

Prince Edward Island

September/October 2021

Volume 22 Issue 5

POTATO NEWS



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- **Modern Family Farms Part II**



Prince Edward Island Potato Board Annual General Meeting 2021

**Pre-register to attend in person or Connect via ZOOM
(All growers will be sent a link via email)**

**November 17, 2021
9:00 AM - 10:45 AM**

Agenda

Chairman's Comments

Financial Report

Sector Updates

Market Report

Open Discussion



POTATO NEWS

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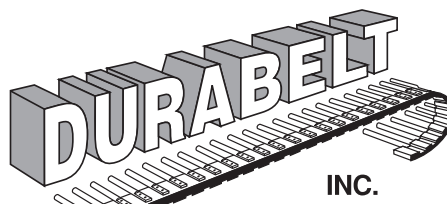
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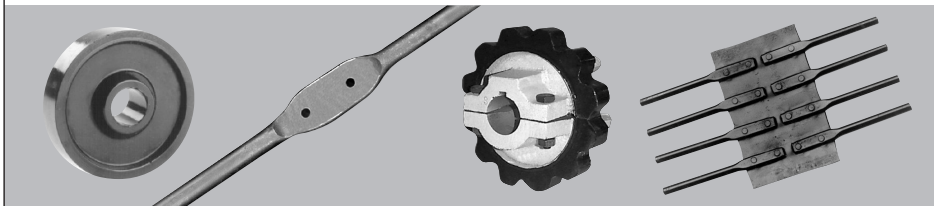
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Cover: *Digging underway in Prince Edward Island. Photo: M.K. Sonier.*



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Chairman's Comments

by Wayne Townshend, PEI Potato Board Chairman



I am finding it hard to believe that this is my last Chairman's report. It seems like only a short time ago I was being asked by fellow directors if I would take the Chairman position. After some personal thought and family support I decided to give it a shot.

It has been a rewarding experience, even with travel restrictions during this pandemic. My role allowed me to meet and talk to people from all over North America through trade shows and conference calls. The pandemic required us to go outside of our comfort zone and begin holding meetings via zoom, which is not the ideal world for some people. On PEI we were lucky enough to have most of our meetings in person thanks to our large board room.

Having an excellent group of directors by my side made doing the job of Chair much easier. I see lots of excellent candidates for my replacement within the current Board of Directors. The staff members at the

Board were an excellent support and a great group of individuals to work with. After spending six years on the Board of Directors one of the biggest lessons that I have learned is that the PEI Potato Board (staff and directors) does not take a back seat to anywhere else in North America; our industry is in very good hands.

As for this year's growing season, it has been a different year weather-wise than what we have seen over the past couple of seasons. Rainfall was plentiful in June and July, followed by a very dry August. In my opinion, this resulted in a crop with less root structure. When August came in dry the crop suffered during early bulking. However, the varied amount of rainfall in early September should help with bulking. All in all, the crop should be average to possibly above average this year.

Looking into the not so far future, it looks like we may be in for a another good year in the market place with overall yields in North America reduced with drought on the West side of the continent. Patience will be key. I am sure that all of our potatoes will find a home with decent returns.

To my fellow growers, I hope that your harvest goes well and that you are rewarded with a decent crop - yield and quality - of potatoes. Everybody needs to be careful digging around low areas of their fields. Either leave the low areas or harvest them later - putting them in a separate bin or at the front of your bin. The old story goes: one bad apple spoils the bag; one bad load can spoil the bin of potatoes.

Wishing everyone a safe and prosperous harvest!

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PEI Potato Board News

Board AGM Set for November 17

The Potato Board's annual general meeting will take place on Wednesday, November 17, 2021 at the Potato Board office in Charlottetown. Those interested in attending in person must pre-register by calling the Board office (902-892-6551), and we will be following the COVID requirements in place at that time. Participation via a Zoom link will also be an option. An invitation containing the Zoom link will be sent to all growers and industry members later this fall.

We welcome participation in the annual meeting, which is scheduled from 9:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. The agenda will include comments from our Chairman Wayne Townshend, presentation of the Board's financial statements, sector updates, a report on current market conditions, and an open discussion. For more information, please call the Board office.

Presentation to Standing Committee

The Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability invited the Potato Board to present to it earlier this summer regarding the supplemental irrigation strategy. As there was still a lot to learn on this issue, the Board asked to defer its presentation until the fall. In the interim, the Board invited committee members to participate in a tour on July 29th of supplemental irrigation approaches being used on Island farms. That tour was well-attended by members of the Legislative Committee and a few other guests, and the Board appreciated the willingness of farmers to host the group and explain their individual situations and approaches.

On September 23, 2021, Chairman Wayne Townshend, Director Rob Green and Board General Manager presented to the Committee. The presentation can be watched online at www.assembly.pe.ca/committee-archive.



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On-Farm Meetings with Minister and Deputy

Minister Bloyce Thompson and Deputy Minister Brian Matheson have met with the Executive of the Potato Board and local farmers at several Island potato farms over the past year, including Eastern Farms Ltd., W.P. Griffin, and Stavert Farms. Those meetings have been appreciated by the Board, as it provides an opportunity for direct discussions among potato farmers in the area and the Minister and Deputy. Minister Thompson, a dairy farmer as well as Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Justice, initiated this approach as he likes to meet fellow farmers in their yards. The most recent meeting, July 7th, was hosted by Donald Stavert and his family at their farm in Freetown, and we thank them for their work in hosting the morning meeting.

Time for Post Harvest Test Samples

Samples for Bacterial Ring Rot and Post Harvest Virus Testing are commonly collected during harvest. Accurate test results are based on the assumption that samples are collected randomly and are representative of the entire seed lot.

To obtain the best sample and ensure you receive your result in a timely manner:

- **Determine the sample size required based on total seed lot acres.**
- **Take tubers from each load of potatoes that are harvested from the seed lot.**
- **Ensure that potatoes are taken from each field making up the seed lot if multiple fields will be combined in storage.**
- **Stay in touch with your provincial inspector regarding sample collection and deadline dates for sample submission.**

Visitors from Thailand

Representatives from the trade commissionaire of Thailand in Canada, under the Department of International Trade Promotion (DITP), Ministry of Commerce, Royal Thai government visited PEI in mid September. The Royal Thai Consulate-General has two offices in Canada, one in Toronto and the other in Vancouver. Their mandate is to promote trade and investment between Thailand and Canada.

Representatives were in the Atlantic provinces to explore sourcing opportunities, and exporting raw material to Thailand. They have received inquiries from Thai companies who are looking for lobster and seafood products as well as agri-food products such potatoes.

A Free Trade Agreement between Canada and ASEAN is under development which could lead to new opportunities for increased trade in the near future.

The group was accompanied by Mr. Darryl Bradley from Innovation PEI. They visited Monaghan Farms, who currently export fresh for chipping potatoes to Thailand. They met with Terry, Derrick and Katelyn Curley from Monaghan Farms, Greg Donald and Brenda Simmons from the PEI Potato Board and Chris Jordan of AAFC to discuss potato production in PEI and opportunities for increased trade with Thailand.



