

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Farmers' markets expand on tradition



Given the public interest in land use, particularly around metropolitan areas of Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, farmers' markets play an increasingly important role in connecting farmers with consumers. These are more than commercial transactions. These are personal relationships, priceless in forging a sense of community. Just ask Kevin Gallant and his wife Keara who farm near Vanessa, Ontario, supplying three farmers' markets in the Greater Toronto Area. Photo by Marcella DiLondardo.

KAREN DAVIDSON

It's 6 am and Kevin Gallant has just pocket dialled several friends. He's been busy loading pumpkins onto a truck headed for the Milton Farmers' Market, one of many such markets in the Greater Toronto Area.

His wife Keara will be off soon in the other direction, to the Burlington Centre Farmers' Market, also about an hour's drive away from their farm near Vanessa, Ontario. Between them, the early morning banter is about their daughter Presley. At the age of nine years, she's already a formidable sales agent. Having made a quick decision about which market she will choose this Saturday fall morning, Presley slides into the truck beside her dad. Milton it is.

Gallant Farms, home to Presley's Pumpkin Patch, has a long-standing tradition of growing vegetables. Their pumpkins have become so popular that five Terra Greenhouse stores now feature their harvest-season globes

and gourds. A pick-your-own pumpkin market also opens to the public on the farm until end of October.

Like many market growers, Kevin and his family have benefited post-COVID because the 2020 pandemic shone a light on just how important farmers' markets are to consumers. Some markets didn't open at all, others spread out to temporary quarters while still others clambered aboard the bandwagon of e-commerce. Since that time, the food landscape has changed in ways that could not have been imagined three years ago.

"The appreciation by customers is unbelievable," says Gallant. "They want to hear about your farm and how the weather is affecting your crop. They are craving a connection at the market."

Dedication to the direct-to-consumer model has paid off for Gallant Farms which has expanded from five acres in 2017 to 80 acres of vegetable production now. In 2022, the Gallants added the Ancaster Farmers' Market to their mix. At that market, more than 80 per cent of their customers used a debit card --- part of a tap-and-go trend

that eliminates the inconvenience and personal contact of exchanging cash.

The economic impact of farmers' markets is challenging to quantify says Catherine Clark, executive director of Farmers' Markets Ontario (FMO). The last study dates back to 2011 when the research showed the province's markets had an economic impact of \$2.47 billion annually. Clearly, in the last decade those numbers have ballooned.

"The dynamics have changed," says Clark, who represents 180 members.

"There is a need to update this information and to understand the importance of farmers' markets to the agricultural sector. With the supply chain disruptions during the COVID- 19 pandemic, consumers appear to be more dedicated than ever to shop directly from the farmers who grow the food."

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AT PRESS TIME...

OFVGA objects to characterization of ‘slavery’ by UN rapporteur

Ontario’s fruit and vegetable growers who employ about 20,000 temporary foreign workers, are refuting recent comments by Tomoya Obokala, the United Nations rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery.

“Seasonal and temporary foreign workers are an essential part of local fruit and vegetable production in Ontario, and we do not support employers who mistreat or otherwise take advantage of people in their employ,” says Bill George, a grape grower and chair of the OFVGA labour section. ‘We recognize there is always more that could be done to ensure all workers have the opportunity for a positive and safe working experience while they are here, but assigning hateful and broad labels to all the hardworking farmers and their employees in the program is not the solution.’”

Every year, Ontario fruit and vegetable growers employ seasonal and temporary foreign workers who come to Canada legally through the government-regulated Seasonal Agricultural Worker program (SAWP) and the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program’s agricultural stream.

Workers apply in their home countries for the opportunity to be part of these programs in Canada and sign legal contracts



“ We do not support employers who mistreat or otherwise take advantage of people in their employ.

~ BILL GEORGE

when accepting employment. All contracts are subject to federal government audits and inspections to ensure they follow program regulations and match the job specifications that the employer received government approval for when workers were hired.

SAWP contract terms also reflect decades of collaborative negotiations between Canada and the workers’ home countries which include Mexico, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados, and the Eastern Caribbean Islands.

Canadian farmers who employ migrant farm workers under either of these two government programs have the same and, in some cases, stricter obligations to their temporary foreign workers as they do for their Canadian

employees, including government-approved wage rates, access to health care such as OHIP in Ontario, Employment Insurance and the Canada Pension Plan as well as workplace insurance coverage and safety protection. Farms are also required to provide every worker with a copy of the federal government’s publication outlining workers’ rights and protections to ensure they are aware of their rights.

To ensure these requirements are being followed in practice, farms are subject to frequent federal, provincial, and in many cases, foreign government compliance inspections. channels, an open work permit program is available for vulnerable workers in these situations.

NEWSMAKERS

Grape Growers of Ontario and Farm Credit Canada have announced that **Erwin Wiens**, Niagara-on-the-Lake, has been chosen as Grape King 2023. Erwin and his wife Dorothy tend to a thriving 120-acre vineyard, cultivating a range of grapes including Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Gris and Merlot. He currently serves as chair of the sustainability committee, Grape Growers of Ontario. He is also chair of the Niagara Regional Irrigation Committee and a member of both the Niagara-on-the-Lake Irrigation Committee and the Agricultural Committee. This award recognizes his excellent vineyard practices and industry knowledge.



Erwin Wiens

The Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada, headquartered in Ottawa, announced a leadership change on September 7. **Rebecca Lee** is no longer executive director. The board of directors thanks her for seven years of dedicated service and wishes her well in her future endeavors. An executive search is underway.

John Jamieson, president and CEO, Canadian Centre for Food Integrity, is leaving after a four-year tenure. He played a pivotal role in the successful launches of ‘Its Good Canada’ and ‘Agriculture More than Ever,’ while also spearheading the efforts behind Canada’s Agriculture Day. Additionally, under his leadership, CCFI experienced substantial membership growth. An executive search is underway while the organization plans the next Public Trust Summit. It’s slated for October 17-18, 2023 at The Westin Toronto Airport Hotel.

British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Food welcomes two fruit extension specialists. **Lindsay Hainstock**, tree fruit industry advisor, is based in Summerland. **Katelyn Hengel** is based in Vernon.

Saskatchewan premier **Scott Moe** announced changes in some of his cabinet ministers in late summer. **David Marit**, remains in his role as Minister of Agriculture and Minister responsible for Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation, but now has additional responsibilities for the Water Security Agency.

Syngenta Vegetable Seeds has appointed **Juan Pablo López** as territory head vegetable seeds for the United States and Canada. In this role, López will lead the vegetable business for the company from an office in California.

In 2024, the new chair of the Québec Produce Marketing Association board of directors will be **Enrico Charest**, fruit and vegetable supply manager at Sobeys.



Enrico Charest

The Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) will be helmed by new executive director **Ashley Honsberger** starting the week of October 9, 2023. Most recently, she was executive director for the Poultry Industry Council. She follows **Andrew Graham**, who is retiring after 33 years with OSCIA, the last eight years as its executive director.

Vineland Research and Innovation Centre promotes **Brian Lynch**, PhD to the role of director, Horticultural Technology Systems. He will lead Vineland’s refreshed vision for the program, a hub for testing, validating and optimizing both Canadian and international technology solutions for the horticultural industry. Lynch joined Vineland in 2018 as senior research scientist and has led a team of engineers and technicians on projects tackling R&D problems in horticultural automation and robotics. He has also been instrumental in project technical developments in machine learning, computer vision, mobile robotics, manipulators and mechatronics.

David Sobey, 92, a former chief executive and chair of the Sobeys Inc. grocery store chain, has died. The parent company, Empire Co. Ltd., is headquartered in Stellarton, Nova Scotia.

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COVER STORY

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Clark is advocating for a national economic impact study that would inform provincial agricultural policy. Such a study would look at how to ensure the authenticity of farmers and local food generally and at farmers’ markets specifically.

The market landscape is very dynamic depending on region explains Justin Cantafio, executive director, Farmers’ Markets of Nova Scotia. In this Maritime province, less than 10 per cent of the food is locally produced and 22 per cent of the population is food insecure. Not surprisingly, Nova Scotia’s food system was massively disrupted by the pandemic.

“We recognized early on that farmers’ markets could continue as a model of bringing fresh food to consumers,” says Cantafio. “We were the first to onboard a number of farmers to online stores across the province. It was a sad, weird, and terrifying time.”

His organization secured funding from the provincial government to help migrate farmers’ markets and vendors, including senior farmers, into digital spaces such as online sales platforms and online stores.

“It was a really challenging situation,” he recalls. “It became obvious to me that farmers’ markets should be considered an essential service.”

With a lot of hard work, Cantafio’s cooperative was able to grow membership from 36 to 45 markets in Nova Scotia. In his view, it’s never been more important to support a circular economy because of the persistent fear that climate change will cause the global food system to collapse, washing out not only crops but vital distribution channels as well.

That perspective sounds apocalyptic but consider the dramatic swings in weather that Nova Scotia has experienced. A year ago, a polar vortex destroyed vineyards. In 2023, that has been followed up with a spring drought, record-setting wildfires, flooding and, just recently, Hurricane Lee.

As Nova Scotians catch their breath, there is a growing realization that regional resilience is more important than ever. Cantafio points out that if Nova Scotians shifted 10 per cent of their food purchases to local food, it would create an economic impact of hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

Out of this challenging time, Cantafio has co-founded a national association, Canadian Farmers’ Markets. This registered, non-profit is a coalition that includes: BC Association of Farmers’ Markets, Alberta Association of Farmers’ Markets, Direct Farm Manitoba, Farmers’ Markets Ontario, Association des marchés publics du Québec, Farmers’ Markets of Nova Scotia, Marketwurks and National Farmers’ Union - New Brunswick.

