

**SUPERFOOD SPECIALTY**

## Sweet potatoes: the uber tubers are now shipped coast to coast



**Twenty years ago, sweet potatoes were an imported specialty reserved for the high holidays. Fast forward and chances are that grown-in-Canada sweet potatoes will be on your Thanksgiving menu. Since 1997, Nick VanBerlo and his family have carved out a niche in two provinces and two states, becoming Canada's largest grower/packer/shipper with home base near Simcoe, Ontario. Photos by Glenn Lawson.**

KAREN DAVIDSON

Sweet Potatoes R Us. Has anyone trademarked that yet?

Nick VanBerlo and his family would be the natural inheritors of that name, since they dominate the grown-in-Canada marketplace with 1,200 acres in two provinces: Ontario and Quebec. Since 1997, the Simcoe, Ontario-based business has proven all the naysayers wrong about the tropical crop that needs heat to grow and a cool place to cure.

The 25 million pounds of sweet potatoes are marketed under one trade name: Berlo's Best. And national grocers have taken notice. Sobeys and its FreshCo banner, for example, have been partners, putting in orders for its Ontario

and Western distribution centres.

"We've been doing business (with the VanBerlo family) for eight years now," says Steve Churchill, director of fresh merchandising, FreshCo. "We've had double digit growth every year."

There's more room for expansion, says Churchill, because foodservice operators and restaurants have put sweet potato fries and other products on their menus. Sweet potatoes are flavourful and versatile. Families want to replicate that experience in their homes.

As luck would have it, the VanBerlo family has partnered with Mother Nature in a unique micro-climate that favours sweet potatoes in most years. Despite a cool, wet spring, the 2019 season blossomed into an unusual combination – a hot summer of 30°C

temperatures and frequent rains.

"There is no manual for what we do," explains Nick VanBerlo, director of sales and business development. "We learn every day and conduct our own research and development."

The slips for planting originate in North Carolina, usually of the popular Covington variety. Due to niche demand, the VanBerlo's are also growing Murasaki, a purple-skinned, white-fleshed variety which boasts a nutty flavour. This "super specialty" has been grown for four years, with all the usual headaches of a more delicate, finicky variety. The Murasaki offering is indicative of the customer service and willingness to fill consumer demand.

Churchill underlines the importance of the rapidly changing demographics in

Canadian society and serving the appetites of south Asians in particular. More Asian vegetables are required such as okra, karela, Chinese eggplant and various squashes.

For growers to tap into these trends and grocers' needs, it's important to be communicating about a year's program in advance.

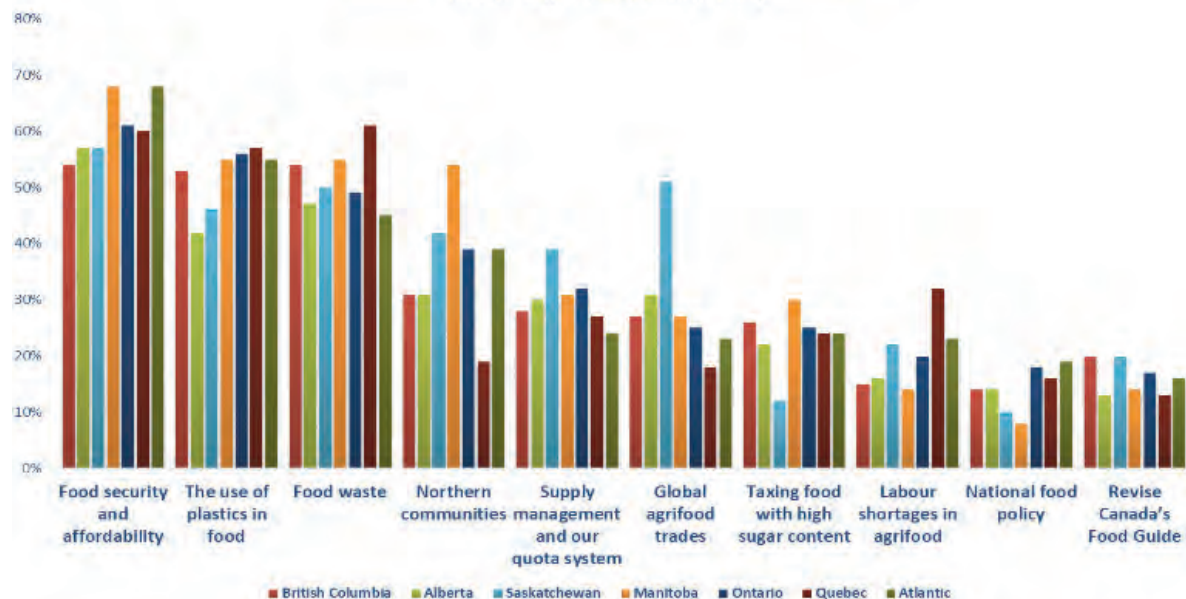
"Communicate consistently," advises Churchill. "We have to be partners to be sustainable."

It may appear daunting to approach a national grocer to be a produce supplier. But there's one sentence of advice to get you started.

**Continued on page 3**

## AT PRESS TIME...

What agrifood issues you believe deserve more attention during the next federal election campaign?  
(Source: Angus Reid Global, n=1524)



### Food security and affordability are top consumer priority

Canadian consumers spend 10 per cent of take-home pay on food, so it's surprising that election debates don't often address this pocketbook issue. However, a September 9, 2019 survey conducted by Angus Reid Global and Dalhousie University's Agri-Food Analytics Lab has brought a timely focus on consumers' attitudes.

Significantly, three out of five Canadians believe food security and affordability to be the most significant issue for the October 21 election. The use of plastics has clearly caught the attention of voters in recent months, and that issue is the second most important priority. Food waste is

the third most important agrifood issue.

"Affordability is a relative term," says Dr. Sylvan Charlebois, senior director, Agri-Food Analytics Lab. "There's been more volatility in prices with a 17 per cent increase in the price of fruits and vegetables this year. This current volatility at retail is not sustainable."

"Food policies are domestically driven," he continues, "but there is still the issue of how trade deals will work for the agricultural sector."

Regarding plastics, Charlebois says that the targets of reducing plastic use by 2020-2022 trivializes the problem. The complexity of the food chain is such that it will take some time to make these changes.

The survey suggests that food waste is an important concern,

with 61 per cent of Quebecers agreeing, compared to 45 per cent in the Atlantic region. Feeding northern communities also ranked high.

When consumers were asked what the next government's priority should be for agrifood in the next four years, 55 per cent selected food security and affordability. Support for farmers ranked second and food safety ranked third.

For this survey, the sample size was 1,524 from across the country, with a margin of error of 2.9 per cent, 19 times out of 20. Other issues such as the use of pesticides in farming and urban agriculture were on the list but results were insignificant.

To view the entire survey results, go here: <https://bit.ly/2mss8Rb>

## NEWSMAKERS

Cheers to **John Fedorkow**, Fruithaven Farms, St. David's who was nominated by his peers to be the 2019 Grape King representing Grape Growers of Ontario. He grows 75 acres of wine grapes for Peller Estates and Creekside Estate Winery. A current member of the Grape Growers of Ontario's Growers' Committee and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake's Agricultural Sub Committee, he is also the past president of the Niagara Peninsula Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (NPF&VGA), past Vineland Growers director, and past member of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake's Irrigation Committee.



Congratulations to **Keith Robbins**, new general manager for the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers, who joined the London office on September 17. He is a seasoned manager with communications and marketing experience. He has spent most of his career in the hog and poultry sectors, most recently as executive director of the Poultry Industry Council. Prior to that, he spent 19 years with Ontario Pork.

Savoura, a greenhouse leader based in Sainte-Sophie, Quebec has announced that **Peggie Clermont** is now president of the board of directors. **Caroline Dalpé** is general manager.

Congratulations to **Mélanie Noël** who is the new executive director of the Federation Québécoise des Fruits et Légumes de transformation (Quebec Federation of Processed Fruits and Vegetables). About 450 growers belong to this sector. She was formerly the executive director of Producteurs de pommes du Québec (Apple Growers of Quebec).

**Dominic Barton**, 56, McKinsey & Co global director, former chair Advisory Committee on Economic Growth, has taken up his role as Canada's new ambassador to China. He's a champion of Canadian agriculture as a pillar of future prosperity. He has lectured widely about the need for tri-sector leaders – people with experience in private industry, the public sector and social organizations.

The Conservatives were re-elected in Manitoba's September 10, 2019 election. Agriculture minister **Ralph Eichler** was handily re-elected in his Lakeside riding. He has been agriculture minister since 2016.

**Tom Coleman** is now director, retail and food service sales for Bonduelle-Fresh Americas.

**Dr. Justine Taylor**, science and government relations manager, Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers, is joining the board of WeTech Alliance. Its mission is to accelerate tech companies across a broad range of sectors and stages, while working with partners to champion the regional tech community.