Representatives from the Trade Commissionaire of Thailand in Canada visited Monaghan Farms in Norboro in early September to learn about potato production in PEI and discuss potential for increasing exports from PEI to their country. Attending the meeting were left to right: Brenda Simmons, Assistant General Manager of the PEI Potato Board; Darryl Bradley from Innovation PEI; Terry Curley of Monaghan Farms; Mr. Thanakrit Luangasnathip, Director & Consul (Commercial); Mr. Donnie Kovit, Chief Marketing Analyst; Derrick Curley, Monaghan Farms; and Greg Donald, General Manager of the PEI Potato Board. Photo: K. Curley.

COVID-19 Not in the Rearview Mirror Yet

As of September 18, 2021, 85% of Island residents 12 and over are fully vaccinated and 93% have received at least one dose of the vaccine. Unfortunately, as the recent outbreak of COVID-19 at a Charlottetown school has shown - we are not out of the woods yet. The Delta variant and the fact that the percentage of the population fully vaccinated is lower in younger age groups, may be contributing to the latest numbers. This means that COVID restrictions carry on.

Public Health recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 will continue to be practiced on farms during the 2021 harvest season. At first glance it would seem that with the current rate of vaccination, the threat of having workers get sick during harvest time is much reduced over what we faced in 2020. However, the fourth wave being experienced throughout Canada with the Delta variant should give us pause and encourage farmers to think ahead. The PEI Department of Agriculture and Land website provides points to consider as we approach the busy harvest season (<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/agriculture-and-land/farmers-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions>):

Make a Plan – Being Prepared is Good Business

- Make sure you have a business continuity or emergency plan in place.
- Think about what you will do if a number of your employees become sick.
- Support employees who may become ill. Talk to your staff about flexible hours or alternative work options should they need to stay at home for an extended period.
- Support proper infection prevention and control measures in your business. Post hand washing signs, provide alcohol based hand rub to encourage frequent hand hygiene and ensure space/surface cleaning is completed.

Are you able to work with a smaller crew, do you have any back up people you could call if any workers on your regular crew become sick? Another

factor many farms may be dealing with is having some employees who are vaccinated and some who are not. Testing before the harvest period begins and continued mask use is warranted.

The Chief Public Health office also encourages individuals to follow routine prevention measures:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow or a tissue
- Get vaccinated
- Stay home if you are not feeling well
- Limit touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Keep your circle of contacts small
- Physical distance - stay two meters (6 feet) apart
- Don't share items like drinking glasses and water bottles
- Frequently clean surfaces like taps, doorknobs and counter tops
- Visit a drop-in-clinic to be tested if you have COVID-19 symptoms.

These are good reminders to help ensure another healthy and successful harvest season on PEI.



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Marketing Report

Virtual Reality

by Mark Phillips

We have teamed up once again with Craig Harris of Furrow Creative to shoot some Virtual Reality video to share with our retail partners. When the pandemic struck, and travel was suspended we needed to be creative to find ways to stay connected to our retailers. While Zoom calls are a great way to get information to retailers, a lot of folks are “zoomed out”, so we teamed up with Furrow Creative and made plans to film some Virtual Reality (VR) videos that allow us to take people directly onto the farm.

This is unlike previous film work we have had completed. The footage is shot using a special camera to get the 3 D effect. Users put their phone into a virtual reality cardboard headset provided by the Board which allows the viewer to watch the footage and feel like they are actually interacting with the video as they view it. The footage follows the camera eye-line so that viewers see the sky, the ground and side to side as if they were actually there. With retailers not able to travel, and some Canadian retailers working from home well into 2022, this will be a great tool to connect with our buyers. Those we’ve shared the news with seem very excited to experience this new tool.



Setting up the special virtual reality camera to film one of the planting sequences at Hilltop Farms.

Plans include film from planting, growing, grading, harvesting operations, and more. So far, we have shot a planting sequence with Craig McCloskey of Howmac Farms, growing and harvesting sequences on Hilltop Farms with Andrew Lawless and a packing sequence at East Point Potato. More will follow.

While the main purpose of this exercise was to reach retailers during a time when visits and in person travel has been unavailable, there may be many other uses of the VR material once it is ready. We’ve talked about new ways to reach out to younger generations, and also how people are further removed from the farm than ever before. While it may be impractical to bring all students to the farm, we can take them there virtually. Using the virtual reality footage for an educational component in schools will really help them understand what goes on at the farm, and why our farmers do the things they do.

Another potential use is in hospitals and senior homes. People who are unable to leave their location, but would love a throw back to the farm. We’ve already had preliminary talks with people at the QEH, who are very interested in this kind of technology for some of their new programs.

When we are finally able to travel for tradeshow again, the VR technology will be a great way to draw people to our booths at events like PMA and CPMA. It’s always nice to have something unique at our booth in order to make it a “can’t miss” spot. In the past, large retailers like Chiquita have used VR technology to share their story, and it has been very effective.

To ensure we get the most out of our VR investment, we plan to reach out to influencers on social media. By sharing it to select influencers with a large and relevant number of followers, we hope more people will get eyes on the work and that more people will check it out on their own. As the public becomes more and more disconnected from agriculture, any way we can help consumers and the public understand where their food comes from, helps fulfill our goals.

We are in the process of putting together press kits for the retailers, which will be ready in the coming weeks, and will be delivered before our planned fall meetings. They will help us package the VR goggles in an attractive presentation to share with retailers, line up influencers, develop a microsite, and reach as many eyes as possible.

We are excited about our new VR assets and can’t wait to share them with you!

Modern Family Farms

Part II

Marvyn's Garden Inc. is a multigenerational farm tucked away on a scenic side road in Eastern Kings County, midway between the south and north shores of the Island. It is a good example of a modern family farm that has adapted what it produces, how it produces and how it markets to continue to meet the demands of the marketplace in 2021.

When Marvyn Robertson started farming with his father Boswell and uncle Edwin, they operated a mixed farm with dairy and both seed and fresh potatoes. Marvyn started farming full-time as soon as he was finished school and over time they transitioned out of dairy to a solely potato and field crop farm.

There was always lots to do on the farm when Marvyn's sons Chad and Brad were small and Chad remembers helping out at a young age – moving trucks, driving tractors, roguing potatoes in the summer and helping in the warehouse in the fall and winter. While developing a good work ethic they were also learning the ins and outs of the potato business. Both boys joined their father on the

farm when they finished school in the early 2000's to be the sixth generation of Robertsons on the farm. Together they operate Marvyn's Garden Inc.

The farm took on a processing contract soon after Chad joined the farm full-time; however, the fresh and seed sides of the business remained important elements. In 2009, a local packing plant that they supplied came up for sale, and with encouragement from their father, Chad and Brad formed a partnership with their uncle Boyd Rose and his brother Myles (neighbouring potato farmers) and formed East Point Potatoes. While the owners still supply the lion's share of the product for East Point, the business has grown over time and they now buy potatoes from growers across the Island. They take pride in treating their fellow farmers as they like to be treated and do their best to offer fair and competitive prices. In 2017, they gave up their processing contract and in 2019 planted their last seed crop. This allows them to focus on fresh potato production and the buying and selling side of the business.

Like many farm families that work well together, over

time the Robertsons have all developed their own niche in terms of tasks and responsibilities. Brad looks after the fertility aspect and Chad and Marvyn look after spray operations. Brad operates the planter in the spring while Chad and Marvyn look after set cutting and field preparation. They mix it up in the fall with Brad in the warehouse and Chad and Marvyn in the field. Brad and Marvyn are more mechanically minded and handle the tinkering and equipment maintenance. Marvyn's wife Marjorie keeps the books and Chad helps with the finances and other business aspects of the operation. The family alone is not enough to run the farm however, and they are all quick to point out the value of their fulltime staff and seasonal crews and comment "you can't grow potatoes without good reliable help."

