

# The Potato Minute

May 1, 2020



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - Terence Hochstein

As I write this article for May 1st, Canada is now 107 days from the first reported case of COVID-19. Never in the history of mankind has the entire world come to a screeching halt; the world economy is completely upside down. There are millions of opinions out there as to the seriousness of this pandemic and the forever lasting effects of what our lives will look like in the future.

As the days go by, our political leaders continue to say that the Canadian food supply chain is safe, we will not run out of food. In reality, the vulnerability of this supply chain is being tested to its limits. It is true that Canada is one of only a handful of countries that has a 'net export' of food and agricultural products, but the other side of the story, the side that is now being exposed, is that we are still highly dependent on one critical component of the supply chain.... people.

Canada has some of the most modern, up to date, processing facilities in the world. Our meat processing plants, protein plants, crush plants, and frozen processing plants are world class, but they all require people to operate them. Many of these plants are in close quarters, with people working side by side. When one person gets sick it affects everyone in the facility. When these plants are shut down or operate at partial capacity, the food supply chain becomes affected. When the grocery stores run low on food, the prices are artificially inflated because there is this perceived 'shortage' of food, and the consumer has to pay more. Once again, the producer is vilified as gouging the public, all the while being unable to sell their raw products.

To complicate this situation even more, with the sit-down restaurants, quick service restaurants, major sporting

and entertainment events not operating, there is a huge backlog of food products sitting in freezers across the country with nowhere to go. Right now, across the US, there are producers that are dumping milk, depopulating chickens, turkeys and pigs because the slaughter plants are shut down or idling along, with Canadian producers not far behind their American counterparts. In Canada the beef industry has lost close to 50% of its processing industry capacity with the COVID-19 situation at two plants in Alberta. Poultry and hog plants are having to deal with similar situations as well.



**“...the Canadian farmer and their families are doing their part; with the rest of the supply chain out of their hands”**

In the potato industry, there is approximately 1.5-1.6 billion lbs. of freezer capacity spread across North America, with most of them being full and sales in some areas having dropped by over 80%. The fresh industry has had some growth, but pricing has taken a dramatic hit the last month or two, forcing earnings below the cost of production for these growers. The industry has shifted as much as possible into food banks and shelters, but this demand does not

even come close to what is left in storage from the 2019 crop. Even with the 2020 crop being reduced in acres, by up to 25%, there is still going to be potatoes currently in storage with no use for them.

As the 2020 cropping season unfolds across the country, please remember one thing, the Canadian farmer and their families are doing their part; with the rest of the supply chain out of their hands. In many ways the system is broken and it is not due to the primary producer.

*Until next month.*

Terence  
403.382.8382



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## SEED COORDINATOR UPDATE- Stacey Bajema

Up here in the north, the last traces of snow have finally disappeared from the treelines and our seed growers are gearing up their equipment in anticipation for the upcoming planting season. Deb and I continue to work remotely as CDCN is still limiting the amount of staff working on site. If anyone needs anything, please feel free to call or text our cellphones.

Stacey Bajema – 780.916.1766  
Deb Hart – 780.722.9395

### CFIA COVID-19 UPDATE



On April 14, 2020, the Federal Government announced 20 million dollars in increased funding to CFIA to support the continued implementation of critical food inspection services. This funding will support efforts to build and maintain its inspection workforce and mitigate potential impacts of COVID-19 on their ability to carry out essential services.

CFIA has developed the following guidelines for operators to follow to prevent and respond to COVID-19 outbreaks when mandatory onsite inspections are required:

CFIA expectations for the prevention of and response to suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 by operators.

### Temporary Foreign Workers

Some of our growers have started to see their Temporary Foreign Workers arriving on farm. AAFC is reporting that by the end of April, about 10,000 workers will have successfully made it into Canada. The Federal government has announced that they will support employers with \$1500 per Temporary Foreign Worker to cover the additional costs that need to be incurred as a result of the mandatory 14-day quarantine period, as long as they comply with the mandatory requirements.