Going forward, farmers’ markets have the opportunity to become both more prevalent and more professional. For example, Farmers’ Markets of Nova Scotia has begun holding workshops for aspiring farmers’ market vendors, and in September 2023, launched its most recent iteration of a 10-course provincially certified farmers’ market manager accreditation program.

For many outdoor markets, Thanksgiving weekend marks the end of the season. As Kevin Gallant winds down on the outskirts of Toronto, he has one eye



Presley Gallant, right, engages with one of many customers at the Milton Farmers’ Market. It’s a popular draw for the town population of 133,000.



FACTS AND FIGURES

- Dating back to 1750, the **Halifax Seaport Farmers’ Market** is North America’s oldest
- **St. Jacobs Farmers’ Market**, St. Jacobs, Ontario is Canada's largest year-round market.
- To be considered a farmers’ market in Ontario, 51% of the vendors must be farmers.
- A perennial tourist attraction, the **Jean-Talon Market** in Montreal, has been operating since 1933.
- As of August 2023, there are 1039 farmers’ markets in Canada.

on the future, saluting his customers with a “see ya next year.”

He can’t help but note the diversity of consumers, a reflection of the country’s bountiful produce. And, like Canada, there’s a common tie that binds: gratitude for kinship and community.

The Grower is “Digging Deeper” with Justin Cantafio, executive director of Farmers’ Markets of Nova Scotia. Based in Dartmouth, he advocates for local food and the role farmers’ markets play in regional resilience. He co-founded Canadian Farmers’ Markets. This podcast is sponsored by Cohort Wholesale.



CROSS COUNTRY DIGEST

BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC strengthens food supply in rural communities

British Columbia is super natural in its beauty but super difficult to navigate in terms of food delivery.

A new fund will help improve the availability and affordability of food in B.C.'s remote, rural and Indigenous communities by strengthening the food supply chain and streamlining logistics, storage and transportation options.

"British Columbians rely on strong, local food systems and it is imperative that we look at ways to help strengthen our supply chains with new and innovative

ideas," said Pam Alexis, Minister of Agriculture and Food. "By supporting this sector, we are helping increase food security and affordability, and strengthening local economies throughout B.C."

The Food Affordability and Innovation Fund is providing as much as \$15.5 million for the new B.C. Food Storage, Distribution and Retail Program, helping recipients improve regional distribution networks and shared storage capacity; including:

- reducing costs with improvements to

warehouse and storage facilities at key locations along the supply chain;

- introducing shared transportation networks that will pool shipments;
- increasing food supply to rural and remote B.C. communities with new partnerships and collaborating on direct sourcing or bulk purchasing of ingredients;
- reducing food waste, strengthening supply chains and increasing food availability; and
- implementing technologies that will improve the efficiency of the food supply

chain, such as modern inventory-management technology.

By improving transportation and food storage, this investment will help increase food security and support B.C.'s rural, independent grocery-store operators who have been dealing with higher costs and slimmer margins to expand their capacity and serve their communities.

Source: British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture & Food Sept 14, 2023 news release

BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC Tree Fruit Cooperative sells Lake Country packing house

BC Tree Fruit Co-operative has sold its Lake Country packing house for \$15.8 million as part of its restructuring plans.

"This was a planned sale as part of the cooperative's consolidation plan that began in August of 2022," says Laurel Van Dam,

vice-president, grower relations and corporate affairs. "The cooperative still owns and operates the storage and receiving facility in Lake Country on the other side of Bottom Wood Lake Rd."

The transaction is part of the plan to

consolidate packing operations in an expanded plant in Oliver. The restructuring process has taken its toll on Warren Sarafinchin who left the CEO role after four years. Laurel Van Dam confirms that he is currently serving the cooperative

in a different capacity. Doug Pankiw, the chief financial officer, has stepped into the interim CEO role.

The cooperative is currently conducting a search for a permanent CEO.

CANADA

Wage rates to increase in five provinces on October 1

British Columbia leads the way in minimum wage rates at \$16.75 per hour, but Ontario isn't far behind at \$16.55 per hour as of October 1, 2023.

Several provinces are raising rates to match the rise in inflation. In the case of

Nova Scotia, the rate is going up six months earlier than scheduled.

Here is the breakdown by province:

British Columbia	\$16.75/hour
Alberta	\$15.00/hour
Saskatchewan	\$14.00/hour

Manitoba	\$15.30/hour
Ontario	\$16.55/hour
Québec	\$15.25/hour
New Brunswick	\$14.75/hour
Nova Scotia	\$15.00/hour
Prince Edward Island	\$15.00/hour

Newfoundland	\$14.50/hour
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The spread between the lowest and highest minimum wage rate is \$2.75 per hour, with the lowest in Saskatchewan and the highest in British Columbia.

Source: Retail Council of Canada



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CROSS COUNTRY DIGEST

QUÉBEC

Bicycle give-away brings mobility to temporary foreign workers

KAREN DAVIDSON

For a temporary foreign worker (TFW), a bicycle is a valuable asset in a remote community. An organization in Québec, Cyclo Nord-Sud, has turned its 25 years of expertise in supplying refurbished bicycles to Africa and South America, to the TFW community in Québec.

Thanks to volunteers, a pilot project has delivered 300 bicycles to TFWs to two areas: Laurentides and Estrie. The 2023 project is funded by the federal government and Immigration Québec. The bicycles meet all

legal requirements including helmets and reflectors. “There is no doubt that there is a need for bicycles,” says Ben Valkenburg, project manager, CycloNord Sud. “The workers are very happy to receive them.”

In many cases, larger farms have mini-vans to transport workers to the local supermarket, but this service is not necessarily the case in isolated areas. The bicycles are used to visit friends at neighbouring farms or even to go to medical appointments. “We hope to continue this

program,” says Valkenburg, “but with the caveat that we’d like to see local communities become more involved in providing the service and information on bicycle safety. We think there are advantages to a bicycle culture being implanted in local areas, not just metropolitan areas.”

More outreach is planned for employers. “We change lives when we supply mobility,” says Valkenburg.

He speaks with conviction and credibility. The non-profit organization has shipped 36,000



bikes to 16 countries. It was created by the Society for

Education for Cycling in Montreal.

NOVA SCOTIA

Farmers have second chance at AgriStability

Damaging rains. Extreme heat. Wildfires. All of these conditions have affected the 2023 growing season in Nova Scotia to the extent that the provincial ag minister Greg Morrow has announced assistance will be offered under the AgriStability program, even if farmers did not previously enrol.

AgriStability supports farmers experiencing a large decline in farm income by providing protection for income losses of more than 30 per cent.

“Nova Scotia’s agricultural businesses have faced real challenges due to several extreme weather events this year. That’s why we are working with the Government of Canada to help the agriculture sector,” said agriculture minister Greg Morrow. “We are giving farmers who need income support more opportunity to get it, if their incomes have dropped sharply due to damaging rains, extreme heat, wildfires or other conditions.”

Farmers who did not previously enrol in AgriStability for 2023 can now participate in the program as late participants until December 31, 2024.

AgriStability is one of the business risk management programs offered under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP). The program is cost-shared 60 per cent federal-ly and 40 per cent provincially/ territorially.

Source: Nova Scotia Ministry of Agriculture September 8, 2023 news release



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GREENHOUSE GROWER

Greenhouse Goodness campaign launches at Windsor airport

The Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers (OGVG) is launching “This is Greenhouse Goodness” campaign at the baggage claim area at the Windsor International Airport. Resembling a greenhouse farm, this campaign showcases the high concentration of greenhouses, achievements, and innovation of the sector in southwestern Ontario. Residents, guests, and dignitaries arriving in Windsor will experience the benefits of Ontario-grown greenhouse produce when entering the region through educational messaging which promotes the health attributes of greenhouse vegetables and growers’ sustainable growing practices.

“The Windsor International Airport represents the dedication and innovation that truly defines Ontario’s greenhouse vegetable growers,” said Richard Lee, OGVG executive director. “We are proud to be the largest exporter of fresh, nutritious



greenhouse produce that contributes significantly to the economic vitality of our region supporting food security.”

Windsor-Essex is known as the heart of Ontario’s agriculture and agri-tech sector that proudly employs more than 32,000 people. The region is one of the largest greenhouse clusters globally, a testament to the

exceptional quality and innovation found in local produce. Each year, area farms produce more than 503 million kilograms of fresh, nutritious, healthy greenhouse produce. The designated greenhouse area is planned to remain at the airport during the next two years.

The Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers (OGVG)



represent more than 170 greenhouse operators growing more than 3,800 acres of fresh and nutritious peppers, tomatoes, and cucumbers. Over the past decade, the sector has experienced a growth rate averaging six per cent annually and is poised to continue that growth. As agricultural innovators, the sector continues to research, develop, and

operationalize novel technologies to reinforce Canada’s domestic food supply system while enhancing its position as a major partner to support global food security.

Source: Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers September 12, 2023 news release

Biobest’s new Crop-Scanner digitizes IPM decision-making

Biobest’s Crop-Scanner platform helps growers to scout their crops quickly and accurately, which will significantly improve their IPM strategy. The innovative app and web dashboard enables growers and their Biobest advisors to remotely monitor diseases and pests and determine trends in the crop.

