

*Prince Edward Island*

Winter 2026  
Volume 27 Issue 1

# POTATO NEWS

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*In This Issue:*

- Potato Expo 2026
- Future Leaders Bursary
- Faces of the Industry



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# POTATO NEWS

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# Chair's Comments

by Katie MacLennan, PEI Potato Board Chair



It is a privilege to serve as the first Chairwoman of the PEI Potato Board, and I am grateful for the trust placed in me. I step into this role with deep respect for the growers and leaders who have built such a strong foundation over the years. I want to thank Donald Stavert for serving as chair this past year, and for the past years of dedication, knowledge and mentorship he has given at the board table and beyond. Also, I want to thank all the growers, board staff, and industry people who have reached out with their kind words as I step into this role.

The first few months in this role have deepened my appreciation for the resilience of our Island growers. Every single farm felt the devastating effects of the drought this year; for some, the worst in memory. Many of us are looking at warehouses that would normally be filled this time of year, and most are sitting with available space. Markets are slower than last year and the three-year average. A massive crop in the United States is affecting typical markets for pack sheds, not only in PEI but nationwide. That said, the smaller crop should allow us to move all of the product by our typical year end timeline.

On a positive note, the quality of the crop this season is excellent with gravity numbers the highest they've ever been in some cases. Post harvest test results for our Island seed is back and we have a 95% pass rate, which is a historic high. This pass rate, coupled with our already strong seed system, will set us up for success next year and subsequent years after.

With the smaller yields this year, it may be beneficial to make contact with your seed provider to ensure availability.

The potato processing committee will be starting their processing negotiations shortly after this magazine hits your mailbox. This will be another tough year to negotiate after crop impacts due to the drought last season and an oversupply most everywhere else. Our processing committee devote many hours to these negotiations and take this work seriously on behalf of the processing growers Island wide.

We are in the middle of "meeting season", and I encourage everyone to take part in the sessions being offered this winter. Our AIM meetings started in January, and we always get a strong turnout. We are fortunate to have excellent board staff and industry partnerships that foster up to date and pertinent research trials that can benefit many of us. We will once again be hosting the bi-annual International Potato Technology Expo which will be held at the East Link Centre in Charlottetown February 26-27, 2026. This is an excellent chance to speak with potato board staff, machinery dealers, industry professionals, crop protectant representatives and growers from across the Island and beyond. There are excellent sessions in the mornings to take in and often an evening event as well. I look forward to connecting with many of you at the Expo.

In closing, I hope you all take some time this winter to reconnect with some family and friends, to pick up a new hobby, or maybe do some travelling. Whatever it is, I hope you enjoy it. Before you know it, our farms will be ramping up to prepare for another planting season. I look forward to the coming year in this role and continuing to work on behalf of all growers in our great industry here on Prince Edward Island.

All the best for the winter months ahead,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "K MacLennan".



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# PEI Potato Board News



*Greg Donald, Katie MacLennan, Hon. Bloyce Thompson, Agriculture Minister and Krista Shaw at their quarterly meeting, to discuss PEI Potatoes.*



*At the Potato Board Annual Christmas staff lunch, Greg Donald, General Manager, presented Karen Martin, Market Information Officer on 10 years of service.*



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# Potato Expo 2026

*By Krista Shaw, Director of Stakeholder Relations*

Board members and staff participated in the annual National Potato Council Expo in Dallas, Texas January 6-8th. Board representatives participated in United Potato Growers of Canada and United Potato Growers of America meetings, the Potato Sustainability Alliance AGM, and World Potato Congress meetings along with speaking with industry professionals on the trade show floor. Sessions focused on AI, farm succession, new plant breeding techniques and RNA testing for virus identification. The Canadian Potato Council executive also met with the National Potato Council executive to keep the lines of communication open between the Canadian and the United States respective organizations. Next years meeting is planned for January 5-7, 2027 in Denver, Colorado.



*Krista Shaw, Director of Stakeholder Relations and Rebecca MacSwain, Seed Specialist with the PEI Potato Board representing PEI Potatoes in Texas.*



*Chris Rennie, Dianne Huestis, and Rit VanNieuwenhuyzen, directors with the PEI Potato Board sharing about PEI Potatoes at the Potato Expo in Dallas, Texas.*

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# Faces of the Industry

*By Rebecca MacSwain, Seed Specialist and Amanda Pineau, Production of the PEI Potato News*

## **Pat Quilty, Marilyn Johnston and Gordon Wheatley**

If you have ever visited the Prince Edward Island Potato Quality Institute (PQI), chances are you have had dealings with Pat Quilty, operations manager, Marilyn Johnston, office manager, or Gordon Wheatley, warehouse manager. With all sharing over 25 years each of dedication and commitment to the seed potato growers of PEI.

Marilyn Johnston is dedicated to getting results to the growers in a timely fashion, as well as being the friendly voice when you call with questions or inquiries, all while making sure all the bills are paid on time and the staff have everything they need to get the job done.

Gordon Wheatley, the resident jack of all trades at PQI, is always lending a helping hand to all the staff, fixing a broken piece of equipment, trying to rearrange a packed warehouse, receiving samples from growers and inspectors as well helping with coring, grinding and sorting of the potatoes.

Pat Quilty is at the office during all hours of the day to ensure results get out to the the growers as soon as possible. Pat is always just a phone call away and has always said that all questions are valid and has given freely of his time and knowledge to anyone who asks for it. This past November at the Potato Industry Banquet Pat was recognized for his outstanding service and dedication to the PEI potato industry.

PQI has become the cornerstone of seed potato testing and certification, offering a wide range of diagnostic testing such as BRR, export virus testing, post harvest testing, PCR, PMTV, PSTV, Nuclear audit testing and soil testing.



*Pat Quilty, Marilyn Johnston and Gordon Wheatley*

## **Kaden Rennie**

Kaden Rennie's history in the agricultural industry runs deep, as a fourth generation farmer from Alma, PEI. Kaden farms at Dale and Ronnie Rennie Inc. alongside his family members, Dale (Grandfather), Ronnie (Great-Uncle), Colin (Father), Darcy (Uncle), and Evan (Cousin). The Rennie's divide their time between a processing potato and 100-head dairy operation.

Kaden is a graduate of the Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture, with a Diploma in Business Management, specializing in Dairy Management. Kaden is actively involved with the PEI Young Farmers, serving as a Board member, representing the western district. Kaden is passionate about carrying on his family's farming legacy while embracing new technology and more sustainable ways of farming.



*Kaden Rennie*

## **Jamie Ward**

Jamie Ward is the Program Coordinator for the PEI Young Farmers Association, where she works closely with young farmers across the Island to support learning, leadership, and connection within the agricultural community. She is also an Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) research student and is currently enrolled at the University of Prince Edward Island, balancing hands-on research with her studies.

Being involved in multiple areas of agriculture, has helped shape Jamie's passion for sustainability, both from an environmental perspective and by encouraging more people to become involved in agriculture to support the industry's long-term success.

Through these roles, Jamie looks forward to seeing how the next generation will help shape Prince Edward Island's growing agricultural sector.