Best wishes to **Jay and Linda Howell**, and their children **Dan, Melissa and Jen**, the cider maker for Howell Road Cider Company. They are winners of one of the BMO Ontario Farm Family Awards. The family's seventh and eighth generations are busy at Brantview Apples, extending the tradition for almost 200 years near St. George, Ontario.

The apple competition at the **Royal Agricultural Winter Fair** will be downsized, offering prizes only for the heaviest apple, most unusual-shaped apple and best collection of apples. The event will be held November 1-10, 2019. For more information, visit [www.royalfair.org](http://www.royalfair.org).

Exceptional scholarship candidates have been selected from Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta to become the 2020 Nuffield Canada Scholars. **Andrew Rosychuk**, 34, Edmonton, Alberta, is one of the four to be presented with the prestigious national award. He is the owner of Rosy Farms, a haskap orchard in the prairies. His scholarship is funded by Nuffield Canada.

Independent retailer **Longo's** has opened its 35th location in East Gwillimbury, just north of Newmarket, Ontario. The store features the Loft Cooking School, a fresh mozzarella station, a full-service Starbucks, stone pizza ovens and more. Longo's is also opening a location in 'Toronto' Liberty Village later this fall.

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COVER STORY

# Sweet potatoes: the uber tubers are now shipped coast to coast



Sweet potatoes require capital-intensive, specialized equipment for planting and harvesting. Peter Jr. VanBerlo, Nick's brother, has expertise in fabricating what the farm needs to grow, pack and ship 25 million pounds per year from coast to coast.



The Murasaki variety appeals to customers looking for a purple skin.



Only a handful of growers have perfected the art of growing sweet potatoes in the sandy soils and micro-climate of Ontario's Norfolk County. "Twenty miles to the east and 20 miles to the west have not proven successful," says Nick VanBerlo.



same growing recipe doesn't work in the southern states. There's an art to growing sweet potatoes and then getting the right skin set in the curing rooms.

The biggest challenge in Canada is to find labour for the operation that is packing and shipping year-round. At peak time, 100 seasonal agricultural workers are on deck. The marketplace is signaling the opportunity for growth, particularly in the value-added sector. Pet food is one example. But VanBerlo is cautious about growing too fast in a capital-intensive and labour-intensive operation.

"For us, this is not an experiment," says VanBerlo. "This is our livelihood. We're doing our part to feed the country with locally-grown sweet potatoes. We have the responsibility and the dedication to pull this off."



The business ships 365 days per year from this warehouse to national retailers such as Sobeys.

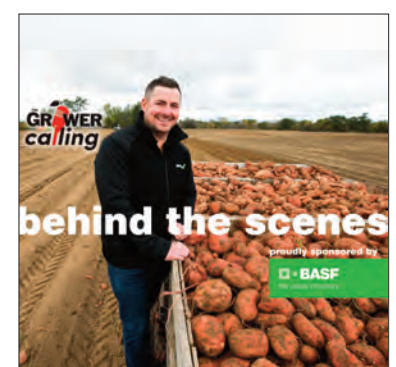
The business started in 1997 with the vision of Peter VanBerlo Senior. He's still involved in the operation today as president, Berlo's Best.

The Grower goes "Behind the Scenes" to dig into the story of Berlo's Best sweet potatoes at Simcoe, Ontario. Nick VanBerlo, director of sales and business development, shares how his family has carved a niche to become Canada's largest grower/packer/shipper of this superfood crop with 1,200 acres in two provinces. To listen, visit [www.thegrower.org/podcasts](http://www.thegrower.org/podcasts).

Continued from page 1

"If you can't tell your story in a minute and how you're going to solve my needs, then you're not ready," says Churchill. "Growers who are prepared know their unique selling proposition."

Nick VanBerlo has earned that winning relationship by offering to bring in sweet potatoes from the U.S. to fill the year-round demands of FreshCo. He's now working with growers in North Carolina (600 acres) and Mississippi (200 acres). This business model is not without its own risks. The



## CROSS COUNTRY DIGEST

## NOVA SCOTIA



## Extensive storm damage reported in multiple crops in the Annapolis Valley

KAREN DAVIDSON

The dragon tail of Hurricane Dorian, downgraded to a tropical storm in the Maritimes, caused millions of dollars of damage to horticultural crops. The hardest hit areas are the eastern and western reaches of the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia.

“We’re still shell-shocked,” said Larry Lutz, president, Nova Scotia Fruit Growers’ Association on September 17, 10 days after 120 km/hour winds and rains totaling 300 mm. “We’re in disarray but we will pull out of it.”

The losses are extensive in the apple industry, from the perspective of what’s left to harvest and damage to trellis infrastructure in high-density orchards. Even mature trees have been uprooted.

Lutz estimates losses of 25 to 30 per cent of Honeycrisp, 50 to 60 per cent of Sweetango, 25 to 40 per cent of Ambrosia – all high-value varieties.

One grower has lost 5,000 trees in a four-year-old block with the toppling of the trellis system. In other cases, mature trees have been uprooted leaving a hollow around the trunk. These openings are

susceptible to diseases such as crown rot. There will be short-term and long-term risk of fire blight with weakened trees.

The September 7 storm struck just before harvest so assessments are still underway as to the quality of fruit remaining on the trees. Bruising is expected. According to the Nova Scotia Crop and Livestock Commission, the vast majority of the apple crop is covered by insurance at about 3,089 acres insured. Total apple acreage is 3,993.

“As bad as it was, it could have been worse,” said Lutz. “No lives were lost.”

The story is much the same for Nova Agri, a farmer-owned business headquartered in Centreville, Nova Scotia. Six families grow an assortment of fruits and vegetables on 3,000 acres.

“We’re discovering more damage every day,” said Andrea Palmer, marketing and sales manager, Nova Agri. “The fruit trees are showing more stress as time goes by.”

With such widespread damage to a multitude of crops, seasonal agricultural workers in some cases have been reassigned to clean up. Unfortunately, the neatly stacked bins of apples are destined for juice or cider at

a fraction of the value of eating apples.

About 220 acres of highbush blueberries were particularly hard hit. In this area, late-maturing varieties were expected to produce fruit for another month. Those berries have been pummelled to the ground. The estimates are anywhere from 20 to 80 per cent crop loss. These bushes will need at least two years to recover.

The grape sector, with about 632 acres under vine, weathered the storm much better.

“Luckily, we had minimal damage,” said Ashley McConnell-Gordon, vice-president Benjamin Bridge Winery, located near Wolfville.

“The difference is that our grapes were a little behind schedule (in maturing) so that the crop wasn’t affected. For anyone on the Bay of Fundy, there was some damage, about five per cent loss.”

A late frost severely hampered the grape crop in Nova Scotia on June 4, 2018, so the hardships of losing a crop are fresh.

“Our hearts go out to the apple and blueberry growers,” she said.

## ALBERTA

## Lethbridge College, potato growers partner in irrigation study

Lethbridge College will be partnering with southern Alberta potato growers to study irrigation and watering methods in the region. The four-year research project is between Lethbridge College’s Centre for Applied Research Innovation and Entrepreneurship and the Potato Growers of Alberta. It’s funded through a \$397,595 grant from the Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

The watering practices of two producers near Vauxhall as well as farms near Bow Island, Chin and Taber are being monitored. The diversity of fields allows researchers to study a variety of different soil

types and topographies which will give a holistic view of how moisture reacts with and affects potato crops. The research team will record how producers use existing irrigation, available water sources and the outcome on crops in different parts of their fields.

The partnership will also support two masters-level projects in conjunction with the University of Saskatchewan. One will look at the irrigation decision-making process of producers, while the other will focus on studying the physical attributes of the land. As well, three students from Lethbridge College’s School of

Environmental Sciences have been hired to conduct the research.

“It’s definitely a broad introduction to applied research for the students,” says Willemijn Appels, Lethbridge College’s Mueller Applied Research Chair in Irrigation Science. “They’ll have been exposed to methods to determine soil texture, but now they’re asked to do that from a perspective of looking at how does that texture influence how plants grow and use water? And they are also more involved in seeing how data is collected, and trying to shape that all into something that you can



interpret and hopefully understand some new information from.”

Source: Potato Growers of Alberta September 1, 2019 newsletter

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CROSS COUNTRY DIGEST

BRITISH COLUMBIA

# Merlot is the most planted grape varietal in B.C.

British Columbia's grape harvest is well underway. Here's a summary of the 2018 harvest from the B.C. Wine Grape Council that reveals growing diversification in the province's grape crop.

The report notes that more than 42,732 tons were harvested in 2018, split almost evenly between red grapes (21,332 tons) and white grapes (21,400 tons).

Merlot is the province's top grape, with 7,957.5 tons harvested last year, or 18.6 per cent of the total crop. Pinot Gris (4,540) and Chardonnay (4,275 tons) took second and third place, respectively. Together, the three varieties account

for more than 39 per cent of the B.C. crush.

But there's a host of newcomers on the latest survey, a sign that growers are not only becoming more confident but also responding to the challenges – and potential – of a changing climate and warmer growing seasons.

