

*Prince Edward Island*

Spring 2025  
Volume 26 Issue 2

# POTATO NEWS

*In This Issue:*

- International Day of the Potato
- CPMA 2025
- Processing Contract Settlements in North America



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# Prince Edward Island POTATO NEWS

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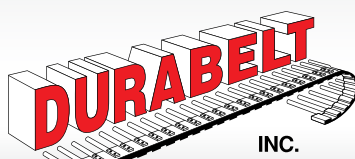
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# Chairman's Comments

*by Donald Stavert, PEI Potato Board Chairman*



After a busy winter, and despite the cool temperatures and the late snowfalls we had, spring is here! We are finally rolling for the 2024 planting season, and it is great to see the potato machinery in the fields again. Planting the crop is normally an exciting time for growers, but with the recent trade issues and general uncertainty that is occurring with tariffs and rising costs, this year seems to be causing a bit of worry and anxiety.

We had excellent post-harvest seed tests at the end of the 2024 season. Demand for Island grown seed was high, and price was good, but with the good seed growing conditions, the low virus rates, and the great storage holdings, we are a bit long in our seed availability this year. Once again, it is important to note how essential our seed growers are to our industry, and I want to thank them for all their hard work in producing excellent quality seed.

Tariff threats provided a lot of stress and general uncertainty for the fresh market. This led to a brief slowdown in shipments to the US, but we quickly regained our shipping pace. Despite all the potential interruptions, prices remain steady. Overall, shipments to all markets are up on the 3-year average. Availability of some varieties and types is becoming tighter, however storages remain in good condition and supply should be cleaned up in a timely manner.

Our processing committee worked hard to come to a new contract agreement with our main buyer prior to planters being filled this year. This was a challenging year to negotiate based on influences outside of PEI, but the committee did a great job, and growers

are thankful the volume has remained stable.

We know that PEI growers are leaders when it comes to growing the best, high-quality potatoes and in practicing effective farm practices in preventing disease spread. A lot of effort has gone into organizing grower sessions, creating and distributing information packages. Thanks to the Province of PEI and ACOA for cost sharing with growers on the purchase of cleaning and disinfecting units as well as wash pads. Additionally, every farm was provided with a boot sanitization dip. As a reminder, it is important to implement appropriate bio-security practices including cleaning and disinfecting, especially during planting time. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Board office and they will be happy to assist.

Please remain diligent in following safe farm practices and openly communicate these to all staff and anyone who may be around your farm this time of year. We have partnered to promote road safety via radio and social media ads that will run over the spring months when machinery is on the move.

In closing, I wish you all a safe, productive, and healthy planting season. We all know the uncertainties that come with our profession – weather, pests, government issues, markets, and regulations to name a few. But if there is one thing this group proves time and time again, it is that we are a resilient bunch and that by working together and using supports on offer, we will get through it. Always know, the Potato Board and its staff will be here to support you any way we can.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge all the people who assist our farmers this time of year in getting their crops in. A very special thank you to the spouses and other friends and family members who work with us, keep us well fed, get us from field to field, and keep everything else running at home while we are in the fields. Your support is greatly appreciated.

I hope for good weather and that everyone has a great spring.

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# PEI Potato Board News

## Celebrating Rob Morrison's Retirement

Potato Board friends and colleagues recently gathered to celebrate and honor Rob Morrison for his amazing career with the Prince Edward Island Potato Board.

Rob dedicated more than 25 years to the Potato Board and we expressed our deepest appreciation for his exceptional service. Over the years, Rob has worn many hats, including serving in roles such as Market Information Officer, Advance Loan Program, Processing Coordinator, and for many years, as Comptroller.

In his time with us, Rob's accounting skills have been nothing short of flawless. His dedication has guided us all through both good times and tough times, providing steady support to our growers and ensuring that everything ran smoothly behind the scenes. Rob has been a constant handling everything from overseeing our facilities to managing major programs, including those during some of our most challenging times.

He's been a rock; someone we could always rely on. Rob was most often the first to arrive at the office, often putting in countless extra hours, and no matter what, he was there when we needed him. His tireless work ethic, his dedication, and his commitment to the team have set an example for all of us.

In addition to his impressive work ethic, Rob's honesty and straightforward opinions have been invaluable. He never hesitated to speak up when needed, and his great attitude made working alongside him a true pleasure. His contributions, both professionally and personally, have left a lasting mark on this organization and on the growers we serve.

We sincerely congratulate Rob for his incredible achievements. His hard work and service have been deeply appreciated, and he will leave behind a legacy that will be remembered for many years to come. We wish him all the best as he transitions to new endeavors with the family fishing business and any other exciting adventures that lie ahead.

In closing we just want to say a big "Thank you" to Rob and we wish him nothing but good health, happiness, and success in whatever the future holds for him and his family.



*Chair Donald Stavert, Rob Morrison and Greg Donald during a celebration for Rob as he moves on to new endeavours.*

## Strengthening Trade Relations for the Potato Industry: Washington DC Mission, March 3-4<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Potato Board General Manager Greg Donald, alongside MP Heath MacDonald, recently traveled to Washington, D.C. on March 3-4, 2025, for an important mission aimed at safeguarding the future of the potato industry. The primary objective of their visit was to engage with key government and industry stakeholders to reinforce the industry's top priority: ensuring the ongoing supply of high-quality, safe, and affordable potatoes to consumers, especially in the face of looming tariff threats.

During the trip, they met with officials from the Canadian Embassy, U.S. elected representatives, and the National Potato Council. These valuable discussions emphasized the importance of free trade between the two countries as the best pathway to ensure that the potato industry continues to thrive, benefiting consumers on both sides of the border.

We believe that our industry offers the safest, and most reliable potatoes in the world. Despite the political challenges that may arise, we are confident that our industries supported by our national organizations will only grow stronger through open communication and collaboration.

As the potato sector faces both domestic and international challenges, the message was clear, that

by working together, industry leaders can ensure the continued success of the North American potato supply chain.



*MP Heath MacDonald and Greg Donald, general manager of the PEI Potato Board in Washington, DC meeting with representatives from the office of US Senator Angus S. King Jr.*

### **AIM Winter Workshops**

Once again this year, we were fortunate to be able to host three AIM winter workshop series on topics relevant to Island potato farmers. For each series of workshops, guest speakers were invited to present on a key topic area, followed by time for discussion as well as sharing related AIM trial results from the past couple of years.

In January, Kate Vander Zaag from Allison, Ontario was invited to speak about her farm's journey in prioritizing soil health, including making changes to crop rotation, cover crops, tillage, and fertility.

In late February, Dr. Claudia Goyer and Dr. Rick Peters of AAFC presented on common scab, including the factors influencing scab occurrence and severity as well as ongoing research into potential control options. Claudia shared some data from research that she has conducted in partnership with researchers in other provinces into the use of the herbicide 2,4-D at low rates as well as the biopesticide Serenade Soil for scab control. 2,4-D showed encouraging levels of control on certain varieties (especially some red varieties) but was inconsistent. It is currently only labelled for use in-season on red varieties. Rick shared results from some on-farm trials under Living Labs with producers looking at the effect of crop rotation, tillage and irrigation on scab severity. Finally, Ryan shared results from the last two years of AIM trials looking at a new formulation

of Serenade Soil from Bayer called Minuet that has shown to be effective at reducing scab severity under field conditions. A full article on this research was in the last issue of the PEI Potato News.

Our last winter workshop series of the season featured Dr. Andy Robinson of NDSU/University of Minnesota speaking about all things weed related. This included the use of pre-emergence and post-emergence herbicides, managing volunteer potatoes, and preventing glyphosate damage/contamination in seed potatoes. One of the key messages for growers was to use multiple modes of action, particularly with pre-emerge herbicides, to control resistant weeds like lambsquarters and pigweed.

