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Norfolk Ontario's Garden



Editorial

In this issue, Norfolk Farms puts its 'eyes' on potatoes in Norfolk County.

A valuable component of 'Ontario's Garden', the 2016 census confirms Norfolk's potato acreage is number one for the province.

Check out our special section dedicated to a crop representing huge business in Norfolk. Beyond the statistical analysis, we believe you will enjoy a feature on Charles 'Chuck' Emre's innovative coupling of potatoes with a cover crop utilized as a natural fumigant, Gary Godelie's 'have potatoes, will travel' experience insights into farmers' markets, Steve and Brad Blizman's Delhi-area operation, and Gerdon and Diane Brokstra's ownership of the Norfolk Potato Company.

Norfolk Farms also reaches to the sky in this issue, illuminating Chris Hedges' approach to high-density apple orchards. Production and volume are crucial to growers, who statistically in the county produce 46,000 pounds of apples on 2,000 acres, representing a farm gate value of \$14,404,000.

We believe that these features and others included in the issue both represent Norfolk's agricultural diversity and economic impact, and make great reading.

Enjoy.

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Apples high density production

Apple production in Norfolk County has evolved impressively over the years, thanks in part to developments at the Simcoe Research Station.

Apple researcher John Cline said traditional trees were large with wider spacings and lower density orchard production. In the 1950s and 60s dwarfing rootstock produced smaller trees planted more closely together in narrower rows.

also made for easier pruning and picking

As of 2019, Haldimand-Norfolk has 2074 acres of apples with a farm gate value of \$14,504,000. Production has remained relatively stable over the past four years.

A big issue is labour which will continue to be a factor into the future.

In response, growers and researchers are looking to increased mechanization which requires uniform tree structure about three to four metres high allowing for mobile platforms for pruning and harvest.

Cline said robotics are a possibility for the

future.

He added that researchers continue to look for disease and pest resistant varieties.

Today, consumers want more variety, better quality and increased crispness of the apple. While traditional varieties such as



Dr. John Cline, University of Guelph / OMFRA Research Station Simcoe

As of 2019, Haldimand-Norfolk has 2074 acres of apple which produced 46,000 lbs with a farm gate value of \$14,504,000. Production has remained relatively stable over the past 4 year. These are based on OMAFRA status.

But a major shift recently has been the introduction of high density orchards supported by wire trellises which reduced the vegetation and allowed for less shading. The more sunlight resulted in earlier apples with better colour and

the McIntosh and Delicious remain popular, the best sellers are Ambrosia, Gala and Honey Crisp.

Chris Hedges, a first generation apple grower from the Waterford area, recalled that free standing trees with about 150 trees per acre, were prevalent in the 1990s. He said the larger tree canopies required a lot of management, including pruning and picking.

"We needed an easier way to get the fruit into the bin," he said.

At the time, about half the crop went for fresh market, while the others went for juice. However, today there is less demand for processed apples.

The introduction of smaller trees resulted in higher production and better quality fruit, as well as easier picking. But it also required more tree management and irrigation.



Chris Hedges

Please turn to page A7 →

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High density apple production...

Continued from page A4



Hedges currently grows 300 acres with about 1500 trees to the acre supported by posts and wires.

"It's looks like a vineyard now," he said.

Hedges added that harvesting of the smaller trees is easier and requires fewer pickers. As well, modern storage keeps the apples in good condition for longer periods.

In addition to the fresh market, Cline said, there has been a big growth in North America for hard cider apples. The Ontario Craft Cider Association was formed about 10 years ago to represent the growing trend.

He said the cider industry is looking more for flavour than potential alcohol content. Craft cider makers want varieties with taste and aroma. European apples are

currently in demand for the cider market.

Some growers still use "grounders" fallen from the tree, but processors are increasingly concerned about bacteria and rot so the Ontario industry is still looking for handpicked apples

Cline said there has been a consolidation of the local apple production from about 100 growers in the Norfolk Apple Growers Association to only five or six large operations, along with some independent growers such as Hedges

There's a current push to mechanization prompted by a dependency on labour which has proved to be tenuous by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

"I feel sorry for the workers and growers," Cline said. "It's been a tough year and much more expensive." 🌿

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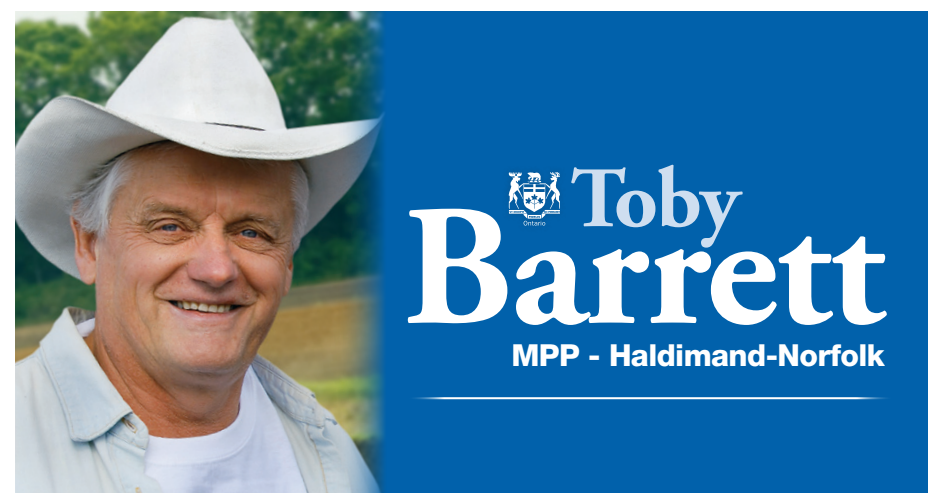
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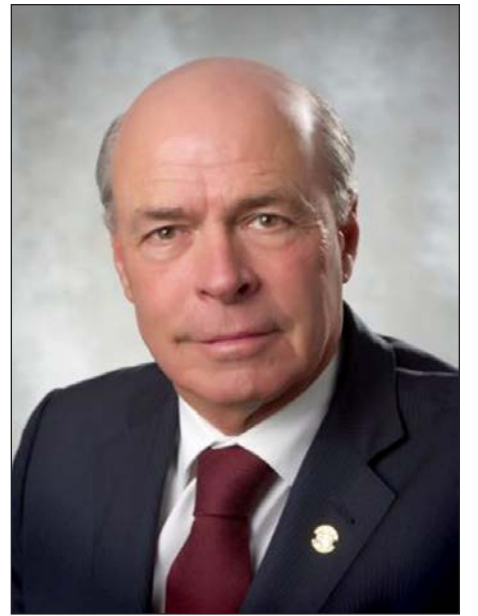


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F.A.R.M.S. continues battle against unprecedented challenges

Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services (F.A.R.M.S) President Ken Forth can confirm the organization has never seen anything like the ongoing challenges COVID-19 presents to its mandate of facilitating foreign migrant workers' safe and productive arrival into Canada, and a similar return home.