*Pictured right: Jamie Ward*



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# Insecticide Efficacy for Colorado Potato Beetle Control

*By: Ryan Barrett, Research and Agronomy Specialist*

In recent years, potato growers in Prince Edward Island (PEI) have reported increasing crop damage from Colorado potato beetles (CPB). For many years, CPB control was not a major concern because neonicotinoid insecticides such as Admire, Titan, and Actara provided effective season-long protection. However, recent grower observations and research conducted by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) under the FVGC National Cluster Program indicate that CPB populations in PEI are developing resistance to neonicotinoids. In addition, reduced effectiveness has also been observed for some foliar insecticides currently used to manage CPB. While earlier studies identified general resistance trends, there has been no direct comparison of commonly used insecticides to evaluate their relative effectiveness.

The trial was planted on May 12, 2025, at the Atlantic AgriTech site in New Annan, PEI. The potato variety Elland (long white) was used. The study included eight treatments- seven insecticide combinations and one untreated check. Treatments were arranged in a randomized complete block design (RCBD). No in-furrow insecticide was applied, allowing the study to focus solely on foliar insecticide performance. Insecticides evaluated in this study were Cimegra, Minecto Pro, Vayego, Delegate, and Coragen.

Results showed no significant differences in canopy coverage, beetle counts, or percent defoliation among the treatments containing Cimegra, Vayego, Coragen,

and Minecto Pro. Delegate showed a slight trend toward reduced residual control, wearing off a little more quickly than the other chemicals. However, this difference was generally not statistically significant, and Delegate still performed much better than the untreated check. The reduced performance of Delegate is consistent with previous AAFC findings that showed reduced susceptibility to Group 5 insecticides.

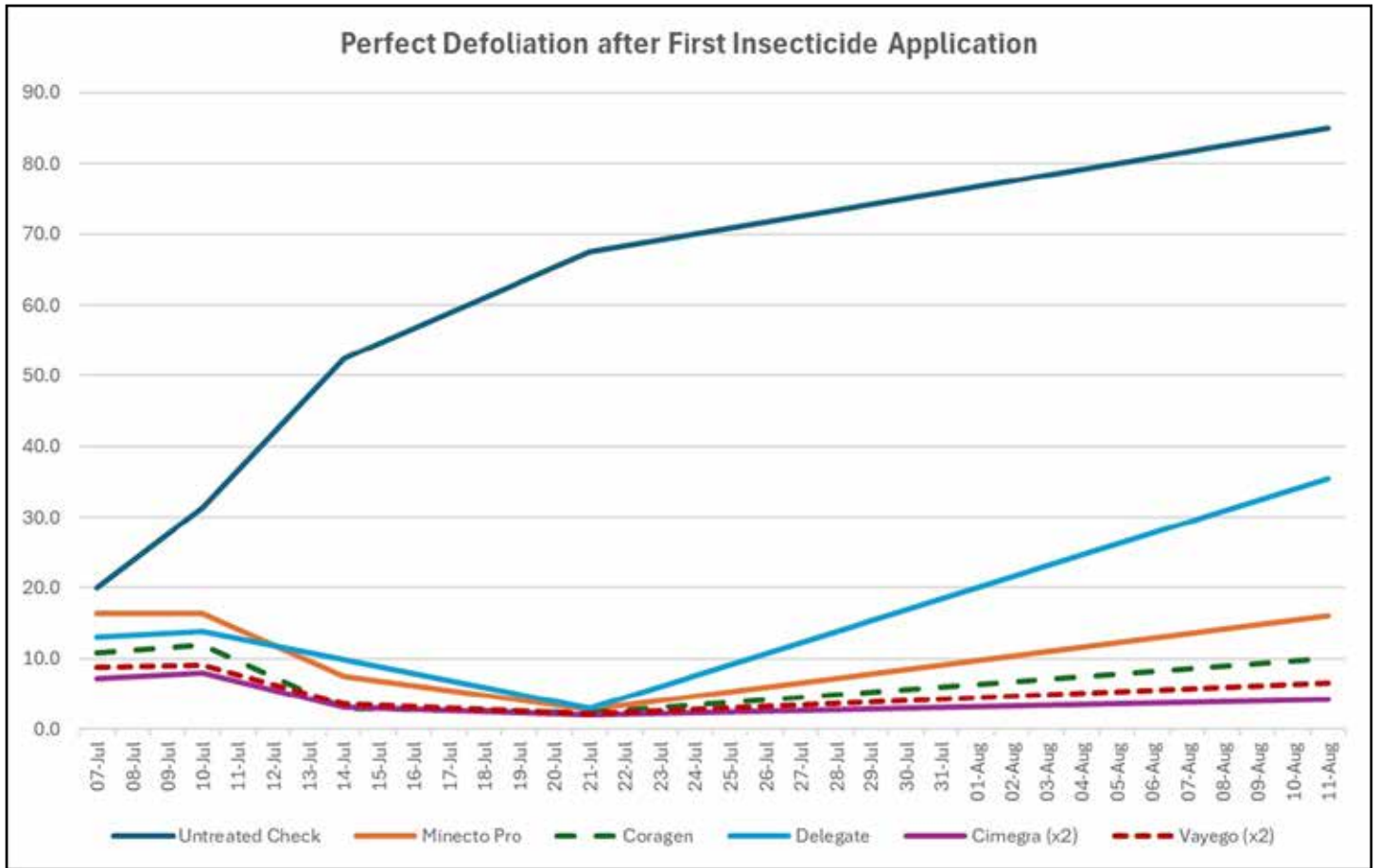
Since most insecticide treatments provided similar levels of control, cost became an important factor. The most cost-effective option in this trial was the Vayego/Delegate combination, followed by Vayego/Cimegra. Best management practices recommend rotating insecticide groups within a growing season to slow resistance development, rather than applying the same mode of action multiple times.

Although no in-furrow neonicotinoid insecticides were used in this study, these products may still offer value by delaying early larval feeding and controlling other pests such as flea beetles, even if CPB control is reduced. Due to low fertilizer application rates and severe drought conditions in 2025, tuber yield data were not collected, as results would not have been reliable. If the trial is repeated in 2026, full-season fertility will be applied, and tuber yield will be included.

The project team thanks Evan MacDonald, Doug MacDonald, Alex Ryan, and Marc Lamers of Atlantic AgriTech for managing and supporting this trial.


**Table 1: Insecticides evaluated in the 2025 CPB plot trial.**

Brand Name	Chemical name	IRAC Group	Application Rate
Cimegra®	broflanilide	30	75 ml/ac
Minecto® Pro	cyantraniliprole + abamectin	6 + 28	270 ml/ac
Vayego®	tetraniliprole	28	60 ml/ac
Delegate™	spinetoram	5	97 g/ac
Coragen®	chlorantraniliprole	28	202 ml/ac



*Pictured below: Colorado Potato Beetle larvae damaging potato foliage, which can be devastating to plant growth and production.*






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# Cultivating the Next Generation:

## PEI Potato Board Introduces Future Leaders Bursary

*By: Krista Shaw, Director of Stakeholder Relations*

The way in which potatoes are planted, grown, harvested, and stored has changed dramatically over recent decades. As new practices, technologies, and business models continue to emerge, the industry increasingly depends on skilled workers, fresh ideas, and innovative thinking; however the supply of these talents is not keeping pace with demand.