Videos of presentations from all three winter workshops are linked on the Agronomy Site under Seminar/Workshop Presentations.



*Colleen Goyer speaking about common scab during an AIM winter workshop in February.*

### **CFIA Launches National Potato Wart Response Plan**

After several years of work, industry and scientific consultations, and education sessions, CFIA has released the new National Potato Wart Response Plan. The plan, which outlines what occurs when a potato wart detection is made, will take effect immediately and will be in place for the 2025 crop year nationwide. The plan replaces the Potato Wart Domestic Long-term Management Plan (2009) and sets out improved processes that will help further contain, control, and prevent the spread of potato wart here in Canada. Linked here is the new CFIA National Potato Wart Response Plan: <https://inspection.canada.ca/en/plant-health/invasive-species/plant-diseases/potato-wart/national-plan>.



PEI growers, as well as Board staff and our consultant Mary Kay Sonier, put significant effort into the plan's creation. We appreciate the valuable input and support from everyone throughout the development of this plan. The Plan provides an additional layer of protection and security and validates the safety of the Canadian potato industry to all our trading partners. Thank you to the Province of Prince Edward Island for the funding contribution towards the costs of the consultant.

In addition, the Enhanced Potato Wart Land Management Tool is now live. Growers can continue to use PID numbers to determine if fields are restricted, but this enhanced tool will also allow them to click on individual fields via an aerial map and if there is a restricted area within the field, additional details will display showing the perimeter of the specific area.

### Immigration Information Session

On March 18th, the Board hosted the PEI Office of Immigration along with the federal department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) teams to speak to growers on foreign workers. A lot of great information was shared and growers in attendance were able to share concerns regarding the current program offerings.



*Cindy-Lynn Frenette (IRCC) along with the Office of Immigration staff Andres MacGuigan and Kelly Hamilton present to growers*

### Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada AGM

Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada (FVGC) members met in Quebec City for the AGM March 10-13th. Tariffs dominated the meetings with the devastating impacts on our fresh produce industry being heard from every commodity group.


John Visser was elected to be one of two Atlantic Caucus representatives which will provide a seat at the FVGC Board table. Rebecca MacSwain is the new Vice Chair of the CPC's Seed Potato Sub Committee as well

as the Atlantic representative for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Working Group and Krista Shaw is the Atlantic representative for the Trade and Marketing Working Group.

The Canadian Potato Council also held its AGM with Bill Zylmans retaining the Chairperson role, Michelle Flis retaining Vice Chair, and John Visser stepping into the Treasurer role.




*Greg Donald, Rebecca MacSwain, Donald Stavert, John Visser, Krista Shaw, and Alvin Keenan at the FVGC AGM*



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# Fill Your Boots 2025

*By: Mark Phillips, Marketing Specialist*

supports local food banks in the process.”

Islanders turned up in full force on Saturday, March 1st, for the much-loved Fill Your Boots event, marking the end of Potato Lover’s Month with fun, food, and plenty of potatoes! Hosted by G. Visser and Sons in Orwell and Monaghan Farms in Norboro, with support from the PEI Potato Board, the event welcomed an enthusiastic crowd of 660 guests across both locations for a morning full of community spirit and agricultural appreciation.

The event offered more than just free potatoes—visitors enjoyed exciting extras like VR goggles, fun contests, tasty recipe sampling, and even a potato cannon. Special guest Tate added to the excitement, and some lucky attendees even discovered a heart-shaped potato, perfectly symbolizing the shared love Islanders have for their spuds.

As always, the potatoes were free, but guests were encouraged to bring donations for local food banks. Thanks to the generosity of attendees, the event raised \$2,000 in donations and a generous amount of non-perishable food items. This initiative continues to bring together the community, local agriculture, and meaningful support for Islanders in need.

Since the first Fill Your Boots in 2022, eight farms have participated, drawing over 8,000 visitors and distributing more than 270,000 pounds of PEI Potatoes. The event contributed over \$19,000 to local food banks.

Randy Visser of G. Visser and Sons summed it up best: “We were thrilled to host ‘Fill Your Boots’ again this year. This event allows us to engage with our fellow Islanders around a shared love for potatoes. It guarantees a fantastic experience, ensuring that everyone learns about agriculture, takes home some delicious PEI Potatoes, and



*Mark Phillips with son Cal seeing how big these tractors really are while lots of people are taking advantage of some of PEI’s amazing potatoes at G. Visser and Sons.*





A Colorado potato beetle, characterized by its orange body and black longitudinal stripes, is shown crawling on a green leaf. A dotted line points from the text 'WE'RE TOAST.' to the beetle's head.

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# Young Farmers AGM

*By: Rebecca MacSwain, VP of Young Farmers*

Over the past year, the PEI Young Farmers Association has made a strong comeback after being re-established within the last 12 months.

Originally founded in 1948 as The Junior Farmers of PEI, the organization remains committed to its mission: to shape Island agricultural leaders by fostering networking opportunities, supporting knowledge exchange and education, and serving as a collective voice for young farmers through policy engagement.

PEI Young Farmers boasts a membership of over 120 individuals from across PEI, representing numerous Island agricultural commodities. As the PEI Young Farmers Association is not commodity-specific, it allows for wide-reaching and inclusive programming. Membership remains free, with registration for specific events serving as the primary entry point for participation.

## **Highlights from the Past Year include:**

- Organizing 7 events focused on networking and learning, including Summer Farm Tours, where we visited three farms in Eastern PEI led by young farmers.
- Worked with 22 agriculture businesses and organizations through a fundraising campaign to help fund programs and keep the group going strong for years to come.
- Represented Prince Edward Island agriculture at the Canadian Federation of Agriculture AGM in Ottawa, taking part in national discussions with other young farmers.
- Secured a 3-year funding agreement from the PEI Department of Agriculture to help cover operational and administrative costs.

The PEIYF Annual General Meeting took place on April 4, 2025, at the Rodd Royalty in Charlottetown. Turnout was very strong with over 90 people registering for the event.

The day featured three professional development sessions, “Fertility 101” with Ryan Barrett from the PEI Potato Board, “Future Focused Farming” with Andrew Fraser, sharing his research from his Master’s program at UPEI, and “Climate Smart Agriculture” with Meagan Moynagh and Rimsha Khan from the PEI

Federation of Agriculture. The agenda also included a business meeting, highlighting committee reports and a presentation of the 2025-2026 budget.

A small tradeshow featured several agricultural businesses, each representing different interests of the industry.

The 2025–2026 Board of Directors were announced, as:

- Robert Larsen, President
- Rebecca MacSwain, Vice President
- Ella Wood, Treasurer
- Megan Adams, Secretary
- Ian Drake, Past President
- Bevin MacLellan
- David Pitre
- Kaden Rennie
- Kegan Ching
- Travis Cummiskey

Following the business portion of the event, attendees enjoyed a networking reception, followed by a banquet dinner. Following the banquet, live entertainment was provided by a live band, The Spuds.

Looking ahead, PEIYF is heading into the year with a lot of momentum, focused on continuing to grow, bring people together, and give young leaders in agriculture a strong and supportive network. With a dedicated board and engaged members, the future looks bright for young farmers across the Island.



*Robert Larsen speaking during the Young Farmers AGM in Charlottetown.*

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# Faces of the Industry

*By Rebecca MacSwain, Seed Specialist*

## **Mark Pridham – Fox Island Elite Seed Farm**

Mark Pridham is the Farm Manager at Fox Island Elite Seed Farm in Alberton. With a lifetime of experience in potato production, Mark grew up working alongside his family at Pridham Brothers, which specialized in potato and hog production in Montrose.