While none have broken into the top 25 varieties harvested in the province, some have been grown in small quantities for years. The early ripening grape Agria has been planted in small quantities on Vancouver Island and the north Okanagan. The northern Italian variety Dolcetto has been embraced by Stag's Hollow Winery in Okanagan Falls



Cooper Etsell, son of winemaker Andrew and third generation of Etsell's, helps with the Merlot grape harvest. Photo courtesy of Town Hall Brands.

and Moon Curser Vineyards in Osoyoos.

The rarity of the varieties often means they fetch top dollar, though the province's most expensive grape variety is Grenache, at \$3,321 a ton, followed by

Tempranillo at \$3,252 a ton and Syrah at \$3,182 a ton.

*Reprinted with permission from Country Life in BC*

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

# Cavendish Farms plans research centre in New Annan

Canadian potato processing company Cavendish Farms, a subsidiary of J.D. Irving, will build a new potato research and plant breeding centre in New Annan, Prince Edward Island.

Fully funded by the company, the \$6 million facility, will support the continued sustainability of PEI's all-important potato industry.

Over the last two summers, growers

have experienced hotter temperatures and less precipitation at critical times. They could benefit from different lines of potatoes with promising traits such as superior yields and a reduced environmental footprint specific to soil, climatic and seasonal conditions on PEI.

"In the face of this changing climate, our research will be focused on high-yielding potatoes that can withstand and

be resistant to hot dry summers and disease pressures," said Robert K. Irving, president of Cavendish Farms.

"Developing a potato variety that grows better yields in shorter seasons with less fertilizer will be beneficial to the PEI environment."

The new research facility, with a state-of-the-art greenhouse, will be open in 2020.

"A locally driven approach to developing varieties that are more suitable to our specific climate will be an asset to the entire PEI potato industry," said Greg Donald, PEI Potato Board general manager.

*Source: Cavendish Farms' August 2, 2019 news release*

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## CANADIAN HORTICULTURAL COUNCIL

**Bankruptcy: the unseen danger**

JAN VANDERHOUT

Fresh produce growers face many challenges in their businesses. Labour and crop protection fall into this category because if disease, pest or labour disruption occurs, our produce may not be there to harvest, transport or sell.

Although getting paid is not front of mind while we are in the thick of production, we depend on that pay to manage an operating line of credit. Lately, most of us get paid at some point along the way - whether in a few weeks or in a few months.

Our ongoing success depends on the simple principle of commerce: compensation in a timely manner for the product we grow. It is, however, a fact that as produce farmers we do not have protection in the cases of bankruptcy and insolvency. It is time that we try to correct

this shortfall in Canadian policy.

Increasingly, long payment terms have put added strain on everyone's financial position along the value chain. Some producers are not paid until 90 or even 120 days after the sale. This is remarkable considering that many of the products we grow have a shelf-life of fewer than two weeks and most produce is sold by retailers within a very short time.

A possible stepping stone towards a deemed trust would be to have specified payment terms of no more than 30 days. This would really help everyone along the value chain with cash flow, especially the farmers who have already borne the costs of seeding, planting, pruning, pest control, watering, heating, harvesting, packaging and marketing.

To help growers remain financially stable, shorter payment terms would also reduce the amount of risk in the

event of payment default at any point along the produce value chain. However, there remains an exposure to financial ruin when a customer along the value chain becomes insolvent. When a wholesaler, broker or retailer goes bankrupt, where do we turn for help? There is little assistance from the courts because after staff is paid and the bank loans are redeemed, the lineup of payees is often very long. Sellers are likely to receive pennies on the dollar for the product that they invested so much time and energy to get to market.

A deemed trust would make a huge difference. In the event of a bankruptcy, the employees would, as always, receive their dues and fresh produce sellers would receive priority based on the accounts receivable, cash, and inventory derived from the sale of fresh produce. This would give confidence in the marketplace and encourage

ongoing investment.

Why should the produce sector get preferred treatment? Unlike dry goods, canned goods, hardware or other sorts of non-perishable products, fresh produce has a very short shelf-life and is sold within a few days of purchase. Even when product is not sold through the value chain, it is almost impossible to reclaim delivered product due to perishability and food safety protocols.

A deemed trust has been a goal for the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) for many years to give Canadian producers a more secure place to do business both here in Canada as well as in the United States.

CHC has been working with the three main political parties leading up to the October 21 election, as well as discussing producers' needs regarding the collection of their receivables with Agriculture and Agri-Food

Canada. These discussions addressed both the timing of payments and responses to insolvency.

CHC needs your help to acquire this protection. If you have been a victim of non-payment due to insolvency, your story needs to be heard. AAFC needs to know that there has been harm to producers and that there is an exposure to non-payment, especially if large buyers are unable to keep their commitments.

CHC will be reaching out to growers to gather information on a confidential basis, but in the meantime, if you have information to share please contact Robyn McKee at CHC directly by email [RMcKee@hortcouncil.ca](mailto:RMcKee@hortcouncil.ca) or by telephone (613) 226-4880 x209.

*Jan VanderHout is vice-chair, Canadian Horticultural Council. Reprinted with permission from the CHC.*

## CARBON OFFSET CREDITS

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DREW SPOELSTRA

As the federal government moves forward with plans for an offset system to address greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) continues to advocate for the positive role agriculture has in addressing climate change.

In a carbon offset system, carbon credits are generated when a project or action reduces greenhouse gas emissions more than if the project had not occurred. Those credits can be sold to other industries to "offset" their excess greenhouse gas emissions.

In this type of system, it's critical to identify and recognize the industries or activities that generate carbon credits. Agriculture falls in this camp. Agriculture industry needs to be a key player in developing a simple, efficient offset system that provides financial incentives to farmers. Agriculture represents the largest group of private landowners in the province with a tremendous potential to provide offsets to regulated sectors. But offset credits from the ag sector will take time to plan, develop, execute and verify, and we need realistic timelines with adequate time for farmers to fully participate.

OFA recently provided input to Environment and Climate Change Canada on its discussion paper Carbon Pollution Pricing: Options for a Federal GHG Offset System.

We are requesting that the key elements of an offset system be developed by people who understand the carbon offsets that agriculture can generate. Ontario farmers, and many companies along the agri-food value chain, have long been leaders in looking for new technologies and techniques to gain efficiencies on the farm.

On-farm stewardship activities have been generating carbon offsets for many years, and any new offset system should be retroactive to include credits for early actions from the agriculture sector.

OFA is confident that a new carbon offset system can provide a necessary bridge for industries to make a cost-effective transition to cleaner activities – and provide new opportunities for agriculture to be recognized for its continued role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

For more detail, read OFA's full submission to Environment and Climate Change Canada at [ofa.on.ca](http://ofa.on.ca), click on Resources then Submissions and Correspondence.

*Drew Spoelstra is an executive member, Ontario Federation of Agriculture.*

*Editor's note: For information on an OFVGA submission to the Ontario government, go here: <https://www.ofvga.org/article/ero-number-013-4551-making-polluters-accountable-industrial-emission-performance-standards>*

OFVGA ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

# Prime time to influence the landscape in Ottawa



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

Top priorities continue to be improving data available to the Pest Management Regulatory Agency for product re-evaluations, financial protection for produce sellers, and strengthening foreign labour programs, such as the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. In addition, the OFVGA will be looking to see each party's position on trade issues, business risk management programs and single-use plastics.

OFVGA is monitoring party platforms and commitments made on the campaign trail to ensure opportunities are leveraged to benefit the fruit and vegetable sector. Please contact the OFVGA if you have questions about how to message industry issues when speaking with your local candidates.

### Self-Directed Risk Management (SDRM)

Work continues related to redesign options for the provincial Risk Management Program, which includes SDRM, to transition it to an insurance-like program by 2021. OFVGA's safety nets committee has been supporting the organization's participation in the redesign process to ensure input from growers and OFVGA member organizations. The process was initiated



earlier in 2019 by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Ernie Hardeman, who tasked Agricorp and ministry staff to work with commodity organizations on transitioning the program.

The OFVGA's objective is to ensure that provincial risk management programs continue to work for fruit and vegetable farmers, while trying to meet government expectations that accompany its 2018 platform commitment for the Risk Management Program/Self-Directed Risk Management Program.

If you have questions about the process, please contact Stefan Larrass at the OFVGA.

### Red tape reduction

The Ontario government continues to encourage ideas for red tape reduction. OFVGA is working on an ask to reduce regulatory burdens around

Environmental Compliance Approvals and Permits to Take Water, Conservation Authorities and removal of provincial pesticide classification. Please share your red tape reduction ideas with the OFVGA so that we can raise them with government.

### Ontario Employer Health Tax

A brief reminder that the increase in the Ontario minimum wage last year may have resulted in the payrolls of some employers now exceeding the threshold for the Employer Health Tax. All growers are encouraged to verify their payroll levels or contact their accountants for more information. Ontario employers with annual payrolls exceeding \$490,000 must pay Employer Health Tax.