In addition, accurate data collection and visualization contribute to insights that help plan upcoming seasons. Digitalization offers horticulture new opportunities, and Biobest is leading the way with its Crop-Scanner. This smart, data-driven tool supports biological crop protection across the board -- from identifying pests, reporting, exchanging advice to timely and systematic intervention. The application works on smart-phones, tablets, laptops, and PCs

and is available for iOS and Android.

“The principle is simple, and the functionalities are numerous,” says Sam Gui, market development manager high tech IPM at Biobest. “The grower can draw their greenhouses on the application. The grower and their employees can then indicate where a particular pest has been observed and what stage it is in. Photos and notes can be added while scouting.”

Crop-Scanner also includes an automatic counting function. This Trap-Scanner function recognizes six pests and insects. “The method is as simple as it is effective,” Gui continues. “Take a photo of a sticky trap with your phone and Trap-Scanner will count the different insects and display them in Crop-Scanner reports. “To make optimal use of this functionality, Biobest

developed special Trap-ID trap cards. The unique design of this trap card ensures that Trap-Scanner can count the entire card surface.

The grower and Biobest advisors analyze the data together and use this information to develop specific control strategies. “The constant availability of current and historical monitoring data will lead to better advice and therefore a healthier crop,” says Gui. By digitizing data, decisions are better substantiated. The history provides insight into the progress of previous crops, so growers can fine-tune their planning for coming seasons.

Biobest trains all its advisors to support growers in the use of Crop-Scanner. The platform is being deployed in phases beginning with Belgium, Canada, Kenya, the Netherlands, UK and United States. At the same time,



work is continuing on further expanding the functionalities. In the near future, it will be possible to connect other high-tech applications such as Trap-Eye for even more convenience and better results.

Crop-Scanner is available in Canada and the eastern United

States through Plant Products – A member of Biobest Group.

For more information, please contact Scott Hodgins (Scott.Hodgins@PlantProducts.com).

Source: Biobest September 14, 2023 news release

Windset Farms unveils a brand refresh and innovative packaging

Based in Delta, British Columbia, Windset Farms is launching a brand refresh and sustainable packaging strategy. Focused on promoting its nutritious, high-quality products, including tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers and various specialty products, Windset Farms aims to captivate consumers with a fresh packaging experience.

Windset Farms has experienced tremendous growth since its inception, currently selling and marketing greenhouse production from growing regions across Canada, United States and Mexico. Windset Farms has found that simplicity holds the key to success. Chief Operating Officer, John Newell, states that, “the new packaging design gives the brand a touch of maturity, symbolic of the company’s growth, while staying true to its original art and music theme.”

Sophisticated and timeless, the brand refresh puts the focus back on the produce, the star of the show. The addition of a ladybug pays homage to Windset’s sustainable, Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA)

growing practices, while the prominent Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) or Fair-Trade logos foster customer trust - reinforcing the Windset Farms’ commitment to social sustainability, food safety and pest management.

In addition to the brand refresh, Windset continues to offer consumers more sustainable packaging options, including transitioning to monolayer LDPE bags, resulting in 20 per cent less plastic used compared to the previous pack style. The change in material will reduce plastic consumption by 108,000 lbs annually!

“We are excited to introduce our brand refresh and innovative packaging approach,” said director of sales, Ryan Cherry, at Windset Farms. “With a focus on simplicity, elegance, and sustainability, we look forward to continue expanding the Windset brand.”

The new Windset Farms branded packaging will be rolled out across all product lines, commencing this fall.

Source: Windset Farms September 13, 2023 news release



GREENHOUSE GROWER

Pure Flavor greenhouse grower acquires MightyVine

Leamington-based greenhouse grower Pure Flavor has acquired MightyVine, a leading midwest greenhouse tomato grower and brand in Rochelle, Illinois, adding to its expanding portfolio of greenhouses and distribution centres.

“We continue to see significant growth and demand for the Pure Flavor brand across North America which has prompted us to strategically invest in specific regions,” said Jamie Moracci, president and partner. “The opportunity to add MightyVine to our family of growers will allow us to further extend our reach into the midwest and beyond.”

Located just west of Chicago, the location of MightyVine’s 30-acre facility with lit production provides a continuous supply of fresh, greenhouse-grown tomatoes year-round to one of the most important cities and regions in the United States.

“Expanding our capacity with lit crop production enables us to service the midwest with U.S.-grown tomatoes, complementing our southeast programs from our Peach County, Georgia facility,” commented Moracci. For background, Pure Flavor opened its

Georgia greenhouse in late 2018 and currently grows tomatoes-on-the-vine that are distributed to key retail and foodservice partners in Georgia, Florida, North & South Carolina, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Alabama.

“The acquisition of MightyVine further demonstrates our company leadership’s ability to recognize and analyze strategic acquisition opportunities which continue to breathe enthusiasm into greater expansion possibilities,” said Jeff Moracci, chief financial officer & partner.

For additional context, the company has been very active in the last nine months. After acquiring DeTemporada Farms in late December 2022 and then Cervini Farms C5 in February 2023, Pure Flavor expanded its network in July 2023 by acquiring another distribution center in McAllen, Texas. Expansion is already underway at DeTemporada’s Phase II of 13 acres that will be completed later this year as well as development plans for Phases VI & VII as part of Pure Flavor’s master 350-acre campus plan in Leamington. The company’s strategic investments are focused on solidifying its



future as an industry leader.

“As we welcome MightyVine to the Pure Flavor family, we look forward to growing existing business relationships that have flourished over the past several years in the Midwest under the MightyVine brand. We will continue to bring flavourful greenhouse-grown tomatoes, and much more, to those loyal business partners in the years to come,” said Matt Mastronardi, executive vice-president & partner.

“Increasing our owned acreage helps facilitate our growth alongside our grower partners and supports our need of scaling up our operations to drive efficiencies. We are excited to add MightyVine to our Pure Flavor family,” said Jamie Moracci, president. With expansion comes a need for greater resources, talent-wise, to support the growth. Pure Flavor continues to lead extensive recruitment drives at all its facilities.

Pure Flavor is on a significant growth path to support its increased demand for fresh, greenhouse-grown fruits and vegetables year-round. Expect more expansion as the company develops more region-specific facilities and explores new product opportunities.

For more detail, visit: www.pure-flavor.com

Source: Pure Flavor September 7, 2023 news release

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PERSPECTIVE

Supportive land use policies needed to protect our food production capacity



BRIAN GILROY

Land use policy in various forms has been a top-of-mind issue for both the Ontario government and growers this year as the province grapples with the current housing challenge.

In the spring, the provincial government introduced Bill 97, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, 2023, and a revised Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) which proposes sweeping changes to land use planning in Ontario, many of which would have significant impact on the agriculture sector.

Along with many other Ontario farm and commodity organizations, the Ontario Fruit

& Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA) has urged the government to balance the needs of profitable farming and food production with its objectives to address Ontario's affordable housing shortage.

I'm an apple grower in the Georgian Bay area and this file carries personal relevance for me as I've seen first-hand the loss of prime food-producing land to sprawling housing developments in our region. I serve as chair of the OFVGA's Property, Infrastructure, Energy and Food Safety section, and our committee worked closely with OFVGA staff and the board to develop our sector's response to the PPS, which we submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in August 2023.

For the fruit and vegetable sector, key priorities include building sufficient and high-quality housing for temporary farm workers and maintaining existing specialty and prime agricultural lands. The need for on-farm housing of temporary foreign farm workers is not new. That's because in most cases, these programs require that farm employers provide housing for the workers and historically, this

housing has been located on-farm for worker convenience and farm efficiency.

Now, as farms are growing larger and the regulatory environment for building new on-farm worker housing becomes more complex, farm employers are increasingly turning to residential homes in nearby communities to meet their housing needs.

Current obstacles to efficient use of on-farm housing include lengthy permitting processes, inconsistent classification by municipalities and the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation, and requirements for costly Environmental Compliance Approvals for larger septic systems.

Addressing these obstacles would contribute to reduced housing pressures in surrounding communities, and OFVGA has indicated we're willing to work with the provincial government on finding solutions to these challenges. We also support the creation of an on-farm housing working group to delve into our sector's unique challenges.

The PPS also proposed changes that could ultimately reduce protections for specialty

crop lands, which we do not support. More than any other agricultural sector, edible horticulture needs access to specialty land with specific and unique features, such as microclimates, or specific soil types to grow high-value, sensitive fruit and vegetable crops.

Currently, not all land suitable for this type of production is deemed "specialty crop land" or protected through the Greenbelt or the Niagara Escarpment and should be considered for its potential value in producing fruits and vegetables before allowing other development to occur.

These protections are even more important now that Ontario's new Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Paul Calandra, has promised a full review of Greenbelt lands, including the possibility of opening up even more of it to development.

Farmland in Ontario is a key pillar of protecting and maintaining our food supply. As the climate changes and the world grapples with ongoing geopolitical turmoil, maintaining our ability to grow as much of our own food as possible has never been more important.

Except for greenhouse vegetables, Ontario is not a net exporter of fruits and vegetables. Quite the opposite. In fact, in many crops, we depend on imports as we don't currently have the local capacity to produce what we need to meet Ontario consumer needs.

In onions, for example, we can only grow enough to cover about three-quarters of domestic consumption. Asparagus are at about two-thirds, apples are at less than two-thirds, and water-melons meet less than half of our domestic consumption needs.

