

INSIDE THE PACKING HOUSE

## Making high grades in potato food safety



EarthFresh built a new potato handling facility a year ago in Burlington, Ontario. New technologies protect workers from injury and food from tampering. Six new processing lines sourced from Weening Brothers Manufacturing have improved productivity. Worker Anthony Griffin keeps an eye on the fast-moving line. Photos by Glenn Lawson.

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KAREN DAVIDSON

Not everyone gets to start from scratch. A year ago, EarthFresh was fortunate in moving into a 60,000-square foot facility in Burlington, Ontario, leaving behind an outdated plant on the outskirts of Toronto.

"This is the right size for today," says Tom Hughes, president of EarthFresh. "It took years of planning from 2009 to 2015."

The company hails back to 1963 when Tom's father and David MacKay started the business under MacKay and Hughes. It's evolved over the years – with both name and ownership changes -- until the present location in an industrial park. One thing hasn't changed: a legacy of food safety culture.

Hughes attributes this sensibility to the fact that the business has packed produce for Green Giant since 1998. Green Giant's exacting standards has kept EarthFresh ahead of other competitors. Some of the farmers who contract to EarthFresh were the first to be on the CanadaGAP food safety program. The plant

itself subscribes to the Primus GFS program.

"Food security will be more important as we go forward," says Hughes. "Preventing nails in our system is just the start."

To that point, the new plant design accommodates six metal detectors on each of the packing lines. This is more than a peace-of-mind investment, says Hughes, pointing out that the P.E.I. potato tamperings are still unsolved after more than a year.

"This investment reflects that we live in a different world," says Hughes. "We have to make sure that anyone who wants to do harm can't do it in our facility."

The metal detectors are just one part of a mindset that protects food safety. Anyone arriving at the warehouse must check in with the receptionist. The new plant was built so that truck drivers have access to a lounge only and are physically barred from entering the floor premises. Off-site human resources consultants vet any new employees, checking backgrounds and references. Once hired, employees take health and food safety training.

"Everyone has a role in food

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Everyone has a role in food safety.

~ Colleen Wilcox

”

safety," says Colleen Wilcox, food safety coordinator. Her own job starts with contracted farmers and extends to co-packers all over Canada where she regularly conducts audits. If she spots a worker chewing gum, she knows that more is required than asking for the gum to be removed. It's a case of going to the root problem and sending employees for a refresher training course.

Sanitation programs are one of the most important elements. It's easier, perhaps, in a new building, but that doesn't preclude that the city water must be tested every day and that equipment must be sanitized every day, all with appropriate records being maintained.

A recall team is in force in

case of a mishap. Every department has its assigned person with a backup, and cell phones on hand for around-the-clock coverage.

Sustainability of a processing operation that uses a lot of water is a key next step. EarthFresh has identified a working group to integrate best management practices without an impact on quality or safety.

"Food safety programs make you a better manager," says Hughes. "The hard work is worth it. We're proud to bring our clients to see the plant."

In the next decade, Hughes forecasts greater harmonization of food safety programs across North America: "The rules may be tougher, but we'll be better."

## AT PRESS TIME...

### Dow, DuPont to merge in \$130 billion deal

Two giants of agribusiness, in terms of size and history, have announced a blockbuster deal that will see Dow Chemical Co. and DuPont merge by the second half of 2016. The newly formed entity, DowDuPont, is expected to split into three independently traded companies focused on agriculture, chemicals and materials, and specialty products. In the December 11 announcement, the companies suggested that process could take until 2018.

DuPont's chief executive Ed Breen will be CEO of the new company, and Dow Chemical CEO Andrew Liveris will be executive chairman. With DuPont's executive heading up the spinoff of the ag and specialty businesses, it's clear he's leading the new agriculture company. DuPont's ag business had more than \$11 billion in sales last year compared to Dow's \$7 billion. Breen has already announced cuts of \$300 million to research and development in the agriculture business.

A strong portfolio in all three areas of seed, seed traits and crop protection products is seen as the competitive edge. As such, DowDuPont will be a formidable competitor to BASF, Bayer, Monsanto and Syngenta. Any positive impact on farmers remains to be seen in the months to come in new product offers and competitive pricing.

### OFVGA welcomes guest speakers

Start your brain! Or maybe rewire your brain. The latest discoveries from the fields of neuroscience, learning and communication suggest that our brains are capable of much more than we ever previously thought possible. On January 12, banquet dinner speaker Brian Thwaites will speak about brain training. He says that applications are virtually unlimited and include the way we think, learn, innovate, solve problems, read, speak, listen, write, organize, advertise, sell products, market services — along with a multitude of other day-to-day tasks. For a preview, go to: [www.brainspeaker.com](http://www.brainspeaker.com). Other guest speakers include:

- Elizabeth Mills, president and CEO, Workplace Safety and Preventive Services, at the labour section meeting
- Crystal McKay, Farm and Food Care Canada
- Jaye Aitkens, ACC Financial, at the safety nets section meeting

To register for the OFVGA annual general meeting, January 12-13, in Niagara Falls, go to [www.ofvga.org](http://www.ofvga.org).

### OFVC highlights Meet the Buyer session

The February 17-18, 2016 edition of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention promises a sold-out trade show including 20 new exhibitors, according to Glenna Cairnie, executive

coordinator. Registration is now open and early pricing discounts end February 9 at 6 pm.

Be sure to register and guarantee a spot for the Meet the Buyer event on February 18 at 8:30 am. There is no charge for this first-come, first-served event, which is open to OFVC registered attendees only.

Last year's inaugural event recorded more than 90 growers meeting with buyers from Costco, Gordon Food Services, Loblaw, Longo's and Walmart Canada. A speed-dating style is the format allowing one-on-one meetings with buyers to explore potential supply opportunities.

As always, educational sessions are a draw. Some samples:

- The future of farmers' markets
- The high cost of low employee engagement
- Getting a bird's eye view with UAVs
- LCBO's thoughts on the Ontario cider market

Popular competitions continue. BASF is sponsoring the Great Ontario-Hopped Craft Beer Competition. Ontario's Finest Sweet and Hard Cider Competition will announce its winners at the show. The Innovation Award, the best new product or service introduced by an exhibitor in the last two years, is always eagerly anticipated.

**The Grower** is the official media sponsor of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention. Go to the website ([www.ofvc.ca](http://www.ofvc.ca)) for in-depth information on sessions, competitions, trade show exhibitors and more. And register soon.

## NEWSMAKERS



**Peter Quiring**, president, NatureFresh Farms, has announced that the first crop of OhioRed branded tomatoes will be harvested in mid-February at a new greenhouse in Delta, Ohio. "We will be heading into 2016 with 130 acres in Leamington, Ontario and 15 acres in Delta, Ohio for a total of 145 acres under glass," he said. Construction is underway for another 30 acres in Ohio to be completed by mid-summer. The company grows and markets an extensive variety of tomatoes, bell peppers and cucumbers.

Vineland Research and Innovation Centre has announced that Hon. **Lyle Vanclief** is the new chair of the board of directors, succeeding outgoing **John F.T. Scott**. Vanclief is well-known in federal politics as a former agriculture and agri-food minister. New directors are **Greg Devries**, president of Truly Green Farms and Cedarline Greenhouses, a grower of peppers and tomatoes. **Allan Visser** also joins the board as president of Visser Holdings, a principal and manager in developing and operating residential and commercial real estate.

At the Ontario Potato Board's annual general meeting in early December, **Glen Squirrell** was re-elected chair, **Harry Bradley** as vice-chair. **Homer VanderZaag** joins as a new board director. Re-elected directors are **Shawn Brenn**, **Jack Murphy**, **Isaiah Swidersky**.



The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association announces the appointment of **Dan Tukendorf** to the position of project manager. He'll be responsible for the Northern School Fruit and Vegetable Program and the Fresh from the Farm program. As a former Loblaw produce procurement category manager, his logistics skills are well suited to these growing programs.

CanAgPlus, the corporation that owns and operates the CanadaGAP food safety program, announces newly elected directors for the 2016-2017 term. They are **Keith Kuhl**, Peak of the Market; **Stephanie Lariviere**, Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers; **Dean Thomson**, Thomson Orchards; **Scott Wright**, Star Produce. Current chair is **Jack Bates**, a potato and blueberry grower from Delta, British Columbia.

Ontario's Agriculture Adaptation Council has announced its 2015-2016 board of directors. **Judy Dirksen**, chair, represents the livestock industry. **Ray Duc**, tender fruit grower and **Brenda Lammens**, asparagus grower, represent horticulture on the board.

The Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers has announced its 2015-2016 board of directors. The following directors have been elected to a two-year term: **Kevin Safrance**, Envirofresh Produce Ltd.; **Hilco Tamminga**, Truly Green Farms; **Naunihal Gill**, eNature Greenhouses; **Marco Hoogenboom**, Hoogenboom Farms; **James Neven**, Neven Produce. **Jan VanderHout** has been elected director for a one-year term. They are joined by **James Cornies** (Cornies Farms); **Paul Mastronardi** (Mastron Enterprises Ltd); **Jim Slater**, Sunsatation Acres; **Mike Vanderzwet**, St. David's Hydroponics. **James Cornies** and **Jan VanderHout** will serve as vice-chairs. Chair of the board is **George Gilvesy**.

The Prince Edward Island Potato Board has a new executive. **Alex Docherty** of Skyview Farms Ltd, Elmwood was re-elected for a second year as chair. The new vice-chair is **Rodney Dingwell**, Mo Dhaidh Farm Ltd, Morell. The third member of the executive committee is **Darryl Wallace** of Wallace Family Farms, Cascumpec. Also joining the Board are three new directors: **Jason Hayden** of Cherry Valley, **Wayne Townshend** of Fortune Bridge, and **Fulton Hamill** of Searletown. Returning board directors are **Donald Godfrey**, **Kirk Shea**, **Owen Ching**, **David Francis**, **John Hogg**, and **Glen Rayner**.



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COVER STORY

# Making high grades in potato food safety



Food safety coordinator Colleen Wilcox takes a moment with workers on the potato grading line at EarthFresh, Burlington, Ontario.



Quality control technician Amir Mazidi regularly records temperatures in potato totes with a sensor. The acceptable range is between 40° and 50°F. If potatoes are too cold, they will suffer damage on the mechanical packing lines.



This one-year-old facility incorporates the latest in technology including six metal detectors. One more unit will arrive in 2016.



This semi-automatic vacuum palletizer was custom-made to swing in a six-foot radius with two working arms. “Robots are too expensive,” says EarthFresh’s plant manager Ashour Albazi, “so we designed a prototype based on the auto industry, but tested the head only.” The size of the head is designed to pick up potato bags with capacity of 50 to 100 pounds. For a cost of \$15,000, this is a good solution for slow output lines allowing a worker to move four masters per minute.

## The history -- and future -- of food safety

Every grower knows there is a roving pack of pathogens ready to contaminate produce. They are all deadly, but which one is the most frequent? *Listeria monocytogenes*, *norovirus*, *E. coli 0157*, *Cyclospora*, *Clostridium perfringens* and *Salmonella* have all been in the news. The answer is *Salmonella*.

In a recent government report, “An overview of food-borne outbreaks in Canada reported through Outbreak Summaries: 2008-2014,” *Salmonella* topped the list with the most frequency. That statistic aside, all of these pathogens can do grave harm. In that six-year time frame, there were 115 investigations, 3301 cases and 30 deaths.

“In the future, expect to see smaller outbreaks but more of them,” predicts Jeff Farber, now director of the Centre for Research on Food Safety, University of Guelph. Before he took up the position six months ago, Farber had spent a decade as Health Canada’s director of the Bureau of Microbial Hazards. His expertise is so highly regarded that he was recently appointed as an

expert advisor to the Food and Drug Administration in the U.S. to help shape policies regarding *Listeria*, especially as it relates to ready-to-eat foods. He speaks with authority about history and the future.

*Listeria* hasn’t historically been associated with produce, says Farber, but he remembers a major outbreak related to coleslaw back in the 1980s. In Colorado, *Listeria*-tainted cantaloupe in 2011 killed more than 30 people and resulted in criminal charges. And this past year, *Listeria* was fingered as a culprit again in caramel-coated apples. More of these whodunit cases are being solved because of improved traceability and sensitive molecular typing methods.

That’s why the food safety science is ever evolving. Low-moisture foods are becoming an emerging issue. Farber says, “We used to think that foods such as peanut butter, spices, seeds and nuts were unlikely to be microbial hazards. But now we know that they can contain pathogens. In fact, there have been a number of

outbreaks involving peanut butter, and we’ve recently seen *Salmonella* in a wide variety of tree nuts, including a recent recall involving Macadamia nuts.”

Researchers like Farber are also studying the microbiome of nuts to see how pathogens survive for so long under these conditions. Another area of research is the use of bacteriophages to detect such lethal pathogens as *E. coli 0157* in spinach.

