

# The Potato Minute

October 1, 2020



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - Terence Hochstein

Most process growers have already completed their 2020 potato harvest, with the balance needing another 2-3 days to wrap things up. Early indications are that the yields are variable, even within each farm. Yields are anywhere from very disappointing to pleasantly surprising. Over the next month we should be able to get a good handle on what the overall production of the 2019-20 will be. Stay tuned.....

Reports from the seed side of the business are that growers need about another week to complete their harvest as well. Yields are down somewhat this year, with excellent quality and some evidence of a smaller set, thus larger potatoes. It seems that each variety has reacted to this summer's growing conditions in their own unique way. Couple this with a number of acres that were drowned out earlier in June and the overall picture will be average at best.

Reports from other growing areas across the country are starting to trickle in, with signs that the 2019-20 crop is not going to be one for the record books. Poor growing conditions during the summer have led to a less than stellar yield, thus adding to the frustration of many growers, with the cutbacks from earlier this spring. Reports out of some of the major US growing areas are not faring much better than their Canadian counterparts. Everyone will be glad to get the 2019-20 harvest behind them and look forward to what the next crop year will bring.

As the world waits with baited breath, on what the next six months will look like regarding a potential second wave of COVID-19, news from the processors is that it is still too early to project what the 2020-21 crop year will look like. Growers are anxiously wanting to know what to do for land

preparation and the booking of seed, but given what this past crop year has looked like, I can understand the hesitancy to commit at this time. This again, puts added pressure on the seed industry on committed sales for the upcoming year.



A friendly reminder that the fall area meetings will be a 'closed session' for growers only this year, on October 22nd in Lethbridge and October 28th in Leduc. With the cancellation of the annual PGA Potato Conference and Tradeshow in November, a closed business meeting for the growers will be held November 18th by way of a Virtual Zoom meeting. With the COVID numbers starting

to rise across North America again, it looks like most of the major events and conferences will entertain a virtual format for this fall and early winter/spring.

The PGA office would like to remind all growers that we offer the AAFC Advanced Payment Program loan with the Interest Free program plus the addition this year, of the Interest-Bearing portion of the program. Please contact Cindy at the office for more details.

*"a reminder that the fall area meetings will be a 'closed session' for growers only"*

*Until next month,*

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## SEED COORDINATOR UPDATE - Stacey Bajema

Harvest in Northern Alberta started a little later this year, but we have had near perfect weather thus far, with no signs of winter coming any time soon. After several years of frustrating harvest weather, this mild season is very welcome.

This fall season for the PGA will look a little different due to the pandemic. We hope to connect with our seed growers, whether digitally or in person, with more specific seed industry related updates.

### Post Harvest Test

Due to COVID-19 the post harvest grow-out in Hawaii this year has been cancelled. The PHT team in western Canada has worked hard to put together an alternative program that will allow for everyone to receive lab testing services in a timely manner without overwhelming the lab at Phyto Diagnostics Company Ltd. in B.C.

Specific information on this program has been sent out to all seed growers via email. If you have not seen this information or have any questions, please contact me at CDCN ASAP.

All samples being submitted to the program should be arriving at CDCN the week of October 26, 2020. If you are a south area grower, you may bring your samples to the PGA Taber office, by October 21, 2020, and I will drive them to CDCN after the South Area Meeting on October 22, 2020.



### Seed Directory 2020 Crop Year

Work is well underway on the new 2020 Seed Directory. All seed growers will receive an email shortly with their Directory information. Please review this email thoroughly and get back to me with any changes that need to be made

As always, please feel free to contact me at CDCN if you have any questions or concerns.

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*Great North Seed Potato boxes ready for harvest 2020*



*Grading potatoes at Hoogland Farms*



*Cody from EPG checking for spud smart sensor through harvester at Northbank Potato Farm*

## AGRICULTURAL DIRECTOR - Thomas McDade

This fall has been wonderful overall, as you all know. It is great to see how rapidly the crop has come, in most parts of Alberta and Western Canada so far. When you consider that exactly one year ago, we were in the midst of a winter storm that closed highways, and brought us freezing temperatures.



