 23L and under for recycling. The program keeps these resource materials out of the environment..

Last year alone, Canadian farmers brought back more than 5.5 million empty containers bringing the total since the jug collection program began more than 30 years ago to 137.4 million containers returned for recycling.

Cleanfarms estimates that, as of 2019, the three-year average collection rate has increased to more than 70 per cent of the containers returned for recycling, up from the previous rate of 65 per cent. The recycling rate for 2020 will be released in June. “We’re challenging Canadian farmers to make a commitment this Earth Week to bring back all of the ag plastic jugs they use in their farm operations. We want 100% of them this year,” said Cleanfarms executive director Barry Friesen.

In addition to empty small plastic ag containers for pesticides and fertilizers, Cleanfarms also operates:

- a nation-wide recycling program for large non-deposit plastic totes and drums for pesticides and fertilizers
- a nation-wide collection and proper disposal program for unwanted pesticides and old, obsolete livestock and equine medications

Recycled agricultural plastics are manufactured into new products such as farm drainage tile, flexible irrigation pipe and plastic bags.