

MARKETING LOCALLY

## How to tell and sell the origin story



Seedless watermelon is only one of the specialties carried at Howe Family Farm Market near Aylmer, Ontario. Kevin Howe says ground cherries and canary melons also pique the interest of consumers. The on-farm market has been so successful that the family opened another location south of London Ontario. The grand opening is planned for spring 2020. Photos by Glenn Lowson.

KAREN DAVIDSON

Kevin Howe is a scrambler, much like the watermelon, pumpkin and squash vines that he tends. Along with his two older brothers, Ryan and Rick, he's a reliable supplier to major retailers of interesting cucurbits: super small-seeded watermelon, canary melon and Caribbean pumpkin.

Located near Aylmer, Ontario, the family farm has evolved since the 1960s

when his grandfather received a pittance for watermelon at Oktoberfest time.

The late-maturing Jubilee varieties were no match against beer! Climb the family tree even further, and his great-grandfather was growing strawberries in 1916, shipping as far east as Montreal.

Today, the Howe family farms 450 acres of which 220 acres are in pumpkin and squash, 70 acres in watermelon, 30 acres in strawberries, 30 acres in sweet corn and four acres in market garden vegetables. Besides the demands of

meeting retailer specifications and timelines, the family has operated an on-farm market. After just 13 years, it's become a busy hub although it's located 40 minutes from the urban center of London.

In mid-2019, an opportunity arose to rehabilitate a market structure on a major highway closer to London. The family scurried to open their second location: Howe's Farm Market and Country Bakery.

"We see this as a way to diversify

from our reliance on the wholesale market," explains Kevin Howe, operations manager, revealing that 60 per cent of the business is wholesale. That business is valued, but it's also at the whims of North American prices.

On-farm markets are not without huge demands on management and marketing. Here are some of the lessons shared by Kevin Howe.

Continued on page 3

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OFVGA AGM to be held Feb 18 PG 5

ON Fruit & Vegetable Convention PG 9

Coming events PG 21

## AT PRESS TIME...



### Canada Agriculture Day set for February 11

Get ready to raise a fork to Canadian agriculture as part of a national social media campaign to celebrate Canada's Agriculture Day on February 11.

The fourth anniversary of the event will focus on strengthening the relationship between consumers and producers who share a common love and appreciation for home-grown food.

"Canada's Agriculture Day is for everyone," said Debbie Bailey, spokesperson for Agriculture More Than Ever. The day will be marked by events across the country. Or you can make a meal with your family using all Canadian ingredients, snap a photo raising your fork to Canadian agriculture then share it on social media using #CdnAgDay.

In Ottawa, the marquee event will bring together producers, grocery retail and agriculture industry leaders. It will feature speakers, such as Michiel Bakker, director of global programs for Google and Eric Pelletier, vice president of

Alibaba Group.

Source: *Farm Credit Canada January 21, 2020 news release*

### 'Buy Canadian' foods campaign

Buy local. Buy Canadian. A new federal campaign will urge consumers to put their buying power behind locally-grown foods. Fresh, frozen, pickled, preserved – it all counts.

Agriculture Canada is looking to buttress provincial and food commodity efforts with its own campaign to 'Buy Canadian.' It has published a request for proposal for marketing firms to help it launch a social marketing campaign to build public trust in the food system and to better connect consumers with agriculture and food.

The five-year, \$25 million ad campaign is expected to launch this summer, reminding consumers of how Canadian farms operate and about stringent food standards. The timing follows a revamp of Canada's Food Guide and a shift in consumer eating habits towards more plant-based

meals.

According to the request for proposal due February 18, 2020, the government plans to spend between \$1.5 and \$4 million each year on media buys.

### Getting ready for CPMA

The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA) is hosting an Ontario Pavilion Exhibit at the Canadian Produce Marketing Association convention and trade show to be held May 12-14, 2020 in Toronto.

"This is a unique opportunity for Ontario-based, small-medium-sized, first-time exhibitors that provide products, services or technology to the fresh produce industry," says OFVGA program manager, Dan Tukendorf.

More than 1,300 businesses and 3,400 attendees take in the show. The OFVGA is offering a turnkey package that includes everything except your own product samples and marketing materials within a large, interactive destination exhibit space.

To book a space, contact Dan Tukendorf at the OFVGA at [dtukendorf@ofvga.org](mailto:dtukendorf@ofvga.org).

## NEWSMAKERS



**Dr. Michael Brownbridge** is the new biological program manager for BioWorks, specializing in disease management for high-value, horticultural greenhouse and field crops across Canada and the United States. His role also includes bringing new products to market, targeting new and changing diseases, and providing expertise to company colleagues. He was previously the director of horticultural research production systems at Vineland Research and Innovation Centre.

**Dr. Daryl Somers** has also left Vineland after 11 years. He had been deeply involved in the apple breeding program as the research director for applied genomics. He has launched Somers Consulting specializing in plant agriculture, genetics, genomics and breeding from his base in Fonthill, Ontario.

**Rachael LeBlanc** is the new apple breeder at Vineland Research and Innovation Centre. According to ONFruit newsletter, the apple breeding program added 3,800 Test 1 trees to the orchard in 2019. There are now about 28,000 unique Test 1 trees from more than 60 different crosses. Of these, 39 have been advanced to Test 2 with eight replicates per selection.

The Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers has elected **Michael Denys**, Wallaceburg as first vice-chair and **Ken Hamm** as second vice-chair, Leamington, at its January 13, 2020 meeting. **Ryan Leclair** and **Ron VanDamme** also joined the board through a new electoral voting process implemented by the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission. **Mike Lenders** was also re-elected to serve as District 2 director and **Dan Froese** was acclaimed in District 3 as director for a second term. **Dave Hope** remains chair.



The Ontario government has renewed the appointment of **Ken Knox**, chair of the seven-member Ontario Food Terminal Board for another year. It expires January 16, 2021.

**Debbie Etsell** has been reappointed chair of the BC Vegetable Marketing Commission until December 31, 2021. According to a report in *Country Life in BC*, she will offer continuity as the commission grapples with issues related to the future of regulated vegetable marketing in the province, including a new strategic plan.

The Dispute Resolution Corporation is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2020. **Fred Webber**, who has been president since 2011, says, "Throughout the coming year we will be celebrating this milestone by remembering the people who made it happen, the vision, the triumphs, and the people who keep it going. We will also examine those places where the vision continues to chase the goal." DRC will have a booth at Fruit Logistica in Berlin, Germany from Feb 5-7.

The Niagara Peninsula Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Association will be honouring **Hugh Fraser** on March 5 with its Award of Merit. He has worked with farmers for more than 40 years offering his 'thinking outside the barn.' For ticket details, go here: [hughfraser-awardofmerit.eventbrite.ca](http://hughfraser-awardofmerit.eventbrite.ca)

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## COVER STORY

## How to tell and sell the origin story

Continued from page 1

**Grow unique varieties.** As a specialist in melons, the Howe family grows seedless watermelon (i.e. Troubadour, Traveller, Warrior), orange-seeded watermelon and canary melons. “We enjoy sharing something new that has a very enjoyable flavour,” says Howe. “The canary melons, sometimes known as piel de sapo, are the sweetest melons out there with a brix level of about 17°. Normally, melons test about 11°Bx.

While mature melons are sold as fruit, they belong to the *Cucurbitaceae* family. Seed is bought from vegetable seed companies, sown in an on-farm greenhouse and set out as transplants in spring. Pollinators are needed for every three transplants. On-farm trials continue every year with about 120 different types of melons under the microscope.

**Stay authentic.** Early June, the first of the market season is always toughest in terms of meeting consumer demand for fresh produce. Strawberries, rhubarb, asparagus and locally-grown greenhouse vegetables start the season. No shelf space is given to out-of-province produce. “We wouldn’t stock Washington cherries, for example, to fill the gaps,” says Howe. “We do bring in tender fruit from Niagara when it’s in season.”

**Invest in signage to tell the story.** “There’s no easy solution to signage,” says Howe. Attractive handwriting is essential to communicate the farm market vibe. He has hired a display specialist to look after this need. And he’s empowered staff to make changes to signage on a day-to-day basis. What’s fresh? What’s new? What’s coming? Where was it grown?

**Group products together in terms of how they’ll be moved and stored overnight.** One of the unique displays is an old-spool electrical reel that is set on casters. This display can be positioned at the front of the market as first-of-season produce, and for those items which need to be stored overnight, it can be rolled into a refrigerator. Tender fruits are a good example of what works well in this display.

**Attract more traffic with a flower garden.** It sounds simple, but planting a flower garden has more than one benefit. Not only does a rainbow-coloured plot attract traffic, but it attracts

bees and butterflies. Of many varieties of flowers, the Howe’s plant a butterfly milkweed that host Monarch butterflies in abundance. The entire life cycle – from eggs, larvae (caterpillar), pupae to adults – is completed in 30 days. That means constant summer-long activity.

What used to be called a “teachable” moment for kids is now an “Instagrammable” moment for adults. This is story-telling at its best. The subtle message is that the farmer is attuned to growing practices for fruit and vegetables that aren’t harmful to the environment.

One more hint: plant the tallest rows of flowers at the back of your plot, parallel to the road.

### Keep social media fresh.

The Facebook page of Howe Family Farm Market has 3,229 followers. It is current, sharing valuable day-to-day information of when crops are ready, hours of operation and pricing. The page is populated with several videos of how produce is grown. The messaging underlines authenticity and transparency.

The Howe family has instinctively catered to consumer cravings, whether that’s country neighbours or urbanites. According to the 2020 Nourish Network Trend Report, many currents are propelling consumers in their relationship to food. For some, food purchases are based on environmental ethics. For others, it’s a desire to make food shopping a pleasure rather than a chore. It’s no surprise that on-farm markets are enjoying unprecedented success. Everyone is craving authenticity, a link to the origin story.

**The Grower goes “Behind the Scenes” with Kevin Howe, Alymer, Ontario to discuss why the fifth-generation business is diversifying its 450 acres of fruit and vegetables with new produce and a second farm market.**



Started from greenhouse transplants early in the spring, super small-seeded watermelons are ready to harvest by early August. The appetite for watermelons usually ends around Labour Day weekend.



This seasonal agricultural worker, Kishore Kadill, is replenishing the supply of canary melons. Sweeter than cantaloupe, canary melons can test as high as 17 degrees brix.



First-of-the-season tender fruit and apples are moved into a high-profile position in the market. Thanks to casters on an old spool wire reel, the display can be easily moved back into the cooler for refilling or for overnight refrigeration.



Plant flowers! Rows of colourful flowers at roadside attract not only repeat visitors but butterflies and bees. This butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) is a particularly compelling species for the Monarch butterfly.