One of the first priorities of the PEI Potato Board's new Advocacy & Operations Committee was to better understand the declining number of young people pursuing post-secondary education in agriculture. Discussions with education specialists revealed a key barrier: the cost of attending off-Island agricultural colleges or specialized training programs is significantly higher than studying at institutions closer to home. As a result, many young Islanders choose careers in other trades and professions, and the agricultural sector loses potential future leaders.

To help address this challenge and ensure the strength of PEI's cornerstone industry for years to come, the PEI Potato Board has launched a new initiative focused on the future: the PEI Potatoes Future Leaders Bursary.

The bursary was developed in response to issues facing growers today, particularly labour shortages and farm succession planning. As farm operations become more advanced, the need for skilled workers—such as mechanics, equipment operators, and technical specialists—continues to grow. However, Prince Edward Island does not currently offer an agricultural degree program or many of the specialized trade diplomas required by modern farming operations.

As a result, many students must leave the Island to pursue relevant education, which significantly increases the cost of post-secondary studies. Our hope is that this bursary will help ease those initial financial pressures and encourage students to enroll in programs that will support the future of the potato industry.

The PEI Potatoes Future Leaders Bursary will award

\$2,000 to each successful applicant, with up to five graduating high school students selected annually. The bursary supports students entering college or university programs that will strengthen their ability to contribute to the PEI potato sector.

Applicants will be reviewed by the Committee and while academics don't play a large role in the decision, students who are currently working in the industry, plan to work in it, or intend to return after completing their studies does. Experience may include involvement on a family farm, seasonal employment, or participation through community or industry-related activities.

The timing of the bursary reflects the evolving nature of agriculture itself. The potato industry has changed significantly over the past few decades; it is no longer solely about manual labour. Today's potato farms rely on a broad range of professional expertise that extends well beyond traditional fieldwork. Operations increasingly depend on agronomists, engineers, mechanics, skilled equipment operators, and specialists who manage storage facilities and advanced irrigation systems.

Students interested in future careers in the industry are encouraged to explore fields such as agronomy, nutrient management, crop production, mechanical and electrical engineering, agricultural business management, and precision agriculture. Skills related to pack-shed operations, export logistics, and irrigation technology are also becoming increasingly important.

Looking ahead, the Board views the bursary as a long-term investment in the people who will help guide the industry through continued growth and innovation. By supporting students now, the program aims to attract new talent while encouraging those with existing connections to farming to return after completing their education.

The goal remains to encourage Island students to make their career in potatoes and bring new ideas and innovative practices to our industry. The opportunities

are vast, and the potato industry can offer meaningful, fulfilling, and lifelong careers for the next generation. As our growers all can attest, there is something deeply rewarding about helping to feed people.

The 2026 PEI Potatoes Future Leaders Bursary is now open, with applications due by May 15, 2026. Students must submit a one-page statement outlining their involvement in the PEI potato industry, their intended area of study, and how their education will support a future career in the sector. Applicants must demonstrate a meaningful connection to the industry through personal experience, family involvement, or community engagement.

Applications may be submitted by email or mail to:

Krista Shaw  
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# Effectiveness of Minuet for Common Scab

By: Ryan Barrett, Research and Agronomy Specialist

Common scab, primarily caused by *Streptomyces* spp., remains a persistent challenge for potato producers in Prince Edward Island (PEI), resulting in significant losses in marketable yield. Although some potato varieties exhibit partial resistance, no varieties commonly grown in PEI are fully resistant to common scab. Cultural practices for managing the disease are limited, and while reduced soil pH has been associated with lower scab incidence, this approach can negatively affect nutrient availability and yield potential in potatoes and rotational crops. As a result, there is continued interest in identifying effective and practical tools for scab suppression.

Previous research conducted under the FVGC National Cluster Program suggested that the Bayer biopesticide Serenade Soil could help reduce common scab symptoms. This product has since been rebranded as Minuet®, a biological fungicide containing *Bacillus subtilis* strain QST 713, and is registered in Canada for suppression of several soilborne diseases, including *Rhizoctonia* root rot and black scurf. Given limited on-farm experience with this product in PEI, field-scale trials were initiated in 2023 to evaluate its effectiveness for common scab suppression under commercial production conditions.

Between 2023 and 2025, a total of eleven field trials. At each site, Minuet was applied in-furrow at the labelled rate of 379 mL per acre on a portion of the field, with the remaining area serving as a non-treated check. All other agronomic practices were consistent across treated and untreated areas. Prior to harvest, four or five 10-foot strips were collected from each treatment, avoiding field variability such as wet spots, eroded knolls, and wheel tracks.

Samples were graded at AAFC Charlottetown according to Cavendish

Farms processing standards. Yield was calculated by extrapolating weights from 10-foot samples, and disease assessments were based on 25 randomly selected tubers per sample. Common scab incidence, percent coverage, and severity were evaluated using a standardized rating scale, alongside assessments of *Rhizoctonia* and silver scurf.

In 2023 and 2024, Minuet significantly decreased common scab coverage in three fields (of seven) with noticeable scab pressure. The other fields in the study did not have appreciable levels of common scab. In those three fields where scab coverage was reduced, the scale of the reduction was between 50 and 70%.

In 2025, there were four fields included in this trial, two with the Prospect variety and two with the Alverstone Russet variety. In one field (Prospects), common scab cover was reduced from 8.0% to 6.2%, statistically significant at  $p=0.09$ . In the other fields, percent scab was slightly lower in the Minuet treatment but not by a statistically significant amount.

Across three years of data, Minuet did not significantly increase total yield or reduce the proportion of small tubers. However, there was a borderline significant trend toward a higher percentage of tubers weighing 10 ounces or greater in Minuet-treated plots. Most notably, Minuet significantly reduced common

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scab, with percent scab coverage decreasing from 11.1% to 5.9% and scab severity declining from 0.93 to 0.84 (on a scale from 0 to 3). Rhizoctonia coverage was also significantly reduced, while no significant effect was observed for silver scurf.

Overall, these trials demonstrate that Minuet can provide suppression of common scab and Rhizoctonia under PEI field conditions, supporting its potential role as a management tool for common scab, a very

complex and challenging disease without many control options.

Thanks for the growers who participated in these on-farm trials over the past three years, and thanks to Bayer CropScience for provision of product for completion of the trial. In addition, thanks to Dr. Rick Peters, Kim MacDonald and others at AAFC Charlottetown for their assistance in grading and storage of samples for this project.



*Ranger Russet- Check*



*Ranger Russet- Treated*

The PEI Potato Board wishes all Growers, Exhibitors, and Industry Members an enjoyable 2026 PEI Potato Technology Expo, February 26-27  
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# Update from the Department of Agriculture PEI

By: *Rodrigo Sampaio dos Santos, Potato Industry Coordinator*



As winter progresses, February marks a critical stage for potato storages across Canada. Tubers have been in storage for months, and maintaining quality now requires consistent monitoring of temperature, humidity, airflow, and early signs of sprouting or disease. For growers, packers, and processors alike, late-winter storage management becomes a decisive factor in protecting crop value all the way into spring.

Temperature control remains the foundation of successful storage management, and its importance only increases as the season progresses. Processing potatoes generally require temperatures between 7–10°C; table potatoes hold best around 4°C; and seed potatoes should be maintained near 3–4°C once their physiological age aligns with planting objectives. Even small fluctuations in temperature can trigger condensation, which in turn promotes disease development and uneven pile dynamics. This is why many storages rely on multiple temperature probes placed throughout the pile to identify microclimates before they escalate into quality challenges.

