

## NEW WORLD ORDER

# Coping with the changing rules of engagement



Sour cherry trees are in blossom this month, immune to the world pandemic of COVID-19 virus. Although an uplifting sight, the outstanding question is how they will be harvested in two months. The Schuyler family near Simcoe, Ontario is in the midst of gathering the workers required for two shifts a day that require 60 workers each. Since this photo was taken in May 2019, Ray Vogel (L) has retired and Ryan Schuyler is part of the management team searching for solutions. Photos by Glenn Lowson.

KAREN DAVIDSON

“When are your workers out of quarantine and in the field?” Unimagined just two months ago, it’s become the most pertinent question this topsy-turvy spring. And it’s the bizarre reality facing growers lucky enough to be allocated workers arriving on chartered planes from Jamaica or Mexico in the new world order of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schuyler Farms near Simcoe, Ontario is one of many coping with these turbulent times. Two brothers Drew and Marshall Schuyler, along with Marshall’s

sons Brett and Ryan, now manage 790 acres of sour cherries and 969 acres of apples.

Nine of their essential temporary foreign workers had arrived before the federal travel ban was issued. On April 3 they were very fortunate to receive another 26 workers from Jamaica. These additional workers have emerged from 14 days of self-isolation under some of the most stringent quarantine rules in the country, as has been decreed by the Haldimand-Norfolk Public Health Unit. The controversy? Regardless of bunkhouse size, only three people are allowed.

“Most of our workers have historically

come from Trinidad,” explains Ryan Schuyler. “The country is in total lockdown, but right now we have one worker on his front porch in Trinidad, sitting on his suitcase waiting for permission to come.”

### Personal boundaries

Never before has so much been at stake for the entire food chain. The closures of protein packing plants across Canada – chicken, pork and beef - in mid-to-late April are a cautionary tale. Distancing measures and personal protective equipment (PPE) will be the order of the day for fruit and vegetable

packing lines this summer.

“Availability of PPE to the industry’s packing sheds is an issue we’ve already brought forward to the Prime Minister’s office in early April,” says Jane Proctor, vice-president, policy and issues management, Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA). As the crisis stretches into the months ahead, health safety needs will require cleaning and sanitizing chemicals to maintain good agricultural practices, hand-sanitizing materials, and harvest crew PPE such as gloves and face coverings.

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Business pivots PG 6

Storage, containers, packaging PG 12

South of the border PG 24



AT PRESS TIME...



UPDATE

\$1500 to support each quarantined foreign worker

The extraordinary efforts of farm employers to isolate temporary workers for 14 days will be recognized financially by the federal government with lump sum payments of \$1,500 per worker. The funds will be paid to employers for workers under the Quarantine Act in April, May and June. In a teleconference call with media April 13, ag minister Marie-Claude Bibeau highlighted the special needs of fresh fruit and vegetable farmers who need experienced foreign workers. She indicated that details of the funding mechanism will be announced in the days ahead, but could be arranged through regional organizations. She was not explicit, but presumably organizations such as FARMS in Ontario, FERME in Quebec or Western

Agriculture Labour Initiative (WALI) in British Columbia would be involved since they already have the records of which employers have received foreign workers after the Quarantine Act was put in force. To be clear, employers who received workers prior to the new travel restrictions are not eligible. And secondly, this is not a first-come, first-served program. With the announcement of a \$50 million program, it's easy to calculate that this funding covers only about 33,000 workers. Minister Bibeau said the program would cover foreign worker arrivals for the months of April, May and June. "If we have to increase the amount, we will consider doing that," she said. Media outlets on the teleconference call -- the Toronto Star and Global News -- pressed the agriculture minister on what assurances there would be for the oversight mechanism of payments as well as health and safety of foreign workers. "We can trust that employers care for the health of their community and workers," Bibeau said. "If they do not respect the rules, then very severe sanctions and fines will be administered and employers risk not having workers in coming years." She also indicated that several levels of government -- immigration, labour and public health units -- would be making follow-up calls on farm

employers. "I doubt many farmers would play with the rules," Bibeau said. "It's very important that we support farmers and food processors to make sure that we have food on our shelves." In British Columbia, the provincial government decided to fund the hotel and food-service costs for seasonal workers who went into 14-day quarantines near the Vancouver airport. The first flight from Mexico City arrived on April 15. BC growers must complete a COVID-19 infection prevention protocol and be subject to a provincial inspection before accepting workers on the farm. At press time, more charter flights from Mexico City to Vancouver were expected the week of April 20. However WALI warned farm employers that the response to the pandemic in Mexico was constantly changing and that there was potential for internal travel bans. If those bans materialize, then the risks are higher that some farm workers might be "no-shows" on the charter flight. "Charter flights are non-refundable and cannot issue credits," warned the April 16 WALI memo. "Employers are responsible for the cost of no-shows and will lose the full seat fare if a no-show occurs. Please be aware of these risks when booking your travel arrangements."

NEWSMAKERS

A shout-out to the Grape Growers of Ontario (GGO) which donated \$66,000 to the Niagara Hospital System to purchase a ventilator for patients suffering from COVID-19 virus. "This is where we live and work and raise our families, and this pandemic has affected all of us in some way," said **Matthias Oppenlaender**, chair, GGO. "We see this as an opportunity, even a responsibility, to give back to our community."

Kudos to **Dr. Keith Warriner**, University of Guelph and **Paul Moyer**, cofounder and president Clean Works Medical in Beamsville, Ontario. Technology for waterless cleaning of fruits and vegetables has been converted to sanitizing N95 masks for hospitals. The process combines ultraviolet light, hydrogen peroxide and ozone to make compounds that kill pathogens.

Best wishes to **Carl Withler** who retired in March 2020 in Kelowna. He's been BC's industry specialist for tree fruits and grapes since 2015. As a professional agrologist, his career has spanned both forestry and agriculture. He was the recipient of the BC Fruit Growers' Association's 2020 Award of Merit.

The Potato Growers of Alberta welcome **Stacey Bajema** to their northern office as the new seed potato coordinator. She will be the main contact for seed growers within the Alberta potato industry, providing updates on regulations and programs, seed availability and requirements and responding to general inquiries.



Vineland Research and Innovation Centre announces a new vice-president of business and client development. **Phillip Stephan** joined senior management on April 1 after almost a decade with the Saskatchewan Research Council where he held various management roles, including vice-president of strategic initiatives and vice-president of agriculture and biotechnology. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural biotechnology from the University of Lethbridge and a Master's of Science degree in biomedicine from the University of Calgary.

Welcome to **Dr. Fadi Al-Daoud**, the new greenhouse vegetable specialist for Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Fadi received his Ph.D. from the Department of Biology at McMaster University with a specialization in molecular plant pathology. Fadi subsequently worked at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Fredericton, New Brunswick, and in the Department of Plant Agriculture at the University of Guelph in Ontario. He has conducted applied and basic research of horticultural and field crops, and has experience communicating his research to the scientific community and producers.

Best wishes to **Jeff Honey**, director of training and development, who has retired from the Ontario Produce Marketing Association (OPMA) after 24 years. However, he will continue to offer services as an independent consultant. Over the years, he developed a training course for quality control staff, training almost 1,200 people across the country. He plans to become an OPMA member, by which his contact details will be on the association's website.

The Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA) welcomed **Ben Murray** to a fulltime position as project coordinator, effective April 1, 2020. A recent graduate of the Political Science Program at the University of New Brunswick, Murray returned to his home province of Ontario to continue his education, earning a Graduate Certificate in Professional Communications at Georgian College in Barrie. From there, he entered the non-profit world, completing two internships at registered charities including one at the Children's Foundation in Guelph. At the OFVGA, he plays an integral role in the Fresh from the Farm and Northern Fruit and Vegetable programs, performing customer service, logistics and procurement.



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COVER STORY

# Coping with the changing rules of engagement

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To be clear, the industry’s needs are not for medical-grade equipment. To meet the requirements from fields to packing sheds, from processing facilities through logistics to retail, the volumes will be more than considerable. This need, according to Shannon Sommerauer, director, government relations, CPMA is driving discussions with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Their long-term forecast is for the period until a vaccine is available which could be 18 months or more.

### Business barriers

The loss of opportunity for face-to-face engagement with customers is the biggest challenge for Steve Bamford, CEO, Fresh Advancements. The company is an importer and wholesaler of fresh produce at the Ontario Food Terminal, providing conventional and organic produce, including, celery, citrus, apples, cherries and assorted berries.

Operating from the Ontario Food Terminal, where buyers must remain at their vehicles at all times, Bamford says, “The social distancing requirements have been the most trying circumstance for us.”

“As you know, the terminal is a very socially interactive place. Each buyer has unique needs for what works for them. It’s one thing to take a photo of a mango, but that still doesn’t portray the taste or texture. Feel and smell are hard to convey in a picture. And these qualities vary by variety.”

Fresh Advancements has lost 35 to 40 per cent of its business with the closure of foodservice channels such as restaurants. With the Ontario government extending its state of emergency to the post-Victoria Day weekend, Bamford is not hopeful of a quick return to normal.

“I don’t know what life will be like post COVID-19, but until there is more testing and contact traceback, I don’t see a quick reopening of restaurants or arenas.”

As a purveyor of exotic specialty produce, Bamford also points to the negative impact of lost supply lines from South America, Spain and Italy due to lack of airline cargo space.

### Port backlogs

Regarding the United States, trucked supplies have been adequate, but as Sommerauer observes, “American marine

ports are beginning to experience significant backlogs in processing containers that carry essential goods.” This situation creates a shortage of available containers for ongoing shipments. At the moment, Canada’s ports are not facing these backlogs, but agriculture’s advice to government is to look ahead to ensure continued access.

### Horizons ahead

During the first six weeks under provincial states of emergency, industry leaders have had heads down, managing through the COVID-19 crisis. But now is the time to look toward sunflower days by leaning into the summer solstice and planning for the recovery.

Sommerauer is liaising with various government offices on what will be needed for future success. One area is flexibility on labeling requirements. She explains that national and international markets are struggling to understand food availability in both the short and long term.

“Labelling is one area which is inconsistent between countries and where a temporary relaxation of these requirements could remove potential technical barriers to the trade of food between countries,” she says. “We are looking for some guidance on relaxing rules for bilingual labeling, units of measure and the nutrition fact table, for example. These are items that will not impact consumer health and safety.”

### Border hurdles

Perhaps of greatest concern to food supplies is the free movement of trade between Canada and the United States. The closure of ports of entry to only essential services is extended until May 20. Along with the Canadian Society of Customs Brokers (CSCB) and other stakeholders, CPMA has successfully advocated for the deferral of payments for customs duties and taxes owed by importers, which are now due June 30.

“We have now turned our attention to working with CSCB to argue for the mitigation of financial liability for customs brokers,” says Sommerauer. “This hasn’t been resolved yet.”