## CROSS COUNTRY DIGEST

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

## BC agri-food exports reach new high

British Columbia farmers, ranchers, seafood and processing workers contributed to a record-setting year in 2018, with annual revenue from businesses in those sectors reaching \$15 billion for the first time.

“It was an excellent year for agriculture in British Columbia,” said Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture. The people who make up B.C.’s agriculture industry are hard working and dedicated, and their passion for growing, raising, harvesting and producing fresh great-tasting

food and beverages is why the industry is reaching new heights.”

The milestone includes increases such as a four per cent rise in food processing, six per cent in agriculture and 11 per cent in seafood revenues. The number of overall sector employees in B.C. also increased to a 10-year high of 63,400 in 2018, with 2,300 more jobs than the year before.

B.C. also set a new record in 2018 with exports of \$4.5 billion — about 10 per cent higher than in 2017. B.C. producers

sent \$3.1 billion worth of farm and food products and \$1.4 billion worth of seafood to 149 international markets, with the United States, China and Japan as the top destinations.

Looking at exports to China from a horticultural perspective, BC cherries earned \$37.5 million followed by fresh and frozen blueberries at \$2.7 million. Wine was valued at \$6.7 million to China.

Source: BC Agriculture Ministry



## PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

## Tough conditions for negotiating potato contracts in 2020

The Potato Marketing Association of North America (PMANA) predicts tough negotiations in 2020 according to Scott Howatt, Canadian vice-president. He offered an overview in the December 2019 issue of PEI Potato News.

On the demand side of the equation, North American processors continue to experience growing demand for quality frozen potato products, both domestically and internationally. Fryers have made very substantial investments in the hundreds of millions of dollars into new processing capacity across the

states of Washington and Idaho as well as the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba and New Brunswick.

When this capacity is totalled, 33 million cwt of processing potatoes are needed for processing from the 2019 crop compared to 2014. This is equivalent to the total potato production of New Brunswick and Maine combined!

In addition, McCain Foods has announced new production lines to be completed in early 2021 in Othello, Washington and Grand Falls, New Brunswick. These plans place further demand for more

processing-quality potatoes to be grown in 2020.

North American growers point out that processing contract values in 2019 provided lower net returns than did agreements in 2013. The pre-season contracts have not kept pace with inflation to maintain a skilled work force, buy crop inputs and to invest in new equipment and digital technologies. The contracts are structured such that each grower must produce above-average quality with well-above average yields to achieve fair returns. With difficult and devastating weather patterns of the last



three years, growers are realizing well-below budget returns — an unsustainable situation for all parties.

If North American processors do not address this substantial lack of grower returns for the risks taken, then there won’t be enough potatoes to fulfill capacity at plants.

“If a processor chooses to believe that this lack of supply will not happen that company needs to reassess their situation,” says Howatt. “It is already happening. It is happening now.”

The Potato Expo held in Las Vegas, January 14-15, 2020, provided more food for thought for Kevin MacIsaac, general manager, United Potato Growers of Canada.

“It appears even more difficult this year to receive the increases that growers need, which is very unusual given that each of the processing companies is experiencing record profit based on increased demand and increased price on their finished product. Washington usually negotiates first and often is settled by now (mid-January).

As of last week (week of January 13, 2020), they were a long distance apart. Not sure how comfortable the fryers customers are (i.e. quick service restaurants such as MacDonald’s, Burger King, Wendy’s) with not seeing their source of raw product secured by contact agreements at planting time.”

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## NEW BRUNSWICK

## Potato Accelerated Release program is changing

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s Potato Accelerated Release Program is undergoing a modernization review process and, as a result, this year’s Accelerated Release process has changed.

No new AR2020 selections will be released this year, and there will not be an Open House event in Fredericton, Guelph or Lethbridge in February 2020.

The program offers potato industry entrepreneurs of every size an opportunity to evaluate first-hand, in their own field, the front runners coming out of early selection trials.

Information about how to participate in the cash bid process for AR2018 Phase II selections is now available online at [www.agr.gc.ca/potato-cultivars](http://www.agr.gc.ca/potato-cultivars). Please note that all cash bids for AR2018 potato selections must be received at AAFC’s Fredericton Research and Development Centre no later than 4:00pm Atlantic Standard Time on Thursday, January 30.

## OFVGA ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

## The February 18 AGM: a time for the past, present and future



**GORDON STOCK**  
SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR &  
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS,  
OFVGA

for the chance to visit with OFVGA's members and have one-on-one conversations, learn about their priorities and hear feedback (positive and negative) about what OFVGA is doing for the industry. So, if you're at the AGM, or visiting the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention the following two days, please seek me out.

### Pre-budget consultations

Although a significant focus is on preparing for the AGM, policy priorities remain. While

the Ontario legislature does not return until February 18, the government is busy planning for the next provincial budget. The OFVGA is participating in this process and will be submitting comments on priority items for the fruit and vegetable sector. The focus will be on pushing the government to follow through on its commitment to increase the funding cap for the Risk Management Program (Self-Directed Risk Management in the case of horticulture).

### Federal activities

OFVGA representatives will also be in Ottawa to join the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) for its Farm to Plate lobby event on February 25. While there, the OFVGA plans to meet with some of the recently elected Members of Parliament representing key constituencies in Ontario.

With March comes CHC's AGM where Ontario delegates will have the opportunity to hear about CHC's lobbying activities and provide direction

for its priorities in the coming year. Without a doubt I anticipate issues such as crop protection re-evaluations, financial protection and labour will be hot topics of discussion.

Want to see an issue highlighted here, or learn more about how OFVGA represents growers? Contact Gordon Stock, senior policy and government relations advisor, at [gstock@ofvga.org](mailto:gstock@ofvga.org) or 519-763-6160, ext. 125. More detailed updates can also be found at [www.ofvga.org/news](http://www.ofvga.org/news).

*This column is to keep you informed about the key issues that OFVGA is tackling on behalf of Ontario's fruit and vegetable farmers.*

### Annual Meeting preparation

With the OFVGA annual general meeting (AGM) on February 18, we are preparing for a productive meeting on top of the regular policy grind. From a policy perspective, the AGM is an opportunity for a formal check-in with the membership on policy direction from the past, present, and future.

For the past, a portion of the AGM is dedicated to reviewing resolutions that currently form the OFVGA's 'standing policy.' Passed resolutions are reviewed every five years to ensure the policy direction remains relevant and supports the organization's goals today and into the future. These historic resolutions will be re-affirmed, revoked or amended.

For the present, the AGM is an opportunity to hear updates from the section chairs about priorities that exist today, and the activities being taken to address those priorities. As well, the OFVGA reports back on actions taken on the 19 resolutions passed at the 2019 AGM. Although we do regular activity updates throughout the year, the AGM creates an opportunity for open discussion by the membership.

For the future, the AGM is a chance for members to put forward their perspectives on areas where the OFVGA should be focussing its efforts for the foreseeable future. Not only do resolutions provide 'marching orders' for the organization, the process allows for constructive discussion between members and creates consensus. Another benefit is that passed resolutions can be used as a tool when the OFVGA approaches government on a specific issue as OFVGA has evidence of a mandate from a broad number of stakeholders.

Personally, I enjoy the AGM

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## RETAIL NAVIGATOR

## Develop better relationships with your customers



PETER CHAPMAN

Success in this industry requires solid relationships with your customers. It is one thing to have a good relationship when sales are good and you are both happy with quality. The true test of your relationship happens when you have a problem. Perhaps you will be short on an order or the quality is not as good as you usually produce. At times like these, your relationship will be tested. That is why it is so important to develop your customer relationships all the time.

Developing great relationships with customers is not a sprint. Honestly it is more like an ultra marathon! In case you are not familiar with this, it involves running +/- 160km in extreme conditions. These ultra marathons are usually held in a desert or a jungle like the Amazon. For those of you developing relationships with some category managers you might see the similarities.

### It starts with communication

A foundation of a solid customer relationship is communication. This is so important and communication is not one meeting per year. You need to determine what the most effective means of communication is with your customer(s). Some category managers prefer email, others like the phone and now we see some who want you to text. One size does not fit all so figure out what each person wants and use that method to communicate with them. In

person is always best because you can read body language.

### You need a plan

Think about the year ahead. How many opportunities will you need to create where you can build the relationship with your customer? My recommendation is to have at least one touch point per month. This does not mean 12 meetings; we all know that will never happen.

Assuming you are a decent-sized supplier, you should be having two face-to-face meetings per year with each category manager. As we said, those are most important because you can read their body language, have some more in-depth conversations and confirm plans for the future.

Determine which industry events your category manager will be attending. Find out if they are on the board for organizations, have a personal connection to a cause or just like to attend some events.

Regardless of their motivation, you need to be there. Usually it is realistic to find a couple of events each year a category manager will attend. This ranges from industry galas to golf tournaments. It doesn't matter if you like attending galas or if you are a terrible golfer you need to be there. You will not talk item and price but you will talk and that is always important.

Throughout the year you should be looking for industry information that would be relevant to your category manager. This can be anything from seed cost changes or perhaps scarcity of seed, which impacts your ability to grow the varieties you want. Find relevant information that would make them more knowledgeable about the category. Share this with them. You might not get a response back but chances are they will look at it. Any time you can make them more knowledgeable it is a good thing.

Think of your category manager when you travel. Even if it is a vacation take a few minutes and go through a couple of stores. Take some photos of the merchandising and find a couple of good ideas. Send your category manager a quick email. Tell them what you like about the photos and perhaps it might lead to something for their category that would include your items.

Most producers and processors attend trade shows. You can always find ideas and interesting learning at a trade show or a break-out session. Take a few notes, take a few photos or if you are comfortable do a short video. Send it to the category manager with a brief explanation of why it is relevant. It sends the message you are out there learning and thinking of them.

Seasonal merchandising is always key. We all have peak times for our products and your customers need to capitalize on them. Get in the stores, either their stores or even their competitors. Show them what is out there. A few photos help them see what is happening when they are often tied to the office. If you have been discussing a particular program show them how it is being executed. If it is poor, let them figure it out. You don't need to be negative, just let them know you were into store ABC and here is what you found.

If you use these ideas, you have one per month to share with your category manager. Split them up and I know you will not always get a thanks or a confirmation they read it but the important thing is to be top-of-mind. You don't want to

be the supplier they only talk to when there is a problem. Plan the year and develop your relationship.

### Back to the starting line

Continuing with the ultra marathon analogy, one of the biggest challenges you must accept is change among category managers. It seems like the good ones are gone too fast and the difficult ones stay too long. This is a reality of working with large retailers and today's workforce.

It will always be this way so use it to your advantage. Have a standard presentation ready for new category managers to help them understand your business and how you support their business. Start at the beginning and remember to include some time to let them know about issues, initiatives and opportunities you had 'in the works' with their predecessor. You never know if the transition was good or bad so protect your own interests.

