



THE POTATO MINUTE

Potato Growers of Alberta

2026

www.albertapotatoes.ca

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Terence Hochstein



“Love the trees until their leaves fall off, then encourage them to try again next year.”

Chad Suggs – Author

Like the tree, agriculture and growing food is always trying again next year, hoping for the best, well knowing that we have limited control of the outcome. The CY26 growing season was one that held many challenges.

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A cool, dry spring that allowed the crop to go in quickly led to an unusually wet May and June, followed by a July of extreme heat and, in some areas, smoke from forest fires from BC. In the case of our seed growing areas around Edmonton, the rain never stopped through July and into early August. Some of our growers received close to 30 inches of rain. With this excessive rainfall, some of the crop never came up; rather, it rotted where it was planted. In mid-August, I was on a trip to the Lac La Biche area, and I have never observed so many fields and acres completely drowned out. What did grow was slowly rotting in the fields.

In the south, a couple of big rain events in late August and early September led to harvest delays and extremely muddy, wet conditions. The rain was too late for the dryland crops in Southern AB. Overall, most of the irrigated crops were somewhat of a disappointment, with yields off 10-15% in some cases. As of October 1, most growers in the south are just reaching 50% of their harvest completed. We need another week to 10 days to get things wrapped up. So far, the forecasts look like this will be the case. Most growers will have left behind the extremely wet, drowned-out areas.

Potatoes from these spots will not store well as we go into winter. From all indications, we will end up with an average-yielding crop, with all things considered, not bad completing harvest in early October.

Overall, the seed acres that were harvested appear to be of excellent quality. Given everything that the crop has gone through, only time will tell as to how well it stores.



Potato harvest at the Lane Lieveart Farms Ltd. September 2026

In talking to other growing areas across North America, every area, with the exception of the Basin, is experiencing some difficulties with harvest. The Atlantic NE, especially PEI, has been experiencing an overabundance of rain over the last few weeks. The start of their crop season started out rough, with planting being spread out over a couple of months, and now they are having to deal with these weather events. Maine and New Brunswick are a bit better, but it's not without their own challenges.

The Midwest on both sides of the border is dealing with wet harvest conditions as well. Idaho's crop is all over the board, with yields and quality varying by the region. Washington always has a good crop, but the quality this year appears to be one for the record book. The conversations will be interesting this fall as to where the discussions will begin around the CY27 contracts. One thing that is evident in every growing area is that growers can no longer continue to grow their crop at a loss.

The dramatic increase in input costs has more than eaten up any margin that was still there to be had. Time will tell how this all plays out across the country.

Our fall area meetings will be held in Nisku on October 13th and Taber on October 15th. It's always nice to get together with fellow growers and industry members after a long growing season and harvest to discuss what went well and what didn't.

Final plans are being set for the 60th Annual Alberta Potato Conference and Tradeshow Nov. 23-25th at the Red Deer Resort and Casino. Join us for 3 days of conversation, good food, informative speakers and networking as we celebrate our 60th Anniversary. The tradeshow has been sold out now for a while, so we look forward to a full house once again this year.

Until next month,

terence@albertapotatoes.ca
403.382.8382

DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, POLICY & SEED Stacey Bajema



Seed Harvest Nears Completion

Seed potato harvest is nearly complete across Alberta, and after a season with plenty of rain, growers are happy to see the crop safely in the shed. The growing season certainly came with its challenges. Wet conditions resulted in the loss of some acres and portions of fields, but after several dry years, most growers will still tell you they would rather manage through a wet season than another drought. Despite the challenges, there are some nice-quality potatoes going into storage. Attention now turns to managing the crop through the storage season and preparing for winter testing and the upcoming shipping season. Hopefully the crop stores well and we have plenty of good-quality Alberta seed potatoes ready to move to customers in the new year.