The CPMA has also advocated for flexibility and harmonization between provinces regarding weight restrictions for trucks. The lack of alignment between provincial



“

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”

~ STEVE BAMFORD, CEO, FRESH ADVANCEMENTS



Demonstrating ingenuity at its best, Bradley Van Luyk and his cousins fabricated a plexiglass divider as a distancing mechanism for the onion transplanter. Once seasonal workers emerge from quarantine on April 30, they will be planting near Bradford, Ontario. It was touch-and-go on the decision to plant the normal 500 acres of onions and carrots. If workers had not arrived, they would have scaled back to 300 acres. Photo courtesy of Bradley Van Luyk.

spring weight restrictions on highways during the spring thaw from February to May increases the costs of moving product interprovincially. Quebec has been one example of relaxing its laws. But it’s still a patchwork quilt of regulations across the country.

The ‘new normal’ is not without friction. It’s a kaleidoscope, shards of shifting glass that has everyone pausing at times to wonder what day of the week it is. In the midst of COVID’s changing landscape

only three days seem to be constant: yesterday, today and tomorrow.

The Grower goes “Behind the Scenes” with Jane Proctor, vice-president, policy and issues management for the Canadian Produce Marketing Association. She offers a candid assessment of liaising with multiple government departments during the first six weeks of life under COVID-19 lockdown. And she outlines work in progress for horticulture.





CROSS COUNTRY DIGEST

CANADA

Potato contracts settled

The COVID-19 virus and the subsequent shutdown of foodservice channels and restaurants have upended the potato processing industry in the midst of annual contract negotiations, both in the United States and Canada. As growers head out to plant, the news is mixed: price increases on less volume.

“I believe most processing contracts with the exception of New Brunswick have been settled,” reports Kevin MacIsaac, general manager, United Potato Growers of Canada. “Most regions have

received price increases to help out with some of their increased cost of production in the coming year.”

Normally price is the most important factor in contract settlements, says MacIsaac, however this year it is overshadowed by processor cuts to volumes in 2020-21 deliveries, created by decreased demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At press time, some fryers have still not been able to advise their growers of the exact cuts required this year. It is expected that volume

reductions will be handed to growers in virtually every region of Canada, the United States, and Europe. Numbers range from 15 per cent to 30 per cent, all related to the end product produced in the various processing plants and how dependent they are on the foodservice market.

“Fryers are also looking to run old crop longer into the summer/fall of 2020, as long as they can find freezer space to do so,” says MacIsaac. “As this occurs, they will be cutting into the deliveries of new crop which are normally processed at



that time.”

Many areas of Canada have just started planting, so there are only minimal acreages in the ground at press time. British Columbia started on February

28, Ontario on March 17, Nova Scotia on April 6, Prince Edward Island on April 14, Quebec on April 16, and Alberta on April 21. Manitoba will likely start by April 23.

QUEBEC

Quebec entices farm workers with \$100 per week

Quebec’s premier François Legault announced a domestic recruitment program on April 17 with hopes of reversing trends that locals don’t relish farm work. Agriculture minister Andre Lamontagne said the program is aimed at offering employment to out-of-work Quebecers and students.

The spending will give each farm worker a \$100 bonus each week, in addition to the usual pay — or between \$2.50 and \$4 an hour for a salary between

\$15.60 and \$17.10 an hour, depending on how many hours a week they work. It is valid from April 15 to Oct. 1. Details are available at [emploiagricole.com](http://emploiagricole.com).

The bonus is in addition to a \$100/week bonus given as part of a program to retain essential service workers.

“I know that it’s not an easy job,” said Quebec premier François Legault “but I think it will be a nice experience.”

Lamontagne said roughly

11,000 temporary foreign workers, mostly from Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras, come to Quebec each year to help with the harvest but estimated only 8,000 will come this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Complicating matters, the international airport in Guatemalan City is currently closed.

Source: Canadian Press April 17, 2020 and CTV News.



QUEBEC

Potato company mergers

On April 8, the leaders of two potato packaging and processing companies announced a merger in the region of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean. It’s an important announcement in a province that grows 42,000 acres of potatoes.

Québec Parmentier will hold all of the assets of Emballage Saint-Ambroise and Légupro, two agri-food companies specializing in potato packaging and processing of potatoes and vegetables.

“The desire for growth, the need to increase production and packaging capacities and the synergies that will be generated by pooling our activities have all been complementary factors in bringing together our companies,” said Mathieu Bouchard, president of Patate-Saint-Ambroise.

Québec Parmentier has also announced that three new producer shareholders in the region have joined the organization. They are: Ferme Rodrigue Rivard et fils de Saint-Ambroise, de la Ferme HP Gagnon de Laterrière et de la Ferme Bilodeau de Métabetchouan.

“The integration of these new partners confirms that the business model and the values advocated by the organization meet the interests of potato producers in Québec,” said Pierre Chouinard, CEO of Québec Parmentier. “We have the prosperity of the families who make up our organization at heart, which was one of the main motivations for the creation of Québec Parmentier.”

Québec Parmentier is the only producer organization in Canada that combines varietal development, research and development, seed potato production (high generation and commercial), table potato production, exporting, packaging and distribution. Founded in 2012, the company brings together more than 25 families of potato producers. The company markets its products mainly under the Propur and Mamzells brands. [www.quebecparmentier.com](http://www.quebecparmentier.com)

Source: Québec Parmentier April 8, 2020 news release

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THE LABOUR FILE

# Being a farm employer in the COVID-19 era



**STEFAN LARRASS**  
POLICY ADVISOR, OFVGA

Don't contribute to the spread of COVID-19. Do physical distancing. Do the right thing.

Growers have been hearing variations of these themes for the past weeks as they have scrambled to prepare for a 2020 growing season with historically high levels of uncertainty and in many cases with a significant delay in the spring arrivals of their workers.

The elephant in the room of course is that there is no consistently "right" formula for addressing COVID-19 risk in a complex essential workplace such as a farm. Federal guidance documents for meat plants, for instance, acknowledge that, "it is recognized that certain public health measures may not be possible." Alternative mitigation steps and documentation are expected in these situations.

In many ways, what is being asked of employers and officers alike is that everyone does their best to achieve the gold standard of hygiene and physical distancing. Where perfection can't be achieved, there is typically an understanding that reasonable effort must be made to reduce the risk of infection or transmission and that these efforts be documented.

The challenge is that growers and officers will not always have the same understanding of what is considered to be reasonable. One side will come at it from the perspective of doing what they can in an extremely stressful time where they are already behind on their farm work; the other side will come at it from the perspective that it is their mandate to minimize the risk of disease.

An obvious flaw in the oversight by regulators (e.g. Employment and Social Development Canada, Ministry of Labour, local health units) is that they can duplicate each other's work. In an environment where there is no "right" formula, this means that growers may receive two or three different assessments about the same aspect of their farm. In addition to potentially creating

confusion, these multiple assessments all have the potential to introduce disease to the farm, if they involve a physical site visit.

The COVID-19 issue is top of mind for everyone in government right now. Even essential sectors such as agriculture and food are being asked to do their part. For this reason, growers are encouraged to be cooperative during their interactions with regulators and inspectors. If a grower feels they are being asked inconsistent or unreasonable demands, they are encouraged to contact their commodity and/or grower association(s) which can raise systemic issues to government agencies.

More clarification is bound to come in the coming weeks, as growers and regulators both start figuring out the "right" formula, or rather the reasonable formula for managing the COVID-19 risk on farms.



In the meantime, growers are encouraged to communicate their biosecurity needs to any visitors, including inspectors, with signs at the entrance to the farm or at the entrance of buildings.

Photo above: Mike Chromczak supervises his work crew on the asparagus packing line near Brownsville, Ontario. Photo by Glenn Lowson.



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PANDEMIC PIVOTS

How does produce get to remote communities which self-isolate?



“  
The produce industry operates under this kind of pressure all the time. The chain is used to dealing with crisis such as major weather events.  
”

~ DAN TUKENDORF, PROGRAM MANAGER, OFVGA

KAREN DAVIDSON

At the best of times, Fort Severn is a haul. As Ontario’s most northerly community on Hudson Bay, it’s 1,500 kilometres as the crow flies from Toronto. But these days, it takes more than a wing and a prayer to deliver fresh vegetables and fruit to this Cree First Nation.  
Produce is trucked to Cochrane, repacked on a train to Moosonee, then flown to the James Bay coast, explains Dan Tukendorf, program manager, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association (OFVGA). Fortunately, he’s had several years of experience managing

the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program, building the relationships to bring produce to isolated communities before the era of self-isolation.  
While the COVID-19 pandemic pitched a big wrench into the wheels of supply chains in mid-March 2020, steady partners have proven resilient and flexible to deliver food. They include Gambles Produce, Erie James, Massey Wholesale and Loudon Brothers. All of them are committed to the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program which delivers 3.5 million servings of fruits and vegetables annually to 450 schools in northern Ontario. Of these schools, 68 are First



The Noojmowin Teg Health Centre in Little Current on Manitoulin Island organizes the distribution of more than 15,000 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables each week. Volunteers support several First Nation communities in the area with a population of 10,000 residents.



Nations.  
Under normal conditions, 82,000 students receive fruit and vegetable packages from January through June with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health. That link to healthy food was suddenly cut with school closures and even blocked as some remote communities self-isolated.  
When the province of Ontario issued its school lockdown rules on March 13, Tukendorf said it took 10 days of outreach to figure out which communities had access and volunteers on the ground to receive shipments. Along with OFVGA program coordinator, Ben Murray, they then had to identify produce supplies with

prices which had doubled, identify which wholesalers could fulfill orders and to verify which truckers could complete deliveries. On the spot market, a master bundle of carrots, for example, doubled in price from \$20 to north of \$40.  
“The produce industry operates under this kind of pressure all the time,” says Tukendorf.” The chain is used to dealing with crisis such as major weather events.”  
About half of the fruit and vegetables procured for this program originate with Ontario or Canadian growers. Carrots, onions, potatoes, beets and apples are all storable products that can withstand the rigours of two or three days of transportation. However, growers have also been impacted by the COVID-19 disruption. Working with growers and brokers, Tukendorf was able to identify produce that was no longer needed in the foodservice channel and divert it to the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program.  
This logistics expertise has been put to good use in north-

western Ontario where Sioux Lookout is a major service hub 350 kilometres northwest of Thunder Bay. Tukendorf has visited Sioux Lookout in the past because it’s been host to conferences with First Nations communities. Working with Fresh Market Foods on the ground in Sioux Lookout, he’s identified alternate ways to get produce to the students of 12 shuttered schools.  
One of the partners is none other than the historically significant North West Company – yes, the fur trading company which dates back to 1668. Still very much in business and headquartered in Winnipeg, Manitoba, its specialty is serving groceries to remote communities such as northwest Ontario. It makes economic sense to turn to a partner outside Ontario, so vast is the geography.  
How many contacts are on Tukendorf’s spreadsheet? He’s too modest to share that number. But in the weeks and months ahead, his logistics expertise will be shared with many communities.

BC farmers’ markets choose to go online



British Columbia has helped 70 farmers’ markets to adopt an online service to sell their produce this coming summer. The initiative is supported by a provincial grant of \$55,000.  
Demand for locally-grown produce is hitting record levels, while growers are hobbled by social distancing rules. The provincial funding provided through the Buy BC program will cover fees for individual markets to join the online platform and set up their online store. Consumers have the option to pre-pay or pay online.  
Local Line is providing the service. The Kitchener, Ontario-based business (www.localline.ca) has been operating for five years, but is now experiencing exponential demand.  
“The last week has been

unbelievable,” reported Local Line CEO Cole Jones in early April. “We fielded a thousand phone calls from all over North America enquiring about our services.”  
Jones reports that week of March 23, the company onboarded 115 farmers’ markets and 2,600 growers from across North America. About half of that demand came from Canada.  
It takes about one day to get an individual grower set up. For a farmers’ market, it takes about two to three days to load the information of all vendors.  
Farmers’ markets in other Canadian provinces are looking at similar initiatives.