In the years since Marvyn's Garden was incorporated, and especially since the boys started farming, environmental issues and climate change concerns have become top of mind on the farm as they have in society as a whole.



Left to right: Brad, Chad and Marvyn Robertson are starting to get ready for harvest as the 2021 growing season winds down. Photo: M.K. Sonier.

Installation of grassed waterways and berms has become almost standard practice with the number increasing each year. The topography and cropping history of each field is evaluated to determine the need for soil conservation structures or the expansion of grassed headlands. These measures have definitely been helping to reduce the negative impact of extreme weather events in recent years. Another key focus in the agriculture community as a whole, as well as on the Robertson farm, has been improving soil health and increasing their use of cover crops. They keep up to date on local research and have been trying different rotation crops such as sorghum sudan grass, mustard and multispecies mixes to build up soil organic matter levels and reduce populations of soil borne pests that can negatively impact potato yield and quality. They spread barley seed before harvest and also after fall plowing (which is followed by a light harrow to encourage emergence of the grain seed). They have also recently started growing some winter wheat. All these measures are helping them to reach their goal of having done their best to ensure that all fields will have some kind of cover over the winter/spring period when bare soil is very prone to erosion.

Technology plays a big role in modern farming practices. The Robertsons do site specific soil sampling on their fields which then enables variable rate lime and fertilizer applications. They use GPS technology on their tractors and have a yield monitor on their harvester. The yield monitor helps to evaluate changes they are making in the field and see if they are making a positive difference. Both boys use social media and podcasts to keep up to date with what



is new in the agriculture industry and to share what they are trying on the farm. Brad can often be found posting beautiful drone shots of farming activities throughout the year.

The number of varieties being grown at Marvyn's Garden has increased over time. Marvyn and his father were growing mainly Superior when he started out. When they expanded into processing they grew Russet Burbank for many years. Changing the variety mix helps to keep up with changing markets but also has impacts for sustainability. This year they are growing 14 different varieties from yellow flesh to reds to new russets. Shorter season varieties allow earlier harvest and a chance to get a better catch on cover crops. As well, some of the newer varieties use nitrogen more efficiently than Russet Burbank and have improved pest and disease resistance which can lead to lower input requirements.

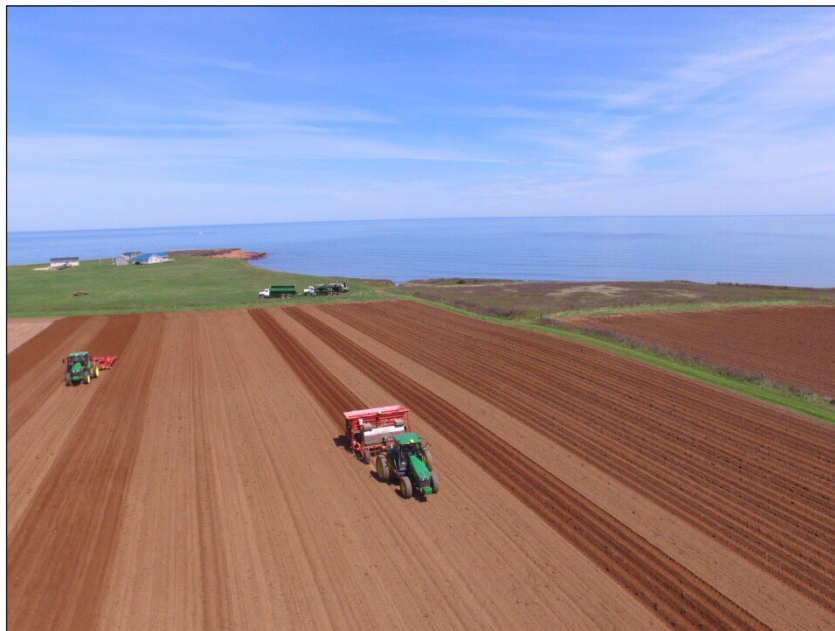
Marvyn's wife Marjorie has always been fully involved on the farm. As Chad says "She keep the books and then does everything from spreading grain seed ahead of the harvester to all the other little things that keep the farm running smoothly." Chad's wife Jennifer is a medical



AAC Red Fox and Campagna are two new varieties being evaluated at Marvyn's Garden in 2021.



secretary at the Souris Hospital and Brad's wife Leah works in the office at East Point Potatoes. Their younger sister Deanna, while not involved in the business, lives on one of the farm properties close by. Marvyn and Marjorie are glad their children are all close by and that they can be involved in the lives of their five grandsons on an everyday basis. Chad comments that with all the large and high tech equipment used on the farm these days it is harder to get kids involved in the day to day operations of a potato farm the way he and Brad did when they were small. The next generation is much too young to know what they want to do when they grow up, but providing the opportunity for the kids to tag along to field days, drive around to check the crops, hang out in the shop and be more involved as they grow older will help to foster that love of the land and place the Robertsons all share.



One of Brad's drone shots from planting in 2018.

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POTATO GROWERS OF CANADA

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Historical Pricing Trend on PEI's Fresh Potato Crop

by Kevin MacIsaac, General Manager, UPGC

(Acknowledgement and thank you for the data collection and analysis by: Mark Phillips, Emmanuel Okpetu, and Debbie Hirst of the PEI Potato Board.)