Changes to federal labour code  
The CHC and the Canadian

Produce Marketing Association have jointly requested an exemption to three concerning changes to the Canada Labour Code which came into effect September 2 for federally regulated employers. Concerns relate to requirements for 96 hours of written notice of shifts and 24-hour notice of any shift changes, and the right to refuse overtime for certain responsibilities. Without an exemption, transporters will no longer be able to adjust shipments with less than 24 hours' notice, making it difficult for growers to meet buyer demands in a timely fashion.

Want to see an issue highlighted here, or learn more about an industry issue? 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).

### Federal election

By now it will be difficult to ignore the media coverage, lawn signs and political posturing that comes along with elections. The OFVGA continues to remain engaged in issues related to the federal government, in partnership with the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) and in our own activities.

CROP PRODUCTION

# Global harvest estimates for apples



Province	2018	2019 Estimate	Average last 5 years	2019/2018 Estimate	Estimate 2019 Average
Ontario	8138	7262	7430	-11%	-2%
Québec	5663	5315	5779	06%	-8%
British Columbia	3473	4040	3518	16%	15%
Nova Scotia	1848	1995	1722	8%	16%
New Brunswick	132	145	165	10%	-12%
CANADA	19254	18757	18614	-3%	1%
New York	33214	31500	31500	-5%	0%
Michigan	2500	25250	24976	1%	1%
Washington	159524	165000	167143	3%	-1%
UNITED STATES	244214	247764	250427	1%	-1%
China	1653750	2152500	2135910	30%	1%
Poland	252525	142275	186848	-44%	24%
Mexico	34650	35175	33128	2%	6%
Chile	92453	87413	88725	-5%	-1%

This chart was released at the time of the U.S. Apple Outlook Conference in mid-August before the devastating effects of Hurricane Dorian in Nova Scotia. Sources: CCH, Producer Associations of Canada, USApples and World Association of Apples and Pears.

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CHAIR'S PERSPECTIVE

# Focus on the federal election



**BILL GEORGE JR.**  
CHAIR, OFVGA

affecting fruit and vegetable growers across the country and encouraging them to include those in their election party platforms. Here are some highlights:

**Financial protection for growers** – we've been asking for federal legislation to ensure growers get paid for produce they sell in case of buyer insolvency or bankruptcy.

**Crop protection** – access to safe, effective crop protection materials and a stable, predictable regulatory system that uses actual domestic water monitoring and product usage data as part of its decision-making processes are vitally important to our industry.

**Labour** – fruit and vegetable growers need reliable access to a steady and stable workforce, supported by legislation and a bureaucratic framework that works for growers and employees. Foreign worker programs such as the Seasonal

Agricultural Worker Program continue to be a very successful and a very essential lifeline for growers.

We've done our homework and now we need your help as growers. During the campaign is a great time to meet with the candidates in your ridings to talk about the issues important to your business and to the fruit and vegetable sector.

One-on-one meetings are great, but you can also meet the candidates at campaign stops, debates or all-candidates' meetings throughout the campaign. Make a point of connecting with more than just one candidate; that way, regardless of who wins the seat, they'll already have an understanding of our sector and our issues.

And although our own ridings are important, the truth of the matter is that most of our policy today is shaped by representatives from urban areas or with urban backgrounds. Less than two per cent of Canadians are involved in agriculture, and even fewer in

horticulture. Farming today is also much more complex than it was even a generation ago, so understandably, most Canadians know little about the ins and outs of what we do.

If you sell directly to consumers, whether through an on-farm stand or store or at a market, or if you interact with urban voters through your involvement in your children's school, sports activities, or your own volunteer efforts, you have an opportunity to speak up for our industry and why local food production matters.

And once the election is over, regardless of your own particular political affiliation, I encourage you to reach out to your new Member of Parliament. Meet with them at their office or invite them out to your farm and give them a tour. It's a great way to start building that relationship, especially if you make a point of meeting with them when you don't actually need anything from them.

You may be wondering why a

provincial organization such as the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA) is active at the national level, both through the Canadian Horticultural Council and our own activities. A lot of the issues important to growers are national in scope – that is, they affect growers across the country and the regulations and legislation around those issues are dealt with through federal departments and agencies.

CHC has created information documents on the key issues on its website [www.hortcouncil.ca](http://www.hortcouncil.ca). I encourage you to visit the site, pick a topic that's important to you and research it, and then set up meetings with the key candidates in your riding.

Any growers who may have questions on how to handle a meeting with a candidate or local political representatives, or are looking for OFVGA perspectives on any of the files we deal with are welcome to call or email me.

Millions of Canadians are eligible to vote on October 21. One of the advantages of fixed federal election dates is that this gives us a lot of time to prepare. So we've been busy this spring and summer behind the scenes as the federal parties were gearing up for the campaign.

In partnership with our national organization, the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC), we've been actively working to make the federal parties aware of key issues

WEATHER VANE



**Bonduelle, a global leader in producing processed vegetables, contracts 10,000 acres of sweet corn in southwestern Ontario. Some of those acres belong to Jeff and Don Cook, Mapleview Farms, at London, Ontario. This past summer's weather has contributed to an excellent crop says Ingersoll plant manager, Jennifer Thompson. Harvested at peak maturity, the sweet corn is flash frozen within hours of field harvesting. Machine operators will be working round the clock until October 17. Photo by Glenn Lawson.**

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## URBAN COWBOY

## Calling on retailers to help consumers with plant-based confusion



**OWEN ROBERTS**  
U OF GUELPH

If you're struggling to understand what constitutes standards of identity, such as new versions of old favourites, such as meat, milk and burgers, you're not alone.

Research in the U.S. by an organization called the Center for Food Integrity (which has an arm in Canada, called the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity) shows consumers there are starting to get their backs up about corporations marketing "healthy" alternatives . . . sometimes even to their own products.

Corporations claim they're

offering plant-based menu items and ingredients because they want consumers to have choices. But the U.S. study says consumers don't buy it – rather, they now see it as a money-grab by big business to confuse them and take their money.

They say that when meat companies offer plant-based alternatives, it sends mixed messages about their traditional products.

For example, new products may claim to be "healthy." So there's an immediate assumption that they're healthier than the traditional products. And that may not be the case.

We're talking about huge numbers, too. The U.S. center monitored online conversations, and found there is a core market of 53 million Americans actively engaged in conversations around the standards-of-identity issue. I haven't seen parallel studies in Canada, but I suspect the sentiment is the same here.

I like some of the push-back coming from commodity groups and traditional product manufacturers who have not lost sight of what consumers have long said they want – fresh,

wholesome, simple food.

They point out the contradictions between some new plant-based products and the drive towards basic food. Consumers voice their disdain for ultra-processed food, and consumer groups urge shoppers to check labels for simplicity.

That's where some plant-based products fall down. The plant patty that manufacturers try so hard to dress up to taste like and look like a meat patty ends up being heaped with a long list of extras, such as flavour, colour and other ingredients for binding and appearance.

The question is, what would you rather have: a meat burger with one ingredient – 100 per cent Canadian beef, for example – or a plant-based burger with multiple ingredients?

That's not to say those ingredients aren't safe. But they certainly don't point to simplicity.

Making sense of the marketplace will always revert to consumers . . . and I believe that increasingly, consumer education will include retailers.

It has to. Retailers respond to

consumers' demands by stocking their shelves with new products. But this is an era of increasing responsibility; retailers need to respond to consumer confusion.

I've seen evidence of retailer involvement by some chains that have nutritionists and trained dietitians from reputable programs, such as the University of Guelph's nutritional sciences program, on hand to answer consumer questions.

To me, these professionals have more of a role than ever to help sort out implicit or explicit claims.

The trickle-down effect of confusion is mistrust. And it's bound to affect farmers, who are already under the microscope by a public that doesn't understand what they do, how they do it and why they do it.

A response to this dilemma, also from the U.S., involves a group called the Agricultural Retailers' Association. It's received support from one of the world's largest seed and chemical companies, Corteva, to create a program called Engage for Ag Leaders. This program is



designed to try explaining to consumers that farmers and the public share similar values.

And shared values are proven to go further to build trust than any marketing campaign could ever do.

I'm not shying away from new products. I welcome them and hope manufacturers always try to address consumers' interests. But manufacturers are getting a black eye from the current state of affairs and need to realize consumers are not happy with the status quo. Ultimately, they want the kind of wholesomeness they get from the likes of fruit and vegetables, and clear messaging to accompany it.

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## MAKING MOVES

## Driver shortage vs driver retention: what's the bigger issue?



JENNIFER MORRIS

For years in the trucking industry there has been ongoing discussions of driver shortages and how to entice new and younger people to enter the industry. But now, driver retention is the new issue that needs to be addressed. Driver retention is one cost along the supply-chain that is largely ignored as it is hard to recognize a hard cost.