PANDEMIC PIVOTS

Packing shed is transformed into a groceria for on-farm shopping

“
   
 We felt this was the safest way for our men to access food, to protect them and limit any exposure to people in the community and that we could be certain they were following all necessary safety protocols.
   
 ~ HELEN ZAMECNIK
 ”

KAREN DAVIDSON

An on-farm grocery store has been dubbed “Helen’s Convenience,” but it’s not been easy in the era of COVID-19. When the hammer came down in mid-March to close Ontario schools and non-essential businesses, it was clear that 2020 would not be a normal season at EZ Grow Farms. The blueberry farm and strawberry propagation business near Langton, Ontario employs several dozen workers over the growing season.

To abide by the new provincial rules for seasonal workers under 14-day, on-farm quarantine, Helen Zamecnik transformed a packing shed into a convenience store.

“We felt this was the safest way for our men to access food, to protect them and limit any exposure to people in the community and that we could be certain they were following all necessary safety protocols,” explained Zamecnik. “Currently, we have six men from Jamaica who arrived March 17 and then nine more arrived April 5 and are completing their days of isolation. We expect to have 30 more men by early June and 35 more for September.”

Her first excursions were to local grocery stores – Sobeys, Metro, Zehrs, Dollarama – to buy large quantities of food. To their credit, the store managers were receptive to her unique needs and supported her volume purchases when most were restricting some purchases to family use only. But her next hurdle was to cater to Caribbean tastes: tinned sardines, coconut milk, red beans and brown rice.

What could have been a daunting exercise in purchasing food became a doable mission when Gordon Food Service pivoted its foodservice business to farmers. The first transport delivery was week of April 6,

overseen by district sales representative Mac Myers. A minimum order of \$500 is required to set up a customer account and access to an online catalogue. The 15,000 SKUS of product are overwhelming, Myers admits, so he curated a list suitable for the Jamaican workers.

“We’ve been athletically nimble in this fluid marketplace during the last few weeks,” says Myers. “We had to be very creative to convert our service, but it’s been beneficial for us to give back to the community during this time,” says Myers. “We’re used to dealing with local farmers on the produce procurement side.”

Gordon Food Service can supply fresh produce – cabbage, onions, carrots, beets, apples and oranges – along with canned staples on a weekly run. There is no delivery charge. Prices are somewhere between wholesale and retail to cover the service. Myers has been successful in onboarding four growers and anticipates doubling the number in short order.

Marketing manager Scott McDevitte adds that the company will be soft launching an online ordering service on April 20 for consumers at GordonExpress.ca. Consumers will be able to pick up orders curbside at the Gordon Food Service warehouse north of Milton, Ontario.

Back at the farm, Helen Zamecnik continues to refine her process. She has learned that her workers favour the Grace line of products, something that’s familiar from Jamaica. Food bought in bulk – a 50 lb bag of flour, for example – must be rebagged in smaller five-pound portions. This is to accommodate the fact that each worker likes to cook for himself, not the entire bunkhouse.

For the men in their mandatory 14-day quarantine,



Helen Zamecnik, EZ Grow Farms, Langton, Ontario has deftly organized an on-farm grocery store to serve seasonal workers during their 14-day quarantines. Thanks to Gordon Food Service, she is receiving bulk orders on a weekly basis.

she produces a Friday night video of her wares so that workers can shop for exactly what they need. Their orders are fulfilled and delivered to the bunkhouse. Men who have exited quarantine and deemed healthy can shop in the store, in person, while keeping appropriate social distances. Always empathetic to the workers’ needs, she’s expanding her offering to include clothing basics. Yes, underwear!

“I’m ramping up my toiletry section with combs and lotions,” says Zamecnik. “The weeks are flying by. It’s a new life.”



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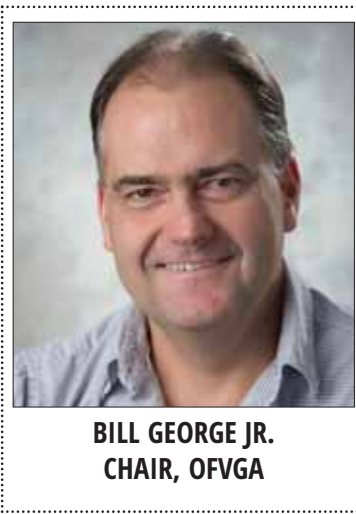
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CHAIR'S PERSPECTIVE

The case for domestic food security has never been stronger



BILL GEORGE JR.  
CHAIR, OFVGA

It is hard to fathom at times how completely our world has changed in the few short weeks since I wrote my last column for this newspaper. Virtually every aspect of our lives has been upended by the global pandemic, and the reality is that things likely won't be going back to what we considered normal before COVID-19 any time soon.

At OFVGA, the weeks since the federal government announced the closure of the Canadian border to non-essential travel have been hectic and stressful to say the least.

Along with many others, our board and staff worked tirelessly to ensure that seasonal agricultural workers are excluded from the travel ban this year.

We particularly appreciated the close collaboration and hard work by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Farm & Food Care Ontario, along with support from FARMS, the Canadian Produce Marketing Association and the Canadian Horticultural Council.

CFA played an integral part in helping secure the travel exemption, and Farm & Food Care Ontario helped with a proactive media campaign around the critical role of seasonal workers in our food system and why getting them here in a timely fashion is so important.

This is why a united voice and strong leadership matter. And although international seasonal workers are now continuing to arrive, everyone in the sector must work hard to ensure proper isolation protocols are followed, physical distancing is in place wherever possible, and the necessary steps are

taken to ensure food safety and worker health.

What lies ahead is not going to be easy, particularly for anyone involved in essential services such as our food system. The next few months are critical as we plant, manage and harvest the fruit and vegetable crops that Canadians will depend on this summer, fall and beyond.

We consume more fresh and processed fruits and vegetables than we are able to grow here in Canada – and some crops we simply can't grow due to our climate. But this pandemic is a global problem and we may not be able to rely on our international trading partners as we have in the past when it comes to filling our production gaps.

Many countries that supply us with produce are themselves struggling with sick workers, access to the seasonal workers they depend on, supply chain limitations, logistical challenges and increasing costs as a result of the pandemic.

At the same time, we're seeing produce plowed under and milk dumped as our supply

chains struggle to cope with the sudden collapse of vital wholesale and food service markets in the wake of widespread school, institution and restaurant closures. Retailers, by comparison, are grappling with higher than usual demand as people stay home.

In Canada, our food costs have consistently been among the lowest in the world. Part of that has been because we've become very reliant on low-priced imports from countries where production costs aren't as high as they are here, and in that drive to keep prices low, Canadian farmers often can't compete.

Unfortunately, cheap food over the long run is not sustainable. It limits the ability of farmers, food processors and others in the food system from being profitable enough to be able to make important investments into innovation, resiliency and sustainability.

Over the years, we've lost a lot of our local fruit and vegetable processing capacity in favour of larger, lower cost and more centralized facilities, often located outside of Canada. That

means we've also lost the flexibility to respond quickly at a local or provincial level to dramatic change, a story that is the same in other agricultural sectors.

If there's one thing that this pandemic has made very clear, it's that Canada needs to do a better job of meeting its own needs – especially when it comes to food. As we've seen recently, international supply chains can be fragile and even long-time relationships between friendly nations don't mean what they used to.

As a country, we need a greater emphasis on domestic food security through policies, infrastructure and legislation to encourage more Canadian food production and processing and support the businesses we already have.

Many things are going to change in our society as we come out the other end of this, and hopefully one of those will be the value we as a nation put on farming and food production.

WEATHER VANE



The wheels of nature keep turning. As Kyle Horlings shows near Bradford, Ontario, he's preparing land in the Holland Marsh while being cheered on by daughter and wife. Photo by Carolyn Horlings.

**STAFF**  
Publisher: Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association  
Editor: Karen Davidson, 416-557-6413, editor@thegrower.org  
Advertising: Carlie Melara 519-763-8728, advertising@thegrower.org

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**OFFICE**  
355 Elmira Road North, Unit 105  
Guelph, Ontario N1K 1S5 CANADA  
Tel. 519-763-8728 • Fax 519-763-6604

**The Grower** is printed 12 times a year and sent to all members of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association who have paid \$30.00 (plus G.S.T.) per year for the paper through their commodity group or container fees. Others may subscribe as follows by writing to the office:

**\$30.00 (+ HST) /year in Canada**  
**\$40.00/year International**

Subscribers must submit a claim for missing issues within four months. If the issue is claimed within four months, but not available, **The Grower** will extend the subscription by one month. No refunds on subscriptions.

P.M. 40012319

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**THE GROWER**



# These aren't foreign workers. They're professionals




Remembering that life lesson, I was happy for the farming community that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, seasonal temporary labourers would still be allowed to come to Canada, as long as they engaged in a 14-day quarantine. Ottawa heard loud and clear the wishes of the farm sector and sent a message that it recognized these workers are



Professionals have a valued specialization. And heading into this planting season, we came to realize just how much the agri-food sector values and needs these professionals' skills.




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# Cooperative communication effort brings awareness of SAWP to the public



Did you know: Seasonal agricultural workers make up 40% of the workforce on fruit & vegetable farms

KELLY DAYNARD

Cooperation between the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association (OFVGA), many of its member organizations and Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO) since the COVID-19 crisis began has resulted in significant media attention across Ontario and beyond on the critical role that seasonal agricultural workers have in producing food in this province.

The communications working group was struck in March after travel restrictions threatened the arrival of thousands of expected workers and thus the 2020 fruit and vegetable crop in Ontario and across Canada.

The campaign was two-fold. Seasonal workers have been essential to Canadian farms for more than 50 years but for the most part, the public is generally unaware of the essential role of temporary foreign workers and seasonal agricultural workers. Second, there were public concerns about the potential risks associated with bringing these workers in, at a time when borders were shutting down to international visitors and when millions of Canadians found themselves out of work. Some public commentaries had focused around the assumption that farmers should be hiring unemployed Canadians – a solution that seemed obvious to those not working in the industry but is far more complicated than that.

Working closely with both OFVGA and FFCO, agricultural journalist Lilian Schaer interviewed eight growers across the province, writing opinion editorial pieces on their behalf that were distributed to about 175 media

outlets across Ontario.

The articles generated more than 30 media interviews of the growers with interviews on radio stations and stories appearing on CTV, in the Globe and Mail, National Post and numerous Ontario dailies and weeklies as well as out-of-province newspapers including the Regina Leader Post and Calgary Herald.

“This is an excellent example of how Farm & Food Care provides support to its members on issues that matter to us, and how collaboration and a united voice can make a difference,” says OFVGA executive director Alison Robertson. “Public trust in food has never been more important, and we appreciate Farm & Food Care’s help in making that important connection between farm, media and consumers at such a critical time.”