Celebrating 75 Years of Crop Diversification Centre North

On August 27th, the Crop Diversification Centre North celebrated its 75th anniversary of serving Alberta agriculture. With an open house and visits from Minister Sawyer and past and present staff, the day celebrated a long history of supporting Alberta producers. Located near Edmonton, CDCN has a particularly strong connection to Alberta's potato industry. The site is home to the Alberta Potato Repository and the Alberta Plant Health Lab, and the Potato Growers of Alberta has maintained its North Area office at the Centre for many years.

The connection between CDCN and Alberta's potato

industry also reflects a shared commitment to plant health. The Alberta Potato Repository maintains potato lines and provides growers with access to high-quality plant material, while the Alberta Plant Health Lab provides testing and diagnostic tools to help identify plant health concerns. Together, these resources provide valuable tools that growers and industry can draw on to support plant health and quality seed production in Alberta.

The Potato Growers of Alberta is proud to have been part of CDCN's history and congratulates the Centre on 75 years of service to Alberta agriculture. We look forward to its continued role serving Alberta agriculture and its connection to the province's potato industry for many years to come.



Crop Diversification Centre's North Staff during facility's 75th Anniversary Celebrations

PGA Participates in 35th Annual Tri-National Agricultural Accord

The Potato Growers of Alberta was pleased to attend and sponsor the 35th Annual Tri-National Agricultural Accord, held this year in Calgary. The event brought together provincial and state agricultural leaders and industry representatives from Canada, the United States and Mexico to strengthen relationships and discuss shared priorities for North American agriculture.

Hosted by Alberta Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation Tara Sawyer, the 2026 Accord welcomed the largest delegation in the event's history.

For Alberta's potato industry, these relationships are particularly important. Our industry is highly integrated with the United States, and a strong, predictable trade relationship is paramount to the continued success of the potato sector throughout the Pacific Northwest. PGA sponsored the event on behalf of Alberta potato growers as an opportunity to support constructive conversations with our North American partners.

A major focus of this year's Accord was the importance of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA/USMCA/T-MEC). Delegates reaffirmed their support for the agreement and called on the three federal governments to work together toward its long-term renewal. For Alberta potatoes, maintaining reliable access to the U.S. market and predictable cross-border trade is essential to the continued competitiveness of our industry.

Plant and animal health preparedness was also a significant area of discussion. For potatoes, plant health issues can quickly become trade issues. Strong relationships, established communication channels and coordinated approaches between trading partners are critical when pest or disease

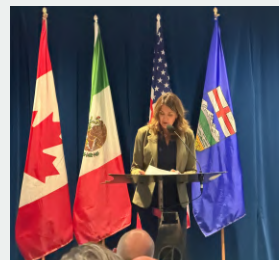
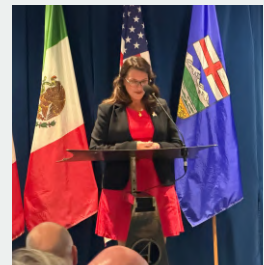
concerns arise. Building those relationships before an issue occurs helps governments and industry respond more effectively when challenges emerge.

The Accord reinforced that North American agriculture is deeply interconnected and that strong relationships matter. The Potato Growers of Alberta will continue to build those relationships with our provincial, national and U.S. partners and advocate for a strong and competitive North American potato industry.

The PGA would also like to thank the Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation team, who put a tremendous amount of work into hosting the event and welcoming delegates from across North America to our beautiful province... rodeo and all!

Respectfully,

stacey@albertapotatoes.ca
780.916.1766



The 2026 Tri-National Agricultural Accord Meetings in Calgary brought together government representatives and industry leaders from Mexico, the United States and Canada. Photo sources: The Grower, Stacey Bajema

AG RELATIONS DIRECTOR – Ashley Wagenaar



Smart Spud Technology in the Shell

In this article, I wanted to highlight a piece of technology that is small but mighty in its usefulness during harvest and is becoming something we are using regularly. Every bump a potato takes between the hill and the storage pile can show up later as a bruise, and most of those bumps are hard to see. Here at the Potato Growers of Alberta (PGA), we have a Smart Spud sensor that can help growers find exactly where those impacts happen. The Smart Spud is a potato-shaped sensor that travels through your equipment just like a real tuber. When a grower wants to use it, I bring the sensor out to the farm, and we run it through the potato digger and over the potato line together. Then we can look at the results on the spot.