At Fox Island, Mark oversees the daily operations of the farm. His extensive industry experience, paired with an open-minded approach to innovation, has led to increased efficiencies on the farm. In recent years, Mark introduced an improved application method for row cover on PreElite seed potatoes.

Mark's keen attention to detail is essential, as Fox Island manages 60 unique lots in field production, ensuring the highest standards in elite seed production.



*Mark Pridham showing off some beautiful spuds at Fox Island*

## **Neil MacFadyen – MacFadyen Farms**

Neil farms alongside his father, Jeddy, his brother, Bill, son, Rodney, and nephew, Daniel, in Augustine Cove. Their multigenerational farm has long been recognized as a pioneer in the seed industry and was once one of the largest seed potato operations on PEI.

The MacFadyens primarily grow seed potatoes but also supply the tablestock market. In recent years, Neil has been producing Caribou Russet for McCain's, a variety he values for its quick maturity, high yields, and excellent profile.

Looking ahead, Neil hopes eventually the next generation will carry on the family's farming legacy, potentially making it five generations of MacFadyens cultivating the land in central PEI.



*Neil MacFadyen standing in one of the nicely covered fields at his multigenerational farm.*



## Brandon MacPhail – MacSull Farms

Based out of New London, Brandon MacPhail grows primarily for the processing sector. Brandon has a very open-minded approach to farming and is always interested in looking to introduce new innovations to the farm. In recent years, Brandon has incorporated new cover cropping methods, including nurse cropping, into his operation with the goal of increasing overall productivity while protecting and building the soil. Additionally, the farm has recently diversified with the addition of 10 cow-calf pairs, originating from Brandon's family's farm in Cornwall. Brandon is very active with the PEI Potato Board, and sits on the Potato Processing Committee as well as the AIM Soil Working Group. MacSull Farm Ltd. is a combination of Brandon's family name and his wife Rochelle Sullivan's family name.

*Pictured right: with Brandon is his son Calvin, who enjoys spending time on the farm with his dad!*



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# Quantifying Nitrogen Credits from Forage Legumes

By Bethany Visser, Junior Agronomist

Including forage legumes in rotation ahead of potatoes is a common practise due to legumes' ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen through the action of beneficial root-colonizing bacteria. This provides a nitrogen credit to next year's crop. How to account for this credit in nutrient management for potatoes can differ greatly across sources and depending on timing of legume termination, species of legume, and quality of forage stand.

The objective of this ACS-Living Labs project is to quantify the nitrogen contributed by forage legumes in the year before potatoes, both with and without winter-terminated fall cover crops. In past research, increased potato yields and decreased soil nitrate levels following the use of fall cover crops have been credited to the cover crop scavenging free soil nitrate. This subsequently carries over some nitrogen to be available to the next crop.

Four fields were planted in various percentages of alfalfa (as an underseed or direct seeded) in 2022 with either tillage radish or barley covers planted before potatoes in 2023. A strip of the field was left unplanted or was terminated perpendicular to the direction of potato planting so that each nitrogen rate strip would include both cover and no cover treatments.

A fertility plan was developed to create the following nitrogen application treatments:

1. GSP: 160 lbs/acre (180 lbs/ac at one site)
2. 75%: 120 lbs/acre (135 lbs/ac at one site)
3. 50%: 80 lbs/acre (90 lbs/ac at one site)
4. Zero N: No applied nitrogen. P, K, and other nutrients hand-applied immediately before planting.

Plant and tuber samples were collected after the plant had achieved peak above ground

growth in each treatment combination to determine total nitrogen accumulation. At harvest, tuber samples from four ten-foot strips in each treatment combination area were collected, stored and graded to calculate average yield, quality and crop value.

When comparing values across all fields, there was no difference in yield, specific gravity, or crop value between the three applied N treatments. As expected, yield and size profile were smaller for the Zero N applied treatment. One field was significantly impacted by drought, with yields considerably lower compared to the other fields. However, the other fields had a consistent total yield with no applied nitrogen around 240 cwt/ac. In these fields, the combination of an alfalfa legume crop plus mineralization from organic matter provided more than 90 lbs/ac of nitrogen when considering the uptake from the Zero N plots.

Cover crops only appeared to improve total and marketable yield in the Zero N treatment where nitrogen was limited, where nitrogen carryover had more effect on yield. Plants in the other treatments had sufficient nitrogen available without mineralized nitrogen from the cover crop residue as no yield differences were observed.

Additional fields will be added over the next couple of years to build on this data to make recommendations to producers on expected N credits from legumes and cover crops, and optimum applied N rates for potatoes with these credits in mind.

**Table 1: Combined data from four fields in 2024 comparing three different rates of applied nitrogen plus a zero N treatment in potatoes following a majority alfalfa forage crop in 2023.**

	With Fall Cover Crop				No Cover Crop			
	GSP N	75% N	50% N	Zero N	GSP N	75% N	50% N	Zero N
<b>Total Yield (cwt/ac)</b>	280.7	267.4	277.3	245.3	278.8	277.5	269.3	197.2
<b>Smalls (%)</b>	13.2	12.4	14.9	15.2	14.2	13.0	14.4	15.4
<b>&gt; 10 oz (%)</b>	6.6	7.4	4.5	3.9	5.6	5.1	3.8	1.8
<b>Total Defects (%)</b>	1.8	2.6	5.5	6.1	0.3	1.8	1.5	3.4
<b>Specific Gravity</b>	1.098	1.096	1.099	1.097	1.097	1.098	1.099	1.095
<b>Market. Yield (cwt/ac)</b>	239.3	228.8	226.2	193.0	239.2	237.4	226.0	158.5
<b>Crop Value (\$/ac)</b>	4265	4082	4020	3430	4258	4212	4008	2793





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# CPMA 2025: A Century of Fresh Connections

*By Mark Phillips, Marketing Specialist*

Montreal's Palais des Congrès came alive from April 8–10 as the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) celebrated a remarkable milestone—its 100th anniversary. The 2025 Convention and Trade Show drew over 300 companies and featured over 650 exhibit spaces, creating a vibrant hub of innovation, networking, and forward-thinking for the fresh produce industry.

Industry leaders, growers, and innovators connected over the latest products and technologies on the bustling trade show floor. The New Product Showcase and Innovation Zone spotlighted the sector's most creative advancements, sparking conversations around the future of produce.

Geoff Molson, President and CEO of Groupe CH, delivered the event's keynote address. Drawing on his business, sports and entertainment background, Molson emphasized adaptability, strategic planning,

and innovation—parallels he sees between managing sports franchises and navigating the evolving food industry.

During the Delegate Lunch, CPMA President Ron Lemaire delivered an impactful speech, addressing the sector's current challenges, including climate disruption, labour shortages, and geopolitical instability. He championed sustainability, proactive industry advocacy, and consumer-focused strategies, urging the produce community to lead with vision and resilience.

Prince Edward Island was proudly represented as Rollo Bay Holdings received the Fresh Health Award for its outstanding promotion of the Half Your Plate campaign. The farm integrated the message into its branding and outreach, encouraging Canadians to make healthier food choices. Other notable award winners included Les Mallard (Lifetime Achievement), Amanda Sharman (Young Professional), and George Pitsikoulis (Produce Person of the Year).



*Greg Donald, Kendra Mills and Mark Phillips representing the PEI Potato Board at the CPMA in Montreal.*

PEI Potatoes marked the centennial with a newly designed booth that blended a nostalgic feel with a modern appeal. Vintage potato bag t-shirts, a photo album of historical photos and vintage promotional materials helped fit the 100th anniversary theme. Steady booth traffic of retailers, buyers, and industry peers made for a memorable show and continued to foster and build meaningful industry relationships.