Ken Forth



"No," he responded simply, a single word encompassing an unprecedented year of struggle, frustration and to be fair, success against all odds.

General Manager Sue Williams has had one day off in recent memory Forth expanded, that being Christmas.

"Every other day it has been a crap show. On and on and on."

In very broad terms, the global pandemic delayed migrant workers' arrival here, ultimately limited numbers, and for Trinidadian workers, significantly delayed their return. Some have elected to make the best of the situation and remain in Canada, while others are gradually returning home, a flow slowed

by the requirement for a negative COVID-19 test prior to embarking, and limited space for a subsequent in-country quarantining period.

"By the end of this month, anybody who wanted to go home should be able to go home," said Forth.

As that effort continues a new challenge arising is the Canadian government's requirement for all migrant workers entering Canada, to have a negative COVID test 72 hours prior to that entrance.

"It was announced New Year's Eve," said Forth.

He fully supports the concept, however is deeply concerned about the logistical challenges its abrupt implementation represents.

In the first place, the announcement was unexpected, putting workers, their home countries, airlines and the Canadian employers expecting their arrival in a shared bind.

"No one was informed of it," said Forth of what he believes was in part a reactionary measure responding to prominent Canadian citizens' decision to travel, and the resultant public outcry.

If the announcement had been made December 15th, for example says Forth, there would have been more time to adjust to its requirements.

"But not with no days notice," he said, noting the countries affected are definitely trying to find a solution. "It takes a lot of time and effort."

Secondly, Forth sees 96 hours as a far more realistic timeframe, given for example the amount of travel time some Mexican workers face before arriving at an airport, and secondly, the challenge for affected nations to meet a standard first-world Canada itself is struggling to hit.

In Forth's personal experience, a kindergarten and a Grade 2 student in his family were potentially

Every other day it has been a crap show. On and on and on

exposed to COVID, and required a negative test before being allowed to return to school. Happily, both tested negative, however it took 'four or five days' for results to be confirmed.

"How can we expect developing nations to live up to that when we can't even come up with a test result in 72 hours?"

Mexico and Jamaica are certainly rising to the challenge credits Forth.

"They are trying to put a process in place."

However the unexpected announcement and its timing has complicated an already involved procedure.

"We are losing workers," said Forth. "That is where we are at," he continued. "This has the potential of affecting the food supply."

Again, Forth understands and supports the validity of requiring a negative COVID test, however has been approaching government with the suggestion a 96-hour negative result window is a fairer and more viable option.

"We haven't heard back just yet."

F.A.R.M.S. does not possess a crystal ball capable of predicting this situation's outcome. For that matter, as Forth points out, if experience over the past 12 months has taught anyone anything it's that any predictions will be clouded by COVID uncertainty.

"Who knows what is going to happen next?"

One thing Forth can predict with full confidence however is that F.A.R.M.S. will be doing its level best to not only meet the unprecedented, unforeseen and unidentified but fully anticipated challenges 2021 is sure to bring, but continue to develop solutions on behalf of its employers and workers.

"Every day we are on the phone trying to make this happen - and the countries are bending over backwards to help." 🌿

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Agriculture labour needs will double by 2029

Farm labour is the backbone of most agricultural endeavours throughout Canada and particularly in Norfolk County.

Yet the supply of labour is a chronic concern of farmers.

Locally, farmers have come to rely on foreign workers to harvest crops, but as the current COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically illustrat-

ed, even that source is tenuous. But there is a source of labour which has been under-utilized, said Ingrid Muschta, Diversity and Inclusion Specialist with the Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN).

According to Statistics Canada, 22 per cent of Canadians identify as having a disability. In Ontario that amounts to 3.1 million people.

In response, a new initiative dubbed The Skills2Sector Workforce Development Project has been launched supported by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), led by ODEN and funded by the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Mushka acknowledged that job seekers with disabilities often face barriers to employment because of lingering myths and misunderstanding among employers about the skills, talent and abilities the disabled bring to the table.

She pointed out that 60 per cent of wheelchair users have post-secondary education and would be

valuable in the business aspects of agricultural operations.

Carol Greentree is the supervisor of the Norfolk Association for Community Living's JobLinks employment service program.

"They approached us because we understand agriculture," she said. "This is an opportunity to build jobs and support it."

"It's exciting."

The initiative Skills2Sector is designed to develop pathways and partnerships aimed at eliminating barriers to agricultural sector employment for people who have a disability. In turn, the program will help agricultural operators access to skilled and capable employees.

She said the program opens up a pool of jobs available to match with people.

Greentree said there was a recent local meeting with Ontario Federation of Agriculture representatives to explain the program and learn their needs.

The project recognizes there is a gap between the ag sector and the disability community which they hope to bridge through education, training and employment services

with the needs of people in the ag sector.

People with disabilities will have access to skills training, education and job specific demands and competencies. Farmers will have access to disability awareness training, opportunities to mentor those looking for work in agriculture and the opportunity to hire proficient workers and business support from local employment service providers.


"There are so many jobs based on agriculture," Greentree said, citing not only field work, but work in greenhouses, retail outlets and wineries.

"One of our biggest challenges is the diversity in agriculture," she said.

Like most businesses, employers look for skilled, motivated, reliable and dependable workers.

"We look for that too," Greentree said.

To find out more about participating in Skills2Sector as an employer helping create a pipeline of locally sourced talent for the needs of farm business visit odenetwork.com/resources/skills2sector



Canada's FARM LABOUR deficit is expected to DOUBLE by 2029 to 123,000 workers or 1 in 3 jobs

Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council. How Labour Changes Will Shape the Future of Agriculture. Agriculture Forecast to 2029. Aug 2019.