How It Works

The Smart Spud connects to my phone through Bluetooth, so I can follow live updates as it moves through the equipment. Every impact it takes is measured in g-forces. The higher the g's, the harder the hit. Sometimes the connection drops, such as when the sensor is a little deep in the hill or buried under potatoes. That's not a problem. The sensor keeps storing impact data on its own and reconnects easily once my phone is back in range, so nothing from the run is lost.

The data can be viewed live on my phone or afterwards on a computer. Either way, it appears as charts that timestamp when each impact happened. That timestamp makes it possible to match a spike on the chart to a specific spot on the digger or line.



The internal components



The smart spud, charger, and power key



Following the smart spud down a grading line

A Quick Process

This process doesn't have to slow down harvest. Running the Smart Spud through a digger or a line 3 or 4 times can take 10 minutes or less. The sensor is dropped in, followed through, and collected at the other end, and then the numbers are reviewed. If an adjustment is made, the sensor can be run again right away to see whether the impacts came down.

What We Learned On Farms This Year

A few areas of opportunity for adjustment came up again and again across the farms we visited this harvest:

- **Right at digging.** A common spot for higher impacts was the moment the potatoes were dug out of the ground. If they were allowed to roll back repeatedly on the primary chain instead of moving up it, the impacts added up quickly.
- **Belt transitions.** Another impact that was easy to pinpoint was where one belt transitions to another. If the transition was set too close to a roller, the potatoes hit the metal and showed high impacts.
- **Changes of direction.** Any change of direction is harder on potatoes than you'd think. Two belts meeting at 90 degrees and running fast showed high impact g's.

Slowing those belts down made a big difference. The goal was never to cut capacity. It was to let slightly more volume travel together, so the potatoes cushion each other instead of tumbling on their own.

THE POTATO MINUTE

It's All About The Little Adjustments

Most of the fixes we found were small, like a slight speed adjustment to stop potatoes from rolling back on the primary, or a small height adjustment where two belts meet. None of these needed new equipment or a big overhaul.

On their own, each change might take only a few g's off one impact, but a potato goes through dozens of these points between the field and storage. All those little impacts add up, and so do the savings. Together, small changes can mean significantly fewer g's for your potatoes.

One More Lesson: Tell Your Graders...

The Smart Spud is a strange-looking potato covered in pink duct tape. If your graders don't know it's coming down the line, they'll toss it out as a reject, and you'll be hunting for it (whoops). Let the whole crew know before you start a run. Luckily, the sensor has a very loud alarm. Knock on wood, we haven't lost it yet!

Further Plans And Reading

We will continue to gather data on impacts and the relationships between impact amounts and bruising. For more on how Smart Spud technology is being used to find bruising risk at harvest and post-harvest, see the article below, which looks at three operations in Western Australia and reaches similar conclusions about transfer points and drop heights: Warmington, M.

"Finding the Hidden Knocks: SmartSpud Technology Reveals Where Potatoes Are Most at Risk of Bruising." Potatolink, Issue 22,

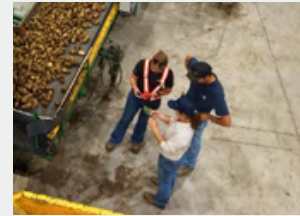
Spring 2026, pp. 18–22. Applied

Horticultural Research: [Link to article](#)