Here's the debate. Is it a

driver shortage or lack of driver retention that's costing the industry? Which of them is actually to blame for the trucking industry woes?

In March, 2019 Kristen Monaco, an associate commissioner at the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Stephen V. Burks, an economic professor at the University of Minnesota Morris, published a research paper about driver retention being the true culprit in the troubled trucking industry. Their surprising conclusion? There is no driver shortage in the trucking industry from an economic standpoint.

"If you talk about a labour market and characterize that there's a shortage for several decades, that means the market is somehow broken," Monaco said while speaking at the FTR Transportation Conference in Indianapolis, IN recently. "The quantity of labour demanded is constantly greater than quantity

of labour supplied."

She mentioned that there is no evidence of the driver market being broken. Instead she points to a combination of wages, hours and undesirable working conditions that are causing the constant turnover and then demand for drivers.

After the report was originally released Bob Costello of the American Trucking Association (ATA) disagreed with the findings saying that the researchers "demonstrate some basic misunderstandings about the trucking industry." And in July, Costello doubled down with a report from the ATA saying that the driver shortage persists and will continue to worsen in the coming decade.

It is important to look at the underlying issue with either theory. Driver wages, hours and working conditions are not desirable. Retention issues continue to be a problem across the board with 25 per cent or more of drivers being delayed

six hours or more on the regular. Until these issues are addressed, providing consistent coverage and service will continue to be an issue for carriers and shippers.

Jennifer Morris is president of Two Roads Logistics based in Toronto, Ontario. She is an international

shipping and logistics consultant with 15 years of experience in produce transportation. Her passion for helping small and innovative businesses is a welcome addition to the Education Committee of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association. She holds a degree in psychology from the University of Windsor

## New name for hops competition

The annual hops competition held at the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention has a new name: ONHops Brewoff. Registration forms are now available for what used to be called the 2020 Great Ontario-Hopped Craft Beer Competition. Organizers David Lauzon, Jason Deveau and Evan Elford have announced the new name for the February 19, 2020 event.

This year the feature beer style is: The Double (aka Imperial) IPA. Find out about the style, download the registration forms, and read all about the competition at [www.onhops.ca](http://www.onhops.ca)!



## COMING EVENTS 2019

- Oct 5 Soupfest, Ansnorveldt Park, Bradford, ON
- Oct 9-10 Canadian Greenhouse Conference, Scotiabank Convention Centre, Niagara Falls, ON
- Oct 16 World Food Day
- Oct 17-19 Produce Marketing Association Fresh Summit, Anaheim, CA
- Oct 21 Federal election
- Oct 24 Farm & Food Care Ontario Harvest Gala, Guelph, ON
- Oct 27-29 Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference, Sheraton on the Falls, Niagara Falls, ON
- Oct 29-30 IPM Scouting Workshop, Kemptville, ON
- Nov 1-10 Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, Enercare Centre, Toronto, ON
- Nov 6-9 North American Strawberry Growers' Association European Tour, Netherlands and Belgium
- Nov 10-16 AgriTechnica, Hanover, Germany
- Nov 13-14 Canadian Centre for Food Integrity Public Trust Summit, Saskatoon, SK
- Nov 15 Ontario Produce Marketing Association Annual Gala, Universal Event Space, Vaughn, ON
- Nov 19-21 Potato Growers of Alberta Conference and Tradeshow, Cambridge Hotel and Conference Centre, Red Deer, AB
- Nov 22 Quebec Potato Convention (bilingual), Convention and Exhibition Centre, Lévis, QC
- Nov 26 OFVGA Fall Lobby Day, Queen's Park, Toronto, ON
- Nov 27 Asparagus Farmers of Ontario Annual General Meeting, Hungarian Hall, 9 am, Delhi, ON
- Nov 28 Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame induction ceremony, Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac, Quebec City, QC
- Nov 28 CanAgPlus (CanadaGAP) annual general meeting, Red Shores, Charlottetown, PE
- Dec 3-4 GrowCanada Conference, Calgary, AB
- Dec 4 Garlic Production and Pest Management Workshop, 1 Stone Road, Guelph, ON
- Dec 4 Ontario Potato Board Annual General Meeting, Delta Hotel, Guelph, ON
- Dec 4-8 Canada Outstanding Young Farmers Recognition Event, Delta Fredericton, Fredericton, NB
- Dec 5 Fresh Vegetable Growers of Ontario AGM, OMAFRA building, Woodstock, ON

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## RETAIL NAVIGATOR

## How to understand your customer better?



PETER CHAPMAN

In the last four columns we have focused on consumers, the end users who purchase your products and use them in their households. This month we will shift our focus to your customers, the retailers, wholesalers and distributors who buy your products from you. If you are doing direct selling you only have consumers.

We discussed who buys your products, how they use them, why they buy and them and where they buy them. Using that information about where they buy we will now shift to developing alignment with these customers. This is the second key ingredient in our process to help you get more of your products in more shopping carts more often.

We have developed a process to help you sell more products. We call this process CART and over the upcoming months I will share the process to help you sell more. There are four essential ingredients in this recipe for success:

**Consumers**  
Alignment with your customers  
**Retail plan** to sell your products  
**Trust** with consumers and customers

Developing successful relationships with your customers is a key task in your business. One path to a productive relationship is to approach them with a thorough understanding of what they are trying to accomplish and how. It is true these retailers are all selling food but how they choose to do it can be very different from one to another. It is incumbent on you to understand them. There are a number of opportunities for you and others in your business to understand your customers better.

## Visit the store

The most important research you can do is in the store. Look at the department where your products are or will be sold. Merchandising units can change from one retailer to another and you should design and develop your packaging to be most effective in these units. They

do change so you have to visit stores often and talk to your category manager about where they see the future going with merchandising units.

When you are in the store, focus on pricing to understand what margins they are making and what expectations will be for your products. Store staff can be very valuable to your research. Often they will share many insights into what is happening and why the retailer is doing certain things in store. You also need to take a step back and read the signage for the overall store and the department. What message are they communicating? If the signage is all focused on value then you need to reinforce that message when you visit with your category manager. If the focus is “local” then help them understand what you will be doing to reinforce this message for them.

## Follow your customers on line

Every week you should be looking at the flyers to understand the message they are sending to consumers, the items on sale and the level of discount. These could all be topics of conversation at your next category manager meeting.

Retailers’ websites are great sources of information about your customer. You will find an avalanche of consumer-facing messages but if you search a little deeper you will find insights into their strategy and results. Retailers that are publicly traded all have a section of their website targeted at investors, which is where you will find some great nuggets to help you understand them better.

Trade publications such as *The Grower*, *Canadian Grocer*, *Grocery Business*, and many others all include valuable information about your customers. They sell magazines by reporting on what is happening in the industry so take advantage of the great research they are doing. You can even find stories about the people who work at the retailers, which can really be helpful in a meeting. Imagine being the one supplier to say: “great article about you in Canadian Grocer.”

Every retailer has a profile on social media. You need to follow your customers and if you are not social-media savvy, find someone in your business who is. This is their method of communicating to consumers and it is now immediate. If you miss it you will miss opportunities. Traditional media also report on our industry regularly. You cannot influence Sobeys’ quarterly results, but if they are good you can mention it to your Sobeys category manager.

## Use your existing relationships to learn more

If you are an existing supplier you need to think about the questions you should be asking your category manager at your next meeting. Certainly you need to be talking about immediate opportunities and issues but you also need to think long term. Change takes time in your business, so you need to know if there will be more discount stores opening (perhaps a different size package for you?) or moving from bulk to pre-packaged displays. These are all decisions they will be making that impact your business. The better you understand them the better.

There are many opportunities for you and others in your business to learn more about your customers. Challenge different people in your business to report back about what they find. As you build a better understanding you can develop your relationship and sell more. Remember, they do change so when you have a new category manager you need to start at the beginning as they might have different views than the previous one.

If you have any questions about understanding your customers better please give me a call at (902) 489-2900 or send me an email at peter@skufood.com.

Next month we will discuss how to increase the alignment you have with your customers



by finding opportunities to support them.

## WHAT'S IN STORE?

## Electronic shelf labels

I see more electronic shelf labels installed in stores. This was something that was an opportunity a number of years ago but now, with the wireless technology, it is becoming a reality. Stores can communicate with the labels wirelessly and instantly. When you consider the hours that every store can save or reinvest every week, it is a huge amount of money. Retailers will be moving to more and more technology as labour costs increase and their ability to retain labour becomes more difficult. These are topics

of conversation you should have with your customers to illustrate you are in their stores and see what is happening. It might also be an opportunity to share some insights into what you are doing to introduce technology in your business.

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




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## FOCUS: EQUIPMENT &amp; NEW TECHNOLOGY

## First Van Wamel optical pear sorter in North America is installed in Kelowna

MYRNA STARK LEADER

Pears scuff easily. The pome fruit must be handled more gently than apples to be marketable. That's why fifth-generation pear farmers at Day's Century Growers have invested in new packing equipment to prevent this occurrence. Thanks to a retrofit of current facilities at Kelowna, British Columbia, the Day family has an optical pear sorter and packing line for the fall 2019 harvest.