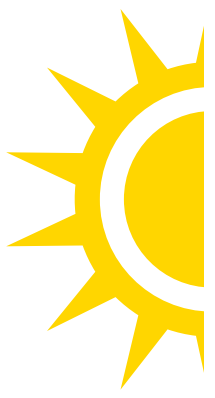
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	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">2013 JD S660</p> <p>ENG HRS: 1,766 SEP HRS: 1,153 Corn/Bean / PRWD / Chopper / Premium Cab / HID Lighting Package / AutoTrac Ready / Single front tires. Well looked after unit.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">\$264,900</p>		<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">2009 JD 9870 STS</p> <p>ENG HRS: 3819 SEP HRS: 2455 Very clean unit. New Michelin drive tires. Must see unit!</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">\$135,000</p>
	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">2012 JOHN DEERE S680</p> <p>ENG HRS: 2522 SEP HRS: 1392 Corn/Bean • PRWD • Duals • Chopper • Lateral Tilt</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">\$234,900</p>		<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">2014 JOHN DEERE 1990</p> <p>Local trade nice clean unit one owner. Comes with fill auger. 40ft</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">\$155,000</p>
	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">2020 BRENT V1000</p> <p>New auger design that's more operator friendly. 2 green units in stock</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">CALL FOR \$</p>		<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">2016 JD 469SS</p> <p>Bale Count: 2576, Mega Wide, Both Twine and Surface Wrap PTO: 1000</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">\$52,000</p>
	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">2013 JD 469SS</p> <p>Mega Wide • 4ft Twine & Surface Wrap • PTO 540 • 1.5l-16.1 10 ply tires • Bale push bar</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">\$30,000</p>		<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">2008 JOHN DEERE 630</p> <p>Urethane conditioner • 540 rpm pto • Ball-Joint Hitch • 31l x 13.5 tires</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">\$21,000</p>
	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">JOHN DEERE 1518</p> <p>15 Ft • Wing-Fold • Safety Chains • Dual Suction Blades Rotary Cutter</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">\$12,900</p>		<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">2014 JD 6150M</p> <p>ENG HRS: 998 CAB, 540/100 PTO, 150 HP, Very Nice Tractor!</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">\$139,999</p>
	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">2015 JD 6150M</p> <p>ENG HRS: 4297 150 HP, DELUXE CAB, Q66 ALO LOADER</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">\$119,000</p>		<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">VÄDERSTAD 525 - 2017 DEMO UNIT</p> <p>17.5 foot, Must have spring/fall tool</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">\$68,999</p>
	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">2014 JD 9360R</p> <p>ENG HRS: 1074 Power Shift / Duals / Guidance-ready PTO-1000</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">\$299,000</p>	<p style="font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold; color: green;">WJHeaslip.com</p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">Quality Commitment</p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">1-800-493-5001 • 905-779-3467</p>	



Norfolk Exotics brings a piece of sunny south home

Agave, pineapple, Elephants Ear – one may confuse Norfolk Exotics for a great place to stop for a bite to eat.

James Rollo has always loved the beach. Every opportunity he and his wife Alycia have, they vacation somewhere hot, somewhere tropical. A few years ago, to bring the beach to the family home, James purchased an exotic plant for his backyard. This purchase had him question the idea of whether or not a market existed for exotic plants right here in Norfolk County.

After finding a local supplier who guaranteed James wholesale pricing if he could sell 10 trees, James took orders for over 100 in just one day. This was a pretty good indication a market existed.

“It was hard to know if it would take off from there but it has,” James said. “I like to work on websites so that’s what I’ve concentrated on over the past few years.”

Although the business started in 2018 out of James’ home, last season he knew he needed more space so he approached Eising Greenhouses and Garden Centre. It’s been a good partnership for both businesses as customers can see what they are ordering from James’ website, and while they are there they can shop all that the greenhouse has to offer as well.

Everyone loves being near tropical plants. They can turn your home into a real oasis

This season over 35 species of exotic plants were brought to Norfolk County from Southern Florida and sold out. Deliveries typically begin

around May 24, and the season concludes around the middle of July. While COVID-19 slowed many operations this spring and summer James said surprisingly the only one hiccup was getting the exotics over the border. Regardless, everything was on time to help bring a bit of paradise to Canadian backyards.

James feels that the pandemic may have contributed to interest this season as Canadians realized they wouldn’t be able to head south or travel in general. While James has a roster of local customers, many are from the Toronto area and this year he shipped into British Columbia and Prince Edward Island.

“People weren’t travelling this year so I think they spent a little more money, and the money they would normally spend travelling, to make their backyard more enjoyable and nicer than ever,” he said. “Everyone loves being near tropical plants. Obviously it’s not normal for us here in Canada to be around them, but we do love how they look because they can turn your home into a real oasis.”

Aesthetics isn’t the only draw as James is quick to point out that his best seller is the edible pineapple plant. There’s nothing like a refreshing piece of fresh pineapple on a hot day -- sales of over 200 pineapple plants by the end of March prove it.

While pineapple is the best seller, when asked which plant is his favourite, James says it is hands down the Bottle Palm.

Please turn to page A17 →



James Rollo and his son Jack stand next to Christmas Palms. Rollo has been operating Norfolk Exotics since 2018, and the idea of bringing exotic plants to Norfolk County backyards is growing in popularity. — Contributed photo



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Happier chickens result in happier farmers

Efforts to improve animal welfare are paying off for a local chicken farmer.

Braydon Olszowka and his family operate a traditional poultry broiler operation outside Delhi. To understand where they are today with the latest in poultry technology, it's necessary to look back at the family history in the industry.



From left, Ashton, Harrison, Rhonda and Braydon stand inside the new single-story tunnel barn built by the family. It will hold 14,800 chickens.

Frank Olszowka, Braydon's grandfather, started the family in poultry farming.

"We were a traditional tobacco farming family," Braydon said. "In 1980, he bought his first chicken operation in the Waterford area. He gradually added to the chicken operation. In the late 1990s, we were fully out of tobacco and into chickens."

Braydon didn't originally start in the family poultry business, but went to school for finance and accounting.

"As a result of connections, I worked for a turkey genetics company and travelled the world," he said.

His job with Hendrix Genetics started in logistics, but with knowledge of poultry he moved into

sales and production planning for farmers.

"I moved around quick when I was there," he said. "I knew the industry and could talk to people."

Five years ago, his grandfather had a stroke. At the time, Frank was actively managing the poultry operation with Braydon's mother Rhonda.

"Once he had a stroke, he couldn't be here on a daily basis," Braydon said. "Somebody had to come back and manage this."

His brothers Ashton and Harrison Lechowicz owned a barn with Braydon and looked after the chickens while he was away. His mother and grandfather had another couple of barns. When Braydon returned, they did a full business succession.

Braydon looked at the three farms, one of which was the original in the Waterford area. With the distance involved and the operational costs for an older barn, he found it made sense to amalgamate the operation at the two farms closer to Delhi.

As the president of the company, Braydon put into play a lot of what he learned while travelling the world and seeing other poultry operations.

Part of that was switching to a modular loading for transportation of the chickens from the barn to the truck. "The birds are handled one time before they're in the plant instead of multiple times."

Two new single-story barns were built. Braydon explained a two-story barn operates effectively, however it is a bigger challenge



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for ventilation. The new barn is tunnel ventilated.

"It's something you see in the south because they deal with intense periods of prolonged heat," he said.

The barn also has an insulated floor.

Upgrades were also made to the water treatment system, even though it met all the standards before. Treatment is used in the new system to lower the pH in the water, which helps the acidity in the

There hasn't been a big change in the quota base, however there are plans to build another barn with the goal of lowering the bird density in the barn.