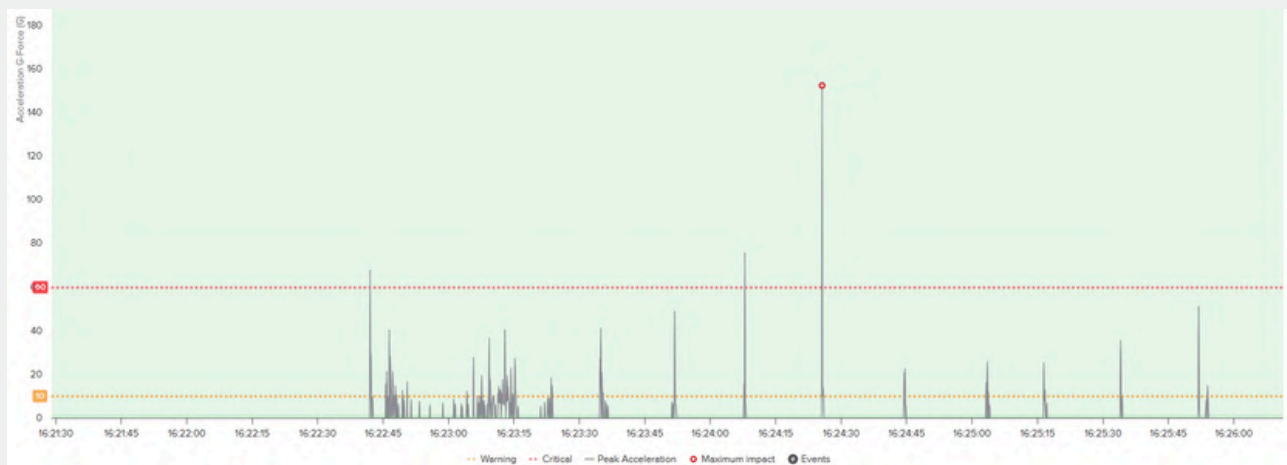
Respectfully,

ashley@albertapotatoes.ca

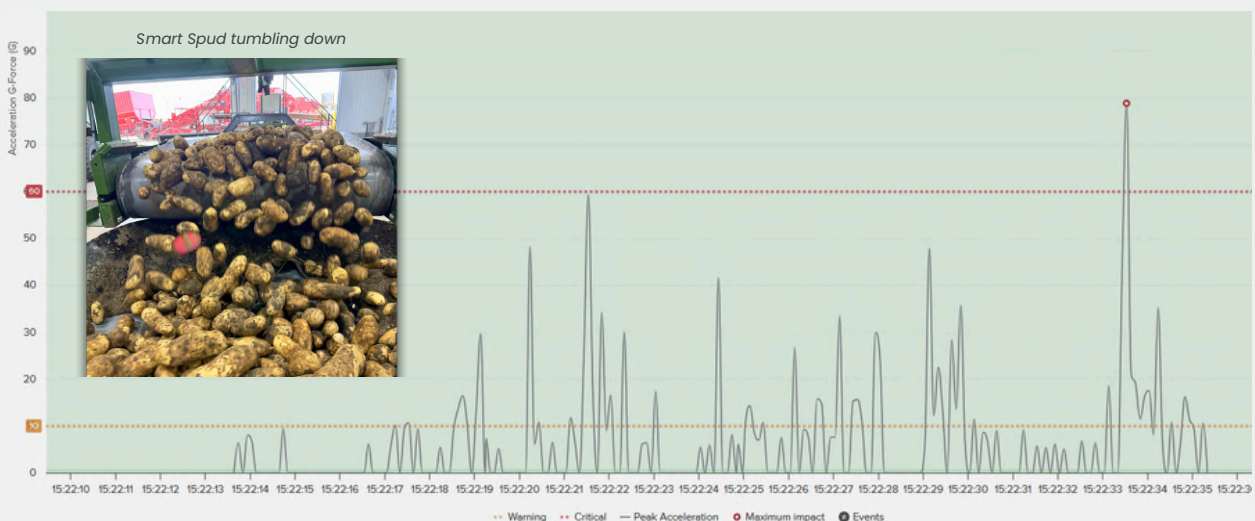
403.715.6867



Examining the results



Example of an impact graph after running through a cleaning table, air separator, and 9 line drops before the pile. One line drop was adjusted after this run; can you guess which one?



An example of an impact graph from a digger



The Importance Of Liquidity In Your Farming Operation

By Robert Jensen – Director- Crop Segment – ATB

It is often said that farmers have to wear many different hats. A better explanation to me would be that farmers need to have an understanding of a variety of vocabularies. A busy morning may find you speaking agronomy, science, mechanics and finance, and each one of those conversations can be critical to your operation at any given time.