"We wanted to step up consistency of handling the fruit, food safety and traceability and our labour efficiency," explains Kevin Day. He's the business partner of his sister Karen who are now operating the packing line and 16,000-square feet of controlled atmosphere storage.

The expansion strategy has worked well since the family exited marketing through BC Tree Fruits Cooperative in 2012. Together, family

members are packing about 40 per cent of B.C.'s pears, shipping as far east as Manitoba and some to the United States until April. Customers include large grocery chains such as Costco.

"I try to buy (equipment) locally but in Holland more than 50 per cent of the tree fruit grown is pears so machinery that's developed there is not developed for apples and then used for pears," explains Day. "It's developed for pears and there's lots of thought taken into account about the gentle handling."

Although it was a tight squeeze installing a new line into existing space, they've accommodated their Dutch Burg infeed, Van Wamel sorter and Ellips optical pear sorter software. To avoid any scuffing, the new line has small metal rods to lift the fruit from one rotating drying sponge to another. The fruit never rolls which helps avoid scuffs. With

this line, fruit that used to be handled many times is now touched only twice by human hands.

"The drop stations are also efficient because they only move as the electronic eye sees fruit so pears don't pile up at the end and get bruised when they're being packed," says Day.

This is the first Van Wamel optical sorter for pears in North America. Designed wider and longer to account for the odd shape of pears, the sorter takes 30 colour and 30 black and white pictures of each pear. While the pre-loaded software can recognize irregular shapes that will be culled, the family has customized the system, after attending a two-day training session in Wenatchee, Washington.

The machine is programmed to look for specific defects. That means taking freeze frames of off-grade pears such as brown russet or a black stem puncture.



Pear labels with optical sorter machine in background



Pears are lifted several times with metal rods and set down to dry on rotating sponges to avoid scuffing the fruit. Photos by Myrna Stark Leader.

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These defects are colour-coded so that the machine can recognize what fruit should be culled. The operator can adjust the specifications to meet grading standards.

The family says consistency of grading is the goal, going to the top end of grades to obtain the highest financial return at market. While they haven't purchased the internal fruit scanner, it could be added.

"I hope retailers notice a better consistency that will make our fruit more desirable and we know down to the row, where the pears came from, who picked them, when they were packed and by whom, etcetera for traceability standards," adds Day.

New technology sometimes means cutting staff, but that's not the case in this transition

year.

What they did sacrifice was one of their six coolers to make the equipment fit. The advantage is that pears are no longer sitting on the packing floor until the pallet is full. The pears now head straight into new cooler space at the end of the packing line reducing the time the pears are out of cold storage from half or a full day to only a few minutes.

The family is confident the million-dollar investment has them poised, based on their farm's volume plus two other growers, to have capacity to pack all the pears in British Columbia. They packed three million pounds last year.

*Myrna Stark Leader is a freelance journalist based in Kelowna, British Columbia.*

## FOCUS: EQUIPMENT &amp; NEW TECHNOLOGY

## The new buzz: bee vectoring to deliver biological crop protection

KAREN DAVIDSON

Two hives of bumblebees can carry a payload of biopesticide to an acre of blooming blueberries to suppress a crippling disease called mummy berry. That's right -- with no water, no spray equipment and no labour. All that's required is the timely replacement of microbe-impregnated powder in trays so that pollinators can dust their legs as they leave the hives.

The ingenious concept of bumblebees acting as miniature helicopters to deliver targeted product is not new, but what's newsworthy is that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has approved the first active ingredient. In technical terms, it's *Clonostachys rosea* CR-7 (CR-7), for use on horticultural field crops, specifically blueberries and strawberries. To be sold under the brand name Vectorite, this biofungicide will be manufactured at the headquarters of Bee Vectoring Technologies (BVT) in Mississauga, Ontario.

"Not only is this a critical milestone for BVT in terms of the commencement of scalable

commercialization and revenue, but it represents a groundbreaking shift in how plant care products can be applied," says Ashish Malik, CEO of BVT.

"By using commercially-reared bees to deliver biological products, growers can protect crops, increase crop yields and enhance their sustainable growing practices by reducing the use of chemicals and other costly and increasingly scarce resources including water, fuel and labour."

Unfortunately, the active ingredient CR-7, a proprietary microbe owned by the company, isn't yet available in Canada pending field trials. The submission to the Canadian Pest Management Regulatory Agency is tabled for 2020. But the American registration, publicized in early September 2019, is a cue to watch the debut of commercial applications in Florida strawberry fields in November and Georgia blueberry fields in February 2020.

According to company literature, recent large-scale commercial demonstrations in Florida strawberries have delivered comparable, if not improved disease protection and



crop yield increases. In blueberry trials, results showed 77 per cent higher fruit yield compared to the non-treated control. Researchers recorded a reduction in the incidence of *Monilinia* blight – mummy berry – by 21 per cent.

BVT has worked closely with BioBest and Koppert Biological Systems, experts in bumblebee pollination. The mathematical equations of bees per hive, visits per flower and flowers per acre by commodity have been factored into the hive placement requirements to adequately treat an outdoor acre. For strawberries, the need is for 1.5 hives per acre whereas for blueberries, the need is for two hives. Costs to the grower will be based on a turnkey service per acre, based on a competitive price with chemical

fungicides.

Other crops are in the sights of BVT including greenhouse tomatoes. "One of our future thrusts will be in Canadian greenhouses," says Malik.

Apple trials are still a few years away, but Malik is excited about the potential to use bees as a vector to control fire blight. "The microbe may not be one belonging to BVT, but we could work with a third party to develop one," says Malik.

For three years now, Malik has been helping Canadian-based BVT from his base in Sacramento, California. He was recruited from his role of vice-president, global marketing for biologics at Bayer CropScience. Since 2012, he had been responsible for integrated crop solutions with traditional chemical products, seeds, traits, seed treatments and services. It was a serendipitous juncture, because he brought previous experience with AgraQuest and Syngenta.

"What's great is that there is a shift from biopesticides being a niche, artsy side of the organic business to becoming mainstream science," says Malik. "I'm proud to be part of that journey."

It's a sign of the times that out of a chemical background, Malik now works on biological products that can be part of an integrated pest management program. Vectorite, for example, can be used during the blooming period for fungal problems but growers may want to follow up with chemical solutions for insect pests. Malik is quick to point out the future of biopesticides in terms of stacking beneficial microbes that will prevent various diseases. It's the same concept as stacking crop protection genes in corn and soybeans.

"Our goal is to work on proprietary microbes," says Malik. "We are evaluating seven other biological products out of which two or three may be complementary."

Malik sits on the board of the U.S.-based Biological Products Industry Alliance along with other directors from familiar companies: Valent Biosciences Corporation, Gowan Corporation, BASF, for example. As the doors close for some commonly used chemicals, the windows may open for new biologics. The brightest minds are working towards this future.

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**FOCUS: EQUIPMENT & NEW TECHNOLOGY**

# Hail netting might also exclude apple pests, reducing spray applications

KAREN DAVIDSON

Questions remain, but hailstorm netting used for protecting apples might also be doubly valuable as “exclusion netting” to protect fruit from orchard pests. The concept is

being tested by Michael Basedow, a tree fruit specialist with the Cornell Cooperative Extension service in Plattsburgh, New York. “Pest management is one of the largest investments fruit growers must make in terms of time, labour, and materials to



Michael Basedow, a tree fruit specialist with the Cornell Cooperative Extension service in Plattsburgh, New York, examines apples under hail netting that also excludes some pests.

produce marketable fruit and maintain healthy trees,” says Basedow. With a grant from the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program, Basedow has worked with commercial growers who have installed hail netting. Trials in France and Quebec have showed success in limiting damage by codling moth and other orchard pests, but the use of drape-style netting had not been evaluated well under northern New York state orchard conditions.

“We are constantly looking at ways to increase the use of integrated pest management (IPM) practices that allow us to produce a commercially viable crop while also making the best use of growers’ time, labour, and money. We wanted to see if the hail netting might be an effective practice to add to our apple growers’ IPM toolbox,” says Basedow.

Recent research provided weekly trap data on four key apple pests: codling moth, Oriental fruit moth, obliquebanded leafroller, and apple maggot. “Results from the trial showed that traps in the trees under the netting caught significantly fewer of the four key pests



The orchard with the best control applied the netting to trees grown in a tall spindle training system with the netting secured tightly to the trunks.

compared to the unnetted trees,” Basedow says. “However, the pest pressure levels in 2018 for three of the

four key pests was such that the feasibility of using hail netting for pest exclusion is still uncertain. The netting may help reduce pest numbers enough to reduce the total number of orchard sprays needed for some pests, such as apple maggot, where spray decisions are based on well-established economic thresholds.”

Basedow adds that the sites with the most effective pest exclusion were those where the hail netting was tightly tied to the lower limbs and trunks of the apple trees. The orchard with the best control applied the netting to trees grown to a tall spindle training system with the netting secured tightly to the trunks.