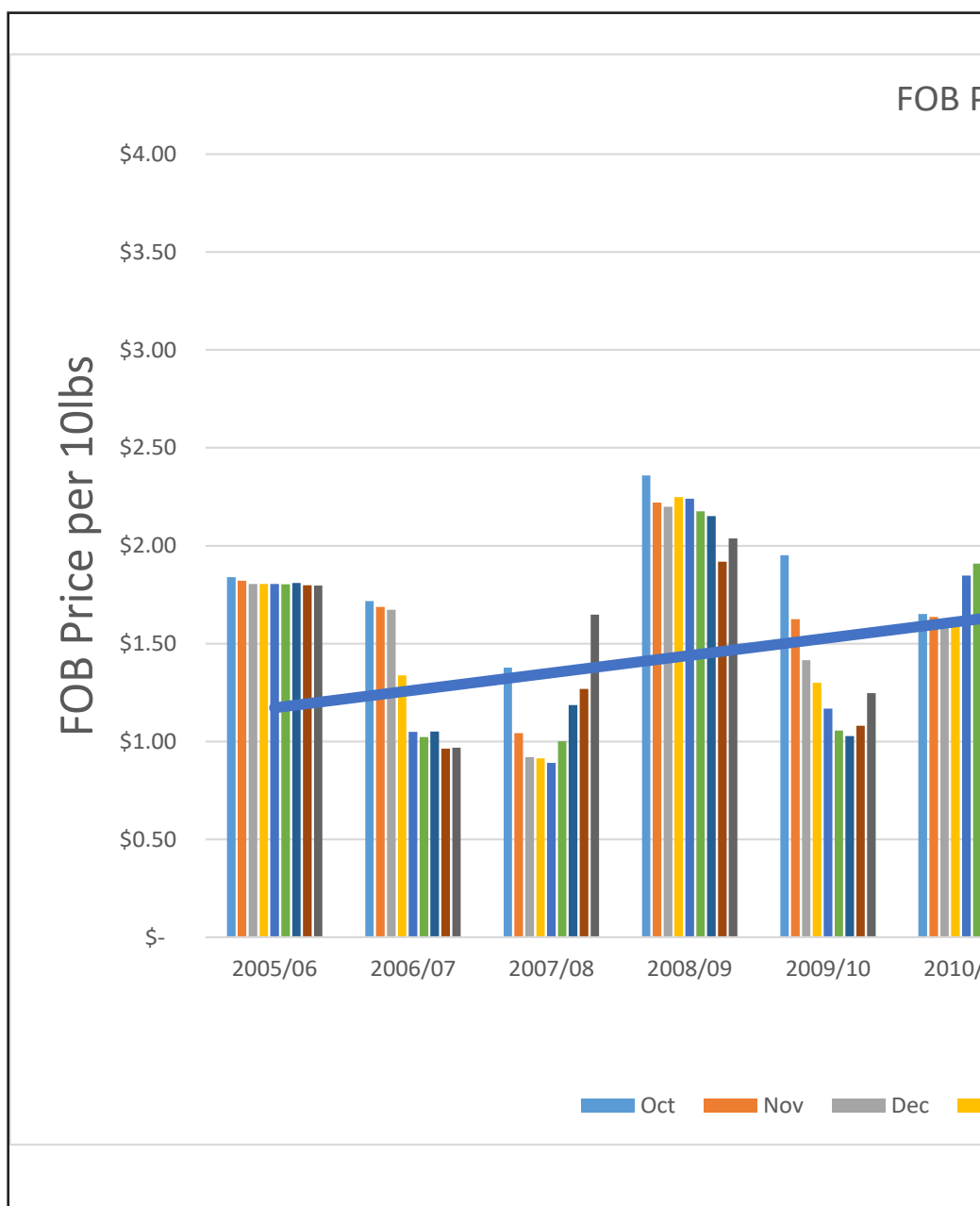
One of the most common questions I get asked from people outside the industry, and also from those within, is "How's the price of potatoes this year?" When one looks at the accompanying graph, the simple answer is, "prices have been good".

The other part of the discussion that needs to be had, is that table prices need to be good – growers' cost of production have increased, packing shed labour is more expensive, packaging material costs have increased, and freight costs have gone through the roof.

Table pricing has not always been this positive and I was reminded of this some time ago while sitting with some producers at a conference in one of our newer potato growing provinces in the country. These producers really did not have a good understanding or appreciation of some of the pain and suffering experienced years ago which brought stability to the industry that has contributed to the current state of prices that are above the cost of production and return a small profit to the primary producer. Personally, our farm has packed potatoes for as low as \$2.00/50lb (back in 2000 when the border closed to exports) to a high of \$12.00/50 lbs (in a year of very diminished supply). Banking institutions do not have an appreciation for this financial volatility in building cash flow projections or profitability models.

You will notice that the start of the timeline in the graphic illustration,

corresponds with the formation of the United Potato Growers of Canada in 2006, which has the mission of improving grower returns by better matching supply with demand. Albert Wada, President of the United Potato Growers of America, introduced this concept to PEI after US growers experienced frustration in having large buyers dictate what price potatoes would be sold for and farmers taking huge losses.



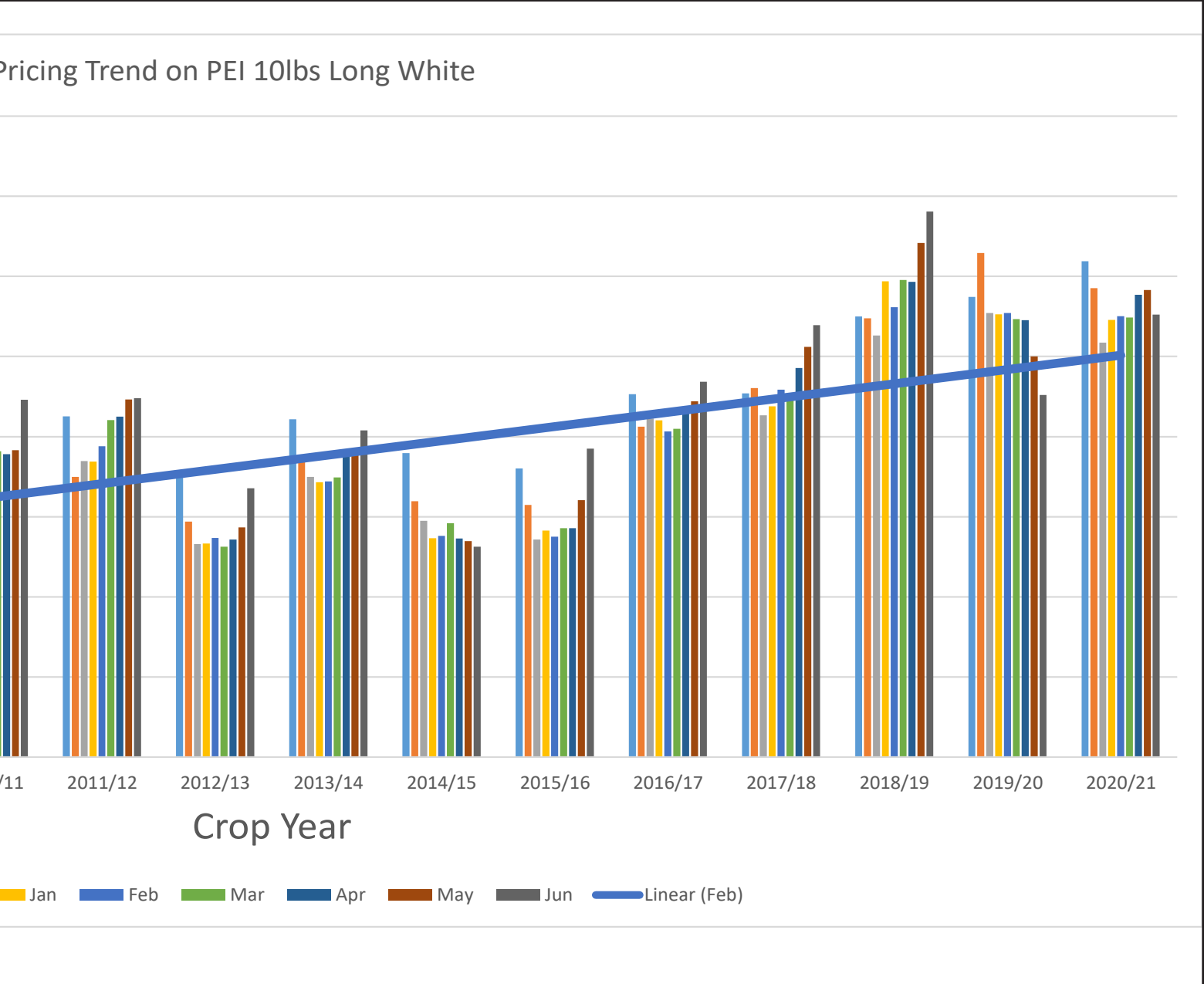
In conjunction with strong grower organizations like the PEI Potato Board, the communication of data and market information back to growers and shippers has had a very positive influence on this curve. The data can be extrapolated Canada wide, but this particular graph is exclusive to PEI, which is known to have the most accurate data collecting and reporting system in the country. We could also have used more sophisticated data such as the Fresh Weighted Average (FWA) or Grower Return Index (GRI) but for a simple take home message, the price of tens from 2006 to 2021 illustrates it best.

