

LABOUR LOST

Fewer hands, less food



Last July, this display of plenty from Oxford County grower John Den Boer was captured at the Ontario Food Terminal. As the summer of COVID-19 unfolds, the variety and volume of fruits and vegetables may not be in such grand array because growers do not have timely access to enough seasonal ag workers for essential planting and harvesting. The legal case of one Ontario farmer signifies the height of the hurdles faced by growers across Canada. Photo by Glenn Lawson.

KAREN DAVIDSON

Physical and mental stress from attempting to manage farms through COVID-19 has boiled over into a legal challenge in Ontario's Norfolk County. The highly fertile area normally produces \$519 million in annual farmgate value. But its horticultural farmers are being hobbled by the local medical officer of health's decision to allow just three seasonal ag workers per bunkhouse, regardless of size, during 14 days of quarantine.

Schuyler Farms, supported by affidavits from other area farmers, has

filed an appeal to be heard at a five-day virtual hearing before the Ontario Health Services Appeal and Review Board starting May 25.

"While the damage has already been done with the loss of early crops, the worry is that there is no expiration date on the order," explains Brett Schuyler, a director of the family business based near Simcoe, Ontario which grows 2,000 acres of asparagus, sour cherries and apples. "There's still time to save crops and to give growers the optimism to plant. We're looking to have the order rescinded."

Growers are questioning why Dr. Shanker Nesathurai, Haldimand-Norfolk

medical officer of health, has exceeded both federal and provincial health guidance in several key areas. Arrival of workers after April 1 was slowed because the order required approving all isolation plans and receiving the identities of all employees before allowing foreign worker flights to be booked. As part of the isolation plans, employers were ordered to flag the perimeter of each bunkhouse, demarcating where workers would be allowed to go.

The health unit's most controversial move was to distribute identity cards to all farm workers with the intent of listing their name, employer, contact and date of arrival. These were provided as a

voluntary suggestion, but made farm employers bristle about community perceptions of their workers from Mexico and the Caribbean.

"The worry is that this order threatens food security without having a clear benefit to the health of our community and our employees," says Schuyler.

As of May 11, the result is only half of the planned workforce had arrived for apple pruning and asparagus harvest at Schuyler Farms. Apple orchards will not be pruned to plan, which will result in quality and sizing issues this fall.

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Pepper weevil is a field pest PG 15

AT PRESS TIME...



Labour shortages persist

Growers across the country are still short of temporary foreign labour at a critical time of the season. Ontario and Atlantic Canada have received 78 per cent of workers compared to workers requested, according to Brian Gilroy, president of the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC). British Columbia and Quebec are faring worse with only 54 per cent and 50 per cent of needs respectively as of April 30.

Those figures were presented to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food by virtual conference on May 15. The problems stem from delays in paperwork from Mexico and the fact that eastern Caribbean countries such as Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago are still in lockdown due to the COVID-19 virus.

Other leaders such as Ron Lemaire, president of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association, explained that the

Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) of \$2,000 per month up to four months is a disincentive for locals to work on farms. Due to a shortage of labour, some growers are deciding to grow only half of their normal volumes.

“This will affect early crops and food supply,” said Lemaire.

MP Francis Drouin (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell) questioned to what extent growers could automate. Lemaire responded, “We can’t automate everything. In the greenhouse sector, for example, only some can automate some procedures.”

“Food security is threatened,” said Gilroy. Current headlines are about meat packing plants pausing their operations due to COVID-19 infections, but the worry is that fruits and vegetables will be in shorter supply as the summer progresses.

Farmers eligible for Canada Emergency Business Account

The federal government has expanded the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) in such a way that small businesses are eligible for funding support.

“Today’s announced expansion of the eligibility to the Canada Emergency Business Account is a big deal for farmers across the country,” said ag minister Hon. Marie-

Claude Bibeau.

“We listened to their concerns, and changed the eligibility to ensure farmers without payroll can now access the \$40,000 interest-free loan available under CEBA – up to \$10,000 of which is forgiven if the rest is repaid by December 31, 2022.

For those farmers who are still unable to access CEBA, they can turn towards the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund.

To qualify under the expanded eligibility criteria, applicants with payroll lower than \$20,000 would need:

- a business operating account at a participating financial institution
- a Canada Revenue Agency business number, and to have filed a 2018 or 2019 tax return.
- eligible non-deferrable expenses between \$40,000 and \$1.5 million. Eligible non-deferrable expenses could include costs such as rent, property taxes, utilities, and insurance.

Link for information on the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF): www.canada.ca/en/atlantic-canada-opportunities/campaigns/covid19/rrrf.html

NEWSMAKERS

Congratulations to **Davis Yung**, the new chair of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association for 2020-21. He’s president of Fresh Direct Produce based in Vancouver, BC. Past chair is **Oleen Smethurst**, Costco Wholesale Canada; 1st vice-chair is **Guy Milette**, Courchesne Larose Ltée; 2nd vice-chair is **Mario Masellis**, M.L. Catania Co Ltd; executive committee member **Colin Chapdelaine**, Star Group/BC Hot House Foods Inc; executive committee member **George Pitsikoulis**, Canadawide Fruit Wholesalers Inc.



Davis Yung

Congratulations to **The Little Potato Company** Easy Sides for Best New Product award in the Canadian Produce Marketing Association Virtual New Product Showcase. Shout-outs to **La Huerta Imports’** Wana Bana Organic Fruit Puree for Organic Product Award; **Mucci Farms** for paper top seal for Packaging Innovation Award and **Mastronardi Produce** SUNSET Honey Bombs Golden Cherry tomatoes-on-the-vine for Best Snackable Product.



The Little Potato Company Easy Sides

The United Potato Growers of Canada has elected its 2020 slate of officers. Returning as chair is **Ray Keenan**, PEI. Vice-chair is **Denis Bissonnette**, QC. Secretary is **Wayne Rempel**, MB. Treasurer is **Brenda Simmons**, PEI. Board members include: **Greg Donald**, PEI; **Michelle Flis**, QC; **Cory Gerrard**, BC; **Terence Hochstein**, AB; **Gord Medynski**, QC; **Hugh Reynolds**, BC; **Dan Sawatzky**, MB; **Andre Solymosi**, BC; **Mike Wind**, AB. **Kevin MacIsaac** is general manager.

The British Columbia Vegetable Marketing Commission has elected its 2020 board of directors. Four new directors start two-year terms including: **Armand Vander Meulen**, greenhouse peppers; **Brent Royal**, greenhouse tomatoes; **Cory Gerrard** and **Blair Lodder**, storage crops. Other directors include **Peter Guichon**, **Hugh Reynolds**, **John Newell** and **Mike Reed**. The chair is **Debbie Etsell**.

The Young Professionals Committee has been named for the Ontario Produce Marketing Association. They are: **Ashley Veri**, Exeter Produce; **Brianna Buchanan**, Organic Girl; **Nicole Quiring**, DelFresco Pure; **Stephanie Myles**, Highline Mushrooms; **Mohamud Wehelie**, Gambles Ontario Produce Inc; **Madison Hopper**, Equifruit Inc; **Michael Miranda**, Farm Boy; **Cindy Rouet**, Vineland Research and Innovation Centre; **Emily Watterson**, Del Monte Foods; **James Meschino**, J.E. Russell Produce Ltd. First meeting May 8.



Nicole Quiring

Amy Cronin has been appointed by the Ontario agriculture minister as the new chair of the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission for a two-year term, effective May 7, 2020. Replacing previous chair, **Jim Clark**, she is a pork and chicken producer and the former chair of the Ontario Pork Producers Marketing Board for five years. She currently represents the province of Ontario on the National Program Advisory Committee, advising government on business risk management programs. **Valerie Gilvesy** remains as vice-chair.

Condolences to the family of **Dick Stewart**, 94, who passed on May 12. He was the founding chair of the BC Grape Growers’ Marketing Board and a founding member of the BC Grape Growers’ Association. In the late 1950s, he planted a vineyard in West Kelowna which evolved into Quail’s Gate Estate Winery. His son Ben is the Kelowna West MLA.

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COVER STORY

Fewer hands, less food



Business pivots for Alf and Sandee Krause, owners of Krause Berry Farms & Estate Winery, British Columbia include new innovative ways to experience the Langley farm while providing safe physical distancing.

Continued from page 1

It also means that 72 acres of asparagus will not be harvested at an estimated loss of \$864,000 gross. Another 45 workers are needed by July 2 for sour cherry harvest and an additional 57 workers by September 2 for apple harvest.

Schuyler’s experience is a common occurrence elsewhere in the county. One area farmer has cancelled plans to plant any cauliflower at all, while others have reduced their green onions and squash acreage by half. And still others have shelved scheduled plantings of ginseng and strawberry.

In British Columbia, the struggle to source workers has been equally daunting. Alf and Sandee Krause manage 120 acres of strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries near Langley and operate a destination on-farm market and entertainment venue as well. Currently they need a total of 20 Mexican workers, but by mid-May had just three working and another six in 14-day quarantine.

“We’re hoping the next wave (of workers) will come soon,” says Alf Krause, who explains that 90 per cent of his berry crop is hard-harvested or picked by consumers. “After 46 years in business, farming remains the same -- unpredictable! But COVID-19 has dramatically changed the question again. Where does our food come from? We need to be self-sufficient as Canadians.”