We support the Ontario government's Grow Ontario strategy to strengthen our agri-food sector, and provincial policy such as the PPS, if crafted carefully, can help bolster our sector to feed Canadians, increase exports, and further contribute to a healthy economy. We welcome the opportunity to work with government and be part of the process to find workable solutions.

Brian Gilroy is chair, Property, Infrastructure, Energy and Food Safety Section for the Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Association.

WEATHER VANE



Pain Court, Ontario is Canada's capital for Brussels sprouts. It's home base for Jean- Marie and Lucille Laprise and partner Dave Van Segbrook who are also hosting Farm & Food Care's Breakfast on the Farm – actually Brunch Edition! – from 10 am to 2 pm on October 21. There's no better place to connect to how food is grown. L-R: Mitchell Chaput, Jean-Marie Laprise, Dave Van Segbrook, Derek Louzon. Photo by Rosemary Chaput.

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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

THE URBAN COWBOY

Trade flows can change markets in an instant



OWEN ROBERTS

A new test of how geopolitics affects food exports is upon us. Growers need to know what’s in the air; in an era of geopolitics and climate change, trade flows can change in an instant and affect markets.

For example, in mid-September, Canada expelled a top Indian diplomat after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said links had been found between India’s government and the assassination in Canada of a Sikh activist.

Everyone was taken back, even the New York Times, calling it a “rare and explosive allegation” by a country’s leader in a breaking-news alert.

You’d expect some kind of trade fall-out to result from that dust up...which would be unfortunate, particularly for apple growers hoping for greater access to India’s huge consumer market. They saw a warming trade relationship between the U.S. and India for apple exports, based on India rescinding a 20 per cent tariff on U.S. apples, and thought it might have a ripple effect on Canada.

Maybe it still will. India just hosted the G20 summit, in which Canada took part.

But as recent history has shown, sabre-rattling among

Estimated Global Apple Volumes (cartons)					
Region	2023/2024		2022/2023		5-year Average
	Volume	2023 vs. 5-year average	Volume	2022 vs. 5-year average	Volume
China	1,951,193,682	-10.27%	1,894,345,980	-12.89%	2,174,637,313
Europe	611,572,086	-0.94%	631,833,594	2.35%	617,346,091
Canada	18,661,891	0.67%	19,687,324	6.21%	18,536,972
Ontario	7,935,000	7.74%	8,666,000	17.66%	7,365,200
Quebec	4,410,000	-18.41%	5,569,000	3.03%	5,404,999
British Colombia	3,735,000	1.53%	3,168,153	-13.88%	3,678,664
Nova Scotia	2,359,891	23.50%	2,086,071	9.17%	1,910,817
New Brunswick	222,000	25.22%	198,100	11.74%	177,292
USA	256,261,905	-0.97%	246,258,342	-4.84%	258,784,356
California	4,761,905	-20.15%	4,202,381	-20.71%	5,300,000
Michigan	32,000,000	29.65%	32,380,952	31.20%	24,680,952
New York	28,000,000	-12.82%	32,261,905	0.44%	32,119,048
Oregon	2,976,190	-20.28%	3,238,095	-13.27%	3,733,333
Pennsylvania	10,750,000	-5.23%	9,833,333	-13.31%	11,342,857
Virginia	4,350,000	1.33%	4,392,857	2.33%	4,292,857
Washington	159,523,810	-2.05%	146,190,476	-10.23%	162,857,143
Other States	13,900,000	-3.86%	13,758,342	-4.84%	14,458,165

Source: Les Producteurs de pommes du Québec/Quebec Apple Growers’ newsletter

export partners is rampant. Look at the U.S. and China. Politically, they despise each other. However, behind the scenes, China continues buying boatloads of U.S. grain and oilseeds. The USDA says private exporters are reporting sales of 123,000 metric tons of soybeans for delivery to China during the 2023/2024 marketing year.

Coming the other way, Chinese cargo ships bound for the U.S. are piled mile-high with containers of consumer goods, especially appliances and TVs. In this case, politics gives way to trade.

And that’s only the start of it. The U.S. is also trying to find sources of manufacturing other than China. So, it’s looking at more trade with Vietnam. But Vietnam, fearing China’s growing aggression, is trying to bolster its coffers by selling arms to Russia. That’s ironic, because Russia claims China is a good friend.

And didn’t Vietnam sign new protocols with China just last year

for increased fruit and vegetable exports? (Yes it did! And considering how much money the U.S. has dedicated to helping Ukraine battle Russia, isn’t it odd that the U.S. would pursue trade with an arms source for Russia?)

Then there’s U.S. and Canada trade relations with Mexico. Canada has joined the U.S. in trying to stop Mexico from banning U.S. corn exports for human consumption. All three countries’ parties are gearing up to square off under the free trade agreement. Yet while politicians and diplomats accuse each other of wrongdoings, boatloads of U.S. grain continue to arrive in Mexican ports, while fruit, vegetables and tequila come the other way.

At this time of year, our attention often turns to apples, a world commodity. A new report from USApple, a commodity organization, suggests American apples are likely to have a big presence in Canada this year. Although global apple production

is predicted to be down five percent, the USDA estimates American apple production for the 2023-24 crop year will be 250 million bushels, a 1.5 per cent increase from last year.

Production involving our largest trading partner is always worth noting. U.S. apples will have a farm-gate value of almost \$3 billion this crop year, generated primarily from fresh apple production. Washington will remain the nation’s top producer with an estimated crop of 160 million bushels valued at more than \$2 billion, a nine per cent increase over the previous year.

Michigan is expected to hold on to its No. 2 spot, despite a late frost that extended through the east and Midwest and dropped production in the water-winter wonderland state by more than 15 per cent, to 27.4 million bushels.

By comparison, Canadian apple production is forecast to fall more than five per cent (one



million bushels), to 18.7 million bushels. The USApple report says Ontario, the nation’s largest apple-growing province, is expected to decrease year-over-year production by 731,000 bushels or around eight per cent. British Columbia, on the other hand, is expected to increase production year over year by almost 18 per cent, or around 567,000 bushels.

Specific production figures aside though, for this country – and any country, really -- domestic fruit and vegetable production is vital. Whichever way the wind blows, retailers and consumers will continue to value local production as insurance against trade vagaries and political whims.

And as the headlines show, those are not in short supply.

Owen Roberts is a past-president of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists and a communications instructor at the University of Illinois.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Re: “Promoting Ontario as a preferred destination for international farm workers”

In Ontario and across Canada, agriculture that requires massive amounts of manual labour has fulfilled farm labour shortages through the Temporary Foreign Worker program (TFW). A good article in the September 2023 issue of The Grower by Bill George and Stefan Larass helps to identify that need and to expand ways in which more farm workers can be found. The Grower, FARMS, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association (OFVGA) and Service Canada have worked hard over the years to help meet the labour needs of agriculture and it is greatly appreciated.

Many of the full-time Canadian farm workers that growers employ were previously TFWs. TFWs have often married to obtain citizenship or been sponsored by growers. The pathway to

citizenship in Canada is long, difficult and costly. It’s easier if you have post-secondary education but not many university graduates are looking for permanent work as full-time farm workers. The immigration process was not designed to recruit permanent farm workers. I have first-hand knowledge because I sponsored a former TFW 37 years ago. The worker I sponsored stayed in my employ for 35 years, eventually becoming my farm foreman until his retirement. Of the five children that arrived with him to Canada, all graduated from post-secondary institutions and all hold well paying skilled jobs. His wife also retired after 35 years as well as a PFW at a regional care centre. My other two long-time (10+ years), full-time, farm workers were former TFWs who obtained citizenship through marriage.

Canada wants immigrants and agriculture also wants full-time farm workers but the present system to recruit full-time workers to agriculture is not succeeding as it should. One way that would benefit agriculture and farm workers the best, is if a pathway for permanent citizenship for TFWs were to be created through FARMS with Service Canada like SAWP. Those farm workers who have worked in Canada for five years with the same employer as a TFW should be able to qualify and stay on the TFW program going back and forth as a TFW until they are granted residency. Labour advocates, growers, government and TFWs all support the sponsorship of TFWs to become workers but a direct simpler process through FARMS has to be created.

One of the greatest criticisms that

labour advocates voice is that TFWs should become Canadian citizens. Let’s respond to those advocates with actions that make Canadian residency for TFWs common. Let’s do our best so that many TFWs can become Canadian full-time farm workers and satisfy some of the labour shortages in agriculture for long-term, full-time worker labour shortages. Can the OFVGA, FARMS and Service Canada develop a program to make this possible?

Jamie Slingerland
Pillitteri Estates Winery and Vineyards,
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON

FARM & FOOD CARE ONTARIO

Seasonal workers brought together for spirited soccer tournament



Red jerseys represent Schuyler Farms.



White jerseys represent Brenn-B Farms.