As temperature interacts with the natural respiration of the tubers, airflow becomes the next critical element. Proper ventilation ensures that heat and moisture are evenly distributed and that CO<sub>2</sub> does not accumulate to harmful levels. Respiration rates tend to rise in late winter, which means ventilation schedules that worked in early storage may no longer be adequate. Storages equipped with condition based automation—systems that adjust fan activity based on realtime data—often see more stable conditions compared to those using fixed ventilation cycles. The goal is not simply to move air, but to move the right amount of air at the right time.

Humidity also plays a major role in maintaining tuber integrity during longterm storage. A relative humidity of 90–95% is generally ideal, ensuring the potatoes maintain their weight and firmness without creating an environment that encourages disease. Condensation inside the structure is an early sign that humidity is too high or that air movement is

insufficient. Conversely, wrinkling or skin dehydration indicate humidity levels that are too low. Balancing humidity therefore requires growers to remain attentive to subtle changes in weather patterns and storage conditions.

For processing potatoes, sugar levels are another essential consideration during the late winter period. Cold induced sweetening can lead to dark fry colour and rejected loads, making regular sugar end testing an important tool. When sugars begin to rise, adjusting temperatures or implementing controlled reconditioning can help return tubers to acceptable processing standards. Each variety responds differently to cold stress, so successful sugar management depends on both experience and careful monitoring.

Late winter is often when storage diseases become more noticeable, with dry rot, soft rot, pink rot, silver scurf, and late blight being the most common issues. Effective management includes maintaining strong airflow, preventing warm pockets within the pile, keeping CO<sub>2</sub> levels in check, and removing any problem areas before they spread. Early detection is always more economical than corrective action after disease becomes widespread.

Sprouting is another challenge that intensifies in February as tubers naturally shift toward the end of their dormancy period. Lower temperatures remain the primary tool for slowing sprout growth, but registered sprout inhibitors can provide additional protection when used appropriately. Timing matters—applications are most effective when sprouts remain below 5 mm in length. Regular inspections help growers stay ahead of unwanted growth before it impacts market grades and storability.

Modern storages use CO<sub>2</sub> sensors, automated climate systems, thermal imaging, and AI-assisted ventilation programs that allow managers to respond quickly and efficiently to changing conditions. These systems not only protect product quality but also

support energy efficiency, a growing priority for producers facing increasing input costs.

With all these factors converging, February truly stands as a decisive month for potato storage. Reviewing temperature uniformity, checking for condensation, monitoring sugar levels and CO<sub>2</sub>, inspecting for early sprouting, searching for disease pockets, and ensuring equipment remains in good working order all contribute to maintaining a stable environment. By approaching storage management with renewed diligence during this late winter period, growers can safeguard the value of their crop, support consistent market supply, and uphold the high quality for which PEI potatoes are known across Canada and beyond.



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MARKETPLACE | EVENTS

# Harvesting Innovation

*By: Brett van Heyningen, Communications Advisor Atlantic region of AAFC*

When Dr. Andrew McKenzie-Gopsill dusted off a piece of equipment invented 10 years prior by an AAFC colleague to repurpose it for a new idea, even he didn't expect to see such clear results.

The potato vine crusher attaches to the back of a potato harvester to kill European corn borer larvae within the potato vine. Dr. McKenzie-Gopsill used the potato vine crusher at the AAFC Harrington Research Farm to test its ability to destroy weed seeds during a simulated potato harvest. He found that germination of certain weed seeds was reduced by 60 to 95 per cent in the petri dishes. The soil tests showed that germination of lambsquarter and pigweed reduced by 50 per cent, while other larger weed seed species reduced by 50 to 75 per cent.

But how would the equipment fare in real-world field conditions during a real harvest?

During harvest mesh bags containing weed seeds were dropped into the crusher. The mesh bags allowed the team to expose a known group of seeds to similar conditions as other seeds that would pass through the crusher during a regular harvest. In the fall, volunteer canola seed germination was reduced by 26% with

the potato vine crusher. This was followed by barnyard grass at 21%, lambsquarters at 14%, redroot pigweed at 13%, and corn spurry weed seeds at less than 1%, confirming that the potato vine crusher can effectively destroy weed seeds during potato harvest.

The results of the study with the potato vine crusher are especially important in a time where more weeds are becoming increasingly resistant to herbicides.



*Dr. Andrew McKenzie-Gopsill*



*Potato vine crusher hard at work during a simulated harvest.*



*By Victoria Stamper, General Manager of United Potato Growers of Canada*

The Potato Business Summit was held in Dallas on January 7th, 2026 in conjunction with Potato Expo and as an event that is sponsored by United Potato Growers of America, United Potato Growers of Canada, and the Potato Marketing Association of North America, we thought it important to provide an update for those that could not attend in person. The Summit brought together a wide range of speakers on global topics impacting potato growers throughout North America.

The summit opened with Stephen Nicholson from Rabobank providing an analysis of the economic outlook for various alternative crops, an important topic as planting intentions for the 2026 crop are being finalized. Mr. Nicholson delivered a clear message to the potato sector: after several years of expansion and strong margins, the market is entering a period that will demand greater discipline, sharper planning, and closer attention to demand signals.

“The industry expanded quickly when margins were strong — now supply is testing the limits of demand.”

Nicholson pointed to a growing imbalance between supply and demand, particularly in processing potatoes. Strong prices and expanding processing capacity encouraged acreage growth across key producing regions in North America and Europe. The result has been large crops entering a market that cannot absorb unlimited volume. While demand for processed potato products remains structurally sound, Nicholson cautioned that it is not immune to saturation. When supply grows faster than consumption, prices and margins adjust — often abruptly.

“Processing demand is strong, but it isn’t endless — and markets always correct when production gets ahead of consumption.”

A major theme of the presentation was the rise of new global competitors, particularly in Asia. Countries such as India and China are rapidly expanding their processing capacity and improving quality, allowing them to compete aggressively in export markets. Nicholson emphasized that these players are no longer

fringe suppliers — they are reshaping global trade flows and increasing competitive pressure on traditional exporters in North America and Europe.

“The global fry market is no longer dominated by just a few regions — competition is broader and more price-driven than ever.”

Despite softening prices, production costs remain stubbornly high. Nicholson highlighted ongoing pressures related to labour, energy, storage, inputs, and capital investment. For many growers, this creates a narrowing margin window, especially for those without firm contracts or cost advantages.

Nicholson also addressed demand-side risks, noting that economic uncertainty and inflation have made consumers more cautious. While potatoes remain a staple, discretionary spending — particularly in foodservice — has been uneven, slowing growth in some processed segments.

“Even staple foods aren’t completely insulated when consumers start watching every dollar.”

The presentation emphasized that the next phase of the market will reward discipline over expansion. Nicholson stressed the importance of aligning production with confirmed demand, understanding true cost structures, and resisting the temptation to chase short-term price signals.

Nicholson closed with a reminder that the potato industry remains fundamentally strong, but the operating environment is shifting. The coming seasons are likely to feature tighter margins, greater volatility, and more scrutiny of planting decisions.