Until recently, laboratory-based methods such as cell culturing and immunoassays have been cumbersome in identifying food pathogens. They are not in real-time and difficult to use in-field. However, lab-on-a-chip biosensors could revolutionize food safety. If they can be miniaturized and automated, they may become the first line of defence on farms and in packing houses.

Let’s trust the science to find a better way forward on food safety.



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CANADIAN PRODUCE MARKETING ASSOCIATION

# Industry education and training launched in 2016

Responding to member requests for industry training, the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) has facilitated the development of online programs for the produce industry. CPMA has engaged members nationally and internationally in the development of meaningful and cost effective training for the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for success in the produce industry. The first component of the program, the Produce Basics Certificate, is now available at [elearning.cpma.ca](http://elearning.cpma.ca).

Certificate topics, delivered through online modules, include: Professionalism, Communications, The Produce Supply Chain, Storage and Handling, Produce Identification, Product Knowledge, Food Safety and Food Safety Initiatives. The

Produce Basics Certificate also includes evaluation through a final online exam to ensure certificates are issued only upon a demonstrated knowledge of content.

“The broad scope of the modules allow each learner to develop core competencies and apply that learning to their specific work context,” noted Eric Biddiscombe, CPMA director and senior category director, Loblaw Companies. “This program is perfect for newcomers to the industry, and I can see it becoming a key introductory piece for new hires.”

“Our industry deals with highly perishable goods on a daily basis, and this introductory certificate will educate industry on best practices to ensure produce is always the best quality



for consumers,” added Ron Lemaire, CPMA president. “At only \$150 per participant, this program is a cost-effective way for companies to train staff on the unique needs of our industry. We look forward to expanding this program as we move forward with this initiative.”

Building on this introductory

certificate, the CPMA is developing additional credentialing for various career levels. These new program elements will be introduced in 2016.

### End-of-year podcast

The CPMA organized a year-end podcast on December 10 with

editors of several produce publications in Canada, the United States and Chile. The topics and assignments were as follows:

- Sustainability – John Groh, The Produce News, U.S.
- Food Safety and Regulation – Tom Karst, The Packer, U.S.
- Food Trends – Karen Davidson, The Grower, Canada
- Trade Agreements and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures – Matthew Ogg, Fresh Fruit Portal, Chile
- Changing Technologies – Karen James, Grocery Business, Canada
- Marketing Trends – roundtable

All participants had the opportunity to comment on all subjects. The podcast was chaired by Ron Lemaire, president, CPMA. Go to [www.cpma.ca](http://www.cpma.ca) and click on podcasts.

## FOOD PROCESSING

# Farmers, processors and consumer trust – what’s the real story?

CHER MEREWETHER

At Provision Coalition - where we take the lead on sustainability issues for Canada’s food and beverage processors – we recently started working with EarthFresh. Why? Consumer trust.

EarthFresh is an impressive Canadian company located in Burlington, Ontario. Specializing in supplying the retail and food-service industries with premium fresh potatoes, carrots and onions, the company prides itself in maintaining successful relationships with growers and buyers. To do this, EarthFresh needs to stay one step ahead of consumer trends and expectations. Key words for EarthFresh are trust and transparency and for good reason.

The Center for Food Integrity in the U.S. recently released an insightful report on consumer trust after many years of research. A Clear View of Transparency and How it Builds Consumer Trust takes a hard look at how different categories of consumers respond to food production and supply chain issues. The report starts with a simple statement that nicely summarizes the matter.

If you increase transparency, you will increase trust.

The report is clear - consumers have an increasing expectation for transparency in the food supply chain. And transparency is

important for both positive and negative issues. On the latter, consumers want to know how a company is addressing a problem when it arises. Consumers identified trust-building transparency on farm to retail issues of food safety, environmental impact, animal well being, impact of food on health, labour/human rights and business ethics

The report found that consumers rate transparency in food safety and impact of food on health as the two most important categories. In terms of general communications, consumers are looking for straightforward access to information through product labeling or on a company’s website.

In terms of environmental impact, consumers want the opportunity to ask questions about environmental performance, again through easy to understand communications on a company website. Similarly, consumers want the opportunity to ask questions about labour practices and human rights directly of an employer company.

When it comes to animal well being, the report indicated that consumers expect results of third-party audits on animal care to be shared openly. And ethical business practices and responsibilities should similarly be shared in a transparent manner with

consumers.

What is so interesting from this report is that communication to consumers does not have to be complicated. In fact simple language and easy-to-access information are what count.

Of course we know in the agri-food industry that communicating practices is one thing; making production and processing changes are another. Developing a sustainability action plan at the farm or processor level takes resources and dedication, but it’s part of a continuous improvement commitment that all good

businesses strive for.

At EarthFresh, Provision is working with the team to integrate sustainability into their business strategy, operations, decision-making and culture. For example, within their operations EarthFresh is considering how to better monitor, track and report on key performance indicators such as waste, water and electricity. These decisions demand a business case for change and a clear return on investment. But with the growing conversation around positive consumer relations and food

chain transparency, it is change companies like Earth Fresh are embracing.

To learn more about Provision Coalition go to [www.provisioncoalition.com](http://www.provisioncoalition.com) or contact Cher Merewether at [cmereweather@provisioncoalition.com](mailto:cmereweather@provisioncoalition.com)

Provision is funded in part through Growing Forward 2, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

*Cher Merewether is executive director, Provision Coalition.*



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INTERNATIONAL

CHINA

Lettuce consumption is rising



Conventional Chinese cuisine is hailed for its focus on shortly steamed or fried vegetables. But as Western influences grow through fast-food chains, Chinese tastes are favouring more raw vegetables. Lettuce fits this trend in China's largest centres.

Hefei Wangjia, a lettuce exporter to South Korea and Taiwan, reported a five per cent increase in demand in 2015. However growth has been hindered by drought, flooding and diseases such as downy mildew and leaf miner.

Whole-lettuce crops are preferred by consumers. Ready-to-eat or fresh-cut salads have yet to take off.

Source: FreshPlaza.com

EUROPE

Roundup probably doesn't cause cancer

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has concluded that glyphosate, the active ingredient in Monsanto's weed killer Roundup, is unlikely to cause cancer in humans. The organization, which advises EU policy-makers, proposes a higher limit on the daily amount of residue of the weed killer that people can safely consume.

This recommendation will be considered by the European Commission which must decide whether to extend the current approval for glyphosate which ended Dec. 31, 2015. EFSA scientists looked at glyphosate-only studies, not groups of related chemicals. For the first time, they are proposing a limit on the maximum safe daily dose of 0.5 milligrams per kilogram of body weight.

Source: [www.efsa.europa.eu](http://www.efsa.europa.eu)

NETHERLANDS

Robot ready to harvest sweet peppers



SWEEPER, the first-generation, market-ready sweet pepper harvesting robot is set to launch in the Netherlands in early February. The Netherlands-based Wageningen University and Research Centre has coordinated the research with partners from Sweden, Israel and Belgium.

The Netherlands, facing a skilled labour shortage, is a leader in agricultural robotics. If this technology works well, it will be adapted to other greenhouse crops. Currently, more than 1.3 billion kg of sweet peppers are harvested in Europe annually.

Google "An Autonomous Harvesting Robot for Sweet-Pepper in Greenhouses" for the YouTube video.

Source: Hortidaily.com

TURKEY

More trade strains in Middle East

Turkey's downing of a Russian fighter jet which invaded air space during the ongoing Syrian war has provoked punitive trade action. On December 7, Russia introduced phytosanitary conditions for the import of vegetables via Belarus. These measures further complicate the food embargo against European Union countries.

Turkey's fruit and vegetable prices are under pressure with disrupted trade patterns. Normally a supplier of citrus, persimmons and pomegranates, Turkey can't find a home for its produce that would normally go to Ukraine, Russia and Poland. Greenhouse-grown vegetables have also been affected.

Source: FreshPlaza.com

WASHINGTON

Cherry disease on radar in Canada



A Washington state scientist is warning Okanagan cherry farmers in British Columbia that Little Cherry Disease may be lurking. U.S. farmers have ripped out large numbers of trees.

Andrea Bixby-Brosi says that the affected fruit is unmarketable for two reasons. The fruit is smaller than normal and the cherries taste bitter. The virus has been documented in every county across Washington state which borders Canada.

The disease, spread by apple mealybugs, can be controlled only by cutting down the infected trees and destroying the roots. If Washington state growers don't replant their affected cherry orchards, they may switch to growing apples or pears.

For more B.C. detail: go to <http://ow.ly/VYLz0>

Source: FreshPlaza.com

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HARVEST STATS

# Potato growers to investigate 'predatory pricing' in the Ontario market



Photo by Glenn Lowson

KAREN DAVIDSON

Productivity is going up and prices are going down for Ontario potato farmers. Frustrations are boiling over regarding the depressed state of fresh pricing as well as eroding government support for safety nets. The farmgate value of the 2014-2015 crop was \$63.9 million, the lowest receipt in the last five years and down significantly from \$77.6 million the previous year.

"We need to remember that we get more productive every year," said Glen Squirrell, chair of the Ontario Potato Board at the December 2 annual general meeting. "More irrigation, fumigation, better varieties and improved plant protection materials as well as the ability to harvest vast

quantities of product in a hurry, have all contributed to our productivity. Mother Nature has also been kind. We haven't had a really bad growing season since 2007."

These comments laid the ground for a harsh review of the marketplace. Provinces in eastern Canada, particularly Quebec, are selling summer potatoes in Ontario during the height of the fresh-market season or chip potatoes below the Ontario contract price. Unsold crop from the 2014 growing season made its way into Ontario markets in the summer of 2015 further heightening tensions. Some of that 'old' crop resulted from market disruptions caused by Russia's embargo of vegetables from the European Union.

With these geopolitical trends still in play, Squirrell is warning that Ontario growers must rethink

“ We need to remember that we get more productive every year. More irrigation, fumigation, better varieties and improved plant protection materials as well as the ability to harvest vast quantities of product in a hurry, have all contributed to our productivity.

~ Glen Squirrell

their 2016 planting plans. Storage holdings in eastern Canada promise a repeat of 2015.

"We have only one market for our fresh potatoes and we all know this is the local market," said Squirrell. "We have to constantly defend our market from outside competition mainly from east of us."

Telephone conversations

between Ontario and Quebec grower groups are ongoing in efforts to prevent a similar situation in 2016. However, a resolution was passed asking that the Ontario Potato Board investigate the issue of predatory pricing in the Ontario potato market. The plan is to seek legal counsel as a first step.

The Ontario Potato Process

Council, chaired by Harry Bradley, will be negotiating all agreements for the 2016 crop year with Frito Lay, Super Pufft, Olde York, Pre-Peel and Soups & Stews. The hope is that the weakening Canadian dollar will put imported product from the U.S. at a disadvantage while increasing the value of Ontario potatoes contracted for the U.S. market.

Recommended Board Price Per Cwt. Tablestock – Lows and highs set each month					
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
July	16.00 - 26.00	18.75 - 28.25	15.75 - 29.25	18.00 - 22.50	19.25 - 31.50
August	19.25 - 22.50	19.25 - 24.75	21.50 - 24.75	18.00	24.75 - 29.25
September	15.75 - 19.25	18.00 - 19.25	18.00 - 21.50	18.00	18.00 - 24.75
October	15.75	18.00 - 16.00	18.00	18.00	18.00
November	15.75 -	16.00	18.00	15.75 - 18.00	18.00
December		16.00	18.00	15.75	18.00
	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
January		16.00	18.00	13.50 - 15.75	18.00
February		16.00	18.00	13.50	18.00
March		16.00	18.00	13.50	18.00
April		16.00	18.00	13.50	18.00
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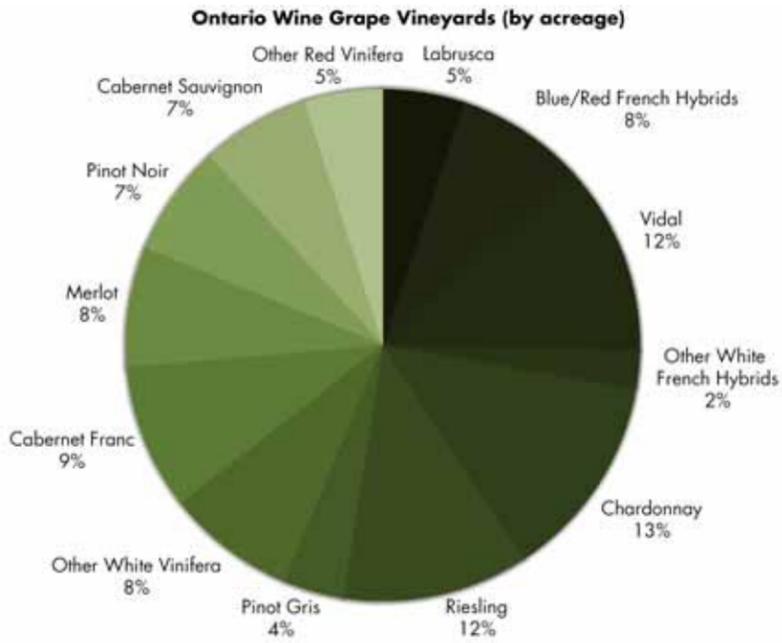
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HARVEST STATS

# With volumes down, Ontario grape growers are banking on quality



**Ken Hunter, Hunter Farms, Niagara-on-the-Lake, delivers Cabernet Franc grapes to the crush pad of Fielding Estate Winery, Lincoln, Ontario on October 30, 2015. Photo by Glenn Lowson.**

With two tough winters at their backs, Ontario grape growers are positive about the quality of the 2015 crop. At a December 4 news conference, Bill George, Grape Growers of Ontario (GGO) chair, announced 52,888 tonnes of grapes harvested with a farmgate value of more than \$62.38 million. Included in this tonnage are juice grapes and 4,317 tonnes left hanging on the vine for premium icewine.

