The beginning of April is always an exciting time for the agricultural community. The days are getting longer and there is a lot more heat coming from the sun. The ground starts to warm up, as the last of the winter snow all but melts away. There is still plenty of time for one more blast of winter, but for the most part spring is here to stay. Most of Western Canada experienced very little winter this year with minimal snowfall and very few cold days. This in itself can be somewhat of a concern for our industry as we rely on the -30’s and the frost to kill any of our overwintering pathogens and any volunteer potatoes that may grow in unwanted locations.

All contracts have been settled in Alberta, about six weeks earlier than the last few years. This in itself is a benefit for everyone, as Growers can now complete their seed orders in a timely fashion rather than having to wait until May to make their final commitments. Having to wait to late April or May puts our seed industry at a great disadvantage, as additional sales are sometimes missed as the seed Growers wait for our contracts to be signed. Manitoba and the east coast continue to hammer out the details of their contracts in hopes of having a settlement soon.

On March 8th-11th, the 94th Annual CHC AGM was held in Ottawa. Many things have changed over the last 94 years in the horticultural industry in Canada. Gone are the days where individual growers are able to market their wares at the local grocery stores. Today’s horticultural scene is on a global playing field and the Canadian Grower is competing with producers from around the world. The consumer is looking for a product that is price competitive and grown in a manner that is healthy for them and their families. That is where the Canadian producer has somewhat of an advantage over many other areas of the world. The focus in food production today is one of having a “SOCIAL LICENSE” to be able to feed the consumer.

In CHC’s Fresh Thinking magazine Spring edition, Dr. Ralph C. Martin references The Canadian Federation of Agriculture’s definition as “social license, within an agricultural producers’ context, can be defined as the ongoing level of acceptance, approval and trust of consumers regarding how food is produced.”

The hard part of holding and maintaining such a license is that it is a moving target! Consumers can raise the bar at a whim, even after a Producer has invested a lot of time and money in improving his/her production practices. Part of that investment must be our willingness to tell our story in a public forum. Farmers have a tendency to be a very quiet sort, who go about their business, without much talk or fanfare. Unfortunately those days are gone, therefore we must be proud of our accomplishments and let the world know what we are up to, tell our story with pride and excitement for we are competing with the world to keep our

Farmers have a tendency to be a very quiet sort, who go about their business without much talk or fanfare.

“SOCIAL LICENSE”. As uncomfortable as this may seem to many of us, we have no choice but to embrace this societal change.

As all of you prepare to start planting, please remember that the most important aspect of the upcoming season is the safety of you, your family and your employees. Take the time to protect them all.

Until next month,

Terence
The Canadian Potato Council and Seed Sub-Committee met at the annual CHC meeting held in Ottawa, March 7-10th. The following topics were discussed: NAPPO, PCN, potato wart, priority markets, promotion & marketing, and shipping point inspections. There were also reports from CFIA, changes in personnel and future changes to programs, such as Cost Recovery and Electronic Reporting.

The Canadian Potato Council voted in favour of extending the Plant Breeder’s Rights protection period to 25 years for potatoes; currently the protection period is 20 years. The change will not happen quickly, but we hope within the next three years.

Congrats to Ernie Van Boom, Prairie rep to the CHC Executive, John Bareman, Chair of the Canadian Potato Council and Gord Visser, Vice-Chair, Seed Potato Sub-Committee. The industry thanks you for the time you commit at the national level.

The photo is of the Executive and Committee Chairs for the upcoming year. Ernie is on the far right and John is second in on the far left back row.

Shipping Season
A friendly reminder to contact your local CFIA office in advance to schedule shipping point inspections. CFIA MUST perform all shipping point inspections for shipments outside of Canada. If your farm is registered on the Seed Potato Tuber Quality Management Program, you can continue to perform this duty for domestic movement within Alberta and across Canada. If you are unsure of our SPTQMP status with CFIA, please contact them now to prevent any delays in your shipping. If you experience any scheduling issues with CFIA regarding shipping point inspections, please contact me immediately.

Also, a reminder to include ALL documents with shipments, including the PHT and summer inspection results. Process growers require these documents as part of their contract.

Area Meetings
If you have questions pertaining to seed related points discussed at the recent North and South Area Meetings, please contact me by calling 780-415-2305.
The Potato Growers of Alberta does a good job at leveraging their research dollars to fund projects that help to support the Potato Industry and the agriculture sector both Provincially and Nationally. Currently, there are close to 15 projects partially funded by the PGA. A few of these projects have a direct influence on management decisions on a week-to-week basis during the growing season.

The Dacom decision support system project was initiated by McCain in 2015 and started with one weather station. Specialized computer software is used to analyze environmental data and field conditions and generates a spray recommendation for the area where the station is located. This year two additional weather stations have been purchased. Three stations will be placed in different areas of the potato growing region. A few growers have agreed to follow a prescribed fungicide spray program for their area. Text messages will be sent to growers with a recommendation on when and what to spray. This will improve disease management, minimize needless spraying, and improve crop health.