When the COVID-19 crisis struck in mid-March, the couple

drafted new plans for their year-round business. One significant move was to form allies with a local Langley company, the J.R.Group, which had empty freezers, coolers and laid-off staff. They also struck an agreement with That’s It, a Vancouver café, to resell their pies and frozen berries. These distribution outlets enable the Krause’s to continue to operate their commercial kitchen and bakery in two shifts with 20 full-time employees.

With their entertainment venue closed and the cancellation of scheduled weddings and charity events, Sandee Krause has channelled her efforts into comprehensive documentation of new standard operating procedures to ensure the safety of staff and farm labour.

They have set up two options for customers. One is a drive-through system, providing picked berries and pies. The other is U-pick offering a choice of three bucket sizes. Customers pre-pay with the tap function of a credit card. The weight is included in the price.

“We’re feeling more optimistic that people are getting anxious to get out,” says Sandee Krause. “People are in the mood to buy local and they’re willing to stand in line. We’ve made every effort for customers to visit us with the proper spacing requirements while still providing the excellent care that we’re known for.”

Even with these best laid plans, the Krause’s are aggressively attempting to recruit local help for the intense



One Norfolk County onion grower has decided to plant half of his normal acreage of green onions — 70 acres rather than 140 acres — because he doesn’t have enough guaranteed labour. He represents one of many growers who have reduced plantings. Photo by Glenn Lowson.



Mexican worker Guillermo Flores shows student Jon Gaulton how to erect a plastic tunnel to protect raspberry canes at Nova-Agri, Centreville, Nova Scotia. Photo by Susan Sipos.

season ahead, holding Zoom group interviews.

On the other side of the country in Atlantic Canada, lack of labour continues to crimp progress. On April 28, New Brunswick’s Premier Blaine Higgs, citing health concerns, closed the border to the arrival of temporary workers. While 1,500 workers were already in the province, another 600 were still expected. He reversed that decision a month later, welcoming seasonal workers May 29 to start a 14-day quarantine.

In Nova Scotia’s Annapolis Valley, farmers are grappling with social distancing and fewer hands. One example is Nova-Agri, the marketing arm of Dykeview Farms and Vital Berry Farm, headquartered at Centreville. The 2,500-acre operation is one of the largest employers of offshore labour in Nova Scotia. Normally, they hire about 210 temporary foreign workers through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program but as of May 8, no workers were on site while 32 Mexican workers were in off-site 14-day quarantine.

“We were incredibly fortunate that we had local

students step up to the plate and help us with our spring preparation and early planting season,” says Earl Kidston, CEO for Nova-Agri. “If not, we would have been in dire circumstances.”

Without the full complement of experienced seasonal workers, he says, “We are seeing changes in efficiencies this season, down approximately 30 per cent.”

As the season progresses, Kidston is expecting more foreign labour to arrive to harvest the high-bush blueberry crop.

“Our greatest risk is yet to come if we can’t get enough harvest labour,” says Kidston.

Nationally, on-the-ground statistics are hard to tabulate during this COVID-19 crisis, but the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) has surveyed its members to quantify the extent of labour woes. In virtual testimony to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food on May 15, president Brian Gilroy reported that growers in Ontario and Atlantic Canada are in slightly better shape with 78 per cent of workers landed compared to those requested for this time of year. However,

British Columbia is only at 54 per cent of its regular numbers and Quebec, with its heavy reliance on Guatemalan workers, is at just 50 per cent. These numbers were current as of April 30.

Bottom line? “There is a critical shortage of workers on some farms,” reiterates Gilroy. “Food security is threatened.”

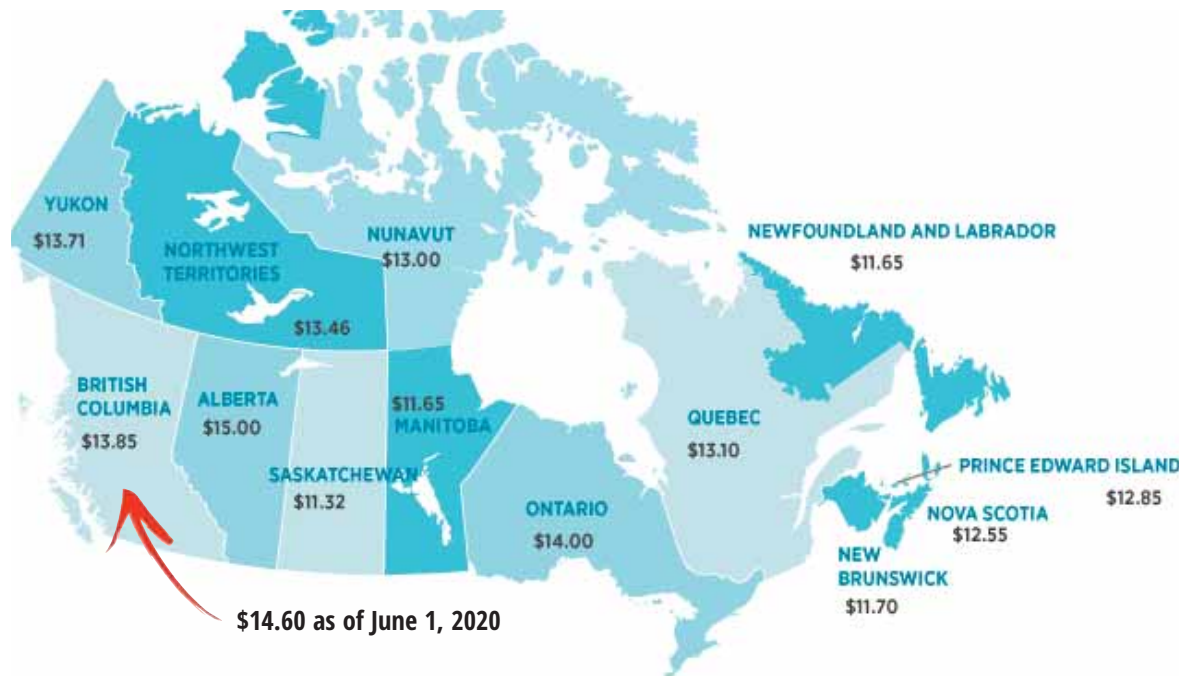
The Grower goes “Behind the Scenes” with Brett Schuyler, Schuyler Farms, Simcoe, Ontario. He’s hired legal counsel to appeal the local public health unit’s exceptional rulings on temporary foreign workers during the COVID-19, 14-day quarantine. This series is sponsored by BASF Agricultural Solutions.



BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC's agricultural industry will be shouldering additional costs on June 1 when the minimum wage moves from \$13.85 per hour to \$14.60 per hour. That will push BC to the second-highest rate in Canada, after Alberta.

Source: Retail Council of Canada



BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Canadian government is defending the patent of the Staccato cherry bred by Dr. David Lane at the Summerland Research and Development Centre. The claim is that three Washington farms propagated the variety without permission.

The defendants are Van Well Nursery of East

Wenatchee, Monson Fruit of Wenatchee and Gordon and Sally Goodwin of Wenatchee.

The Staccato cherry is among several varieties which have rejuvenated the industry in British Columbia, accounting for exports valued at \$75 million per year. The late-maturing variety extends the season for BC

growers after the Washington crop is normally over.

Bloomberg Law reported the suit on May 18. A Washington-based paper, the Capital Press, published more details on May 19. See link here: <https://bit.ly/2Xhb0fU>

ALBERTA

The fall-out from COVID-19 and the loss of potato processing markets has hit Alberta growers hard. When negotiations finished, contracted tonnage was down 23.8 per cent or 10,000 acres. That's down from the record-breaking 42,000 processing acres of 2019.

Overall, there were 57,000 acres grown in Alberta last year, including process, seed and fresh potatoes.

“Our growers are devastated,” says Terence Hochstein, executive director, Potato Growers of Alberta. “That’s \$45 million gross out of

grower pockets.”

Compounding matters is the large tonnage still remaining in storage from the 2019 crop. The struggle is to find markets whether it's in food banks, dehydrated or fresh pack. Nearby cattle feedlots in southern Alberta can take some



of the potatoes, but not all of them.

One of the hurdles is explaining to politicians and consumers why Russet Burbank potatoes aren't suitable for large-scale diversion to the fresh table market. This oblong-shaped variety is best suited for French fries. It's not feasible to convert 50 million pounds of these potatoes in large storages into five-pound bags for consumers.

Seed potato growers are equally affected. Hochstein says 15,000 tons of seed were turned back by growers when their potato processing contracts were cut. Growers who specialize in Russet Burbank seed have lost their income, whereas those who grow multiple varieties are not as badly hurt.

"I'm afraid of losing some growers," warns Hochstein.

management program, AgriStability, will not help many growers because they grow multiple crops. Total revenues on all crops make them ineligible for losses on specific commodities.

By mid-May, processing potato growers had finished planting the 2020 potato crop in southern Alberta while seed growers in the Edmonton area were waiting for temperatures to improve. The snowpack in the Rocky Mountains, the source of irrigation water during the summer, was “in good shape” says Hochstein. However, a couple of hot days in June could cause rapid snow melt and the potential to overflow reservoirs.