JESS McCANN

The Ontario-based Farms of Norfolk Football Association hosted the fourth annual inter-farm soccer tournament on August 13, 2023. Run by local volunteers, the tournament invites seasonal workers from local farms to enter teams for the friendly -- but fierce -- competition. This year, 12 teams were transported

to the Simcoe, Ontario pitch. The Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA), supported by Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO), attended the event to support the More than a Migrant Worker project. T-shirts were handed out. Several players agreed to be interviewed on the spot. This was OFVGA and FFCO's first year attending the tournament. Accompanied by a

photographer, videographer and Spanish translator, they captured photos, videos and interviews from the event. During the day, the crew followed the progress of two teams: Brenn-B Farms and Schuyler Farms. While neither of the teams made it to the finals, spectators couldn't help but be enthralled by the amazing atmosphere. Migrant workers arrived at the soccer fields by the bus load, each team stepping out in bright-coloured jerseys sporting the logo of their farms. As the day went on, food trucks arrived and the smell of jerk chicken and tacos filled the air; Caribbean music could be heard from every corner of the event and attendees mingled with friends and family while cheering on the players. Bright sunny skies made for an amazing day that brought together hundreds of members of the Simcoe, Ontario community. In the weeks following the tournament, FFCO followed up with team members from Brenn-B and Schuyler Farms as a part of the More than a Migrant Worker project. Every worker mentioned the importance of soccer and bringing together a team to practise and play outside of work. "When I first came here (to Canada), I was so astonished that there was a soccer team at the farm. I heard about it and right away got myself a pair of soccer shoes and started practising," said Siven Smith from Jamaica. The tournament itself made a huge impact on the migrant worker community. "With all the

people and supporters and music, it makes you feel like you are in an international tournament; it builds your confidence," said Terry Lewis from Trinidad and Tobago, as he recounted the day. Terry served as keeper for the Schuyler Farms team, making some terrific saves throughout their games. The soccer tournament interviews are only a portion of the More than a Migrant Worker project. In 2023, workers and farmers from Chromczak Farms, Meyers Fruit Farms, Haist Family Farm, Malivoire Winery, Cherry Lane, C. & J. Ginseng and TamBerry Farms will all be featured as a part of the project. More than a Migrant Worker was launched in 2021 by the OFVGA as a public outreach initiative. With thousands of workers making their way to Ontario each year to help produce food for Canadians, this

project aims to capture the stories of some of these incredible individuals and understand what being a migrant worker in Ontario means. To date, the More than a Migrant Worker project has had more than 135 workers share their stories. Those stories have reached hundreds of thousands of Ontarians with more than 130,000 website views in 2023, alongside social media campaigns and story features in The National Post and Toronto Star. For more information on the project or to read some of the amazing stories, visit www.morethanamigrantworker.ca Farms interested in introducing some of their great workers can email info@farmfoodcare.org for more information.

Jess McCann is communications coordinator, Farm & Food Care Ontario.

COMING EVENTS 2023

Oct 2-9	Ontario's Agriculture Week
Oct 4-5	Canadian Greenhouse Conference, Niagara Falls, ON
Oct 17-18	Canadian Centre for Food Integrity Public Trust Summit, Westin Airport Hotel, Toronto, ON
Oct 19-21	PMA Fresh Summit Convention & Expo, Anaheim, CA
Oct 21	FFCO Breakfast on the Farm, Laprise Farm, Chatham, ON
Nov 3-12	Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, Toronto, ON
Nov 14	Arrell Food Summit, Toronto, ON
Nov 16	Farm and Food Care Annual Harvest Gala, Milton Banquet & Conference Centre, Milton, ON
Nov 19-21	Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference, Sheraton Fallsview, Niagara Falls, ON
Nov 20-22	Potato Growers of Alberta Conference & Trade Show, Grey Eagle Resort & Casino, Calgary, AB
Nov 22-26	Canada's Outstanding Young Farmer National Event, Laval, QC
Nov 24	Ontario Produce Marketing Association Annual Gala & Awards Ceremony, Bellvue Manor, Vaughan, ON
Nov 29	CanAgPlus Annual General Meeting VIRTUAL
Dec 5-7	Great Lakes Expo, DeVos Place, Grand Rapids, MI
Dec 6	Ontario Potato Board Annual General Meeting, Delta Hotel, Guelph, ON
2024	
Jan 10-11	Potato Expo. Austin, Texas
Jan 24-27	Guelph Organic Conference, Guelph, ON
Jan 28-31	North American Strawberry Growers' Association Meeting & Conference, Hershey, PA
Feb 5-9	Global Minor Use Summit IV, Madrid, Spain



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RETAIL NAVIGATOR

Artificial intelligence can change how you sell



PETER CHAPMAN

There is no doubt artificial intelligence (AI) has been integrated into agriculture for some time.

Sorting, grading and packing are areas where artificial intelligence is becoming essential. Equipment gets ‘smarter’ the more volume that goes through the line. People should improve their ability to do a job after some experience but if they do not show up for their shift or have a cap on hours to work, this situation limits an operation. Equipment that continues to improve efficiency and operate longer hours are a benefit.

Now we are entering a new era where AI can impact how you interact with consumers and customers. With the option to use AI to generate information about product use and communicate with consumers, the conversation changes.

Artificial intelligence is available to everyone

Many businesses and institutions are grappling with their position about AI and where it should be used. Our daughter’s history teacher indicated a number of students had submitted an essay five minutes prior to the deadline and the submissions were very close in content. His opinion was these students had left the task to the last minute and used Chat GPT to create their essays. His position? This was not an acceptable way to write essays. We had the conversation at home. Our daughter did write her own essay, but was aware of several people in the class who said this was a great solution.

AI applications such as Chat GPT comb millions of websites for content. They use this learning to complete tasks, as directed by the user. The response time is very fast and the applications have the ability to create responses in a format suitable for different purposes. Currently, this app is free and if you have a smart phone, you have access to it.

Applications in selling your products

Food and beverage brands should communicate regularly with consumers over social media

and other media channels. The AI applications can write copy for these channels and even format it to fit the platform you are using. For example, AI can write it in a style that is most effective for Facebook or LinkedIn.

Some producers maintain a database to communicate directly with consumers. This can be very effective to develop relationships, share recipes and other information about your products. The AI applications can create the content for direct communication to your community of consumers. AI can even write your holiday message to your online community if you choose to send one.

Almost every producer has a website. Many brand owners will tell you the website needs work or a refresh. AI can generate content for your website. Providing information to your target market that complements your product does increase the value of your website.

AI is an option to the traditional Google search. You can do research with AI to understand the potential for specific market segments. The difference between AI and Google is that AI will do the work for you, as opposed to going through multiple websites to get the information you need.

However, there is a caveat!

With free versions of applications such as Chat GPT, you are not aware of the sources used to compile the information. We should all be wary of trusting any information gleaned from the Internet if you do not know the source. You should always check recipes to ensure they actually work in the kitchen. Remember, the power of your website is authenticity!

AI can reduce the time and energy required and give you a good starting point. You need to ensure everything you share with consumers and customers reflects your brand and how you want to be perceived in the market. We are all learning about the capabil-

ities of AI and the applications it might have in our industry. AI in this new capacity can be perceived as incredibly powerful and game-changing or frightening and taking over what humans do. Regardless of your perspective, agriculture businesses need to assess if it will be a resource in sales and marketing.

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

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FOCUS: START-UPS AND SMART TECHNOLOGY

State-of-the-art apple facility integrates global expertise with local start-ups



The Greefa pre-sorting line can handle 12,000 kilograms of apples per hour, taking bins out of controlled atmosphere storage, scanning and tracing each bin as they move down the line.



Gerbe Botden stands on a bridge overlooking the flumes with apples sorted to size. In the back, a crane is placing a sorted bin onto the floor.



Sacha Botden supervises the tray line. It consists of four automatic tray packers which can handle up to 170 apples per minute.



The robotic arm makes sure that each apple is settled gently into its nesting cavity.



Total Operations Performance (TOP), Waterloo, Ontario provided the robots for the bagging operation.



Customized printing and labelling ensures traceability from orchard to retailer.



The palletizer is a labour-saving device in a complex operation of moving apples to their final destination.

KAREN DAVIDSON

A five-year research and contracting process has come to fruition for Blue Mountain Fruit Company. The Botden family –Marius and Irma with the next generation of Gitty, Sacha and Gerbe – have installed a 82,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art sorting, packaging and storage facility for 500 acres of their own apples near Thornbury, Ontario. Plus they pack for another 20 Ontario growers.

“Dad and I travelled Europe and North America starting in 2018,” says Gerbe Botden, orchard manager, mobilized by the fact that equipment was aging and staff turn-over was increasing. “We looked at packing operations and high-speed packing lines. The goal was to retain apple quality while improving through-put as gently as possible.”

They broke ground in July 2019, just months before the global pandemic curtailed equipment shipments and slowed down construction schedules. Despite formidable delays, their first season using the line was in 2021. And finally, they hosted an open house in May 2023. Another harvest season is underway, starting with McIntosh and Honeycrisp apples.

Most impressive is the integration of technology from global leaders as well as local start-up companies. Global leader Greefa, a Netherlands-based company, played a central role with Provide Agro supporting the local installation. Four cameras take up to 160 photos of each apple to determine any external defects to the millimetre. These conditions range from bruising and bitter pit to russetting, limb-rot, punctures, hail damage and insect damage. Internal defects –internal browning, water core and moldy core -- can be detected as well.

Further down the line, a Waterloo, Ontario company, Total Operations Performance (TOP) brings its robotics expertise to bear on bagging apples.

Edi Sablic, TOP president, spent 20 years as a senior operational manager with a large bakery company, before turning his expertise to agriculture. He’s worked with the Norfolk Fruit Growers’ Association on a case erector system and more recently with Blue Mountain Fruit Company. His four engineers have written the algorithms to pick up bags of apples and place them into cases. Changes can be made easily to pack into RPCs, according to retailer specifications.

A 3-D vision system analyses the height, length and width of the bag and then instructs the robot on how to pick up the bag.

“My engineers can remotely monitor the process,” explains Sablic. “There’s no maintenance costs.” Sablic’s company has worked with growers in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Québec British Columbia and Washington State on customized packing solutions that use a robotic arm.