As agricultural bankers, we have the privilege of spending time with you and your operation, often picking up on some of the lingo and almost always being fascinated by the agronomic and technological advances as you adopt new practices. While banking doesn't seem nearly as exciting as what you do every day, we hope that you find value in the advice we share from our experience.

Liquidity

Much like producing a crop, you can't just focus on one thing and expect success, but there are some critical aspects that can't be overlooked. In this respect, liquidity could be likened to a critical step (think seeding and harvesting) in leading to financial success for your operation.

Throughout a fiscal year, your operation has many demands on cash flow. These are your current obligations, and if they aren't paid, things can come to a pretty quick stop. Some of the obligations I am referring to here are crop inputs, payroll, fuel, supplies, taxes and loan interest on your land and equipment.

The thing about these current obligations is that they aren't necessarily flexible or negotiable when farm cash flow gets reduced by things out of our control like weather or commodity price pressure. Another issue can be that, even with a solid plan, obligations like inputs, repair bills, and fuel can end up higher than anticipated based on market conditions and unexpected circumstances.



Strategies to maintain strong liquidity involve managing what you can to reduce the volatility. Examples of this include:

- Locking in input costs like fertilizer, chemical, and fuel
- Maintaining or replacing equipment to avoid untimely repairs
- Structuring debt payments to provide the most flexible terms

As an ag banker, I find that last one to be somewhere where I can add the most value. Whether your loans are for equipment or land, there are almost always options to provide flexibility that will help improve liquidity. While these are best to be discussed and determined at the onset, having regular meetings with your banker can uncover some opportunities to improve or tweak your debt structure. Features that would be important to talk about with your banker would be:

- Ability to stretch the amortization of the loan – Amortization refers to the overall life of the loan, a longer amortization period will reduce the required principal or blended payments required each year and allow you to keep more cash in your operation. I would also add that the ability to pay additional principal on the loan can be important as well, so that in the years when you have surplus cash, you can effectively lower the amortization.
- Ability to defer principal portion of the payment in the tough years. We all know that not every crop is a bumper crop, so sometimes being able to defer payments will allow you the ability to use your available cash for the most critical expenses first.
- Cleaning up unfunded capital expenses – Often, when times are good and cash is plentiful, farms will pay for equipment or upgrades from their bank account. While there is nothing inherently bad about this practice, in agriculture we can't always see around the corner, and one hot, dry year, and make us wish we had that cash back in our account.

While each operation will be different, maintaining a reasonable average amortization on your long-term debt is something that your ag banker will be happy to discuss with you.

From The Office

2026 Alberta Potato Conference & Tradeshow



Red Deer Resort & Casino
November 23-25

2026
ALBERTA POTATO CONFERENCE & TRADESHOW
PGA APIA
SINCE 1960

60th
ANNIVERSARY

Early Bird Pricing ends on October 23 – register now and save \$100!
Sponsorship deadline is November 2.

Meet Our Speakers



Ashley Nicholls
REACH Agriculture Strategies
[Speaker BIO](#)



Trevor Wallace
Agricultural Meteorology,
Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation
[Speaker BIO](#)



Dr. Linda Schott
Department of Plant Science,
University of Manitoba
[Speaker BIO](#)



Dr. Jonathan Neilson
Potato Health Research Group
Lethbridge Research &
Development Center
[Speaker BIO](#)



Dr. Sylvian Charlebois
Food Distribution & Policy,
Agri-Food Analytics Lab
Dalhousie University of Halifax
[Speaker BIO](#)