"We're continually decreasing the bird density in the building," Braydon said. "Even before we built, we met all poultry and animal welfare guidelines. Once again, it's business. Lowering bird density decreases any bacterial pressure that may be present, allows for improved ventilation, and as a result

raised per crop. Each farm is slightly different, but there are around six crops per year with it taking 46 to 52 days to raise a bird.

"With the balanced feed diet we give, it has no reason not to perform like a human athlete on a balanced diet trying to achieve optimum growth," Braydon said. "It's a business for us but we do care about the animals."

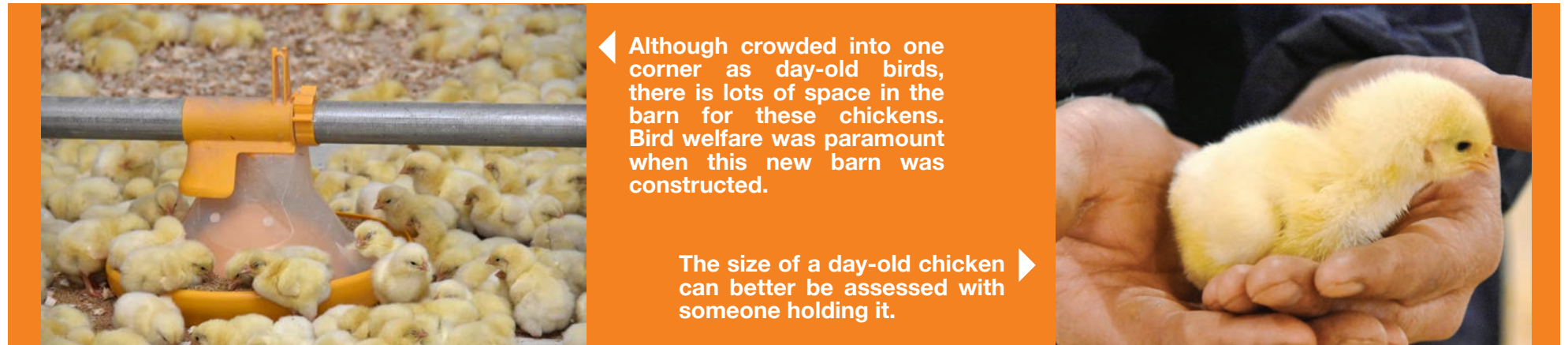
There are about 80 acres between the two farms combined. There is asparagus on one farm

at minimum to insulate the entire floor.

"That chicken stands on that floor," he said. "Imagine a chicken, a day-old chicken, standing on the floor. It will be more comfortable."

He said by pre-heating the building before the birds come in, insulation isn't needed. With the heated floor, the three inches of shavings will not allow the heat to rise.

The insulated floor also stays dry because there isn't condensa-



◀ Although crowded into one corner as day-old birds, there is lots of space in the barn for these chickens. Bird welfare was paramount when this new barn was constructed.

The size of a day-old chicken can better be assessed with someone holding it. ▶

bird's stomach and aids digestion. Chlorine is injected to keep the water nipples clear – just like in a home.

"With the genetics today, I feel you are missing out if you're not treating the water," Braydon said.

All these things combined result in an improvement in growth rates and better animal health.

birds become more comfortable and bird health goes up once again."

With better bird health, there are fewer problems.

"I will achieve the growth rates the bird is capable of genetically," Braydon said.

Between the two farms, there are roughly 130,000 chickens

and another 140 acres rented for cash crops.

All manure from the chicken operation is taken off site when the crop is changed. The barn is then cleaned out, disinfected and new shavings are put in.

Although there are two barns with heated floors, Braydon prefers

tion transferring into the litter.

Part of the plan is to switch from the older two-story barns to newer single-story buildings if the right opportunity presents itself. In the future, adding more birds are a possibility but only if another barn is built to keep the goal of the density at or under 2 kg/square-foot.

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Left to right: Dan & Jill Heeg and son Sawyer - Dan Acres Farms, Dirk & Hilda Heeg - Heeg Sunshine Farms, Ryan & Lexi Heeg - Riverside Dairy with agent Aaron Miedema.

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18,000 to 150,00 square feet.. 3 acres of greenhouse space

Nothing can brighten up a rainy, gloomy day better than flower therapy so when I headed off to Burford on just such a day, I had no idea how much 'therapy' I was in for. Just off the main road, neatly tucked away I discovered Slaman's Quality Flowers. I had no idea that I was walking into a 3 acre greenhouse operation that would take me from seed to flower all in one very large facility.

After World War II founder John Slaman emigrated from Holland to Canada with his parents and siblings bringing with them the famous "Dutch glass house green thumb" experience. Dad William and Mom Petronalla established the Echo Place Florist greenhouses in Brantford in 1954. John worked in the family business until 1969 when he set out on his own to build his

greenhouse in Burford. For John it was the ideal location for growing spray chrysanthemums, or poms, based on the sandy soil that offered him great access to ground water and good drainage.

He started his operation with 18,000 square feet of greenhouses and, at present, is at 150,000 sq. feet. It took several years to reach

its current size of 3 acres of internal product and was due to several additions over the years. As they grew in size, they also improved their technology with an automated blackout system and energy curtain. The plants require a temperature of 18 degrees C. year round and there are times when the plants require more light than others. They can add or take away light to offer ideal conditions with the use of these curtains. Their operation is fueled by natural gas and their hydro and heat is supplied by their own natural gas generator.

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with all of the modern technology it is still a labour intensive job as most of the work is done by hand

As technology in the field improved they installed the first central computer for environmental and irrigation control in 1985. Two years later marked a change in owners when John's eldest son Brian and youngest Mike embarked on a co-ownership. With this change also came a 37,000 sq. ft. of additional glass to accommodate the increased market demand. In 1990 they added lisianthus to their production as a seasonal crop. After a few years of seasonal growth, they decided to grow them year round so another addition of 45,000 sq. ft. was added.

Slaman admits that even with all of the modern technology it is still a labour intensive job as most of the work is done by hand. They have experts in all fields related to such a large greenhouse operation from propagation to planting to quality control for plant health. To control these factors they use a comprehensive biologicals program that uses natural predators to go after different pests and little traditional spraying to support a commitment to growing quality flowers using the best environmentally sustainable practices available.

It takes many hands to keep an operation this size running and running smoothly. Slaman's Greenhouse employs 12 full-time and 4 part-time adults, 4 Temporary Foreign Workers from Mexico who live on site and work 11 months of the year as well a few part-time students who work weekends and summer holidays. They all have their areas of expertise and are instrumental in helping to keep the operation run smoothly.