Next year's CPMA Convention and Trade show will be in Toronto, April 28- 30th.



*Luc Prevost hosting Geoff Molson, CEO of the Montreal Canadiens during a fireside chat at CPMA.*



*Ray Keenan of Rollo Bay Holdings was awarded the Fresh Health Award*



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# Impact of Rotational Grazing on Potato Yield and Quality

by Bethany Visser, Junior Agronomist

Recent interest in growing the provincial beef herd on Prince Edward Island has created a need to develop economical practises that ensure the sustainability of the industry. Improved livestock integration with crop production is an important principle of regenerative agriculture that can help promote the adoption of these new practices.

This ACS-Living Labs project was developed to determine if there are benefits in improved soil health and potato yield by introducing beef cattle under a managed rotational grazing program for one or two years before potato production.

Three fields were used for this trial, with one initiated in 2022 and two more added in 2023. Each field considered several different variables with the incorporation of grazing into a potato rotation. When grazed, a section of the field was fenced off to create a “non-grazed” check. This check was managed by the producer as a typical forage field and was either mowed or left alone. All fields were in potatoes this year, allowing for collection and comparison of yield and quality samples.

The first field compared the potential benefits and drawbacks of grazing two different crop rotations (sorghum sudangrass underseeded with alfalfa/grass, grazed corn in year one followed by an mix of annual forage species in year two) compared with barley underseeded with red clover (the control treatment). Due to an early top-kill date, the full extent of the impact on potato yield may not have been observed. Though the section of the field that had alfalfa in it the year before (grazed) remained greener throughout the season, it yielded the lowest, which

may have been due to higher nitrogen mineralized from previous crops.

The next field considered the impact of rotational grazing as well as manure application and found higher yields in the area of the field with applied manure in both grazed and non-grazed treatments. It was also observed that there was lower weed pressure in the grazed section of the field compared to the non-grazed section. Yields in the grazed section of the field were slightly numerically higher, but the difference was not statistically significant.

In the final field trial, the producer was only able to include a small sized check in acres planted to potatoes in 2024, as only a portion of a larger grazed field had potatoes last year. Here, it was noted that due to spring plowing, there was an increase in weed pressure and soil clods but this was relatively consistent over both grazed and non-grazed treatments.

All fields saw no significant impact on potato yield or quality following rotational grazing. It was also noted that residual nitrates were typically lower in



**Prince Edward Island  
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PEI C1E 2C6

Tel: 902-368-8378 Fax: 902-892-4468

Website: [peipqi.ca](http://peipqi.ca)

grazed portions of the fields when compared to the non-grazed areas.

This rotational grazing project experienced some challenges in the first trial fields, including the impact of dry weather and the size and layout of non-grazed control strips. It is difficult to set aside non-grazed portions of fields in representative areas of the field because it adds significant labour and management to grazing. These challenges from the first iteration of this

project will inform future years of study.

More time and more replications may be needed to observe true impacts of these practices. At the same time, there were no observed detrimental effects of grazing on these fields. This alone may prove valuable to potato producers who have an opportunity to rent land for grazing or who choose to graze their own animals.



*Cow-calf herd grazing a trial field in Kingston, PEI.*



*Grazed (left) beside non grazed control treatment (right) in a trial field.*



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POTATO GROWERS OF CANADA

LES PRODUCTEURS UNIS DE POMMES DE TERRE DU CANADA

*By: Victoria Stamper, General Manager of UPGC*

At the time of writing this article the most pressing thing on growers' minds is of course planting. However, overshadowing planting intentions this year are the uncertainty around tariffs from the US and more recently the substantial volume cuts announced by most of the large fry processors. Since potato acreage in Canada is not officially reported until early July, United Potato Growers of Canada always takes an early look at industry projections across the country to help growers better plan their own crops. Although last year started quite early, some getting into the fields in March, this year erratic weather has put off the start of planting in most areas until a more "normal" schedule in mid-April. Contract negotiations have only been completed in Alberta and PEI, while still on-going in all other provinces at the time of writing.

Demand for French fries continues to increase both in Canada and globally, albeit at a slower rate than previously forecast, despite what we might hear from processors, and demand for potato chips and table potatoes continues to be stable or even growing slightly. The seed sector was generally well balanced for the last season up until the start of planting this year as we are seeing a significant impact from the recent volume cuts from processors. With certain regions turning back processing seed and some looking for fresh varieties there is a lot of uncertainty for planting this year.

For 2025, UPGC estimates Canadian Potato Acreage will decrease by 1.5%, to 386,660 acres, a drop back to just higher than the 2022 crop. The majority of this decrease is attributed to the volume cuts in the frozen processing sector across Canada, and possibly some changes in the seed sector based on these same cuts. The fresh sector is expected to remain fairly stable, perhaps up in some areas, with the uncertainty of potential tariffs out of the US likely being outweighed

by the lack of profitability in alternative crops. It is very early days and these estimates may change of course, but this is our initial forecast based on discussions with our members across the country.

Although 2023 originally reported a record year at 397,232 acres planted, there were adjustments made as late as December 2024, bringing the figure down to 392,702. The 2024 planted acreage had originally been recorded as a 0.3% decrease to 391,438, in line with processing cuts in Alberta and Manitoba. However an adjustment in January of this year bumped it back up to 394,477, a 0.5% increase; the change coming from higher planted acreage reported in Quebec.

**Here is an outlook by growing area:**

#### **Prince Edward Island**

Despite a slight decrease predicted, PEI is still forecast to be the province with the highest planted acreage in Canada. We estimate 84,500 acres with seed, processing and fresh sectors remaining stable. Growers are just beginning to plant their potato crop and based on precipitation reports for March and April, so far things seem to be drier than in 2024.

#### **New Brunswick**

New Brunswick has been impacted by the US tariffs and decreased demand from US customers for fresh potatoes, or more specifically increased competition from US packers taking advantage of the uncertainty surrounding the tariff situation. More recently the processing sector has been hit with the volume cuts that have been seen across Canada and in the Pacific Northwest. These facts combined have influenced our estimates of planted acreage for the province and we believe New Brunswick will likely register a 5% decrease to 50,350 acres. Weather has been erratic, with frequent cold spells and snow flurries since February, growers are only just getting started.

## **Quebec**

We are estimating Quebec growers will plant 47,500 acres, a 0.6% increase over last year's reported 47,229 acres which was adjusted in January of this year. Fresh acres in total will likely be fairly flat to last year and there may be a slowdown on the shift from reds to yellows. Processing acres, especially for French fries could decrease due to the reliance of the local processor on exports to the US and the uncertainty of the tariff situation. Chip acres will likely be stable, perhaps a slight increase. The largest increase may be seen in the reported seed acreage which had seen an almost 700 acre decrease last year. This sector continues to grow in the northern areas of the province and despite some potential surplus this year due to the processing volume cutbacks, the acres may come back for fresh and chip varieties. Planting is only just beginning in the province with colder temperatures and quite a bit of rain, and snow, in early April, but is not yet behind schedule.

## **Ontario**

Ontario is expected to plant 39,500 acres of potatoes this year bringing them closer to the record level of 39,800 in 2012. We should see some small increases in both the fresh and chip sector this year as well as the seed sector. With temperatures in the single digits through April and average precipitation, but several snow flurries, spring conditions have not been overly warm, especially compared to the early start in March last year. The Leamington area did start planting in early April and planting in the traditional storage region in the Alliston area will likely get going in earnest after Easter.