“This isn’t a downturn — it’s a transition to a more competitive, more disciplined market.”

Narrowing the focus slightly, the next speaker Cedric Porter focused on the European potato sector who have produced record volumes but who are operating under intense pressure. EU potato area in 2025 was the largest in six years, and production rose around 5% to about 117 billion pounds, with

Germany, France, the Netherlands and Belgium (the “EU 4”) delivering a record 65.5% of that total. Yet this apparent abundance hides structural challenges: yields have plateaued, EU 4 yields now sit roughly 16% below average US levels, and long term production in key countries like the UK and Poland has trended down despite modest crop increases in the last season.

Weather volatility has become a defining feature rather than an exception. Recent years have brought a run of disruptive events – drought in 2018 and 2022, excessively wet springs and falls in 2019, 2023 and 2024, Covid and Brexit impacts around 2020–21, and the wider consequences of the Ukraine invasion – leaving growers without anything resembling a “normal” year. In England, 2024 delivered roughly a third more rain than average, only for 2025 to swing to about 80% of normal rainfall in the main eastern potato belt, underlining how unpredictable growing conditions have become.

At the same time, regulation is tightening and input costs are high. European growers have lost or seen restrictions on a series of crop protection tools, including chlorpropham, chlorothalonil, neonicotinoids, mancozeb and pencycuron, and they also face stricter limits on nitrogen use and genetic technologies. Dutch costings suggest that growing potatoes in the EU 4 now averages around US \$5,395 per acre, with breakeven prices ranging roughly from US \$10 to US \$16 per hundredweight depending on soil type, timing of sale and storage, which left margins only marginal in 2024/25 and “very difficult” in 2025/26.

Market signals add further strain. Bumper crops have pushed free buy (spot) prices for Fontane in Belgium down to about US\$0.80 per hundredweight, a level that offers little comfort to growers relying on the open market. Around 70% or more of European processing potatoes are now sold on contract, which has been a lifeline in such a weak spot market, but those contracts themselves are expected to fall by roughly 10–20% in 2026/27, depending on the period of delivery. In processing, Dutch usage is under pressure despite the abundance of raw potatoes, while French processing continues to grow but at a slower pace, even as new capacity from McCain and a new Agristo plant is scheduled to come online in the next few years.

On the export side, Europe still dominates global frozen fry trade but faces intensifying competition

and higher costs. EU frozen fry exports, largely driven by Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Germany and Poland, have come under pressure from strong rivals and rising prices, and shipments outside the EU fell by about 8% over the last year, though they remain above pre Covid levels. Exports of EU fries to the United States slipped only 0.5% to around 506 million pounds in the year to October 2025, but the sharper 19% drop in October alone suggests that US tariffs are beginning to bite.

The most striking competitive threat comes from Asia. China’s frozen fry exports have surged from about 68.5 million pounds in 2019/20 to nearly 787 million pounds in 2024/25, while India has grown from roughly 86.6 million to around 525.7 million pounds over the same period. These increases—over 1,000% for China and more than 500% for India in just six years—are being driven in part by lower average export prices, which are helping both countries secure growing market share across the Asia Pacific region and beyond.

Despite the sobering economics, Porter closed on an upbeat note, reminding his audience that potatoes still have a lot working in their favour. They are nutrient dense, offering vitamin C, vitamin B6, fibre and potassium; they are naturally gluten free, fat free and sodium free, and they are versatile, moving easily between roles as staple food, animal feed, bio energy source and even raw material for textiles and plastics. In a world of volatile weather, political risk and regulatory change, his message is that potatoes remain a resilient, value for money crop with a future—provided the industry can navigate the cost and competition pressures now bearing down on it.

These finishing thoughts led well to the next presentation from Kim Breshears, the Chief Marketing Officer of Potatoes USA, who offered a robust outlook for the industry, centered on the strategic goal to “Strengthen Demand for Potatoes.” The presentation highlighted that despite shifting dietary trends, the potato remains “America’s Favorite Vegetable,” with 88% of consumers agreeing that it is a crowd-pleaser. She showed that the U.S. continues to be a dominant force in the global marketplace, with exports driven largely by key partners in Asia and North America (specifically the Philippines, Taiwan, and South Korea). Domestically, the market leans heavily toward foodservice, which now accounts for 58% of sales

compared to 42% at retail. Frozen products remain the category leader, representing nearly half of all potato volume sold. A significant takeaway from Kim's presentation was the shifting consumer perception regarding nutrition. The industry has successfully combated the anti-carb sentiment; 59% of consumers now view the potato as a "high-quality carbohydrate," ranking it above staples like white bread and rice. However, Breshears also addressed the "elephant in the room"—the rise of GLP-1 weight-loss medications and its impact on demand. While usage sits at 10-14% of the population, the presentation noted a high drop-off rate (62% within six months), suggesting the long-term threat to consumption may be less severe than predicted. With media sentiment reaching new highs and barriers to consumption falling, the presentation concluded that the potato industry is well-positioned for 2026 and beyond. By focusing on the vegetable's role as "fuel for the body and brain," Potatoes USA continues to work with the industry on pivoting the potato from a commodity to a performance food.

Following Kim, we heard from McCain Foods' Daniel Metheringham with an overview of the processing sector, arguing that "uncertainty is the new normal" for the global fry and potato industry, as economic headwinds, tariffs, climate volatility and geopolitical conflict reshape both demand and trade flows. He noted that while demand growth has softened in mature markets like North America and Europe, it is still expanding in emerging regions, just as new processing capacity comes online faster than expected in India, China, Europe and North America—an imbalance that is forcing a reset of traditional export routes and market relationships. Emerging markets are increasingly dictating frozen potato trade patterns, with more product moving between regions such as Europe, North America, Latin America, the Middle East and Asia, and new players altering long established flows.

On the home front, Metheringham described a North American foodservice market that has stabilized but not truly bounced back from COVID. In big burger and chicken chains, traffic is down but average check size is up, as consumers visit less often yet spend more per trip, and consumer economic confidence remains under pressure with U.S. sentiment down sharply year over year and Canadian households showing similar caution. This is driving a sharper focus on value: diners

are more selective and deal oriented, forcing operators to protect margins while delivering strong execution and clear value messaging to stay competitive.

He closed by calling for a "one potato industry" mindset that cuts across borders and segments. His final message was that the sector must work together to protect domestic and export markets, promote quality and food safety, and partner across the chain on continuous improvement if it is to thrive in a world where volatility is no longer the exception but the rule.

Mark Klompfen, CEO of UPGA, wrapped up the Summit with a review of 2025 fresh shipments; delivering a sobering market analysis defined by high supplies and challenging returns for growers. He characterized the 2025-26 marketing year as a period of "oversupply" realities where abundance is weighing heavily on prices, despite some pocket strengths in specific varieties. The most striking aspect of the presentation was the disconnect between production costs and market returns for Russet potatoes, where a massive gap has emerged. While fresh Russet shipment volumes are projected to reach nearly 71.7 million cwt, the weighted Grower Return Index has plummeted to around \$4.09, a figure that stands in stark contrast to the estimated production cost in Idaho of \$12.35 per cwt. This disparity highlights an annualized revenue gap of over \$592 million, underscoring the severe financial pressure currently facing the sector.