With the new Millenium came more changes with the reconstruction of the propagation

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John, Brian and Theo Slaman examine their mom crop

area as well as improvements to both the warehouse and cooler systems. In 2002, with a focus on energy efficiencies, a hot water storage tank and central CO2 distribution system was built. All of these improvements have helped them to build over the years and to insure that customers are supplied with quality flowers while improving their energy efficiency and reducing their carbon footprint. In 2012 Brian Slaman took sole ownership of Slamans' Greenhouse and has been successfully running the company with help from his children and the knowledgeable and hard working staff.

Slaman's Quality Flowers is not open to the public for sales.

About 25% of their product is sold through the Toronto and Montreal flower auctions with the balance sold directly to wholesale and retail store customers. Customers can request Slaman flowers at your local Florist by asking for them by their brand name as every bunch of flowers is sleeved with the logo 'Slamans Quality Flowers' so customers can easily identify the superior Ontario grown quality flowers. Slamans is a proud member of the Canadian Floriculture Industry Association flowerscanadagrowers.com. If you would like more information about John Slaman Greenhouses you can contact their sales and marketing team at sales@slaman.ca.

Norfolk Exotics...

Continued from page A11

"It just has a really cool look to it and it's definitely not something you see very often," he explained. "They are really big around eight to ten feet tall and look really tropical."

Online, consumers have a choice of plants in all sizes, with some palms reaching over 30 feet tall. Size doesn't always indicate price on exotics either as James says he's amazed at how many people are spending upwards of \$700 on a two-foot plant.

The big question when considering the purchase of an exotic is where does it go once our cooler climate sets in? Most exotic species must be kept in temperatures above five or six degrees Celsius.

"Most people bring their plants indoors for the winter or into a heated shop," James explained. "The ones you can't bring in, own-

ers build boxes around the plant to protect it because there are only a few varieties that can actually survive a Canadian winter."

As the long dark days of winter set in, James will keep things bright by working on his website and preparing for next season when he hopes to be shipping right across Canada. While Norfolk Exotics began as a hobby business, James can see it is quickly growing into a full-time job.

"I enjoy my full-time career as a power engineer at Imperial Oil but it will mean some full-time work for some other people," he said. "I know we can do this year round."

So when the Canadian winter keeps you indoors, and as you grow tired of snow and cold, head over to norfolkexotics.com and plan for sunnier, hotter days.

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Hodge looks to hazelnuts as an opportunity to diversify

A ten-acre hazelnut planting furthers Harley-area cash cropper Kevin Hodge's policy of agricultural diversification.

"Surely to heaven everything can't be bad at the same time," he explained with a laugh.

Hazelnuts were added to a 'couple of thousand acre' mix including corn, rye and soy, kidney and white beans beginning in 2018 and continuing through the following two years. Hodge's interest was piqued at a meeting roughly a decade ago and subsequent Ontario Hazelnut Association symposiums in Brantford.

"Trying to diversify the farm and trying to do something different," he explained, adding it might open the door back to smaller rather than larger scale operations at some point.

Hodge elected to go with a 'double density' planting via post-

hole digger, nine feet apart on 18-foot rows. Theoretically, hazelnut trees produce at 50 per cent in five years and are mature in ten when the 'double' trees are replanted in order to make a consistent 18-by-18 grid.

"Hopefully I can get production quicker," Hodge explained of the double density concept which has translated into 2,700 trees on tiled sandy or black loam soil behind the house on his home farm.

'There is no perfect time,' for a cash cropper to plant trees says Hodge, although if it wasn't for a busier fall harvest season he might lean toward then when the ground warmer. Either

Trying to diversify the farm and trying to do something different



Kevin Hodge planted hazelnuts in order to diversify his operation.

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way, young trees need to be well watered he believes, servicing his with a drip irrigation system. Dry weather during his first year of planting presented a challenge, says Hodge.

"You can't let them go dry."

Three Oregon varieties: Yamhill, Gamma and Jefferson anchor his orchard with additional Ontario pollinator varieties including Matt, Cheryl, Gene and Northern Blaze.

"Hopefully they have more resistance to EFB (Easter Filbert Blight) than the Oregons."

EFB is a concern, showing up on 'two or three' trees last year, which beyond his spraying specifically for, Hodge pruned and destroyed.

"That's a worrisome sign," he said of an issue which can be devastating. "Hopefully I can keep it under control, or else - welcome to farming."

Hazelnuts are also susceptible to insects such as gypsy moths and other diseases.

"A spray program is pretty important."

Hodge's marketing plan is a 'bit of a work in progress', given in part he's a ways from measurable production. However, conceptually he would prefer some form of retail option over wholesale.

"Having worked in the grain business long enough I just know how it ends. Farmers are always good at producing a product, never good at marketing, and it's always in between where the higher margin is made, in between the farmer and the consumer."

Building bins on his property to process and store corn has allowed Hodge to sell at a better margin, enhancing his financial return. In the same way he'd like to take control of hazelnut marketing through some form of value-added 'local food' retail option.

"Maybe people will be willing to pay a little bit extra to get that local freshness and quality, and also make this a little more viable for us."




Hodge's learning curve has been sharp over the past three years, but he has grown comfortable enough at this point for the goal of a few additional acres per year.

"I'd like to make it a business, not so much a hobby, put it that way. Ten acres is reasonable, but I'd like to see it on a larger scale just to better utilize the equipment."

There are challenges, but again believes Hodge, that's farming.

"No risk, no reward."

And in contrast to corn and beans for example, enjoying solid prices due to an Asian market boost - "China is a hungry mouth," - the hazelnut market can't be flooded year to year by farmers pivoting production on an annual basis.

"Realistically, it's seven to ten years out. You can't have a crop the next year, it's just a longer establishment time." 



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Oxford resident embraces two-generation environmental, educational opportunity



Off-the-grid living is not for or accessible to everyone. But it has been a positive learning curve and lifestyle choice for Oxford resident Lindsay Tribe (centre), through the consultive support of Craig Cook (left) and Al Towers (right).



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Off-the-grid solar living becoming increasingly accessible

Living off the grid is certainly not for everyone.

But it is becoming increasingly accessible for those who are interested in a sustainable, environmentally-friendly option.

"If you can, why wouldn't you consider it?" asked Lindsay Tribe rhetorically.

The Oxford County resident took the plunge in conjunction with development of a hazelnut orchard. The distance of its associated residence from existing power lines and the potential cost of connecting to Hydro One transmission opened the door to discussion on a stand-alone option.

It was furthered by access to an inexpensive family labour source and the supportive, consultative expertise of Craig Cook and Al Towers. The latter are connected geographically and philosophically through Clear Creek-area off-the-grid earthship residential living.