### Relationships don't just happen

Great relationships with your customers take time and effort. Create your own plan and measure your results. As we discussed earlier the true test is when you have a problem. When you do the work in advance and build a solid relationship you will feel much better running that ultra marathon. Sure there will be some challenges along the way but you have put in the work in advance to be ready and push through the steep hills.

If you have any questions about developing a relationship with your customers please give me a call at (902) 489-2900 or send me an email at peter@sku-food.com. Next month we will discuss how to develop a retail plan to sell your products more effectively.

*Peter Chapman is a retail consultant, professional speaker and the author of A la Cart-A suppliers' guide to retailer's priorities. Peter is based in Halifax N.S. where he is the principal at GPS Business Solutions and a partner in SKUfood.com, an on line resource for food producers. Peter works with producers and processors to help them navigate through the retail environment with the ultimate goal to get more of their items in the shopping cart.*

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## URBAN COWBOY

## There's a lot to like about International Year of Plant Health



**OWEN ROBERTS**  
U OF GUELPH

there's a lot to like.

To begin with, the topic of plant health – similar to fruits and vegetables -- immediately resonates with ruralites and urbanites. That's different than some international years -- such as 2019, which the FAO decided to tag the International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements.

(Actually, it's too bad that proclamation didn't make headlines. If more people understood we are naturally made of chemicals, maybe chemicals would be viewed with less brimstone and fire.)

The International Year of Plant Health is dripping with accessibility. You can even observe it in your own home with houseplants – they release oxygen, clean up the air to a certain extent, reduce stress and enhance concentration.

Multiply that hard work exponentially – across millions of acres of farmland everywhere -- and it's clear why the FAO is so bullish on plant health. It says healthy plants can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment, and boost economic development.

And that's not hyperbole. Stephen Lewis, the UN Special

Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, often said health was the first line of defence against disease. Healthy people have a better chance fighting illness of all kinds. And in a world where, according to the FAO, plants make up 80 per cent of the food we eat, plants must be healthy so we too can be healthy.

Yet every year, 40 per cent of all the plants grown in the world succumb to pests and disease, according to the FAO. It says this amounts to annual agricultural trade losses of more than \$220 billion. Such losses leave millions of people facing hunger, and severely damages agriculture, the primary income source for poor rural communities.

The FAO wants to promote the idea that protecting plants from pests and diseases is far more cost effective than dealing with full-blown plant health emergencies.

As producers know, plant pests and diseases can be impossible to eradicate once they're established. And managing them is time consuming, expensive and increasingly unpopular with consumers.

But let's also consider the

new frontiers that plants are leading us to, such as unconventional plant-based foods and even vaccines.

For example, Canadian biopharmaceutical company PlantForm Corporation, which grew from plant-based technology developed at the University of Guelph, is working with scientists to develop new antibody treatments for HIV/AIDS. These antibodies are developed in plants that serve as bioreactors.

"Everything we do depends on having a consistent supply of healthy plants to produce the biopharmaceutical products we want," said Doug Cossar, the company's vice-president of research. "Healthier plants are more robust and respond better to yield more product, so we need fewer plants to get the same amount of product. That lowers our costs."

PlantForm maintains what Cossar calls an active plant health research program, to optimize how much light, nutrition and CO<sub>2</sub> its plants receive so only the healthiest plants enter its manufacturing process.

But few plants have such safe confines. FAO



director-general Qu Dongyu says climate change and human activities are altering ecosystems, reducing biodiversity and creating conditions where pests can thrive.

At the same time, he says, international travel and trade have tripled in volume in the last decade and can quickly spread pests and diseases around the world causing great damage to native plants and the environment.

This all spells trouble for plants. So he's promoting a proactive message.

"As with human or animal health," he says, "prevention in plant health is better than cure."

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**BILL GEORGE JR.**  
CHAIR, OFVGA

As I wrap up my first year as chair of this organization, it's never been more clear that being proactive and engaged matters.

Farming, as we all know, can be a precarious business. It was the weather that dominated much of our year here in Ontario and around the world, as well as global trade and political uncertainties – and while those are issues beyond the control of the individual grower, what we can have some influence over is how government and industry respond during times of crisis.

That's where lobbying and proactive relationship building is invaluable, and that's where the OFVGA has been concentrating the vast majority

of its efforts provincially and federally this past year.

Provincially, it was a year of laying ground work as the Conservative government moved ahead with changes on many fronts and marked its first full year in office. A shuffle of cabinet ministers meant new faces in many of the portfolios of interest to fruit and vegetable growers.

We held two lobby days at Queen's Park, one in April 2019 and one in November 2019 when we proactively met with politicians, their staff and bureaucrats to introduce them to OFVGA and what the fruit and vegetable sector represents to Ontario's economy.

With so many new MPPs and young political staff with little or no knowledge of our sector, our goal is to raise awareness of edible horticulture and let people know that OFVGA is the go-to resource for any policies or issues impacting fruit and vegetable farming.

In the fall, we added three specific topics to address during our lobby day: timely payment for growers, protecting and strengthening risk management programming, and drawing attention to the importance of the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program and the Temporary Foreign Worker

Program to the production of fruits and vegetables in Ontario.

It takes time to cultivate relationships, but it can be an invaluable resource to both policymakers and organizations such as the OFVGA to know who to talk to and how to get in touch when critical issues occur.

In addition to being proactive, being engaged and part of the conversation are also vitally important.

Never was this more evident than this past year when we faced the threat of losing the Ontario Food Terminal from its central location in Toronto. The industry rallied together and thanks to strong stakeholder pushback, the province ultimately decided not to move the terminal. Without that level of engagement and commitment from stakeholders across the whole sector, we could be facing a very different future today.

The Food Terminal was only one of many items subject to review as the provincial government is looking at regulations, programs and supports in its efforts to cut red tape and manage fiscal constraints. OFVGA was busy responding to consultations on a wide range of issues this past year, but significant time has been devoted to a government-driven, re-design of the Self-

Directed Risk Management (SDRM) program, which you will hear more about at the annual general meeting.

The key message for growers is that we can't take for granted things we've long counted on to keep our sector running, whether that's the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, access to crop protection materials, or the security of safety net programming.

The same is true nationally. This past year brought us a minority parliament, which now means that every vote in the House matters, regardless of what party a Member of Parliament represents. We've stepped up our lobby with Ontario's MPs to make them and their staff and ministries aware of our sector and the vital role we play in the provincial and national economies. We hope that making that federal connection locally will help ensure Ontario grower voices are heard in Ottawa.

At the same time, we are supplementing the work of the Canadian Horticultural Council by strengthening our relationships with other national organizations, including the Canadian Produce Marketing Association and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

As a board, we depend on

input from the grower community to help us formulate the policies and positions we take forward into all of our lobbying activities. That's why it's important for growers of all ages, including young farmers, to become involved with their commodity boards or local farm organizations.

That's where many policy decisions are made that directly impact the future direction your industry is going to take. And in the bigger picture, our farm leaders are ultimately the people who represent us in lobbying governments, helping secure funding programs, ensuring agriculture's voice is heard in lawmaking, and even participating in international trade negotiations.

A good way to start is to attend the OFVGA annual meeting on February 18. I encourage you to spend the day with us listening to discussions and feel free to participate in the resolution process by speaking up and voicing your opinion.

Agriculture is usually not top of mind when government makes decisions, but we often bear the brunt of unintended consequences. That's why being proactive matters and as the food terminal example has shown, those who show up are those who get heard.

### WEATHER VANE



Thanks to staged access to an expanding electricity grid in the coming years, Ontario vegetable growers have regained confidence to build. With a base of 2,900 acres under glass, it's anticipated that 150-160 additional acres will be in production by September 2020. That's at an estimated cost of \$1.4 million per acre according to Joe Sbrocchi, general manager, Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers. Photo of new tomato plants is courtesy of Pure Flavor, Leamington, Ontario

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# What's on tap

## TRADE SHOW



Free parking! That's a welcome perk for more than 2,500 attendees and exhibitors who will be on hand with products and services. Hours are 8 am to 5 pm.

## TASTING COMPETITIONS



The ever popular sweet cider and hard cider competitions are hotly contested. They are held in the Port Colborne Lounge, Feb 19, 12:30 pm to 4 pm.

## EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS



Some of the 120+ sessions have standing room only. Be an early bird to get your front row seat for expert speakers from Canada and abroad. Photos by Glenn Lowson.

## EARLY-BIRD REGISTRATION

February 12, 2020 is the deadline for early-bird prices. A two-day package costs \$100+HST. Single-day package – either Wednesday or Thursday – costs \$75+HST. Pre-registration has its rewards: complimentary drink tickets thanks to sponsors of the Farmers and Friends reception. For more details, go to: <http://www.ofvc.ca/pricingA.html>

## FARMERS AND FRIENDS RECEPTION

Entertainment and local fare are in order on the trade show floor from 5 pm to 7 pm on opening day. Ontario wines, craft beers and cider are the ideal toast for the winners of the ONHops Brewoff and the Sweet and Hard Cider Competitions.

## YOUNG FARMER FORUM



Tailored to farmers 40 and under, this forum will feature Will Heeman, chief daymaker for Heeman's, a multi-generational garden centre and berry farm near London, Ontario. Borrowing some of the marketing approaches from a New Zealand garden centre, Heeman returned to the family business with a zest for change. His modern marketing sensibilities have already earned him numerous accolades. He was 2016's Young Retailer of the Year for North America. The lunchtime session is free but do register online to save your seat. It's Thursday, February 20 from 11:45 am to 1:30 pm in Room 221.

## RESEARCH POSTER COMPETITION



The poster display is a quiet corner to review promising horticultural research in fruit, vegetables and alternative crops in Ontario. Researchers, industry and extension specialists present results that span pest management, crop production, new cultivars and avenues for marketing. The Student Poster Competition adds another layer of interest, highlighting the work of up and coming researchers. Deadline for posters is January 31, 2020.

## ONHops BREWOFF



Which will be the fairest of them all? Eighteen teams will be competing for the Bottomless Cup Trophy in 2020. This year's featured beer is Double (aka Imperial) IPA type. Ontario's hop industry has matured since the Ontario Hop Growers' Association was founded in 2012. Currently there are approximately 65 commercial growers province-wide with an estimated 225 acres in production and more than 30 different cultivars grown. Organizers David Lauzon, Jason Deveau and Evan Elford are proud to bring together growers and the brewing industry in this unique event sponsored by BASF Canada and hosted by the Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Convention. This event takes place on Wednesday, February 19 from 2 – 4 pm, Ballroom C.

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What's on tap

"OUTSTANDING IN HER FIELD" BREAKFAST

In a tribute to the scores of women working in horticulture, this event is designed to make you think about your mission in career and life.