That would be considered the least of problems besetting farmers in 2020.



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CROSS COUNTRY DIGEST

NEW BRUNSWICK

Premier reverses decision, welcoming seasonal workers May 29

New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs is opening the province’s borders to seasonal workers once again. They are now welcome as of May 29 to start a 14-day quarantine.

The last month of the COVID-19 pandemic has been full of lessons. The premier called on the pool of 70,000 unemployed New Brunswickers to sign up for a noble cause. Only 250 applied for 600 positions. Farm leaders held a virtual press conference on May 19 pleading their economic case that seasonal workers should be allowed into the province to salvage the season.

“The decision to ban these

workers from New Brunswick this spring has been devastating,” said Kent Coates, president of Really Local Harvest, in an interview with Global TV News. While 1,500 seasonal workers had already landed, there was a need for several hundred more.

Kent Coates is an organic farmer and owner of Nature’s Route farm, Point de Bute, about 60 kilometres southeast of Moncton. His business model is to sell vegetables directly to customers at local farmers’ markets in Dieppe, Moncton and Sackville.

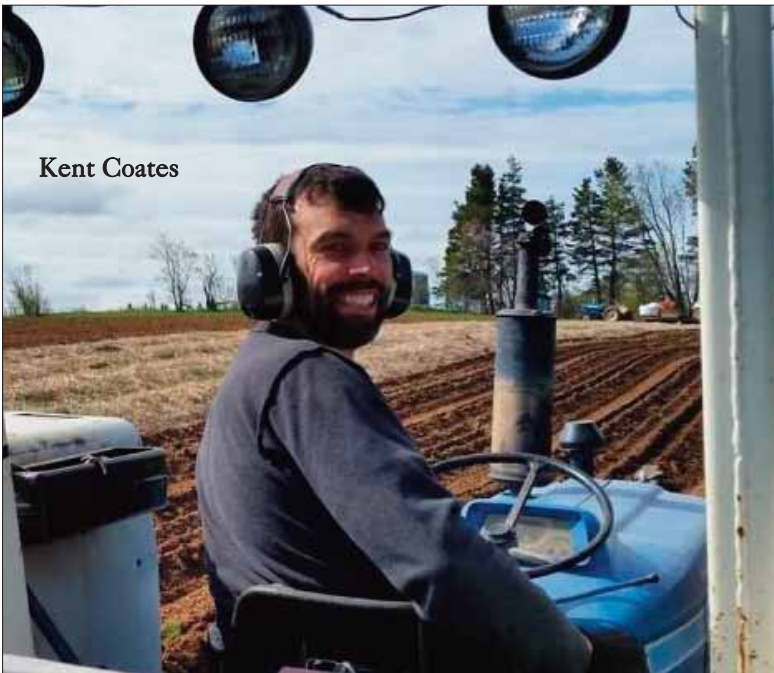
Attracting workers is about more than higher wages. Coates

outlined what a challenge it is to retain workers for the entire season.

“The challenge for me has been the reliability for the whole entire season to get right through till the end. It’s not that pleasant in October when it’s cold and wet and the weather did not enable us to get the crops out in better weather,” Coates said.

What is particularly galling for Coates is that one of his trained workers has arrived in Canada to work on a farm in a different province.

As farm leaders have pointed out, neighbouring provinces of Prince Edward Island and Nova



Scotia have welcomed workers while adhering to federal guidance on 14-day quarantines. No spikes in COVID-19 infections have resulted. Higgs

has relented, now that it’s evident that the benefits to the food supply may be much greater than any risks.

ALBERTA/MANITOBA/NEW BRUNSWICK

Potato disposal is next hurdle

Canada’s farm leaders say that 760 million pounds of processing potatoes will need to be disposed as quickly as possible to make room for 2020 crop.

“There are a lot of potatoes which don’t have a home,” testified Ray Keenan, chair, United Potato Growers of Canada, to the House of Commons

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food on May 15. Hardest hit provinces will be Alberta, Manitoba and New Brunswick, all with major potato processing plants.

“The logistics of transforming these potatoes into small bags for food banks just aren’t there,” said Keenan.

Composting or burying these potatoes must meet plant health requirements. And the Herculean job must be done in the next three months to make room for the 2020 crop. Potatoes don’t have an unlimited shelf life.

Kevin MacIsaac, general manager, United Potato Growers of Canada,

estimates the value of processing potatoes at \$92 million and seed potatoes at \$13 million. Processing potatoes comprise 70 per cent of the farmgate value of potatoes in Canada.

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PUBLIC SPACES, PERSONAL SAFETY

The search for personal protective equipment in a crunch

KAREN DAVIDSON

When COVID-19 forced states of emergency across Canada in mid-March, the VanRoboys family realized their near-future need was for supplies for the spring planting season. Plexiglass dividers, face shields and sanitizers were purchased for the seasonal and local workers who come to work on the 500-acre processing vegetable farm in Chatham, Ontario.

“It was very difficult to source personal protective equipment,” says Taera VanRoboys, owner of Ontario Pickle Corporation. “We had two office staff working on this fulltime.”

The immediate need was solved with hand-sewn face masks, but by the time tomato transplants went into the ground on May 13, workers on two, six-person transplanters were outfitted with masks, face shields and divided by flexible Plexiglass. The supplies were

delivered barely in time due to backlogs experienced by couriers. The face shields arrived just two days before planting.

Normally, 40 seasonal workers would be on hand, but those numbers have been cut to 22 to comply with public health guidance and to manage the disease risks this season to keep the team and employees safe.

“We couldn’t take the risk of having more workers even though we built a new bunkhouse last summer,” says VanRoboys. “The distancing guidelines seem to be evolving rapidly so instead of bringing in 40 workers and have the rules change on us, we felt it would be safer to voluntarily reduce our workforce.”

As a result, cucumber plantings for the pickle business have been trimmed by 40 per cent while the processing pepper plantings are down by 50 per cent.

“It’s impossible to find good local help,” says VanRoboys. “The message that has come

from the government over the past 25 years is to strive for high skilled, technical jobs. An office job was the measure of success. Unfortunately, we’ve created a society that views manual labour as something beneath them.”

Farm safety has taken on new meaning in 2020 with not just mechanical hazards, but biological ones. For workers hopping in and out of trucks and tractors, the expectation is to spray and wipe down steering wheels and controls with disinfectant. Large volumes of sanitizer will be needed, but fortunately there’s a local source at Sons of Kent Brewing Company in Chatham. Many local distilleries have repurposed their lines to fill business needs.

“There are so many risks and unknowns right now, but as farmers we are faced with that on a regular basis. We will do all it takes to get the crop planted and harvested, but also create a COVID-safe environment for all our workers” says VanRoboys.



The contract to grow 100 acres of processing tomatoes for Sun-Brite Foods Inc. is a first-time venture, just as it’s the first time for wearing face shields. Photo by Krystle VanRoboys.

Solutions for personal space in bunkhouses and beyond

KAREN DAVIDSON

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, an Oakville, Ontario

company has pivoted from its ‘public space’ trade show specialty to ‘private space’ solutions at reasonable cost.

The first prototype was

modular-type wall dividers for bunkhouses at a fruit farm in the London area.

“This is a substrate that can be wiped clean with



Example of an enclosed bunkhouse bedroom.

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disinfectant,” says Marta Rudyk, account executive, Creative Visual Solutions. “The aluminum frames the PVC wall to give it structure.”

For interested growers, Rudyk fields calls to determine the scope of the project. The company offers a quote depending on the measurements and needs, then delivers and installs the walls. The system is available for short-term rental or can be purchased outright.

Other products are in development. The company’s fabrication department is building clear walls that are portable dividers between stations. It is also building freestanding hand sanitizer

units.

Visual Solutions has a network across Canada providing these new services.

“In March, we realized that all the materials and staff were on site, but we needed to change quickly to keep our business open,” says Rudyk. “Hospitals and airports were quick to respond but now we realize that agriculture has a need. We think this could grow to be a new company division.”

Rudyk is empathetic to the need. She lives on a 26-acre farm in the Niagara region.

For more details call 905-730-4998 or email Marta@visual-solutions.ca

AGRISTABILITY

Stability in agriculture and in our food supply through 2020

JAN VANDERHOUT

The world has really changed in 2020. Everyone is striving to survive the turbulence of our time as they deal with financial challenges, emotional issues and loneliness while trying to avoid becoming part of the COVID-19 statistics.

Fruit and vegetable growers are challenged by access to labour, in a way that no other farming sector is. Will essential foreign workers arrive in time for their regular work season? Can we hire and train Canadians to do the work in the interim? What will happen when those Canadian workers go back to their regular jobs? Will there be enough workforce to perform the harvest at the appointed time? Should the normal crops even be planted? What if we invest in growing the crop only to watch it perish in the event of a labour crisis? What if I get an outbreak on my farm at a critical time? Will government have my back if things take a turn for the worse or could I lose the farm? Too much uncertainty!

The Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) the voice of Canadian fruit and vegetable growers, in concert with other agriculture organizations at both the national and provincial levels, have been working with government to mitigate the impact that COVID-19 has on our farms and the impact it has on Canada’s food supply. A COVID-19 task force, staffed by key association personnel as well as grower representatives from Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia, have been convening virtually every day to develop strategies to support Canadian fruit and vegetable growers through this crisis. Getting workers into Canada, establishing appropriate protocols and procedures around distancing and personal protective equipment and attaining government support for growers has been our principal objectives. Countless conference calls and Zoom meetings have been held as we collaborate with stakeholders and government about possible solutions. We have presented to the Committee of Finance via Zoom and had many conversations with politicians, staff and government officials as the work continues to attain practical outcomes.

Farm business risk management programs have been available to Canadian farmers for decades. The current national programs available to Canadian farmers were initially designed in the early 2000s to ensure they do not impede our ability

to trade with the U.S. or other trade partners. In recent years, the AgriStability program has been severely cut back, to the point where growers who lose half of their farm revenue margin will have less than a third of that loss covered by the program. It is not surprising then that fewer than 30 per cent of farmers are currently signing up.

CHC along with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture have requested that the program be increased to 85



per cent coverage of losses below 90 per cent margin loss. Government has not committed to this yet. CHC has also asked for some real assurance that we are not risking our farms by planting as usual and that in the event of an on-farm financial crisis caused by COVID-19, government would “have our backs.” Personally, I would find some of the older models acceptable that were in place before the recent cuts and believe that this would give growers the confidence to plant

their crops fully if it is not already too late. What we have been told by government is that any support would come through existing programs, which could include AgriStability. We must all decide for ourselves whether to sign up or not, but I strongly encourage growers to sign up for AgriStability to ensure that they do not miss out on support in the event the program is improved.

It is my hope that government realizes that potential food

shortages could come if farmers of all sectors do not get assurance of support in the very near future. As a grower, this support would give me confidence that my farm will continue to grow post COVID-19. As a consumer, it would give me comfort that there will be enough food on Canadian grocery shelves through 2020 and beyond.

Jan VanderHout is first vice-president Canadian Horticultural Council and a greenhouse cucumber farmer in Hamilton, Ontario.




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CHAIR'S PERSPECTIVE

A thanks for carrying on



BILL GEORGE JR.
CHAIR, OFVGA

It was the middle of March when Canada closed its international borders, Ontario declared a state of emergency and coronavirus turned all of our lives upside down. It's been a hectic and turbulent time since then to say the least, unlike anything any of us could have imagined. Our first and immediate challenge was dealing with the impact of the border closure on the arrival of our seasonal workers for this year.

There was excellent collaboration and teamwork with many organizations, particularly the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, who came together quickly to work on this issue. But securing the travel exemption for international workers was only the first step and we've faced many more hurdles since then to get our season underway. And although workers are continuing to arrive, there is no denying that many of us will be facing labour shortages this year that will impact our production, both in the short term and potentially longer than that, depending on the crop. Getting a crop in the ground every year or preparing for a production season is never without some risk, but the risks have arguably never been greater than this year as uncertainty about how the pandemic will continue to unfold, how our economy will respond and how all of this will impact food production is never far away. On top of the usual concerns

about weather and preparing for the season, growers this year are facing a plethora of additional costs and challenges to maintain compliance with new layers of regulations and ensure the health and safety of their workers. Add to that contracts that have been cut back, food service and other markets that have disappeared, and new restrictions on how we can sell to the public at farmers' markets, on-farm stores and other venues. For some growers, there's no denying that it would be easier to just sit this one out and stay out of production this year. But this pandemic is a global problem and it's affecting food-producing regions right around the world. That's why domestic food security – being able to produce as much food as we can right here at home – has never been so important. And that's why I want to thank each and every fruit and vegetable grower in Ontario for stepping up, being willing to

take on those extra risks and costs and continuing to do what you do best – grow food. I know firsthand the scope of the challenge we all face this year, and I commend and appreciate everyone who is part of this essential work. For the OFVGA as an organization, our year has completely pivoted since our annual general meeting back in February and so far, many of our plans and goals for this year have been put on hold or in some cases, put aside altogether. What hasn't changed, though, is our commitment to work on behalf of fruit and vegetable growers in this province. As the pandemic continues to unfold, our board and staff are continuing to work hard to ensure growers have the necessary supports. It's vital that we stay on top of issues affecting your farms and your families – as challenging as that is in an environment that can and often has been changing daily.

I appreciate the hard work of our board members and section chairs, who have put in long hours over and above the work their own operations demand, especially during the busy spring season. And I also appreciate our staff team who have been invaluable in supporting us in our lobbying efforts. Along with other farm organizations, we continue to make our case to all levels of government about the need for a commitment to growers that government will help mitigate risk so we can continue to focus on growing the food Canadians depend on. We appreciate the steps government has taken so far to recognize the importance of domestic food security. We know that everyone across the country is facing uncertainty, loss and risk as a result of this pandemic, but we can't lose sight of the critical importance of keeping food on the shelves for Canadians. We're all in this together.

WEATHER VANE



Industrious growers have sourced personal protective equipment for spring planting. A case in point are Jeff and wife Taera VanRoboys at Ontario Pickle Station. Together they manage processing tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers near Chatham, Ontario. They installed flexible plexi-glass dividers on two, six-person tomato transplanters and sourced face shields. Photo by Krystle VanRoboys.

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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

URBAN COWBOY

Food packaging must help reduce waste, but not at all costs



OWEN ROBERTS
U OF GUELPH

Just when research started to show Canadians were shifting their concerns from food safety to food waste, along came the COVID-19 pandemic.

Understandably, people want the industry to use packaging that will limit their exposure to the virus. You can't blame them.

But going full circle, it's likely that the next time Canadians' food concerns are researched, food waste will percolate to the top again. The very thought of food waste makes most of us wince at the best of times -- but even more so when we're experiencing food insecurity, many of us for the first time ever.

It's real. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is warning that this summer we may have neither the variety nor the affordability we're used to. That's no shock, given what we've watched happen in the livestock sector, not to mention the challenges that will face horticultural production because of hiccups getting international farm workers in place in a timely manner.

But as Martin Gooch at Value Chain Management International and his colleagues point out in a major new report called Less food loss, less packaging waste, some tough choices lie ahead for the industry for getting commodities not just out of the fields, but in front of consumers too.

Some of the 103-page report, which was commissioned by the National Zero Waste Council in collaboration with partner organizations, focusses on bulk food. It's long been regaled as a way to reduce packaging . . . but is it suddenly unrealistic? Ask consumers scared out of their wits about COVID-19 if they think buying unpackaged food in bulk is a good idea now -- food that's out in the open, in bins where anyone can handle it, cough or sneeze on it and contaminate it -- and you can

anticipate the answer.

Conventional packaging offers convenience, along with other benefits. And it's an integral part of the industry. To date, the packaging industry has largely driven the bus, says Gooch -- despite concerns, it's packaging manufacturers and suppliers, not consumers or producers, that have determined what kinds of packaging will be used. The packaging industry has preferred to manufacture their products from cheap, virgin plastic, and Gooch is concerned.

"We're living on credit when it comes to the environmental impact of plastic packaging," he says.

In the report, Gooch argues that it's no longer a matter of managing the flow of packaging. Rather, the use of virgin materials must be reduced, stopped before they even get into the system.

For example, he says, how about moving away from non-recyclable multi-resin laminate bags, and instead using mono-resin laminate bags? They can do the same job. Although some packaging that fits within a circular economy may not be as vibrant on the shelf as the current offering, Gooch says a generation of sustainability-minded consumers could be trained to adapt to this kind of packaging if it was better for the environment.

"We can't change consumer behaviour carte blanche, but consumers are prepared to act more responsibly if given the chance," he says.

However, isolated efforts on a farm or by a processor won't mean much unless there are national, meaningful standards that reflect the truthfulness of the packaging from a circular economy perspective. Gooch cringes at the term biodegradable packaging; it's often an abused, marketing gimmick, not an honest representation of the packaging, he says.

"Biodegradable packaging could take eight weeks to break down, or hundreds of years," he says. "There are no enforceable standards or protocols."

And in most provinces, few incentives exist for the municipalities that receive truly environmentally-friendly packaging to deal with it differently than less sustainable materials that go into landfills.

The industry needs to get together on this. Food packaging can be a key to less food waste. But if packaging



Borealis, an Austrian-based company, is producing mono-resin laminate bags.

that keeps food from spoiling is damaging the environment, is there any sense in it?

"So much talk has taken place about food waste and food packaging, but no one has brought them together," says Gooch. "That's what we're trying to do, to produce outcomes that industry can act upon."

The report concludes with recommendations for industry and wider stakeholders, including government.

Actions that individual growers can take include:

- From your packaging supplier, obtain technical specifications on current and alternative packaging materials.
- Seek packaging material advice from your peers, a cooperative or your industry advocacy group.
- Ask your key retail and foodservice customers about their intentions regarding allowable packaging materials.

The report can be found at www.nzwc.ca.







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KELLY DAYNARD

Traditionally, Farm & Food Care Ontario’s (FFCO) spring, summer and fall seasons are filled with tours for food influencers, public outreach events for Local Food Week and Ontario Agriculture Week and well-attended Breakfast on the Farm programs across Ontario. This year, with a planned event schedule on hold for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization is pivoting to focus its attention and effort on creating more virtual opportunities to engage and educate in meaningful ways.