Overall, the Botden family is now at ease with the harvest operations from orchard to packhouse. In summary, the innovations include:

- Integrated storage facility to control quality air/temperature/inventory control to ensure quality is maintained until packed
- Automated pre-sorter to meet retailer standards with dynamic sorting capabilities
- Waxer/dryer removes all debris, polishes and waxes to the exact standard for each variety and improves shelf life
- Automated weigher & bag fillers ensure apple combinations to achieve targeted weight specifications, while gently handling apples and applying traceability code
- Automatic tray fillers ensure consistent presentation to customers
- Computerized printing and labeling with traceability code is applied to each box containing information all the way to the original block where the apples were harvested
- Automatic palletizer ensures loads are secure and product is received with the highest quality

Tour the facility by means of this YouTube video: <https://bluemountainfruitcompany.com/new-packing-plant/>

FOCUS: START-UPS AND SMART TECHNOLOGY

Pilot robot shows promise for multi-uses in vineyards



Gabriel Demarco (L) and Josh Aitken are involved in the Naio robot pilot at Cave Spring Vineyard, Beamsville, Ontario. Photos by Marcella DiLonardo.



Chuck Baresich, Haggerty AgRobotics Company.

KAREN DAVIDSON

“The Naio Ted robot works,” Gabriel Demarco says with excitement about the machine that’s pronounced Ni-O. Since 2018, he’s been the winemaker for Cave Spring Vineyard, near Beamsville, Ontario.

“We have a very dynamic team here and we’re always working to do better,” says Demarco. “A robot was trialed back in 2018, and through failure and successes, we’re now collaborating with Haggerty AgRobotics Company on a robot that will have a UV-C attachment for killing powdery mildew.”

UV-C is the shortest wavelength of the three forms of ultra-violet light. The shorter the wavelength, the more harmful the UV radiation. The C-form kills micro-organisms.

While the current price tag of \$350,000 is a barrier to adoption, Demarco affirms how important it is to collaborate with

start-ups to de-risk the new technology. With more field results and confirmed benefits, he predicts that prices will come down for early adopters.

In 2023, the pilot was about making sure the machine could pivot and turn in the five acres of mapped vineyard at Cave Spring. It’s an autonomous 100% electric vehicle that can work up to 10 hours. Currently, the machine does the ground-work of hilling and de-hilling. It was also tested with a weed attachment for potential under-vine tillage in a two-foot span. The wish list includes a lawn mower attachment for the cover crops between the rows. It may also be able to predict yield with an attachment from another start-up, Vivid Machines.

Into the future, Demarco is hoping for a UV application for mildew and weed control. They are working with a local company that’s focussed on using UV with LED lighting.

“The hurdles to overcome are the ebbs and flows in wavelengths with traditional



Riesling grapes are almost ready for harvest.

UV lighting,” says Demarco. “We’re excited about the potential of using an energy-efficient LED system.”

The AgRobotics Working Group, helmed by OMAFRA’s Kristen Obeid, has been instrumental in bringing together innovative growers, agribusiness, researchers and companies to pilot these new technologies.

SCENE ON TWITTER/X

Bradley Van Luyk
@bradleyvanluyk

1 pass Seeding oil seed radish and working it in. Very nice unit works very good in our muck soils. @GreatPlains_Ag turbo till with turbo seeder.

ONTARIO
FRUIT & VEGETABLE
GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

NOTICE OF MEETING

is hereby given that the
165TH Annual Members and Directors' Meeting
of the
Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association
will be held in person at Hilton Niagara Falls/Fallsvue Suites
on February 20th, 2024

Election of Directors of the Association will take place as well as dealing with resolutions and any other business that may arise.

AWARD
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Award of Merit is our way of recognizing the outstanding contribution made by an individual or organization to our fruit and vegetable industry. This recognition may include the strategic leadership, technical input, and/or the dedication shown by this person or organization to our fruit and vegetable sector.

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START-UPS AND SMART TECHNOLOGY SPOTLIGHT

Vivid Machines beta tests growth rate model in apples

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KAREN DAVIDSON



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Variable lighting, row widths, fruit varieties and tree widths – these are all considered and analyzed in an emerging technology for predicting yield in tree fruit orchards. It’s technically difficult to distinguish green apples from green leaves. Now in its second year of orchard work, Vivid Machines Inc. is quickly improving the accuracy of its predictions to 90 per cent in most circumstances.

Jenny Lemieux, co-founder and CEO, Vivid Machines Inc., explains that the goal is for the ATV-mounted camera sensor to count and size the fruitlets, the beginnings of a new crop so that hand thinning – or chemical thinning – can remove the heavy crop load and allow remaining apples to size properly.

As of summer 2023, Lemieux shares that growers in Ontario, Nova Scotia, Michigan, New York and Washington have committed a total of 5,000 acres to the technology. What’s most encouraging to her is that some growers are now confident enough to run the ATV-mounted camera themselves. The aggregated data from all participating growers help to improve predictability for the

next season.

“We’re now trying a beta version of the growth rate model,” she says. “This will predict the fruit set and how and where to pinpoint thinning. This is particularly helpful in large acreages. In the future, this system could replace hand counting.”

“We’re in the alpha stage of shareable maps that teams can use for precise thinning programs,” Lemieux continues. “We’re learning as fast as possible to deliver strong value for fruit producers.”

After thinning, the ability to predict yield when small fruit is at 40 to 45 mm, would aid the apple industry. Growers could communicate with confidence to their packing teams about labour and packaging requirements and ultimately, retail customers, how much fruit will be available for the coming year.

Specialty niche exists to build housing for seasonal workers

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This start-up company has successfully built seasonal farm worker housing units for a number of Niagara-area growers. The foundation is made of concrete slab on grade, explains Sandra Salverda, business manager.

The company uses steel structural insulated panels. The exterior and interior wall are anchored together on the concrete foundation. Because these panels are used as interior walls, no wooden beams or studs are required with standard designs. The roof is also constructed using these insulated panels.

Generally, a home constructed in this manner takes about half the time of a traditional wood-framed home, depending on the features and finishes. If desired, drywall or any other finish can be incorporated. For off-shore worker housing that requires a deep clean, it is not necessary to add drywall as this diminishes the ability to easily clean the walls.

Homes can be heated by a forced-air furnace or in-floor heating powered by gas, propane or electricity. Air-conditioning can be incorporated as well.

“We aim to hide all plumbing and electrical within the walls and structure using innovative methods and techniques,” says Salverda.

The windows and doors are measured and cut as with a traditional build, secured with steel channels for a tight and clean finish.

Air flow is not a concern. A heat recovery ventilation system can be included in the design.

Smart Home Designs Niagara has built expertise in coordinating permits with the municipality on behalf of clients. While standard concepts and floorplans are available, the company can customize the size to accommodate the grower’s needs.

While the 2010 Seasonal Farmworker Housing Guidelines are still in place, Smart Home Designs Niagara references proposed changes to the current guidelines when designing a layout for worker accommodations. A link to the report can be found here: <https://shorturl.at/egA58>

“We’re excited to be working on a new project in the London, Ontario area,” says Salverda.

From past experience, she says that once municipal permits are received, an eight-person building can be put up in 16 weeks. Getting permits for the septic capacity is the biggest hurdle. “The building project really starts and ends with the septic system,” she says. “Hire a local septic designer to find out what capacity you need for your situation.”

START-UPS AND SMART TECHNOLOGY SPOTLIGHT

Regulatory changes are anticipated for drone use

KAREN DAVIDSON

Look up! More drones are anticipated to be in the air in 2024 as Transport Canada updates its regulations for special flight operating certificates. That’s the prediction of Felix Weber, AgDrone.ca, who has been operating agricultural drones since 2011 near Palmerston, Ontario. “Drones have been slow to take off,” says Weber, who first used them as a tool to GPS map field variability and to identify stressed zones in fields. His commercial interest started with senseFly fixed wing drones, followed by an association with Wintex Agro, a Danish company, which specialized in precision probe soil sampling. With GPS able to pinpoint and sample the same location every year, the benefits were clear in terms of a repeatable location and consistent sampling from one year to the next. Fast forward five years to 2018 when Transport Canada began an extensive review. By 2024, the ministry is expected to announce changes that allow drones with their heavier payloads to operate with fewer restrictions under an advanced

operator certificate. Weber is one of the members of a national sub-committee providing counsel. If enacted, the changes would allow operators to use drones with a total weight of 150 kilograms that would include a load of seed or fertilizer. The benefit to growers would be to seed or fertilize in wet areas of a field that are not accessible by tractor. Or the grower could go ahead and spread material with a weatherproof drone in rain or shine. Importantly, growers can use drones to spray biopesticides. “We can help clients with a special flight operating certificates to carry a 50-litre payload,” says Weber. This is the intersect between smart technology and the new array of products on the market. Research conducted in the U.S. on the effectiveness, user and environmental safety of crop protection products applied by drones is promising. In horticulture, Weber has seen how potato growers are using drones to identify stressed areas of the field, detecting where early blight may be starting. With an accurate field map, they can now spot treat. Satellite imagery helped in the past, but drones provide much more accurate high resolution.

