What a difference a year makes! This time last year the planting in the south was all but complete, and the North Area Growers were only about 10 days behind their southern colleagues. Fast forward 365 days and we have just begun seeding this past week in the south and the Edmonton area is still experiencing the wrath of Mother Nature and the white stuff. I had one of the seed growers from the Edmonton area say to me that he might start to get worried after the May long weekend, as nothing was going to happen before then anyhow. That being said, a week or 10 days of good weather would put a big dent in the acres in the south. Most seed growers have said the same, as to only requiring about 10 days to get the crop in once they get started. One thing we all know about being involved in the agricultural industry is that no two years are ever the same; very seldom is the spring and fall the same! We are still way better off than our fellow growers in Manitoba who are still waiting for the snow to disappear from the fields, let alone start to melt the snow banks that were in some areas over 10’ tall this year. June planting is starting to look like a reality for them this year.

United Potato Growers of America Board of Directors met on April 22-23. The numbers in the US this year are somewhat encouraging, but also misleading as well.

Overall, Idaho’s planting is about a week and a half behind last year, but only slightly behind normal. Early Russet Norkotah acres are down significantly, which may be a positive for everyone in the long run. So far about a million hundred weights of potatoes have been fed to the livestock industry as the dehy industry is running to capacity. Processors have reduced their contract tonnage, and as such, seed lot sales are being declined. Idaho expects their total acreage to be down about 5.5% from last year.

Colorado is extremely dry, with no planting as of April 23rd. They are expecting a 5% reduction overall in acres planted.

Washington is all but finished planting; very few acres of early fresh or processing have gone in this year as carryover is still evident. Fresh acres are down about 6% and overall acreage is down about 7%.

Wisconsin is still very cold and spring has not really arrived. Fresh and chip acres will also be down in this state as well for 2013.

Nebraska and Kansas are all planted.

Overall the season is not starting off on a positive note as most of the country is late getting the game underway. A couple weeks of heat and sunshine will definitely change the mood of the grower nation in a hurry though.

When I said that the numbers coming out of the US were somewhat encouraging but misleading as well, the overall picture is still discouraging. Even though the overall acreage in the US appears to be down 5%, we are still looking at approximately 100 million cwt of production which is the same size or slightly larger than last year. Idaho’s GRI is estimated to be $5.46; thus providing a net loss of $978.00/acre.

Canada’s numbers are still unknown as not all contracts have been signed. Overall most are anticipating a reduction of about 5% in total acreage, but only time will tell.

May you all have a safe and successful planting season and please remember to get your planting records in as soon as possible. Feel free to contact the office staff if you need any assistance with them.

Until next month.

Terence
My goal this year was to educate people on the health benefits of potatoes. I find that a lot of people misunderstand what is really in a potato. People know that potatoes are full of carbs, what many don’t fully understand though, is that the carbs in potatoes are “good carbs”. They are complex carbs that fuel your brain, muscles and organs, and your body can’t survive without them!!

I love to show people the comparison between potatoes and some other healthy foods. I show them that a potato has almost as much potassium as two bananas, 46% of your daily Vitamin C, and more fiber than three pieces of whole wheat bread!!! Along with that, they have 1/3 the calories and carbs of brown rice, and half that of pasta!! I love it when I hear them say “Wow! I didn’t know that!!”.

I quizzed the children on what they had had for fruits and vegetables that day—sadly many had not had any!! 80% of children do not eat the minimum 5 servings of fruits and vegetables they should every day!! I suggest to them that potatoes are a super satisfying after school snack, quick meal, (6 min in the microwave), or great to eat before they go play sports.

Probably the favorite thing to show the kids, is our potato clock. They think its pretty cool to see that it uses potatoes for batteries. It shows them there is energy in the potatoes to run the clock, and I explain that the same energy helps run their bodies when they eat them!

I like to talk to them about French Fries as well. We discuss how the oils they are cooked in these days are healthy oils, and really the biggest “health issue” with fries is the heat they are cooked at. The heat may take away a lot of the nutrients, but one that actually increases, is potassium. (See page 3 for more). There is more potassium in French Fries (cooked in Trans-fat free oil) than in many other fruits and vegetables, even more than potatoes cooked by other methods!! I tell them, there is no need to ever feel guilty about eating fries again, just enjoy them in moderation!

I really like “educating” people about potatoes, and telling them that they can eat potatoes every meal, of every day, and be healthy!!

Cindy Fletcher

On the other side of the booth we talked varieties and gardening. We sparked interest especially with our “PURPLE POTATOES!! We had some beautiful Purple Magic samples from West Edmonton Seed Potatoes, and everyone, from every nationality, wanted to know where they could buy some of the fingerlings we had on display! We also discussed the potato chip industry using chippers from Perry Produce, and the processing industry using Russets from North Paddock. People also like to point out that they like the yellows (Adoras from Halma’s Vegetables) and the red potatoes (Sangres from Phoenix Farms). Mostly, everyone wanted to know where they could buy Alberta Potatoes at this time of year!!!