Guest speaker will be Cheryl McLachlan, an inspiring individual who is now a retired former national athlete. In recent years, she became involved as a Rowbust coach for the Breast Cancer Survivor Dragon Boat Team. While she is not a breast cancer survivor, she is well equipped

to mentor these competitive women.

"We win on the water and we lose on the water," she says in a Facebook posting. "We win in life and we lose in life."

This event encourages both men and women to attend the February 20 breakfast from 8 am to 9:15 am. It's free, but register online for one of the 100 seats. Location: Port Colborne Lounge.

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Several annual general meetings are slated for mid-February.



**Berry Growers of Ontario AGM**  
12 noon,  
February 18, 2020  
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**Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Association AGM**  
8:30 am, February 18, 2020  
Hilton Fallsview Hotel,  
Niagara Falls



**Ontario Craft Cider Association**  
10 am, February 18, 2020  
TBA, Niagara Falls



**Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association AGM**  
11:30 am, Ballroom B,  
February 19, 2020  
Scotiabank Convention Centre,  
Niagara Falls



**Farmers' Markets Ontario AGM**  
4 pm, Ballroom D,  
February 19, 2020  
Scotiabank Convention Centre,  
Niagara Falls



**Ontario Lavender Association AGM**  
10:30 am, Room 221,  
February 20, 2020  
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Cheryl McLachlan, steersperson of Dragon Boat.

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#ofvc2020

## OPMA celebrates 30th anniversary with new strategic plan



Michelle Broom, president of the Ontario Produce Marketing Association, has led a 17-member board on a vision and mission exercise for the last year. The result is a strategic plan for 2020-2022 that launches the 30th anniversary of the association. Here, she is pictured with (L-R): Chris Streef, Shreenivas Shellikeri, Michael Borcsok, Sarah Taylor. Photos by Glenn Lowson.

KAREN DAVIDSON

There are multiple touch points for the 230-member Ontario Produce Marketing Association (OPMA) but Michelle Broom could well be one of them. She's been in the role of president since October 2018, bringing with her a

complementary skill set from Australia. She had been the leader of a grains and pulse organization, focused on consumer research and nutrition marketing.

For the last year, Broom has used her unique position as a newcomer to network from her office base at the Ontario Food Terminal. She had the luxury of

asking open-ended questions with no historical baggage.

"The industry is such a broad mix, from growers and packers to logistics, wholesale and retail," says Broom. "There are many common challenges in terms of how to deal with regulations and how to retain good talent. But I also observed a disconnect across the industry.

Growers want the OPMA to help them get in touch with retailers. For their part, some people working in retail don't understand why local growers can't provide produce at lower prices. From my perspective, we'd all benefit from a better understanding of the pain points across the sector."

Out of the broad consultation exercise, not only with the 17-person board but with more than half of the membership, Broom is launching a new strategic plan for 2020-2022. The timing coincides with the 30th anniversary of OPMA. What's admirable is that the plan is condensed to one page with concrete and measurable goals.

The OPMA's new vision is to become the trusted resource for good food and good health. By that, Broom envisions the association as the first port of call for the entire produce sector. OPMA has limited staff resources but it can direct questions and connect to such organizations as the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention, Dispute Resolution Corporation, culinary schools and well

beyond.

In the past, the OPMA has loomed large as the well regarded host of an annual gala and the Produce Made Simple platform that has earned 11 million media impressions for its recipes and social media outreach. Building on those successes, it wants to become an information hub and a catalyst for bringing the industry together to help improve business for the entire produce chain.

In the future, Broom foresees a speaker series and webinars. A new website will be launched in April 2020 that can engage consumer media as well as the whole produce chain. She wants to build on the successful relationship with Student Nutrition Ontario and its Junior Chef program in Toronto. It's an example where local apple grower Steve Martin spoke to students learning to cook with Ontario-grown apples.

It's these simple face-to-face connections that make the OPMA's vision a living reality. As Broom concludes: "My 'aha' moment was realizing that OPMA has a distinct role in connecting people at a local level."

## speaker sessions

OPMA will lead an afternoon session at the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention. It's titled Food innovation: trends, opportunities, adaptation. Guest speakers will address survey results of consumption intentions of Canadians, packaging innovations, and how industry is adapting to change.

At that time, there will be a call to populate a Young Professionals Network with a 10-member committee. Those under 35 will have a way to connect with others through physical events and online forums. Perhaps a grower wants to connect with a logistics provider or a retailer. Here's the avenue to make those links.

February 19, 2 pm, Room 204, Scotiabank Convention Centre, Niagara Falls, ON

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# Packaging that solves extra-large problems

KAREN DAVIDSON

Where there's a will, there's a way to package and sell unusually-sized produce. During a site visit to Vineland Growers' Cooperative last fall, Costco's Oleen Smethurst spied a beautiful peach variety called Coralstar. It's striking red in colour and in a normal season, produces a medium to large-sized peach.

"Last summer's nice growing conditions resulted in an extra-large peach," explains Phil Tregunno, chair, Vineland Growers' Cooperative, headquartered at Jordan Station, Ontario. "They were beautiful peaches but they wouldn't fit a traditional three-litre basket."

It was the last week of August, but Smethurst smelled an opportunity, corralling her staff and a packaging supplier to design a corrugated tray pack that could handle the weight. Within days, these X-sized peaches made their way to Costco stores priced at \$7.99 per box.

Did consumers convert these peaches into jam, slice them into smoothies or freeze for the winter? Hard to know. But Smethurst's street smarts of moving an odd size into an appropriate container resulted in sales for the grower and the wholesaler. And just as importantly, there was no food waste.

"This on-site visit came at a busy time, but we moved a lot of product," says Tregunno.

Another packaging innovation moved pears for Costco Canada in the fall of 2019. The wholesaler asked Vineland Growers' Cooperative to package both Bosc and Bartlett pears in a tray with a heat seal film.

"By using the film, we are able to eliminate the need for a plastic lid," says Matt Ecker, sales and business development manager, Vineland Growers' Cooperative. "This container reduces the amount of plastic

use by 25-30 per cent. There are micro perforations embedded in the top film that are used to achieve optimum respiration rates to help 'maximize shelf life.

Oleen Smethurst, currently chair of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA), has invested her leadership time in a Plastics Packaging Working Group that kicked off

in May 2019. Look for an 'industry strategy to be released in the summer of 2020.

**Photo on left: This young mother picks up a tray pack of extra large peaches at Costco's Etobicoke location.**

**Photo right: Vineland Growers' Cooperative used a heat seal film on Bosc pears in the fall of 2019.**



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**speaker sessions**

The Ontario Produce Marketing Association is hosting a session at OFVC on Wednesday, February 19 on Food Innovation: Trends, Opportunities, Adaptation. At 2:30 pm, Packaging Innovation is part of the session featuring Robert Procius, TekPak Solutions and Dr. Ana Cristina Vega Lugo, Canadian Food and Wine Institute Innovation Centre.

## Shared space extends Ontario apple season



Retrofitting an existing storage facility at Norfolk Cherry Company provided new opportunities for area apple growers, thanks to synergies uncovered by Ryan Schuyler (left) and Tom O'Neill.

JANE ROBINSON

Sour cherries and apples don't have a lot in common. And that's a good thing for an Ontario farmer-owned processing facility and a grower co-operative. The different timing of harvesting seasons between the two crops created the perfect opportunity for a project that's building a stronger and longer season for consumers to buy fresh, Ontario-grown apples.

Ryan Schuyler operates Schuyler Farms with his brother Brett, along with their father Marshall and uncle Drew. It's a family farm that's been in the county for 100 years and they've grown apples for most of that

time. They also have a large sour cherry orchard and are one of two owners of Norfolk Cherry Company (NCC) – a local sour cherry processing facility in Simcoe.

Just around the corner, Tom O'Neill is the general manager of The Norfolk Fruit Growers' Association (NFGA) – a grower cooperative that provides storage and packing facilities for local apple growers. NFGA was formed in 1906, and today has eight members with orchards covering 1,400 acres.

"We have a lot of young orchards coming on. Our volume is increasing and we are always looking at options for extra storage capacity," says O'Neill.

### Better use of existing assets

Sour cherries and apples have complementary seasons with very little overlap in terms of storage, packing and processing needs.

"All of our work at Norfolk Cherry Company happens during a few weeks in July when the cherries are harvested," says Schuyler. "We go from nothing to 10 million pounds of cherries to process in a two-week period and then our facility sits empty."

By contrast, the fresh apple market "season" at NFGA is stretching out to nearly 11 months of the year. "We are doing a shift in varieties getting out of McIntosh and into Gala apples," says O'Neill. "Proper

storage helps Galas last longer and keep them in market longer."

As one of the largest cherry and apple producers in the area, Schuyler had a unique perspective on the potential synergy between the two crops and the companies that pack and process them.

"We are very familiar with the operations of both the Norfolk Cherry Company and NFGA," says Schuyler. "We had underutilized refrigeration and warehouse space at Norfolk Cherry Company that was only being used for about one month of the year, and we knew NFGA needed more space and refrigeration to be able to store fresh apples for longer periods to extend the local season for consumers."

### New technology feeds consumer trend

That's when Marshall Schuyler, the current president of the NFGA, proposed that NCC put up the capital to upgrade an existing storage facility and share the space for apple storage based on a rental agreement. Since their cherry and apple storage seasons don't overlap, it was an obvious win-win. Part of the proposal included applying to the Greenbelt Fund.

The successful application helped NCC retrofit the existing storage facilities with controlled atmosphere

technology that controls the temperature and air mixture. Two separate rooms with 600-bin capacity each were created, adding about five per cent more apple storage capacity.

"This new technology means we will be able to keep apples for 11 months," says O'Neill. "We'll use the new facility for Gala – which continues to gain consumer popularity – and are expected to be a bigger market than McIntosh in Ontario this year."

### Shared successes

The upshot is that NCC has a new revenue stream from storage rental.

"We have more cash to invest in our own operation for technology," says Schuyler. "When you are dealing with fresh produce such as apples, every minute counts and we aren't paying someone to sit in line to deliver our crop because there is less congestion by having two drop off locations – at the NFGA and now at NCC. And if I know there is more storage space available for apples, I'm more willing to plant more apple trees."

Bottom line is that NFGA has an up-to-date storage facility.

"We now have access to more apple storage that is a modern, airtight facility that gives us the ability to tailor the controlled atmosphere to the needs of the apple variety," says O'Neill. "We can hold a greater volume of fruit, later in the season, and that keeps our packing operation running longer."

With a lot of young orchards coming on, the additional 1,200 bins of controlled atmosphere capacity will help the NFGA cover some of the increased production.