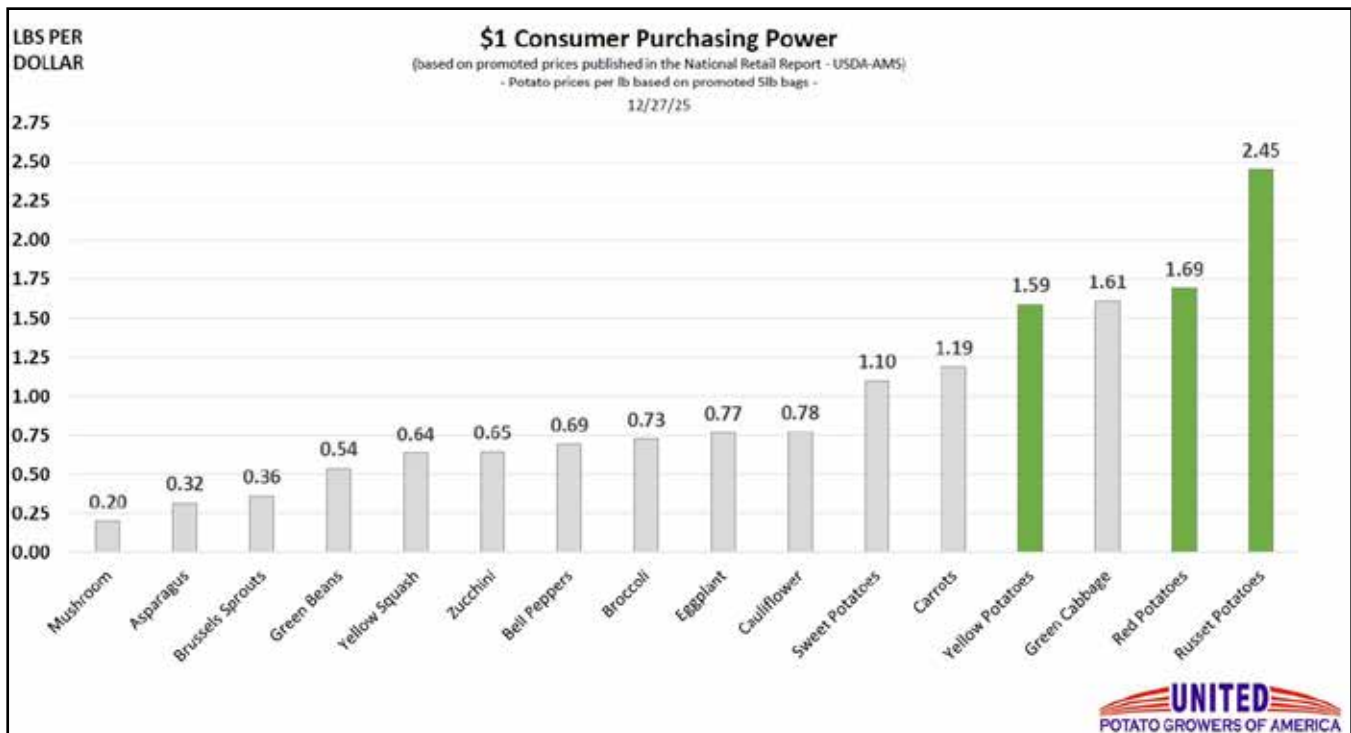
The situation varies across other potato types, with Yellow potatoes remaining a bright spot in long-term trends thanks to a strong ten-year annual growth rate, though even they are seeing a slight volume dip and reasonable but lower pricing this year. Meanwhile, the market for Red potatoes is facing headwinds due to supply increases in nearly all major regions, which has softened pricing compared to both last year and the five-year average.

Looking ahead to the 2026 crop, growers are navigating a landscape of flattened but elevated production costs, potential water and seed supply issues, and significant challenges in the processing and dehydration sectors. Klompfen concluded that with weak pricing for alternative crops and stiff global competition, the industry must move toward rationalization to bring supply back into balance with demand. However, if alternative crops continue to show lower profitability as they did in 2025, growers may still expect to lose less on the potato crop and

adjust their acreage accordingly, creating a continued danger of oversupply, particularly if there is a repeat of the 2025 growing season for most regions.

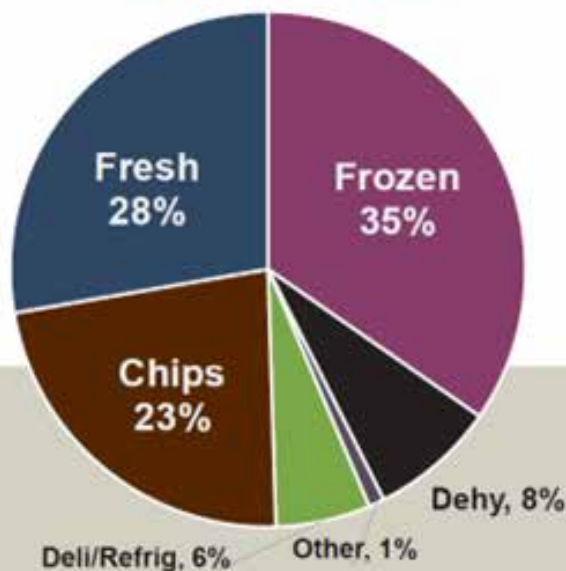
We hope this gives you a good overview of the extensive data and comprehensive insights that were

presented at the Summit to an audience of nearly 400 of which close to a third were from Canada! Presentations are available at [www.potatobusinesssummit.com](http://www.potatobusinesssummit.com) for members.

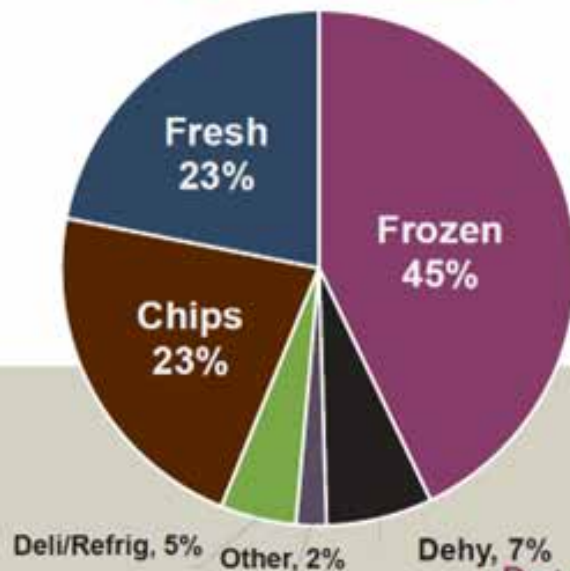


## Domestic Sales by Form

**U.S. Crop**  
 July-June 2025



**All Sales in the U.S.**  
 July-June 2025



# The Importance of Knowledge Transfer

*by: Ryan Barrett, Research and Agronomy Specialist*

December and January have been a busy time of year for meetings for growers and industry members. In December, the PEI Department of Agriculture and the PEI Potato Board hosted irrigation meetings in Summerside at the Credit Union Place to help educate and answer questions on the growth of irrigation on PEI. The summer of 2025 gave farmers drought-like conditions to deal with which caused smaller yields and other drought related issues. With this in mind, the PEI Dept of Agriculture has designated financial assistance to help growers to install irrigation equipment to mitigate the risk of drought. This event was very well attended, with a lot of information shared through speakers Shawn Ledgerwood, Morgan McNeil, Kurtis Rooke, Darren White, Evan Derald, Scott Anderson and Paul Deschenes. Videos of the presentations have been linked to the PEI Potatoes Agronomy site.