Recent changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations that came into effect on April 20, 2020 have led to the following updated requirements for employers to follow:

Special Compliance Inspections for Employers of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program during the COVID-19 Pandemic.



### HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

TO ALL THE AMAZING MOMS OUT THERE  
THAT GIVE UNCONDITIONALLY!

MAY 10TH



## AGRICULTURAL DIRECTOR - Thomas McDade



Hello all. As I travel through the countryside this week delivering the chemical books, seeding appears to be progressing very well in most areas. For the most part, seeding conditions appear to be good as there is good moisture in the soil and it is finally warming up.

I will be continuing to collect some soil samples this spring, as the U of L continues its research project on Potato Early Die with the University of Manitoba. Additionally, you may notice me in a number of potato fields, as I monitor soil temperature and the emergence dates of the new potato crop. - **Thomas**

### Update on Research activities at the University of Lethbridge:

Despite the University's COVID-19 lockdown, the Potato Research Lab continues its research activities, trying to minimize the impact of the current country-wide situation on our potato program.

Among the latest news is Colby Robertson's successful defense of his Master's thesis on Management Strategies for Potato Early Dying Complex (PED) in Southern Alberta. Congratulations, Colby! It was a job well done. Because of



2019 photo - Colby Robertson spore trapping

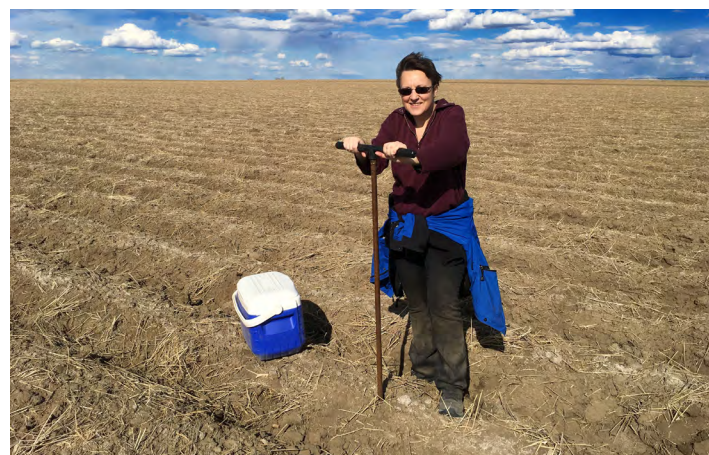
the importance of this topic to the growers, the PED research will continue in collaboration with the Canadian network (CanPEDNet) and as multiple stand-alone projects.

In several weeks, we will be starting our 2nd season of the Pest Monitoring Program at the University of Lethbridge. The program is operated by Promax Agronomy Services and supported by the PGA. This program serves the growers' community to improve disease management decisions through monitoring the potato fields of Alberta for

the occurrence of major potato pathogens such as the late blight pathogen *Phytophthora infestans* and the potato psyllids that may carry the zebra chip pathogen *Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum*. In addition, we will monitor for the presence of *Alternaria* spores (early blight), *Fusarium conidia* (*Fusarium* wilt), and some other insect pests.

Similar to last year, two university students will be involved in daily diagnostics of spore samples collected from the spore traps, and two other students will focus on the potato psyllids monitoring. In addition to Andrea Abenoja and Dylan Jones, who worked in the program last summer, we welcome two new bright minds, Becky Davidson and Brendon DeGroot.

Among other events, we had four undergraduate students conducting their Independent Study projects this spring. These small projects provide opportunities to generate interest in potato research among the students and grow our own graduate students. They will present their results at the 6th Annual Undergraduate Research in Science Conference of Alberta, which will be held at the U of L in May 2020. Finally, we have two new post-doctoral researchers in our lab: Dr. Mariana Vetrici and Dr. Maria Munawar. Mariana is



Dr. Mariana Vetrici conducting soil samples for CanPEDNet project

a molecular biologist and one of her initiatives will focus on expanding molecular diagnostics of pathogens. Maria, who just arrived, is a plant pathologist with extensive experience in plant diseases and nematodes. We will give them a chance to introduce themselves in the next issues of Research Minutes. Happy Planting! - **Dmytro Yevtushenko**

[thomas@albertapotatoes.ca](mailto:thomas@albertapotatoes.ca)  
403 892-7184

## PROVINCIAL NEWS



Call for  
Groundbreakers  
& Game Changers



Do you know an outstanding individual who has made a significant contribution to the agriculture and food industry, and to the development and sustainability of rural life in Alberta? Nominate them before May 15, 2020.

The Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame was created in 1951 to recognize individuals on a biennial cycle who have made significant contributions to the agriculture and food industry and to the development and sustainability of rural life in Alberta.

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry ceremonially inducts up to 3 individuals every 2 years. The Selection Panel is appointed by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and is comprised of a cross-section of panellists representing Alberta's agriculture industry.

### Nominations

A candidate must be nominated by 3 individuals other than members of the candidate's immediate family.

Nominators may submit a nomination on behalf of an organization or independently as individuals.

### To nominate someone:

Download the [2020 Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame Nomination Form \(PDF, 282 KB\)](#).

Submit your application form and 3 letters of recommendation.

Electronic submissions are preferred and can be emailed to: [susan.lacombe@gov.ab.ca](mailto:susan.lacombe@gov.ab.ca).

Paper submissions are acceptable and can be mailed to:

Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame  
Provincial Building  
#106, 4709 44 Avenue  
Stony Plain, Alberta T7Z 1N4

### Evaluation

Information provided in the nomination form must stand on its own, and is the primary document used for evaluating candidates.

In addition to the completed nomination form, 3 letters of recommendation should be provided with letters not exceeding 2 pages each.

Additional information is not required nor encouraged.

### Eligibility

Individuals, who have demonstrated leadership in farm, rural or commodity organizations, or in the food industry, are eligible for the Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame. Leadership must have been demonstrated over many years at the provincial level, and the candidate must have made a significant province-wide impact on the industry as a whole.

*Source: alberta.ca*

## BLAST FROM THE PAST...



### Shimbashi, Edward Jim - 1990 Hall of Fame Inductee



One of the causes the late Edward Shimbashi will be most remembered for was his dedication to the mechanization of the potato industry in southern Alberta. During the Depression, Mr. Shimbashi and his father grew about 25 acres of potatoes in the Raymond area and marketed them locally and throughout Western Canada. Mr. Shimbashi introduced the first potato harvester and piler, mechanical beet harvester and large scale product transportation, revolutionizing the vegetable and potato industry in southern Alberta. He also purchased one of the first sprinkler irrigation systems in the area in the early 1950's. By the mid-1970's the same operation developed 7,000 acres of land into a pivot irrigation system. With water from the Oldman River, this project turned out to be one of the largest successful private irrigation systems in Canada.

[Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame main page](#)

## ACROSS THE COUNTRY



### The Canadian Federation of Agriculture seeks \$2.6 billion for Agriculture and Agri-Food Emergency Fund to Maintain Food Security in Canada

Ottawa, April 30th, 2020 – The Canadian Federation of Agriculture has asked the Federal Government to provide an Agriculture and Agri-Food Emergency Fund of \$2.6 billion to help maintain food security in Canada in response to COVID-19.

This amount is based on estimates of the immediate impacts of COVID-19 provided by agricultural commodity groups across the country. The emergency fund is required because of the shut down of the food service sector, processing plant closures and other supply chain disruptions and increases in labour and associated costs. It should be noted that this figure was representative to the losses as of last week and losses and additional costs will continue to mount as farmers deal with the impacts of COVID-19, highlighting the continued importance of enhancing AgriStability support.

This emergency funding is for impacts which are not eligible under any of the government programs announced to date to combat the impacts of COVID-19. These extraordinary costs are also not covered by existing Business Risk Management programs offered by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

This emergency fund for immediate impacts of COVID-19 should only be seen as the first phase of emergency funding, to persevere through the issues the sector is facing today. It is very probable that more support will be required in the coming year as unforeseen challenges continue to emerge throughout the food supply chain. Additional funding will be required to maintain food security in Canada.

