

Prince Edward Island

November/December 2023
Volume 24 Issue 4

POTATO NEWS



In Our Marketing Issue:

- AGM and Banquet
- Packaging Keeps Changing
- Global Produce and Floral Show



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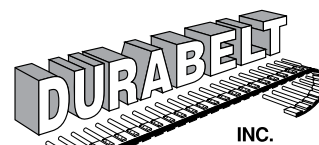
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Cover: PEI Potato Bacon Pie, Shannon McQuaid from Savoury by Shannon



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Chairman's Comments

by John Visser, PEI Potato Board Chairman



I am in Toronto a little early for our upcoming Canadian Potato Council meeting and we are visiting our part Iranian and Jewish granddaughters. I can't help but be grateful to live where we do. We all have issues; however they are a totally different scale than the horrible things happening in the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

In our own industry, we had a successful AGM and banquet in late November. What a great opportunity to get together to review the events of the past year and honour those who have contributed greatly to our industry. The full report can be found on page 7 of this issue.

The Board and staff continue to work hard on the potato wart file, with our efforts directed at proposing that CFIA create a suspect class as well as viability test, which we believe would greatly reduce a farm's risks overall. We continue to work together with CFIA to re-establish pest-free places of production and do everything we can to stay focused on this critical file.

It was a challenging year in some ways with a wetter than normal growing season and harvest, thus our yields are impacted; however, early storage reports are favourable, so continued monitoring will be necessary. Shipping for table and processing is well underway and shipments are tracking ahead of this time last year. While it's still early in the year, it's a great way to start our marketing year.

There are so many stakeholders who contribute to the success of the potato industry, including the Province of Prince Edward Island, who has been and remains very supportive of our potato industry, and for that we thank them.

I want to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and all the best for 2024.

Upcoming Events & Program Deadlines

Please call the Board at (902) 892-6551 for further information on any of these events.

January 2024

- Jan 3-4 **Maine Potato Summit**, Presque Isle
- Jan 10 **United Potato Growers of America Business Summit**
Potato Expo 2024. Austin, TX
- Jan 10-11 **2024 NPC Potato Expo**. Austin, TX
- Jan 17 **PEI Potato Board of Directors Monthly meeting**

February 2024

- Feb 1 **NB Potato Conference**,
Woodstock, NB
- Feb 14 **PEI Potato Board of Directors Monthly meeting**
- Feb 22-23 **International Potato Technology Expo**, Charlottetown

March 2024

- March 6-7 **Cereal and Oilseeds/ PEI Crop Conference**, Summerside
- March 20-21 **Northeast Potato Tech Forum**,
Rodd Royalty, Charlottetown

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PEI Potato Board News

Prince Edward Island Potato Board Elects New Executive for 2023-24

(Charlottetown, PE – November 22, 2023) The Prince Edward Island Potato Board elected a new executive team at the November 22nd, 2023, Board of Directors meeting.

The Board is pleased to announce that John Visser will return as Board Chair. John has been on the Potato Board for five years, serving as a tablestock director for the Central District and has been chair since 2021-22. John Visser and his family own and operate Victoria Potato Farm Inc.

The new Vice Chairman of the Board is Donald Stavert of Lower Freetown, and he and his family operate Stavert Farms Ltd. Donald represents the seed sector for the Central District. Billy Cameron of Hampton is the new Secretary-Treasurer. Billy and his family own and operate Cameron Farms. Billy is the at-large representative for the seed sector.

The Board also welcomed three new directors, including Randy Visser of G Visser and Sons, Rit VanNieuwenhuyzen of Vanco Farms Ltd., and Shawn Birch of Birch Farms Ltd. The remaining board members are Katie MacLennan of MacLennan Properties Ltd., Guy Cudmore of Preston Cudmore & Sons Inc., Ian Shaw of Shaw & MacLeod Farms, Becky Townshend of Townshend Potato Co. Ltd., John Griffin of W.P. Griffin Inc., Craig Wallace of Wallace Properties Ltd and Marshall Smallman of Smallman Farms Ltd. as the Young Farmers Representative.

The Board also recognized the efforts and commitment of retiring Board members Jason Hayden, Chad Robertson,

and Rob Green.

The PEI Potato Board comprises of 12 directors elected by their peers to serve a three-year term. The Island is divided into three districts: Western, Central, and Eastern. There are three directors elected per district and three from At Large, one representing each of the three sectors of the industry – seed, table and processing.

The directors are all active potato growers and serve staggered terms so that one term expires and one new director is elected from each district each year – this helps to maintain continuity in board operations from year to year. Board directors may serve a maximum of two terms consecutively.



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PEI Potato Board Annual Meeting 2023

On November 22, 2023 the Board held our Annual Meeting at the Board office in Charlottetown. At the business meeting committee representatives reported on plans for the new year. Below is a brief overview on the presentations made that day.

Research and Environment - Ryan Barrett

The strategic objective for research and environment is to improve the marketable yields and margins earned by growers, as well to improve the environmental sustainability of the industry. The 2022/2023 fiscal year was a transition year for research programs. March 2023 was the ending date for the third National Potato Cluster (under FVGC), the Living Labs program in PEI, and the provincial CAP funding program which underpins the AIM program. Thankfully, all three of these programs have either been renewed or restarted in 2023; that said, we are starting a number of new projects, with 2023 largely being a set-up year for many trials. Humna Khan started with the Board in April 2023 as our new Junior Agronomist to assist with these projects and more. The AIM program continues to build momentum with producers, with a significant focus on agronomy extension in a variety of ways (workshops, emails, webinars, farm visits, etc).

Farm & Seed Committee – Rebecca MacSwain

The strategic objective of the Farm & Seed Committee is a viable and expanded seed industry on PEI, and in light of wart restrictions, a focus on local and off-shore markets.

The committee is currently involved in two ongoing funding projects: the Biosecurity Project, and the Fox Island Capital Improvement Project, both of which will finish in March 2024. The Biosecurity Project provides funding for cleaning & disinfection equipment, as well as assistance in preparing a biosecurity plan, while the Fox Island project is focused on capital improvements to enhance the farm's efficiency and sustainability. A new digital record keeping review project is underway for 2024. The committee continues to promote for the prevention of virus through best management practices, as well as promoting local seed production and supporting growers looking to sell to export markets.