These numbers are down significantly from the 2013 record harvest of 80,548 tonnes. However, individual grape

growers are sharing stories of the quality of not only white varietals but the reds. Technologies such as wind machines and vineyard pruning are helping growers fight climate change.

Grape Growers of Ontario represents 500 active grape growers in three designated viticulture areas: Niagara Peninsula, Lake Erie North Shore and Prince Edward County. The industry has high levels of volunteerism and civic engagement, with calculations of 79,000 hours annually to the benefit of local communities. The statistic was sourced

from a study by Betsy Donald, Queen's University and Donald-Morrow Research titled "The Growers and the Vines: people and places behind Ontario wines."

Several grape growers – Bill Schenck, Jamie Slingerland and Matthias Oppenlaender – testified to the involvement in their communities. These individual stories speak to the leadership skills gained in various volunteer activities

which are then shared with agriculture.

**Did you know?**

- 10.6% of wine sold in Ontario is VQA made of 100% Ontario grapes
- 32.0% of wine sold in Ontario is International Canadian Blend
- On average, it takes the juice of 107 grapes to make one glass of wine



## 157TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

JANUARY 12 & 13, 2016 CROWNE PLAZA NIAGARA FALLS, ON

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## CANADIAN HORTICULTURAL COUNCIL

## Reflections from 2015 and looking ahead to 2016



One of the entries from Brad Fraser, Wheelbarrow Orchards, Milton, ON.

### Register for CHC 2016 Annual General Meeting

Online registration is now available for the 2016 Annual General Meeting to be held from

March 8 – 10 at the Westin Ottawa. The AGM is a highlight in the Canadian horticultural industry's calendar and is an important opportunity for industry members and stakeholders to meet to discuss

a way forward for our industry in the upcoming year and beyond. The AGM will again follow a shortened three-day format, but new this year is that registration can be done via the CHC website.

As in past years, we are extending an invitation to members, stakeholders and partners to consider sponsoring the event. The popular Companion Program will again be offered for spouses and partners who wish to join us in Ottawa.

### Royal Agricultural Winter Fair Potato Competition 2015

Randy Visser of Orwell Cove PE entered the variety Krone in the Yukon Gold, Fabula or Other Yellow Flesh Class of the Table Stock Potato competition at the Royal Winter Fair in November, winning this Class and also being honoured with the Ontario Potato Board Award as Champion Stock Potatoes. Jim Black of Shelburne ON won both the Gemstar, Goldrush or Other Russet Skinned Class and the Norland, Red Maria or other Red Skinned Class and was also honoured as Reserve Champion Stock Potatoes. The Commercial Feature Exhibit Class of the Table Stock Section was won by Patricia Tupling of Shelburne ON. In the Novice Potatoes Section, the Champion and Reserve Champion awards were both won by Ed Valdes, Guelph ON.

### CHC trophy awarded at RAWF

This year's winner of the Canadian Horticultural Council Trophy for new apple varieties (Honeycrisp) was Verger Francois et Luc Turcotte from La Côte-de-Beaupré et l'Île d'Orléans, Québec.

This competition was resurrected in 2008 after a 44-year absence. It's supported by several sponsors including: Ontario Apple Growers, Canadian Horticultural Council, British Columbia Fruit Growers Association, Quebec Apple Grower Federation and Georgian Bay Fruit Growers' Association.

### Arbitrator issues report in "COOL" case between US, Mexico and Canada

On 7 December, a WTO arbitrator issued the report on the level of retaliation that Mexico and Canada

can request in their dispute with the United States over "country of origin labelling" (COOL): DS384, DS386: United States — Certain Country of Origin Labelling (Cool) Requirements

The WTO arbitrator ruled that Canada can impose retaliatory surtaxes on \$1.054 billion of U.S. exports to Canada as a result of the economic harm caused by the U.S. COOL policy, once final WTO authorization is obtained. The United States cannot appeal the ruling.

In a joint statement Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of International Trade, and the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food noted: "If the U.S. Senate does not take immediate action to repeal COOL for beef and pork, Canada will quickly take steps to retaliate."

### Statistical overview of the Canadian fruit industry 2014

AAFC has released its annual Statistical Overview of the Canadian Fruit Industry. The 31 page report contains information on production, innovation, trade, imports, consumption and world data. Download information at [www.hortcouncil.ca/uploads/file/English/What's New/2015/Fruit Report\\_2014\\_EN.pdf](http://www.hortcouncil.ca/uploads/file/English/What's%20New/2015/Fruit%20Report_2014_EN.pdf)

### Statistical overview of the Canadian veg industry 2014

The Horticulture and Cross Sectoral Division of the Sector Development and Analysis Directorate, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is pleased to present the latest report: "Statistical Overview of the Canadian Vegetable Industry - 2014."

The report provides a comprehensive statistical overview of the vegetable industry statistics. It contains tables and charts about Canadian vegetable production, farm gate value, new vegetable products, consumption, trade statistics as well as world production of vegetables. Download info at [www.hortcouncil.ca/uploads/file/English/What's New/2015/VegetableReport\\_2014\\_EN.pdf](http://www.hortcouncil.ca/uploads/file/English/What's%20New/2015/VegetableReport_2014_EN.pdf)



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- Tuesday morning breakfast hosted by Sobey's
- *Branding Atlantic Canada* panel session, with leading growers from the four Atlantic Provinces

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## NOTICE of MEETING

is hereby given that the 157th Annual Members and Directors' Meeting of the

### Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association

will be held in

Niagara Falls, Ontario at  
The Crowne Plaza Hotel  
January 12 & 13, 2016

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

ONTARIO FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

Board briefs

The OFVGA Board of Directors meeting took place on Thursday, December 10, 2015. The following items, organized by section chair, are reflective of the board's work on safety nets, research, crop protection, and property. The board briefs for January include reminders on SDRM funds, Cap & Trade Program design options, and the use of drones for precision agriculture.

Safety Nets – Mark Wales

SDRM now has \$4 million in account balances sitting there; it generates zero interest and should have been withdrawn. When there is zero activity by a participant for three years, Agricorp will begin to issue cheques.

The 2015 Fresh Vegetable Acreage Loss Program has been successful. The deadline for applications to the program in 2016 is May 1.

Crop Protection – Charles Stevens

Craig Hunter and Charles Stevens attended the Crop Protection Advisory Committee (CPAC) annual meeting, including meeting with Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA), Pest Management Centre (PMC) in November. PMC gave an update on the invasive species working group which continues to work with the Spotted Wing Drosophila and Marmorated Stinkbug. The Stinkbug has been found in an Ontario orchard. Ontario does significant monitoring. Work is being done to ensure funding for these activities going forward.

We heard that Marion Law, Chief Registrar at PMRA has moved into another section of Health Canada. The current acting Chief Registrar is Neilda Sterkenburg of PMRA. There has been a positive increase in correspondence between CPAC

and the horticultural industry.

Items coming out of the PMRA meeting include an update on the Grower Requested Own Use (GROU) program, helping to combat non-compliance within the crop protection industry, product re-evaluations, and an update on the Codex process.

Craig and Charles went to the Grow Canada Meeting in Calgary in December. Laura Dawson, an expert on Ontario/Canada/U.S./NAFTA international trade issues, spoke at the meeting. Craig put her in touch with Ontario ginseng producers to assist with problems created in trade.

Research – Harold Schooley

The annual Emergency Management Research Expo was recently held at 1 Stone Road, Guelph. Emergency issues in the animal sector typically outnumber plant issues in this theme and this year was no exception.

Dr. Andria Jones-Bitton (an epidemiologist with the Department of Population Medicine at the University of Guelph) is conducting a baseline study on producer stress and resiliency in response to traumatic disease epidemics experienced by swine and poultry producers recently. The researcher was encouraged to include horticultural growers in her study. Fruit and vegetable growers deal with the vagaries of weather, markets, and crop losses, as well as rising input costs in labour and energy and a burdensome regulatory environment. Stress is no stranger to them. Producers of any commodity are encouraged to participate in the producer stress and resiliency survey by dedicating 15-20 minutes to an anonymous survey at [www.producerwellness.ca](http://www.producerwellness.ca). Your input would add to the weight and breadth of this study.

The Muck Crops Research Station in the Holland Marsh is



Harvesting ginseng in Ontario's Norfolk County. Photo by Glenn Lowson

experimenting with drones to further precision agricultural technologies. Specifically, the research station is able to monitor crop disease from the air quickly and thoroughly, giving researchers the ability to respond sooner. It is unlikely that food costs would be lowered, but in a world where climate change is becoming an increasingly important issue, drones allow for better management of crops by helping to better collect data on weather events and to spot the constants in weather patterns that are increasingly unpredictable. Calibrating drones for use in a number of other precision agricultural uses is underway.

OMAFRA recently commissioned a consulting agency to conduct focus groups for input into the future trends in research and knowledge transfer. OMAFRA is cognizant of quickly emerging innovations in agricultural research and has concern for which methods are most appropriate for transferring these new technologies to producers. Your research chair participated in this exercise.

Property – Brian Gilroy

Farm and Food Care Canada is up and running. It will house the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity. Crystal Mackay is moving to Farm and Food Care Canada (FFC) but will continue to work closely with FFC Ontario as it works to hire a new executive director with an estimated start date of January.

Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) is updating the information it uses to calculate values for farmland and buildings for tax purposes. Only sales to bona fide farmers will be included in MPAC's calculation. Information from 1984 is being used along with the Douglas cost guide so an update is due. From the information received, 40 per cent of farms and farm structures will not see an increase. The remaining 60 per cent will see an increase. The greenhouse sector will likely be the most affected.

Ontario Cap and Trade Program Design plans have been released and Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), OFVGA and Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers (OGVG) are preparing responses due on Tuesday, December 15, 2015. This response will be made

available on the OFVGA website. There is talk of agriculture being exempt, however, alternative industries such as transportation will have inadvertent effects on many industries, agriculture included. The understanding is that credits will not be given for normal farm practices, only for innovative projects.

Ontario's Waste Reduction Strategy was released at the end of November and looks at a zero-waste proposal that would reallocate the financial responsibility of waste disposal from municipalities to the originator of the waste. A response is due in February; OFVGA has formed a working group and a response is in the works. Agriculture will see some cost-effective measures in place for tire recycling, which could result in a positive for this industry. There is a question whether or not the municipal taxes allocated to waste disposal would result in fewer taxes or simply reallocating that budget item to other municipal activities. There will be a heavy requirement for organics to not end in a landfill.

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## The power of perception



**JASON VERKAIK**  
CHAIR, OFVGA

values of the stakeholders, and earned through industry engagement, operating practices and expressed values. Social licensing is slow to build and quick to erode. Industry tactically garners public trust by doing what is right. Simply put, it's today's society and its acceptance – or rejection -- of the way things are done.

On my family farm, my sister runs a direct-to-consumer seasonal, local fruit and vegetable food box program. This program is subscription-based and runs over 20 weeks starting mid June to beginning of November. The business has grown to supply more than 500 families a variety of seasonal, local, conventional, organic, sustainable, environmentally conscious, socially responsible, all-natural, gluten-free, farm-fresh produce all placed together with balanced symmetry in a reusable plastic container. Okay, we really don't advertise that way,

however a strong case can be made for each of those adjectives.