"We are working to grow consumer demand for Ontario apples," says O'Neill. "We are catching up with production to match demand and hope to replace most of the imports from the U.S., New Zealand and Chile within the next five to 10 years."


## speaker sessions







Wendy Hogarth, proprietor, Muskoka Lakes Farm & Winery, will be speaking at the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association Summit on Wednesday, February 19 at 10:30 am in Ballroom B.

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# Making your on-farm market into a destination



New Canadians visit Muskoka Lakes Farm & Winery, Bala, ON



Alex Chesney, Thames River Melons, Innerkip, ON

KAREN DAVIDSON

Depending on traffic from the Greater Toronto Area, a drive to Bala, Ontario can be anywhere from two to three hours. That hasn't been an obstacle for the scenic village becoming the Cranberry Capital of Ontario, thanks to the tourist draw of the Muskoka Lakes Farm & Winery.

Until recently, the enterprise was known as Johnston's Cranberry Marsh. But so much

more has evolved out of its heritage of the 1950s that a rebranding exercise has updated what the farm stands for, explains Wendy Hogarth, proprietor.

"The critical part is starting with authenticity," says Hogarth. "We are dedicated to the terroir and presenting what is native to here. That's cranberries and blueberries." The farm and winery, offering fruit wines from cranberries and blueberries, operates year-round with the exception of Christmas

and Boxing Day. That's a surprising fact for a farm situated on the Canadian Shield, far away from clusters of consumers.

The perception that the Bala Cranberry Festival is the only draw is false. October fall harvesting provides unexpected highlights – how about a cranberry plunge in chest waders? But so much more has been built using the natural bounty of the land. The dikes, which corral the water, are used for a wagon tour as well as walking. Most imaginatively, it becomes an ice trail during the winter months. What would normally be a flooded bog becomes a giant hockey rink.

In the era of social media, pictures and tweets about night skating and snow-shoeing are what drive day-trippers to the destination. Hogarth says, "I think it's important to be consistent. For example, tours are offered every day at 11 am, 1 pm and 3 pm. Frequent updates on Facebook engage 20,000 followers. There are now 5,000 followers on Instagram.

"I find Facebook useful for sharing," says Hogarth. "People can share our posts more easily than Instagram. We can share information from others we think our followers will find interesting, we can post event information, etc. Facebook has some useful features not found on other platforms."

What Hogarth is observing, anecdotally, is that their cranberry farm and winery have

become a destination for new Canadians.

"We offer a unique experience that reflects where we live and what we grow," she says.

## Newcomer to on-farm marketing

Alex Chesney is a newbie to on-farm marketing, but already she's making some veteran moves. Since June 2019, she's been in a whirlwind setting up a new farm market for Thames River Melons near Innerkip, Ontario. As host to the Berry Growers of Ontario Twilight Tour in September, she shared some of that journey.

Stocking the barn structure with fresh produce was not an issue. Her family grows multiple commodities for farmers' markets in the Greater Toronto Area. The farm has offered pick-your-own berries in the past, but it was a casual set-up with a pop-up canopy in the field. The decision was made to move the location to an existing barn on a main thoroughfare, just a kilometer from the home base.

"We reused a lot of items to set up the market," said Chesney. "Old doors, ladders, and window frames came in handy." A special butcher block counter was unearthed from her grandparents' barn, originally purchased by Chesney's late mother Brenda.

A pick-your-own patch for strawberries, raspberries and

blueberries is the major attraction. However, consumers are lured to add vegetables to their basket with a pick-your-own vegetable patch. Okra was a unique addition to the standbys of potatoes, carrots, cabbage and tomatoes.

Chesney's first surprise was that the vegetable garden was so popular that basics such as potatoes and cucumbers ran out. The second surprise was that the frozen yogurt machine – fed with home-grown frozen berries – was a big hit. And lastly, \$4 per dozen eggs flew off the shelf.

Chesney's future ambition is to add an on-farm kitchen and small-scale event space to the farm market, where she plans to offer baked goods featuring farm-fresh produce as well as host interactive cooking classes and farm experiences. As both a Registered Dietitian and a farmer, Chesney offers a unique view of food and agriculture. She is passionate about local food – how it's produced, the best ways to cook it, and why it's good for you – and is excited to have a space to share that with others.

She also plans to start a farm line of preserves, providing frozen fruits to the well-known Rootham's Gourmet Preserves based in Puslinch, Ontario. Some recipes will be Rootham's standards while others will be sourced from family heirloom recipes.

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## Update on herbicide resistance genetic testing



Photo 1: Glyphosate-resistant Canada fleabane in carrots

KRISTEN OBEID

Horticulture cropping systems throughout Ontario have been surveyed to better characterize the occurrence and distribution of herbicide-resistant weeds. Herbicide-resistant weed populations must be detected and managed rapidly because, depending on species, they may quickly spread within the same field and to adjacent fields or farms. Additionally, because fewer herbicides are available for use in horticulture crops, resistance management can result in costly weeding practices such as hoeing and/or mowing.

Since 2016, this project has developed 16 (five more in progress) genetic quick tests to assist in identifying herbicide resistance in 12 weed species. Some of these tests were

implemented from scientific literature. Two are new discoveries. These tests deliver a diagnostic and a recommendation to the grower within the same growing season. Traditional resistance testing in the greenhouse can take from three months to a year to get results back to growers. Now, leaf tissue instead of seed is collected. DNA is extracted from the leaf tissue to determine if there is a change in the sequencing resulting in a mutation conferring resistance.

Tests have also been developed to differentiate between Brassica and Amaranthus (pigweed) species. Tests differentiating pigweed species have been instrumental in confirming new cases of waterhemp in Ontario (25), Manitoba (7) and Quebec (9). Once confirmed, the waterhemp was tested for Groups 2,

Table 1. Genetic Tests Developed to Date

Weed Species	Herbicide Group	Resistance & Tests
Large crabgrass	1	Target-site: ACCase gene amplification
Common chickweed	2	Target-site (P197Q & unpublished)
Common ragweed	2	Target-site (W574L)
Eastern black nightshade	2	Target-site (A205V)
Green pigweed	2	Target-site (S653N & W574L)
Giant foxtail	2	Target-site (unpublished)
Redroot pigweed	2	Target-site (S653N & W574L)
Waterhemp	2	Target-site (S653N & W574L)
Common ragweed	5&7	Target-site (V219I)
Green pigweed	5&7	Target-site (A251V, S264G**, V219I & F274L)
Lamb's-quarters	5	Target-site (S264G)
Redroot pigweed	5&7	Target-site (A251V, S264G**, V219I & F274L)
Waterhemp	5&7	Target-site (A251V, S264G**, V219I & F274L)
Brassica spp.	9	Presence of transgene
Canada fleabane	9	Target-site (P106S)
Waterhemp	9	Target-site: EPSPS gene amplification
Waterhemp	14	Target-site ( $\Delta$ G210 in PPX2L)
Amaranthus spp.	-	Species identification
Brassica spp.	-	Species identification

\*Several of these tests were developed by other researchers (Francois Tardif) and reproduced from the scientific literature.

\*\*S264G mutation only induces resistance to Group 5 herbicides, not Group 7

5, 9 and 14 resistances.

Since 2018, the protocols for these tests have been shared with the Pest Diagnostic Lab of the Quebec Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPAQ) and the weeds lab of AAFC's Harrow Research and Development Centre as a pilot project and made available to extension personnel in Ontario and Quebec to submit samples, providing the diagnostic service to growers.

### Results

- Since 2016 a total of 76 cases of herbicide resistance have been confirmed in horticulture crops.
- A total of 16 genetic tests have been developed (five additional tests are in progress), as well as, two genetic tests for species identification (*Amaranthus* and *Brassica spp.*).
- Surveys revealed the presence of biotypes with non-target site linuron resistance in common ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) and target gene duplication in large crabgrass (*Digitaria sanguinalis*) resistant to ACCase-inhibitor herbicides.
- In 2019, these tests detected multiple resistance cases (ALS + Photosystem II inhibitors) in green pigweed (*Amaranthus powellii*) in three tomato fields. Different common ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) plants in the same carrot field were also resistant to either ALS or Photosystem II inhibitors.
- In 2019, 76% of the weed biotypes surveyed tested positive for genetic mutations conferring resistance.
- The differentiation of *Amaranthus* species test was instrumental in confirming waterhemp populations in Ontario (25), Manitoba (7) and Quebec (9). Multiple resistant waterhemp has now been confirmed in vegetable fields in Elgin (Groups 2 & 14) and Norfolk (Groups 9 & 14) counties.

- Confirm both single and multiple herbicide-resistant weed species.
- Develop management programs that work.
- Alleviate the risk of spreading herbicide-resistant weeds by managing them in season.
- Provide proof that resistant weeds are present to obtain new minor use priorities and support from crop protection companies for new product registrations.

### Collaborators

- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs: Ms. Kristen Obeid
- Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu Research and Development Centre: Dr. Marie Josée Simard, Dr. Martin Laforest
- Harrow Research and Development Centre: Dr. Robert Nurse, Dr. Eric Page
- Pest Management Centre: Dr. Cezarina Kora
- Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec (MAPAQ) Pest Diagnostic Lab: David Miville
- Since September 2019: Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, Ontario Apple Growers, Fresh Vegetable Growers of Ontario, Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers, FMC and Syngenta Canada.

This project was partly funded through the Pest Management Centre's Pesticide Risk Reduction Program.

Kristen Obeid is OMAFRA weed management specialist – horticulture, based in Harrow, Ontario.

### Summary

Early detection and rapid confirmation of resistant weeds has helped growers:

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# Fertilizer can be custom blended for orchards and vineyards

KAREN DAVIDSON

A fertilizer facility dedicated to horticulture is now a reality for orchard and vineyard growers in Ontario. Niagara Orchard and Vineyard Corporation, with three warehouses in Virgil, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Jordan Station, has built a new facility to be opened in February 2020 at Jordan Station.

“Too often, growers wait for row-crop farmers to get their fertilizer orders filled in a very intense period,” says Arnie Lepp, proprietor of the company he’s owned since 1988. “Orchardists have different needs because they grow on different soils, often sandy soils with little organic matter. Fertilizer timing is important at bud break.”

Lepp is a grower himself with several hundred acres of peaches, yellow and blue plums, apricots, nectarines, wine grapes and fresh grapes. So he’s keenly attuned to grower needs. In the past, the company purchased fertilizer from a distributor. Today, he sees economies of scale in purchasing bulk directly and unloading from ships in Hamilton or Montreal. Customers receive custom blended fertilizer in one-ton totes. The company also rents fertilizer and lime spreaders as well as gravity boxes.

Custom blends are mixed at no extra cost, as dictated by soil samples and leaf tissue analysis. Micronutrients are particularly important for tender fruit. Calcium, for example, builds the strength of cell walls. Boron and zinc act as an antifreeze in grapes, allowing vines to buffer cold an extra degree or two than vines which are not fortified.