Marketing - Kendra Mills

The strategic objective for marketing is to provide high-quality market information to growers and industry, as well to maintain existing and develop new markets. After a few

difficult years from a marketing perspective, whether it was Covid or the Potato Wart crisis, it's back to regularly scheduled programming for the marketing department! We zigged and zagged to adapt to the chaotic market conditions in the past few years, but hopefully, we can have a smoother year. We have a couple of exciting things in this year's plan. We are working with Lobster PEI, Tourism PEI, Atlantic Beef and The Social Shell to do a winter promotion called the Ultimate Foodie Escape, for a winner to win a trip for two to PEI and experience all the great food we have to offer. That will happen mid February. We are working closely to improve our trade strategy, after a few years of learning and trying new things. As always, we are always focusing on continuous improvement and content creation on social media and we are venturing into TikTok for PEI Potatoes! We are planning for more integration with social media and our local community activity and sponsorships. We attend several trade shows, including CPMA, IFPA, NYPS and Restaurants Canada. We encourage everyone to follow along, particularly on social media to share and amplify our message. And as always, we look forward to all comments and ideas.

Processing-Scott Howatt

The key objectives of the Potato Processing Committee (PPC) are to improve the economic sustainability of processing acres, and to diversify the contracted volume on PEI. The desired outcomes for growers' economic sustainability are increases in prices and profits earned on contracts, leading to an increased return on investment. The desired outcomes for diversifying our contracted volume are improved access to technology and resources and the adoption of new varieties.

To accomplish these objectives and outcomes, the PPC employs various data collection systems to share factual information with both growers and our processing customers. We regularly communicate with Potato Marketing Association of North America representatives to track the supply of quality processing spuds, the expansion of processing facilities, and the demand for finished frozen product. We also champion the AIM program with Cavendish Farms growers to keep improving marketable yield; that will help make PEI an attractive location for the processing sector.

Potato Marketing Association of North America

By Scott Howatt, Processing Specialist

The PMANA Fall meeting was held in Las Vegas, Nevada on November 9 at the Flamingo Hotel. The meeting was very well attended; as there were over forty grower and industry representatives in attendance with all thirteen member organizations present, except Wisconsin. There were twelve written area reports presented during the one-day session which included details of the quantity and quality of their harvested crop, the current outlook and movement of potatoes in their area, as well as an update on the value of their contracts and any current progress in contract talks with their customers. After the area reports, there was a presentation from Mr. Blair Richardson, President & CEO of Potatoes USA, titled A Few Thoughts on Current Market Conditions/Trends, which led into an informative discussion on the fresh and finished market places, both domestic and off-shore.

The combined overall production in the twelve reports is projected to be up over 41 million CWT more than 2022's production, a 9.13% overall increase. It is important to note that 2022's production was well-below normal due to the major cut in acres in Idaho (25,000 ac.) and the cold, late

spring in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) and the Midwest. Subsequently, the 2022 crop created a major shortfall in North America's potato production. PNW growers at the meeting stated there was a major over-correction by the processors and themselves, with over 46,000 more acres being harvested in that region than in 2022. With yields rebounding to be significantly better than average in Idaho, Malheur County and Alberta (while yields in the Columbia Basin came in as average) the better yields combined with the increased acres to create the current surplus of potatoes in the PNW.

The Midwest States and Manitoba reported a return-to or stronger-than average yields for 2023 and their production numbers add up to over 8M of the 41M increase. However, in the Atlantic Northeast (ANE), the four areas of Quebec, Maine, New Brunswick & PEI reported they either lost or abandoned a combined 9,000 planted acres. When the projected ANE production numbers are combined, we are down 7.9 million CWT from our 2022 overall production in the east. This means that the script from last year has basically flipped, when the PNW was short of potatoes and the ANE reported record yields. This year, the west has a

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glut of potatoes, so much that one western fryer is paying their growers to destroy and divert contracted acres to remove 3.0M CWT and one fryer has advised growers there will be a 10% cut in their 2024 contracted acres.

Overall, the reports from the PNW and the Midwest spoke of very good to excellent quality and all fry plants are running at full capacity to make the best out of this major rebound crop. There were a few concerns expressed from the Midwest on how some spuds went into storages very warm and the weather throughout October was “too warm” for proper suberization / conditioning to happen; otherwise storability of the crop seems to be very good. Meanwhile, in the east there is concern whether the stored crop will have the quality necessary to meet customer needs. There is a good deal of uncertainty on the impact of the hollow heart and storage rot issues. At the meeting, reps from Maine, NB and Quebec shared that their growers are very concerned.

On the finished side of the sector, we learned foot traffic in restaurants is slowing down compared to year earlier data, however fry sales are up between 1% and 4% (depending on the restaurant category) compared to last year. Potatoes are on 83% of the menus in North America and the numbers of times they are on a menu is up 5%; i.e. the number of different potato sides and dishes are increasing. From the Potatoes USA presentation, we learned that the fresh weight equivalent volume in potato exports has grown by 54% over pre-pandemic volumes in 2019. In the same time period, the value of these exports from the USA has

grown by 184%, meaning that not only has the volume of sales increased but the actual prices on the products has increased as well. From Potatoes USA charts, dehydrated potato products are greatly contributing to the growth in 2023 exports over 2022 exports, on a fresh weighted basis.

Back on the farms, a major challenge shared by most all areas is the issues of finding skilled workers and operators. Growers groups who have completed their cost projections for 2024 are budgeting for overall production costs to increase between 2-4%. Higher interest rates or the cost of money and the cost of skilled services are within many budget line items.

To date, only the Potato Growers of Washington have had contract negotiation meetings with their fry customers. Other areas in the PNW expect to hear from their fryers after settlements are achieved in the Columbia Basin. Growers in all areas will come to the table with cost projections and the need for price stability in the contracts to encourage the necessary capital and technology investments at the farm level. This said, the over-supply of potatoes in the PNW provides significant leverage to the fryers to reduce pre-season contract prices. The questions that need answering: will fryers take a short term approach to their contract talks with growers and push prices down? Or will they reflect on the volatility of the supply of potatoes they have witnessed over the past three growing seasons and be part of a collective approach to bring greater stability and sustainability to their potato suppliers?



Packaging Continues to Keep Changing

By Mark Phillips, Marketing Specialist

Packaging has gone through many changes over the last 15-20 years. Consumers have driven much of this change with their preferences and buying habits. Stores now carry potatoes in smaller quantities and routinely packed in clear poly bags. Trying to stay on top of consumers' wants has always been challenging. In the age of climate-conscious consumers and retailers, it's not just what is convenient; we also need to be mindful of what is sustainable. Current clear poly packaging is not only conducive to greening, it's not sustainable.

Pre-pandemic, work was being done to find a sustainable direction with packaging. When the pandemic hit, consumers who once wanted less plastic and more sustainable options were now demanding additional plastic to ensure the safety of their produce. As we move into a post-pandemic world, concerns surrounding plastics are returning to the forefront.