On January 21 and 22, the first AIM Winter Workshops of the year were held in Emerald, Fox Island and Montague. Approximately 100 people across the three meetings came out to hear Ryan explore optimizing crop rotation in potato production, including results from AIM and Living Labs trials in



*Aim Winter Workshop in Emerald, January 21, 2026*

recent years. The well attended workshops featured great discussions with growers and industry partners. A three-part video series from the Montague workshop is available on the PEI Potato Board Research page, on YouTube, and is linked on the PEI Potato Agronomy Site.

At the end of January, Scott Howatt hosted PPC district meetings in the same locations. At the PPC district meeting processing growers got an update from Cavendish Farms staff on continual improvements

at the plant as well as the need to deliver high quality raw potatoes to ensure quality french fries. In addition, PPC CHair Kyle Maynard and Scott discussed current industry issues and asked for feedback ahead of contract negotiations.



*PEI Irrigation Information workshop in December was very well attended, with water being a huge discussion point after drought conditions in the summer of 2025.*



# EAST PRINCE AGRI-ENVIRONMENT ASSOCIATION

*By Emily Belliveau, Knowledge Exchange Specialist*

## **Living Labs: Building a Sustainable Future for PEI Agriculture**

Prince Edward Island farmers are taking the lead in shaping a more sustainable and resilient agriculture sector through Living Labs. Led locally by the East Prince Agri-Environment Association (EPAA), a group of 13 innovative farm families, Living Lab – PEI (LL-PEI) is a farmer-driven initiative where practical, on-farm research meets evidence-based solutions. Since its formation in 2014, the EPAA has been committed to supporting beneficial management practices (BMPs) that improve soil health, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and protect water quality, all while ensuring farms remain productive and profitable.

What sets Living Labs apart is collaboration. Farmers work side by side with researchers, universities, watershed groups, government and other partners to co-develop, test, and evaluate innovative beneficial management practices directly on working farms. Living Lab – PEI currently focuses on six key areas, including rotational grazing, cover crop management, alternative soil amendments, and improved nitrogen management. These hands-on, field-scale trials generate timely, practical data that farmers can immediately apply to their own operations, supporting informed decision-making grounded in real-world conditions.

The benefits extend beyond individual farms. Living Labs foster stronger communities by building networks of trust, knowledge, and shared resources. Farmers exchange experiences, researchers gain insights into the realities of farm operations, and together they help ensure a strong, resilient agricultural industry for future generations.

“We say it takes an island, and that couldn’t be more true for the way we produce our food,” says Andrea McKenna, Executive Director of the EPAA. “We all need to work together to responsibly share our

resources and protect them for future generations. The world is watching PEI and the rest of Canada as we showcase, through the 14 Living Labs across the country, how farmer-led research can shape practical, sustainable solutions.”

This collaborative approach has placed PEI on the global stage, with EPAA sharing the Island’s successes at international forums such as the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) Science Summit, the International Forum on Agroecosystem Living Labs (IF-ALL), the Groundswell Regenerative Agriculture Festival, and more. These presentations highlighted PEI’s leadership in small-island innovation, showing how tight-knit communities and limited land resources can drive practical solutions to global challenges like climate change and maintaining soil health.

While federal funding for the Living Labs program is winding down, the legacy of LL-PEI demonstrates the value of farmer-led, evidence-based innovation. The relationships, capacity, and trust built over the past years are assets that will continue to benefit PEI’s agriculture sector. Moving forward, sustaining these networks ensures that farmers, researchers, and communities remain connected, responsive, and equipped to address the challenges of a changing climate and global markets.

Living Labs are more than on-farm trials. They are a model for the future of agriculture. On PEI, they show that when farmers lead, innovate, and collaborate, the entire community thrives.

To learn more about EPAA and Living Lab – PEI, visit [eastprinceassociation.com](http://eastprinceassociation.com) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s Living Labs page.



*EPAA's Executive director, Andrea McKenna, speaking on the community impact of Living Lab-PEI during a BBQ and field tour organized by EPAA and AAFC.*



*Chad Mooney of Arthur Mooney & Sons Farm demonstrating drone technology to local farmers at an EPAA field event on collaboration with Taters, Tractors and AgronomAI.*



*Farmers, researchers and industry members discussing trial data at a Living Lab-PEI event hosted by EPAA and AAFC to guide future decisions.*



*PEI Potatoes Research and Agronomy Specialist Ryan Barrett, speaking to the practical benefits of long-term cover cropping during a BBQ and field tour organized by EPAA and AAFC.*



*Farmers, researchers and industry members touring a Living Lab -PEI wetland site during a BBQ and field tour hosted by EPAA, the Souris and Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation and AAFC.*

# New York Produce Show 2026

*By: Mark Phillips, Marketing Specialist*

This past December, we participated in the Produce Business annual New York Produce Show, held December 2–4, 2025, at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in Manhattan. As one of 300 registered exhibitors focused on the Northeast Seaboard, we promoted the PEI Potatoes brand, strengthened existing relationships, established new contacts, and identified emerging industry trends.

The New York Produce Show is recognized for its personal atmosphere, especially compared to larger industry events. For returning attendees, it offers a more targeted, cost-effective experience, with fewer but more relevant vendors and attendees than shows like the Global Produce and Floral Show.

We hosted a 10x10 booth showcasing our product and place, staffed by representatives from three Island companies who engaged with both new and existing customers.



*Jesse MacIntyre and Ray Keenan, from Rollo Bay Holdings, Mark Phillips, Luke Bakker of Vanco Farms*

On the tradeshow floor, discussions focused on the abundant supply of high-quality potatoes in the US, particularly russet and oversize varieties. While there were some variety-specific opportunities, the overall market outlook was wary. However, some buyers who have traditionally supported us have expressed

continued interest in sourcing from PEI as they value the brand and quality.

A highlight of the event was a trip to Philadelphia for a tour of the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market, a fully enclosed, refrigerated, 700,000-square-foot facility. We visited ripening rooms, met with wholesalers, and observed the movement of fresh produce. The scale and efficiency of the terminal were impressive, but the limited presence of PEI products underscored the impact of the large US crop in a market that has traditionally supported PEI Potatoes.

The tour concluded with a visit to a Sprouts Market in Philadelphia. Sprouts Farmers Market is a rapidly growing specialty supermarket chain that centers its stores on a farmers-market-style experience, with fresh produce as the focal point. Its layout features a



*Greg Palmer, Mark Phillips and Sue Lewis*



*A highlight of the event was a trip to Philadelphia for a tour of the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market, a fully enclosed, refrigerated, 700,000-squarefoot facility.*

prominent, colourful produce department that highlights seasonal items, organic offerings, and natural foods more than conventional grocers.

Sprouts is recognized for its commitment to organic, non-GMO, and locally sourced produce, as well as its reputation for freshness and competitive pricing in the natural foods segment. Health-focused items are integrated throughout the store, reinforcing its appeal to shoppers seeking wholesome, ingredient-driven products. With more than 400 stores across 24 U.S. states, Sprouts has grown into one of the largest specialty retailers of natural and organic foods.