Earthships are the brainchild of visionary architect Michael Reynolds, so named because like a ship upon the ocean, they are essentially self-sustaining entities. In very general terms earthships are bermed structures with exterior walls formed of discarded tires pounded full of earth into the rough equivalent of highly-insulated building blocks. They feature 60-degree-angled south-facing windows aligned perpendicular to the winter solstice which absorb the sun's energy into interior thermal mass during the day, releasing it gradually into an environment requiring very little supplemental heat. Rainwater is harvested, stored and recycled and interior walls traditionally feature either recycled bottles or cans.

Craig and wife Connie's journey toward sustainable living began by supplementing grid connectivity with homemade wind turbines at their previous residence near Cornell. They fully embraced environmental friendliness and early retirement in part through construction of their 3,000-square-foot earthship at a material cost of \$70,000 and the additional financial savings off-the-grid living represents. Their journey is shared on the website: windchasers.ca.



Towers and wife Sally live up the road a kilometre or so in their own version of an earthship, Towers possessing complementary electrical expertise. Both couples supply their full hydro needs with solar-powered off-the-grid systems. Tribe's components were sourced through Craig Cook, and his and Towers' combined support was invaluable.

Her system begins with 16 south-facing 400-watt solar panels mounted on a wooden frame anchored by pressure-treated 6-by-6-inch posts Cook feels are more secure than pre-fabricated metal options. The panels are connected in series through a combiner box and the resultant DC power transmitted via an underground cable into an inverter, located within a dedicated inside room. Power passes through a charge controller which displays and logs generation performance and on through the inverter to a 48-volt battery bank, still as DC power. It is stored there and accessed back through the inverter again for conversion to AC, and onward via another buried cable into the residence's electrical panel.

A generator stands by as insurance in case of low solar generation. It's linked to come on automatically, both powering the house's immediate demand and charging the batteries when levels fall to a defined point, ensuring a consistently-available power supply, day or night.

The Cooks' earliest off-the-grid forays involved multiple components and a freezer full of batteries linked with flattened copper pipe, a combination one might approach with a mixture of bewilderment and caution. Technology has advanced significantly however in the

past couple of decades, resulting in higher performance efficiencies and hugely-simplified combined components. It is not as easy as putting together a lego kit, but far more attainable than historically.

Costs have fallen to the point it was a financially competitive, even advantageous alternative in Tribe's circumstances. The initial outlay is significant, but if one is able to do work oneself, monthly hydro bill savings can represent an ROI of between five and ten per cent, decent performance compared to many investment options. Generator fuel and system maintenance

are required including regular battery fluid level monitoring and the necessity of sweeping snow off solar panels following a storm. There definitely was also a sense of

heading into uncharted waters, although the Cooks' and Towers' shared demonstrated experience was helpful encouragement.

Cost was a factor for Tribe, but so too was the chance to take advantage of advancing technology. She has learned the difference between good and poor generating days as well as the irony that winter, the highest consumption due to heating requirements, also features the shortest days and solar production. But she has also found satisfaction in the 'magic' of solar power generation, electrical independence and the opportunity to not only embrace a more sustainable option lowering her family's environmental impact, but exposing her children and their contemporaries to alternative possibility.

"It has been a learning curve," she summed up. "But I couldn't be happier." 🌱

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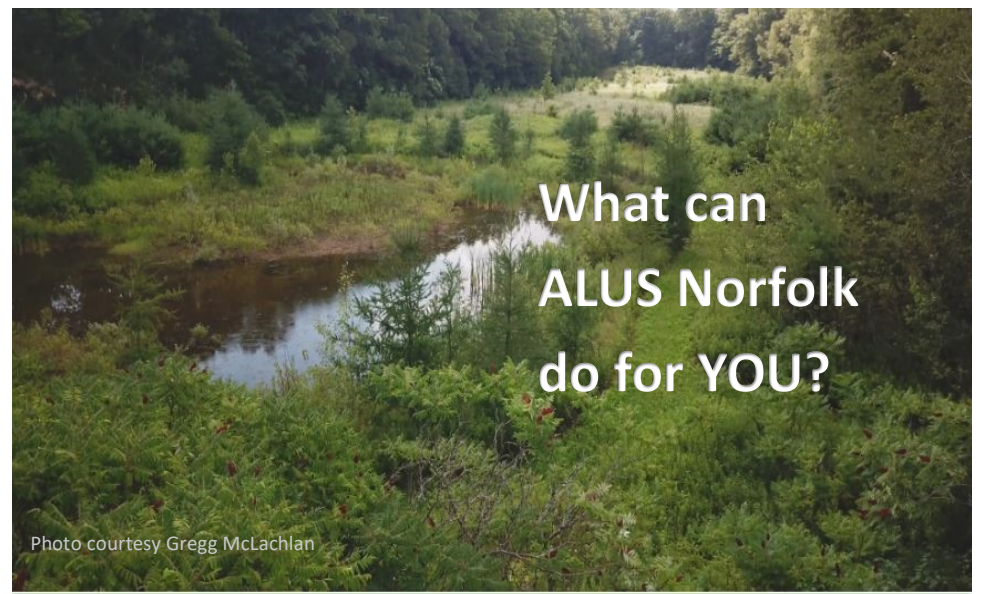


Photo courtesy Gregg McLachlan

What can ALUS Norfolk do for YOU?

ALUS Norfolk is committed to reducing phosphorous runoff into Lake Erie through the Great Lakes Protection Initiative, focusing on Big Creek in Norfolk County. ALUS Norfolk can help you, as an agricultural producer, establish projects that reduce phosphorous. **Please contact us for more information: (519) 420-8127 or by email at alusnorfolk@alus.ca.**

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Funding for projects within the Big Creek area is provided in part by Environment and Climate Change Canada through the Great Lakes Protection Initiative.



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OFA Director pushing for quality rural Ontario broadband capability

Quaker settlers in Ontario were reputed to follow rows of walnut trees as an indicator of good soil and cropping potential. Navigable waterways and quality roads have been other conduits to rural prosperity.

Today, tiny strands of plastic or glass fibres facilitating the rapid flow of data resulting in quality bandwidth for adequate worldwide connectivity represent a vital corridor to financial success many rural areas simply don't have access to.

"It's really critical during this COVID pandemic that your internet works well," emphasized Larry Davis, Ontario Federation of Agriculture Provincial Director for Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk. "And Haldimand and Norfolk seem to be two areas that have really poor access."

Davis knows of what he speaks. His family has access taxed by the demands of day-to-day requirements, farm security and a son relegated to online university education by COVID-19 institutional restrictions. Resultantly, Davis called a major Canadian communications company to inquire about the cost for a potential upgrade in speed, only to be informed they did not service his area.

"We don't even have an option," said Davis, assessing his current service as 'OK, if not the best.'

"And when you get down into Haldimand and Norfolk, there's areas where it's not even OK."