A large portion of conventional potato packaging relies on single-use plastics and non-biodegradable materials,

significantly contributing to environmental pollution. These materials take centuries to decompose, accumulating plastic waste in landfills, oceans, and other ecosystems. Their carbon footprint further exacerbates the environmental toll. In recognition of these challenges, retailers and other stakeholders in the potato industry are increasingly seeking sustainable packaging solutions to align with broader environmental goals - and potential federal regulation.

In August of this year, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), the government agency responsible for environmental policy, published a pre-proposal that aims to regulate packaging in Canadian grocery stores. The proposal requires that 75% of all fresh produce sold in Canada must be sold either in bulk or in non-plastic packaging by 2026, with an increase to 95% by 2028. This will accelerate the move away from unnecessary plastics.

One avenue for sustainable packaging lies in the adoption of biodegradable materials. Innovations in this area include packaging made from biopolymers derived from renewable resources such as cornstarch, sugarcane, or potato starch itself. These materials break down naturally, minimizing the environmental impact associated with their disposal. Additionally, they can be composted, offering an end-of-life solution that supports circular economy principles. Companies are investing in research and development to enhance the strength and durability of these materials, ensuring they meet the rigorous requirements of potato packaging. While biodegradable packages have some advantages, issues with biodegradable packaging can include limited shelf life, variable decomposition rates, a higher cost, and limited composting facilities. While these products break down faster, it's still slow and often needs ideal conditions to hit decomposition goals; for these reasons, some perceived greenwashing is associated with their use.

Another approach is the promotion of recyclable packaging. Recyclable packaging made from paper or cardboard allows for efficient recycling processes. By investing in infrastructure to support recycling and raising consumer awareness about the importance of recycling potato packaging, the industry can contribute to a more sustainable supply chain; however, recyclability is only beneficial if people actually recycle. This is especially true of plastic recyclables. The government of Canada reports that only 9% of plastic is actually recycled, while the rest ends up in our landfills, waste-to-energy facilities or the environment.

While some items material might not be inherently sustainable, improvements in technology and design may

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help in other ways, like extending the shelf life of potatoes, which can help reduce food waste, a significant concern in the context of sustainability. Those in opposition to the plastic ban warn of unintended side effects of banning plastic, like additional food waste.

One issue when dealing with packaging decisions is the need to account for all the supply chain and manufacturing variables (including weight, carbon footprint, food waste/shelf life/spoilage properties, and even the cost of mining ore in the case of aluminum or steel, and more). A presentation at the CCFI Public Trust Summit introduced an example in the cosmetics industry where a company switched to glass containers over plastic due to consumer demands. While the glass was perceived as more sustainable, the weight of the containers was less efficient, and the shipments required the use of packaging Styrofoam to prevent damage (which there still was some of). There are many things besides just the materials to consider when packaging.

Cost is another consideration. While there is a great desire for more sustainable packaging, in times of inflation, who will pay for it? The consumer does not want to pay more for food, the producer is already paying excessively for implements, and the retailer is often interested in finding new sustainable solutions, but they rarely offer compensation for them. While farmers, like retailers, are interested in developing sustainable packaging solutions, there are also limitations on how expensive those items can be.

There are no fully sustainable options in some cases, but companies are still finding ways to improve sustainability, even if they're not compostable or biodegradable. Kwik Lok Bag enclosures are now offering Enviro-Lok and Eco-Loks. While bread companies have switched to a compostable tag, those tags are not durable enough to work with potato bags. So, they are focused on items that are easier to recycle than compostable items at this time.

While many 10lb paper bags are paper, 5lb bags and smaller are traditionally poly. Consumers prefer poly packaging as they can better see the product, despite the likelihood that the exposure to light will cause potatoes to turn green, a significant source of consumer complaints. One large retailer has switched their potato packaging to paper for their 10 lb and 5 lb offerings; indications are others plan to follow. The traditional ten-pound bag was compostable except for the plastic vent view. While there was development on a compostable mesh, prices were high, and there was limited access to materials. Die-cut holes offer a compostable solution that allows the bag to be marketed as compostable while providing a viewing window for consumers. Some retailers complain that consumers rip them open to get a better view of the spuds.

Still, most retailers say that the ability to offer a sustainable bag outweighs the loss due to consumers opening the bags. In collaboration with PEI Bag Company, we now provide die-cut versions of our board-branded 10lb bag with updated graphics and a new recipe.

Could there be a new solution on the horizon? BIOLO, a Columbian packaging company, uses polyhydroxyalkanoate (PHA) to manufacture eco-friendly bags that biodegrade in soil, freshwater and marine environments. US company Bolthouse Farms has adopted this packaging with its organic carrots. PHA is a renewable plant-based plastic alternative that is TÜV (Technischer Überwachungsverein or Technical Inspection Certification) certified for soil and marine biodegradation as well as home and industrial composting. The biodegradation process begins when PHA enters a bioactive environment (any setting where live microbes are present). PHA is a natural fuel source for microbes. When PHA and microbes interact, the microbes break down the PHA product entirely without leaving behind any harmful substances, including microplastics. It will be interesting to see if solutions like this are accepted and promoted in the industry.

We continue to keep our eye on the packaging situation. At this point, the only constant is that there will be change.



PEI Potato Industry Recognizes Four Members

By Kendra Mills, Marketing Director



Greg Donald, John Visser, Ray Keenan and Chad Robertson

The 2023 PEI Potato Industry Awards Banquet was held on November 24 in Charlottetown and four members of the industry were recognized at the event.

Ray Keenan was presented with an award for his commitment to the PEI potato industry. Ray, with his brother Alvin, operates Rollo Bay Holdings in Rollo Bay, PEI and grows, packs and ships potatoes all over North America. His work in establishing the United Potato Growers of Canada was highlighted as one of the standout reasons for this award as a respected, influential member of the potato industry nationwide.



Greg Donald, John Visser, Andy Walker and Katie MacLennan

Andy Walker was also acknowledged for his contributions to both the PEI potato industry and the broader, local agriculture sector. Walker is well known for his role as the former editor of the *Island Farmer*, which he began in 2000 and continued until retirement earlier this year. He earned a reputation for his commitment to delivering accurate and informative content to the industry and the public.

Brenda Simmons, the former assistant general manager of the PEI Potato Board was also recognized as a highly respected member of the industry in PEI, Canada and beyond. Her citation remarked on her thorough work throughout the years, successfully guiding the industry through many good times as well as more challenging ones. She has tremendous agriculture experience, having spent many years at AAFC and over 25 years at the Potato Board.