The next New York Produce Show will take place December 2–4, 2026. If you are interested in attending, please let Kendra or I know.

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# Industry Updates

## World Potato Congress

The PEI Potato Board delegation had the opportunity to connect with the hosts of the 13<sup>th</sup> World Potato Congress at the recent NPC Potato Expo in Dallas. For over 30 years the World Potato Congress has moved around the world and for the first time, is heading to Sub-Saharan Africa, October 26-30, 2026. Co-hosts of the Congress Wachira Kaguongo, CEO, National Potato Council of Kenya, and Chris Gasperi FreshCrop Limited, attended the Potato Expo to promote the upcoming event in Naivasha, Kenya. The PEI Potato Board is a proud Platinum sponsor of the World Potato Congress Inc. and is well represented on their governance structure. Greg Donald is the Vice President and Krista Shaw serves as an International Advisor representing Canada.

With as many as 1000 delegates expected to attend, plans are well underway with highlights including a field day at the 1200 acre potato farm of Chris Gasperi, pre-Congress workshops, speakers and post-Congress technical and wildlife tours. More information can be found <https://potatocongress.org/>



*Rebecca MacSwain, Krista Shaw, Chris Rennie, Jonathan MacLennan, Chris Gasperi, Ray Keenan, Wachira Kaguongo, Greg Donald*

## Jubs Bristow of Cavendish Farms Retires



*Kevin Schurman, John Ramsay, Vernon Campbell, Chris MacAulay, Jubs Bristow, Katie MacLennan, and Kyle Maynard*

In December, the processing growers took the time to thank Jubs, and wish him well on his retirement.

Kyle Maynard, Processing Chair provided the following remarks: “It is my pleasure to take this opportunity, on behalf of the growers, to express our gratitude to Mr. Irving and the entire team at Cavendish Farms for hosting this evening’s banquet. This event provides a valuable opportunity for the growers and the Cavendish Farms team to convene prior to the holidays, to reconnect, and to enjoy a fine meal and fellowship together.

I would also like to dedicate a few moments to acknowledge Jubs Bristow on the occasion of his forthcoming retirement. I have invited Katie MacLennan, the new Chair of the PEI Potato Board, to join me on the stage, along with previous PPC Chairs Vernon Campbell, John Ramsay, Chris MacAulay and Kevin Schurman who have collaborated with Jubs over his tenure.

On behalf of the Cavendish Farms Growers and the PEI Potato Board, I wish to extend our sincere thanks to Jubs for his years of dedication, his fairness, and his outstanding commitment to Prince Edward Island’s potato growers and to the industry at large.

On behalf of all of us, Jubs, congratulations on your retirement.”



*The Keough family from Borden- Carleton really went all out promoting PEI Potatoes when they appeared on the Family Fued!*



*Cora Lukeman, grand daughter of Boyd Rose from East Point Potato was in Ottawa in January for the Heritage Fair National Showcase. Cora was focusing on “Women in Agriculture: Rooted in Tradition, Growing the Future”*

## Upcoming Events & Program Deadlines

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

### February 2026

- February 20 **Young Farmers AGM, Red Shores, Charlottetown**
- February 25 **PEI Potato Board of Directors Monthly Meeting, Charlottetown**
- February 26-27 **International Potato Technology Expo, Eastlink Center, PEI**

### March 2026

- March 9-12 **Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada, AGM, Ottawa**
- March 10-11 **AIM Local Workshops**
- March 25 **PEI Potato Board of Directors Monthly Meeting, Charlottetown**

### April 2026

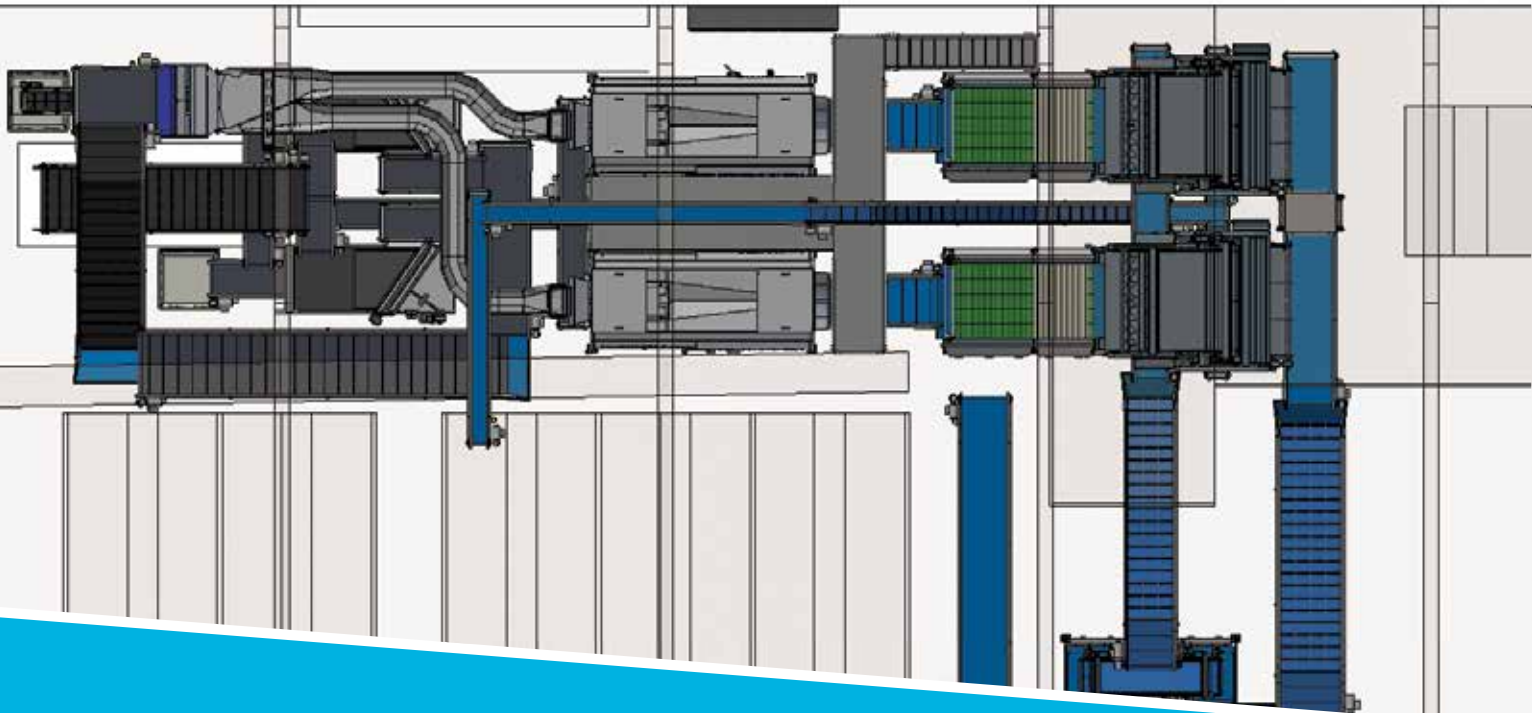
- April 15 **PEI Potato Board of Directors Monthly Meeting, Charlottetown**



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