In addition to fertilizer, Niagara Orchard and Vineyard Corporation offers other specialty orchard supplies. The acquisition of the manufacturer of picking ladders is a bonus in serving southern Ontario clientele. An aluminum, tripod ladder is available in different heights, from six feet to 14 feet.

“It’s 100 per cent aluminum, riveted, with no structural bolts,” says Lepp.

Niagara Orchard and Vineyard Corporation will be exhibiting at the Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Convention, February 19 and 20 at the Scotiabank Convention Centre, Niagara Falls, Ontario.

Photo top left: Niagara Orchard and Vineyard Corporation is opening a new fertilizer facility in February 2020 in Jordan Station, Ontario.

Photo top right: Aluminum ladders were spotted at the farm of Art Moyer, Beamsville, Ontario.



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## How a first-time farmer faced unexpected challenges



Hayden Dooney is a first-time farmer in Canada, but long-time apple industry analyst. Photo by Glenn Lowson.

KAREN DAVIDSON

Hayden Dooney has worked around the clock to realize his dream of owning a farm. In the spring of 2019, he bought 45 acres of high-density apples from Lingwood Farms. The Simcoe, Ontario orchards contain primarily Ambrosia and Gala varieties, but also Ginger Golds, Golden Delicious, Honeycrisp, Sunrise and Paula Reds.

The New Zealander, who hails from an apple farm near Hawke's Bay on the North Island, has a world of experience from the U.K. and the southern hemisphere. He's been in Canada since 2005, working for the Norfolk Fruit Growers' Association (NFGA) and raising a family.

"I live a high-paced life," admits Dooney, now NFGA assistant general manager of the eight-member cooperative. "I did 90 per cent of the spraying

last year."

Now that he's intimately acquainted with his own orchard, Dooney realizes that hectic schedule is not sustainable. He will be supported by his wife Amanda and offshore workers in the 2020 season.

Despite a deep resumé that points to his apple-growing knowledge and experience, nothing prepared him for the paperwork hurdles. Financing is never easy, but as a first-time

farmer in Canada, Dooney had no track record to put forward.

"What I learned is not to go for the cheapest or quickest banking solution but one that will last for the long term," says Dooney. "It's a relationship after all."

Also surprising was the rigour of paperwork required for applying for seasonal workers. He had to prove business stability and proof to pay employees. Net assets were not enough. Obviously proof of previous payroll statements were not available. A certified letter from a lawyer or accountant was required that stated all the financial resources were in place.

"It was a little daunting to get the documentation," says Dooney. "Finally, a friendly accountant put his name to the letter."

Going into the second year of operation, Dooney is assessing opportunities going forward. Ontario apple growers have invested in a lot of plantings in the last five to eight years, all of which will be bearing fruit at higher volumes in the next couple years.

"This will put pressure on the marketplace and I think maintaining prices will be a challenge," says Dooney. With an eye to what's happening in Washington state, he says there are clues of a highly competitive environment with too many apples, and not enough export destinations.

As a grower and part of the managerial team at Norfolk Fruit Growers' Association,

2019 was an exceptionally high-pressure year. It was the transition to a new arrangement with Vineland Growers' Cooperative marketing apples for the first time. Headquartered at Jordan Station, the tender fruit team at Vineland Growers reviewed the quality standards for apples and asked probing questions.

"It's interesting what happens with a fresh set of eyes looking at daily routines," says Dooney.

Apple sales were the same as the year previous, but with lessons learned, the 2020 season promises opportunities in niche markets. One experiment was putting apples in baskets, just as tender fruit growers do. Baskets moved really well at a couple of retailers in the fall season.

Dooney's global connections paired with local growing and marketing experience are valuable assets moving forward.

## speaker sessions

Hayden Dooney will be speaking at OFVC on Wednesday, February 19, 3:30 pm in Room 221. He's part of the session called "Farming basics for new fruit and vegetable growers."



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# Fixing the gaps and glitches in packing lines

## Lean Manufacturing: forms of waste



**Energy** includes water, electricity, fuel, etc.

**Correction** means redoing something (ie. making a mistake on a BBQ sauce recipe)

**Over-production** - making too much of something

**Movement** - moving materials or products around for no real increase in value

**Motion** - People spending more time and energy moving around that consumes time that could be better spent

**Waiting** - delays in a process that impeded the flow

**Inventory** - too many raw materials or products

**Processing** - processing something more than what your customer is willing to pay for

**Under utilized people** occurs when the skillsets of people within your business aren't deployed to their full potential



Photos by Glenn Lowson

### KAREN DAVIDSON

Whether it's automobiles or apples, there are commonalities in the processing line. That's the view of process engineers such as John Van de Vegte, engineering specialist, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Rural Affairs.

"It's all about productivity," says Van de Vegte. "So we break it down into steps to make the analysis more manageable."

Gaps and glitches in the packing line can be fixed with a four-point process.

**Workplace organization.** We like to make sure that all the tools are close at hand. For example, does a worker have the twist tie or the elastic or a sticker in sufficient numbers to last the shift. Think of a kitchen, for example. Everything is at hand for the cook but it's a different story when you scale up. Time spent going to get the right tool or more elastics and stickers is lost productivity.

**Process engineering.** A work flow map that identifies the sequence and timing of everything that happens to an apple or a pear or a peach on a packing line can be revealing.

What are the cycle times? What is the conveyor speed? What is the setting of the optical sorter? What is the overall throughput in a standard shift? Where is the bottleneck in the operation that is setting the pace for the entire production line?

Equipment availability is a measure of whether the production equipment can operate without any unplanned stoppages throughout the day. A 20-minute breakdown of the optical sorter will quickly get noticed and repaired. However, often if the same equipment breaks down for 20 x one-minute periods throughout the shift it just gets reset and not properly repaired. The effect of the lost production time can be significant.

**Lean manufacturing.** Years ago, Toyota designed a set of principles to reduce waste. Instead of cars, think of peaches. The packing line might be working to capacity, but if the outcome is a high number of bruised peaches, then profitability sinks rapidly.

**Process management.** This is about reducing risk by predicting what can go wrong on the packing line. What controls can be put in place to prevent work stoppages or product defects?



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## Help wanted! It's here in a human resources toolkit



KAREN DAVIDSON

Accessing labour, managing labour, retaining labour – these are key issues in horticulture. According to the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC), the economic impact of not having workers on Canadian farms almost doubled in four years, increasing from \$1.5 billion in lost sales in 2014 to \$2.9 billion in 2018.

When CAHRC released its Labour Market Forecast to 2029 last year, it reported that more than 47 per cent of farm employers surveyed said they could not fill their labour needs. Greater than one third said they did not receive any Canadian applicants when they posted an available job. The situation is not forecasted to improve, with approximately 37 per cent of the workforce expected to retire in the next 10 years.

“In a time of labour shortages, it's important for horticulture's managers to be well supported and trained,” says Portia MacDonald-Dewhirst, executive director, CAHRC. “Not every business has the luxury of a specific human resources (HR) person, so an HR toolkit has been developed with industry input to help in this challenging role.”

### Better human resource management

There are solutions to the farm labour shortage, which include sharpening human resource skills says Deb Hauer, CAHRC's manager of labour market information.

“It's hard to find people, so once farmers find them, they want to keep them,” Hauer

says.

There are tools to help. For example, CAHRC developed agriculture-specific HR tools designed specifically to support modern farm operations to manage their workforce. This includes online and in-person training programs, and the Agri HR Toolkit, an online resource guide and templates to address the HR needs of any farm business.

### Other solutions

Focusing on untapped potential within Canada, such as encouraging employees from other sectors with transferable skills to find a career in agriculture, as well as looking outside the domestic workforce will also help. Canada's three-year agri-food immigration pilot program, announced in July 2019, is one initiative promising to help fill labour shortages, particularly in meat processing, greenhouse vegetables and mushroom production.

### A New Brunswick approach

In New Brunswick, nearly three out of every five farmers are over the age of 55 and most expect to retire in the next decade. To address the situation, the Agricultural Alliance of New Brunswick (AANB) provincial government and other partners are developing a workforce strategy for the province's agriculture sector.

One of the first steps is surveying farmers to assess their challenges with workforce recruitment and retention. AANB president Christian Michaud says survey responses will assist in developing the strategy.

“This is not just another survey to get their opinions,” Michaud says. “The results of this survey will be used to craft specific strategies meant to help address workforce shortages now and into the future.”

### Bottom line

While workforce shortages in agriculture continue to grow, industry is working to find solutions. Ag-specific resources are available, such as online information and templates, as well as recruitment efforts to bring workers from other industries. On the farm, experts say the use of sharp HR skills helps retain employees, creating an environment where employees don't want to leave.

## speaker sessions

Speaker series Portia MacDonald-Dewhirst, executive director, CAHRC, is scheduled to speak on Thursday, February 20 at 9:30 am in Room 204. She is part of the General Labour session. Her topic: Tools to Manage the HR Part of your Farm – best practices and how to comply with legal requirements.



## COMING EVENTS 2020

- Feb 5-7 Fruit Logistica, Berlin, Germany
- Feb 6 New Brunswick Potato Conference & Trade Show, Ayr Motor Centre, Woodstock, NB
- Feb 9-12 International Fruit Tree Association Annual Conference and Tour, Amway Grand Plaza, Grand Rapids, MI
- Feb 11 Canada's Agriculture Day
- Feb 11-12 British Columbia Fruit Growers' Association Annual General Meeting, Coast Capri Hotel, Kelowna, BC
- Feb 18 Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association Annual General Meeting, Hilton Fallsview Hotel, Niagara Falls, ON
- Feb 18 Berry Growers of Ontario Annual General Meeting, Embassy Suites, Niagara Falls, ON
- Feb 19 Farmers Markets Ontario Annual General Meeting, Ballroom D, Scotiabank Convention Centre, 4 pm, Niagara Falls, ON
- Feb 19-20 Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention, Scotiabank Conference Centre, Niagara Falls, ON
- Feb 20 Ontario Lavender Association Annual General Meeting, Room 221, Scotiabank Convention Centre, 10:30 am, Niagara Falls, ON
- Feb 21-22 International Potato Technology Expo, Eastlink Centre, Charlottetown, PE
- Feb 22 Ontario Hop Growers Association Annual General Meeting, W. Galen Weston Centre for Food, Durham College, Whitby, ON
- Feb 24 Fresh Grape Growers of Ontario Annual General Meeting, Board Office, 7 pm St. Catharines, ON
- Feb 25 BC Tree Fruit Horticulture Symposium, Kelowna, BC
- Mar 3 BC Cherry Association Annual General Meeting, Ramada, Kelowna, BC
- Mar 5 Ontario Potato Conference, Delta Hotel, Guelph, ON
- Mar 10-12 Canadian Horticultural Council Annual General Meeting, Westin Ottawa, Ottawa, ON
- Mar 15-21 Canadian Agricultural Safety Week
- Mar 23 Farm & Food Care Speak Up seminar, Simcoe Research Station, Simcoe, ON
- Mar 24-26 Minor Use Priority Setting Workshop, Hilton Lac-Leamy, Gatineau QC
- Mar 25 Farm & Food Care Speak Up seminar, Vineland Research & Innovation Centre, Vineland, ON
- Mar 30-Apr 1 Global Berry Congress, Rotterdam, Netherlands
- March 31 Ontario Tender Fruit Growers' District 3 & 4 (Essex, Kent and Lambton) Annual General Meeting, Colsanti's Tropical Gardens, Kingsville, ON

## Speaking up for horticulture – two workshops scheduled for Norfolk and Niagara



JESSICA SILLS

Today's farmers are faced with a growing and unprecedented challenge – maintaining the public's trust in how they grow and produce food. This is a conundrum that did not exist a century ago, when more than half of Canadians worked or lived on farms. Today, that demographic makes up only about two per cent of the country which means the gap between Canadians and their food has never been wider. The result is that earlier generations of farmers operated with a level of social licence that might be unrecognizable to future farmers.