COVID has exacerbated an existing problem. In a world of lockdown and curbside shopping, farmers, like other consumers are forced to go online to check on product availability as well as placing orders, a two-way street for those looking to market directly.

"It's all about connecting rural Ontario to our suppliers and our markets," said Davis. "If that's not available to all of Ontario, rural Ontario is at a big disadvantage."

A lot of the services are directly related to having quality internet. Home-based education means many rural families are struggling to find adequate bandwidth for operational functionality. The global pandemic has also driven an exponential rise in the home office. Functions including Zoom calls can be a problem says Davis, alluding to compatriots losing out on visuals including human interaction, spreadsheets and graphics.

"They have to shut off their video in order for their voice to carry over the internet."

The Norfolk Federation of Agriculture has been frustrated in its efforts to host Zoom meetings says Davis, but the issue goes well beyond in-county or county-to-county.

"We are trying to communicate with the world."

Hosting the Ontario Agriculture Conference online is feasible, but would require upwards of 700 individuals on a Zoom platform.

"And our internet is the hold-back," says Davis.

It's understandable urban areas with far more clients considerably closer are attractive to providers. To offset this, government financial subsidization has been pledged toward the goal of 98 per cent connectivity by 2026 and 100 per cent by 2030, but as Davis points out, that's a time period longer than it takes to get a university degree.

"We need that commitment of money and commitment of companies to get this work done, to go that final mile."



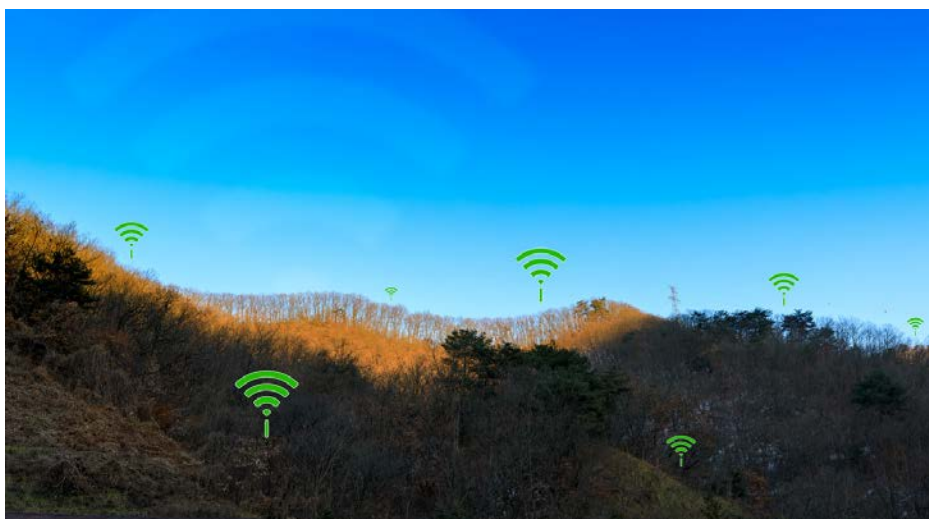
Larry Davis

It's critical says Davis, funding goes not to bureaucratic organization, rather physical infrastructure.

"Implements to the ground financial support to good use so it happens."


There has been considerable talk and governments have made a commitment to quality rural broadband Davis concluded. But in his opinion the for time talk is at an end and the time to complete a job crucial to rural Ontario competitiveness and prosperity, has arrived.

"It's all about pressure from the people and pressure from rural Ontario to keep the government's toes to the fire." 🌿



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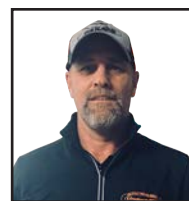
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PRESS RELEASE

D&W Group Incorporated announces its Simcoe location, Norfolk Tractor, will convert to a stand-alone Kubota Canada Dealership

The owners of the D&W Group Inc., a four-store agricultural and construction equipment dealer complex located in south-central Ontario, announced today the conversion of their

Norfolk Tractor Now

facility in Simcoe Ontario, Norfolk Tractor, from a major multi-line operation to one dedicated to the exclusive sale and service of Kubota products.

Norfolk Tractor has been successfully representing Kubota for more than 27 years and this move represents a logical progression in bringing to valued customers a focused dedication to satisfying their needs. By specializing in Kubota sales and service the staff of Norfolk Tractor will be better able to serve all aspects of the Kubota experience. The owners of D&W Group Inc. are very excited about this change and are confident it will greatly enhance the position of the company for years to come by forging a stronger bond between Norfolk Tractor, Kubota and customers.

The conversion will take place by the end of 2021 but customers will see building and other changes begin happening immediately. Company owners understand the need for continuity so it is important to stress that most of the employees at Norfolk Tractor will remain in place once the conversion is completed.

The product lines that will no longer be sold from Norfolk Tractor are the subject of a separate press release.



Norfolk Tractor After Renovation

FARMS

NORFOLK COUNTY - ONTARIO'S GARDEN

SECTION B / ISSUE 16 / WINTER 2021

Norfolk potato production

Norfolk County has the justifiable reputation as "Ontario's Garden." The diversity of fruit and vegetables grown locally is truly impressive.



Potato production, however, has largely gone unnoticed although the large acreage crop was one of the first to take advantage of the land base

freed up by decline of the tobacco growing industry.

According to Kevin Brubaker, general manager of the Ontario Potato Board, 20 to 25

producers grow about 4,000 acres in Norfolk, making it one of the most productive potato growing areas in the province.

"The sandy soils in the area contribute to these growers producing some of the highest quality potatoes in the province," he said.

In addition, local growers produce some of the earliest potatoes to go to market.

"Without the growers in this area, supply of Ontario fresh market potatoes throughout July and August would be limited," Brubaker said.



Please turn to page B2 →

Vanessa Currie

Photo credit Cam Shaw

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Norfolk potato production

Continued from page B1

Typically, growers begin harvest in mid-July and market the crop through October. Production is mostly round white, yellow and red varieties for the fresh and process (chip) markets. Most of the product is for retail sales within Ontario, although some growers ship to the United States.

Kevin Maclsaac, general manager of the United Potato Growers based in Prince Edward Island and separate from the Ontario Potato Board, said they were formed in 2006 to match supply and demand for growers across Canada.

Maclsaac said 2020 potato plantings in Ontario amounted to 36,500 acres, up 7.3 percent from last year. According to the most recent Statistics Canada survey, total acreage across Canada is 363,370 acres. Potato production in Ontario was up 12.1 per cent.

Maclsaac attributed the increased production of 12.1 per cent in Ontario this year to increased demand for chip potatoes.

"People are buying more comfort food during the pandemic," he said.

He added consumption of table potatoes is up as people are staying home during the pandemic rather than eating out.

Ontario potato production is almost equally split between table potatoes and the chip market.