Another recently retired staff member, Mary Kay Sonier,



Brenda Simmons with past and present chairs of the PEI Potato Board

was also recognized for her contributions to the industry. A highly regarded advisor both in and out of the field for over 32 years, Sonier served as the Board's seed coordinator, was responsible for the Elite Seed Farm in Fox Island, PEI and was the editor and publisher of the industry's magazine, *PEI Potato News*. She was also heralded for playing a key role in the recent potato wart crisis and was mentioned as one of the most knowledgeable people in the country on the subject.

The PEI Potato Board congratulates all recipients of these prestigious honors and thanks everyone for their tremendous contributions to the PEI Potato Industry. Potato Industry.



General Manager Greg Donald, Chairman John Visser, Mary Kay Sonier, and Vice-Chairman Donald Stavert at the PEI Potato Industry Awards Banquet



Andy Walker and wife Angela Walker are all smiles as they pose for pictures with Andy's award.



Brenda Simmons and Mary Kay Sonier retiring staff of the PEI Potato Board



Ray Keenan of Rollo Bay Holdings, 2023 PEI Potato Industry Award Recipient



Boyd Rose with present and past chairs during the citation for Brenda Simmons



Andy Walker, retired journalist of the Island Farmer



Mary Kay receiving her award from chairman John Visser



Chairman John Visser receives recognition award from Secretary-Treasurer Billy Cameron



Hon. Bloyce Thompson, Provincial Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Lawrence MacAulay, Federal Minister of Agriculture, Chairman John Visser and General Manager of the PEI Potato Board Greg Donald. Both Ministers did us the honour of speaking during the banquet.



John Visser presenting retiring director Jason Hayden with recognition award



Chairman John Visser presents recognition award to Director Chad Roberston



Rob Morrison, comptroller for the PEI Potato Board with Brenda Simmons



Rob Morrison with newly retired Mary Kay Sonier



Wonderful to see a packed house at the 2023 PEI Potato Industry Awards Banquet in Charlottetown, PEI

State of the Industry

International Fresh Produce Association Global Produce and Floral Show

by Mark Phillips, Marketing Specialist

The International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA), formerly the PMA, Global Produce and Floral Show took place October 19-21, 2023. The show was in Anaheim for the first time since 2019, and it was the first in Anaheim under the new IFPA banner. Over 1,160 companies from over 60 different countries exhibited at the show, including 157 first-time companies. PEI Potatoes showcased our branding and products with a 10x10 booth at this year's show.

The recent industry show brought together key players in the fresh produce and floral community, offering not only valuable networking opportunities on the trade floor but also featuring influential speakers, including Apple Co-Founder Steve Wozniak, US Olympian Allyson Felix, and a CEO panel discussing pressing issues.

A highlight of the show was IFPA CEO Cathy Burns, who delivered a compelling State of the Industry address, highlighting challenges like geopolitical tensions, extreme weather events, and emerging technologies such as generative AI. Burns emphasized action and advocacy as the vehicles through which the organization and its members will overcome these hurdles together.

“We must look at the how the state of things are, envision what we want the state of things to become, and most importantly, ACT to make it happen,” she said. “The good news is this industry knows how to invent from within and tap into innovation from outside our community.”

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) took center stage, with examples ranging from 3D-printing of food to palm scanners measuring vegetable consumption. Burns discussed AI's potential impact on agriculture, citing McKinsey data that outlined its likely influence on sales, marketing, software engineering, and supply chain logistics. Some unique examples of AI include:

- Retail and foodservice applications of AI that enhance the customer experience, primarily suggesting meal solutions.

- Floral applications where AI-powered robots design flower arrangements via robotics.
- Food waste applications, including dynamic pricing systems based on product freshness and AI-powered scanners that detect ripeness.
- Consumer applications of AI, such as smart cutting boards that help track nutrition and calories, as well as apps that use what's in the refrigerator to recommend meal possibilities.

She acknowledged the challenges of AI implementation but emphasized the industry's ability to adapt. “While it is a bit early to paint AI as a villain, the reality is that businesses may struggle with its implementation and implications, especially since some work functions will likely evolve. Activities that absorb 60 to 70% of employees' time today could be automated,” she said.

Addressing global concerns, Burns presented findings on climate change's impact on the produce and floral community. Extreme weather events have doubled in the



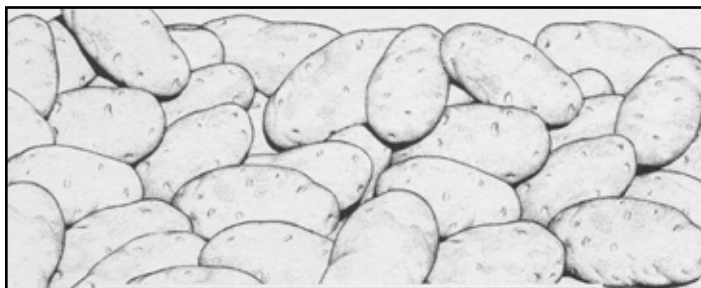
past 30 years, posing a threat to agriculture, and could force more than 122 million more people into hunger and poverty within the next seven years. IFPA's sustainability strategy involves participating in global conversations, leading environmental benchmarking, and contributing to climate-smart agriculture practices.

While sustainability continues to be important, human sustainability has also become a priority (defined as what happens when companies embrace helping their employees become healthier, more skilled, and connected to a sense of purpose and belonging), with Burns emphasizing the importance of supporting employee well-being. High burnout rates, costing the global economy trillions of dollars, prompted a call for businesses to prioritize both skill development and well-being. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) remained a focus, with IFPA launching a toolkit to guide members on their DEI journey.

Addressing the health of consumers, Burns highlighted the growing rates of obesity and diabetes globally. IFPA's nutrition policy initiatives, including advocating for full

fruit and vegetable benefits in programs, demonstrated a commitment to combating these health issues. The IFPA Foundation for Fresh Produce aims to increase consumption through various consumer-related programs.

In conclusion, Burns urged industry members to advocate locally, domestically, and globally. Recognizing the industry as a voice of authority, she emphasized a three-pronged approach of government relations, public relations, and consumer relations to tackle challenges. The overarching message was clear: action is the answer to creating a vibrant future for the industry and addressing global issues.