With Canadians so disconnected from the origins of their food, it is understandable that in some cases the relationship has become strained – even though we in the industry know that no one cares more about producing healthy, safe, affordable and ethical food than a farmer.

Many consumers have nostalgic associations with the small mixed farms that existed decades ago. They likely don't understand or appreciate the great strides that have led to modern agriculture and the many ways in which Canadians have benefitted. For the average person, the tools and programs vital to modern farming can seem disconcerting or unnecessary; and tricky (or sometimes deceptive) labelling and biased media perpetuates these feelings – regardless of the mounting evidence to the contrary. Put simply, it's easy to be afraid of something you don't understand.

The good news is, with the right information, messages and tools, farmers can make a positive impact. According to a 2019 survey by the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity, 71 per cent of consumer respondents indicated they hold farmers and producers most responsible for providing credible information on how food is grown or produced, and

42 per cent of respondents said they trust farmers over anyone else in agri-food. Additionally, 60 per cent of Canadians are interested in knowing more about agriculture. Farmers have an audience ready and willing to listen to their stories – if they can just find that audience.

The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program and crop protection tools get a fair share of attention – and not always for being the successful, highly regulated and critical aspects of contemporary farming we know them to be. In order to increase consumer confidence we need to practise transparency in what we do and why we do it. Every farmer has a story worth telling.

How do you approach topics like this? That's where Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO) can help. For more than 15 years, FFCO has been offering Speak Up training sessions for primary producers and those working in agriculture. Choosing the right language that will be understandable and relatable to a non-farming audience can be hard to master coming from an industry far more comfortable talking in acronyms and science-lingo, but the program works to instill confidence in farmers so that they can tell

their own stories in their own words. To date, more than 1,000 Ontario farmers and agribusiness staff have taken the course and are using the lessons learned in their outreach work whether it be in presentations, farm tours, school visits, government visits, media interviews and more.

In March, Farm & Food Care Ontario is partnering with the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA) and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) to host two Speak Up training sessions specifically tailored to horticulture growers and the issues affecting them. These sessions will take place March 23 in Simcoe and March 25 in Vineland. To register, visit [farmfoodcare.eventbrite.ca/](http://farmfoodcare.eventbrite.ca/) or email [info@farmfoodcare.org](mailto:info@farmfoodcare.org) for more information.

To learn more about the work Farm & Food Care Ontario does, visit [www.FarmFoodCareON.org](http://www.FarmFoodCareON.org)

*Jessica Silles is communications coordinator, Farm & Food Care Ontario.*

*Photo by Glenn Lawson.*

## Environment and conservation section report

MIKE CHROMCZAK

We hit the ground running in 2019, and as a result, we have made progress for the Environment and Conservation section. We have had the opportunity to network with decision makers and peers to help shape policy within the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture. Through face-to-face discussions and comments on policy proposals, we focused on the following initiatives.

### Made in Ontario Environment Plan

Early in 2019 the OFVGA commented on the province's draft Made in Ontario Environment Plan. The plan is intended to be a framework of principles and actions that the government will be following as it works through issues on the environment file. The OFVGA took the opportunity to inform government staff on principles including the use of smart environmental regulations and greater support from government to increase compliance, versus a focus on enforcement and punishment. We indicated that there are opportunities to improve processes for permits to take water and environmental compliance approvals. Finally, we offered up the sector's ability to be a greater part of the solution when it comes to meeting carbon reduction targets.

We understand that there is a specific environment plan for agriculture which will be released for consultation sometime in 2020, which will focus on specific aspects of the overall Ontario plan. The OFVGA will be following this closely to ensure that any new requirements do not create competitive barriers for growers.

### Industrial emission performance standards

In March we responded to the government's consultation on industrial emission performance standards. This issue is mainly in the greenhouse sector, but the overall fruit and vegetable sector could

be impacted negatively, as these policies are intended to address the gap created by the dismantling of the cap and trade system and replace the federal carbon tax currently imposed. Our comments indicated that a preferred provincial emission performance standard should provide greater recognition of trade exposure, competitiveness and carbon leakage, and provide a more gradual transition period for the greenhouse sector to adapt to an increased input cost in comparison to the federal carbon tax. The provincial system should also provide a greater opportunity to recognize and accommodate for the diversity within the sector. Finally, we reiterated our support for a carbon credit offset system as there are many activities that farmers can do to offset emissions.

### Waste and recycling programs

At least two government consultations focused on waste and recycling program modernization. While no one can dispute the need to reduce waste in our society and within the fruit and vegetable sector, it was important to flag key food safety and competitiveness concerns. Pushing to reduce packaging could have negative implications for food safety, shelf life, and wasted product. If changes to the regulatory structure are not thoughtful, consumers could be put at risk or additional organic waste could be created if product is not marketed before spoiling. Concerns were also raised about how recycling costs will eventually be borne completely by industry, costs which may ultimately be pushed down to farmers. Competing with imported product that may be produced under different standards also surfaced as a concern. We encouraged government to ensure that any significant changes are phased in with sufficient time for the sector to adapt. Finally, we urged the government to look at ways to make consumers more educated and accountable when it comes to waste reduction -- as they are often the critical control point where the system fails and diversion rates are

reduced.

### Conservation Authorities

The Ontario government took a closer look at Conservation Authorities (CA) in 2019, specifically looking at refocusing CA's primary activities back to their core mandates of drinking water source protection, natural hazard protection and management (including flooding), conservation and management of authority lands. In addition, the government reviewed permitting processes and definitions within the act. We took the opportunity to point out that some of the activities of CAs have been detrimental to building and expansion plans of some farm operations, whether to stop the plan completely, alter or limit the farmer, or cause significant delays and additional costs. We suggested that service standards for permitting would be helpful and supported clearer definitions to prevent CAs from over reaching their authority.

### Ontario Pesticide Advisory Committee

Late in 2018 we met with the then Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, Rod Phillips and raised a number of issues, including the redundant activities of the Ontario Pesticide Advisory Committee with respect to classification of new crop protection products for use in Ontario. In the fall of 2019 the government released Bill 132, which included dozens of regulatory changes across multiple ministries. The OFVGA was pleased to see that Bill 132 included the removal of these redundant processes.

### Holding polluters accountable

Bill 132 also included components that would increase the ability of government to impose financial penalties on various industries, including agriculture. This obviously gives pause as the greater opportunity for penalties could result in innocent individuals being charged for something that they were not intentionally



Photos by Glenn Lowson

doing. Our comments around these proposed changes shed light on support for risk-based approaches to compliance and enforcement of the Acts. Monetary penalties should only be used in a situation where there is a willful contravention occurring and an unwillingness to implement a corrective action in a timely manner. Enforcement would also benefit from more uniform application of requirements under various legislation, and that a stronger, fairer appeal process be implemented. Finally, we encouraged that any financial penalties collected should be put into

environmental investments related to the contravention.

Moving forward I will continue to be a proponent for efficient and effective environmental policy that doesn't compromise our competitiveness. I am sure 2020 will again bring change, challenge and opportunity to our farms but thanks to the formidable staff behind us at the OFVGA we will be ready. Thank you for the privilege to serve as your Section Chair.

*Mike Chromczak is section chair, Environment and Conservation, OFVGA*

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## Energy, property, infrastructure and food safety section report

BRIAN GILROY

2019 began with a consultation on the provincial government's Bill 66: Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness. This was a significant bill with many parts including an impactful section on expanding municipalities' authority through open-for-business bylaws and Ministerial approval to allow developments to be exempted from current development plans and policies. This proposal garnered significant pushback from agricultural and rural stakeholders as it created opportunities for patch work development without a clear growth plan.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture submitted extensive feedback on this issue, which was supported by a submission from the OFVGA. We focused on the need to protect enough agricultural land to ensure food security/sovereignty, the economic impact that food production provides, the importance of protecting our water resources and to prevent development that negatively impacts agricultural businesses. The government's specific proposal from Bill 66 was eventually removed before the bill was passed -- a significant win for the industry.

In March 2019, the OFVGA wrote to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks to support the Ontario Ginseng Growers Association's efforts to remove American Ginseng from the endangered species list. Its inclusion as an 'endangered species' creates challenges for exporting ginseng, and limits allowable cultivated ginseng to only be grown under artificial shade. Not to mention, there are nearly 10,000 acres grown in Ontario -- making it hard to argue it is truly endangered.

This past year has seen increasing activity by special interest groups, specifically animal rights activists, who have intensified their efforts to trespass onto farm properties and livestock facilities. To support our livestock colleagues, the OFVGA wrote to Minister Hardeman and the Attorney General at the time, Caroline Mulroney, outlining our support for greater protections of farm property from trespassers. In December 2019 the provincial government launched the Security from Trespass and Animal Safety Act. The legislation, aimed at protecting the livestock value chain, is a great step forward. However, the legislation stopped short of protecting other sectors, such as fruit and vegetable farmers, from trespass

and/or accidental or intentional food contamination from trespassers. The OFVGA will make this the focus of our feedback on this new legislation.

On the energy file, the Ontario government launched consultations to better understand how industrial electricity pricing could be improved in the province.

Beyond addressing potential improvements to how the industrial pricing works, we want to see increased value of incentive programs for

improving energy efficiency, net metering for combined heat and power systems, and increased availability of three-phase power in the province.