## **Manitoba**

Volume cuts from the fry processors have hit the province especially hard and as such we expect a significant decrease in processing acres in the province. Although this will likely be offset by some increases in fresh, and possibly seed acreage, we still forecast an overall decrease of 6.5% to 73,500 acres, down from last year's 78,600. As in other regions across North America, we may see a slowdown on the trend of growers replacing red acres for yellow. According to the Hydrologic Forecast Centre in Manitoba, "In southern Manitoba, the Red River is already starting to be affected by spring runoff. Otherwise, base flows and levels range generally from normal to above normal in most southern Manitoba basins and normal to below

normal in central and northern Manitoba basins." Although not necessarily a large snowpack this year, the report states that "Most major Manitoba lakes are currently tracking normal to below normal levels for this time of the year and are within their operating ranges. Levels on most Manitoba lakes are expected to be within their normal operating ranges after the spring runoff." As of the writing of this article in mid-April no planting has started in the province as growers wait for soil temperatures to rise.

## **Saskatchewan**

The UPGC acreage estimate for Saskatchewan is slightly up at 7,700 acres, 2% higher than last year's 7,500 acres and representative of the slow, but steady, increase in potato acreage in the province. Saskatchewan acreage continues to be predominantly seed but has seen increases in table production. The government of Saskatchewan continues to invest in irrigation with the next reported project to provide upwards of 80,000 acres of irrigated land in the western part of the province. Although Saskatchewan has been impacted by the volume cuts elsewhere in the processing sector, both last year and this year, we do not expect acreage to be reduced in the seed sector but perhaps a shifting of varieties planted. Weather since February has been cold and snowy in the province and planting has not yet begun as of mid-April.

## **Alberta**

Contract negotiations have now been settled in Alberta so we are in a better position to estimate the planting intentions for the province, however this can, and may, change quickly as contract commitments are finalized. Our best estimate is 78,500 acres which would be up from last year's 76,500 acres. Despite announced volume reductions from the fry processors across the Pacific Northwest, including Alberta, these decreases will be offset by the extra volume required for the expansion in McCain's Coaldale facility set to come online in June. We also expect increases for the chip growers as well as the fresh sector, but seed acreage will likely remain stable. Snowpack is not where it needs to be for the province and areas of southern Alberta have already received water allocations. Temperatures of have been low and precipitation close to normal levels, but planting has not started yet and will likely get started after Easter

## **British Columbia**

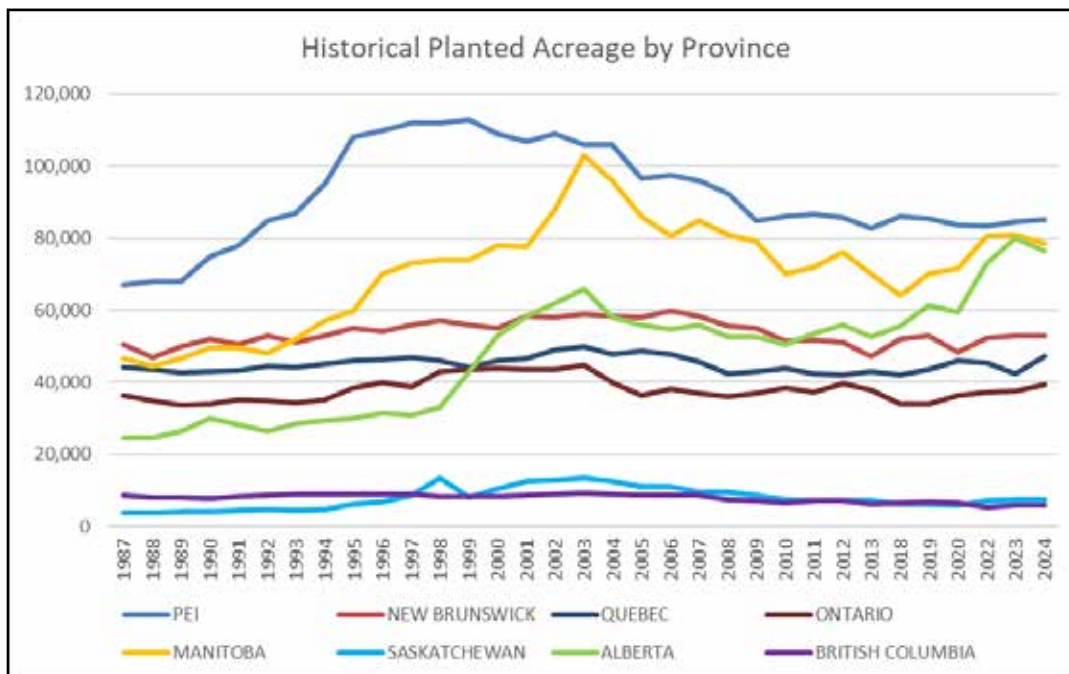
UPGC estimates 2025 potato acreage in BC will



stable at 5,900 acres. Although the potato crop has been profitable in the province, there are always higher value fruit crops competing for the existing land base, making further expansion very costly. Growers have been planting the early crop for a few weeks now, however heavy rains at the end of March

put a halt on planting in some areas. Most growers appear to be behind last year's pace, but not yet behind a "normal" schedule.

[Good Luck to all Potato Growers in Planting Their 2025 Potato Crop!](#)



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# Update from the Department of Agriculture PEI

By: Rodrigo Sampaio dos Santos, Potato Industry Coordinator



Spring has finally arrived, and a new planting season begins! As soil preparation and seed handling get underway, it's a good time to revisit some key practices that can help maintain a healthy crop throughout the season.

With the increased movement of seed, the risk of disease spreading between farms, trucks, equipment, and bins also rises. To minimize this risk, it's essential to thoroughly clean and disinfect all vehicles and equipment. After removing soil, debris, and other organic residues, apply a proper disinfectant containing hydrogen peroxide, quaternary ammonium, or sodium hypochlorite. These products are readily available from your local ag retailer. For best results, ensure treated surfaces remain wet with the product for 10 – 20 minutes.

When handling seed for planting, follow these best management practices:

1. Grade out as many defective or diseased seed tubers as possible (e.g., soft, mushy tubers; those discolored or with dry, sunken lesions; wrinkled or with abnormal sprouts),
2. Disinfect cutting equipment frequently, and always between different seed lots,
3. Keep cutting blades sharp,
4. Use an appropriate seed treatment, and
5. Plant under ideal conditions – in warm, dry soil with no forecast of heavy rain.

Controlling volunteer potato plants in fields previously used for production is also important to limit disease and pest spread. Regularly monitor these areas, and if volunteers emerge, manage them promptly to prevent the transmission of viruses and other pests.

Starting the season with these practices is key to producing a clean, healthy crop – and it will pay off at harvest time.

I also would like to use this space to provide some updates from Dr. Suqi Liu with the Plant Health Section of the PEI Department of Agriculture. Dr. Suqi has exciting news for the PEI potato industry as follows:

## Staffing:

Research Scientist (Plant Pathologist): Dr. Shuanglong (Simon) Huang received his PhD in Plant Science from the University of Manitoba (UM). Before assuming his current position, he completed postdoctoral research at AAFC (Saskatoon) and at UM, where he also instructed undergraduate and graduate courses in plant pathology and plant physiology. He is eager to contribute his expertise in service to PEI agricultural industries.

## Projects related to potato crops:

1. Field Pest Monitoring: The field pest monitoring project will target European corn borer (ECB), Colorado potato beetle (CPB), flea beetle, and leafhopper populations with weekly reports to be provided.
2. Beneficial Insect Monitoring: This project provides regular reporting on beneficial insect populations in the field to support informed spray decision-making.
3. Preliminary Climate/Pest Prediction System: The system was designed to predict the development of major crop pests in PEI up to 14 days in advance, using hourly weather data from over 20 stations across the province. It would help growers optimize the timing of plant protection measures in real-time. To enhance the system's accuracy, we are seeking grower participation for field testing during this growing season. Your feedback will help validate and refine the predictive models and ensure a more robust platform for next year. Interested participants may contact Dr. Suqi Liu at [sxliu@gov.pe.ca](mailto:sxliu@gov.pe.ca).