*Top: Thomas inserting SpudSmart before harvester.  
Bottom: Stacey & Cody*

As of last week, Southern Alberta was more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  done harvest, with the overall provincial average closing on 50%. Driving around the country this last weekend, I think we are ahead of Alberta Agriculture's numbers, and well ahead of the 5-year average. This is great news after all the challenges of the last couple of years. Recently, in my travels, I was in the Edmonton area training our new Seed Coordinator, Stacey and Cody from EPG, on how to use the Smart Spud sensor. Many of the potato growers in this area also market their potatoes into the fresh industry. Most of the growers in this region were just starting their potato harvest during the second week of September. After a very wet spring and summer, the potatoes are looking better than expected. - Thomas McDade



term storage trials (till July 2021) will begin as per the new storage trial protocol developed with LPC.

Most of the industry varieties (including Medium and low N) have been harvested, except, Lamb Weston, which will be completed on Monday (Sept 28). This varieties were the last to be seeded due to delay in seed supply but this did not impact the overall crop development. Once the grading is done, reports will be prepared and shared with all project partners. - Dr. Chandra Singh



### Variable Rate Irrigation:

This summer consisted of the second of four years for the project "Towards Climate-Robust Irrigation Water Management for Potato Production". We monitored soil moisture dynamics at multiple locations in fields of five potato operations, analyzed field characteristics, and irrigation management practices with the goal of finding the opportunities and limits for precision irrigation (including but not limited to Variable Rate Irrigation). The wet month of June provided a sharp contrast to the dry growing season of 2019. Under wet conditions, the spatial variability of moisture for plants remains enlarged for a meaningful period of time. This could be managed with precision irrigation. With yield samples obtained in the last three weeks, we will analyze if this variability of moisture affected yields or product quality. - Dr. Willemijn Appels

### Update on the Alberta Variety Trials - Brooks

The potato variety trials this year at CDCS Brooks went very well, in partnership with AAFC, Little Potato Company and Industry (supported by CHC). Tri-party agreement with CHC, AAF and Lethbridge College was completed for successful transition of potato variety trial project to Lethbridge College. Lethbridge College signed separate land use agreement with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry to lead the trials at the CDCS Brooks.

Seeding, fertilizer application, pesticide treatment and irrigation schedules were properly followed as per the plan without any major disruption to ensure good crop development to gather valuable agronomic, yield and quality data. All the varieties were top killed before the harvest to allow good skin set. The harvest is nearly complete. Harvesting of AAFC varieties including FM/CH/FF was completed by September 25th, and samples are in storage for grading, which will be done soon. Harvesting and grading is now completed for Little Potato Company, and now long

### Research Activities at the University of Lethbridge

The new fall semester has just started at the University of Lethbridge... Online learning is the new reality in education and virtually all courses at the university are conducted over the Internet. This affected the number of undergraduate students who were able to participate in the Independent Studies this fall. On the positive side, restricted access to the labs on campus is easing and we anticipate our new graduate students to be in the lab soon.

Our 2020 Season of the Potato Pest Monitoring program, supported by Promax Agronomy and the PGA, was successfully completed in September. It was a good year, with relatively low levels of *Phytophthora* spores that never exceeded the economic threshold. We look forward to continuing this important work next season. Meanwhile, the *Phytophthora*-like spores collected in this program and maintained as in vitro cultures, will be used this fall to optimize molecular diagnostic protocols and to train an Independent



Study student Melissa Telfer, in plant pathology techniques.

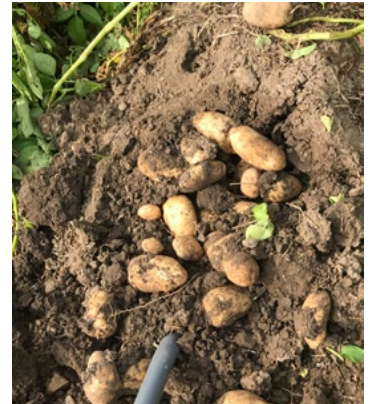
We have completed hand-harvesting by our Research Associate, Mariana Vetrici and grading of tubers from the fields selected for the CanPEDNet project this season. We are thankful to all growers' assistance and support of this



*Mariana Vetrici, Michelle Konshuh, Scott Gillespie*

important work. This is a multi-year, nation-wide program on monitoring the Potato Yearly Dying (PED) complex, and we will continue these activities for the next several years.

As such, in October we will start collecting soil samples for Verticillium and nematode analyses from 30 fields that will be planted with Russet Burbank potato in spring 2021. If you are willing to participate in this soil survey and already know what fields will be used to grow potatoes next year, please let us know and we will collect soil samples from your field(s).