We also talked about how the different coloured potatoes cooked up best (we developed a handy chart on a give away card) and advised them to buy their spuds and certified seed from licensed PGA Growers when visiting the farmer’s market. The old sprouting potatoes also drew interest! It was really neat to watch the grandparents show their grandkids how to grow potatoes with what we had on display.

We handed out many brochures on late blight, gardening tips, recipes and tons of stickers, bags and colour changing pencils! And we met a whole bunch of cool Alberta kids and their families!
That would be good news for potato farmers, who produce a crop high in both vitamin C and potassium. Martin is assisting in potato research that she believes will provide the first data on the health benefits of potassium derived from a food source, rather than a vitamin supplement.

The study, led by her department head Connie Weaver, is funded by the Alliance for Potato Research and Education, which promotes research on the health benefits of potatoes and french fries. Martin argues research has largely neglected potassium, known to lower hypertension and improve heart health.

"The potential for potassium is huge in terms of blood pressure," Martin said. When consumed in food, she expects the study will show potassium is more fully absorbed and lasts longer in the system, as it's slower to digest than supplements.

Purdue University nutrition researcher, Berdine Martin, sees potential for potassium to be the next "really hot" nutrient emphasized in food science.

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**APPLICATIONS ARE NOW AVAILABLE**

Contact Wendy or Cindy at the PGA to make arrangements for your new loan. We will prepare the documents, and set up a time to meet with you to sign the new forms.

Remember to bring your Letter of Intention for planting to start the loan process, and later your AFSC Statement so we may determine the amount of your interest-free loan.

For those of you who had early pay out of your loans due to AFSC claims....this year we can review your AFSC statement after a crop insurance payment. If you still show ample potato acres to satisfy all or part of your interest-free loan, we will be able to issue a refund to you from the AFSC payment we received, and carry on your loan.

As always, call us if you have any questions.

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Announcing PGA’s new Technical Director
Jeremy Carter

The PGA staff is once again a full compliment. The PGA would like to welcome Jeremy Carter to the role of Technical Director starting June 3rd, 2013. Jeremy hails from Barnwell AB, and most recently was the Ag Retail Manager for Viterra at Grassy Lake. He and his family spent 5 years in New Zealand where he worked for McCain’s and brings a background of both the processing industry and agronomy to the PGA. We look forward to having Jeremy on staff to work with the growers and industry to provide the technical information that you require.
Every year the Southern Alberta 4H region holds a judging day in Claresholm. At judging clinics, the members learn how to evaluate, communicate, make decisions, and develop confidence. I was approached by the regional director to see if the PGA would be willing to input a class of potatoes (four plates of potatoes of varying quality to be placed from best to worst). 4H is a great program for young people to be involved in, and I was happy to help! Putting a class of potatoes in also gave me another medium to talk to people about our favorite vegetable!

Each presenter was given a few minutes to talk to the 150 members that attended about the class they had brought to be judged. My class would be fresh table Sangre potatoes. I explained to them what characteristics I thought made the perfect Sangre, and also put in a quick plug about their health benefits. I like to talk, but boy was I nervous talking in front 150 members that have all competed in public speaking!

Finally it was time to start the judging. This is where the fun began! I was so impressed how all the members studied the potatoes, picking them up, feeling them, comparing them with the other samples. There is absolutely no talking allowed between the members while they are judging, so their placings and reasons are all their own!!

Once they decided their placings, they had to give a quick speech to a judge giving the reasons they placed them as they did. I took reasons from junior members (9-11 years old), and they all did a super job!! They put a lot of thought into their reasons, and were quite convincing in justifying them!

I just can’t say enough, how much I enjoyed watching and listening to all the members. They were genuinely interested in the potatoes, and what made one better than the other. Whether we realize it, or not, we judge things every day, and I was glad to have the opportunity to see these young people judge our potatoes!!

Cindy Fletcher
Accounts Clerk/Promotions Coordinator

To work around our staff shortage, the PGA put a request in to the 4H Members in the Calgary area, to see if they could volunteer in our booth at Aggie Days in Calgary. Thanks to Toni, Billi, and Emily from the Crowfoot Multi Club who came for the experience, and helped us get the word out about potatoes to the large crowd on Saturday!
United Potato Growers of America face lawsuit on price fixing

April 24, 2013, United Potato Growers of America, Wada Farms, Potandon Produce LLC, R.D. Offutt Company, Idaho, Ill. In a recently-filed lawsuit, Associated Wholesale Grocers claims that the United Potato Growers of America, United Potato state groups and many potato grower-shipper are illegally setting potato prices.