Participating in the first round of interviews for the project were Brian Gilroy of Meaford, Charles Stevens of Newcastle, Kevin Howe of Aylmer, Mike Chromczak of Tillsonburg, Peter Quiring of Leamington, Shawn Brenn of Waterdown, Dusty Zamecnik of Langton and Jan VanderHout of Waterdown.

Each grower talked about the need for these workers on their farms and about their concerns that the workers were having significant problems getting to Ontario, due to a lack of flights and other logistical challenges.

The growers also mentioned that they’d like to hire local help – but often that isn’t possible.

Stevens said, “If our international workers, many of whom have been working with us for decades, don’t come this year, we wouldn’t have the ability to train an entirely new

workforce, even if we were lucky enough to be able to find people interested in working on a fruit farm.”

Asparagus grower Chromczak emphasized how critical his employees are to help harvest one of Ontario’s first crops of the year. “Depending on the year, asparagus harvest can start in early May and this year we were planning to have our workers arrive in late April.”

Food security was a key message of all of the participants. “Our food system and country’s food security depends on them,” said Zamecnik, adding, “we can’t count on imports to fill our grocery stores if there’s a local crop failure. Fruit-growing states south of the border are also in the midst of a COVID-19 crisis and a labour shortage.”

Accompanying the opinion pieces were a series of graphics produced by Farm & Food Care that were distributed by OFVGA to its membership for use on social media.

While workers have started to arrive and face mandatory two-week quarantine periods before working, efforts will still be made to keep this issue before the media in the weeks and months to come.

A second series of opinion pieces, penned by OFVGA chair Bill George, are now in development and will be focused on other issues related to foreign labour including protection and public safety from COVID-19 and the rights and working conditions of seasonal agriculture workers and temporary foreign workers.

To learn more about the shared communications campaign, visit [www.ofvga.org/covid-19](http://www.ofvga.org/covid-19). This special link was developed to house all of the grower profiles, fact sheets and other relevant resources.

## COMING EVENTS 2020

- May 12 Ontario Garlic Workshop, Guelph, ON  
**POSTPONED until September**
- May 12-14 Canadian Produce Marketing Association Trade Show & Convention, Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Toronto, ON **CANCELLED**
- May 28 Food & Beverage Ontario 2020 Conference, Steam Whistle Brewery, Toronto, ON  
**POSTPONED to October 29**
- June 10 Ontario Produce Marketing Association Annual General Meeting, **POSTPONED to September 2**
- June 14 Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, Country Heritage Park, Milton, ON
- June 15-19 United Fresh 2020 LIVE! Virtual event
- July 15-17 Federal-Provincial-Territorial Agriculture Ministers’ Meeting, Guelph, ON
- July 12-16 International Cool Climate Wine Symposium, Brock University, St. Catharines, ON  
**POSTPONED TO JULY 25-29, 2021**
- July 19-23 Potato Association of America, Holiday Inn Downtown, Missoula, MT
- July 22-25 International Fruit Tree Association Summer Tour, Richland, WA
- August 6 Nova Scotia Fruit Growers’ Association Annual Summer Tour
- Aug 10-12 International Blueberry Organization Summit, Trujillo, Peru **RESCHEDULED TO AUGUST 22-25, 2021**
- August 12 Ontario Apple Summer Tour, Newcastle, ON
- Aug 13-15 73rd annual Quebec Produce Marketing Association Convention, Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Montreal, QC
- Sept 8-10 International Strawberry Symposium, Rimini, Italy (originally 5-7 May)
- Sept 15-17 Canada’s Outdoor Farm Show, Woodstock, ON
- Sept 16-18 Asia Fruit Logistica, Singapore
- Sept 17 Goodyear Farm Ltd Farm Tour, Beaverton, ON
- Sept 20 10th Annual Toronto Garlic Festival, Artscape Wychwood Barns, Toronto, ON
- Sept 21-23 United Fresh Washington Conference, Grand Hyatt, Washington, DC
- Sept 23 Ontario Produce Marketing Association Golf tournament, TBA
- Oct 5 – 8 International Plant Health Conference, Helsinki, Finland
- Oct 7-8 Canadian Greenhouse Conference, Scotiabank Conference Centre, Niagara Falls, ON
- Oct 14-17 International Plowing Match, Lindsay ON
- Oct 15-17 Produce Marketing Association Fresh Summit, Dallas, TX
- Oct 29 Food & Beverage Ontario 2020 Conference, Steam Whistle Brewery, Toronto, ON
- Nov 2-4 Fall Harvest Meetings on Parliament Hill, Ottawa, ON



RETAIL NAVIGATOR

# Generating sales in a ‘new normal’ environment



PETER CHAPMAN

The shopping environment suppliers and retailers built prior to COVID-19 took years to develop. Only a few weeks have changed that drastically. The new visit to a food store is very different, however it is reality and there will be opportunities for suppliers who figure out how to be successful.

### You need to change your mindset

It has been very challenging for everyone in the food industry and we still do not know how long this will be the environment in which we operate. The experts are indicating the changes implemented in stores will be with us for a while. One of the biggest challenges is the uncertainty.

I will admit; I have been frustrated.

2020 was going to be a great year for my speaking business. I had a plan, the first quarter was busier than ever and events were starting to shape up for the rest of the year. I have come to the realization these plans will not happen and I have to change my business model. It is frustrating because I really enjoy sharing food industry insights with live audiences. It is unfortunate, but it is reality. Sound familiar? I am sure you had some great plans for 2020 as well.

It was important for me to change my mindset. I had to shift from why is this happening to what can I do about it? You need to do the same with your food products.

The first priority needs to be continuity of supply. Despite what retailers say in public, they are very focused on going category by category to assess the level of supply they will get from producers and processors. There are a lot of uncertainties such as labour, ingredients, packaging and many more. You need to go through every component of your business to ensure you have the ability to produce your products.

Once you have some assurances you will be able to produce your products you need to shift your focus to how do I sell them? This is what I did in

my business as well. I still have the insights into the industry but it is a different industry today so I have been diligent to watch and learn over the last few weeks. Now I am able to go out and share what I know, in a different format.

You need to think about how to generate sales given the following:

**1) Demos are not an option.** This is an interesting one for me as I believe people over-use demos and rely on them too much. The biggest reason to invest in demos is to remove the risk for consumers. They try before they buy so they spend money on something they like.

Find other opportunities to remove the risk. Find influencers who will sample your products and share how great they are. These can be online or traditional mass media. One great example for me would be asparagus. What better sign of spring and a new growing season is there than asparagus? Take some to a radio station and get them talking about it or take some of your best spears to the right bloggers. If you are too busy on the farm hire someone to do this. If these people try the product and talk about it they can be as powerful as an in-store demo. The other part of removing the risk is to guarantee your product. Most people would do this now but they do not talk about it. Remove the risk for the consumer in their mind at the point of purchase. We have to think differently.

**2) Ads will probably be a part of the retailer’s strategy but there is a real chance item count will be less to reduce the complexity and cost of the programs.** Ads do a few things for your products but they also cost money, which you might be able to save or reinvest. Retailers will still run ads to drive traffic with front-page items. The inside blocks that are designed to drive execution in store, create awareness with consumers and deliver value will be reduced. We need to find alternatives to deliver in-store merchandising, build demand and deliver value.

Discuss merchandising plans with your customers and try to get them to agree on what it will be. They are stretched in store as well but the conversation is shifting from surviving this to operating in it. You also need to create awareness in different ways. Perhaps you have to invest some of your ad pricing in more traditional forms of advertising or social media. Delivering value can be accomplished with loyalty programs or in-store specials.

You can’t invest more but you might have to reallocate your spend.

**3) Consumers want to know more about your products.** There has been a desire to support more Canadian products and I believe the current situation accentuates this. You need to tell your story even better and make sure people know your roots. Consumers are looking for good news stories. Share some insights into what your company is doing and tie it to your brand. Some people might say you shouldn’t take advantage of the situation but I would argue if your employees are doing good/great things, celebrate them and they will benefit when your product sells more. The story of your product, your brand and your people can influence sales now more than ever.

**4) People are home and they are cooking/baking more.** Find uses for your product and help them figure out what to do. Many times I would hear producers and processors talk about “if people only knew how to cook” or “how can I get them to use the products?” Now is the time, they are home and doing things differently. Comfort food is making a comeback so help them figure out how to make those recipes. You can deliver recipes on pack, on your website, via social

media or even mass advertising. Many producers and processors have done recipes, now those who do it really well can sell more products.

**5) Remember the people in the store.** You can’t visit the store like you used to. Retailers are asking you to stay out of the stores unless you are in there to deliver product. You can still communicate with the people in the stores. A simple note in your case of product to say “thanks for going to work and putting our product out on the shelf” will go a long way. Think about the changes people working in retail have had to endure so it would be a great time to send a message to them in your cases of product. You never know they might give you some extra space! We have to find different solutions to deliver the objective.

There are many more opportunities out there. It is important to shift the mindset first and ask “how do we drive sales in this environment?”

If you have any questions about driving sales in the new environment please give me a call at (902) 489-2900 or send me an email at peter@skufood.com.

### WHAT’S IN STORE?

#### Limits

It is common in stores right now to see retailers limiting quantities on certain items. This is something we have not experienced, aside from deep discount ad items. They are limiting purchases to allow more consumers to have a chance to purchase products. The supply chain is very volatile right now so if you see a product with a limit and you know there is a lot of supply, think before you take action. The appropriate action is to contact the person, perhaps that is you, who has the direct relationship with the retailer. Explain the situation and try to find a solution. Do not post it on social media and contact your member of parliament. This is the time to build relationships, not break them down.

*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 GPS Business Solutions and a partner in SKUfood.com, an on line resource for food producers. Peter works with producers and processors to help them navigate through the retail environment with the ultimate goal to get more of their items in the shopping cart.*

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FOCUS: STORAGE, CONTAINERS AND PACKAGING

Trends and impacts of fresh produce packaging in the COVID-19 era



KAREN DAVIDSON

On Monday morning, the start of the virtual work week, everyone is sharing stories about their grocery shopping. How about when two female members joined their male member of the family as he got to first place of a 20-person lineup? The folks in the line behind didn't think that was the Canadian way. Or were you able to get potatoes? Did you score a bag of flour? "Grocery shopping has become a precise, strategic event," says Shannon Boase, with CKF, Inc. The company has

five plants spanning Nova Scotia, Ontario and British Columbia, manufacturing food packaging in foam and rPET plastic along with a sustainable alternative called EarthCycle, a thermoformed molded pulp option. The last eight weeks have been a roller-coaster ride serving the needs of retail customers. But what is clearly evident is the importance of that once-a-week, out-of-home grocery experience. It is a planned event with a carefully edited shopping list. "What we are hearing is that there is limited engagement of consumers," says Boase. Research is showing a consumer

that wants to get in and out of the store, with more purchases per visit, but no impulse buying. These observations are supported by a market survey of 2,900 Canadian adults, conducted by David Coletto at Abacus Data from April 3-7. He shared the results at a Canadian Produce Marketing Association webinar on April 16. Consumers do perceive some risk in unpackaged fresh fruits and vegetables. When asked how risky they consider different types of food products, fresh vegetables not in packaging were considered too risky by 14 per cent, with another 57 per cent saying somewhat

risky. Perceptions were similar for fresh fruit not in packaging (15% too risky, 58% somewhat risky). Only four per cent/six per cent felt that fresh vegetables/fruit in plastic packaging was "too risky" while 48 per cent/47 per cent felt it was somewhat risky – almost half the level of perceived risk as bulk produce. When consumers were asked whether they are eating more or less fresh fruit and vegetables than usual, 17 per cent said more, 18 per cent said less, and 65 per cent said about as much as usual.