**More Event
Information
& Registration**

Here



From The Office

2026 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING | AGENDA

November 23 – 25, 2026

MONDAY	Monday, November 23, 2026
10:00 am	Registration Desk Opens - <i>Event Centre</i>
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	Seed Grower Business Meeting - <i>Marseille & Savona Room (AB Licensed Seed Growers only)</i>
2:00 pm – 2:30 pm	Refreshment Break - <i>Marseille & Savona Room</i>
2:30 – 4:00 pm	Speaker: CFIA - <i>Seed Grading / Standards</i>
4:00 pm – close	Tradeshow - <i>Event Centre</i>
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm	Welcome Reception Buffet - <i>Event Centre</i>
9:00 pm – 12:00 am	APIA Hospitality Reception - <i>Event Centre</i>
TUESDAY	Tuesday, November 24, 2026
7:00 am – 8:30 am	Breakfast - <i>Event Centre</i>
7:30 am – 4:00 pm	Registration Desk Open - <i>Event Centre</i>
8:00 am – 10:00 am	PGA Business Meeting - <i>Marseille & Savona Room (AB Licensed Growers only)</i>
9:00 am – 5:00 pm	Tradeshow - <i>Event Centre</i>
10:00 am– 10:20 am	Refreshment Break - <i>Event Centre</i>
10:20 am – 10:30 am	Welcome <i>Alison Davie, PGA Board Chair</i>
10:40 am – 12:00 pm	Speaker: Ashley Nicholls - <i>“Pressure, People, and Performance”</i>
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch - <i>Event Centre</i>
1:00 pm – 1:50 pm	Speaker: Trevor Wallace, ACIS - <i>“Alberta's Weather Stations and What We Can Do with the Data”</i>
1:50 pm – 2:40 pm	Speaker: Dr. Linda Schott, Chair of Potato Sustainability & Associate Professor- <i>“Manure Mechanics”</i>
2:40 pm – 3:00 pm	Refreshment Break - <i>Event Centre</i>
3:00 pm – 3:50 pm	Speaker: Dr. Jonathan Neilson, AAFC
3:50 pm – 4:40 pm	Grower Panel - <i>“Farm Employee Strategies”</i>
5:30 pm – 6:30 pm	Cash Bar Cocktail Reception - <i>Mediterranean Ballroom</i>
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm	PGA Annual Banquet - <i>Mediterranean Ballroom</i>
8:00 pm – 10:30 pm	Dueling Pianos - <i>Mediterranean Ballroom</i>
10:30 pm – 12:00 am	APIA Hospitality Reception - <i>Mediterranean Ballroom</i>
WEDNESDAY	Wednesday, November 25, 2026
7:30 am – 9:00 am	Breakfast - <i>Event Centre</i>
7:30 am – 10:30 am	Registration Desk - <i>Event Centre</i>
9:00 am – 10:00 am	PGA Business Meeting - <i>Marseille & Savona Room (AB Licensed Growers only)</i>
9:00 am – 2:00 pm	Tradeshow - <i>Event Centre</i>
10:00 am – 11:00 am	Refreshment Break - <i>Event Centre</i>
11:00 am – 12:00 pm	KEYNOTE Speaker: Dr. Sylvain Charlebois - <i>“How AI will revolutionize the Food Industry, from Growers to Consumers”</i>
12:00 am – 1:15 pm	Lunch & APIA Awards / PGA Draws - <i>Event Centre</i>
1:15 am – 1:30 pm	Closing Remarks - <i>Alison Davie, PGA Board Chair</i>

From The Office



FALL AREA MEETINGS

North Area	South Area
October 13, 2026	October 15, 2026
Supper Meeting 6 pm	Breakfast Meeting 8 am
Holiday Inn & Suites	Heritage Inn Hotel
1100-4th St, Nisku	4830 46 Ave, Taber

All licensed growers are welcome, along with Industry reps who will be excused during the PGA business portion of the meeting.



Ag Leadership Learning Series & Board Governance Workshops

The Ag Leadership Learning Series offers a variety of workshops and learning opportunities designed to support GMs, executive directors, senior staff leaders and board members in strengthening leadership and governance skills.

One of the upcoming workshops will be hosted at the **Potato Growers of Alberta** Learning Centre in Taber on **December 9 & 10**. The Targeted Governance Topics Half-day Workshops will cover practical topics including healthy conflict in the boardroom, serving as a great chair, understanding board financials and having effective meetings.