The Promax Agronomy Aphid and Psyllid monitoring program is entering its third year. This project has been very successful at identifying important insects in the potato growing region. Sticky cards will be placed in approximately 100 fields in 2016 and collected weekly by provincial field staff. This project generates a report weekly for growers to use as an insect management tool. In 2015, potato psyllids were found in Alberta and because of this project, and a national psyllid project, we have a heightened awareness of important insects moving into 2016.

The air-borne pathogen monitoring and disease prevention project is entering its third year as well. The PGA Board of Directors has recently approved the extension of this project into the 2017 growing season with the financial support of Alberta Crop Industry Development Fund (ACIDF) and the Federal-Provincial-Territorial initiative Growing Forward 2. This project has become an important disease warning and forecasting network for Alberta’s potato growers. With late blight becoming an issue in the past few years, this has become an invaluable resource for our growers. In the past, reporting has been weekly. In 2016, reports will be coming more frequently as cooperation and interest in the network has grown.

CanadaGAP has recently released an updated version of the CanadaGAP Food Safety Manual for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and its Appendices. The manual has been updated from Version 6.3 (2015) to Version 6.4 (2016). A package of 25 sheets is available for CanadaGAP growers at the PGA office. The inserts can be placed in your current manual to get you up-to-date to the newest version. More information is available at the office when you pick-up the insert package.

Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA) has recently released an updated version of the Alberta Environmental Farm plan (EFP). The EFP is now online and is called WebBook 3.0. The online format will make updates much easier for producers when it comes time for an update to future versions. We are looking for volunteers to work on EFP WebBook 3.0 for their farm and test the online version. Our plan is to run workshops in January 2017 so all growers who require an EFP can get assistance from an instructor in a “classroom” setting. Please contact Jay at the office if you are interested in going through WebBook 3.0. Thank you!
In January, 1968, a Potato Recipe Booklet was printed. In addition to the original printing of 20,000, a utility company printed 4000 for the distribution to all of its customers. The first printing of this booklet was financed by Western Co-Operative Fertilizers Limited and the Alberta Potato Commission. Complimentary copies had been sent to newspapers, radio and television stations and home economists. The first booklets were sold at a price of 50 cents, then a coupon was developed and sent to all packing plants, to be inserted into potato bags. The coupon reduced the cost to 25 cents. In addition to this, another insert was incorporated called “Facts About Alberta Potatoes” and a “Cooking Hints” card.

1971 – Another special recipe sheet “Spudelights” was created and distributed during the Calgary Exhibition and Trade Show along with “Gardening is Groovy”! 30,000 pamplets were given away.

In 1972, baking nails (inserted in the potato to help them bake quicker and evenly) were created for distributed. 18,958 were given away in 1972 and 12,903 in 1973.

1974 FRESH FOR FLAVOR FOUNDATION Our support of this organization was continued in 1975. A special National Potato Promotion was made in a four-week campaign during April. Increased consumption of 16,500,000 lbs. was recorded during the campaign. This was completed in 1977.
THANK YOU to everyone who has submitted their farm history and recipes for the History/Cookbook we are putting together for the 50th Anniversary! We had an early deadline of March 15th, and those who submitted their info by that deadline were eligible for a draw for a Hard Cover of the book. And the winner is.....A&A Seed Farms Ltd.! Congratulations!

For those who have not, please plan to have everything ready for submission by April 30th. This will give you time to work on your story so it is how you want it! Don’t forget, we want you to give yourself time to approve your page before everything goes to print this summer!

Please contact the office with any questions you may have!

As a reminder, here is what we need from you:

• 500 words (more or less) to tell the history of your potato farming business in Alberta. Give us the date it all started.
• 3 - 5 pictures which can be brought in to the office and scanned or sent through email (we need them in 600 dpi).
• A favourite potato recipe.

No other commodity group has created this combination of book, so this is going to be unique to Alberta Potato Growers. The PGA History/Cookbook Committee has proposed that a portion of book sales be donated to the Alberta Food Bank to help feed Alberta’s less fortunate! So this project is also going to be a very worthy cause!

This is a great project, but we need your contribution to make it an A+, just like the entry to the left. In the end, it will be something for our Alberta Growers, past, present and future, to be truly proud of!

If you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday. ~ Pearl Buck
Register & book your rooms today!

Early registration for the 2016 Potato Conference is your best deal in town! Prices go way, way up starting September 1st. Register today before you get too busy in the field.

http://www.albertapotatoes.ca/files/BanffFillableRegistrationForm2016.pdf

Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel
Phone:
(800) 441-1414
Quote: 1116POTA

If you use the online registration payment option on the PGA website, please email Patti with a list of those attending or complete the PGA Early Registration form and send it in by fax or email. The online option does not allow us to see the names entered, which we need for your name tags.

THANK YOU.