Continued on next page

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FOCUS: STORAGE, CONTAINERS AND PACKAGING

Trends and impacts of fresh produce packaging in the COVID-19 era



Continued from last page

Self-evident during this upheaval is that there is an increased demand for packaging, says Boase, which is impacting supply chains and production planning.

There is also growth in ‘click and collect’ and home delivery which again impacts packaging and in particular, considerations of how best to merchandise and protect fresh produce. An EarthCycle pulped molded tray with four apples is one example.

“Right now, consumers perceive that pack-aged product is safer,” says Boase. “We are also

hearing that some retailers are preferring top seal formats as they are tamper-evident.” Two examples are Demers greenhouse tomatoes and Naturipe blueberries.

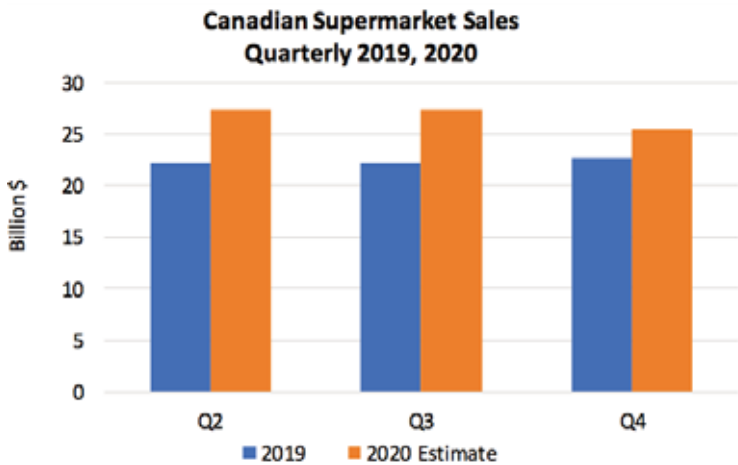
Changes in consumer buying patterns may be pushing more retailers to favour fixed weight packaging, says Boase, as retailers rationalize SKUs.

“We can’t forget about sustainability,” says Boase. “When it comes time to rebuild, we must rebuild in a thoughtful way. We can’t forget about the gains we’ve made.”

The larger context of grocery sales in Canada

A significant surge is expected in Canada’s \$90 billion grocery sales in 2020. As Kevin Grier explains in his April 20 report, “Coronavirus sales impact at foodservice and grocery,” the total could reach \$102 billion this year. That estimate does not include Walmart or Costco.

Grier’s analysis shows that Canadian supermarkets could see a sales increase of 20 per cent or more in the second and third quarters. The fourth quarter could see added sales of about 10 per cent. These figures are consistent with early assessments in the United States.



Source: Kevin Grier Market Analysis and Consulting, Guelph, Ontario

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FOCUS: STORAGE, CONTAINERS AND PACKAGING

How grower/shippers are changing packaging plans



David Bell, Houweling's.



KAREN DAVIDSON

While the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) cancelled its May 2020 event in Toronto, it has provided a link to the much-anticipated Innovation Showcase. Link here: <https://bit.ly/2xMAQzL>. Here are two of the stories of how produce companies have shifted their strategies and timing.

EarthFresh

EarthFresh, last year's

winner of the coveted CPMA Best Booth award, was planning to put forward its new paper bag for red baby potatoes. "Unfortunately with the COVID-19 crisis, we have shifted our focus and have put this project on hold," reports Jessica Hughes, director of innovation, EarthFresh. "Our new small paper bagger has not yet been installed and we have delayed the launch to fall 2020. Currently consumers are focused on sustenance right now in larger format products. During this crisis, we have seen a shift in sales from small to

larger pack sizes; people are buying in bulk rather than for convenience." That said, Hughes predicts that the longer term demand for this new package will be strong. Consumers are looking for alternatives to poly. This new bag will be made with renewable resources, free from plastic, and will be naturally light blocking. It is essential for EarthFresh packaging to be light blocking as potatoes will turn green under lighting in less than 12 hours. The light blocking packaging extends shelf life and reduces food

waste. Once launched, potatoes in all sizes and colours will be available in paper bags from one lb to 10lb. **Houweling's** The greenhouse business headquartered in Delta, British Columbia vows to eliminate plastic on its greenhouse cucumbers with the use of Apeel. It's a family of plant-derived coatings to keep produce fresh. Houweling's is not in-market yet with Apeel says David Bell, chief marketing officer.

"Our partnership launched at the Produce Marketing Association and we have an in-market commercial launch in August 2020 with production coming out of our Camarillo, California farm and being treated on-site. While we will be able to sell into Canada our Canadian farms won't initially be equipped to treat with Apeel for plastic-free cucumbers. Of course our plans would be to add capabilities in our Canadian operations once we have successfully rolled the program out in Camarillo."



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FOCUS: STORAGE, CONTAINERS AND PACKAGING

What’s new in packaging



It’s a topsy-turvy world right now for suppliers of packaging. Some sectors are up. Some are down.

“It’s crazy!” says Allen Kirkpatrick, executive director of the Canadian Corrugated and Containerboard Association. “Generally, the industry is very busy. To peel the onion a bit, the big food companies are flat out. Frozen food is the same. Comfort foods in the beverage and snacks sector are busy. But the hardware segment

is suffering. When we get some statistics the week of April 20, we may find that the packaging industry is not down much at all.”

It’s still too early to know what the final decisions of growers will be in terms of planting and harvesting and what their needs will be. “In our heart of hearts, we believe that the bigger growers will continue to do what they do,” says Kirkpatrick. “We are anticipating a letdown in a couple months when the pipeline is full.”

CPMA New Product Showcase goes virtual



Not everything was cancelled for the Canadian Produce Marketing Association conference and trade show in mid-May. The popular New Product Showcase is available online here: <https://convention.cpma.ca/exhibit/new-product-showcase-2020>

Above are three examples of packaging innovation.

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# Strawberry anthracnose fruit rot model adoption

KEVIN SCHOOLEY and  
ERICA PATE

Anthracnose fruit rot has been a serious strawberry disease in Ontario since the early 2000s, particularly for day-neutral strawberry producers. In 2016-2017 Mike Celetti, OMAFRA's now-retired horticulture pathologist, led a GF2 project 'Integrated Management of Anthracnose in Ontario Strawberries', where they evaluated a strawberry anthracnose fruit rot model, and determined if there was any resistance to the fungicides currently controlling anthracnose. This project found that there was resistance to pyraclostrobin, a group 11 fungicide, in anthracnose fruit rot populations in Ontario. Anthracnose management became more challenging as these important fungicides that growers previously relied upon were less effective. However, this project also included work on new management tools to reduce pesticide use: the strawberry anthracnose fruit rot

model.

The strawberry anthracnose fruit rot model was developed by MacKenzie and Peres for growers in Florida. However, here in Ontario we have different climatic conditions, so this model needed to be validated here. Plots were established in Simcoe and Cedar Springs, and were treated with four treatments including the standard seven-day schedule and applying when the model indicated a 'medium' and 'high' risk. They found that by using this model when a medium and high risk was triggered, fungicide applications were reduced by 7%- 33% compared to a seven-day schedule, without compromising disease control, yield, or berry quality. Reducing fungicide use will, in turn, reduce the risk of resistance developing in the future.

Moving forward from this project in 2016-2017 we knew: resistance to group 11 fungicides was present in Ontario strawberries; there are limited fungicide options for strawberry anthracnose

management; and the strawberry anthracnose fruit rot model has the potential to reduce fungicide applications for Ontario berry growers. With limited fungicide options and the risk of resistance being present any tool to help growers reduce fungicide use and make management decisions is valuable.

In 2018 the Berry Growers of Ontario received CAP funding to further Ontario's experience with this model and assist five Ontario strawberry growers to adopt the strawberry anthracnose fruit rot model in 2019. Each grower had a weather station that monitored precipitation, temperature, and leaf wetness, installed in their day-neutral strawberry fields. The growers could access a website where the model was available. The model would let growers know if there was a

'high', 'medium', or 'low' risk of an anthracnose infection based on the conditions. The participating growers sprayed according to the model.

All five growers had similar feedback regarding their experience using this model in their strawberry pest management program. They reported the model provided good information, was helpful in timing fungicide applications, and was a good tool to learn more about the conditions that lead to anthracnose infection.

However, there were two concerns with this model. The first issue is incorporating this model into a management program where other pests need to be managed and harvest schedules need to be maintained. For example, growers need to spray for insects such as tarnished plant bugs and spotted wing drosophila weekly, and for other diseases including botrytis and powdery mildew weekly. This can make it challenging to follow the model recommendations. The model could potentially be triggered every 10 days, while the other pests require growers to spray every seven days. It is not feasible for growers to spray the same field multiple times within a week.

Growers also need to keep their harvest schedule in mind. Maintaining a regular, weekly program helps growers time their pesticide applications to make sure they can harvest at appropriate times to supply their market. However, despite the challenges with pesticide timing some of the participants commented that they could be flexible with harvest dates or could use this model to make decisions on what products to apply weekly, using the strongest options when the risk of infection is highest, instead of using the model to determine when to apply a fungicide.

The other factor in further adoption of this model is the economics. While growers acknowledge the benefit of reducing fungicide applications and spraying as needed, the reduced costs from fewer fungicides may not cover the costs of the system for smaller growers and is not a justifiable cost. The economics of the system would vary farm by farm, but at the current cost of approximately \$2900 per year, interest is limited in wider adoption of the technology.

While there are challenges

that need to be addressed with incorporating this model into fungicide timing decisions, participants commented that if there were other options to access this model they would be interested in using it. For example, a regional option for growers to access the model could be a feasible system.

This model may also provide a bigger benefit regarding reducing fungicide applications in the spring. The 2019 adoption project began in July and continued through August and September, when the hot, wet conditions required for an anthracnose infection are frequently present. Because of this, growers using this model in 2019 did not see much of a reduction in fungicide applications compared to their standard program. However, in the spring when temperatures are cooler and less frequently conducive to anthracnose infection, growers may see a greater reduction in fungicide applications if spraying according to the model, and a greater benefit in adopting this model.

This model may also become more important in the coming years, as the fungicide options available to growers changes. Currently, growers rely on broad spectrum, group M fungicides for resistance management. However, by 2021 growers will not be able to use these fungicides in-season, as they will have to observe a 6-day re-entry interval. In this situation, with fewer in-season options, growers could use the model to determine when the greatest risk of infection is, and save their most effective products for this timing and using their broad spectrum fungicides before harvest begins.

Berry growers in Ontario are interested in using weather-based models to make informed decisions on pest management, and there is a growing need for conserving anthracnose fungicides with the changing fungicides available to Ontario growers and concerns around fungicide resistance. At the current cost this model is not economical for individual growers, however there is interest in pursuing options for regional monitoring or establishing a province-wide system for greater adoption of this model.