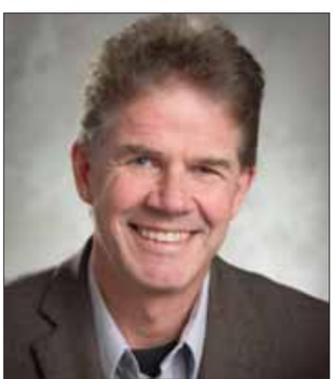
What does it all really mean or insinuate? Is it just marketing? Who determines what is right? Who is driving the interpretation of information? Debate of any of those terms can lead to divisions and subdivisions. These divisions and subdivisions can take conversation from moderate disagreement in methodology to passion-fueled activism. Back at the farm, the three most commonly asked questions are: Is the produce organic? Do you use Monsanto seed? Do you use GMOs? Having the advantage of dealing directly with the end consumer, we are able to engage in an honest conversation about horticulture. During the conversation, I find that often consumers of produce are not entirely sure why they ask a particular question or what they are really asking, however they feel socially compelled to ask.

I am not insinuating the consumer's lack of ability to reason. After a sincere conversation, the majority of our customers feel good about the their food system and confident in their choice. We are at a time in history where information is overly accessible and fraught with a myriad of marketing and competing agendas. Two percent of our North American population farms. Society's disconnected relationship with the land and the people who produce our food is at an all-time high. This disengagement along with polarizing information overload has led to a society that still trusts and respects farmers, but are confused and suspicious about the business of agriculture. Unfortunately there are many myths and half-truths being driven by realms outside of agriculture that are leading to knee-jerk reactions in developing policy and legislation. This type of response challenges

our competitiveness and risks our ability to meet the premier's challenge to grow our industry.

The effectiveness of our lobbying will depend on our ability to inform and re-establish social expectations around modern agriculture. We have a good story to tell. Globally, Canadian agriculture is highly respected. Let us reinforce this message at home. Farmers are highly educated men and women. They understand the dynamics of the environment in which they work and sustain it well. They are extremely innovative, highly technical, yet very practical. They have a diverse skill set. They are constantly learning, adapting and implementing. It is time now for farmers to add to their resume and become story tellers and educators. Farmers need to drive the information. If we want to earn and maintain our social licence to operate, we have to actively tell our story.

## Reflections of the past, visions of the future



**JOHN KELLY**  
EXECUTIVE VP, OFVGA

play in this challenge, and supplying food for domestic consumption and supporting exports. We have seen growth in some sectors, notably greenhouse vegetables. We have seen increased value of the production of horticultural products, however this may be as a consequence of a declining value of the Canadian dollar rather than a direct increase in production. Horticultural producers in Canada need to be able to retain and expand their market share, edge out competing imports and expand exports, and contribute to meeting the premier's challenge to agri-food, ensuring a secure food supply for Ontarians.

The government of Ontario over the past two years has come from a very strong position of activism, controversial policies, questionable value in consultations, and strong potential for impacts on the cost of production and return on investment for horticultural farmers. We have seen unprecedented activity in terms of consultations, primarily driven by the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF).

In the past, the key ministry that has worked with the OFVGA has been the Ontario Ministry of

Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In the more recent past however, the MOECC has grabbed the lion's share of attention with policies on neonicotinoids, climate change, water quality and quantity and the proposal for additional new audits and assessments. It is clear that environmental considerations are going to play a major role in horticultural production going forward. In Quebec, the proposals for restrictions of crop protection products will no doubt have an impact on growers in that province. With the election of Liberals at the federal level, it is clear that climate and the environment will also be part of their agenda.

But policies being developed by the government that negatively impact the competitiveness of fruit and vegetable farmers must be challenged vigorously. Currently, the major costs of production for our sector are labour and energy, followed by inputs. The government has been very active on these files over the past two years. Growers are also facing challenges from the supply chain to meet ever-increasing demands on how fruits and vegetables are produced and supplied to the marketplace.

The OFVGA is also concerned about the availability and

sky-rocketing prices of energy, including fuel (for example, natural gas) and electricity. Our ability to both access and pay for these essential components of the business will be compromised if we are not able to remain competitive and innovative. Further, our ability to produce electricity through combined heat and power (CHP) systems is limited by our infrastructure to carry power. To resolve these issues, continued presence and working with the Ministry of Energy is essential.

International pressures will continue to impact the domestic horticultural sector. While the decline in the Canadian dollar does make exports more attractive, it also increases the costs associated with innovation and expansion since many technologies come from outside of Canada. Agreements such as the Trans Pacific Partnership, in a global trading world, also have the potential to impact growers and their ability to get to market.

Agreements can be made to positively impact the export of Canadian produce. For example, an agreement for the sale of greenhouse product to China from Ontario was made during the last Ontario-led agricultural trade mission. Resolution of the financial protection for produce sellers at the federal level will result in a

more favourable market for U.S. export and domestic sales. The work just recently completed at the Paris Climate Change Conference will place limits on carbon use, and drive those energy-intensive businesses to low carbon economies.

So the question remains as to what will be coming in the future. In 2016, it is anticipated that there will be continued pressure from many different and diverse stakeholders in the business. Policies being brought forth by many sections of the government, including environment and others, will continue to impinge producers' ability to do business. The development of supply chain-related components, including sustainability measures (including environmental, social and economic) and food safety, are going to increase. The concept of "social license" applied to farmers is going to enter the conversation with growers. It is anticipated that the "Buy Local" market will also continue to grow. Vegetable and fruit growers must be aware of the multitude of challenges and opportunities in front of them, and determine the best way to take advantage.

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**THE GROWER**

PERSPECTIVE



# Alberta-style farm safety legislation will ripple across Canada



OWEN ROBERTS  
U OF GUELPH

against the impact of workplace injuries and illness. And finally, it would include farm and ranches in Employment Standards and Labour Relations legislation.

Some of these measures were to start as early as January 2016.

Many Alberta politicians were expecting the passage of the farm safety bill to be a slam dunk. After all, Albertans are still reeling from two separate incidents that had claimed young lives on farms there. Another tragedy occurred in Ontario, which may not have directly impacted Alberta -- but when people die on farms, headlines appear across the nation.

In any event, the new NDP government thinks it has a role in making farms there safer.

But many farmers (including many in other provinces) think agriculture is already legislated enough. If you follow the news, you'll have seen photos or footage of Alberta farmers -- 500 of them, in some cases -- protesting the government's proposals outside the legislature in Edmonton and in rural communities.

Ultimately, after farmers pushed back hard, the province

admitted it did a poor job of explaining the intent of the proposed legislation. It then decided to take its foot off the gas and consult with farmers, who maintain that farms can't be lumped in with other sectors when it comes to safety legislation.

You may be familiar with the arguments the Alberta producers are putting forward. Despite protests, they're not against farm safety. Many farms have farm safety plans. Farm safety associations are active in Alberta, as they are in all provinces. They offer training and courses for those willing to take them.

Rather, they are against what they say is the way legislation could change the culture of farming, and ignore some of the realities.

For example, a lot of farm family children work on the farm. Farmers, of course, don't knowingly put them at risk. But Alberta farmers worry that provisions in the proposed Bill 6 would make it illegal for farm kids there to be active in the operation like they are now (even though the Alberta premier has said the bill is not intended to



Photo by Glenn Lowson

take away opportunities such as 4-H).

Farmers also say they have some unique needs when it comes to wage-earning or salaried workers. When a crop needs to be harvested, they have to work long hours to get it off. Otherwise, they'll lose it or have it significantly devalued. Likewise, when a cow decides to calve, it's not watching the clock.

No one, including the farmers themselves, suggest safety should be sacrificed.

But if legislation exists that says employees can only work eight-hour days, who then can farmers count on?

Society will have something

to say about all this too. It won't stand for the government totally backing down, as some farmers want it to. And I can foresee a time when farm safety is used as a marketing point: "This produce is grown on Canadian farms that are local, sustainable...and safe." What Canadian wants to buy anything from people they think are putting their workers -- or worse, their kids -- in harm's way?

There's little doubt some form of the farm safety bill is going through this winter. Expect it to have some impact on the rest of the country, and more support from consumers than farmers think.



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## Ontario environmental issues: a year in review



**Mat Shetler, Maitland Valley Conservation Authority, samples a watercourse in efforts to reduce phosphorus runoff. Photo courtesy of Farm & Food Care.**

### BRUCE KELLY

As we close the books on 2015, the International Year of Soils, let's look back at the events related to weather and water that impacted our cropping year.

The weather at planting was almost ideal. As we finished planting, we were looking for some rain but instead many areas were hit hard by a late May frost that killed off buds and shoots on grapes, along with apples and some soy fields. Some of these areas experienced nearly 80 per cent losses.

And when it did start to rain, it felt like it wouldn't stop. Here in Guelph, we got nearly seven inches of rain and there was even more in areas to the southwest and in eastern Ontario. It was the wettest June that Windsor had seen in 75 years. But for most other areas, it wasn't nearly as wet as the spring of 2010.

July brought with it nearly perfect growing conditions, even though we lagged in heat units and were concerned about the

lack of warm nights that the corn likes so much.

Our fears of an early frost faded with a beautiful September that finished most crops off naturally. When can you remember attending Canada's Outdoor Farm Show when all the show days were as nice as they were this year? And after some damp stretches in October, a warm November allowed us plenty of opportunity to harvest, and even time to clean the equipment.

This year's weather has been good to most parts of Ontario, but our concerns about weather, water and nutrients never went away as some new issues emerged this year.

This year, the International Joint Commission on the Great Lakes challenged southwestern Ontario to reduce the amount of phosphorus lost into the Great Lakes by 40 per cent, with a keen focus on Lake Erie. This will be a tall order for agriculture as we do not yet understand all the pathways that phosphorus takes to enter the lake. We do know

though that the majority of phosphorus runs off in the spring thaw and in major storm events, both of which are inevitable. Because we cannot control the weather, we will need to control our timing and placement of nutrients. Easier said than done.

In other water news, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) made an announcement on October 5th that they will be "enhancing the Permit to Take Water (PTTW) program to ensure water takings in Ontario are managed to the standards of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement." Even though these changes were not intended to deter agricultural uses, they may make it more difficult for farmers to get a PTTW in areas of high use or deemed higher risk.

Twenty-two source protection plans have been developed to date by Source Protection Committees. These plans cover 19 regions within the province and contain more than 12,500 proposed policies designed to reduce or eliminate threats to sources of drinking water, and at a cost of more than \$240 million dollars. The provincial auditor has pointed out that no plan has yet been established to fund the implementation of these source protection plans, many of which occur on farmland.

It should also be noted that there is no plan for funding the implementation of Bill 66, passed early this fall. Bill 66, better known as the Great Lakes Protection Act, governs activities in the Great Lakes Basin and will certainly extend to agricultural activities, though we aren't yet sure what that will look like. Apparently, the provincial auditor is not impressed with OMAFRA's policy to educate and inform farmers, but seems to think that agriculture needs to be regulated in aspects of our water and nutrient usage, without any seeming consideration for the costs of implementing such programs.

So you can see that there are many environmental issues that will continue into 2016 and likely well beyond. Please stay involved in your association's efforts and with Farm & Food Care as we continue to engage stakeholders in discussion on environmental issues surrounding water and nutrient usage.

*Bruce Kelly is environmental program manager for Farm & Food Care.*

## COMING EVENTS 2016

- January 7 British Columbia Grapegrowers' Association Pruning Workshop, Red Rooster Winery, Penticton, BC
- January 7-9 North American Strawberry Growers' Association, in conjunction with the Southeast Regional Fruit and Vegetable Convention, Savannah, GA
- January 12 Ontario Apple Growers Annual General Meeting, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Niagara Falls, ON
- January 12 Fresh Vegetable Growers of Ontario Annual General Meeting, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Niagara Falls, ON
- Jan 12-13 Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association Annual General Meeting, Crowne Plaza, Niagara Falls, ON
- Jan 12-14 Potato Expo 2016, Las Vegas, NV
- Jan 19-21 Empire State Producers' Expo, Oncenter, Syracuse, NY
- Jan 26-27 Nova Scotia Horticultural Congress, Old Orchard Inn, Greenwich, NS
- Jan 26-27 Nova Scotia Fruit Growers' Association Annual Convention, "Replant, Renew, Refocus," Old Orchard Inn, Greenwich, NS
- Jan 26-28 Manitoba Potato Production Days, Keystone Centre, Brandon, MB
- Jan 28-30 Pacific Agricultural Show, Tradex Trade and Exhibition Centre, Abbotsford, BC
- Jan 28-31 Guelph Organic Conference and Trade Show, Guelph University Centre, Guelph, ON
- Jan 29-30 B.C. Fruit Growers' Association Annual General Meeting, Ramada Inn, Kelowna, BC
- Feb 2-3 Ontario Processing Vegetable Conference, Four Points by Sheraton, London, ON
- Feb 3-5 Fruit Logistica, Berlin Germany
- Feb 6-12 59th Annual Conference International Tree Fruit Association, Grand Rapids, MI
- Feb 10 Potato Selections Release Open House at AAFC, Guelph, ON – simulcast with Fredericton, NB and Lethbridge, AB
- February 16 Ontario Berry Growers' Association Annual General Meeting, Embassy Suites Hotel, Niagara Falls, ON
- February 17 Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association Annual General Meeting, Scotiabank Convention Centre Ballroom B, Niagara Falls, ON
- Feb 17-18 Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention, Scotiabank Conference Centre, Niagara Falls, ON
- February 24 B.C. Tree Fruit Horticultural Symposium, Trinity Baptist Church, Kelowna, BC
- March 1 Ontario Potato Conference and Trade Show, Delta Hotel and Conference Centre, Guelph, ON
- March 2-4 North American Raspberry and Blackberry Conference, Williamsburg, VA

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RETAIL NAVIGATOR

# Working with difficult category managers



PETER CHAPMAN

Ask the questions and figure out why they are not happy with you or your business. Often a conversation will alleviate a lot of problems. Technology is great but it does not always replace a conversation on the phone or in person. If you are not able to speak directly with the category manager then try one of the other people at the retailer. Often they will be able to help you understand the situation.