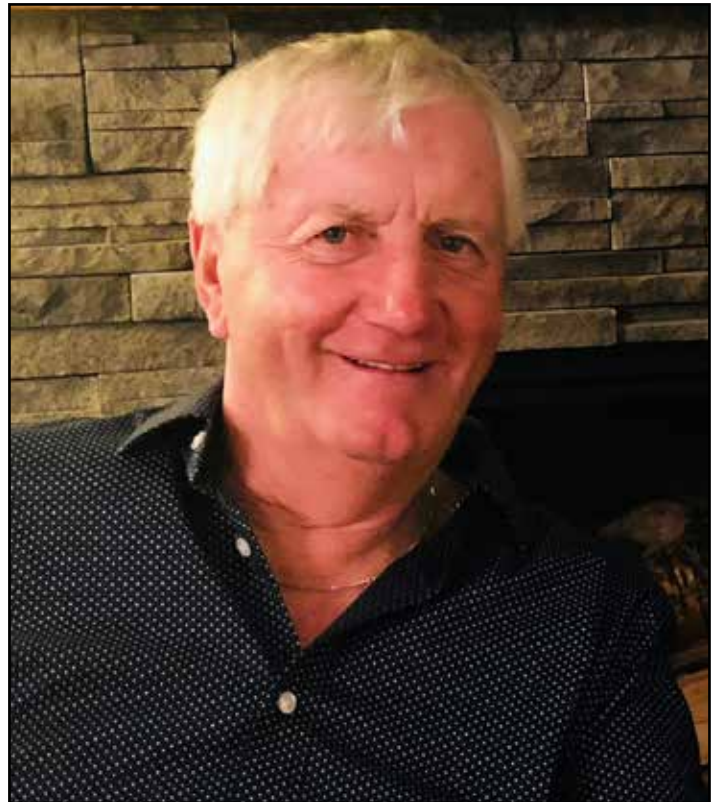
In Memorium

St. Clair Croken Jr.

April 22, 1947 – September 20, 2023

Prince Edward Island recently lost a well-respected member of the farming community. St Clair Croken Jr from Emerald began full time farming at the age of 18 with his father. He operated a 300 acre mixed farm in Emerald with potatoes, dairy, beef, hay and barley. He sold his milk cows in 2000 and He planted his last crop of potatoes in 2009. In 2015 he sold his farm and built a new home just up the road, but he still maintained a small beef operation at his old barn until 2021.

St Clair loved farming and easily made friends all over the Island. He had respect for everyone he met and was often the community go to person for assistance whether it was helping other farmers or towing someone out of the ditch. St Clair was very active in his church and community and always had the full support of his wife Meredith and children Kent and Kim (Kenny) Murphy along with his 30 year employee Gary Ross.



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The advertisement features a logo with a red map of PEI, a photograph of a factory interior with workers and machinery, and a red banner at the bottom with contact information.

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The advertisement features a background image of a potato field with a dirt road. A portrait of Allan Weeks, a man in a suit and tie, is in the bottom right corner. A red banner at the bottom contains the company name, contact details, and a portrait of Allan Weeks.

United Kingdom Study Tour: AIM Seed & Tuber Quality Working Group

by Ryan Barrett, Research and Agronomy Specialist

In mid-November, members of the AIM Seed and Tuber Quality Working Group visited the United Kingdom. The rationale for the study tour was to better understand seed production at both the farm level and industry level in the UK, and to understand how there may be opportunities for research and extension that highlight advancements in the British industry. Tour members included producers Jonathan MacLennan (Working Group Chair), Becky Townshend (WG member and Board Research and Environment Committee Chair) and Brett Francis, Dwayne McNeill and Newton Yorinori of Cavendish Farms, Rebecca MacSwain and Ryan Barrett with the Board, and Steve Watts of Genesis Crop Systems.

The first four days of the tour focused on Scotland, home to the majority of the seed grown in the UK. Our study tour included visits to Cygnet PB (the largest independent variety breeder in the UK), Gentech Propagation (mini-tuber producer), two family farm seed producers, Scanstone (tillage equipment manufacturer), the James Hutton Institute (the premier potato research institute in the UK), and Scottish Agronomy (grower agronomy cooperative).

There is a wealth of knowledge and a long history of producing high quality seed in Scotland, and our visits were very informative with the best of hospitality.

After leaving Scotland, we visited Greenseed International, a large seed farm in Northumberland, England. Greenseed grows more than 40 varieties over 500



Seed grading facility at Greenseed International

acres of entirely leased land. Their seed operation was very similar to the two farms we visited in Scotland, albeit on a slightly larger scale and with more of a corporate structure. We then headed down to Yorkshire for the two day British Potato Show in Harrogate, the premier potato show in the UK that is held every two years. Similar to our own Potato Expo, this show featured conference presentations and a wide



Left to right: Doug Hartley (owner of Cygnet), Becky Townshend, Ryan Barrett, Rebecca MacSwain, Jonathan MacLennan, Brett Francis, Steve Watts, Dwayne MacNeill, and Newton Yorinori



Example of the low profile, one tonne boxes in use at Cygnet and many of the seed farms we visited.

variety of exhibitors, including equipment manufacturers, crop protectant companies, variety agents, research and agronomy service providers, and much more. It took us the best part of two days for the group to get around to the whole show. We then ended our two with two farm visits in the Scarborough area on the Yorkshire coast, including a large potato farm growing both seed and processing potatoes (James Stockdale Farms) and Airy Hill Farms, a family farm growing for McCains who are innovators in soil health and regenerative agriculture practices.

While it is hard to summarize in a short article the take-home messages from such a diverse study tour, the largest difference between the UK seed industry and PEI seed production is the use of boxes all the way through the system. Potatoes are harvested into boxes, graded out of and into boxes, and stored all winter in boxes with well-ventilated storages. This allows producers to grade all fall and all winter, as well keeping their seed in excellent condition. Two of the growing pest challenges faced by seed producers in the UK are PCN (which necessitates an eight to ten year crop rotation) and aphids, which are leading to growing levels of PVY and leafroll virus. Like us, they are also challenged by the weather, as evidenced by the water-logged fields we drove past every day, including some fields still waiting to be harvested.

A full report on our tour will be available to growers this winter, and our working group will be reconvening soon to explore how learnings from our tour will be reflected in future research and agronomy projects.



Looking out at the Northumbrian countryside at Greenseed, near Alnwick

Foodie Escape Promotion

By Kendra Mills, Marketing Director

Most years, we include a winter promotion in our marketing plan to highlight PEI Potatoes. In the past few years, the promotion was led by a media campaign, which has aired in different spots in the past, and tagged a contest or promotion as a Call-To-Action.

This year, to up the ante, we looked to include the other core food groups on PEI to create something great! So this year, with the help of Tourism PEI, Lobster PEI, Atlantic Beef and The Social Shell (oysters and mussels), we will put together the Ultimate Foodie Escape to PEI. A trip for two to PEI to be surrounded with all the great food PEI has to offer!