*Kevin Schooley is executive director, Berry Growers of Ontario. Erica Pate is fruit crop specialist for OMAFRA.*


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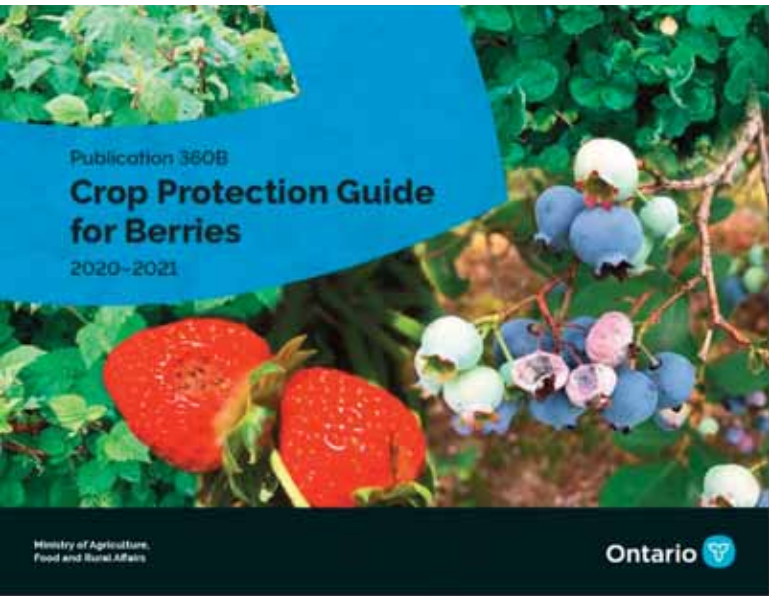
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ONTARIO BERRY NEWS

# Updated OMAFRA publication guides available



Available free online on the OMAFRA website at Fruit Crop Protection Guides 2020, [www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/pub360/p360toc.htm](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/pub360/p360toc.htm). These are early release drafts of these publications. The final English versions will be posted when ready.

Publication 360 is now offered as five stand-alone crop

publications: 360A Apples, 360B Berries, 360C Grapes, 360D Tender Fruit and 360E Tree Nuts. These publications provide pest control information for the commercial production of fruit crops. Pest management guidelines are presented in a calendar format and some publications include information on integrated pest management,

Product	Crop	Insect/Disease	Notes
Cormoran (4A +15)	Blueberry	Japanese beetle, aphids, cherry fruitworm, cranberry fruitworm, blueberry maggot	PHI (pre-harvest interval): 8 days Max: 3 applications
PCP#33353	Currant and Gooseberry	Aphids, Japanese beetles	
	Saskatoon berry	Spanworm, Japanese beetles, Aphids	
	Strawberry	Strawberry aphids, potato leafhoppers, tarnished plant bug	PHI: 1 day Max: 3 apps
Quadris Top (11+3)	Strawberry	Anthracnose, Powdery mildew	PHI: 1 day Max: 3 apps
PCP# 30518			
Exirel (28)	Strawberry	Spotted Wing Drosophila	PHI: 1 day Max: 4 apps
PCP# 30895			

thinning of tree fruit, plant growth regulators and nematodes. Technical information on products is easy to look up in the many tables in this publication.

Download your copy free online. Print copies of Publication 360A, 360B, 360C, 360D, 360E should be available to order from ServiceOntario Publications in May for \$10 each or \$35 kit of all five plus shipping and handling. Order online at [Ontario.ca/publications](http://Ontario.ca/publications)

or by phone 1-800-668-9938 Toll-free across Canada. For a complete list of OMAFRA publications visit [omafra.gov.on.ca](http://omafra.gov.on.ca) and click on ‘Publications.’ Given the current situation availability of print publications could be delayed.

New products or registrations for berry growers in Pub 360B Berries (see chart).

Note for Group 11: For anthracnose fruit rot, use group 11s once, then rotate to a

different fungicide group. Resistance to Group 11 fungicides has been confirmed in strawberry anthracnose population in Ontario. Wherever possible, include a group M fungicide in your program to expand the spectrum of disease control. See Managing Resistance to Fungicides, Publication 360B Berries, for more information on managing resistance.

## Imidacloprid and thiamethoxam re-evaluation decisions



ERICA PATE

Imidacloprid: Admire (PCP# 24094), Alias (PCP# 28475)

Thiamethoxam: Actara (PCP# 28408)

Label changes have been made to the Alias 240, Admire 240, and Actara 25WG labels. Registrants have until April 2021 to update the labels on these products. Consult the most recent label on the PMRA website and/or the product registrant to verify dates of last sale and use.

Changes include: **restricting applications to post-bloom and cancelling all soil applications** in berry crops.

**Soil applications** for certain insects on strawberries, raspberries and blueberries can be used until **April 2022** due to a lack of alternatives.

**Renovation requirements for raspberries and blueberries:** cutting back of old growth –**removal of all growth that was previously treated** (leaving a 30 cm high stump would be acceptable). Selective cutback of older growth wood and leaving the young wood would not fulfill the requirement if that young wood had previously been treated with neonicotinoids.

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information included here is accurate and up-to-date, it is the responsibility of the user to confirm with the registrants of pest control products that the dates are correct and current.

### Label changes and requirements for post-bloom applications

Crop	New Label Comments
Blueberry Products: Admire, Actara	Application is allowed only post-bloom with renovation after harvest. Do not apply pre-bloom or during bloom (Do not apply until petal fall). Do not apply when bees are present. When applying after petal fall, renovation of woody plants (cutting back of old growth) must occur after harvest and before the next season’s bloom.
Raspberry Products: Admire, Alias, Actara	Application is allowed only post-bloom with renovation after harvest. Do not apply pre-bloom or during bloom (Do not apply until petal fall). Do not apply when bees are present. When applying after petal fall, renovation of woody plants (cutting back of old growth) must occur after harvest and before the next season’s bloom. Strawberry
Strawberry Products: Admire, Actara	Do not apply pre-bloom or during bloom or when bees are actively foraging. Apply post-bloom only.
Soil Application uses below expire on April 11, 2022	
Raspberry soil application	larvae of the European chafer & larvae of Japanese beetle
Blueberry soil application	larvae of the European chafer & larvae of Japanese beetle, Brown marmorated stink bug (Actara only)
Strawberry soil application (Admire & Actara)	larvae of the European chafer, Leafhopper (Admire) Black vine weevil, strawberry root weevil (Actara)



RESPONSE TO COVID-19 VIRUS

# Food security is priority, second only to healthcare



The Canadian Federation of Agriculture warns that the domestic food supply needs to be the biggest government priority, following healthcare, in the fight against COVID-19. Mary Robinson, president, asked for an emergency fund in a virtual press conference on April 16 to give farmers the confidence for the 2020 planting season. On behalf of the CFA’s 200,000 farming families, she acknowledged government support to date, including the recently announced fund to help offset the significant costs of isolating temporary foreign workers when they arrive in Canada, but she said much more needs to be done.

As the unified voice advocating for Canadian farmers at the national level, the CFA highlighted the urgent issues farmers are facing today: **Ongoing labour shortage and market predictability and how that is impacting farms and food processing** - In addition to alarming uncertainty in their markets, unfortunately this spring many Canadian farmers do not have enough workers to consider planting a 2020 crop. Labour was already a critical issue before the pandemic and has now escalated to the point that both farmers and food processors are worried that even if planting does proceed, harvesting and processing may

not be possible without sufficient labour. “We face the possibility that crops will rot in the fields, as is now happening in other countries,” she said. **Unexpected and increasing costs for farmers due to COVID-19** - Canadian farmers are dealing with significantly increased costs associated with purchasing the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) for their workers. In addition, due to meat processing plant closures, farmers are being forced to keep and feed their livestock for an extended period of time. Canadian farmers are feeling increasingly stressed, with some farmers so worried about the mounting

challenges, they are strongly considering stopping their farming operations to stave off financial disaster. “As farmers, we have carefully considered this message today,” said Mary Robinson. “We do not want to create panic. At the same time, it would be irresponsible not to sound the alarm about the realities Canadian farmers are facing. In times of economic crisis and global uncertainty, Canadians have always been able to depend on farmers to do what we do best - grow food. Today, Canadian farmers need immediate, meaningful help from our federal government to continue fulfilling that responsibility. Agriculture, the

foundation of our overall food supply is, at this very moment in time, at a tipping point. If we do not, as a nation, address the rising challenges immediately, Canadian consumers could see a decrease in the amount and variety of food at their local grocery stores as well as higher prices, in the months ahead.” This press conference was exclusively sponsored by Food and Consumer Products of Canada. See the link to the news conference here: <https://bit.ly/3es8RpH> *Source: Canadian Federation of Agriculture April 16, 2020 news release*

## CHC launches #WeAreGrowers social media campaign

With farms around the country facing unprecedented challenges in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) has launched a social media awareness campaign entitled #WeAreGrowers to showcase the grit and ingenuity of Canadian growers. The campaign encourages growers to share their experiences related to the COVID-19 pandemic using the #WeAreGrowers hashtag. Growers are encouraged to highlight the new challenges they are facing, their hard

work to maintain the Canadian food supply and the creative solutions they are employing to ensure the growing season remains bountiful. “We have often used social media to communicate with our members, growers, politicians and the general public,” says Brian Gilroy, CHC president. “And now, #WeAreGrowers is about giving growers the opportunity to share their personal stories of determination and resourcefulness. That grower perspective is essential as we

work with our partners to underscore the importance of support for our sector from provincial and federal governments.” By sharing their stories, growers can help to communicate the ongoing industry issues presented by COVID-19 and what everyone in the sector is doing to maintain domestic food production and Canadian food security. Altogether, the aim is to strengthen the public’s understanding of fruit and vegetable production in Canada, and support

advocacy efforts on behalf of Canadian horticulture and growers. Just a few days after launch, the campaign has already reached more than 6,500 people over Twitter and Facebook, and is gaining steam as more growers start to use the hashtag. You can follow CHC, share your story and take part in the campaign on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

*Source: Canadian Horticultural Council April 17, 2020.*



## Keep calm and trade on

A letter to the produce industry from Fred Webber, president of the Dispute Resolution Corporation, shared the advice: keep calm and trade on. “The world is in a state of flux and for how long remains unknown. Who can I trust amidst all this uncertainty? Well the short answer is the same people you worked with on a first-name basis yesterday. The idea of keep calm and trade on is especially true these days. When it comes to trading in times of crisis, absolutely check credit, licenses, DRC membership, and references even more carefully, but

remember it is the trust relationships you can count on to share the load if the pointer of the crisis lands on you. Somehow these folks always seem to have a better memory of what occurred. We would ask that trading partners be even more aware of payment terms and respect them as much as possible, because that flow through will help everybody better weather this challenge. We would take this opportunity to make a big salute to those companies which have shortened their payment terms and to those who have been forced to close for the short term but have continued to

make payments as they can. These are the actions trust and loyalty are built on and let others reach out to you and trade with confidence. Regardless of whether the “bump” was a payment problem, quality on arrival, delay, or a product recall was there honest communication and did your trading partner do what they said they were going to do? As we keep saying here at the DRC, was there a Discussion, were issues clearly Understood, was there Agreement on a path forward (even if it was agreeing to disagree)? Then we can certainly help

you get through the issue. Fortunately, this industry is filled with great relationships built on working together, getting through challenges and dealing with the bumps later on. It is in large part what keeps the industry going through tough times. Flattening the curve may be new vernacular, but it is what this industry has always done, by keeping calm and trading on. More more information, contact: [www.fvdrcc.com](http://www.fvdrcc.com) *Source: Dispute Resolution Corporation April 15, 2020 communiqué*