**Perhaps they are just busy**

Category managers have a lot of pressure and demands. It is possible they are tough to deal with because they are just too busy. Find out what is causing them pain and assess if you can alleviate any of it. Often you can provide information, change lead times or communicate in a different manner. Offer to change things to make them better.

**Be proactive**

When you are working with a difficult category manager it is easy to take the approach “no news is good news.” When the phone calls and emails are always negative it is tough to see it any other way. My experience has been that if you are proactive and initiate the conversation it is better, than to wait for them. If there is an issue, get it on the table, find a resolution and move on. The only way this will happen is if you are proactive. As tough as it is, pick up the phone and get the conversations started. Category managers are people and we all have bad days or get frustrated with certain issues. You have to continue to work on the relationship and get it to the point where you can trust each other. If you have some stories and ideas about difficult category managers or if you have any questions you can contact me at [pchapman@gpsbusiness.ca](mailto:pchapman@gpsbusiness.ca).

**RETAIL NEWS**

**Sobeys Extra opens in Tantallon, Nova Scotia**

Sobeys opened a new Sobeys Extra store just outside Halifax in Tantallon. The store is similar to their model in Ontario and probably has its roots in Quebec. The fresh departments are very different from a traditional Sobeys with new fixtures, décor and focus. The selection is broad and there is a real determination to execute “Better Food for All.”

In the opening flyer they claim to have three chefs on staff. This is an interesting investment to really reinforce the food positioning. There is no doubt the assortment of prepared foods is impressive. You can never judge a new format during the opening as every retailer puts in the



resources to make it work. As a consumer I do hope that shoppers respond so that we continue to get this level of choice in the market. The biggest challenge for Sobeys will be to get the return from the investment. If you are in the market, it is worth a visit to see where Sobeys is going.

**WHAT'S IN STORE?**

**Store has a simple, yet effective message**

During my days with Loblaw Co., we worked with some great

growers. Judy and Lee Thompson and their daughter Meghan at Forest Glen Greenhouses were some of the best. They really made an effort to understand the needs of the retailer and they built a significant business on these principles. I was in a store last week and this sign caught my eye.

Often we believe things need to be pre-printed and done by an advertising agency. This sign was done in-store and the message is simple. We have a great local grower who takes pride in growing poinsettias for you to enjoy in

your home. This says more than the item and price to me. *-Peter Chapman is a retail consultant, professional speaker and the author of A la cart-A suppliers' guide to retailers' priorities. Peter is based in Halifax NS, where he is the principal at GPS Business Solutions. 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. [pchapman@gpsbusiness.ca](mailto:pchapman@gpsbusiness.ca).*

Category managers can have a significant impact on a supplier's business. They determine who will be on the shelf and which items will be promoted. Category managers are people too and they are all different. Some are great to work with and others can be a challenge. Regardless of the personality, you have to work with them.

**Focus on the business**

When you run up against a category manager who wants to be difficult it is important to focus on the business. Don't take it personally. Often we spend time trying to assess why they are so tough to work with or that they have an issue with “me.” Chances are they are trying to do their job and one way to do that is to push you and challenge your business. Their approach might be different than yours but try to focus on the business, not the personal.

**Present a clear plan**

Often the gap starts to widen between a category manager and a supplier when there is a perceived or real performance issue. This happens when you have a different definition of success or what the original objectives were. In your business where you have challenges such as weather or labour, your ability to service 100 per cent of the order may drop to 80 per cent. The category manager has the belief that anything less than 92 per cent is a real problem so they start to be difficult to work with. If you had agreed on the number going into the season, then you have a benchmark to judge yourself against. The conversation is then about the gap as opposed to letting the retailer down.

When you are presenting the plan, focus on the basics. Once you get this right and begin to build the relationship, you can move on to more complicated issues.

**Determine the cause of the issue**

The best method of improving a bad situation is to determine what caused it in the first place.

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## FOCUS: FOOD SAFETY

## CanadaGAP reports 14 per cent increase in enrolments



HEATHER GALE

CanadaGAP is a food safety program for companies that produce, pack, repack, store, wholesale and broker fruits and vegetables. It is designed to help implement effective food safety procedures within fresh produce operations. Audit and certification services for the program are delivered by third party, accredited Certification Bodies. The program has been benchmarked and officially recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) for certification options B and C. Benchmarking of option D for repacking and wholesaling is currently in progress.

2015 marks the seventh complete season of CanadaGAP operations. The program has seen remarkable growth this year, as represented by a 14 per cent increase in enrolments. This growth was achieved despite the voluntary cessation of audit and certification services by one certification body, QMI-SAI GLOBAL, in September 2015. The remaining three CanadaGAP certification bodies have benefited from their partnership with CanadaGAP, and have shown commitment, professionalism and flexibility in taking on the clients affected by SAI's departure.

We're pleased to highlight the following key achievements for 2015:

- Surpassed 3,000 enrolments since the CanadaGAP certification program was introduced in 2008
- Brokerage added to scope of CanadaGAP program
- Progressing with GFSI benchmarking of Option D for repacking and wholesaling
- Completed Government Technical Review of program management system
- In progress with implementation assessment towards achieving full Canadian Government recognition
- Underwent third-party audit of

the national office to assess the effectiveness of program delivery

- Began monthly publication of consolidated list of CanadaGAP-certified companies
- Registration of trademark for CanadaGAP and design of the CanadaGAP logo
- In progress with plans to cooperate with the North American Potato Sustainability Initiative (PSI) to offer verification audits for growers participating in the Potato IPM Survey.

## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

## Directory of CanadaGAP-Certified Companies

In early 2015 CanadaGAP began publishing a list on the CanadaGAP website of companies who are certified, or whose certificates have been suspended or withdrawn. This list draws on information provided to CanadaGAP by the certification bodies. While the searchable PDF can help buyers identify CanadaGAP-certified companies, it is important to note that the certification bodies remain the definitive source to confirm a supplier's certification status. More information can be found at [www.canadagap.ca](http://www.canadagap.ca) under "Certified Companies."

## Participation Trends

Close to 3,000 producers are now participating in CanadaGAP. A substantial increase in participation was seen over the past year, evidenced by a healthy growth rate of 14 per cent. This figure stands out from previous years where increases were more modest, for example, a 3.5 per cent increase in 2014 and 9 per cent in 2013. Notably, the annual program fee has not increased since the program was launched in 2008. The following participation trends are significant for 2015:

- The fastest-growing area of participation continues to be at

## Proportion of CanadaGAP Participants represented by crop grouping:

Based on # of producers	Tree and Vine Fruit	Field Vegetables	Potatoes	Small Fruit	Greenhouse	Total CanadaGAP Participation
						
Percentage of CanadaGAP participants	33%	23%	18%	18%	8%	100%

## Audit Trends: Number of CanadaGAP Audits

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
No. of audits reported	1270	1037	1031	771	557

the farm level, as certified packinghouses request food safety compliance from growers.

The program saw continued increases in enrolment by British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario producers.

The strongest sector growth comes from the BC small fruit (mainly blueberry) industry, where enrolments increased by more than 30 per cent.

Participation among Quebec tree and vine fruit producers climbed by nearly 25 per cent, while Ontario greenhouse enrolment figures jumped another 20 per cent in 2015.

Growth in the participation rates by vegetable producers was steady across all provinces.

Enrolment among potato producers in Quebec, Alberta and PEI is growing.

The trend continues away from the four-year audit cycle options (A1 and A2), which fell again slightly in 2015 to 28 per cent. This compares to 30 per cent of program participants choosing option A1 or A2 in 2014, and 50 per cent of all CanadaGAP enrolments in 2011.

A high proportion of enrolments continue to occur among individuals choosing Option C (annual audit), which now comprises 46 per cent of all certified companies. Last year's proportion was 40 per cent. Many Option C program participants who are producer/packers were previously on the four-year audit cycle, but driven by customer demands, are now having annual audits because of their packing operations.

Participation in group certification has decreased relative to individual certification options, and now stands at 23 per cent of enrolments. (Was approximately 30 per cent in 2014)

This year again saw higher than average retirements as the established farming population ages. However, the growth in enrolments more than offset withdrawals from the program in

## CanadaGAP Random Audit Results

Year	Average Audit Score for Option A1 and A2	Average Audit Score for Random Audits
2010	93.85	95.94
2011	91.28	93.67
2012	87.56	92.57
2013	91.85	91.18
2014	90.14	91.04
2015	91.03	92.75

2015.

For the purposes of analyzing participation trends, enrolment figures are broken down by five crop groupings:

- o Tree and Vine Fruit
- o Field Vegetables
- o Potatoes
- o Small Fruit
- o Greenhouse
- o Total participation in CanadaGAP is 100%.

The proportion of that total occupied by each crop grouping is presented above. The Tree Fruit industry continues to lead enrolment figures.

## Addition of Brokerage Food Safety Requirements

On April 1, 2015 CanadaGAP certification became available to fresh produce brokers under Option D. The first brokerage operation enrolled in the program this summer. Also under Option D, the program now has nearly 40 companies enrolled from the repacking and wholesaling sector. This level of participation is consistent with first-year targets set by the Board with the introduction of Option D in 2014.

## Random Audit Programme

CanadaGAP offers certification on a four-year cycle to companies participating in Option A1 and A2. To become certified, companies undergo a

scheduled audit in the first year of the four-year cycle. To be recertified in the subsequent three years, they may be randomly chosen for an audit in any or all of the three years. If they are not randomly selected, they must complete a self-declaration and self-assessment and submit it to the certification body to demonstrate their continuing adherence to program requirements.

After six years of running the CanadaGAP random audit programme for Option A1 and A2 participants, the statistics show some interesting trends (see table above).

Random audit scores, with a minor exception in 2013, are consistently higher than the scores achieved on scheduled audits. This encouraging trend suggests that companies are doing a good job maintaining their programs consistently and are ready to demonstrate compliance to their auditor even in years when they may not be expecting an on-site visit.

These trends bode well for results we can expect when unannounced audits are introduced to the CanadaGAP program for all certification options. That development is anticipated for 2017, due to new GFSI requirements that are scheduled for announcement in 2016.

FOCUS: FOOD SAFETY

# CanadaGAP reports 14 per cent increase in enrolments

## Report on Certification Bodies

CanadaGAP has three licensed certification bodies. These auditing firms are approved to offer CanadaGAP audits:

- Bureau de normalisation du Québec (BNQ)
  - NSF-GFTC (including sub-contractor Gestion Qualiterra in Quebec)
  - SGS Canada
- A fourth certification body, QMI-SAI GLOBAL, voluntarily withdrew its services to CanadaGAP clients in September 2015, after seven years of offering audits and certification for the program. CanadaGAP successfully transitioned many former SAI clients mid-season to new certification bodies. We wish to thank our three partner certification bodies for their responsiveness, efficiency and cooperation in taking on many new clients on short notice. The transfer of clients to a different certification body will continue over the coming months as CanadaGAP certificates issued by SAI expire.

party audit of its national office in August 2015, and is currently underway with third-party assessment of the delivery of on-site audits. It is anticipated that the process will be complete in 2016, which may coincide with the coming-into-force of new food safety regulations in Canada. The outcome of these efforts would be the achievement of Full Government Recognition of the CanadaGAP Program. Currently, the only other food safety programs to reach the recognition stage are the Chicken Farmers of Canada On-Farm Food Safety Assurance Program, and the Dairy Farmers of Canada Canadian Quality Milk Program.

## What's Ahead for 2016?

- GFSI Benchmarking of Option D – anticipate completion in early 2016
- Canadian Government Recognition – anticipate completion in 2016
- Launch new program participant survey

## Auditors by region

	West	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic	U.S.	Total
# auditors	14	10	13	5	2	44
Percentage	32%	23%	30%	11%	5%	100%

## CanadaGAP Auditors

The auditor pool consists of 44 active and qualified CanadaGAP auditors (currently working for a Certification Body). This represents 19 per cent of those who have taken the CanadaGAP auditor training course and 29 per cent of those who passed the course.

## OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2015

## Progress achieved towards Canadian Government Recognition

CanadaGAP has been participating in the Canadian Government Food Safety Recognition Program for more than a decade.

In 2014, the CanAgPlus Board made the decision to proceed with the next steps towards achieving full Government Recognition. In 2015, CanadaGAP successfully completed technical review of the management system, the phase known as Technical Review Part two.

The final step in the process is the Implementation Assessment, which involves a third party assessment of the administrative effectiveness of program delivery. CanadaGAP completed a third

- Expected introduction of GFSI Auditor Competency Scheme
- Refresher testing of auditors and auditor trainers
- Changes to 2016 Manuals – some of the key revisions to come into effect April 1, 2016 include:
  - o New exemptions for cucumbers and peppers sent for pickling.
  - o Section 2 – new bullet: “The person responsible does not use production sites where sewage sludge has been applied.”
  - o Section 6 – MRL requirements will apply to the

person responsible for exporting.
 

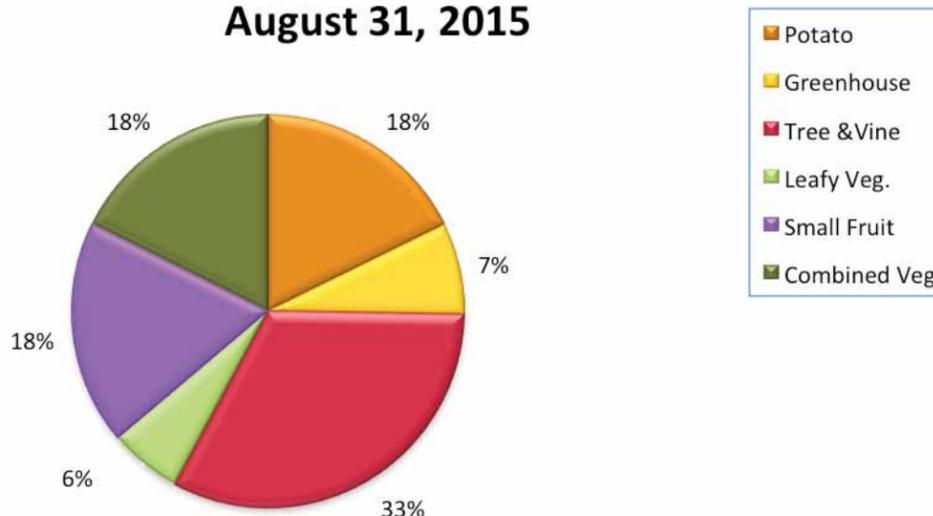
- o Section 19.1 requirement will apply to producers sending their product to stand-alone storage facilities (i.e., storage facilities will be expected to have an audit/certification under an industry-recognized food safety program).

*Heather Gale is executive director of the CanadaGAP Program, CanAgPlus*

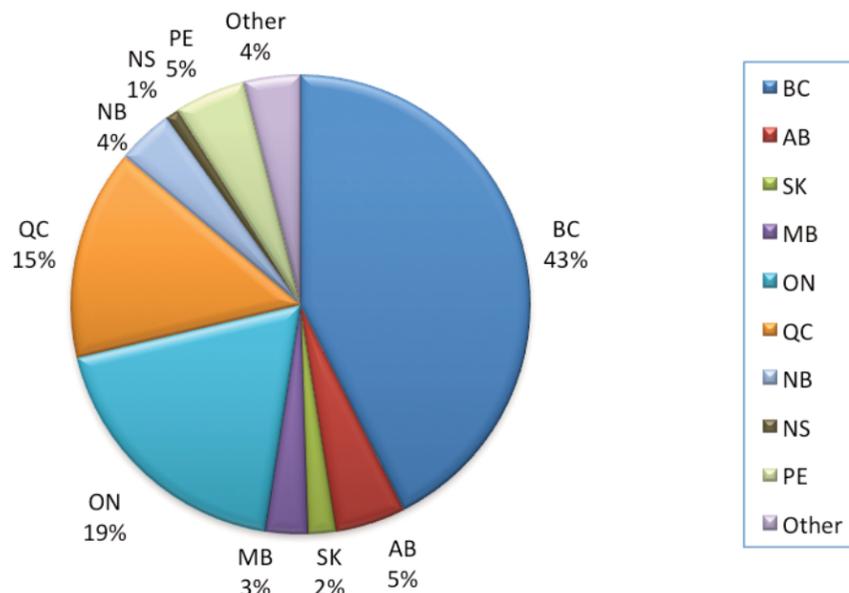


Photos by Glenn Lowson

## Proportion of CanadaGAP participants represented by crop grouping August 31, 2015



## Operations Enrolled by Province August 31, 2015



# NOTICE

## to CanadaGAP-Certified Companies

If you were last certified by QMI-SAI GLOBAL, please be advised they are no longer providing CanadaGAP audit services. You will need to choose a new certification body to continue with your CanadaGAP certification.

Contact the CanadaGAP office for further information/assistance:

613-829-4711 [info@canadagap.ca](mailto:info@canadagap.ca)



FOCUS: FOOD SAFETY

# Spinach grower converts CanadaGAP manuals into GAP App Saves data input and retrieval costs



(L-R): Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, Shelley and Jim Sheehan, Ontario Agriculture Minister Jeff Leal.

KAREN DAVIDSON

So much has happened on the food safety front since the *E.coli*-contaminated spinach crisis of 10 years ago, that the U.S. case history is just that – ancient history. Fast forward to 2016 and consider that spinach grower Jim Sheehan has just won a Leadership in Innovation award for his GAP App. He’s converted the hard-copy CanadaGAP food safety manuals into a mobile-friendly app that can record routine events in real-time.

Growing spinach hydroponically at Durham Foods, Port Perry, Ontario is unusual

enough, but Sheehan has de-risked contamination throughout the seed-to-harvest process. Their well water is tested before it comes in contact with spinach seeds and a mechanical harvester has been developed so that no human hands touch the produce. From planting large spinach seeds into rafts that float on nutrient-rich water, Sheehan can monitor plant health over the 18 days until harvest. From several 900 square-foot pools, he can reap 500 pounds of spinach.

**Safety oversight**

Spinach is highly perishable and as a leafy green, needs plenty

of safety oversight. Growing spinach in soil has its own hazards, but water also presents its own hurdles.

No templates exist in growing spinach hydroponically, so Jim and his wife Shelley have

“ We created an electronic format of the CanadaGAP forms so that we got paperwork out of the greenhouse and made food safety part of the everyday work flow.

~ Jim Sheehan

”

innovated from the ground up. That started with an OMAFRA course in food safety and traceability initiatives in 2011. Since then, they credit working relationships with a number of funding agencies such as NSERC, Ontario Centre of Excellence (OCE), CONII, NRC-BIAP, Niagara College, Durham College, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, and the constant support and guidance from the team at CanadaGAP to achieve the program’s translation to an electronic format.

When the Sheehan’s wanted to join CanadaGAP in 2012, there was no category for hydroponic spinach. So they engaged researchers at Niagara College to review the CanadaGAP manuals and identify specific growing steps that were not included. These physical tasks have been added to the roster of safety steps.

“We created an electronic format of the CanadaGAP forms,” says Sheehan “so that we got paperwork out of the greenhouse and made food safety part of the everyday work flow.”

Instead of documenting an incident at the end of the work day in an office removed from the growing area, the incident is recorded on a mobile phone or tablet. A photo can be taken and added to the record along with how the problem was resolved.

**Electronic trail**

If an employee finds a broken

lamp in the greenhouse, for example, the worker notes it immediately on the smartphone. The event is recorded automatically into spreadsheets that an auditor can see once on the premises. There is no paper trail, just an electronic trail.

“The really great thing is that everything relates back to the auditor’s forms,” says Sheehan. “We don’t deal with a huge paper beast every day, but rather a more engaging format.”

Record-keeping costs time and money. Sheehan claims savings on both inputting data and retrieving data. Auditing time is reduced. In fact, the auditor can review the electronic records in advance of the farm visit and specify the few things which are to be the focus.

The mechanics of the GAP App work smoothly for Durham Foods. The next step is to have the University of Ontario Institute of Technology researchers test for adaptability to other commodities. GAP App is a piece of intellectual property that may save tens of thousands of dollars for the horticulture industry. That commercial venture is underway at the start of 2016.

When Durham Foods won one of Ontario’s Agri-Innovation Food Awards in late fall, it came with a \$25,000 cheque.

“The money is nice,” says Sheehan, “but what’s more important for us is the positive feedback from our peers. That means a lot.”

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FOCUS: FOOD SAFETY

# Safe Food Canada aims to modernize how industry learns food safety

KAREN DAVIDSON

Food safety is not a static concept. Despite improved efforts to prevent food contamination from bacterial diseases such as *Salmonella*, *Listeria* and *E. coli*, these lurk every day on every food line in North America.

“Lots of food producers are paying attention to the mechanics of food safety and are compliant with food regulations,” says Sylvain Charlebois, professor at University of Guelph’s Food Institute. “But there needs to be a culture change to manage emerging risks.”

In Charlebois’ opinion, growers are adhering to food safety practices as a cost of doing business, rather than viewing food safety as a prerequisite for improving all levels of management. He’s currently benchmarking a number of food companies in both the United States and Canada asking, among other questions, how much money is spent on food safety training. The results will be published early in 2016, but the preliminary finding is that not many resources are set aside to make food safety a priority for frontline workers.

“I think the United States has done a better job in connecting the dots in terms of understanding the interconnectivity of food safety knowledge,” Charlebois says. “For example, the country has a trifecta of physicians, laboratories and industry regulators who communicate food safety crises in real time.”

“  
Growers are adhering to food safety practices as a cost of doing business, rather than viewing food safety as a prerequisite for improving all levels of management.

~ Sylvain Charlebois

”

If a physician sends a specimen to a laboratory which then confirms a positive diagnosis of a bacterial infection, then an alert is sent to the Food and Drug Administration for a broader investigation. This network allows for regulators to be more interconnected and to safeguard public health.

The highly publicized outbreaks of food contamination in Canada have been meat-based, however fruit and vegetables are not immune. Safe Food Canada (SFC), a not-for-profit organization, held its official launch in late November 2015 to announce founding partnerships for modernizing food safety training and education among the value chain.

Fruit and vegetable partners are missing in this list of founders: Maple Leaf Foods, the Canadian Meat Council, the U.S. Grocers Manufacturers Association Science & Education Foundation, the University of Guelph’s Department of Food Science, and the World Bank’s Global Food Safety Partnership.

“Because of rapidly changing consumer demands and with the Safe Food for Canadians Act, both the Canadian food industry and regulators are now at a tipping point and must shift to more consistent, competency-based food safety training,” explained Brian Sterling, president and chief executive officer of SFC. “Our mandate is to modernize the design and development of food safety and food protection training; we must bring together food professionals from industry and government and help them do that.”

While Canada is cited as a global leader in food safety, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) sees a role for Safe Food Canada not only to enhance compliance with regulations, but to reduce duplicated efforts and training costs for all parties. Bruce Archibald, president of CFIA, readily agreed that electronic record-keeping is a priority to reduce the time spent on paperwork.

**What’s in the future?**

The goal is to standardize food safety training in such a way that

all businesses, regardless of size, have employees with a common, comprehensive set of competencies. Currently, businesses and government regulators have a hodge-podge of employee training programs. This leads to duplication of effort and inconsistencies which increases costs.

“Right now, growers tell us there are too many audits,” says Sterling. “They are confused about what they’re being asked to do and why. It’s not surprising that growers say they’re in an adversarial position with regulators. Using that separate training approach is costly and we need to turn the culture of food safety into one that values protecting the nutritional value of the food



Several high-profile leaders kicked off the launch of Safe Food Canada, a new not-for-profit organization to focus on education and training. From left to right, they are: Michael Burrows, chief executive officer of Maple Lodge Farms; Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, professor at the University of Guelph’s Food Institute; Ted Bilyea, chair of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute; Dr. Bruce Archibald, president of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; Brian Sterling, president and chief executive officer of Safe Food Canada. Visit [safefoodcanada.com](http://safefoodcanada.com) for more details.

Photo by Isabel Dopta, Food and Beverage Ontario.

product.”

Food laws are changing, both in the United States and Canada. Everyone along the food chain benefits when they’re on the same

page. According to SFC’s Sterling, the goal is a food system in Canada with individuals trained to consistent standards with the same understanding and

performance expectations. “We need to move beyond the mindset that food safety is just rubber boots and a hairnet,” Sterling concludes.

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## FOCUS: FOOD SAFETY

# Canadian fruit and vegetable growers key factor in recycling success story

DAVID ANDREWS

Produce growers in Canada are hard at work feeding our nation. But they are also a key component to a recycling success story that rarely makes the headlines.

We can now say that Canadian corrugated has among the highest recovery rates of all packaging materials.