*Dr. Shuanglong  
(Simon) Huang,  
newest staff addition  
to the Department of  
Agriculture*





# Canadian Potato Council: 2025 So Far

*by Caleigh Hallwink-Irwin, General Manager - Canadian Potato Council*

2025 has already been a busy and productive year for the Canadian Potato Council (CPC) and the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada (FVGC). Across the country, CPC has been focused on strengthening collaboration, advocating for science-based policy, and ensuring the national voice of potato growers is clear, especially as we face mounting uncertainty in global trade and domestic policy. Whether in-person, online, or behind the scenes, the goal is the same: protect and promote the success of Canadian potato growers.

## **Tariffs & Trade: A Critical Moment**

Clearly, trade with the United States has been a significant focus lately.

CPC and FVGC have been continuously engaged with Canadian officials and U.S. industry counterparts to emphasize the mutual benefits of seamless cross-border trade and to advocate for a balanced, collaborative trade relationship that avoids tariffs and protects market access.

FVGC has assembled a trade-focused task force, including representation from CPC, that has been focusing on retaliatory tariffs, Business Risk Management programs, and our overarching trade advocacy strategy.

This trade war is both unprecedented and unfair, and CPC's position reflects that reality. We support free and open trade. But if – and only if – the U.S. chooses to again impose a 25% tariff on Canadian potatoes, we believe reciprocal tariffs are a fair response, with the critical exception of inputs like seed potatoes. CPC has submitted this position to Finance Canada.

CPC and its members have also contributed to FVGC's white paper outlining why the existing Business Risk Management (BRM) programs aren't adequate in this current environment. This paper was submitted to our new Agriculture Minister Kody Blois, and circulated to major Canadian news outlets. The programs need to recognize the real and unique risks fruit and vegetable

growers face and not just offer a one-size-fits-all approach.

We are working with our members, CFIA and AAFC on market diversification, especially in markets like Mexico and the Philippines. Expansion takes time but we are pleased work is being done, and that it is a priority for our federal government departments.

The US tariff situation continues to evolve and change. Even as I've written this article mid-April, it could be (and likely is) different by the time you're reading it! To combat this ever changing landscape, we've added a tariff update section to the FVGC website with FAQs and resources, and I encourage anyone with concerns to reach out directly to me as the situation evolves. Check it out at: <https://fvgc.ca/u-s-tariffs/>

## **Relationship Building and Communication**

The Potato Wart file remains active. CPC has been working closely with the PEI Potato Board, CFIA, and FVGC on a communications strategy that counters misinformation with facts and keeps the discussion grounded in science and not politics.

Since I joined CPC in October, member engagement has been a top priority. I had the pleasure of visiting PEI in February and providing updates, and I've have the privilege to do similar presentations for several other provincial organizations this year so far. Potato growers across Canada may have differences, but your shared priorities are many and deeply aligned. It's very clear that a unified, collaborative approach can achieve success for everyone.

## **Looking Ahead**

We're building stronger relationships across both provincial and international borders, reinforcing our place in federal policy conversations, and laying the groundwork for long-term progress. It's not always fast, but the work we're doing now is setting CPC and FVGC up to be a more resilient, responsive national voice for Canadian potato growers.

I look forward to continuing to work with you all!

# Farm and Food Care PEI

*By Maggie McCormick, PEI Federation of Ag.*

Each year the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity surveys Canadians on their sentiments about the food system, and every year these survey results continue to confirm that more than anyone else, consumers trust farmers to share honest information about how food is produced.

Farm & Food Care P.E.I. helps consumers connect with farmers, and farmers with consumers, even through the busy growing seasons to keep those lines of communication open. A variety of in-person events, videos, and web resources help all Islanders access the true stories about P.E.I. agriculture.

Here's just a sample of things we've been up to this year, and how you can participate in 2025!

## **Faces of PEI Food**

It takes many hands and many skills to grow our Island food, and the Faces of PEI Food video series introduces Islanders to those important roles. These quick videos showcase farmers, farm workers, researchers, processors and more. Some of the latest in the series include Adam Jay, the Chief Operating Officer at G. Visser & Sons; Keisha Rose Topic, a farmer at R.A Rose and Sons Ltd. and East Point Potato; and a research technician from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada working on agricultural water quality. One of the most popular videos to date this past year was about Chef Adam Loo, who is incorporating his farming background into the menu at Ada, his grab & go eatery in downtown Charlottetown. Find them all at [youtube.com/@farmfoodcarepei9442](https://youtube.com/@farmfoodcarepei9442) or [farmfoodcarepei.com/faces-of-pe/](https://farmfoodcarepei.com/faces-of-pe/)

## **Save the date!**

The ever popular Breakfast on the Farm is returning for 2025 and headed back to the potato fields! Islanders and visitors alike will be treated to a free locally grown breakfast, educational activities and farm tours at G Visser & Sons in Kings County on July 19, 2025. The Farm & Food Care PEI team will be on the lookout again for members of the agricultural community to help share their insights on farming with the public. Find the volunteer call in the PEI Federation of Agriculture weekly newsletter this spring!

Does your farm have a story to tell? Whether you or your staff would like to be featured in a short video, or you are undertaking an interesting farming practice this year, the FFC PEI team would love to capture those moments to help all Islanders understand the day-to-day of farming. Reach out to us today at [farmfoodcarepei@gmail.com](mailto:farmfoodcarepei@gmail.com)

*Farm & Food Care PEI is a program of the PEI Federation of Agriculture.*



*Adam Jay, Chief Operating Officer at G. Visser and Sons (Photo credit: Simon Reid)*



*Breakfast on the Farm, pictured above Mark Phillips sharing the farming experience with VR goggles with visitors. (Photo Credit: Millie McKay)*





*Chef Adam Loo is incorporating his farming background into the menu at Ada, in downtown Charlottetown.*

*Keisha Rose Topic, a farmer at R.A Rose and Sons Ltd. and East Point Potato.*



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# Processing Contract Settlements in North America

*By Scott Howatt, Processing Specialist*

Contract settlements for the 2025 season will forever be marked as the second and most cruel year of down agreements for the growers who supply potatoes to the processors of North America. Last year (2024), the finalized agreements ranged from 1.4% to 3.9% down in value from the previous year. This year (at time of print) growers have agreed to or been left with no option other than to accept contracts between 4.5% to 7.2% down, and at the same time there have been large, damaging reductions to the contracted volumes signed up by the fryers.

Only time and history lessons will say for sure what took place in our processing sector over the past 18 months. In real time, the fryer executives have given a number of reasons for the recent downturn; astonishing excess plant capacity in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) where the Big 4 fryers invested hundreds of millions of dollars into new facilities as well as major modernizations and expansions to existing fry plants; an increasing softness in consumer demand for finished product in our domestic marketplace (illustrated by a significant reduction in year-over-year restaurant traffic statistics); lowering overall consumer confidence which is signalling warning signs of a pending economic recession; and the over-supply of potatoes in the PNW which has resulted in the second year of unprecedented volumes of raw potatoes being diverted towards livestock farms, dehydrators, bio-digesters, etc.