The FarmFood360.ca website, featuring virtual tours of 15 farms and food processing tours (with three more in the works) has received an unprecedented boost in traffic with it being promoted as a credible educational resource by teachers, school boards and AgScape (Ontario’s Agriculture

in the Classroom organization) as part of its Virtual Camp Experience which is providing parents and teachers with regular e-newsletter updates featuring educational materials, videos, virtual tours and games.

Since the COVID-crisis began, the FarmFood360 website has seen increases of 1315 percent in viewer traffic. By the end of April, the site had generated almost two million page views thus more than doubling its entire viewership for 2019. Added to the site in 2019 was a new apple orchard tour filmed in Ontario in cooperation with Ontario Apple Growers and CropLife Canada.

In May, FFCO and AgScape partnered for a Farm to Facebook event. The partnership builds upon AgScape’s long-established connections with Ontario teachers and school boards and Farm & Food Care’s agricultural expertise and outreach audiences beyond the classroom.

Farm & Food Care turns online for agricultural outreach

Taking over FFCO’s Facebook account, Norfolk grower Dusty Zamecnik gave a half hour live tour of his farm, talking about his family’s blueberry and strawberry propagation business. Students, parents and other interested consumers asked questions in real time about his seasonal workers, about markets for his crops and about challenges faced by his industry. Following the live engagement, the online tour was posted to Facebook generating a total audience of 5,252 viewers in the first week.

Until social distancing restrictions lessen, FFCO will continue to look for creative online ways to profile Ontario farmers and food processors and answer questions about these industries. More Farm to Facebook events are planned for Local Food Week in early June with others to follow throughout the season. FFCO is seeking growers of all types who might be interested in hosting a Facebook to

Facebook Live tour in 2020. Growers should have access to a reliable internet connection, have some familiarity with Facebook or other social media platforms and be willing to give about a half hour tour of their

farm, greenhouse or orchard. Anyone interested should contact info@farmfoodcare.org

Kelly Daynard is executive director, Farm & Food Care Ontario.

COMING EVENTS 2020

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| June 10 | Ontario Produce Marketing Association Annual General Meeting, POSTPONED to September 2 |
| June 14 | Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, Country Heritage Park, Milton, ON CANCELLED |
| June 15-19 | United Fresh 2020 LIVE! Virtual event |
| July 15-17 | Federal-Provincial-Territorial Agriculture Ministers’ Meeting, Guelph, ON |
| July 12-16 | International Cool Climate Wine Symposium, Brock University, St. Catharines, ON POSTPONED TO JULY 25-29, 2021 |
| July 16, 17 | Haskap Days, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK POSSIBLY CANCELLED, MAYBE ONLINE |
| July 19-23 | Potato Association of America, Holiday Inn Downtown, Missoula, MT |
| July 22-25 | International Fruit Tree Association Summer Tour, Richland, WA CANCELLED |
| August 6 | Nova Scotia Fruit Growers’ Association Annual Summer Tour CANCELLED |
| August 8-9 | Perth Lions Garlic Festival, Perth, ON CANCELLED |
| August 8-9 | Ottawa Carp Farmers’ Market Garlic Festival, Ottawa, ON |
| Aug 10-12 | International Blueberry Organization Summit, Trujillo, Peru RESCHEDULED TO AUGUST 22-25, 2021 |
| August 12 | Ontario Apple Summer Tour, Newcastle, ON CANCELLED |
| Aug 13-15 | 73rd annual Quebec Produce Marketing Association Convention, Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Montreal, QC |
| August 30 | Eastern Ontario Garlic Festival, Cornwall, ON |
| Sept 2 | Ontario Produce Marketing Association Annual General Meeting |
| Sept 5 | Verona Lions Garlic Festival, Kingston, ON |
| Sept 8-10 | International Strawberry Symposium, Rimini, Italy (originally 5-7 May) |
| Sept 12-13 | Stratford Kiwanis Garlic Festival, Stratford, ON |
| Sept 15-17 | Canada’s Outdoor Farm Show, Woodstock, ON |
| Sept 16-18 | Asia Fruit Logistica, Singapore RESCHEDULED TO NOVEMBER 18-20 |
| Sept 17 | Goodyear Farm Ltd Farm Tour, Beaverton, ON |
| Sept 20 | 10th Annual Toronto Garlic Festival, Artscape Wychwood Barns, Toronto, ON |

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RETAIL NAVIGATOR

Setting the table for the future



PETER CHAPMAN

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had to focus on the immediate challenges and priorities. There have been so many hurdles to overcome for the food industry from labour to no food service to a rapidly changing consumer. Many of these challenges will continue through the season for primary agriculture and processing as the labour issue will not be resolved quickly, if at all. Despite all of these challenges, we do need to look to the future. Lead times are so long in food we need to balance between the immediate priorities and the future. There is a shift in the market place that this is 'how it will be' and we need to adapt and plan to succeed.

Success depends on understanding your customer's priorities

Shopping patterns have changed. Consumers are buying different amounts of different products at different times in different places. That is a lot of differences and my advice would be to explore each difference to understand the impact on your products and your markets. One of the biggest challenges is the right amount of stock on the right items. Retailers are trying to figure it out too. Remember to talk to your customers and ask them what volumes they are planning for. Every category is different and I have heard that where some took a dip initially they are now rebounding, which is encouraging.

Retailers are reviewing their sales data and looking for trends. They are probably more willing to share and have a collaborative approach to figure out the best answer for planning purposes.

Once you do have a plan for how much to produce, you need to do everything within your power to deliver it. Suppliers who are able to meet their commitments right now are valuable. So many variables can impact this, but when you can deliver what you said you would, it is more important than ever. In the past if there was an

issue, alternatives were sourced and usually product was on the shelf. That is more difficult now and the supply chain is more complicated. During challenging times, suppliers who do what they say they will do build long-term relationships.

Communication is very important for both suppliers and retailers. Although you might think they are busy, they do need to hear from you. The people working for retailers are being challenged constantly about the in-stock position of their items. Keep them informed. Knowledge is important; as they need to assure their boss they know what is happening in their category. Managing the category used to be sales and margin. During the pandemic it expands to being able to deliver the inventory they need to reach those targets.

You also need to communicate with your suppliers to ensure you will meet your commitments. Packaging, ingredients and other inputs are all critical to your ability to fulfill your orders on time. You can also share with your customers that you are communicating with your suppliers to ensure product will be available.

One other component of communication is any impact on your cost of goods. The best price increase is one the retailer is ready for and has already decided on before you even have to ask. This is possible when you keep them informed and up-to-date on any changes to your operation. If you need to increase labour costs by 25 per cent because of new staff who are not trained or switching to a more expensive ingredient to ensure you have stock, communicate this to your customers. You might not get the cost up the first time but when you set the table, they will know there is a good chance the increase will have to change your cost of goods.

One of, if not the biggest challenge facing the entire food industry during this pandemic is labour. Maintaining a staff of healthy people who have the skills to do the work that needs to be done is a priority at every level of the value chain. Share your issues and your solutions with your customers. It is important to be realistic. When I was working for a retailer one of the questions I would ask suppliers often was, “how is your labour situation?” Their answer would tell me a lot about their business. My preference was to find the proactive suppliers who found solutions. During these unprecedented times this is even more important.

Remember they have labour challenges too and work hard to fill jobs in retail, which are not easy jobs either.

Retailers are starting to look to how they can compete and be successful in a new environment. Work to balance your efforts on the immediate priorities and long-term programs. Remember retailers have some different priorities and how you meet or exceed their expectations can have a big impact on your relationship.

If you have any questions about retailer's priorities or how the environment is changing please give me a call at (902) 489-2900 or send me an email at peter@skufood.com.

WHAT'S IN STORE?

Shopping without going to the store

Voilà, Sobey's' new online shopping and home delivery service, launched in Ontario with a dedicated fulfillment centre in partnership with Ocado. It will be very interesting to see how this changes the landscape where other competitors in the market are focused on picking orders in stores. In some U.S. markets where online shopping has increased, grocers are closing stores to dedicate the resources to fulfilling online orders. This has increased to more than 10 per cent of the market and will likely stay at this level ongoing. Have you tried to buy your

items online at each retailer yet?
You should.

Peter Chapman is a retail consultant, professional speaker and the author of A la Cart-A suppliers' guide to retailer's priorities. Peter is based in Halifax N.S. where he is the principal at

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



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LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT TECHNOLOGY

Four scenarios point to possible paths ahead

KAREN DAVIDSON

The lights still burn brightly at a critical crossing at Windsor/Detroit, where year-to-year, truck traffic is down 16.21 per cent compared to 2019 according to the Bridge and Tunnel Operators’ Association. More striking is the figure for April 2020, which shows truck traffic is down 51.1 per cent compared to the same month a year ago.

However, the City of Windsor notes that as of May 21, 2020, truck traffic in the previous week experienced an uptick of 60 per cent, due to North America’s original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) restarting their operations. It’s a testament to how essential goods have continued to flow during a pandemic-induced, partial closure of the Canadian/American border until June 21. Efficient passage is critical to Ontario’s greenhouse vegetable sector which in 2019, sent an average of 49 transports a day to the U.S.