The full project report is posted on the NNYADP website at [www.nnyagdev.org](http://www.nnyagdev.org).



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# ONvegetables



Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

## Results from multi-site garlic cultivar trial

TRAVIS CRANMER

While Music has shown to be an excellent garlic cultivar for growing conditions in Ontario, there is always room for improvement. That improvement may be an increase in yield per acre, average bulb size or the ability to store into the spring. Additionally, consumers are becoming more aware of the different tastes of garlic and are willing to pay more for a spicy flavour.

Most agronomic information about garlic found online is from areas with different climatic conditions to Ontario and most information is written in a language other than English. Much of the production research in Ontario to date has been conducted by John Zandstra out of the University of Guelph – Ridgetown Campus over the last two decades. Trials conducted in conjunction with the Garlic Growers’ Association of Ontario have identified ideal planting densities, spacings, methods for bulbil production as well as scaping for the cultivar Music, but these production practices may not hold true for all of the cultivars discussed below.

This trial was meant to demonstrate the differences in cultivars from the same planting stock but grown in different conditions and soil types. Last year, 22 garlic cultivars (16 hardneck, 6 softneck) were planted in three locations in Southwestern Ontario in mid-October 2018. Cultivars were planted in a randomized

complete block design with four replicate rows. Each row had 10 cloves of garlic planted per row at a depth of two inches. None of the locations received irrigation, fertilizer or products. Soil texture ranged from Parkhill loam near Gorrie, Wattford loamy sand at Ridgetown and Huron clay loam near Dashwood.

Before examining the data, it is important to note that the first two reps at the Gorrie location experienced flooding in the early spring and had a poor emergence rate. The plants that survived the unfavourable conditions at Gorrie are included for interest, as we found a few cultivars performed well regardless of the flooding.

Bulb weight at harvest in July prior to curing showed multiple cultivars were significantly better than the standard Music at one or two locations, but no cultivar outperformed Music at all three locations. Notable hardneck cultivars include Portugal 1 Azores, Mount Hood, Red Russian, Kranagasger Red, Purple Glazer, Guelph, Ukraine, Polish White and both cultivars of Duganski. The softneck cultivar Transylvanian performed extremely well in all three locations and had an average bulb weight of 77.5 g at the Dashwood location (Figure 2).

Harvested bulbs were cured at the same location under the same conditions of low relative humidity and high ventilation for a total of 11 days. Bulbs that were not marketable were removed prior to curing and were not included in the dry

weight assessment (Figure 1). Once again Portugal 1 Azores, Mount Hood, Purple Glazer, Guelph, Ukraine, Polish White and the Duganski cultivars performed the same or better than Music. Transylvanian performed better or comparable to Music at all three locations.

When purchasing planting stock domestically or internationally, it is extremely important to test cloves for bulb and stem nematode. Bulb and stem nematodes can survive undetected in garlic cloves as infested cloves often look healthy with no basal plate damage. Planting clean, nematode-free cloves into non-infested soil is the best option to avoid crop failure in the future.

Thank you to those who donated space, cultivars or time over the past year. A full overview of the trial with other parameters such as scape curl, bulb diameter and cloves per bulb will be posted on the ONvegetables blog in the upcoming months.

If you are a vegetable grower near Kemptville, you might be interested in a Vegetable Pest and Production workshop October 29 and 30. On Tuesday, the agenda will focus on garlic, cucurbits and sweet corn while on the second day we will focus on potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, onions, carrots and Brassica crops. Space is limited. Please register by calling the Agricultural Information Contact Centre (AICC) at 1-877-424-1300.

*Travis Cranmer is a vegetable crops specialist for OMAFRA.*

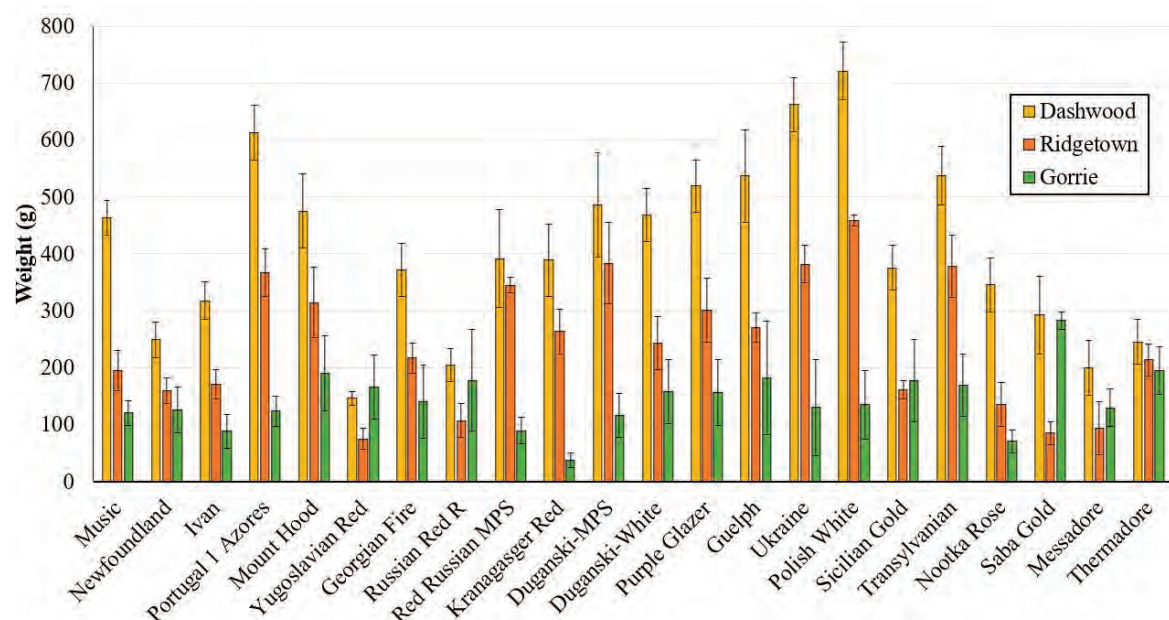


Figure 1. Cured weight of garlic cultivars from marketable bulbs within a replicate row. Soil textures were Parkhill loam near Gorrie, Wattford loamy sand at Ridgetown, and Huron clay loam near Dashwood. Only two replicates of the original four were used at the location near Gorrie due to flooding in the spring.

Dashwood Ridgetown

Cultivar	Bulb Wt (g)	Bulb Dia.	Image
Music Porcelain Hardneck	59.9	5.3	
Newfoundland Porcelain Hardneck	44.7	4.8	
Ivan Porcelain Hardneck	43.3	6.4	
Portugal 1 Azores Porcelain Hardneck	90.2	6.1	
Mount Hood Porcelain Hardneck	73.1	5.7	
Yugoslavian Red Porcelain Hardneck	40.5	4.9	
Georgian Fire Porcelain Hardneck	52.6	5.1	
Russian Red Racambole Hardneck	33.1	4.5	
Red Russian Marbled Purple Stripe Hardneck	81.1	6.1	
Kranagasger Red Marbled Purple Stripe Hardneck	76.2	6.0	
Duganski - MPS Marbled Purple Stripe Hardneck	89.6	6.3	
Duganski - White Purple Stripe Hardneck	66.4	5.6	
Purple Glazer Purple Stripe Hardneck	62.8	5.5	
Guelph Unknown Hardneck	71.0	5.6	
Ukraine Unknown Hardneck	88.0	6.1	
Polish White Unknown Hardneck	88.0	6.1	
Sicilian Gold Artichoke Softneck	67.9	6.0	
Transylvanian Artichoke Softneck	77.5	6.0	
Nootka Rose Silverskin Softneck	55.4	5.3	
Saba Gold Unknown Softneck	47.8	5.1	
Messadore Unknown Softneck	34.7	4.3	
Thermadore Unknown Softneck	45.7	4.9	

All harvest measurements are averages from the Dashwood location only.

Figure 2. Table of harvest measurements from the Dashwood location only.

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Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
December 5, 2019  
9:30 am

Election of Directors of the Association, discussion of financial reports and any other business that may arise will take place.

Lunch will be provided.

Meeting details will be posted to the FVGO website as they become available.

[www.freshvegetablesontario.com](http://www.freshvegetablesontario.com)

To register for the meeting please call the FVGO office, 519-674-1500 ext.63592 or email [mmcdonal@uoguelph.ca](mailto:mmcdonal@uoguelph.ca)

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Produce trade between Canada, the United States and Mexico is big business. Canada imported more than \$6.3 billion in fresh and frozen fruit and vegetable produce from the U.S. and Mexico last year. We also sent more than \$2.7 billion in produce south of the border, including \$1.3 billion worth of vegetables from Ontario alone. Canada and the U.S. are each other's largest trading partners in agriculture, while Canada is the third largest export market for Mexico. Agriculture trade forms a key part of all three economies.