[Click Here to Register & View Courses](#)



2027 Potato Expo – Denver, Colorado

Get ready for Potato Expo 2027 at the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center in Denver, Colorado. Join the potato community to build valuable connections, discover new ideas, and help shape the future of the industry.

As the largest conference and trade show for the potato industry, Potato Expo brings together growers, suppliers, researchers, and industry leaders from across the country and around the world.

[Click Here For More Info & Registration](#)

From The Office

Spuds in Tubs: Sponsorship Opportunity



Our Spuds In Tubs Program is going on 5 years now with over **4600** students participating across the province. We are looking for sponsorship dollars to help provide the program at no cost to registered schools.

Students learn all about growing potatoes and how it fits into specific subjects in the Alberta curriculum. They also learn several facts about the potato industry in the province and are fortunate to meet growers through the virtual farm tours. As a valued **\$1000 sponsor**, your business or farm name will be added to all the handbooks distributed, the PGA and Ag For Life website, newsletters and social posts.



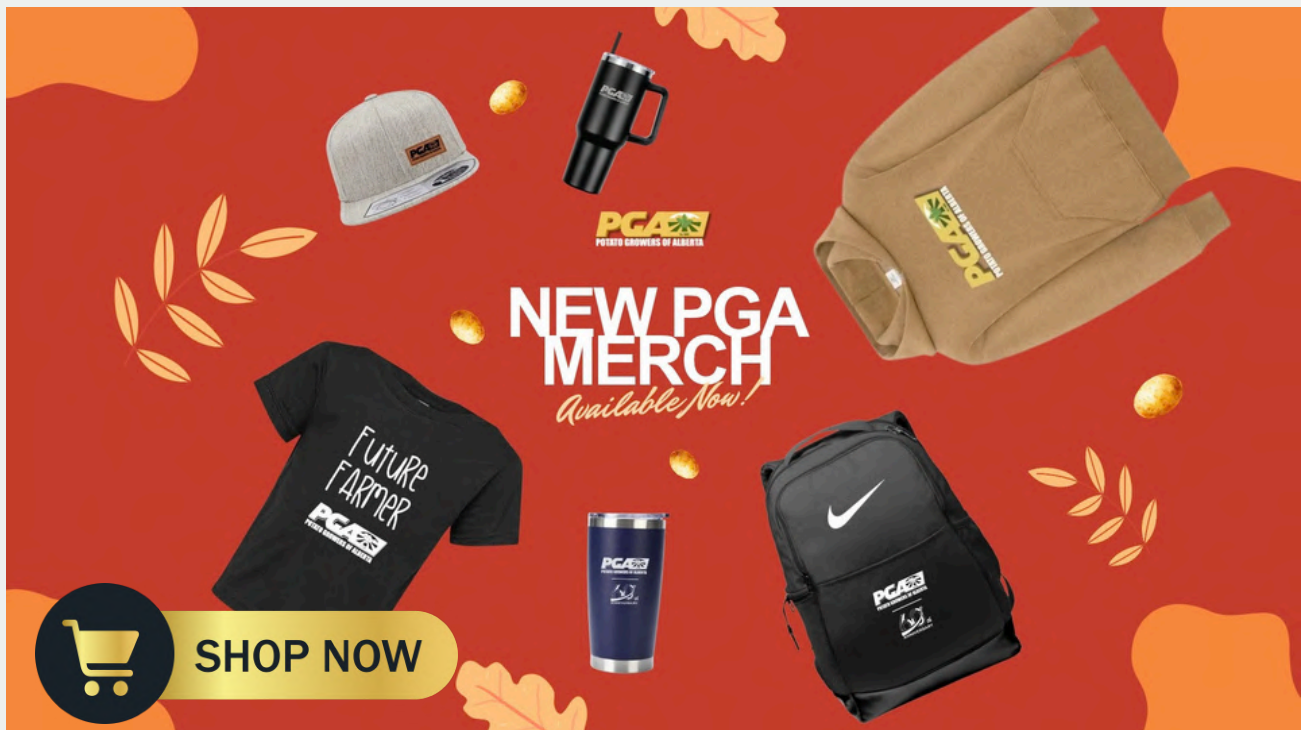
Contact Deb or Trina at the office with interest by October 30th!