The reboot comes at a critical time because July is peak season for greenhouse vegetables. In July 2019, there were 93 transports filled with greenhouse produce headed across the Ambassador Bridge. This is where two pillars of the Canadian economy converge: agriculture and auto manufacturing.

Susan Anzolin is the

executive director, Institute for Border Logistics and Security – a department of the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation. Along with other members of the Windsor-Essex COVID-19 Economic Task Force, she has been meeting since the

outbreak of the pandemic to better understand the economic impact on a number of key sectors. Through discussions of the Logistics, Transportation and Cross-Border Issues committee, members reference that goods valued at \$450 million cross the Windsor-

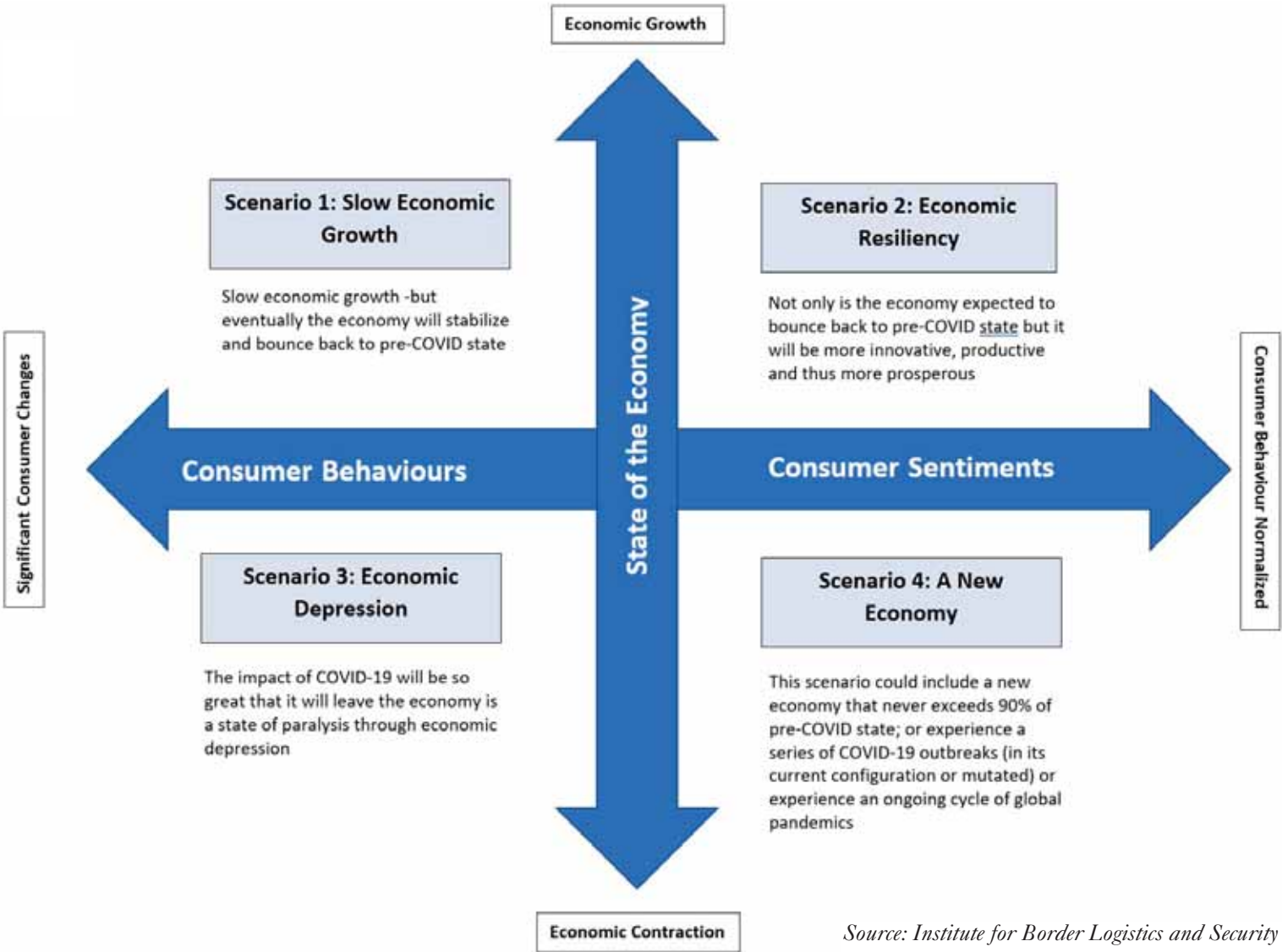
Detroit border every day, representing about one-third of all surface trade between Canada and the United States.

Together, the task force is keeping tabs on a rapidly evolving business environment. Anzolin has shared those May 8 meeting notes with **The Grower**.

that the impact of COVID-19 has not been uniform and the recovery state is not expected to be uniform either. The key questions now? At what cost can the economy continue in this restrained state? How much longer can this level of effort be sustained?

The task force is assuming economic scenarios in a pre-vaccine treatment world and a post-vaccine treatment world. Here are some of the considerations moving forward.

• **Structural vs. cyclical:** In developing strategies to support economy recovery/resiliency, there is a need to consider whether there are structural economic changes as a result of this pandemic. Will the disruption to global supply chains lead to a mini-revival in selected sectors in manufacturing? Will manufacturing companies continue to produce medical equipment and emergency supplies? Will organizations dedicate space for stockpiling supplies in case of another emergency? Will the surge in online education, telemedicine, and online conferencing persist? Will companies opt for smaller physical footprints? Will “Just-in-Time” be a concept of the Past? Will COVID-19 be a catalyst to eliminate interprovincial trade barriers? Hard to know.



Source: Institute for Border Logistics and Security

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Impact on trucking and logistics

In analyzing the trucking and logistics sector, Geotab Inc estimates that, on average, Canada is operating at 79 per cent of normal commercial transportation activity, however retail, industrial and commercial locations have been impacted the most. Commercial transport activity to grocery stores has dropped the least with 90 per cent of normal activity.

The Canadian Trucking Alliance is demanding a payroll tax deferral program to offer fleets the cash needed to maintain operations, as well as an increase in the meal allowance for drivers who face higher costs during COVID-19. The Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) financial package is not enough, say task force members. Consideration should be given to reducing/eliminating the high premiums for the trucking industry for trucks that are idled.

Peering ahead

Her task force is now mulling over the steps ahead, noting

Continued on next page

LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT TECHNOLOGY

Four scenarios point to possible paths ahead



The Gordie Howe International Bridge, a twin to the Ambassador Bridge, is scheduled for completion in fall 2024. Due to ongoing work the performance matrix indicates that construction is ahead of schedule. This positive news may be dimmed by the risk of the tightening of the supply chain for construction materials.

Continued from last page

- **Developing a COVID-19 vaccination/treatment:** An effective public health response across the globe is the necessary pre-condition to economic recovery.
- **Modernizing the border:** While it is recognized that the Canadian Border Services Agency as well as Customs and Border Protection have made great efforts to reduce document handling at Primary Inspection Lines during COVID-19, this situation further confirms the need to adopt automation and technology for low-risk goods and persons.
- **Investing in automation and technology:** Those companies that invested in automation and technology are generally faring much better through the COVID-19 pandemic. Consider logistics automation: it protects warehousing and delivery workers from being exposed to pathogens. Robots continuously cleaning hospitals avoid imperiling health workers. Digital payments obviate exchanging money, cards, and signatures for those who work in retail. Has the impact of COVID-19 accelerated interest in investing in greater automation?

- **Investing in the longer term:** As governments seek to stimulate economic recovery, it is important to look at investing in building an economy that is ready for tomorrow. Infrastructure stimulus remains China’s first line of response for recovering from COVID-19, but with a focus on “new infrastructure” such as: artificial intelligence, big data, EV charging stations, energy efficiency programs and 5G as the main priorities. This may be an approach for Canada to consider, moving from the relief phase into recovery, if not resiliency.



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LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT TECHNOLOGY

The limiting factor in trucking is not technology. It’s human.

KAREN DAVIDSON

Canadian/American border crossings will continue to operate under partial closure restrictions until June 21. It’s a testament to the fact that essential goods and food continue to be moved expeditiously by Canadian truckers, new heroes in the age of COVID-19. However, despite being cocooned in truck cabs with satellite technology, truckers have discovered that humans have not elevated their manners to the same degree of sophistication.

“There are still places on both sides of the border that won’t let truckers use bathrooms,” says John Giordano, general manager, Ontario Potato Distribution Inc Logistics, (OPDI) Alliston. “These are basic necessities, especially to wash your hands.”

His May 18 report highlights only one of many challenges that the trucking industry faces during the COVID-19 pandemic. The shutdown of many Canadian businesses has meant that some trucks are

travelling to the U.S. with less than a load. Giordano points out that moving trucks with less than a load or empty is a very rare circumstance.

“The truck needs to move with enough revenue onboard, or it doesn’t make sense to send it out,” says Giordano. “Unfortunately this is resulting in a lot of trucks being parked.”