The blue line represents Trendline Pricing on February 1st over a period of 15 years. In 2006, tens FOB were \$1.15 and in 2021 tens were \$2.50. There are higher or lower prices in some years, but the trendline indicator helps remove some of the outside or other contributing factors

for price determination. Some examples are competition from other provinces and other countries, processing expansion requirements, and of course weather, one of the biggest determinants of supply.

So, take a look back, and analyze how each of these years affected your crop and subsequent profitability on your farm. Here is the take home message: in a year where an excellent growing season has provided a potentially very good harvest (although not dug yet) to the major tablestock growing regions of the country, it is important not to give up some of what we have already achieved, just because the volume may have changed.

Lowering price only sells that load – it does not sell more loads throughout the season. Best of luck to all potato growers in their harvest this fall!



2021 Industry Field Days

by Ryan Barrett, Research and Agronomy Specialist, PEIPB

Late summer and early fall is normally a good time to get together with producers and industry partners to get a sneak peek of how the potato crops are progressing and share some of the on-farm trials that are underway. Again this year, we held three AIM tours (September 1 and 7) to showcase some of the work that is being done across the province. These were then followed by four on-farm variety trial tours hosted by Cavendish Farms (September 8-9) and the Cavendish Farms Research Field Day on September 17.

AIM Field Tours:

The first AIM tour was held in Kings County on the afternoon of September 1st. It was a warm and sunny day, but the impending arrival of Post Tropical Storm Ida meant that a lot of growers were trying to get field work finished before the rain. Nonetheless, we had a good group to view some of the work being done with eastern growers, including: AIM physiological age trial, PEIDAL/Genesis Crop Systems nitrogen response trial, AIM/Living Labs crop rotation trial featuring Caliente mustard and oilseed radish, and an AIM trial on the use of Quash fungicide. We also had a presentation from Evan MacDonald on his Board-supported research into the use of SWAT maps as part of variable rate seed spacing trial. Thanks to MacAulay Farms and Black Pond Farms for hosting us in their fields for these

trials.

Due to the heavy rainfall brought by Ida, our next two tours were pushed to September 7th. In the morning, we visited fields belonging to MWM Farms and Dunk River Farms to view a number of trials, including: AIM/Living Labs trials on soil-building rotation crops and fall cover crops ahead of potatoes, another PEIDAL/Genesis N response trial, an AIM trial looking at the use of mustards for biofumigation, and an AIM/UPEI trial investigating the use of soil electroconductivity data to detect differences in soil compaction. Dr. Aitazaz Farooque from UPEI was on hand to show off the DualEM2 sensor that they use as well as the specifics of this research project, with the goal of using electroconductivity to detect what parts of a field might be compacted and at what depth. This research is proposed to continue for another year.

In the afternoon, we hosted a tour in West Prince. Our first stop was to a field owned by Wallace Properties in Alma where we have been running an AIM trial for the past three years on the differential effect of different forage species (alfalfa, red clover, white clover, ryegrass) on potato early dying. This was followed by a trek down to Springfield West to a couple fields owned by MacLennan Properties, where we viewed another AIM physiological age trial as well as another mustard biofumigation trial. Both of these trials are done under contract with Genesis Crop Systems. Evan



Dr. Aitazaz Farooque discussing his AIM-supported research on detecting soil compaction with soil electroconductivity sensors. Photo: R. Barrett.



Samples of Mountain Gems from an AIM trial in West Prince investigating the effect of different forages on potato early dying.

MacDonald also joined us to again discuss his research into variable rate seed spacing, this time done in an irrigated field with the MacLennans.

Cavendish Variety Trial Tours and Research Day:

On September 8th and 9th, Cavendish Farms staff hosted a series of on-farm variety trial tours at four sites across the province. At each field, Newton Yorinori and

Dwayne McNeill would tag-team to walk attendees through each of the varieties in the trial, highlighting observed strengths and weaknesses of each variety from what they've seen under local growing conditions, as well as discussing how they may or may not fit into procurement plans for the company. Overall, observed yields from 10 foot strips were very encouraging, with many samples already exceeding 300 cwt/acre with quite a bit of life left in the plants. The highest yielding sample exceeded 500 cwt/acre on the yellow-fleshed Fontane variety, which dominates the European French fry market. It was heartening to see such promising samples in comparison to those seen in the last couple of years that were the result of dry seasons experienced in 2019 and 2020.

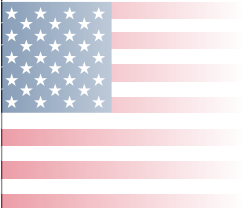
On September 17, a Field Research Day was hosted for growers and industry partners at the Cavendish Farms research site in New Annan. Attendees were split into four groups and rotated amongst trial sites for discussions on research on variety evaluation, seed management, precision agriculture and testing the effect of varying spacing and fertilizer rates for new varieties. A major focus of the research trials is to develop or build on current variety management recommendations for PEI conditions. This information can help growers to be more successful in the early stages of growing a new variety. Yield and quality data and summaries from these trials will be shared with growers this winter.

Newton and his research team are also looking forward to the first field harvest of lines originating from the new Cavendish Farms Potato Breeding Program.



(left to right) Newton Yorinori, Director of Ag Research, Breeding and Seed Development at Cavendish Farms and Bernadette Forrester, with Cavendish Agri Services describe the spacing and fertilizer trials with new varieties at the well attended Cavendish Research Field Day on September 17 in New Annan.

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Packaging and Sustainability

by Mary Kay Sonier

For shipping fresh potatoes, poly is still king, however sustainability concerns among consumers, retailers and the rest of the supply chain is driving the exploration of alternative options. Thane Smallwood and his sales team at PEI Bag Co. Limited in Central Bedeque, PEI are keeping on top of the trends and preparing for change.

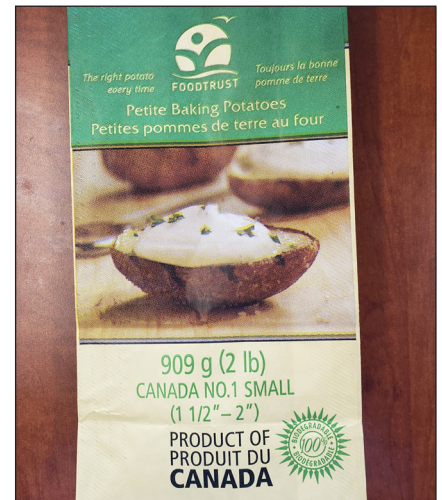
“Initiatives in reducing single use poly bags, such as the ban in PEI, have been expanding to the rest of Canada. In our industry, organizations such as the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) have initiated a Plastics Packaging Working Group focusing on ways to reduce and ensure recycle-ability of poly used in fresh produce,” he comments.

Paper potato bags are one alternative to poly and the potato packaging industry has seen a slight uptick in the demand for paper packs - particularly in the packaging for 3 and 5 pound options that have been almost exclusively poly until now. The demand is being driven by some brands that are associated with an environmentally conscious market such as organic producers, Trader Joe’s and Earthfresh to name a few.