The establishment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 created the largest free trading region in the world. This trading environment gave consumers wider access to food and increased market size for domestic growers considering exports. The extent of this trade relationship wouldn't be nearly as prolific without the regulatory cooperation promoted between these countries over the past two decades. An important

component of this cooperation for crop protection has been the creation of the NAFTA Trilateral Working Group (TWG) on pesticides.

Established in 1996, the goals of the TWG are to collaborate on crop protection regulation, eliminating barriers and promoting food trade across the three countries. There have been some solid achievements in regulatory harmonization under the TWG including joint registration reviews, NAFTA-wide product labels and alignment of Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs). These efforts have been commended for increasing the speed of the review process, benefitting regulators, registrants, and growers. The public has also indirectly benefitted through growers gaining access to new crop protection technology sooner.

The 2019 edition of the TWG was held the first week of September with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) hosting the meeting at its headquarters for pesticide programs in Arlington, Virginia – across the river from Washington, DC. It marked the first TWG meeting since the U.S. began the renegotiation of NAFTA last summer. Representatives were present from all three countries, including the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA), EPA, SENASICA (Mexico), registrants, CropLife and other government departments. Many grower groups including the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association and the Canadian Horticultural Council also attended.

It was clear that the lack of a

new ratified trade agreement between the nations impeded any significant outcome at the TWG. Despite the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement being signed by all three countries, it has yet to be ratified by domestic governments in Canada or the United States. The prospect of federal elections in Canada this fall and the United States in 2020 added further uncertainty to this TWG, at least from the perspective of the regulatory agencies. Unfortunately, despite over two decades of trilateral meetings, there is still much work to achieve the original objectives of the TWG as set out almost 25 years ago.

One of the original goals of the TWG was to achieve full North American collaboration during product reviews including re-evaluation. Despite significant progress on collaboration during new registrations, the re-evaluation process at PMRA or the equivalent registration review at EPA is far from aligned. This is currently a major issue in horticultural crops where Canadian growers have been losing access to products during re-evaluation that continue to be acceptable south of the border. One of the most common deviations for PMRA compared to EPA in this process has been the selection of conservative safety factors and/or toxicological endpoints. These alone can determine if a product will pass or fail re-evaluation.

The PMRA and the EPA have the same mission: to protect human health and the environment. That has not guaranteed their alignment.



Drastically divergent decisions through these processes causing different registrations, use patterns, re-entry intervals, and pre-harvest intervals create advantages for other jurisdictions frustrating growers for good reason. Our free trade environment in North America has certainly increased availability for consumers and opened export opportunities for Canadian growers. However, in a mature industry with small margins, advantages such as better access to crop protection products can make the difference – in favour of the competition.

Just like many industries, our fruit and vegetable markets in North America have been

integrated. The TWG recognized the importance of regulatory harmonization for crop protection products now almost 25 years ago. Canada, the United States, and Mexico must continue this progress towards increased harmonization, especially alignment of scientific methodology and processes for registering and reviewing products. This would go a long way towards harmonized or closely aligned use patterns and MRLs in North America, levelling the playing field for growers across the board, and further facilitating the high degree of produce access to which we've become accustomed.

## Orchard Outlook Podcast by Perennia

Michelle Cortens, tree fruit specialist for Perennia Food and Agriculture Inc., has started a podcast series that can benefit not only growers in Nova Scotia, but across the country.

"This podcast is intended for all commercial apple growers, not just the Nova Scotia region," says Cortens.

Check it out on the Perennia website -- [www.perennia.ca/learning/podcast/](http://www.perennia.ca/learning/podcast/) -- or anywhere that you tune into podcasts

such as Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

Here's what has been posted to date:

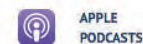
- Don't play with fire blight with guest Dr. George Sundin
- Apple maggot birth control with guest Dr. Suzanne Blatt
- Sensing fruit maturity with guest Dr. John DeLong

The plan is to release one episode per



### Orchard Outlook

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JIM CHAPUT

The Pest Management

Regulatory Agency (PMRA) recently announced the approval of an URMULE registration for Tilt 250E foliar

## Gesagard herbicide to control weeds on parsley

The Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) recently announced the approval of a minor use label expansion registration for Gesagard 480SC herbicide for control of labeled weeds on parsley in Canada. Gesagard 480SC herbicide was already labeled for use on a number of crops in Canada for control of several weeds.

This minor use project was submitted by the national minor use program at Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Pest Management Centre as a result of minor use priorities established by growers and extension personnel.

The following is provided as an abbreviated, general outline only. Users should be making weed management decisions

## Kanemite miticide for spider mite control in hops



The Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) recently announced the

approval of an URMULE registration for Kanemite miticide for control of spider

## Nova fungicide for artichokes, greenhouse eggplant

The Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) recently announced the approval of URMULE registrations for Nova fungicide for control of powdery mildew on globe artichokes and greenhouse eggplant in Canada. Nova fungicide was already labeled for use on a number of crops in Canada for control of several diseases.

These minor use projects were submitted by Ontario's minor use program as a result of minor use priorities established by growers and extension

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

Nova fungicide is toxic to birds, small wild mammals, aquatic organisms and non-target terrestrial plants. The use of this chemical may result in contamination of groundwater particularly in areas where soils

Crop(s)	Target	Rate (mL/ha)	Application Information	PHI (days)
Garden beets	Cercospora Leaf Spot	500	Apply prior to when conditions are favourable for disease development. Repeat at 10 – 14 day intervals until conditions are no longer favourable for disease development. Apply a maximum of two applications per season.	14

fungicide for control of Cercospora Leaf Spot on garden beets in Canada. Tilt 250E foliar fungicide was already labeled for use on a number of crops in Canada for control / suppression of several diseases.

The following is provided as an abbreviated, general outline only. Users should be making pest management decisions

within a robust integrated disease management program and should consult the complete label before using Tilt 250E foliar fungicide

Follow all precautions and detailed directions for use on the Tilt 250E foliar fungicide label carefully.

For a copy of the new minor use label contact your local crop

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

*Jim Chaput is minor use coordinator for OMAFRA.*

Crop(s)	Target	Rate (mL/ha)	Application Information	PHI (days)
Parsley	Labeled weeds	3.75-4.58 L product/ha	Apply prior to weed emergence or early post emergence to parsley before weeds reach 5 cm high. Application on sandy soils may result in crop injury. Do not apply if parsley is under water stress.	30

within a robust integrated weed management program and should consult the complete label before using Gesagard 480SC herbicide.

Gesagard 480SC herbicide is toxic to aquatic organisms, small wild animals, certain beneficial

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

containers.

There are significant precautions and detailed directions for use on the Gesagard 480SC herbicide label; follow these carefully.

Crop(s)	Target	Product rate per ha	Application Information	Days Before Harvest
Hops	Spider mites including two-spotted mites	2.07 L	Apply when thresholds are reached as determined by monitoring. Do not apply more than twice per season and allow a minimum of 21 days between applications.	7

Apply in the appropriate water volume to achieve thorough coverage of all plant surfaces

mites on hops in Canada. Kanemite miticide was already labeled for use on a number of crops in Canada for control of several mite pests.

This minor use project was submitted by AAFC-PMC as a result of minor use priorities established by growers and extension personnel.

The following is provided as

an abbreviated, general outline only. Users should be making pest management decisions within a robust integrated pest management program and should consult the complete label before using Kanemite miticide.

Kanemite miticide is toxic to aquatic organisms. Do not contaminate aquatic habitats

when spraying or when cleaning and rinsing spray equipment or containers.

Follow all other precautions and directions for use on the Kanemite miticide label carefully.

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

Crop(s)	Target	Product rate per ha	Application Information	Days Before Harvest
Globe Artichokes	Powdery mildew (Erysiphe cichoracearum and Leveillula taurica)	280 g	Begin applications when disease first appears or when conditions favor disease development. Repeat application at 14-day intervals and a maximum of 6 applications per year. For best results use a minimum of 1000 L of spray volume.	3
Greenhouse Eggplant	Powdery mildew (Leveillula taurica; Oidium neolycopersici)	340 g	Begin application as soon as possible after initial infection. Maximum 1 application per crop cycle. Apply as a foliar spray in a maximum spray volume of 1000 L water/ha.	3

are permeable (i.e. sandy soil) and/or the depth to the water table is shallow. Do not contaminate aquatic habitats when spraying or when cleaning and rinsing spray equipment or

containers.

Follow all other precautions and directions for use on the Nova fungicide label carefully. For a copy of the new minor use label contact your local crop

specialist, regional supply outlet or visit the PMRA label site.



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Based on tests performed by the IVF in 2016, **EASYclean offers 99.8% cleaning quality on bins.**

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- MOG then exits the unit back into the grape rows while the berries fall into the stainless steel bins of the harvester
- 2 settings allow for custom speed rotation and oscillating frequency which is modified by the driver from the convenience of the cab
- Operates in all picking conditions



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GL7.4 – 1.9% 5/yr Financing OAC Available



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