“Imagine if six months ago someone had told Canada to stock up on face masks, ventilators and personal protective equipment, our nation would be in a much stronger position to weather this storm. A month ago, we offered our government a similar warning for a different looming problem, the potential collapse of components of our food supply chain. ‘An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure’ could never be more true,” said Mary Robinson, President of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

“We understand that the entire country is under duress. Agriculture is a unique player in our economy. Not only does agriculture create value for our economy, act as stewards

of our environment and employ over two million Canadians, agriculture also provides us the unique benefit of food – not only for Canada but for the world at large,” added Robinson.

“Planting season is happening right now. Mother Nature waits for no one. Farmers need to have the financial confidence that they will not be facing bankruptcy due to impacts of COVID-19. Like the rest of the country, we’ve been watching our government announce new assistance for many other sectors almost daily since the pandemic began, and farmers are appalled as they watch an essential service and critical infrastructure such as food production and processing being largely ignored. The time for the government to act is now. Canadians should be concerned,” concluded Robinson



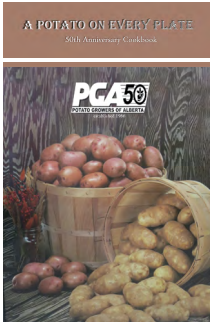
In an effort to show Canadian’s support for the food industry, CFA has created a [letter-writing campaign](#) website to help Canadian’s show their support for Canadian food. CFA urges you to use this website to email your MP and give a concentrated, unified message on the importance of food security in Canada. Together, we can secure Canada’s food supply during this pandemic.

Source: [cfa-fca.ca](http://cfa-fca.ca)

## FROM THE OFFICE

**SHOW YOUR MOM HOW MUCH YOU LOVE HER BY GIVING HER A GIFT OF HISTORY AND CUISINE. WE HAVE IT COVERED WITH OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY HISTORY BOOK AND COOKBOOK...**

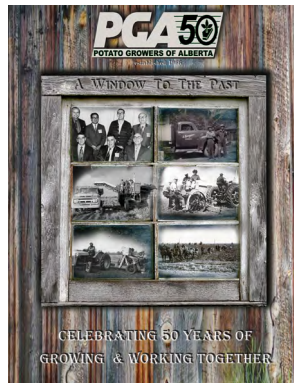
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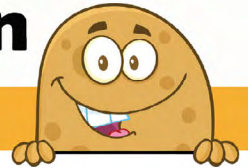


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Staff Editor: Deb Brewin

# FRENCH FRIES

**enjoy guilt-free...  
in moderation**



**130 Calories**

**0 Trans Fat**

**High In Potassium**

**Source of Dietary Fibre**

### Nutrition Fact's Valeur nutritive

Per 19 Pieces (85 g) / Pour 19 morceaux (85 g)	
Amount Teneur	% Daily Value % valeur quotidienne
<b>Calories / Calories 130</b>	
<b>Fat / Lipides 4 g</b>	<b>6%</b>
Saturated / saturés 0.3 g	
+ Trans /trans 0 g	<b>2%</b>
Polyunsaturated / polyinsaturés 1 g	
Omega-6 / oméga-6 0.7 g	
Omega-3 / oméga-3 0.2 g	
Monounsaturated / monoinsaturés 3 g	
<hr/>	
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 g	<b>0%</b>
Sodium / Sodium 90 mg	<b>4%</b>
Potassium 310 mg	<b>9%</b>
Carbohydrate / Glucides 22 g	<b>7%</b>
Fibre / Fibres 2 g	<b>8%</b>
Sugars / Sucres 0 g	
Protein / Protéines 2 g	
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	<b>0%</b>
Vitamin C / Vitamine C	<b>6%</b>
Calcium / Calcium	<b>0%</b>
Iron / Fer	<b>4%</b>



**Low in Saturated Fats**

**Cholesterol Free**

**Source of Vitamin C**

**Source of Iron**

*\*great baked or fried  
in healthy canola oil*