However, it is not as simple as going to back to paper bags. Packaging has changed over the years to adapt to consumers’ desire to see what is in the bag. To address this demand, those who packaged in solid paper bags adapted by adding a vent view to the bag – a window traditionally

covered with a poly mesh. In 2008, the PEI Bag Company manufactured a small compostable bag with compostable vent view mesh for the local company PEI Food Trust. Now that this option is being explored for wider scale use, there are many moving parts to consider:

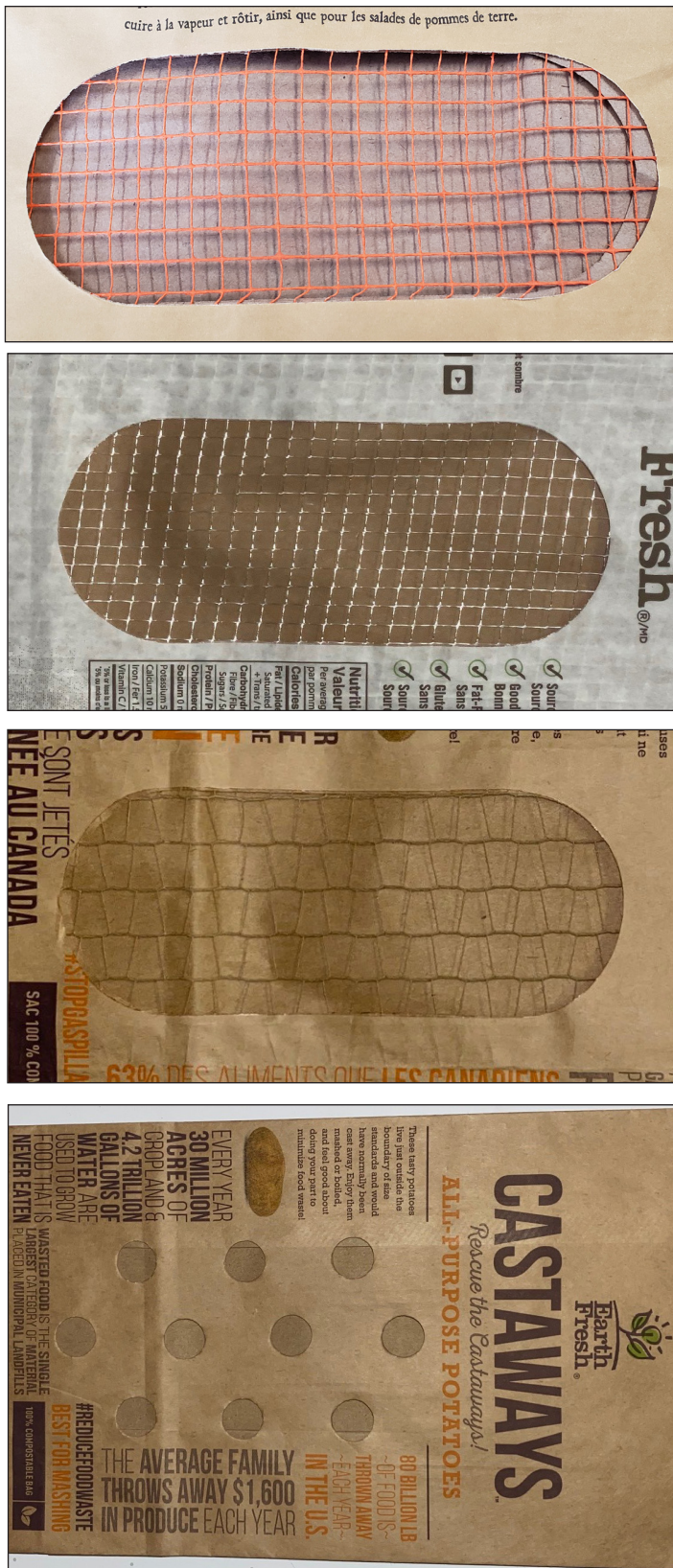
1. Ten years ago inputs such as inks and glues were not compostable, but now all those used by PEI Bag Company are certified to food grade standard. Replacing the poly mesh is another complication. Team member Pranav Trivedi, Purchase and Business Development Manager with PEI Bag Co., has spent some of his time working with suppliers to identify products that will fill this need – and there are options such as a poly lactic acid material made with cornstarch or sugarcane that is available in the US, a paper fibre mesh available from Mexico and cotton mesh coated with starch available from Europe.



Compostable bag developed by PEI Bag Co. Ltd in 2008.



The sales team at PEI Bag Co. Ltd. look over compostable bag options. Left to right: Trevor Smith, Sales Manager; Thane Smallwood, General Manager; Pranav Trivedi, Purchasing and Sales; and Colton Dawson, Packaging/Technical Sales.



Options for compostable paper bags that still allow consumers to see the product - vent view panels made using compostable materials - (from top to bottom) a cotton based mesh coated with starch, a compostable poly mesh made with PLA starch based product (center), a paper fiber mesh window and a die cut pattern for a paper bag. Photos courtesy PEI Bag Co. Ltd.

2. The technology is there and the materials work, but COVID has thrown a wrench into the supply chain. As with so many other products from semiconductors to lumber, COVID has negatively impacted the availability of raw materials, and shortages of labour and shipping containers add to the problem of obtaining reliable supplies. Plans are in the works for orders for compostable bags, but large orders are difficult to confirm with the current difficulty in ensuring the raw materials will be on hand.
3. Predicting what the demand will be for certification and documentation to verify packages are compostable is unknown at this time. Sales rep Colton Dawson spends part of his time compiling the written confirmation from all suppliers to ensure that the raw materials that go into making a paper bag are compostable. With this information on file, PEI Bag has developed their own logo for a compostable bag. As compostable packaging products expand however, Smallwood is already anticipating the need for third party certification and has received some funding support from Innovation PEI to explore this procedure.
4. Deciding on the best option for a compostable bag is another consideration. Replacing the current poly mesh in vent view bags with compostable material is one option, but another is a simple die cut pattern in the paper. Although the holes are primarily for ventilation, patterns would also allow consumers to see the product, but perhaps not as clearly as with the vent view mesh. Wear and tear during the shipping and retail display levels will help to determine the eventual adoption rate of this option.

One of most significant challenges in moving ahead is determining customer demand and consumer education. According to Sales Manager Trevor Smith, certain market segments are looking for compostable or recyclable options, but the mass retailers have not moved in that direction yet. Starting gradually is not a bad thing however, and Smith feels it will allow them to see what package types work and have the best consumer acceptance.

Smallwood feels that all the background work they are doing will stand them in good stead when consumer demand picks up. At that point, consumer education and labelling will be key. Consumers need to know if a package is compostable or recyclable and how to properly dispose of the product – will it go in a green bin or a blue bin – so they can do their part in reducing the waste going to landfill.

For now, Smallwood and his team at PEI Bag Co. are keeping up with the competition and preparing for a more sustainable future.

An Update From the:

PEI Department of Agriculture and Land

by Lorraine MacKinnon, Potato Industry Coordinator



Applications open for Agriculture Stewardship Programs!