BITS AND BITES

# Modernizing Canada’s grade standards for fresh fruit and vegetables



The Safe Food for Canadians Regulations includes a provision for Incorporation by Reference (IBR) which is enabling the Dispute Resolution Corporation (DRC) to review and modernize grade standards for fresh fruit and vegetables. Through a consultative process with industry commodity-specific review teams, the following grade standards have been reviewed with a set of changes endorsed at the recent Canadian Horticultural Council Annual General Meeting:

- Apples
- Apricots

- Peaches
  - Nectarines (note: this is a new grade standard)
  - Pears
  - Plums and Prunes
  - Greenhouse Cucumbers (to include mini cucumbers)
  - Greenhouse Tomatoes
- The summary of changes is available on the DRC website ([fvdrc.com](http://fvdrc.com)) and the complete grade standards for fresh fruit and vegetables is found in the CFIA Canadian Grade Compendium: Volume 2 – Fresh Fruit or Vegetables <https://www.inspection.gc.ca>

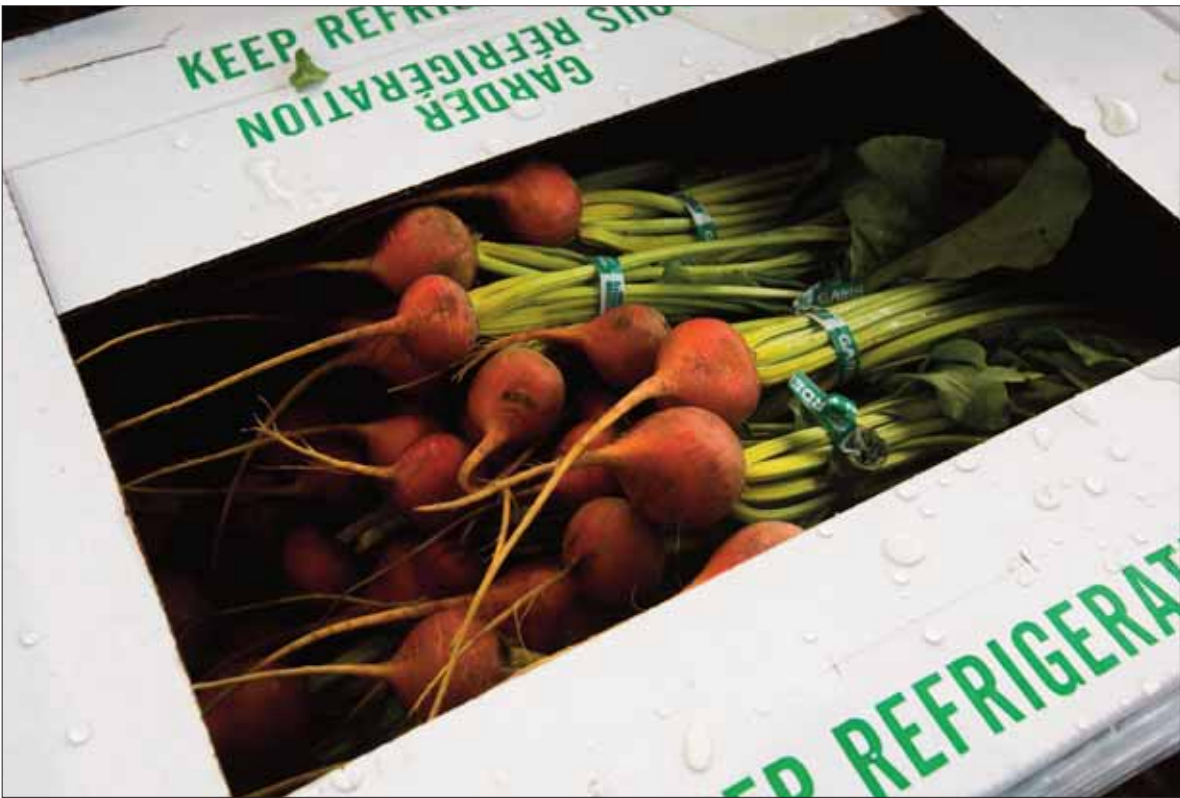


Photo by Glenn Lowson.

It is important to note that a grade standard is the lexicon for describing fruit and vegetable commodities and the associated defects, grade standards are foundational to DRC’s Good Arrival Guidelines and Trading Standards. They serve to establish expectations for arrival condition, support inspections and can contribute to the resolution of disputes. They can also contribute to consumer

confidence regarding quality in the marketplace. The grade standards serve as a baseline, or minimum standard, and are not a substitute for buyer specifications as outlined in buyer-vendor agreements. Over the coming months the remaining grade standards will be reviewed. For additional information or to participate in specific reviews, please contact Anne Fowlie

([afowlie@fvdrc.com](mailto:afowlie@fvdrc.com)). The DRC-led initiative is supported by the AgriAssurance Program, under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal, provincial territorial initiative. Phase 2 is expected to conclude in 2021, at which time it is anticipated that the DRC will host the newly revised Compendium and oversee a consultative process for future updates.

## Review: Canadian access to PACA

The Dispute Resolution Corporation (DRC) has recently received a number of inquiries regarding access to the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA). DRC president and CEO, Fred Webber, notes these are difficult times and encourages everybody to be as accommodating as possible while acknowledging that there may be a need for action when it comes to unpaid invoices.

Canadians, and others, should keep in mind that they may still be able to access certain financial risk mitigation tools in the U.S. In October 2014 the USDA PACA implemented the requirement for Canadians wishing to file a formal complaint to post a bond in twice the value of the claim. U.S. and Canadian traders previously enjoyed reciprocal treatment when filing cross

border disputes. This was the result of a determination by the U.S. that Canada did not in fact have a system fully comparable to the provisions of the PACA. While DRC and PACA had comparable systems for dispute resolution, Canada did not have anything comparable to the PACA trust when buyers became insolvent. Efforts are ongoing to address this. While this was a change for Canadians doing business in the

U.S. , it altered but did not eliminate access to the PACA dispute process. This is the process in which PACA staff actively engage and require that a double bond be posted. The dispute process is a USDA administrative process which is unrelated to the protections and workings of the trust provisions. Access to the trust provision for those outside of the U.S. have remained unchanged. You must notify your buyer of your

intent to preserve trust rights within 30 days of when payment was due and those payment terms may not exceed 30 days. Documentation is required and some members have been very successful in recovering funds. These two distinct tools are available to you and should be a part of your knowledge toolbox. Anyone having questions should reach out to DRC for further detail.

## AgriStability enrolment deadline extended

The AgriStability enrollment deadline for the 2020 program year has been extended without penalty, from April 30th to July 3, 2020. This extension will allow farmers more time to sign up and benefit from the program. This exceptional step, agreed to by federal, provincial, and territorial governments, will enable the program to help more farmers manage the impact of current market disruptions, increased expenses, and production challenges facing many farm operations. Farmers experiencing losses are encouraged to apply for interim payments under AgriStability for more rapid support. For more information: contact the AgriStability Administration.

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*Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada April 17, 2020 news release*



Growers need some shelter this year, just like this sweet corn in a protective tunnel. Photo by Glenn Lowson.



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## BITS AND BITES

# Nature Fresh Farms thanks its workers



Nature Fresh Farms, Leamington, Ontario has posted a personalized thank-you video extending their gratitude to their team members and all the heroes in fresh produce helping to keep communities fed. The video opens with the fact that while Canadian society is staying at home, these essential workers are going to work.

As the world faces these unprecedented times, communities are recognizing the individuals and organizations that have stepped up to provide important services needed to keep the public healthy and society operating. Nature Fresh Farms wants to

acknowledge the critical importance of farms and thank the efforts of their retail partners, suppliers, customers, communities, truck drivers, and fellow industry leaders who all play a vital role in keeping families fed.

“Many people – our people – are working above and beyond so communities across North America can have continued access to fresh food keeping families nourished,” said Matt Quiring, director of sales. “That is why, alongside our healthcare workers, first responders, and grocery store staff members, we are recognizing the heroic efforts of farm workers at every

level of the food supply chain.”

The 90-second video shines a special light on the dedication of the entire Nature Fresh Farms team and their invaluable efforts to ensure the stability of food supply and providing uninterrupted access to fresh produce for millions of people. Now more than ever, people are in need of nutritional fruits and vegetables to maintain their health amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

See the video here:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtN-hv-EYH8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtN-hv-EYH8)

*Source: Nature Fresh Farms April 20, 2020 news release*



CROP PROTECTION

# Crop protection news you might have missed during COVID-19



**CHRIS DUYVELSHOFF**  
CROP PROTECTION ADVISOR,  
OFVGA

With the pandemic dominating all headlines recently, you might have missed the following important crop protection updates.

**Ontario pesticide license extension**

In Ontario, growers are legally required to pass the Grower Pesticide Safety Course and obtain a certificate to buy, handle, and use crop protection products. These must be renewed every five years.

As a preventative measure to minimize the spread of COVID-19, the Ontario Pesticide Education Program cancelled all classroom courses and in person exams from March 16, 2020. Online course capacity has been expanded, but as of the writing of this article (April 15) the next available online course doesn't begin until May 4. In the meantime, pesticide safety certifications will expire for more than 1,400 of Ontario's growers and vendors by the end of April.

To ensure that Ontario growers can continue to farm, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks announced that growers and vendors whose certification expires on or after January 1, 2020, will have their certification extended until December 31, 2020. This extension will allow Ontario's growers to continue to purchase and use the products they need for the 2020 growing season.

Other provinces that require

grower certification may be doing similar extensions. Contact your local provincial staff for more information.

**Ontario aligns with federal classifications**

As covered in the December 2019 Crop Protection Column, Ontario has had a separate classification system for crop protection products compared to the federal government. In addition to what is already required by the federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA), a company wishing to register a new product in Ontario must first apply to have its product classified provincially.

The consequences of Ontario's duplicative system are slow integration of new federally registered products within the provincial regulations. These products have already met all requirements for human health and the environment during their PMRA review. Growers in Ontario have been unable to access new crop protection products already approved nationally because the provincial process is not completed. When this delay happens just before or during the growing season, growers can miss out on an entire season of use that would be available in any other province.

Ontario Bill 132, Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019, introduced in the legislature when the government resumed last fall, included important amendments in the regulation of crop protection products. The amendments included the elimination of Ontario's duplicate and inefficient classification system. Ontario would follow all other provinces and adopt the federal classifications. No application to approve a product in Ontario would be required, it would simply automatically be processed following along the federal system.

The Bill received Royal Assent in December. However,



“  
**The total number of minor use priorities after the first round of selections is 512 — not a typo! — with room for only 36 projects at the end. Needless to say, there is some work to do yet!**  
”

proclamation was required from the Lieutenant Governor to establish a date to come into force for these changes. The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario has now proclaimed these changes into force on May 1, 2020. This should fully eliminate product accessibility delays for Ontario growers in the very near future.