For trucks that are coming back from as far afield as California, the 2,000-mile trip is monitored with electronic logging devices which were made mandatory in the U.S. in February 2016 with a transition period ending December 2019. Transport Canada will require these tamper-resistant devices to be mandatory on June 12, 2021 to make sure drivers are not on the road for longer than their daily limit. Slight differences between the two jurisdictions are outlined at ELDFacts.com.

To attract and retain reliable drivers is an ongoing issue, not made any easier during the virus crisis. Giordano explains that word-of-mouth recruiting is still the best way to identify experienced talent. OPDI will



not consider anyone with less than a three-year AZ driving record and a “clean abstract.” That means the driver must be clean of driving infractions.

One of the best insurances for a problem-free trip is to ensure you have a robust preventative maintenance

program. Avoiding an on-the-road repair is a key to success.

“There’s nothing more costly than a truck going down on the road,” says Giordano.

Truckers have earned well-found respect as heroes during the COVID-19 crisis, delivering essential goods and food.

“You can have all the latest technology, nicest truck and best-looking paint job, but it’s the person behind the wheel that has to execute,” says Giordano. “If that person drives as expected, we all win.”

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Preparing for pepper weevil: common misconceptions and the importance of monitoring

CASSANDRA RUSSELL

For some, hearing “pepper weevil” may cause panic and flashbacks to 2016 and 2017 where this pest significantly impacted pepper production in southwestern Ontario. However, after a quiet season in 2019 with no known infestations in Ontario, it is important to remember that we shouldn’t let our guard down when it comes to this destructive community pest. The best course of action is to be proactive and continue monitoring for pepper weevil to avoid a repeat of previous years.

Pepper weevil is a widespread pest of peppers and a few other solanaceous species (e.g. eggplant and nightshade weeds) in Mexico and throughout many U.S. states. Adults lay eggs directly into young pepper fruits and buds and the pepper continues to grow while the insect completes development inside the fruit, protected from sight and control measures. With a lack of chemical controls available to combat this pest, a strong focus on monitoring is critical to detect pepper weevil adults that may be entering fields and greenhouses.

Over the last three years of researching and working with this pest, I have come to realize the lack of information and the growing amount of misinformation about pepper weevil. So, let’s address some common misconceptions about pepper weevil.

1) Pepper weevil is just a greenhouse pest. This is something I hear a lot. In fact, in Mexico and the U.S., pepper weevil is considered a “field pest.” Historically in Ontario, reports of infestations have been more common in greenhouses due to the pest’s hypothesized point of entry (imports from regions with endemic pepper weevil populations). The increased awareness and diligent management of this pest, including the use of exclusion screens and intensive scouting practices, have slowed the spread of pepper weevil but does not eliminate the possibility of a field infestation from an alternate source. There has been strong evidence of

weevils hitchhiking on people, produce bins and vehicles allowing them to travel far distances to seek out a pepper crop.

A researcher in New Jersey took an extensive look at how pepper weevil was dispersing through their growing region and found the pest in some unexpected places such as a landfill, community garden and a shopping mall. More research is needed to determine if pepper weevil adults can survive our Canadian winters while in protected areas such as buildings or in cull piles for long periods of time. One thing is for certain though, once temperatures are above freezing, pepper weevil adults can survive outdoors and use wild solanaceous hosts such as nightshades as stepping stones until they come across the next crop of peppers to invade. So, for those who think this is just a greenhouse pest, think again. This is a community pest that can be easily spread throughout the region if we don’t remain vigilant.

2) Pheromone traps attract weevils into my field/greenhouse. The bottom line is, if you are growing peppers and pepper weevil is present in your region, the crop itself is attracting the weevils to your greenhouse or field, not a small pheromone lure. Research into the chemical ecology of these pests has shown that their preferences towards natural volatiles released by plants, especially plants undergoing feeding damage by other weevils, is high. Researchers and industry are utilizing this knowledge and are working on advancements to harness pepper weevil’s chemical signal preferences. However, even with more advanced lures that combine aggregation pheromones with plant volatile cues, an aggregation pheromone lure will still only attract weevils in the immediate area since these chemical signals are not long-range cues. In short, a pheromone trap at the edge of your field or greenhouse will attract pepper weevils towards them if there is already an adult close enough to detect your pepper crop. So, wouldn’t you

prefer to trap it on a sticky card instead of laying eggs into pepper fruits and buds?

3) Pepper weevil can escape the sticky card traps. If you have used pheromone monitoring kits for pepper weevil, you know that the kits come with a two-part lure and a yellow sticky card. After reports of weevils escaping the sticky cards, lab experiments with adult pepper weevil were conducted to determine how well various sticky cards could retain weevils. Of all sticky cards tested, the sticky cards supplied in the kits (Trécé’s PHEROCON® PEW kits) were the best in minimizing adult escapees in lab conditions. A small percentage of adults was able to escape the sticky card traps after a period, but with frequent trap checks and changes, escapes can be minimized to make these pheromone tools more reliable.

Continued on page 16



Photo 1: Pepper weevil adult hiding in a pepper plant. Photo credit, Hannah Fraser, OMAFRA.



Photo 2: Pheromone trap for pepper weevil detection. Photo credit, Cassandra Russell, OMAFRA.

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Preparing for pepper weevil

Continued from page 15

It is also important to remember that pheromone traps placed at the edge of fields, greenhouses and near packing areas are only part of a successful monitoring program. Regular scouting of a pepper crop is crucial to successfully detect this pest before populations are able to build up. Scouting in a crop should focus on looking for signs of egg laying in young fruits, not the adults themselves. Adults are small and hide easily among the fruits and foliage, making them incredibly difficult to detect. When scouting, look at fruits for small pin-sized depressions in the skin of the fruit. Young fruits will often drop off the plant and show signs of yellowing at the calyx when an immature pepper

weevil is developing inside. This is another sign of potential pepper weevil presence in your crop. Here are three take-away points:

- 1) stay vigilant and don't assume pepper weevil won't be your problem
- 2) don't be scared to use pheromone traps
- 3) always combine proper use of pheromone traps (frequent trap checks and changes) with regular crop scouting.

From everything we have learned about pepper weevil over the last few years and by continuing to monitor for this pest, we can hopefully look to 2020 with optimism that we can manage pepper weevil here in southwestern Ontario.

For more information on identifying weevils found on sticky traps, OMAFRA staff have developed a great guide for identifying weevils on traps "Which Weevil Warrants Worry?" Link: <https://medium.com/ongreenhousevegetables/which-weevil-warrants-worry-6f6a8402b23c>

If you suspect pepper weevil in your greenhouse or field or think you have found one on a monitoring trap, please reach out to Cara McCreary, Greenhouse Vegetable IPM Specialist (OMAFRA) or Cassandra Russell, Vegetable Crops Specialist (OMAFRA).

We are also still looking for growers in Chatham-Kent and Essex county to participate in our pepper weevil monitoring program for 2020. If you are growing peppers and would like to be involved and stay up to



Photo 3: Young damaged pepper fruit showing two oviposition scars and a yellow calyx, indicating an immature pepper weevil is developing inside. Photo credit, Cassandra Russell, OMAFRA.

date on the latest pepper weevil updates, please send an email to Cassandra.russell2@ontario.ca.

Should I remove garlic scapes?

TRAVIS CRANMER

In Ontario, garlic scaping normally occurs the first and second week of June. Research conducted by John Zandstra at the University of Guelph Ridgetown Campus has shown that the timing of scape removal in a hardneck cultivar, such as 'Music' can result in a potential yield increase of 20-30 per cent. These results indicate that it is advantageous to remove the scapes by hand as soon as they are visible. However, this yield improvement is not always true if a sickle bar mower running above the crop is used to remove the scape.

Sickle bar mowers greatly reduce the

amount of labour that is required for scape removal, but it comes with a cost. A sickle bar mower is an easy way to spread viruses and other pathogens since the knives are coming into contact with every stalk. In addition to spreading pathogens, a sickle bar mower often cuts leaves as well. Research has shown by removing one leaf, the yield was reduced by an average of 17.5 per cent and if two leaves were cut, the yield was reduced by approximately 25 per cent. Research has shown that the best way to remove scapes is by hand. Scaping by hand limits pathogen spread and fewer leaves are damaged in the process.

Travis Cranmer is a vegetable crops specialist, OMAFRA.



Figure 1. Garlic scape

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CROP PROTECTION

Dealing with the risk part of life



CHRIS DUYVELSHOFF
CROP PROTECTION ADVISOR,
OFVGA

Risk management is something we all do constantly in our lives. Much of it totally subconsciously. Going outside (solar radiation and lightning), crossing the street, and driving the car all have some certain degree of hazard associated with them. How much we need to worry about something is what risk is referring to.

Risk is comprised of two parts, hazard and exposure. Hazard describes the inherent properties of a substance, organism, or action to cause harm. Exposure is how much and how frequently you come into contact with a hazard. For example, electrocution is a hazard of lightning. How often you go outside, especially in a thunderstorm, is the exposure. Risk is a function of this hazard and this exposure. Most of us choose to seek shelter in a thunderstorm to limit our exposure; we don't worry much about getting hit by lightning. Yet lightning strikes still kill about 10 people a year in Canada – most view the overall risk as low, but it is not completely zero. Some risks we can control and others we can't.