In the fall, the Ontario government began consultations on how to improve Ontario's Building Code services. We took the opportunity to encourage consistent application of the code between inspectors and municipalities, as well as ensuring that requirements for bunkhouses are consistent and more flexible

for those wanting to convert excess farm dwellings for use as worker housing. The consultation also proposed a new building permit levy, which we commented against, instead suggesting that a review be completed to ensure existing fees and levies are used efficiently.

2019 ended with the introduction of more significant red-tape reduction legislation, Bill 132, Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. The act proposes changes to nearly

80 different pieces of legislation, with many changes to regulations impacting agriculture. Relating to the property and industry file, the OFVGA submitted comments related to proposed changes to the Line Fences Act, Environmental Protection Act, and the Highway Traffic Act.

*Brian Gilroy is section chair, Energy, Property, Infrastructure and Food Safety Section, OFVGA.*

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## REPORT FOR OFVGA AGM

## 2019 crop protection section report



**CHRIS DUYVELSHOFF**  
CROP PROTECTION ADVISOR,  
OFVGA

There were plenty of crop protection matters for OFVGA to address this past year as expected. Significant issues continued to include the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) and the re-evaluation program, advocating for growers regarding specific crop protection challenges, and also addressing Ontario's convoluted pesticide regulation.

#### OFVGA Crop Protection Committee

There was one meeting of the Crop Protection Committee in 2019. The members continued to be a valuable resource to consult on crop protection issues throughout the year. The OFVGA would like to thank all the participating members again for their valuable contributions to this section.

#### Ontario Pesticide Regulation

The OFVGA initially approached the Ontario government in fall of 2018 regarding the unusual process for pesticide classification in Ontario. The provincial regulatory system is currently based on a separate Ontario-specific classification process for crop protection products. A company wishing to register a new product in Ontario must first apply to have their product classified. This does not occur in any other province.

This inefficient process results in delayed product access for Ontario's farmers

where federally approved products are available for use across Canada except in Ontario. Ontario Bill 132, Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019 introduced in the legislature in fall of 2019, included important amendments in the regulation of crop protection products.

The proposed amendments to the regulations included the elimination of Ontario's duplicate and inefficient classification system. Ontario would follow all other provinces and adopt the federal classifications. No application to approve a product in Ontario would be required -- it would be simply automatically processed following the federal system. Finally, no separate second public consultation period for new active ingredients would be required in Ontario. The proposed changes to the regulations strongly followed an OFVGA submission.

The adoption of the federal classifications will not change how crop protection products get used in the field or greenhouse, nor will safety be compromised. This is simply bureaucratic process about when these products can get to the grower. It is expected this will become the new legal process for Ontario sometime in the first half of 2020.

#### PMRA Re-Evaluation Program

The re-evaluation program at PMRA continues to be an ongoing focus of concern for crop protection at OFVGA. The program is currently under internal review by PMRA which intends to publish a consultation document proposing structural changes -- likely related to program operational sustainability -- in 2020. The OFVGA will be watching this closely.

From research and observation at OFVGA over the past year, it became clear that there are two primary issues affecting the quality of many re-evaluation decisions. These are both related to data availability, more specifically on crop protection products in



Canadian waters and summary data on how crop protection products are used by Canadian growers.

#### National Water Monitoring Program

It has become apparent there is a great need for consistent and reliable Canadian data on crop protection products in the environment to support regulatory decisions. Obtaining water quality data has been a particular challenge for PMRA. In some cases, the empirical data to conduct these assessments does not exist at all leading to conservative models. In other cases, some data have existed, but are scattered in various provincial government and non-government entities throughout Canada leading to delays in collection. No single point of coordination exists to gather this data.

The OFVGA along with Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) and CropLife Canada have been advocating for an organized approach to water monitoring in Canada to provide suitable data to PMRA. At this point, there is agreement amongst these stakeholders for guiding principles towards a national water monitoring program. There appears to be some traction as well within the federal government. The federal ministerial mandate letters released in December 2019 included references to Health Canada collaborating with other federal departments

to make timely science-based decisions supporting the safe and sustainable use of effective pesticide products in Canada. This will continue to be explored in 2020.

#### Crop Protection Use Data Collection

The development of a centralized method of collecting current-use information for all crop protection products is critical. Availability of this information and particularly for horticultural crops is poor. Without updated use information, PMRA must assume the worst-case scenario -- maximum number of applications X maximum label rate. Having updated industry data would allow PMRA to revise risk assessments based on real usage and can make an active ingredient much more likely to successfully pass re-evaluation.

This only requires aggregate, non-personal data and does not need to identify a farm or specific locations. It does require support from the horticulture industry to provide such information on a confidential basis. Initial discussions on a national approach were started in 2019 and will continue going forward. The OFVGA is also exploring possibilities of collaborating with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) to help support the collection of this information in Ontario. This

will be a prominent area of focus for 2020.

#### Neonicotinoids

The first final decisions, related to impact on pollinators, for the neonicotinoids clothianidin, imidacloprid, and thiamethoxam were published in April 2019. OFVGA made submissions to support the continued registration of these active ingredients for key horticulture uses. However, in the final pollinator decisions many uses for horticulture have been cancelled. All applications to tree fruits and soil applications to berries, fruiting vegetables, and cucurbits have been cancelled. In addition, foliar application to other crops including berries, grapes, fruiting vegetables, and cucurbits, will be limited before and/or during bloom. Required changes are to be implemented on product labels in two to three years, depending on the crop.

At this point, vegetable seed treatments and registered applications -- aside from those mentioned above -- were not identified as posing unacceptable risks to bees and other pollinators and no required changes were identified in these decisions. The next round of final decisions for these active ingredients as related to aquatic invertebrates and the general re-evaluations are expected sometime during 2020.

**Continued on next page**



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## 2019 crop protection section report



Photos by Glenn Lowson.

### Continued from last page

Other neonicotinoid products in Canada are currently in re-evaluation (i.e. acetamiprid) or are scheduled in the coming years (i.e. thiacloprid).

### Chlorpyrifos

The PMRA has a goal of making decisions on older products registered before 1995 such as chlorpyrifos (e.g. Lorsban) by 2020. Chlorpyrifos provides critical insect control in

certain crops with few to no viable alternatives. In May, the proposed decision for chlorpyrifos was released indicating that all food crop uses are set for cancellation. The OFVGA has been working with the registrant Corteva Agriscience and member organizations to provide further information on the critical uses of chlorpyrifos and methods of application. The OFVGA maintains that these critical uses should be permitted to remain and has made supporting

comments to PMRA. The final decision date is not yet scheduled.

### Mancozeb

The OFVGA and CHC continued working with the Mancozeb Task Force (representing registrants) in early 2019 to support its continued registration. Member organizations were consulted regarding the critical uses of mancozeb along with the United States label which

passed Environmental Protection Agency re-evaluation in 2005. We are optimistic of keeping some uses although at a reduced use pattern from the current label. The PMRA is expected to make a final decision in June 2020.

### Gloves to Mitigate Post-Application Exposure

Exposure risk to workers conducting hand labour tasks in crops following crop protection applications has been a prominent factor in recent re-evaluation decisions. This has led to very extended restricted-entry intervals (REI) for some crop protection products or has completely cancelled uses of others. One proposal to help mitigate risks to post-application workers includes the use of protective gloves when performing hand labour tasks.

There is evidence that gloves alone can have a significant impact on reducing overall exposure. The PMRA, CHC, CropLife Canada, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) currently have a working group to investigate this possibility and are currently considering studies to

determine a potential “glove protection factor.” While the existing research looks promising, PMRA needs more data to determine if this will be broadly acceptable for Canada. This has potential to significantly reduce REI requirements and result in continued use of some crop protection products. The OFVGA is following these developments closely.

### Collaboration

The OFVGA collaborates with numerous organizations in order to advocate for crop protection on behalf of edible horticulture in Ontario. We wish to thank our member organizations -- CHC, PMRA, AAFC, OMAFRA and CropLife Canada -- who continue to work towards making crop protection in Canada better for growers and ensure safe and abundant food for consumers.

*Editor's note: This report was a collaboration with Charles Stevens, chair, Crop Protection section.*

## Syngenta launches Miravis fungicides

Syngenta Canada has announced the launch of Miravis fungicides, two of which are targeted to horticulture. Miravis Duo is for cucurbit and fruiting vegetables while Miravis Prime is for grapes.

Miravis fungicides are built with Adepidyn, a new Group 7 fungicide belonging to the carboxamide chemical class. Adepidyn is the trademark for the active ingredient pydiflumetofen.

The unique chemical structure of the active ingredient delivers intrinsic activity and long-lasting protection against a broad range of key diseases, including Fusarium head blight, Alternaria leaf spot, Aschochyta, Sclerotinia and Botrytis.

“With each of our Miravis fungicide brands, we are providing farmers with highly effective tools to maximize crop quality and yield,” says Eric Phillips, fungicides and

insecticides product lead with Syngenta Canada.

Miravis Duo is for cucurbit and fruiting vegetables, offering Adepidyn and difenoconazole (Group 3) for the broadest disease control label in cucurbit and fruiting vegetables. It is designed to help growers manage early blight, powdery mildew and Alternaria leaf spot in addition to several other important diseases through a SDHI mode of action. For a video on how Miravis Duo

works, go here: [www.syngenta.ca/miravis/miravis-duo](http://www.syngenta.ca/miravis/miravis-duo)

Miravis Prime is for grapes, combining Adepidyn and fludioxonil (Group 12) for effective control of Botrytis grey mould, a disease that can cause severe yield losses and substantially reduce quality in grapes. The fungicide can be applied from bud break through veraison, giving growers the flexibility to make a first application at early bloom and a second, subsequent application if

conditions favour Botrytis development later in the season.

For more information about Miravis fungicides, please visit [Syngenta.ca/Miravis](http://Syngenta.ca/Miravis), contact your local Syngenta Sales Representative, or call Customer Interaction Centre at 1-877-SYNGENTA (1-877-964-3682).

*Source: Syngenta Canada January 6, 2020 news release*

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**Early season protection to preserve crop potential.** Vibrance® Ultra Potato fungicide seed treatment helps give your crop the best possible start by providing broad-spectrum protection against key seed- and soil-borne diseases, including seed borne late blight and suppression of pink rot. With three modes of action in a convenient, all-in-one liquid formulation, the decision is easy—start strong, finish strong. Choose Vibrance Ultra Potato.

**WIN!**

Purchase Vibrance Ultra Potato for your **chance to win an \$8,000 travel voucher!** For more details, visit [Syngenta.ca/VUPContest](http://Syngenta.ca/VUPContest)



 **Vibrance® Ultra**  
Potato

**syngenta®**

For more information, visit [Syngenta.ca](http://Syngenta.ca), contact our Customer Interaction Centre at 1-87-SYNGENTA (1-877-964-3682) or follow @SyngentaCanada on Twitter.

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