The Alberta Potato Industry Associates will be again hosting the Trade Show portion of the Potato Conference, and this year’s registration is easier and better than ever! An all inclusive pass includes your 10’ x 8’ trade show booth (with an 8’ x 2’ table, electrical outlet and two chairs) meals for two people including breakfast and lunches on Tuesday and Wednesday and the Welcome Reception on Tuesday evening. PLUS this pass will give you access to all speakers at the conference. Please note NO individual meals will be available to purchase this year, except banquet tickets. For more info contact Down to Earth Labs info@downtoearthlabs.com

Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel
This year’s theme...
“PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE”

Speaker Announcement

Jon Montgomery delighted Canadians by winning Gold in Men’s Skeleton at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics. Now, as host of The Amazing Race Canada, he is a charming ambassador for our country’s most beautiful sights. In his talks, Montgomery shares his Olympic journey and important lessons on teamwork, leadership, and dreaming big. Whether he’s in snowy Nunavut, on a lentil farm in Saskatchewan, or on stage presenting a keynote speech, Montgomery is genuinely funny and always inspiring. Jon will be the closing speaker at 3:00 pm on Wednesday.

Ladies Partner’s Program

More than ever, be sure to bring your Partners to our 50th celebrations in breathtaking Banff, Alberta. A special agenda is in the works, planned just for the ladies which will include, of course, their exclusive pass to the APIA Trade Show at 3pm on Tuesday! Growers Partners still only pay $100 and Industry Partners pay only $325 (for Sponsors) or $350 (for General). This includes all meals and events! Register now as prices go way, way up after August 31st. Imagine experiencing spa time, great shopping, wine tasting, high tea, and more in Alberta’s Winter Wonderland!
In early May, you will receive a letter with easy-to-follow instructions on how to complete your Census of Agriculture questionnaire online. This user-friendly option will save you time by automatically adding totals and limiting the questions to the ones that apply to your operation.

The questionnaire can be completed by anyone who is responsible for, or knowledgeable about, the day-to-day management decisions of your farming operation. As required by the Statistics Act, the information you provide will be kept confidential and used only for statistical purposes.

This May, add your voice to those of Canada’s potato farmers by completing your Census of Agriculture questionnaire!

QUICK POTATO FARMING FACTS FROM THE 2011 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE:

- There were 3,272 farms growing 362,265 acres of potatoes, a 9.9% decline from 2006.
- Prince Edward Island, the province best known for potatoes, remained in top spot with nearly a quarter (23.9%) of potato areas. Manitoba ranked second, with 19.9% of the national total.
- The average size of farms growing potatoes was 111 acres. The averages were as high as 351 acres on Manitoba farms and 289 acres on Prince Edward Island farms.
- 1,323 farms specialized in potato farming (the majority of their farm receipts was received from potato sales).

Here are some facts about these farms:

- They occupied a total of 341,977 acres (94.4% of the total number in Canada).
- The largest 5% of specialized potato farms grew 26.9% of the potato areas across Canada.
- 34.4% of specialized potato farms were held in sole proprietorship; 42.7% were owned by family corporations; 16.2% were owned in partnerships; and 6.3% were owned by non-family corporations.
- The average size of a specialized potato farm was 258 acres.
- There were 2,020 operators across Canada and 81.8% were male.
- The average age of an operator was 53 years old.
- 42.6% of operators were 55 years and older; 48.2% were 35-54 years old; and 9.2% were under 35.
- Almost three-quarters of operators (73.2%) did not work anywhere other than on the farm, while 9.6% worked more than 40 hours per week at another job in addition to their farming duties.

Applications for AAFC’s 2016 Advanced Payment Program interest free loans begin May 1st. There have been some changes to a number of the regulations, one being the definition of relatedness. The new policy states that “in the absence of proof to the contrary, an administrator may presume the producers are related” (i.e., are not operating at arm’s length). The Act, has been amended to shift from familial relationships to business relationships, such as corporate control, partnership, and sharing of management services, administration, equipment, facilities, or overhead expenses. If an Administrator presumes relatedness based on their information that the producers are sharing business resources, it is up to the producer to provide all information to substantiate their claim of operating at arm’s length.
Crop Choice

Sit down with an Expert – You

Whether you are firming up crop plans, deciding on insurance coverage or negotiating a land rental arrangement, sit down with an expert – you and CropChoice.$

CropChoice$ uses your knowledge of your situation to help forecast your crop enterprise margins. Current insurance premium rates and recent cost data are in the tool for your convenience.

Identify, Measure and Manage Risk

CropChoice$ calculates projected profitability and evaluates the risk associated with each alternative. Start with a basic crop plan and expand it to test alternative crop mixes and risk management strategies based on your needs, targets and risk preferences. You can analyze up to 40 different crops and run up to 8 different scenarios.

To download your free copy, go to www.agric.gov.ab.ca and click on “Decision Making Tools”.

For further information, contact the Economics Branch of Alberta Agriculture and Forestry at 780–422–4056 or the AgInfo Centre toll-free at 310–FARM (3276).

PGA 2016-17 LICENCES are in the mail. Please return your signed licence with payment.

Blue Books are available at the office, but only one book per farm. North Area Growers can contact Deb for their books.

The PGA assumes no responsibility for any errors in the information provided, nor assumes any liability for any damages incurred as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of the use and application of any of the contents of The Potato Minute. Unless otherwise noted on an individual document, the PGA grants users permission to reproduce and distribute information in the Potato Minute as long as the contents remain unaltered and as long as it is noted that the contents have been made available by the PGA.