Deb: deb.b@albertapotatoes.ca

Trina: trina@albertapotatoes.ca

**MORE
INFO** 

From The Office



2026 Potato Variety Trials at Lethbridge Polytechnic's Research Farm. August 2026



A crazy spud found in the field while completing 10 feet digs. Photos sent by Cassidy Quiring September 2026



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Staff Editor: Sonia Third

PGA Office: 6008-46 Ave. Taber, AB T1G 2B1 403.223.2262

pga@albertapotatoes.ca

www.albertapotatoes.ca

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APIA

Alberta Potato Industry Association

— SINCE 1990 —

MEMBERSHIP

The Alberta Potato Industry Association is composed of individuals from various areas of business, all of whom work with, and alongside, the potato growers in Alberta. Formed in 1990, the APIA facilitates in the networking with growers at events such as the Burgers N Beans, the Alberta Potato Conference Trade Show, and the Annual PGA Golf Tournament.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please send an email to apiamemberships@gmail.com. Memberships will be sent out at the end of the year to last years' members, as well as those interested this year.

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP RECIPIENTS

The following individuals are recognized for their long-standing contribution to the APIA and have been awarded a Lifetime Membership to our association:

**Corah, Chuck
Gash, Brian
Gouw, Arie**

**Hacker, Bill
Jensen, Wayne
Kaiser, Dave**

**Mitchell, Peter
Mrak, Tony
Nelis, Jacques**

**Oikawa, Tricky
Stewart, Russ
Sandberg, Phil**

The following individuals are members in good standing of the APIA for the 2026 calendar year:

**Acheson, Cam
Alcock, Tony
Aleman, Mike
Bateman, Dave
Bell, Jared
Blaine, Justin
Bos, Tim
Brehaut, Randy
Burns, Riley
Cann, Creed
Claassen, Chantal
Clark, Joe
Coker, Mike
Day, Carol
DeHaan, Jeff
Draper, Derrick
Dube, Kelly
Duell, Michael
Dykstra, Ray
Elser, Ryley
Fletcher, Blake
Fletcher, Bruce**

**Fletcher, Derrick
Forbush, Todd
Gallant, Dave
Glas, Cobie
Goertzen, Nathan
Gratton, Geraldine
Gratton, Lawrence
Haacke, Aaron
Haan, Hartger
Hanlon, Brendon
Hansen, Courtney
Iwan, Josh
Janssen, Tom
Joss, Jessica
Keys, Scott
Kinniburgh, Shaun/Stacey
Klassen, Greg
Konynenbelt, Marlin
Kruk, Adam
Kuipers, Kianna
Kwiatkowski, Ryan
Leffer, Joel**

**Loman, Ryan
Lyczewski, Laurie
Mackinnon, Kevin
Marshall, Robin
Mackenzie-Greive, Rob
Meier, Whitney
Menkveld, Andrew
Michielsen, Frank
Mykytiw, Murray
Nelis, Brian
Nelubowich, Adam
Neudorf, Ayrton
Nikles, Brendan
Oseen, Brett
Peters, Abby
Pickles, Taunya
Pieters, Kirstof
Pluta, Denine
Quinton, Justin
Quiring, Cassidy
Rattray, Desire
Reed, Hal**

**Reimer, Taylor
Ritchie, Mike
Russell, Jessie
Sawatsky, Kirby
Slingerland, Timothy
Slomp, Harry
Slomp, Jordan
Sternberg, Ronald
Stewart, Craig
Stinnissen, Pat
Sydoryk, Terry
Van Dyk, Justin
Van de Bruinhorst
Visser, Daniel
Vossepoel, Adam
Warkentin, Bruce
West, TJ
Wielenga, Jorrit
Wilson, Barb
Wolsey, Chris**