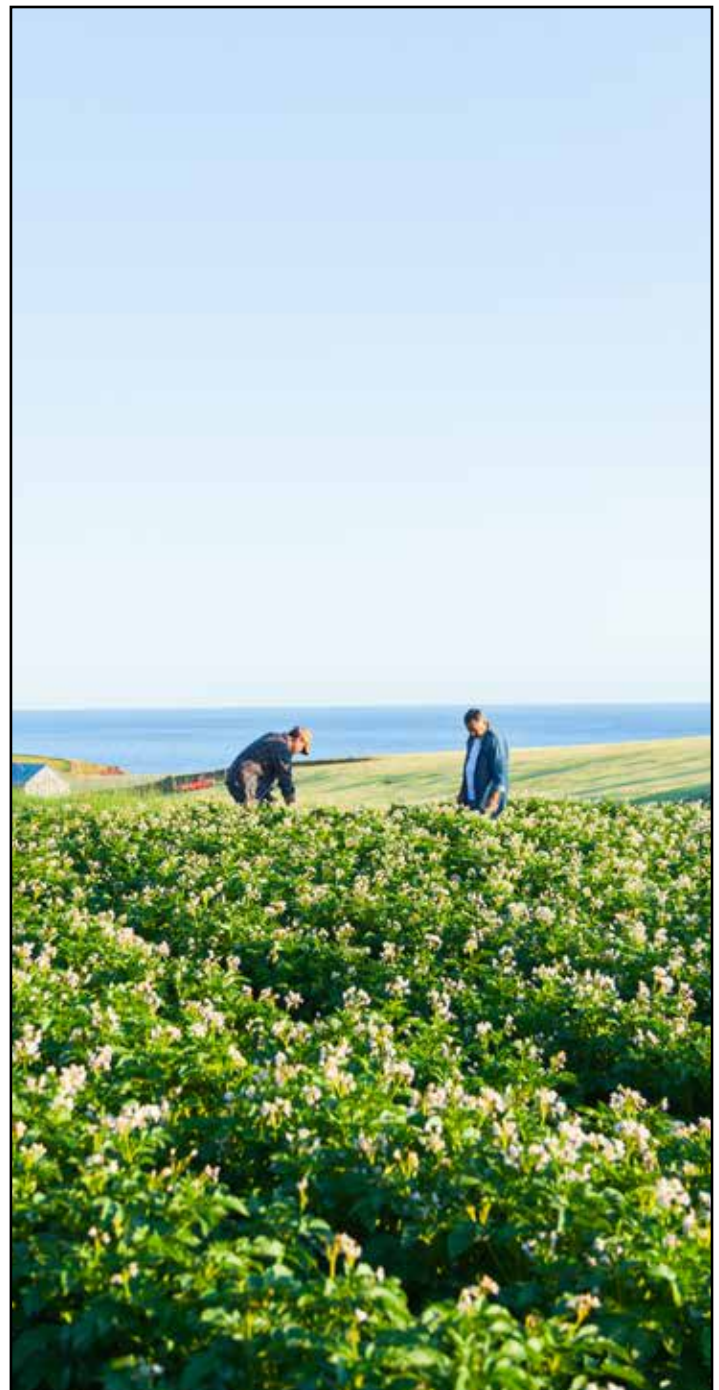
We will, be including a media plan again and will go back to airing the “It Takes an Island” spot, which asks the question, “What does it Take to grow a quality potato? It Takes an Island”. The 30 second spot lends itself to the overall intent of the promotion, focusing on our food and where it comes from, tying product to place really well. The promotion and contest entry will be built into our newly designed website, a great way to drive traffic. There we will also be using social media, our large email database and the added benefit of working with the other food groups, as they all will be using their platforms to further amplify the message. If this promotion is like any of the ones we’ve done in recent years, we will once again, deliver millions of impressions over the course of the promotion.

The timing for the promotion will be mid February to end of March. We are working with Chelsey Lake Designs, the same company who helped build and launch our new website, and we will be working once again with Arrivals and Departures, the media company in Halifax to assist with the media planning and buying. I look forward to following up with a report post-promotion and share the details.

We are so fortunate in PEI to have such collaborative marketers in this province. The different food groups, commodity organizations, Food Island Partnership and Tourism PEI have so much in common – we mostly market to a similar consumer with a similar message. Our goals are so similar. We meet regularly and have done great projects together, such as Canada’s Food Island Recipe Book, which was a great success with almost \$11,000 donated to the Island Food Banks, as the proceeds from the cookbook are all donated. We have done social media content together, various partnerships, and will be looking at sponsoring the ECMA’s collaboratively in the spring. How lucky are we to have amazing opportunities to work

together with the amazing, authentic content of our food and where it comes from. When we work together, not only does our money go so much further, our message is so much stronger.

A special thank you to Lobster PEI, Tourism PEI, The Social Shell, Atlantic Beef, and in particular Crystal MacGregor for helping to bring this great promotion together!





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Supply Outlook for 2023 North American Crop

by Victoria Stamper, General Manager, UPGC

Since the official Canadian Potato Production Estimate will not be released by Statistics Canada until December 7, 2023 (after print deadline), we will provide some general observations and estimates on supply produced from this year's potato crop across the country.

The overall crop in Canada is expected to be up approximately 3.9 million hundred weight (3.2%) over 2022 levels. With harvest now complete we felt it important to review our production forecast from September and revise based on newer information from the fields. Based on better weather for harvest in October for the eastern provinces, with the exception of PEI in the latter half of the month, and despite some processing acres abandoned in the west, we feel overall production will be approximately 126,851,000 cwt, the highest ever for the country and an indication of a good growing season for most with improved yields over 2022.

Abandoned acres, based on harvested acre projections, are estimated to be approximately 11,994; a decrease of almost 7% from last year's 12,882 acres, but completely different in terms of regions; in the 2022 crop there were more lost acres in the west due to the very wet and cold spring for Manitoba and BC and near drought conditions in Alberta. This year, the heavy rains hit Ontario, PEI, New Brunswick

and particularly Quebec where we saw the largest abandonment numbers for 2023 based on weather conditions; the other large losses would be in Alberta and Manitoba out of the processing crop.

Crops in Eastern Canada were impacted by continuous precipitation from right after planting in April and May right throughout the summer. PEI potato production is expected to be down approximately 2%, with growers fighting rain, and even a light snow, through the harvest period in October. There will be lower levels of potatoes making it to the bin as growers leave some in the low lying areas of fields, a strategy seen in the neighbouring provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec as well, to avoid potential storage issues.

Although we have estimated a 14.7% reduction in potato production for the province, growers in New Brunswick reported that if it hadn't been for the two to three weeks of better weather in September just prior to harvest, that this crop might have been even lower. Planted acreage was similar to 2022, however yields are being reported lower than last year, and with reports of hollow heart, and some rot, grade out prior to storage is expected to be higher.