AWG specifically mentions Albert Wada of Wada Farms, who traveled extensively in the mid-2000’s to convince potato growers in other states to follow Idaho growers’ leads in establishing United Potato groups.

Despite forming under the Capper-Volstead Act, which allows growers to meet and set goals to stabilize markets without fear of antitrust laws, the United Potato groups are operating outside the Act because growers have affiliations to marketing/processing/and other non-grower entities, according to the lawsuit, filed April 17 in Kansas City, Kan.

The Kansas City-based wholesaler filed suit against Wada, his Idaho companies, the Salt Lake City-based United Potato Growers of America and 20 other potato companies, organizations and individuals. The case is in U.S. District Court in Kansas.

Source: The Packer

Potato production in the US during 2012 reached its highest level in over a decade. The gains have been due to increased acreage and better yields, and the large supplies have caused prices to drop from those seen the previous year.

As a result of such large production, prices have dipped from the previous year. While the season-average price for 2011 fresh potatoes was $12.82 per cwt, it dropped to $10.02 for 2012 production. The ERS report noted that the large amount of fresh potatoes has led to the lowest fresh prices since 2004.

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USDA and Partners Launching State National Harmonization Program for Seed Potatoes

WASHINGTON, April 25, 2013–The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today announced the launch of the State National Harmonization Program (SNHP) for seed potatoes. This program is a collaborative effort between APHIS, the National Potato Council, the United States Potato Board, the National Plant Board, and state seed certification agencies.

“The harmonization program launched today by APHIS and its partners is an important tool that will benefit U.S. agricultural trade and the economy,” said Rebecca Bech, Deputy Administrator of APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine. “By working together to harmonize seed certification programs, this country’s potato industry is better positioned to take advantage of trade opportunities.”

Each participating State agrees to follow baseline standards regarding both quarantine and non-quarantine potato pests, creating a framework in which interstate and international commerce can be facilitated.

Nearly all of U.S. seed potato production falls under the newly launched program’s guidelines. Currently, twelve states participate in the program, covering 98.5% of all U.S. seed potato acreage: Colorado, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. New York, California, and Alaska are in the process of completing the requirements for entry into the program. Three non-seed potato producing states - Alabama, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia - have also signed onto the program in an effort to demonstrate to trading partners that their potato industries are following best practices by using seed potatoes that are produced through this program.

The successful SNHP partnership between State and Federal agencies will allow the partners to not only improve trade, but also to deal with future potato pest issues in a coordinated fashion. View news releases on the APHIS Web site at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom
Remember to submit your PLANTING REPORTS before the JUNE 15th deadline. Please call or email the office if you need a reminder of your username or password.

The SPQMP was initiated as a formalized voluntary program in 2006 and it is described within CFIA Directive D-06-04, entitled The Seed Potato Quality Management Program. The SPQMP is an audit-based program, allowing growers or their designated representatives to conduct quality and grade related seed potato tuber inspections. Participating growers can also issue certain related documents for domestic movement, as well as export to the United States of shipments determined to meet all applicable requirements. In addition to making the program mandatory, CFIA is proposing to allow seed potatoes intended for re-certification to be shipped to the United States under this program.

The CFIA and USDA-APHIS would like to invite all interested stakeholders to participate in a webinar session to explain and discuss this initiative and program details. This webinar will take place on Friday, May 17, 2013 from 1:00-2:30 (Eastern).

Please find the details and instructions below.

Join the meeting.<https://www.livemeeting.com/cc/usda/join?id=W2M5GR&role=attend&pw=ScX%7D%7Bt%7B7S>

Audio Information Telephone conferencing use the information below to connect:
Toll-free: +1 (888) 858-2144
Participant code: 7055772

First Time Users: To save time before the meeting, check your system http://go.microsoft.com/fwlink/?LinkId=90703 to make sure it is ready to use Microsoft Office Live Meeting.

Unable to join the meeting? Follow these steps:
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If you still cannot enter the meeting, contact support http://r.office.microsoft.com/r/rlidLiveMeeting?p1=12&p2=en_US&p3=LMInfo&p4=support>

Pay your PGA Invoices online!
Due Date Reminders…
2nd Table Levy April 15th
2nd Seed Levy May 15th
Licenses & 3rd Table Levy June 15th

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CFIA Edmonton is Moving!
Please note that over the week of May 6-13 the CFIA Edmonton offices will be moving to one new address:
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
8403 Coronet Road NW
Edmonton, AB T6E 4N7
Please be aware every effort is being made to provide uninterrupted service during this time, however responses may be delayed.

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