2025 contract talks began in the Columbia Basin prior to Christmas. On December 23 the Potato Growers of Washington (PGW) reported they had reached agreements with both Lamb Weston and McCain Foods; then in mid-January the PGW shared they had an agreement with JR Simplot. All three settlements in the Basin were reported to be 5.0% down in value, and the growers cited their projected costs at 2-3% lower than 2024. Some grower groups met with their fry customers at the Potato Expo in

early January in Florida, while others met with their fry customers during February; however, it wasn't until later into March and April that other agreements were finalized. In the rest of the PNW, the growers of Malheur Co. in Oregon agreed to a 6% reduction with their fryer; the growers of Idaho ended up with their contracts going down by 7.2% in value and the Potato Growers of Alberta finished with their contracts down 6.5%. These PNW grower groups have indicated their projected production costs for 2025 will be between 2% lower to 1% higher than 2024.

Settlements in the Midwest (at time of print) are in the range of 4.5 to 5.5% down in value, in Wisconsin and North Dakota respectively. Meanwhile in the Atlantic Northeast (ANE) there are currently two settlements, the growers of Maine agreed to a 4.55% down contract and then shortly afterwards, the growers of PEI agreed to a 5.1% down settlement. The remaining PMANA areas (Manitoba, New Brunswick and Quebec) are still negotiating with their fry customers as of April 24. Processing growers from the Midwest to the ANE are reporting their productions costs for 2025 will, generally speaking, be at least 1% higher than 2024.

For the second year in a row, the gross oversupply of potatoes in the PNW was a leading factor in contract discussions across North America. As talks progressed, growers in all growing areas were being informed of their individual contract volume cuts. Spring planting is in different stages across the continent and the reported cuts are varied. Generally speaking, the growers in the Pacific Northwest are having to deal with volume cuts ranging between 10-20%; growers in the Midwest are faced with managing volume cuts of 5-30% and in the ANE, growers have volume cuts between 0-10percent across the pile. We understand the volume cuts are different for each of the fry companies and in some areas with some fryers, the cuts vary from grower to grower. At this time, PEI growers are the only ones who will be signing the same volume as they did in 2024

As I reported to the Potato News last May, "... from 2021 to 2023, North American processing



contracts increased between 40-45% accumulatively. These increases in gross farm income were greatly offset by major increases in growers' variable costs, most notably: seed, fertilizer, crop protectants, fuel, repairs and labour. In addition there were significant increases in borrowing costs as well as land costs. Over these three years significant gains were made by some farms here in the Atlantic Northeast where, due to favourable growing conditions, they achieved above-budget crop yields with above average quality." Now, with two consecutive down years in contract values, our contracts on PEI have gone down 7.5%, while growers' cost of production remain at historical highs of greater than \$5,600 per acre. This significant erosion of profit margin from growers' farm businesses will cost growers dearly in the short term. Perhaps more alarming, is the long term costs of these contract reductions. How is the next generation of growers going to see a viable business plan when their family farms' returns on operational costs are single digit while they sink millions of dollars into the ground to grow a highly-intensive, demanding crop that is, by all definitions, a high risk venture?

From this desk, these are tough times we face as an industry. There is little logic in the continued over production of potatoes that has happened these last two years in Idaho in particular, in the PNW in general. My message this May remains the same as usual, all North American growers need to dial their planted acres and subsequent production closer to their actual contracted commitments. The supply of potatoes is the only factor that is within a grower's control. Another thought, perhaps processing growers need to investigate the diversification of their business investments away from the entities in our industry which ask, and in some cases demand, that their growers give up essential profit margin so they can report to shareholders and board rooms that they have maintained their margins.

## Upcoming Events & Program Deadlines

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

### June 2025

June 25

**PEI Potato Board of Directors  
Monthly Meeting, Charlottetown**

### July 2025

July 23

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Monthly Meeting, Charlottetown**






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# PEI Burger Love: A Celebration of Island Flavour

*By Mark Phillips, Marketing Specialist*

Every April, Islanders and food lovers from across the region eagerly gear up for a month-long culinary celebration that has become a sizzling sensation—PEI Burger Love. What began in 2011 as a campaign to promote Prince Edward Island beef has evolved into a vibrant food movement, showcasing the Island’s culinary creativity, community spirit, and passion for local ingredients. With dozens of restaurants crafting unique gourmet burgers, PEI Burger Love transforms lunch and dinner into an exciting edible adventure for thousands of hungry fans.

Over the course of thirteen campaigns, the event has featured 707 different burger creations, generated over \$19 million in sales, and led to more than 1.3 million burgers sold across 38 communities. From decadent stacks topped with local cheeses and jams to fiery builds layered with bacon, fried onions, and spicy aiolis, each burger tells a story of innovation and Island flavour. Diners vote for their favourites, track their burger conquests online, and restaurants compete for the ultimate bragging rights: the title of “Most Loved Burger.”

After a brief hiatus in 2023, founding organizers Fresh Media invited Anderson House to reimagine the campaign as an exclusive fundraising event. Anderson House, a Prince Edward Island provincial emergency shelter, offers vital support to women, trans, and non-binary individuals—and their children—seeking safety from violence. With Anderson House at the helm, PEI Burger Love made a triumphant return last year, with \$1 from every burger sale donated directly to the organization. The result? A staggering \$90,179 raised to support new programming and services.

Adding to the excitement, PEI Potatoes and Cavendish Farms

have teamed up for T.G.I.Frydays. Participants are encouraged to share a photo of themselves enjoying a burger with a side of PEI fries for a chance to win one of four potato swag packs. Additional contests invite fans to submit their favourite fry cuts for a chance to win an AirFryer, or share their go-to dips and sauces to enter for Fries for a Year. You’ll find all the delicious details and prize info at [peiburgerlove.ca](http://peiburgerlove.ca)!

But PEI Burger Love is more than just a food festival—it’s a celebration of Island pride. It lifts local restaurants, supports farmers, and unites the community through a shared love of burgers. With social media buzzing and local ingredients like PEI beef and potatoes in the spotlight, Burger Love has become a signature flavour of the Island.

For burger listings, contest entries, and this year’s winning creations, visit [peiburgerlove.ca](http://peiburgerlove.ca) or follow the campaign on social media.





# AAFC Research Proving Diploid Breeding is More Than Just Small Potatoes

*By Brett van Heyningen, Communications Advisor,  
Atlantic Region, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada*

Diploid potatoes are quickly becoming the stud spuds for breeding new commercial potato varieties. Wild diploid potatoes have 2 copies of each chromosome in their DNA, unlike our common tetraploid potatoes, which have 4 copies of each chromosome. Fewer chromosomes make diploid genetics easier to work with for breeders.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) research scientist Dr. Bourlaye Fofana is leading the pre-breeding charge for diploid potatoes. After successfully pinpointing drought resistant and early maturing genes in diploid potatoes, he's moved onto to his next foe — common scab disease. Common scab is a widespread issue that can lead to major economic losses for producers across Canada. Common scab resistant potato varieties are scarce, so developing potato varieties with resistance is vital for the industry.

Dr. Fofana, along with AAFC researchers in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, and Kentville, Nova Scotia, as well as former AAFC student Dr. Braulio Soto-Cerda, now at the Universidad Católica de Temuco in Chile, evaluated 384 diploid potato clones for common scab resistance traits. The team found genetic markers on the diploid chromosomes for common scab resistance. Of the 384 diploid clones, the group identified 61 that are tolerant or resistant to common scab disease and have genes that help the potato plants to defend and protect themselves against diseases.



*Dr. Bourlaye Fofana, working in his lab.*



*Common scab diploid potatoes*

# Celebrating the International Day of the Potato

*By Mark Phillips, Marketing Specialist*

On May 30th, the global agricultural community will celebrate the International Day of the Potato, honouring the cultural, economic, and nutritional significance of our most beloved crop. This observance is more than just a celebration; it is a call to recognize the potato's vital role in ensuring global food security, supporting livelihoods, and adapting to climate challenges.