Quebec was the hardest hit with rain consistently throughout the summer, causing some isolated cases of late blight in August and reports of hollow heart in the russets as harvest began. Reds and yellows seemed to have fared better however, with reports of good quality in those

PROVINCE	Planted Acreage	ESTIMATED			PRODUCTION COMPARISON		
		Harvested Acreage	Yield	Production ('000 cwt)	2023 VS. 2022	2022	2021
PEI	83,500	82,000	315	25,830	-2.9%	26,600	27,209
NEW BRUNSWICK	53,000	50,000	295	14,500	-14.7%	17,000	18,200
NOVA SCOTIA	800	776	300	233	-3.0%	240	357
NEWFOUNDLAND	425	392	150	59	13.1%	52	55
TOTAL MARITIMES	137,725	133,168		40,622	-7.5%	43,892	45,821
QUEBEC	47,197	44,000	290	13,420	-9.6%	14,844	14,100
ONTARIO	37,700	37,400	225	8,415	3.1%	8,160	8,953
MANITOBA	81,000	79,901	372	29,723	13.7%	26,139	24,024
SASKATCHEWAN	7,300	7,285	235	1,712	18.1%	1,450	1,519
ALBERTA	80,000	78,000	405	31,200	16.4%	26,813	24,614
TOTAL PRAIRIES	168,300	165,186		62,635	15.1%	54,402	50,157
BRITISH COLUMBIA	5,200	5,174	340	1,759	9.9%	1,600	2,080
TOTAL CANADA	396,922	384,928	330	126,851	3.2%	122,898	121,111

varieties. Things finally started to dry up in September and weather through harvest cooperated for most growers, but reports are still showing reductions of up to 10-15% on yields. Nearer to Quebec City did not seem to be hit as hard, and the Saguenay region also missed much of the precipitation, so the seed crop is looking very good for the province.

Although starting with a great planting season like most of the country, Ontario's crop then experienced cool temperatures and rain throughout the month of June, slowing down growth in the crop. Rain continued through the summer and there were some isolated reports of late blight in August, however these were quickly brought under control. With improvements in weather later in the summer and very good conditions for harvest, Ontario growers are reporting good quality and average to better than average yields for the storage crop, although many are reporting potential long term storage issues. Both chip and fresh production are expected to be up 3.1% over last year, which will help potential shortages in the processing sector in the provinces further east.

Excess heat and near drought like conditions hit Manitoba this year, a complete about face from the floods of the prior spring. Despite these high temperatures and dry conditions,

irrigation through the processing sector and through some of the fresh fields have improved yields greatly in the province, with overall averages expected in the 355 cwt/acre range. Processing growers have unfortunately had to disc under close to 2000 acres due to over supply in the Pacific Northwest and damage due to earlier hailstorms. Harvest went very well in the province and growers are reporting a very good crop heading into storage.

Despite near drought like conditions once again in Alberta this summer, their crop was excellent, up almost 17% to a record 31,200 million cwt estimated production this year. Like Manitoba, there will be processing sector potatoes destroyed or moved to cattle feed in Alberta this year with very good yields and over contracted acres. The seed crop in Alberta has also fared well in the areas further north around Edmonton with weather cooperating from planting right through harvest.

British Columbia, battling high temperatures and very little rain all summer, actually ended up with a very good crop. Yields are expected to come in above last year's 320 cwt./acre at close to 335 cwt/acre, boosting overall potato production almost 10% over last year despite lower planted acreage.

United States Potato Production (million cwt)

State	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change
California	12.86	11.05	8.47	9.61	13.60%
Colorado	22.6	21.48	21.43	21.37	-0.20%
Florida	5.3	5.4	5.02	6.06	20.60%
Idaho	134.78	132.09	120.75	141.9	17.50%
Maine	13.46	18.39	18.43	17.36	-5.80%
Michigan	17.55	19.35	18.88	19.48	3.10%
Minnesota	17.92	17.55	19.15	18.43	-3.80%
Nebraska	9.21	9.26	9.65	11.06	14.60%
North Dakota	23.8	22.5	21.75	25.88	19.00%
Oregon	27	26.28	25.8	27.23	5.50%
Texas	7.12	5.52	7.42	4.89	-34.10%
Washington	99.65	91.93	95.41	101.17	6.00%
Wisconsin	28.77	29.03	26.6	29.8	12.00%
US Total	420.02	409.83	398.74	434.22	8.90%

USDA November Crop Production Report

In summary, despite very challenging weather conditions throughout the growing season, Canada's production is expected to increase this year, to an estimated 126,851,000 cwt, a record level for the country. Despite some decreases in the east, fresh sector potatoes should be readily available for domestic markets as pricing pressure due to oversupply in the Pacific Northwest continues to impact our exports to the US.

Now we turn to south of the border where, on November 9th, USDA released their estimate of 2023 Potato Production in the United States. The accompanying table provides a summary of reporting states for 2023, including comparison to the previous 3 years. USDA estimates production to be up 35.48 million hundred weight or 8.9% from the 2022 crop the majority of that increase seen in Idaho and Washington, creating a surplus of processing potatoes in the Pacific Northwest.

Based on these estimates, we are seeing the largest US potato crop since the year 2000, in fact 9 out of the 13 reporting states showed increases this year.

USDA projected an overall national average potato yield of 452 cwt per acre, led by a 615 cwt/acre yield in Washington, which is 35 cwt/acre higher than last year, along with a return closer to trend line yields in Idaho at 430 cwt/acre, up from 410 last year.

USDA also made changes to its June 30 planted acreage estimates, increasing the total to 964,000 acres, an increase of 48,000 acres over 2022. The harvested acres were also increased from the June forecast by close to 18,000 acres, bringing the total up to 959,800, a jump of 48,400 acres over last year.

USDA estimates production in the state of Washington to be up 5,760,000 hundred weight or 6.0%. Being one of the first areas in North America to begin planting, growers enjoyed very good growing conditions thought the summer bringing yields back up to levels seen 3 years ago. Idaho also enjoyed favourable growing and harvesting conditions, so with their increased planted acres combined with better yields we have seen production in the state rise to 141,900,000 cwt this year, a 17.5% increase which is substantial in the largest potato crop in the country. After two years of shortages in raw product, the 2023 crop was heavily contracted by fryers and even dehydrators, and the processors have more than enough potatoes to run their facilities at full capacity this year.

Yields for the Wisconsin crop were above average and quality is good, and with a 2000 acre increase in planted area, production in the state is up 12% to 29.8 million cwt, also impacted by a continued movement from red to yellow potato production which has boosted overall yields.