As of September 15, applications have been open for the PEI Department of Agriculture & Land's (PEIDAL) suite of Stewardship Programs, funded through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. Erosion Control Structures, Irrigation Efficiency, Soil-Building Crops, IPM Data-based Decisions and Winter Cover Cropping are just a few of the Best Management Practices funded.

A relatively new component of the Agriculture Stewardship Program is Merit-based Soil Conservation. Projects considered would benefit both producers and adjacent landowners through watershed-scale conservation improvements, and protection of environmentally sensitive areas. Improvements include the installation of soil conservation structures with the goal of i) reducing topsoil loss due to erosion and ii) reducing impacts to surface and/

or groundwater from siltation and nutrient leaching off-site. Projects considered to be high merit may include fields located in close proximity to environmentally sensitive areas or watersheds, fields where integrated soil conservation structures would involve multiple landowners within a watershed, and fields where erosion has impacted adjacent landowners or transportation corridors.

Producers have been inquiring about winter cover crops, which can help avoid nutrient loss and soil erosion. Across the Island last winter, there was excellent establishment of winter cover crops. For producers who aren't aware, the Winter Cover Crop program offers \$35 of assistance per acre up to a maximum of \$1,000 per field (\$3,000 per year) is available for eligible Winter Cover Crop expenses.

For more information on these, or any of the Agriculture Stewardship Programs, contact agstewardship@gov.pe.ca, or phone 902-368-4880.

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International Potato Technology Expo 2022

Planning for the 2022 International Potato Technology Expo is currently underway! Master Promotions Ltd., the event management company, reports that major show sponsors have returned, and there's already good exhibitor registration. The PEIDAL and the PEI Potato Board will once again coordinate a conference alongside the tradeshow. One change for 2022 is that the show will be held on a Thursday-Friday, instead of Friday-Saturday. The event will take place in adherence to guidance by the Chief Public Health Office.

Mark Thursday February 24 and Friday February 25 on your calendars!

Harvest Safety

As harvest gets into full swing, farmers and farm employees should re-familiarize themselves with the basics of harvesting safety. Often harvest takes place under tight timelines and stressful situations. Long days can lead to fatigue which increases the risk of accidents. Workers should be trained, supervised, and equipped with the necessary PPE for their task (reflective clothing, proper footwear, pesticide PPE if applying post-harvest pesticides, etc).

The PEI Workers Compensation Board has compiled a list of Safety Guidelines for Potato Producers (available at <http://www.wcb.pe.ca>).

Harvest Safety around Powered Equipment:

- Equip machinery with the proper guarding, including chains and sprockets, PTO shafts and belts.
- Make sure trucks and harvesters are equipped with backup alarms.
- Park harvesters in a safe area, turn equipment off, remove key and engage safety devices before adjusting, cleaning or servicing equipment.
- Replace any guards that have been temporarily removed for maintenance.
- Ensure that equipment has safety lights, reflectors and a slow-moving vehicle sign, and do not allow anyone other than the operator to ride equipment when travelling on public roads.
- Shut off rear-facing work lights when travelling roads to avoid confusing oncoming traffic.
- Be aware of power lines when moving equipment.
- Wait until the equipment and all moving parts come to a complete stop before getting on and off the equipment.
- Once stopped, do not move the equipment until the

operator, or a person designated by the operator, is sure that no one is at risk. Be aware of equipment blind spots.

- Wear a reflective vest when working around moving equipment and in fields during harvesting.
- When unloading, trucks do not begin the "backing in" process until a designated person is in place to assist and direct the driver. All other workers remain clear of the operation.

From "Safety Guidelines for Potato Producers", http://www.wcb.pe.ca/DocumentManagement/Document/pub_safetyguidelinesforpotatoproducers.pdf

Harvest is inherently a stressful time; a time when things like proper rest, healthy meals, social connection and taking breaks seem impossible. But these are known to support mental health, and the consequences of poor mental health are increasingly apparent in our world. Please visit www.farmerstalk.ca if you want to know more about mental health resources for PEI farmers, and take good care of yourselves.



Industry Updates

United Potato Growers of Canada General Manager, Kevin MacIsaac, is Retiring After 10 Years of Service

September 1, 2021 - Kevin MacIsaac, who has been General Manager of the United Potato Growers of Canada since October 1, 2011 announced he will be retiring this fall.

MacIsaac's diversified career over a 42 year timespan includes dedicated service as an extension agronomist, farmer, industry organizer and a knowledgeable and eloquent advocate.

MacIsaac felt the time was right for a change, "I was fortunate to have the life experience of being a farmer for 27 years; milking cows, growing cereal and protein crops and of course lots of potatoes. Just as rewarding was the opportunity to work for potato growers across Canada in the last decade, to bolster the concept of balanced supply and demand, and profitability to the grower members of the United Potato Growers of Canada."

The General Manager's work over the past decade leaves the United Potato Growers of Canada, in good shape - a strong credible organization, with members from the east coast of Prince Edward Island to the west coast of British Columbia. UPGC was founded in 2006 with the mission of providing timely information allowing growers to make informed production and marketing decisions. It works with its sister organization, United Potato Growers of America, which has similar goals.

MacIsaac was hired by the organization ten years ago to increase its capacity to determine the available supply of potatoes for fresh, seed and processing markets. Kevin was also a well-known participant in national and international potato organizations, and spoke at grower meetings across the country. One of the highlights of his job was the development of a strong, mutually respectful working relationship with counterparts in the United Potato Growers of America and their grower membership.

Kevin began his profession after graduating from the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and the University of Guelph, becoming an extension agronomist with the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture. Subsequently, he and his brother Blair operated Lily Pond Farms Ltd., a family farm business in Bear River, Prince Edward Island. He has taken on roles with many farm organizations including Chair of the PEI Potato Board, Chair of the PEI Soil and Crop Improvement Association, and Director of the PEI Processing Committee.

Ray Keenan, Chair of the United Potato Growers of Canada said, "We always appreciated the experience Kevin brought to the table, his knowledge of our industry and his ability to communicate with growers across the country were very strong attributes. In addition, he was a tireless promoter of our organization among our international partners and comrades, and raised UPGC's profile with growers and other industry members. We thank him for all his work, and wish him well in his future endeavors."

With some additional free time, Kevin hopes to spend some more time with his 6 grandchildren and continue his hobby of being a runner, having qualified for the Boston Marathon next spring.

UPGC hopes to have a replacement for the position by this fall and is actively seeking applications for the GM position at this time.

For further information contact Info@unitedpotatocanada.com

Wendy's Canada Launches New-Recipe Hot & Crispy Fries

August 26, 2021 - Soggy fries are a thing of the past at Wendy's Canada with the introduction its new Hot & Crispy Fry – something the brand says is "going to disrupt the category."

Wendy's reinvented fries are made with real potatoes produced in Canada, are natural cut with skin-on and feature a whisper of coating to ensure maximum crispiness.

More than 20 different cuts and shapes were tested to land this optimal design built for heat, protection and crispiness:

- Not a perfect square; the thick side retains heat while the thinner sides enhance crispiness.
- The fries have just a whisper of coating to avoid any barriers to the potato experience Wendy's customers are looking for.
- It was critical for Wendy's that the drive-thru and delivery options offered the same quality hot & crispy fries as the in-restaurant experience. Reliable delivery isn't just for pizza anymore.
- The new Fry solves the problem of settling for a disappointing fry experience for fans – once and for all.