**What's happening with Minor Use?**

The Minor Use Pesticides Program in Canada is an important mechanism for generating new crop protection registrations for horticultural crop uses. Run by the Pest Management Centre of Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada (AAFC-PMC), the goal is to address pest management issues for crops aside from the major field crops.

The Minor Use program runs on a priority basis, with growers and the Provincial Minor Use

Coordinators (PMUCs) choosing which priorities AAFC-PMC will focus on. Priority projects are then pursued for further research to establish efficacy, crop safety, and/or residue information to support a future registration of a crop protection product.

The program has capacity to conduct 36 projects from the priorities selected this year. The limited number of slots does make this process a bit competitive. In order to facilitate this selection, a Canadian Minor Use Pesticides Priority Setting Workshop has been held annually since the program first started in 2003. The 2020 version of the priority setting meeting was scheduled to take place March 24-26 in Gatineau, Quebec. This was of course cancelled following the outbreak of COVID-19. So what now?

The first round of selections, the “C” priorities have now been chosen in consultation

with growers and staff from the individual provinces via conference call and email. The total number of priorities after the first round of selection is 512 (not a typo) — with room for only 36 projects at the end. Needless to say, there is some work to do yet!

The next step is the selection of a far lower number of “B” priorities. Again this is being conducted by the PMUCs in association with provincial grower representatives. Eventually, this final list will need to get pared down to the 36 “A” priority projects to move forward.

While more difficult and slower to do remotely, Minor Use is making progress this year and there will be priority projects happening at some point from 2020. If you are wondering what might be happening with the process in your province, contact your PMUC.



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CROP PROTECTION

# Pyganic insecticide registered for low-growing berries



JIM CHAPUT

The Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) recently announced the approval of a minor use label expansion registration for Pyganic crop protection insecticide for control of several insect pests of crop subgroup 13-07G, low growing berries\* in Canada. Pyganic crop protection insecticide was already labeled for use on several crops in Canada for control of some insects.

This minor use project was submitted by Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Pest Management Centre (AAFC-PMC) as a result of minor use priorities established by growers and extension personnel.

The following is provided as an abbreviated, general outline only. Users should be making pest management decisions within a robust integrated pest management program and should consult the complete label before using Pyganic crop protection insecticide.

Pyganic crop protection insecticide is toxic to aquatic organisms and to bees. Bees can be exposed to direct treatment, drift, or residues on flowering crops or weeds. Do not apply this product to flowering crops if bees are visiting the treatment area.

Do not apply this product or allow drift to other crops or non-target areas. Do not contaminate off-target areas or aquatic habitats when spraying or when cleaning and rinsing spray equipment or containers.

Follow all other precautions, restrictions and directions for use on the Pyganic crop protection insecticide label carefully.

For a copy of the new minor use label contact your local crop specialist, regional supply outlet or visit the PMRA label site.

*Jim Chaput is minor use coordinator, OMAFRA.*

Crop(s)*	Target	Rate (/ha)	Application Information	PHI (days)
Low Growing Berries, Crop subgroup 13-07G (Bearberry; Bilberry; Blueberry, lowbush; Cloudberry; Cranberry; Lingonberry; Muntries; Partridgeberry; Strawberry; cultivars, varieties and/or hybrids of these)	Aphids Leafhoppers Leafrollers Leaftiers Spanworms Blackheaded fireworm Sparganothis fruitworm (first generation only)	2.32 – 4.65 L/ha (30 - 60 g a.i./ha)	For the low growing berry subgroup, do not reapply more often than every 3 days. Do not apply more than 10 times per growing season. Do not apply more than 46.5 L/ha (600 g a.i./ha) per growing season.  For chemigation application (cranberry only) see: Directions for chemigation on cranberry	N/A

## Pest Management Centre research trials may be delayed a year

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have ripple effects throughout horticulture, not the least of which is the potential for some research projects to be cancelled for 2020. Dr. Marcos Alvarez, executive director, Pest Management Centre, communicated the risks in an April 20 letter to stakeholders.

By April 23, the provincial minor use coordinators will have listed the “B” priorities in consultation with growers and producer associations.

At the same time, the Research and Development Centres are maintaining critical services such as care of live-stock; germplasm and insect colonies maintenance; watering of plants; and maintenance of specialized laboratory equipment and biocontainment facilities. As spring progresses,

additional measures must be taken: preservation of perennial crops, through pruning, irrigating, and the propagation of irreplaceable genetic resources.

These activities preserve long-term research trials, but unfortunately, all field-based research projects are currently on hold.

“While there is no clear timeline towards a resumption of our field-based research activities, we recognize the implications this will have on AAFC’s ability to conduct research in 2020,” writes Dr. Alvarez. “In this context, should AAFC research centres remain closed past mid-May, PMC’s field trial activities would be interrupted, therefore delaying by a year the data generation required by the Pest

Management Regulatory Agency for minor use pesticide label expansion submissions.”

A possibility exists that if research centres resumed by early August, some field trials for late-season pests affecting perennial plants and greenhouse trials could be conducted. The data generated could be used for some pesticide label expansion submission projects.

“Rest assured that PMC remains committed to its planned joint IR-4 residue trials for the 2020 field season and that we are working closely with IR-4 to ensure that a portion of these trials are conducted this year,” says Dr. Alvarez. “We have conducted an analysis of the 31 trials that were planned on Canadian sites and this analysis is accessible on the IR-4 website under “Food Crop



Tracking Spreadsheet”.

“In this context, I anticipate that the PMC will not have the capacity to take on the number of planned priorities for 2020. The PMC’s management team is currently conducting a capacity analysis that will allow us to identify the maximum number of projects that we can take on as an organization under these extraordinary

circumstances. PMC has scheduled a teleconference call with provincial minor use coordinators on April 24 to discuss the results of its capacity analysis.”

*Source: Pest Management Centre April 20, 2020 note to stakeholders*

## HopGuard biopesticide registered for varroa mite control in beehives

JIM CHAPUT

The Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) announced the approval of a new biopesticide registration for Hopguard II for control of varroa mites in honeybee hives in Canada and Ontario recently completed its review and classification of this novel new product for beekeepers.

The following is provided as an abbreviated, general outline only. Users should be making pest management decisions within a robust integrated pest management program and should consult the complete label before using Hopguard II.

For varroa mite control in bee colonies: Strips must be applied as per the table below for the number of standard Langstroth combs covered with bees in each brood chamber. DO NOT apply more than two strips per brood chamber.

Strips are only placed in the brood chamber (not in

No. combs covered with bees	≤ 5	6-10	11-15	≥ 16
No. of HopGuard II strips	1	2	3	4

the honey super). Folded strips must be opened and hung over one of the center brood combs near the middle of the comb with one-half of the strip on each side of the comb. If using a second strip, apply the strips in the brood chamber in the center of the cluster, with a minimum distance of two combs between the strips. Suspend the strips in the brood chamber in a way that the bees can walk on both sides of the strips. Do not lay the strips on top of the combs. Leave strips in the colony for 10-15-day interval. Two applications, applied at 10-15-day intervals, may be required to provide control of varroa mite. Treat up to twice a year as monitoring indicates is necessary: one or two applications when bee hive population is increasing in spring, and one or two applications when bee hive population is decreasing in late summer and fall.

Remove strips from bee hives after 15 days.

Do not use HopGuard II more than four times per year. This limit includes all applications to a bee colony (usually during spring, late summer, and fall). Application of strips should be based on levels of varroa mite observed in the colony. Users must not harvest honey and wax from the brood chambers, only from the honey supers.

HopGuard II has potential to cause brood injury.

For a copy of the new label contact your local bee inspector, regional supply outlet or visit the PMRA label site.

*Source: Jim Chaput, minor use coordinator for OMAFRA.*



SOUTH OF THE BORDER

\$2.7 billion will flow to distressed fruit and vegetable sector



On April 17, the U.S. secretary of agriculture Sonny Perdue announced \$2.7 billion in financial support targeted to the fruit and vegetable industry in response to the overwhelming losses from the COVID-19 emergency. That support is divided with \$2.1 billion allocated for direct payment to growers, and \$100 million per month for the next six months in produce purchases.

“From the moment that the foodservice channel was shut down, we’ve worked hard with our members

and allied produce associations across the country to formulate a plan for the government to help those who have been hit the hardest,” said Tom Stenzel, president & CEO of United Fresh.

Mike Joyner, president of Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association said that the state’s specialty crop growers have suffered more than \$520 million in losses for this season.

The U.S. potato industry, worth \$4 billion annually, has been hit hard because 60 per cent of that business is

directed towards food service.

Details of the fruit and vegetable package include the following:

- \$2.1 billion in payments to growers and grower-shippers of fresh produce for demonstrated losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a commitment to relieve the debts of PACA-licensed buyers for losses covered by government payments.
- \$100 million/month for the next six

months in a new “Buy Fresh” program funded through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act in which the federal government will purchase fresh produce and pay for its delivery to food banks, curb-side school pick-up sites, and other non-profit institutions.

*Source: United Fresh April 17, 2020 news release*

**Photo courtesy of Rob Blakey, Wenatchee, Washington state. He can be followed on Twitter @TreeFruitRob.**

Farmers are plowing under crops

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit growers in the southern U.S. in the heart of their growing season. One California grower of romaine lettuce plowed under 350 acres valued at \$1.46 million. Normally his crop would be on its way to restaurant salad bars and food chains across the country.

But since mid-March, his accounts have dried up. For Jack Vessey, the business decision was to cut his losses in labour, packaging and storage. He belongs to the Imperial Valley Vegetable Growers’ Association, located near the Arizona border. The area produces about \$1.2 billion in vegetables every year.

The situation is as grim in Florida where the drop-off in consumer demand has been

“swift, staggering and devastating,” in the words of Lisa Lochridge, director of public affairs for the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association. Farmers are walking away from millions of dollars in crops ranging from cucumbers to zucchini, yellow squash and bell peppers.

Not every farmer can make the switch from foodservice to retail because it’s a change of specifications on sizing and grades, not to mention packaging. The last week of March and first week of April 2020 marked a slowdown, then a sudden drop in demand.

Berry grower Gary Wishnatzki, Wish Farms, headquartered at Plant City, Florida, noted a mass surge in consumer buying in mid-March



A worker mows down eggplant bushes that have no market near Homestead, Florida.

then dropping off a cliff. “Berries are a little bit of an impulse item,” he told one interviewer. He’s the co-founder of Harvest CROO

robotics, but that project is on hold in these unprecedented times.

One of the less obvious impacts of the coronavirus

pandemic is that research may be delayed or cancelled during 2020.

Perfect storm for Michigan asparagus crop

Going into the 2020 asparagus harvest has its worries, according to John Bakker, the executive director of the Michigan Asparagus Advisory Board.

Growers are concerned with getting enough workers to harvest and process the product, getting the product to consumers and competing against international producers.

“It’s kind of the perfect

storm right now,” Bakker said. “Additional product in the U.S. market, lack of the restaurant trade and the change in buying habits of consumers (due to COVID-19).”

Bakker shared his comments with local media at an April 17 event with local producers and processors.