The same could be said in the in the Red River Valley with overall production in North Dakota up 19% to 25.88 million cwt, down somewhat in red potatoes and up in yellows. The growing season, although experiencing high temperatures early on, was very good for the area.

Colorado, another fresh producing state, saw lower yields than last year although better than expected, and a slight decrease in overall production despite more acres planted than last year.

Finally, the state of Maine faced high levels of precipitation throughout the growing season that were experienced in Canada's east coast as well. There have been issues and challenges with weather and low lying areas, however they were still able to harvest upwards of 700 acres more than last year; total production is estimated at 17,360,000 cwt, down 5.8% from 2022, most growers are keeping a close eye on storage.

Overall, there has been a serious change in the North American potato supply compared to the shortages last year, specifically in the processing sector with plentiful supplies in the Pacific Northwest. Most of the oversupply is coming from the United States, in the major production areas of Idaho and Washington, however Alberta and Manitoba also experienced very good crops this year and have plentiful supply in the processing sector as well. UPGC will continue to keep an eye on the movement of potatoes, not just the shipments of fresh potatoes, but also the shift of potatoes between sectors which can happen in times of oversupply. It is important to speak about the facts and figures, but we realize that growers want to know what the impact will be, both on the current crop as well as next year's intentions.



Industry Updates

Minister MacAulay announces new investment to advance Canada's horticulture sector and improve environmental sustainability

October 11, 2023 – Abbotsford, British Columbia – Canada's horticulture sector produces high-quality fruits and vegetables while keeping our food supply steady and strong. Yesterday, the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, travelled to Abbotsford, British Columbia to meet with the BC Federation of Agriculture and visit local food producers.

While in Abbotsford, the Minister highlighted a \$9.8 million partnership with the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada (FVGC) through the AgriScience Program – Clusters Component, a program under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, that will assist Canada's horticulture industry by enhancing research that protects the environment, builds greater resilience, and helps ensure Canadians have access to high-quality products.

The investment will fund research that builds off of previous cluster investments, under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, supporting the development of new varieties, disease management, labour cost-savings, climate resilience, and greener pesticides and energy, with a focus on apples, berries, field vegetables, greenhouse vegetables, and potatoes. The goal of this research is to reduce the reliance on synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, advance innovative technologies, and create new disease control technology.

The Cluster consists of research activities that focus

on the AgriScience Program priority areas: Climate change and environment, economic growth and development, and sector resilience and societal changes.

By investing in research and sustainability, the Government of Canada is helping organizations meet the increasing demand for our world-class, grown-in-Canada products.

PEI Potato Farmers Applaud the induction of Mr. Robert Irving and Mr. Rory Francis into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame.

November 6, 2023, Charlottetown, PEI – For the first time, the Canadian Hall of Fame inductee event took place in Atlantic Canada on Saturday, November 4, 2023 in Charlottetown. The PEI Potato Farmers were especially pleased Mr. Robert Irving and Mr. Rory Francis, both very active participants in the agriculture industry on Prince Edward Island, were two of seven people being inducted into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2023.

Mr. Irving's agricultural legacy began when he established Cavendish Farms in 1980, a frozen food plant in PEI that created a local opportunity for processing and value-added agriculture. Cavendish is now the fourth-largest producer of frozen french fry products in North America. Mr. Irving also heads Cavendish Agri Services, an agricultural inputs and services company. "PEI Potato Farmers are very proud of the relationship we have with Mr. Irving and are grateful for his commitment, passion and dedication to the PEI potato industry and our Island



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The 2023 Inductees to the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame from left to right: Garnet Altwasser, John Bragg, Rory Francis, Marcel Groleau, Ron Helwer, Robert Irving, Ray Robertson

communities” says John Visser, chair of the PEI Potato Board.

Mr. Francis has dedicated his career to the agriculture and life science sector in Canada with a particular passion for Island agriculture. A former public servant, served 7 years as Deputy Minister of Agriculture and a valuable partner of the Industry. Mr. Francis is the Executive Director of the PEI BioAlliance and founder of the annual VetHealth Global conference. “We really appreciate the outstanding dedication and commitment Mr. Francis has made towards the betterment of agriculture on PEI” says Greg Donald, General Manager of the PEI Potato Board.

We are very thankful for the contributions of Mr. Irving and Mr. Francis and congratulate both on receiving this prestigious award. We also congratulate the other inductees include Garnet Altwasser, John Bragg, Marcel Groleau, Ron Helwer, and Ray Robertson.

Fresh Produce Alliance welcomes the passage of Bill C-280 in the House of Commons

October 25, 2023 (Ottawa, ON) – Today, the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA), the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada (FVGC), and the Fruit and Vegetable Dispute Resolution Corporation (DRC) were thrilled to see Bill C-280, the Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act, passed with the support of all political parties at third reading in the House of Commons.

Bill C-280, sponsored by Member of Parliament (MP) Scot Davidson, aims to establish a deemed trust, a vital financial protection mechanism for fresh produce sellers in Canada. This mechanism will help secure payment in the event of buyer bankruptcy, providing stability and support to the industry while safeguarding Canadian food security.

“After a long road to get here, the passage of Bill C-280 in the House of Commons with all-party support is a critical

milestone in ensuring the stability and financial security of the fruit and vegetable sector,” said CPMA President Ron Lemaire. “We are grateful to all Members of Parliament for their support of the Bill, and greatly appreciative of the efforts of MP Davidson in moving this legislation forward.”

The perishable nature of fresh produce, coupled with the industry’s typically longer payment terms, leave sellers unable to recover losses when faced with buyer bankruptcy. The case of Lakeside Produce in Leamington, Ontario, earlier this year serves as a reminder of the urgent need for a financial protection tool to safeguard the fruit and vegetable sector.

“Particularly now, when Canadians are increasingly concerned about the cost of food, it is so important for the government to take action to strengthen food security in Canada,” agreed FVGC President Jan VanderHout. “The positive impact of Bill C-280 on the fresh produce industry cannot be overstated. The establishment of a deemed trust for all fresh produce sellers will help to ensure that they can continue to support local economies across the country and to provide Canadians with our safe, nutritious fruit and vegetable products.”

Bill C-280 will now be referred to the Canadian Senate for debate and votes. The CPMA, FVGC, and DRC call on all Senators to recognize the positive impact that Bill C-280 can have on the fruit and vegetable sector and to prioritize the passage of this important legislation.

“The fresh produce sector has been working towards the establishment of an effective financial protection mechanism for many years,” said DRC President and CEO, Luc Mougeot. “We are hopeful that the Senate will build on the momentum of the cross-party support we’ve seen in the House of Commons and move swiftly to pass Bill C-280 into law.”

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