The brand's new Hot & Crispy fries are currently available at restaurants in Eastern Canada and will be available in all Canadian locations by mid-September 2021.

North America's Leading Potato Event Returns

Master Promotions is thrilled to invite potato industry members back to Eastlink Centre in Charlottetown, PEI for the 2022 edition of the International Potato Technology Expo, which will take place February 24 & 25, 2022. This event is the perfect opportunity to reconnect after these long and challenging months.

Focusing on harvesters, sprayers, pilers, cultivators, storage, climatization technology, tractors, bagging machinery, packaging, seed cutters, plant genetics, seeds and more... there's no better way to market your products and services to a qualified audience.

New Weekdays and Times

Show attendees have spoken and we have listened. After speaking with and surveying exhibitors and visitors we had made a few changes to the show format. The 2022 show will be held on Thursday and Friday. As well, we will be extending the hours on the Thursday to 7PM in order to offer more time for people to attend the event.

Conference

Once again, we are happy to be working with the PEI Department of Agriculture and the PEI Potato Board to present a 2-day seminar program which will be offered on the morning of both show days. This quality seminar program makes this event a must attend for growers across PEI, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and further.

For additional information contact: INTERNATIONAL POTATO TECHNOLOGY EXPO at POTATOEXPO.CA

Government of Canada Increases Total AgriRecovery Funding to up to \$500 Million to Support Farmers Facing Extreme Weather

August 15, 2021 – Ottawa, Ontario – Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Today, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, announced that the Government of Canada has increased total AgriRecovery funding to up to \$500 million to address extraordinary costs faced by producers due to drought and wildfires. This includes initial funding of \$100 million announced on August 6, 2021.

Given the extraordinary circumstances that farmers in Western Canada and parts of Ontario are facing, this increased funding ensures the federal government is ready to contribute to eligible provincial AgriRecovery costs on the 60-40 cost-shared basis outlined under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

The Government of Canada and the governments of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario continue to work with the utmost urgency

to complete joint assessments of the disaster and launch support programs. This will include direct assistance to affected livestock and agricultural producers, and help them with added costs of obtaining livestock feed, transportation and water.

Producers can also apply for interim payments under AgriStability to help them cope with immediate financial challenges. The Government of Canada and the governments of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario have agreed to increase the 2021 AgriStability interim benefit payment percentage from 50% to 75%, so producers can access a greater portion of their benefit early to meet their urgent needs. British Columbia and Manitoba have also opened up late participation in AgriStability to farmers who did not register in 2021 so they can benefit from this important income support.

In addition to this support, the Government of Canada announced designations for Livestock Tax Deferral on July 22, 2021, and August 6, 2021, for prescribed drought regions in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. The Government of Canada continues to stand with farm families during this difficult time and is taking concrete action to respond.

Agriculture Podcasts Are On The Rise – And For Good Reason

Seeding, driving to town for supplies, yard or barn work — common, important tasks around the farm that also open the door to multi-tasking — which is where a growing number of Canadian farmers see podcasts fitting into their lives. If you haven't jumped on the podcast bandwagon yet, it's likely you know someone who has.

Agricultural economist Brad McCallum of Truro, N.S., is a podcast aficionado. As a frequent traveller to agricultural meetings throughout the province and the country, he uses the travel time to learn.

"I got tired watching the same movies and listening to the same music over and over," McCallum says. "I wanted to do something more useful with my time, so I started downloading podcasts."

McCallum, who is executive director of AgriCommodity Management Association, wanted to increase engagement with members of Nova Scotia's livestock sector and delivery of advance payment programs, so he launched Maritime AgCast podcast to keep livestock farmers up-to-date with reliable information.

Maritime AgCast is a part of the growing podcast phenomenon in Canada. In its 2020 report, The Infinite Dial, Edison Research and Triton Digital said the introduction of unlimited data plans by Canada's top three mobile carriers

in June 2019 had a significant impact on online data consumption growth, paving the way for more podcasts.

According to the report, Canadian podcast listeners 18 years of age and older listen to six podcasts a week. Podcast consumption in Canada as a percentage of the population now equals that of the US. Almost one-quarter of the population in Canada listened to a podcast in the past week.

And it's not just younger people who are listening. Nearly one-quarter of podcast consumers are 55 years of age and older - the average age of Canadian farmers.

Podcasts cover various topics, from fictional stories and news updates to historical accounts and learning opportunities. If you have a smartphone – you can listen to an endless variety of podcasts, anytime.

Falling into the category of learning opportunities is another relative newcomer onto the podcast scene, FCC Knowledge: Talking Farm and Food. Marty Seymour, director of industry relations for FCC, hosts the monthly podcast that launched last year. It highlights stories and experiences of farm business entrepreneurs from across Canada and lessons they've learned on their journey, no matter their location or sector.

Episodes are 30-50 minutes long, with Seymour interviewing guests on topics like finance, transition, strategy and leadership.

Such matters can get weighty. But Seymour concentrates on keeping the conversation moving.

"The best interviews paint a picture for listeners," he says. "It's up to the interviewer to keep probing, to get guests to drop nuggets of knowledge throughout the interview for listeners. It's like the relationship between a play-by-play host and a colour commentator on a sports broadcast. They work together."

Seymour says the bulk of podcast interviews are with regular people who know a little something about a specific topic or field. "They make for good listening because the audience can see themselves in the story," he says. "The combination of common language and few boundaries on time speaks to listeners in a novel way."

Podcasts appeal to people with routines. That's when they have the most time to listen.

One of his favourite episodes, "Ranching by the numbers," featured beef producer Ben Campbell of Grazed Right Ranch outside of Calgary, talking about the ups and downs of pursuing profitability.

"He's an excellent rancher with great ideas, and he also talked about his frustrations and vulnerability," says Seymour. "Producers can all relate to these kinds of experiences."

Seymour and McCallum both say podcasts appeal to people with routines – like travelling to town for supplies or carrying out field or barn work. That's when they have the most time to listen.

"Listeners don't have to be laser-focused like when they listen to a story on the radio or an audiobook," says Seymour. "They are the perfect medium for the multi-tasker. Seeding is coming up, and I'm expecting a lot of engagement."

You can binge listen to season 1 of the FCC Knowledge: Talking Farm and Food on any podcast listening platform like Spotify, Apple Music or Stitcher, or [fcc.ca/podcasts](https://www.fcc-fac.ca/).

Article by: Owen Roberts, <https://www.fcc-fac.ca/>

Upcoming Events

Please call the Board at (902) 892-6551 for further information on any of these events. In person events require pre-registration to ensure public health guidelines for gathering limits are met.

November 2021

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Nov 9 | PMANA Fall Meeting. Virtual format. |
| Nov 10 | Monthly Potato Board Meeting. |
| Nov 17 | PEI Potato Board AGM. Charlottetown, PEI & virtual. |

December 2021

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| Dec 2-3 | Canadian Potato Council Fall Meeting. Ottawa, ON. |
| Dec 15 | Monthly Potato Board Meeting. |

January 2022

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| Jan 5 | Potato Business Summit. Anaheim, CA, |
| Jan 5-6 | Potato Expo. Anaheim, CA. |

February 2022

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| Feb 24-25 | International Potato Technology Expo. Charlottetown, PEI. |
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