We have three new M.Sc. students in the lab starting this fall: Atta Rahman will be involved in a PED project, whereas Christie Stephen and Nick Schimpf will be working on NSERC Discovery projects. We are also expanding our nematode work to better understand their roles in PED and, possibly, other plant diseases. We would love to have you visit our lab when COVID-19 is over!

-Dr. Dmytro Yevtushenko



Virtual Event

## Influential Women in Agriculture Summit

October 20, 2020 at 12:00pm ET

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Register for a virtual mentorship event with some of the most influential leaders in Canadian agriculture.

Earlier this year, we launched the Influential Women in Canadian Agriculture (IWCA) program to recognize women across Canada's diverse agriculture industry. The applications we received showed the innovative and important contributions women are making in all ag sectors.

Six IWCA honourees were chosen by AgAnnex (the agricultural publications at Annex Business Media). In discussing their experiences, we **found common lessons worth sharing.**

[Click here to  
find out more](#)

## RESEARCH

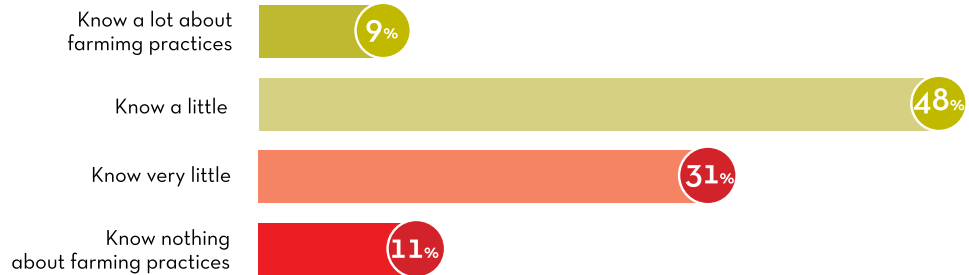


THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR  
FOOD INTEGRITY

The CCFI is constantly doing research on what consumers are concerned about and what interests them when it comes to the food they eat.

The Canadian Centre for Food Integrity Public Trust Research indicates that consumers are interested in the topic of sustainability. Check out the results!

91% of Canadians claim they know 'little or nothing' about modern farming practices, and 60% indicate they are interested in learning more.



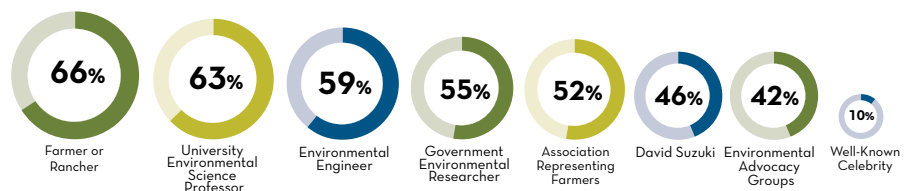
**40%** of Canadians agreed that Canadian farmers are good stewards of the environment.

When asked if consumers are interested in knowing more about agriculture, **60%** of respondents indicated 'Yes' and **40%** indicated 'No'.

**60%** of Canadians are interested in knowing more!

**41%** indicated they were concerned with the topic of environmental sustainability in farming.

When consumers were asked who they trust to provide credible information about farming and environmental issues, Canadians indicate farmers and researchers as their top sources, respectively.



In addition to CCFI research, many food companies have publicly shared their commitment to sourcing sustainably produced agricultural products.

- Maple Leaf Canada vows to become "the most sustainable protein company on earth" by meeting a number of goals related to animal care, emissions, becoming carbon neutral, and water-use among others.<sup>3</sup>
- Molson Coors aims to source 100% of its barley and hops from sustainable sources and reduce carbon emissions across agricultural supply chains by 20%.<sup>5</sup>
- High liner Foods has committed to 100% sustainably sourced seafood, using criteria developed by numerous fisheries standards including Marine Stewardship Council, Ocean Wise, Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative, and others.<sup>2</sup>



## FROM THE OFFICE



We are currently looking for volunteers to help process samples at CDCN for the Western Canada Post Harvest Program.

November 2-4th, 2020

If possible, please consider sending a cohort of volunteers from your farm!

Please call or email Stacey.

## HARVEST REPORTS

PLEASE COMPLETE YOUR HARVEST REPORTS AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE

IF YOU REQUIRE ASSISTANCE, CINDY WOULD BE HAPPY TO ASSIST YOU.



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