“Over the past 20 years the recovery rate of old corrugated containers, or OCC, has increased dramatically,” explains Robert Lanthier of Norampac, a major recycler. “Participation from both growers and retailers mean that more and more of this valued material is escaping landfills.”

Corrugated containerboard plays an important role in the protection, traceability and marketing of most grocery items. More than just a vehicle used by growers to ship their goods from the farm to grocery store shelves, it’s also a sustainable solution that keeps produce fresh, safe and marketable.

When growers use corrugated they are participating in a closed-loop system. They are a

key player in helping us make new boxes from old ones.

“Year after year we have seen more users recognize the importance of having their old corrugated containers collected and returned to mills as part of our closed-loop system,” says Bruce Westaway of Cascades Recovery Inc., a commercial waste recycler.

At least 85 per cent of OCC in Canada is now recycled.

## How do we breathe new life into an old box?

After goods are shipped by growers to stores in corrugated boxes they are broken down just before or following sale. Grocers then simply bale used corrugated for pick-up by commercial waste recyclers.

The recyclers ship the OCC to mills where it is then churned in heated and treated water to make a pulp. It is during this process that debris, tapes, and other foreign objects (contamination) are removed. This mixture is then pumped onto the screens and drums of a massive paper former where it is compressed and

superheated to create rolls of containerboard, both linerboard and corrugating medium.

“We reuse wood fibres over and over again by recovering used boxes to remanufacture into new, valuable material. The environmental benefit is clear and it’s at the very core of our business,” explains Serge Desgagnes of Kruger Inc.

“In addition, it is important to note that corrugated made from recovered board also has a long history of safe use in the food industry,” says Stephen Burnett of Atlantic Packaging. “Our industry continuously updates its food safety standards and procedures and remains both CFIA and FDA-compliant.”

The few mills in Canada that use virgin material to make containerboard are also environmentally sound. “Our plant purchases sawdust from sawmills which rely on trees which have been harvested from managed forests,” explains Pierre Pacarar of WestRock. “We not only create new paper from this byproduct, but we also use the sap we remove from the sawdust as energy to fuel the



Corrugated boxes are stacked high at EZ Grow Farms, Langton, Ontario. Photo by Glenn Lowson.

manufacturing process.”

As every farmer knows, a tree is a natural product, and following harvest, a replacement is planted for future use. For information on Canada’s reforestation programs, visit the Paper and Paperboard Packaging Environmental Council’s website: [www.ppec-paper.com](http://www.ppec-paper.com).

The resulting containerboard meets stringent performance specifications prior to being shipped across Canada to box plants. It is here the material is

converted into new corrugated containers ready for growers to use again to ship and promote their produce.

So the next time you ship in a corrugated box, remember: you are not only servicing yourself, but the environment. Thanks for helping us, help you.

*David Andrews is executive director of the Canadian Corrugated and Containerboard Association.*



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- IR: TSWV:T0



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# Ontario Berry Grower

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

Ministry of Agriculture  
and Food  
Ministry of Rural Affairs



## Can you keep Spotted Wing Drosophila out? Results of exclusion netting trial

SHELBY JONES  
PAM FISHER  
ELLEN COLE

Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD), *Drosophila suzukii*, is an invasive vinegar fly that was first detected in Ontario in 2011. SWD attacks raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, day-neutral strawberries and other soft fruits as they ripen, affecting shelf life and consumer appeal. SWD overwinter in neighbouring wild hosts, returning to berry crops as the fruit begins to ripen. Growers presently manage SWD with regular applications of insecticides and tight harvesting schedules. However, this approach is costly and unsustainable in the long term.

Researchers in New York, Quebec and Vermont have tested the use of exclusion netting on a small scale for SWD control in

berry crops. These projects demonstrated that covering crops with a 1.00 x 0.60 mm – 80 g/m<sup>2</sup> net (ProtekNet) successfully excluded SWD from the area and did not affect yield or fruit quality in the short term.

In summer 2015, we worked with two growers in southern Ontario to measure the effectiveness of insect exclusion netting to control SWD. The main objective was to demonstrate and gain experience with the use of this product and evaluate its potential for SWD management in berry crops.

Growers at two locations were provided with 80 gm insect netting to cover small areas of crop. They installed the netting using their own design and resources. Two rows of blackberries were covered July 4th at Site A (Figures 1 & 2) and one row of blueberries was covered July 20th

at Site B (Figures 3 & 4). SWD populations were monitored inside and outside the netted area using traps, baited with apple cider vinegar (ACV) plus 10 per cent ethanol, and fruit assessments. Fruit samples were incubated at room temperature in insect-proof, ventilated containers for three weeks. Emerging SWD flies were routinely collected and counted.

### Site A

SWD was not trapped inside the net prior to the week of August 1st. SWD was trapped outside the net in raspberries and other locations on the farm for four weeks prior to this date. On August 3rd, the net over the blackberries was blown open by a storm and was closed again the next morning.

**Continued on next page**

Table 1: SITE A, blackberry SWD trap captures

Week Ending	Total SWD/4 traps Inside Net (ACV)	Average SWD/4 traps Inside Net (Suzuki bait)	Total SWD/4 traps Outside Net (ACV)	Total SWD/4 traps Around the Farm (ACV)
04-Jul-15	0	-	0	0
11-Jul-15	0	-	0	1
18-Jul-15	0	-	1	1
25-Jul-15	0	-	12	10
01-Aug-15	0	-	29	24
(Storm damage to net Aug 3)				
08-Aug-15	14	-	55	124
15-Aug-15	37	12	151	434
22-Aug-15	6	6	39	180
29-Aug-15	73	161	432	-
05-Sep-15	232	433	464	-
12-Sep-15	172	455	128	-

Table 2: SITE B, blueberry SWD trap captures

Week Ending	Total SWD/4 traps Inside Net (ACV)	Total SWD/4 traps Outside Net (ACV)	Total SWD/4 traps Around the Farm (ACV)
11-Jul-15	0	0	5
18-Jul-15	0	1	18
25-Jul-15	0	1	20
01-Aug-15	0	4	190
08-Aug-15	0	21	654
15-Aug-15	0	132	3193
(Net removed August 14)			
22-Aug-15	24	47	2829



Figure 1: Site A blackberry netting trial – outside net



Figure 2: Site A blackberry netting trial – inside net



Figure 3: Site B blueberry netting trial - outside net



Figure 4: Site B blueberry netting trial – inside net

BERRY FOCUS

# Results of exclusion netting trial

Continued from page 20

In an attempt to trap out all SWD that had entered the net during this time, 12 additional traps with Suzuki bait were installed inside the net to collect SWD flies. This attempt was not effective and SWD populations continued to increase both inside and outside the net (Table 1) after August 3rd.

Samples of 60 fruit were collected inside (blackberries) and outside (raspberries) of the net each week for fruit assessment. SWD was not detected inside on blackberry samples collected prior to August 3rd, while it was detected outside on raspberries each week. SWD first emerged in fruit collected on and after August 4th, following the opening of the net. All blackberry samples collected after

this date were positive for SWD and the number of larvae found per sample continued to increase each week.

**Site B**

The blueberry plants were affected by winter injury and had a light crop. SWD was not found in traps inside the net for the duration of the trial. Increasing numbers of SWD were found in traps outside the net. Pest pressure, as measured by SWD flies in traps, was higher at other locations on the farm compared to the blueberry planting. The net was taken down at the end of blueberry harvest in the week ending 15-Aug-15; 24 SWD were trapped in this area after the net was removed. When comparing the populations inside and outside the net, the exclusion netting was successful in excluding SWD at this site (Table 2).

Samples of 25-50 fruit were collected inside and outside of the net each week. No SWD was detected on fruit collected inside the net prior to its removal. Fruit collected outside of the net was also free of SWD with the exception of samples collected the week of July 20th.

- The following factors should be considered if netting is going to be a cost-effective approach to controlling SWD:
- Construction and maintenance costs
  - Accessibility of the net for workers and equipment
  - Increased temperature and limited airflow in the net
  - Impact on other pests including birds and overwintering pests
  - Timing to allow for pollination
  - Weed management

See other resources - In Spring 2014, "Evaluation of Insect Exclusion and Mass Trapping as Cultural Controls of Spotted Wing Drosophila in Organic Blueberry Production" by L. McDermott and L. Nickerson was published in the New York Fruit Quarterly at [www.nyshs.org/fq.php](http://www.nyshs.org/fq.php)  
 In 2015, "An Investigation of Insect Netting Trellis Systems to Manage Spotted Wing Drosophila for Vermont Blueberry Farms" by Hannah Lee Link was published by the University of Vermont and can be found by searching for key words in the title.  
 To read the full article visit ON fruit blog at [www.onfruit.wordpress.com](http://www.onfruit.wordpress.com)

*Shelby Jones is agricultural technician, OMAFRA. Pam Fisher is berry specialist, OMAFRA. Ellen Cole, Contributor*

# Airblast 101: A handbook of best practices in airblast spraying

JASON DEVEAU

Just in time for the New Year, Airblast 101 is a new book that describes best practices in airblast spraying in clear, conversational language. With more than 200 full-colour illustrations and 200 pages of content, Airblast 101 takes the reader from adjusting airblast settings for the first spray of the season all the way to winterizing the sprayer at the end of the season.

Perhaps you're an airblast sprayer veteran looking to refresh your understanding or squeeze a bit more efficiency out of your

applications. Perhaps you're new to airblast spraying and need foundational information. Maybe you're a farm manager, a government regulator, an agricultural extension specialist, an agrichemical sales representative or an academic researcher. No matter your occupation, if you want to learn more about airblast spraying, there's something in this book for you!

The handbook focusses on three central themes:

- Understanding the forces that influence droplet behaviour
- How to optimize airblast sprayers to match the target and minimize waste

• How to diagnose spray coverage and make changes to improve it  
 Go to [www.sprayers101.com](http://www.sprayers101.com) and type 'airblast101' into the search bar. From there you can download a copy as an interactive pdf, or an eBook for Apple or Android tablets. This is a large file, so please be patient and stay on the webpage until the screen

changes and gives you an option. There is also a limited number of printed versions that can be shipped on request. They are ring-bound with a wrap-around water-resistant cover and are printed on a high-quality glossy stock. They're hardy enough for a tractor cab and nice enough for a book shelf. In order to recover costs, we have to charge \$30

CAD for the printed versions, plus shipping. If you'd like a book, email Jason Deveau at the email address at the bottom on the webpage.  
 Happy spraying.  
*Jason Deveau is application technology specialist, OMAFRA*

# Software program helps Ontario farmers prevent soil erosion



The Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE2) is a software program designed to help farmers estimate the potential for soil erosion under different land management and cropping practices. The software overcomes many of the limitations of the previous USLE equation.

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) staff has adapted the RUSLE2 for Ontario farmers by incorporating climate, soil and management practices common to the province.

We have created five

interactive tutorials to help you use RUSLE2 for Ontario. The easy-to-follow audio/visual guides give step-by-step instructions on using RUSLE2 to help assess the cropping and tillage practices used on your farm.

Find out how you can prevent soil erosion from your fields! Visit the OMAFRA website to watch the tutorials and to download RUSLE2.

Do you have questions about RUSLE2? Contact the Agricultural Information Contact Centre at 1-877-424-1300 or [ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca](mailto:ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca).



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## FOREIGN TRADE

## New import requirements to prevent the introduction of European grapevine moth

Under a new directive published December 31, 2015, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) will require that regulated host material from regulated areas outside of the United States meet one of three requirements: fumigation; production in a CFIA-approved pest free area; or production under a CFIA-approved systems approach. Regulated host material imported into the United States intended for re-export to Canada must be accompanied by documentation that demonstrates the product meets Canadian requirements for *Lobesia botrana*.

Regulated host material may be fumigated in the United States prior to re-export to Canada if the material does not meet Canadian import requirements upon entry to the United States. The CFIA will allow a 30-day transition period, with full enforcement of the requirements commencing on February 1, 2016.

*Lobesia botrana* (*L. botrana*) or European Grapevine Moth (EGVM) is predominantly a pest of grapes and reduces

both grape yields and quality in all areas of the world where it is present. The larvae feed directly on the fruit which increases the fruits' susceptibility to fungi.

*L. botrana* has a wide range of alternate hosts. Examples of regulated host material include blueberries, cherries, nectarines, peaches, plums and kiwi. For an entire list of host material please refer to Appendix I of the draft Directive D-13-03. This allows for the survival of the insect during periods when grapes are not available for feeding. The various life stages of *L. botrana* can be transported over long distances, most commonly as eggs on the stems of infested plant material or as larvae within fruits and fruit clusters.

*L. botrana* is present in most of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, as well as in Chile, Argentina and Japan. The entire list of regulated countries can be found in Appendix 2(b) of the Directive and includes many countries that Canada imports from. *L. botrana* is not established in North America, although it was detected

in California in 2009 and is under eradication. This insect is a quarantine pest for Canada and several other countries, including the United States and Mexico.