Voluntary risk

Alcohol consumption is known to be hazardous. There are certainly acute exposure levels that could result in direct death (i.e. drinking a lot at once). But there are also chronic exposure levels that can produce other negative health effects such as cancer. The government of the U.K. revised

its alcohol consumption guidelines in 2016 based on a wide range of studies and analysis to help reduce alcohol-related illnesses in the population resulting from long-term drinking.

The new U.K. guidelines are the same for both men and women at a limit of 14 units of alcohol per week. Each unit is equivalent to 10 mL of pure alcohol. This translates into 6 x 473 mL pints of five per cent alcohol or six x 175 mL glasses of 13 per cent wine. The weekly limit is also suggested to be spread out evenly over at least three days, reducing the amount of consumption in any one day. People that consume above these guidelines are expected to have at least a one per cent greater chance of dying from an alcohol-related illness including cancer in their lifetime. Alcohol consumption represents a voluntary risk. One may choose to prevent their own exposure by not drinking at all. Others may choose that the risk is acceptable to them.

Involuntary risk

Today roughly 60 per cent of Ontario's electricity needs are met by nuclear power plants. More than 9000 MW of output were being produced at three sites in the province at the time of writing. In fact, Bruce Power's facility on Lake Huron is one of the largest nuclear power plants in the world. Nuclear radiation is of course inherently hazardous – we've all heard of Chernobyl and Fukushima. But I can't remember any conversations I've had or seen on social media about risk from Ontario's power grid.

A study by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission compared radiation doses and cancer cases of those people living within 25 km of the Ontario nuclear plants to that of the general population over 18 years. Radiation doses attributable to the nuclear plants were 100 to 1000 times lower than that of the natural background radiation found at the earth's surface. Incidences



Photo by Glenn Lowson



of cancers in the communities within 25 km of these nuclear sites were similar to the general population of Ontario. In this case the risk is involuntary – I myself cannot control what happens at the power plant. However, the management of exposure by the reactor operation produces miniscule risk despite the well-known hazards. Acceptable safety thresholds for involuntary risks are understandably higher than voluntary risks.

Risk acceptability

Both voluntary and involuntary risks are managed to some degree of risk acceptability. Driving a car and the speed limit is a perfect example. In 2019, the Ontario government launched a proposal to increase the speed limit on three sections of 400-series highways to 110 kph from the current 100 kph. The proposal received widespread public support despite the hazards associated with driving faster.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety in the United States calculated the number of traffic fatalities per road mile

following speed limit changes for every state over 25 years. The study found that a five mph (8 kph) increase in the posted speed limit was associated with an eight per cent increase in the fatality rate on interstates and freeways compared to the expected fatalities if the speed limit didn't change. For Canadian context, British Columbia increased posted speed limits by 10 kph in many sections of provincial highway in 2014. Following the change, a University of British Columbia study found an 11 per cent statistically significant increase in injuries and fatal collisions.

While the specific results can be interpreted in each jurisdiction, there is an undisputable linkage between travel speed and serious and fatal road collisions. Ontario went ahead with the speed limit increases anyway. The feedback showed people valued convenience – even if statistics prove we will almost certainly see an increase in fatal incidents as a result. This is a publicly acceptable risk.

Crop protection

The same principles are applied to risk management of crop protection products. The Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) assesses the cancer risk for consumption of residues on treated produce. However, as this is considered involuntary, safety thresholds are far above things such as alcohol consumption and risk of traffic accidents.

The PMRA acceptance threshold for lifetime cancer risk resulting from dietary exposure to treated produce is less than 1 x 10⁻⁶ or one in one million persons over a lifetime. While risk is never totally zero, at this level it is considered to be 'essentially zero'. Consider that every year in Canada one person per 3.7 million population is killed by lightning and one person per 20,000 population dies in a road collision. With crop protection, the risk of human health effect at less than one in a million – per lifetime not year – is pretty darn safe!

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Aim herbicide label expanded for tree nuts



JIM CHAPUT

The Pest Management Regulatory Agency has approved a label expansion registration for Aim herbicide to control weeds and suckers on tree nuts in Canada. This is crop group 14-11 in Canada. Aim herbicide was already labeled for use on several crops in Canada for control of weeds. This minor use project was submitted by Ontario in collaboration with the Southern

Ontario Nut Growers 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 weed management decisions within a robust integrated weed management program and should consult the complete label before using Aim herbicide. Aim herbicide is toxic to aquatic organisms and non-target terrestrial plants. Do not

Crop(s)	Target	Rate / ha	Application Information	PHI (days)
Tree nuts* (African Nut Tree, Almond, Beech Nut, Brazil Nut, Brazilian Pine, Bunya, Bur Oak, Butternut, Cajou, Candlenut, Cashew, Chestnut, Chinquapin, Coconut, Coquito Nut, Dika Nut, Ginkgo, Guiana Chestnut, Hazelnut (Filbert), Heartnut, Hickory Nut, Japanese Horse-Chestnut, Macadamia Nut, Mongongo Nut, Monkey-Pot, Monkey Puzzle Nut, Okari Nut, Pachira Nut, Peach Palm Nut, Pecan, Pequi, Pili Nut, Pine Nut, Pistachio, Sapucaia Nut, Tropical Almond, Walnut (Black and English), Yellowhorn, cultivars, varieties and/or hybrids of these commodities	Labeled weeds	37 – 117 mL	For WEED control: Using hooded sprayers apply in a minimum water volume of 100 L per ha. Use Agral 90 or AgSurf adjuvants at 0.25% v/v. Mix thoroughly before spraying. Maximum of 1 application per season	3
	Sucker control	150 mL of product per ha or 75 mL per 100 L of spray	For SUCKER MANAGEMENT: Apply to young suckers that have not reached maturity and hardened off. Directed spray at the base of the tree for sucker control with special precaution not to get spray on fruit, foliage or tender growing parts. Apply in water volume of 200 L per ha. Use Agral® 90 or AgSurf® adjuvants at 0.25% v/v. Mix thoroughly before spraying Maximum 2 applications per year. Allow 14 days between applications.	30

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

containers. Follow all other precautions, restrictions and directions for use on the Aim herbicide label carefully. For a copy of the new minor

use label contact your local crop specialist, regional supply outlet or visit the PMRA label site. *Source: OMAFRA April 30, 2020 news release*

Vayego insecticide protects against Colorado potato beetle

The Crop Science division of Bayer, headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, has announced the registration of the active ingredient, tetraniliprole, which will be launched commercially in the registered end use product Vayego insecticide, a new addition to its pest control lineup. For potato growers, it combines excellent knockdown of Colorado potato beetles, potato flea beetles and European corn borer. Vayego also provides Lepidopteran pest control in key tree fruit and

vegetable crops. “When applied as a foliar spray, Vayego provides extended residual on Colorado potato beetles, giving growers confidence that their potatoes will have additional protection,” says Carmen Holding, crop & campaign manager, horticulture at Bayer. “This residual activity also means growers may need fewer applications throughout the season. It’s an easy-to-use product because of its low use rate, enabling growers to stay on top of their pest infestations.” A second generation Group 28

diamide, Vayego offers excellent control of Lepidopteran pests in tree fruit and vegetables, with low risk to beneficial insects when used according to the product label. The addition of Vayego further complements the Bayer insecticide portfolio in potatoes, tree fruit and vegetables. With its low-dose rates, fast feeding cessation and residual control on Colorado potato beetles, Vayego will be an invaluable tool for horticulture growers for years to come. For more information,



farmers are encouraged to talk to their local retailers or visit [cropscience.bayer.ca/Products/Insecticides/vayego](https://cropsscience.bayer.ca/Products/Insecticides/vayego)

Source: Bayer May 6, 2020 news release

BioLink herbicide registered for Canada

Westbridge Agricultural Products, based in Vista, California, has received approval from the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) for BioLink herbicide. It is registered as a broad-spectrum contact herbicide for post-emergent, non-selective weed control for use in and around all food and non-food crops. Westbridge’s patented and proprietary formulation is an emulsifiable concentrate that has been approved by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) for use in certified organic food production. “The introduction of this new product into Canada is

exciting news and what organic growers have been waiting for,” says Westbridge president, Tina Koenemann. “The herbicide will provide growers with a safe and valuable tool to help meet their certified organic crop production goals. It will also be a valuable option for conventional growers to use as a rotational herbicide where weeds have become resistant to chemicals.” With more than nine years of grower-proven efficacy and university testing, BioLink herbicide consistently provides fast and effective burndown on a wide variety of annual and perennial weeds and grasses. The active ingredients are naturally-occurring fatty acids

which disrupt the plant’s waxy cuticle and cell walls, causing weeds to dehydrate and die. The product is not volatile so vapour damage will not occur to non-target plantings. This herbicide can also be a beneficial tank-mix partner to enhance conventional herbicide

efficacy, and it is an excellent IPM tool to rotate with conventional herbicides to minimize resistance. BioLink herbicide is low-foaming, easy-to-use, and has no pre-harvest interval so it can be applied up to day of harvest. It is safe for pollinators

and beneficial insects. For more information on BioLink herbicide EC and Westbridge’s full product line, call (800) 876-2767 or visit www.westbridge.com. *Source: Westbridge Agricultural Products May 5, 2020 news release*



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