This day was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2023 to raise awareness about the potato's importance as a staple food and its role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The inaugural event took place in 2024.

As an industry, we celebrated the inaugural event with a social media campaign, Meta advertising, local radio contests, potato giveaways, and prizes through online and radio contests. We also published press releases that were picked up by 10 media outlets.

Support came from the Provincial Minister of Agriculture, the Federal Minister of Agriculture, and the Premier of PEI. CBC hosted a sit-down interview with Louise Martin, the host of CBC Compass, for the 6:00 p.m. news. It was a successful campaign!

This year's International Day of the Potato will spotlight the crop's growing importance in sustainable agriculture. As the world grapples with climate change, population growth, and

shifting dietary needs, the potato offers a resilient and efficient solution. Its short growing cycle, minimal water requirements, and potential for high productivity make it a key player in climate-smart farming practices.

The potato has a fantastic story, tracing its journey back to when it was first domesticated over 7,000 years ago in the Andean highlands. From there, the potato has travelled from its roots in South America to become a staple in over 150 countries. Today, it is the third most important food crop worldwide, after rice and wheat, with more than 370 million metric tons produced annually. The crop's success is partly due to its ability to thrive in diverse climates, its high yield per hectare, and its exceptional nutritional profile.

We are developing a new strategy to build upon last year's success and add a few new surprises. We encourage all industry stakeholders to participate this year and help us celebrate on social media. If you have any ideas to contribute, please contact the Board office at 902 892-6551.



*Krista Shaw and Greg Donald of the PEI Potato Board giving away free potatoes to celebrate International Day of the Potato in 2024*



**May 30**  
**International Day of Potato**



Wishing All Farmers  
a Safe and Successful  
Planting Season.



# Industry Updates

## **PEIIA Recognition Award: Scott Howatt**

Scott has always been involved with the agriculture community of PEI, first through growing up farming with his father in Tryon, followed by obtaining a degree from NSAC majoring in Ag. Mechanization. Scott continues the family farming legacy by operating a small beef feedlot as well as growing cereals, oilseeds and forages.

Along with farming full-time, Scott has worked for PEI Crop Insurance Corp and Farm Credit Canada. He then served as chair of the Potato Processing Committee (PPC) before starting with the PEI Potato Board in 2009 as Processing Specialist.

In this position, his primary responsibility is working with producers to negotiate contracts with processing companies on behalf of all processing growers. Through his commitment to fairness, he was instrumental in envisioning and building the system of mediation that the growers and Cavendish Farms now use to negotiate contracts. His role as Canadian Vice-President of the Potato Marketing Association of North America (PMANA) reflects his dedication to representing PEI potato growers on a national scale. He has also been a vocal advocate for the Agronomy Initiative for Marketable yield and is supportive of local research and agronomy projects with PEI producers. This is Scott's "hay season" in his role at the Board, and he has been putting in many long hours, pouring through spreadsheets and combing through contract language to ensure that processing potato growers are getting fairly compensated for their investment and labour. Seeing as processing represents about 60% of the Island potato production, it is fair to say that Scott's efforts have a significant impact on not just grower livelihoods but the provincial economy.

Scott is dedicated to promoting the success of PEI potato growers through ensuring they receive a fair value for their product while balancing a positive relationship with processors. By working with growers and representatives in other regions of North America, Scott has built relationships that allow for collaboration in expanding the knowledge of processing contracts and negotiations in other markets. His commitment to honesty and professionalism in all aspects of his work has led to tangible improvements in how contract

negotiations are conducted here in PEI. Scott does not seek the limelight in his professional career and is often found working behind the scenes.

Scott continues to be active in the farming community through involvement in fundraising for the South Shore Actiplex, volunteering with the Plowing Match in Crapaud and serving multiple roles with the South Shore United Church. He also loves spending time with his three grown children, Todd, Jenny Shea and Elsa, including recent international travel to Thailand and Malta.



*Scott Howatt received the PEIIA Recognition Award for his outstanding contributions to agriculture , pictured here with Ryan Barrett.*

## **PEIIA Outstanding Agrologist: Mary Kay Sonier**

Mary Kay Sonier has shown dedication to the agriculture community through her extensive work throughout the industry. She first received her



Bachelors degree in Agriculture from the University of Guelph before becoming a Potato Breeding Technician for the university. After moving to PEI and working briefly with the Department of Agriculture in Potato Extension, Mary Kay joined the PEI Potato Board as Seed Coordinator.

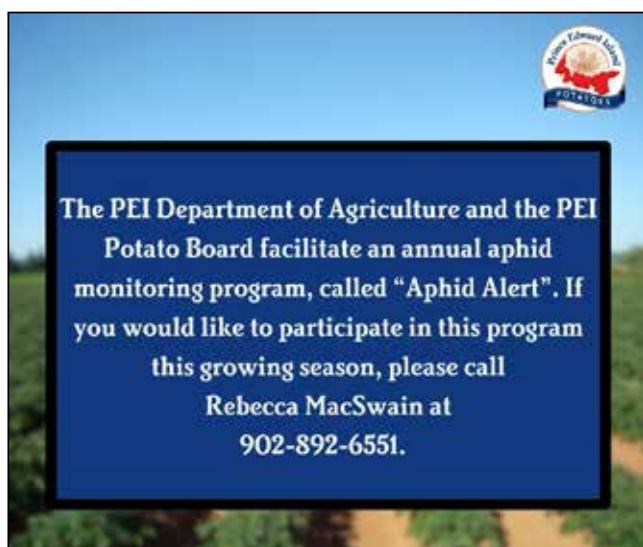
For more than 30 years in this position, Mary Kay displayed commitment to promoting the success of the PEI potato industry through her many roles. She oversaw activities at Fox Island Elite Seed Farm and worked with seed producers to improve seed quality. She championed the Aphid Alert program with the PEI Department of Agriculture, edited and published the PEI Potato News magazine and coordinated provincial and national variety trials under Fruit & Vegetable Growers of Canada cluster.

In recent years, Mary Kay has become an expert on potato wart through the multiple crises that have hit the industry. Mary Kay has been at the center of every working group and committee trying to better understand the disease, working to control the spread of potato wart, and advocating for fairness in trade that follows scientific principles and facts. Following Mary Kay's retirement in 2023, she continues to work with the Board on a part-time basis on the potato wart file, sharing her experience with provincial and national stakeholders.

Beyond her role with the Potato Board, Mary Kay has represented the agriculture industry of PEI on both a local and national level. She has served on the FVGC Research Working Group, Seed Potato Sub-Committee and the Seed Certification Section of the Potato Association of America (PAA). On PEI, she championed

the "Spuds in Tubs" agriculture awareness project in elementary schools and currently serves as Chair of the PEIIA Membership Committee. Mary Kay also remains active in her community through involvement in 4-H, her church and other community groups. She and her husband Bill enjoy travelling, gardening, and spending time with their three children.

All of Mary Kay's contributions reflect her commitment to the success of the agriculture industry. The time and expertise she has dedicated to the continual improvement of the agriculture community has helped create a resilient industry. When faced with the PVYn and potato wart crises, Mary Kay worked tirelessly to advocate for PEI potato growers by voicing their concerns to stakeholders and officials at all levels. Through developing personal relationships with farmers, Mary Kay has been instrumental in helping producers grow and access high quality seed, while also being a well-respectful voice advocating for the industry nationally and internationally.



*Greg Donald and Ryan Barrett pictured with Mary Kay Sonier as she received the Outstanding Agrologist award for her outstanding contributions to the PEIIA and its membership.*

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