*L. botrana* could survive in Canada's major grape-growing areas (southern Ontario and parts of British Columbia) where it is anticipated that it would have a significant negative impact on grape yields.

### Imports from the U.S.

For commodities coming from the U.S., importers should contact their U.S. supplier/exporter. The USDA APHIS has a CFIA-approved systems approach to manage the movement of grapes for consumption out of a regulated area. If your U.S. shipper has questions they should contact their local USDA APHIS office.

### Imports from Chile

Chile has also been accepted by the CFIA for a systems approach to detecting

and shipping regulated products such as grapes and blueberries to Canada.

It is suggested that Chilean growers and/or shippers contact their National Plant Protection Authority [NPPO] of Chile to obtain further information. Their NPPO is the Servicio Agrícola y Ganadero – SAG (Agriculture and Livestock Service).

It should be noted that under this new directive grapes from Chile will require a phytosanitary certificate (currently they do not require a phyto).

In summary it is the importer's responsibility to verify:

- the import requirements prior to importation
- confirm the Canadian import requirements with supplier/grower/shipper/broker
- confirm how the exporting country meets Canadian import requirements (treatment vs. survey vs. systems approach)

Source: Ontario Produce Marketing Association Member Notice

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## MINOR USE



## CRAIG'S COMMENTS

## Resolution

CRAIG HUNTER  
OFVGA

Take a big breath: it is about to get started all over again! This is the start of the season for resolutions to be taken forward to annual meetings, including for the OFVGA and the CHC (Canadian Horticultural Council). Very few people understand that all of our 'business' starts from these resolutions. In fact, all of our standing policies originate from resolutions- some of them decades old but still relevant today. In old issues of **The Grower** there are mentions of similar resolutions arising continuously over the ages. At one time there were as many as 85 resolutions to be dealt with at the annual meeting. Most of those were to do with crop protection issues!

Times have changed. In recent times we seem to get very few resolutions. That may be because there are so few issues that members wish to get resolved, or it may mean that they have lost faith in 'the system.' Unfortunately, it may also show that apathy has set in, and our member associations have not met or nothing of concern was raised. Certainly the way in which we are now structured has changed the approach to dealing with issues. In the fifties when OFVGA was a one-person show, there was a limit on what could be done and on the expectations that the membership had for getting changes. In fact, most of the effort at that time was on garnering government support for issues. Tariff and trade issues dominated then. Few if any specific pest management issues hit the headlines, nor did labour



issues dominate as they did later. Disputes between buyer and seller were regular, and OFVGA general manager Bobbie Robinson had to step in between fisticuffs more than once! Water concerns had more to do with too much (Hurricane Hazel) or too little (drought) rather than the permits to even use irrigation water that we deal with today.

Times have changed, and issues do not have to wait until the annual meeting to be aired. OFVGA has a staff to deal with many current issues, and also has a paid consulting company to help with government relations to stay close to those who 'make the rules' that members have to deal with on a daily basis. Crop protection has become a 24/7 issue so that immediate response can prevent serious problems from getting worse. As a result, we have only two or three new crop protection resolutions a year, and most are actually resolved or being worked on by the time of the annual meeting. Issues on other subjects may well be dealt with by our various standing committee chairs such as for research, property, safety nets, labour and crop protection. They and their committee members are active throughout the year dealing with member issues that started with resolutions. Of course, some

issues are so urgent that they get done without the need for a resolution between annual meetings!

Our resolutions get divided into two parts- one for local (Ontario only) dealings, and one for furtherance to CHC as they are national in nature. We track all resolutions, and report back on what has been accomplished at subsequent annual meetings. Some take a long time to be resolved. The lobby for a PACA-like trust for sellers of fresh produce is an example. This may get traction now with a change in the federal government. A promise was made during the election campaign that should get the changes we want. The vital importance for members to remember is that this did NOT just happen by chance! It took strong lobby efforts for many months to all political parties. The continual effort to get a change came about because members expect nothing less of the staff! They had to overcome the strong pressure being exerted by people such as the very buyers who may not pay their bills, the banks who cherish first place in line in a bankruptcy, and an inherent distrust in government of all things that appear to be 'American' because the program originated there. In fact, we were told more

than once that the 'Ottawa impression' was that our plan was solely to protect American produce sellers and not our own! If not for the diligent work behind the scenes the change in our favour could never have happened.

In a similar scenario, the strong lobby to create a Canadian Minor Use Program had to fight forces internal to government bureaucracy that did not want such a program. The subsequent internal fighting over the ownership of the program's assets was a wonder to behold. At the end of the day we have a world-class program that responds well to our needs. We still have members on the advisory committee to ensure this continues to be the case.

Some issues may seem small and maybe not worth raising. Not true! All issues deserve attention, and may be symptoms of bigger problems. Members pay for and deserve attention to their concerns. In Ontario, the container fees paid by most of the membership (and augmented by direct fees to those commodities that have no market containers) allow each member to express their needs and to expect action.

Of course, membership comes with obligations! Our board is always in need of new blood. We need and expect regular additions

of new directors, new committee members, and of course new attendees at our annual meetings. This is the basis of democracy. No member should just expect others to do the heavy lifting. We have some board members with 30+ years of service! I have heard that some people are afraid to attend a meeting for fear of getting a job to do! Everyone is busy, but those that step up get rewarded in many ways. It is a great feeling to have helped out others (and one's self) in resolving an issue. It is an unbelievable chance to meet some great people who you can call at any time henceforth on an issue that might have been unsolvable without their help. Friendships made at the board table are for life.

The OFVGA annual meeting is January 12 and 13 in Niagara Falls. You owe it to yourself to attend. Likewise, plan ahead for the CHC annual meetings in Ottawa from March 7-10th. Your fellow growers will be there, and part of your future will be determined with or without your help.

I resolve to see each of you there.

I further resolve to resolve the resolutions you resolved at your meetings!

Happy New Year to ALL!



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MINOR USE

# EPA cancels sulfoxaflor registration in U.S., Canada unaffected

On November 13, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a cancellation order for sulfoxaflor-containing products in response to a September 10th Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling “vacating” product registrations. See <http://ow.ly/VshKv>

Dow AgroScience has issued the following response: As a result of the extensive data currently available on sulfoxaflor, Dow AgroSciences expects the pollinator protection concerns expressed in a recent Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision (September 10) to be readily and thoroughly addressed by EPA through further review of scientific data, supporting pressing grower needs for protection against destructive crop pests with renewed U.S. registrations of sulfoxaflor-containing products.

Four full years of widespread U.S. product use under the trade name Closer— with additional use in Canada, Australia and other nations – have demonstrated excellent sulfoxaflor performance worldwide with no noted adverse effects on pollinators.

Registrations outside the U.S. of sulfoxaflor-containing products should not be impacted by this decision. U.S. tolerances for sulfoxaflor are similarly unaffected.

As part of its recent action, EPA has issued an existing stocks provision allowing growers to use sulfoxaflor-containing products

they have in hand consistent with directions on the pre-existing product label. Dow AgroSciences is, however, disappointed with EPA’s existing stocks provision which effectively removes a critical tool from the American grower by not allowing existing inventories of sulfoxaflor-containing products to be sold and distributed to end-users while EPA considers its next steps.

Dow AgroSciences remains confident in the benefits offered by this new class of insecticides and will work diligently with EPA and States to achieve new

Dow AgroSciences notes that contrary to misrepresentations circulated by pesticide opponents, sulfoxaflor is a sulfoximine-class insecticide, not a neonicotinoid

registrations for these important products to support the American grower.

Dow AgroSciences notes that contrary to misrepresentations circulated by pesticide opponents, sulfoxaflor is a sulfoximine-class

insecticide, not a neonicotinoid, a distinction clearly established by the Insecticide Resistance Action Committee (IRAC) and published in the open scientific literature.

Source: Dow AgroSciences

## Dow sells Treflan, Edge herbicides to Gowan

Gowan Company has announced a deal to acquire the entire DNA (dinitroaniline) herbicide portfolio from Dow AgroSciences, including popular herbicides Treflan and Edge.

The products to be acquired by Gowan have active registrations in 22 countries including the U.S., Canada, Japan, Australia, and parts of Europe.

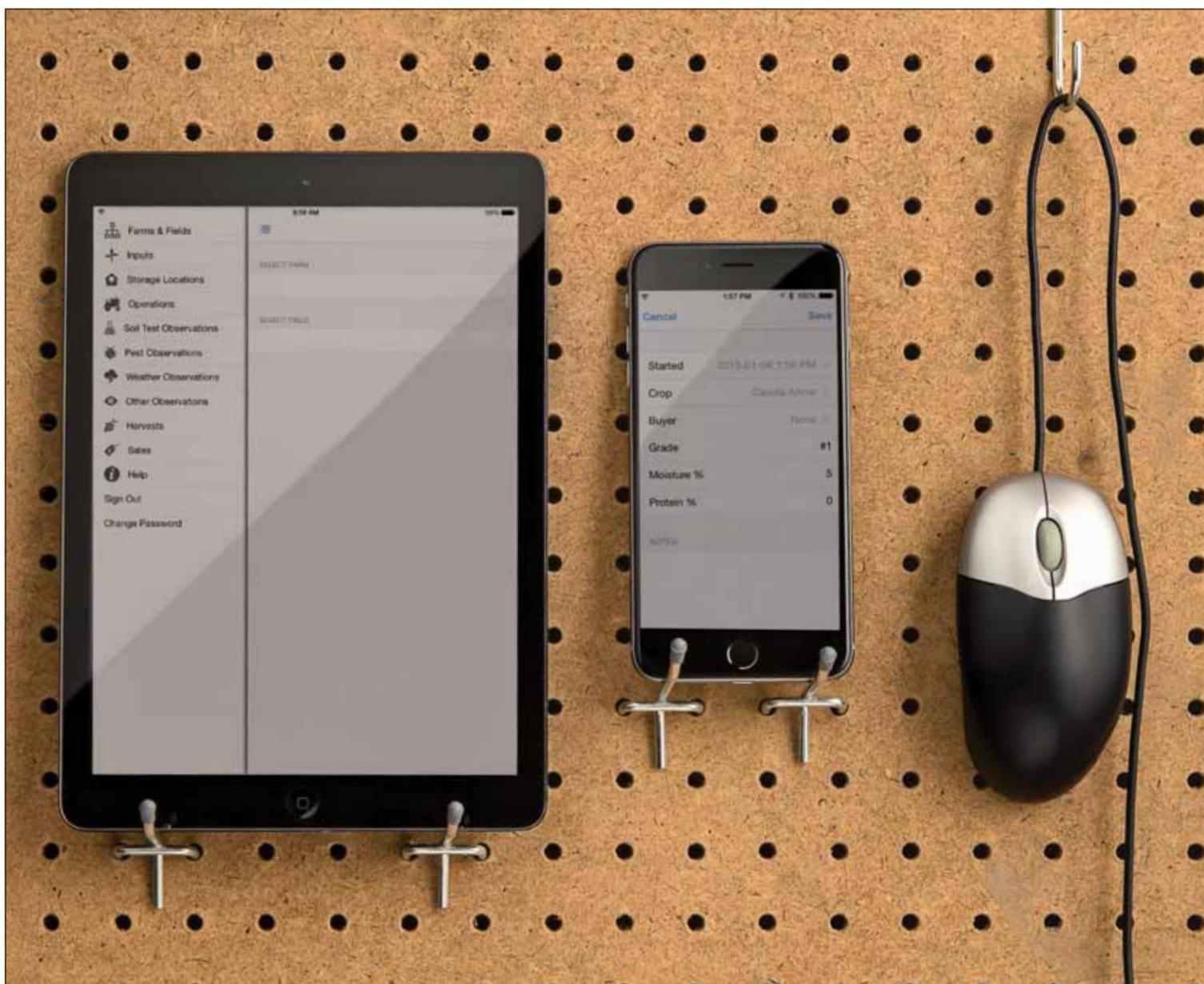
“We are enthusiastic to be able to acquire these proven products in this critical era for herbicide resistance management. The products are particularly significant for us in Canada and Europe where our growing sales force is centered on extending the utility of herbicide programs,” said Juli Jessen, Gowan Group CEO. “And we are grateful for the opportunity to defend and evolve the DNAs for niches that have long been our sweet spot, such as vegetables and turf.”

The deal includes Treflan, Edge, Team, Bonalan, Sonalan and intellectual property and labels for products containing trifluralin, benfluralin and ethalfluralin. A formulation and packaging facility in Sturgeon County, Alberta is part of the transaction.

Gowan also holds the Canadian registration for Avadex, a granular herbicide used to control resistant wild oats. Gowan acquired the herbicide from Monsanto in 2004.

The transaction was expected to close by January 1, 2016.

Source: Gowan Company



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