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Spore traps provide disease data so growers can test before they treat

Kristine White had been on the cutting edge of indoor air sampling for more than two decades when a request arrived for an outdoor air sampler for farmers. “We were shocked to find there wasn’t one,” says White, CEO of Spornado. “So we designed the Spornado sampler. That first field pilot in potatoes began in 2018 and business has exploded since then.” Use of the Spornado spore trap has expanded to more than a dozen crops and disease combinations. The company recently upgraded the air sampler to include solar panels and a small fan to increase the collection of air-borne fungal pathogens. Spore traps are now used in crops as diverse as grapes, strawberries and apples. That’s because growers have testified to their utility in detecting spores of fungal disease before the naked eye could observe disease symptoms. White explains that since the company’s start in potato crops, testing for a wide array of fungal pathogens has been developed including early and late blight in tomato, mildews and botrytis in a number of crops including peppers, onion, cucumber, and Cercospora in sugar beet and soy.

“We are pleased to be working with prominent scientists from Michigan State University to trial Spornado testing for the emerging and devastating tar spot disease in corn,” says White. “The Spornado is also used in vineyards to detect powdery and downy mildew in grapes, and new in 2022, in greenhouses for various diseases in peppers. Spornado traps are used as far afield in Canada as Prince Edward Island and Manitoba, and abroad in Europe and South America. For two years, studies have been conducted with staff from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). Wendy McFadden-Smith (grapes), Erica Pate (strawberries) and Kristy Grigg-McGuffin (apples) have been looking at various diseases and fungicide resistance. The Spornado team was able to detect FRAC group 11 fungicide resistance genes from spores in the air. They believe that they will be able to offer fungicide resistance services to growers in addition to early detection. Growers would be able to make better decisions about not just when to spray but what to spray as well.

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Sugarbeet cyst nematode – preparing for the future

AMANDA TRACEY

With the official arrival of fall, it is a great time of year to sample fields with suspected nematode issues. For sugarbeet growers, the risk of sugarbeet cyst nematode being introduced to Ontario is rising with each growing season. Fortunately, this nematode has not been found in Ontario yet, but having some facts on this pest and sampling problematic fields in the fall, will hopefully help growers identify the pest quickly and help minimize yield losses.

Sugarbeet cyst nematodes have been found in sugar beet fields in most sugarbeet growing states in the United States, including Michigan. These

nematodes have also been a problem in several other sugarbeet-producing countries, including many in Europe. At high rates, these nematodes have caused significant reduction in yields and decreased profits. Over the past 30 years, the number of fields in Michigan infested with sugarbeet nematode has increased quite significantly.

There are many different types of plant parasitic nematodes. Although most cyst nematodes have a specific host, an especially challenging aspect of the sugarbeet cyst nematode is that it can infect more than 220 plant species besides sugarbeets, including many Brassica vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower. In terms of life cycle, the sugarbeet

cyst nematode can have two generations per year. It can also stay dormant in the soil for several years when it is contained in a cyst, which is like a sphere of armour. One cyst can hold up to 300 nematode eggs.

The sugarbeet cyst nematode damages the roots of sugarbeets. These nematodes can often be seen right on the roots. If you notice areas in a sugarbeet field that appear to have wilted leaves during the middle of hot summer days or nutrient deficiencies similar to nitrogen, it is worth looking into what may be going on in these locations.

Management of the sugarbeet cyst nematode has proven to be a challenge for many growers outside of Ontario. However, integrating common methods



such as three- to four-year crop rotations with non-host crops, good weed control, planting in soil temperatures under 15° Celsius, biosecurity measures such as thorough cleaning of equipment used between fields, and chemical controls are some things that can be done to keep this pest at bay.

It is recommended that you sample soil and root tissue for the presence of sugarbeet cyst nematode and seek an expert opinion if you are ever unsure about a pest. For a sugarbeet field, sampling should be conducted during the late summer months into fall, when soil temperatures begin to cool down. Take multiple 20 cm (8-inch) core samples from across

the field, discarding the top 2.5 – 5 cm (1-2 inches) of soil, and mix gently in a bucket before transferring to a labelled bag or container, packaging, and shipping to an agriculture laboratory. Make sure to keep your samples cool at all times, especially while shipping. The nematodes need to be alive for extraction to have a successful identification.

If you believe that you might have sugarbeet cyst nematodes in your field or would like more information on sampling procedures, please reach out to Amanda Tracey, vegetable crop specialist with OMAFRA at amanda.tracey@ontario.ca.

Amanda Tracey is a vegetable crop specialist, OMAFRA.

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CROP PROTECTION

Fruit & Vegetable Growers of Canada host successful 2023 crop protection tour



CHRIS DUYVELSHOFF

It can be hard to envision the realities of farming while sitting in an office. That's why the Fruit & Vegetable Growers of Canada (FVGC) hosted another crop protection field tour for government staff in August 2023. Joined by officials from Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Pest Management Centre, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the tour showcased the unique considerations of horticultural crop production, and the daily crop protection challenges facing growers.

After gathering in Ottawa, the tour crossed the bridge into Gatineau and departed for farm stops in southern Québec, a region with very diverse horticulture. The first stop of the day was to Verger Trottier, an apple orchard located in the hills of St. Joseph-du-Lac, just west of Montreal. Alexandre Simard began by giving us an overview of the history of his orchard and the ongoing process of replacing some of the older trees with newer plantings.

We were also joined by advisors from Agropomme, an agronomic consulting services group that was working with many of the orchards in the area. They provided an excellent overview of how they use trapping, models, and mating disruption to deliver integrated pest management techniques for the local orchards. Their demonstration of the placement of mating disruption ties in the trees for codling moth was the first time many had observed this strategy of pest management.

After a short drive to the north

side of Laval, we made our second stop at Les Productions Margaric Inc. Owned by current FVGC board member Jocelyn Gibouleau, the farm is a large producer of field vegetables including broccoli, cauliflower, cantaloupe, cucumbers, peppers, celery and lettuce. The company now farms more than 700 acres. To meet the needs of its expanding customers, Margaric also began growing in southern Ontario near Chatham and in 2015 established a farm in Florida to provide out-of-season harvests to Canada.

Southern Québec experienced exceptional volumes of rainfall during the 2023 growing season and this was reflected in high disease pressure. We stopped at a bell pepper field with the lower areas of the field yellowing and dying. Jocelyn Gibouleau explained how quickly the soil-borne Phytophthora blight can take down pepper plants and that much of the field would be gone without fungicide protection. He also explained how they would benefit from injecting a fungicide product into the drip line – allowed in the United States but not on the Canadian label of this product. We also observed two cucumber fields, one of which had finished harvest and was no longer being treated for downy mildew -- it was nearly defoliated showing how rapidly this disease progresses.

Another discussion topic at Margaric was the importance of having a harmonized maximum residue limit (MRL) with our trading partners such as the United States. Jocelyn Gibouleau explained how one product registered in Canada had a lower MRL in the United States and they were not sure if they could use the product as the vegetables were planned for export. Our stop at Margaric concluded with a wonderful lunch, including fresh produce from the farm, allowing us to enjoy vegetables and fruits from the fields we had seen earlier in the day. It was the best cantaloupe most of us have ever had!

The final stop of the day was Les Fermes Petite Nation Inc., a 1,000-acre farm in Montebello. The owners Daniel and Charles Bock have a strong emphasis on soil health and grow a two- to



“Jocelyn Gibouleau, Les Productions Margaric Inc., Laval, Québec, explained how quickly the soil-borne Phytophthora blight can take down pepper plants and that much of the field would be gone without fungicide protection.



The tour group consisted of officials from Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Pest Management Centre, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. The 2023 crop protection tour, hosted by Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada, showcased the unique considerations of horticultural crop production and the daily crop protection challenges facing growers.

three-year rotation of forage and legume cover crops before planting potatoes again. They discussed how an agronomic consultant provides them advice on crop protection. Daniel Bock noted how 2023 was the worst season for late blight they had experienced in years due to the wet conditions. There were also a few Colorado potato beetles munching on the leaves in the field we stopped at, allowing

attendees to get a glimpse of these colourful and destructive pests up close.

Consistent across all stops were the growers highlighting the critical need to continue to have access to effective crop protection tools, especially as older products are removed from the market. There was lots of engagement between the grower hosts, industry representatives and government participants through-

out the tour, making this event a great success. We believe events like this help to promote greater knowledge-sharing between growers and government and improved understanding of both practical and policy needs.

Chris Duyvelshoff is crop protection advisor, Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Association.



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CROP PROTECTION

Bayer launches two potato products for 2024

The Crop Science division of Bayer has announced that Emesto Complete fungicide and insecticide seed-piece treatment and Velum Rise fungicide/nematicide have been registered for use in Canada. Emesto Complete and Velum Rise expand Bayer’s commitment to provide Canadian potato growers with leading crop protection products.

“This is a very exciting time,” says Meghann Garlough, campaign marketing manager, Fruit and Vegetables at Bayer. “Emesto Complete and Velum Rise are part of our commitment to delivering effective, innovative, and convenient solutions for potatoes.”

Emesto Complete fungicide and insecticide seed-piece treatment is a co-pack that includes Group 4 insecticide clothianidin and the strengths of Emesto Silver fungicide with Group 3 prothioconazole and

Group 7 penflufen for broad-spectrum protection against key pests and diseases. The inclusion of the new and improved clothianidin formulation provides excellent control of aphids, Colorado potato beetles, potato flea beetle and potato leafhopper.

The fungicide actives are highly effective in protecting against some of the worst diseases, such as fusarium tuber rot, including current resistant strains and seed-borne rhizoctonia such as black scurf, stem, and stolon canker.

“As an all-in-one seed-piece treatment, Emesto Complete offers protection in one convenient package so you can feel confident in your potato crop from the beginning,” says Garlough. “Not only is it simple to apply, Emesto Complete is also efficient with a low-dose rate and low water volumes.”

Emesto Complete will be available for the 2024 growing

season. Just like Emesto Silver, each case of Emesto Complete will treat 425 cwt of seed. Farmers are encouraged to talk to their local Bayer representative and retail to learn more, or visit cropscience.bayer.ca/EmestoComplete.

Velum Rise is a broad-spectrum fungicide/nematicide for in-furrow application in potatoes that combines the Group 7 active ingredients fluopyram and penflufen to deliver advanced protection against crop diseases and nematodes. Velum Rise builds on the trusted performance and user experience of Velum Prime, while broadening the disease spectrum helping Canadian potato farmers maximize quality and yield potential. It provides excellent control of soil-borne black scurf, stem, and stolon canker caused by Rhizoctonia solani, as well as providing suppression of early blight, black



dot, and plant pathogenic nematodes.

“Velum Rise complements the Bayer potato portfolio by providing strong control on yield-robbing diseases,” says Garlough. “Canadian potato growers now have two additional tools in their field management system,” says Garlough. “Velum Rise is compatible with other in-furrow products such as Minuet biological fungicide and with Emesto Silver or Emesto

Complete seed-piece treatment.”

Velum Rise will be available in 8.1 L jugs for the 2024 growing season. At a rate of 404 mL/ac, one jug will treat 20 acres. Farmers are encouraged to talk to their local Bayer representative and retail to learn more, or visit cropscience.bayer.ca/VelumRise.

Source: Bayer CropScience September 19, 2023 news release

Subdue Maxx fungicide label expanded to manage pythium root rot on greenhouse tomatoes

JOSH MOSIONDZ

The Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) recently approved a minor use label expansion registration for Subdue Maxx fungicide for control of pythium root rot on greenhouse tomatoes in Canada. Posterity fungicide was already labeled for disease control on a wide range of crops in Canada. This minor use proposal 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 disease management decisions within a robust integrated disease management program and should consult the complete label before using Subdue Maxx fungicide.

For a copy of the new minor use label your local greenhouse vegetable crops specialist, local regional supply

Crop(s)	Target	Rate (mL product /ha)	Application Information	PHI (days)
Greenhouse Tomatoes	Control of pythium root rot	1.5 – 2.5	Mix 1.5 to 2.5 mL of product in 10 L of water. Ensure that the growing media of container-grown plants is moist prior to a drench application of Subdue MAXX Fungicide. Irrigate within 1-2 days to ensure product reaches the root zone. Use the higher rate under conditions of high disease pressures, or when there is a history of high Pythium disease pressures in the greenhouse. Application Volume: Apply 250 mL of the Subdue MAXX mixture as a drench to the growing media at the base of each plant. One application per planting cycle. Apply 7-14 days after transplanting or when Pythium root rot is present.	1

outlet, or visit the PMRA label site <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pest/registant-titulaire/tools-outils/label-etiq-eng.php>

Josh Mosiondz is minor use coordinator, OMAFRA.

Palmer amaranth found in Ontario

Recently, an Ontario landowner and his agronomist noticed a “weird looking pigweed” along one of their fields and brought the sample to the Department of Plant Agriculture. Dr. François Tardif and Mike Cowbrough identified the plant as Palmer amaranth. Plant material was subsequently provided to TurnKey Genomics, which confirmed this visual identification with a DNA test.

“I think we all knew that it was only a matter of time before this weed reared its head on farms in Ontario,” says Mike Cowbrough, weed specialist, field crops, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA).



“The good news is that there only appears to be the one plant but the area will be scouted again this fall to look for more. I believe the most productive thing that can be done at this time is to gain familiarity with the key identifying features of this species so that any additional sightings can be dealt with before any seed is produced and spread.”

Early fall is a good time of year to identify plants, especially in dry bean and soybean fields.

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Cleanfarms to pick up in four provinces this fall

Each fall, Cleanfarms teams spread out across the country, bringing a valued opportunity to local farmers to safely and conveniently dispose of unwanted and obsolete agricultural pesticides.

This year’s program features 72 collection events – some of which are one-day blitz style collections and others that are multi-day events. They will take place in:

- Quebec: September 18 to October 6 with a mix of blitz and multi-day events
- British Columbia: Vancouver Island, October 2 to 4 and Fraser Valley, October 10 to 13
- Saskatchewan (Southern): October 23 to 27
- Prince Edward Island: October 30 to November 10 (all multi-day events)

This is an important opportunity to collect items that are no longer needed and bring them for safe disposal. Farmers are encouraged to bring:

- old or unwanted agricultural pesticides (identified with a Pest Control Product number on the label; includes used miticide strips)

- commercial pesticides for golf courses and industrial and commercial pest control products (identified with a Pest Control Product number on the label)
- livestock/equine medications that are used on-farm for livestock, poultry or horses (identified with a DIN number, serial number, notification number or Pest Control Product number on the label).

The program does NOT accept:

- fertilizer, diluted rinsate solution, large quantities of unopened product, and treated seed (except in Québec)
- full and unopened jugs of adjuvant or surfactant
- aerosol containers, premises disinfectants and sanitizers
- needles or sharps, medicated feed, waste and medications from veterinary clinics, ear tags
- domestic pesticides and any other household hazardous waste.

“Knowing that there is a safe way of managing hazardous on-farm waste materials, farmers appreciate this program and wait for it to return to their region every three years. Not only that, but we’re always glad to meet up



with new farmers every time we’re in each region,” says Cleanfarms’ Executive Director Barry Friesen. “We’ve been told that this program provides peace of mind for farmers, understanding that the materials they bring will be disposed of according to the highest health and safety standards.”

The crop protection industry

members of Cleanfarms, in concert with the Canadian Animal Health Institute, cover the full cost of operating the program and disposing of the materials responsibly so that farmers pay nothing when they deliver the unwanted materials.

Collection events are scheduled at local agricultural retailers’ locations for ease of

access. Farmers can find their most convenient events at the Cleanfarms’ website under ‘What to recycle & Where’, then clicking on ‘Unwanted pesticides & old livestock/equine medications’.

Source: Cleanfarms September 5, 2023 news release

How to practise due diligence

Don’t assume you know your customer.

“We talk about this every day here in the office,” says Jaime Bustamante, director of trading assistance, Dispute Resolution Corporation (DRC). “We question how our members get hooked for so much money or find themselves in a complicated bind. The answer frequently follows the same pattern: our clients assume they know enough about their customers.”

With a DRC membership and a little due diligence, you can avoid putting your business at risk.

- First of all, is your customer or a prospective DRC member? If you don’t know the answer to this question, take notice of the red

flag waving in the air. We recommend you visit our website to find out if they are a member. If you are unable to find them in our public member list, contact our office, and we can help.

- If you discover your customer or prospect is a DRC member, contact our Trading Assistance Staff to find out if they are a member in good standing. Our Trading Assistance Staff can also provide additional information and guidance that you will find valuable.
- Have you ever requested references and checked on who those references are? Many firms find themselves with non-existent references or later find out they have a bad reputation. References are only good if they

are reputable.

- When someone contacts you on behalf of a company, ensure that the person is an employee or an actual company representative. We have often seen people believing they are dealing with the company receiving the goods when they are actually dealing with an intermediary.
- If your customer or prospect is in the United States, check out “The Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act,” also known as PACA. Here, you can find out the status of their PACA license.
- Is your trading partner in the Blue Book Services? If not, why not? If a firm is not listed, they are either not dealing with significant volume or could be a new business.

- Take the time to learn about the Blue Book Services’ rating system and credit scores. Being listed only means they are either members of the credit agency or they are conducting enough business to show up on “the radar screen.” A company listed without a rating does not mean their business status is “OK”; it could mean they are not ratable or the information on file is insufficient to establish a rating!
- Do the phone numbers, addresses, personnel, and EXACT company name match up with DRC’s records? If they don’t, this could be another red flag.
- Are you doing business with companies that do not have a DRC membership? Or do they at

least have a DRC arbitration agreement? If not, why not? You are exposing yourself to needless risk and expense should challenges arise.

Without fear of contradiction, many disputes could easily have been avoided by checking with the DRC and practising some due diligence before the sale. Everybody “takes a chance” occasionally, but is it worth taking the risk? Consider a DRC membership as your risk mitigation tool.

For more information, link to: www.fvdrcc.com/

Source: Dispute Resolution Corporation September 7, 2023 newsletter

Omnia holds open house in Guelph

Omnia Packaging Inc. is bringing 30 years of European expertise in injected plastic molded products to the Canadian marketplace. It’s the Canadian subsidiary of Gruppo Sunino Italy, a well-established, family-owned business that has been providing innovative packaging solutions across product sectors and continents.

“We’re holding an open house in our 90,000 square-foot facility on September 21 to launch brand new technology,” says Monica Viazzo, business development and marketing. Omnia Packaging. “Our glue-free, top-sealable paper trays are perfect for fresh produce.”

Omnia is leading the way in innovative, sustainable food packaging with a commitment to producing exclusively

recyclable plastic and paper food packaging, helping to increase recycling rates across Canada by 2025.

The choice of Guelph, Ontario made sense because the city offers well-structured recycling and sustainability programs and shares the company’s commitment to sustainability.

The location offers also easy access to several international airports that facilitate global business connections and a steady supply of skilled graduates, particularly in the agri-food and biotechnology sectors.

To learn more, link here: www.omniapackaging.ca/