Labour is important but growers are mechanized for planting and harvesting. Maclsaac added

People are buying more comfort food during the pandemic

that potato growing requires good management in terms of disease and pest control.

A potato research program at the University of Guelph is currently undertaking a project at their Simcoe Research Station to reduce the severity of PED (potato early dying) and increase potato productivity and profitability in Canada.

Vanessa Currie and project leader Dr. Katerina Jordan report that the first year of the three-year study had limited success due to delays caused by COVID-19 re-

strictions in the spring. The study is looking at the effects of different soil treatments.

"We expect to have valuable results in the coming seasons and look forward to sharing them with the industry," Currie said.

Maclsaac said a new market has developed for early small potatoes.

Traditionally, growers look for potatoes of about two inches. Smaller potatoes were usually discarded. But now there is a demand for small unpeeled "petite" potatoes sold at a premium price.

"In a year with difficult circumstances to gather data as a result of COVID-19, the diligence of both Statistics Canada to conduct the (potato) survey and the growers who took the time to respond to it is very much appreciated," Maclsaac said.



Doctor Katarina Jordan



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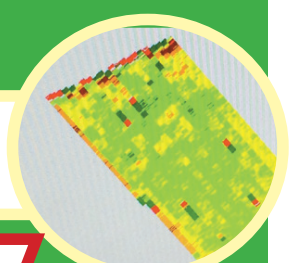
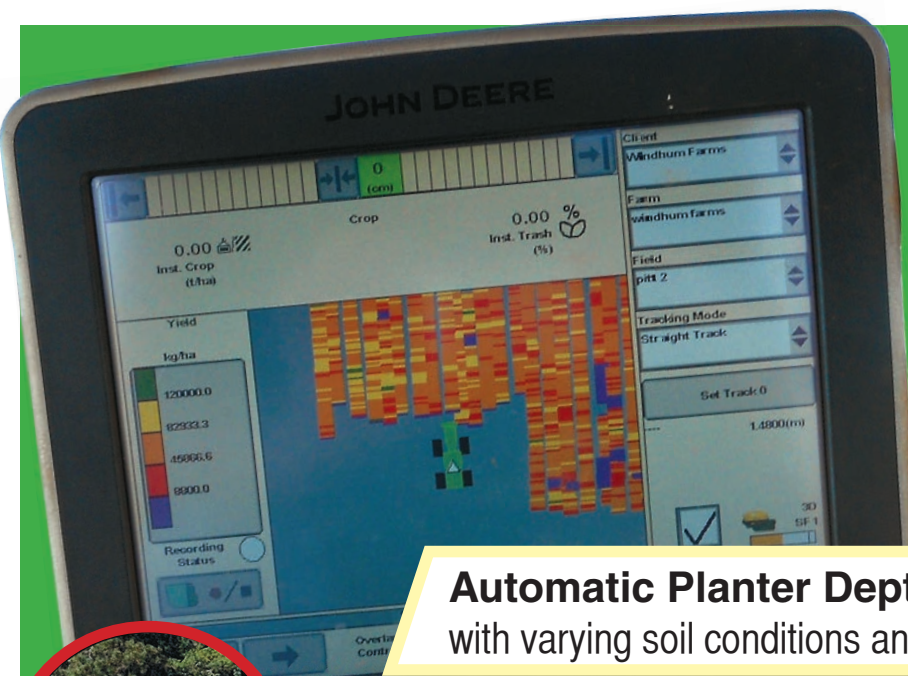
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Labour saving potato harvester

Like most farmers, labour is a constant concern for potato growers.

Even though the large acreage crop has been mechanized, skilled labour and equipment is required to run their harvesting operation.



“Labour is hard to come by,” acknowledged Blair Cobb, service manager for HJV Equipment, based in Prince Edward Island.

HJV is a dealership for Grimme, a German-made self-propelled potato harvester popular in Europe.

The Grimme is self-propelled and requires only one operator to run the four-row harvester which is easy to maneuver with its fully hydraulic wheeled chassis. It also has a seven-ton bunker allowing for non-stop harvesting operation due to a reversible bunker web.

“A selling point of this harvester over a conventional harvester that you tow behind, is it’s just one operator and one machine and then the trucks just come to the field and wait for the harvester to fill its own hopper,” said Cobb.

With a self-propelled harvester, it doesn’t need to be pulled behind a tractor and doesn’t require a windrower operating in the field. Nor is a truck running next to the harvester to collect the spuds required.

Cobb added the self-propelled harvester can work in wetter conditions than a standard harvester because conventional tow behind harvesters requires a truck behind them at all times.

A couple of PEI growers who promoted the self-propelled harvesters said the reduced labour and machines made a big difference during harvest last year.

“I suppose (the Grimme) was really good,” said Robin Steijn. “I think it did what we wanted it to do.”

First introduced in Europe about 20 years ago, self-propelled harvesters are popular there and are garnering interest in the Atlantic provinces, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Investment in the self-propelled harvester is viable for operations of 400 to 500 acres. The average potato farm is 700 to 800 acres or more. 🌱



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Growing potatoes and watching for rattlesnakes

The sign not far from Norfolk Potato Company says Rattlesnake Harbour, even though there is no water or rattlesnakes. There are, however, lots and lots of potatoes.

Gerdon Broekstra and his wife Diane started Norfolk Potato Company on the edge of the former Windham Township village in 2016.

“My wife and I got married and wanted to start a small farm so we bought the old Dennis

Horseradish farm and started growing potatoes,” Gerdon said.

The farm is only 35 acres, but with rented land nearby, they have 100 acres in the ground.

Potatoes were the crop of choice for the young couple because Diane’s family has experience with the crop.

“They grew potatoes and we grew potatoes,” Gerdon said. “We started growing together, packing and sales. Then they wanted to downsize so they went back working for themselves and selling to only a few customers. We up-scaled our operation.

Most of Norfolk Potato Company’s product goes to table stock – be that in restaurants or homes – not to processors. The main business is on the food service side. Potatoes for this market are the largest ones and packed in 50-pound bags. Smaller potatoes go in 10-pound bags, often for local food markets in a non-COVID world.

Different varieties of white, red and yellow potatoes are grown.

“In Norfolk, our advantage is we can grow early so we can try and be the first to market with potatoes,” Gerdon said.

One of the goals is to have a good-looking potato as the end product.

“We try to grow as nice as possible whereas the potatoes for the chip industry don’t have to be a nice looking potato because they all get sliced,” he explained.

In the beginning, harvest was done with a harvester that required people to ride on it and grade on the machine. Since then, a switch to a more automated harvester means grading is no longer done in the field.



Gerdon Broekstra and his wife Diane started Norfolk Potato Company in Rattlesnake Harbour in 2016. Since then they have grown the company substantially, growing 100 acres of potatoes.



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“All grading and packing is done at the barn,” Gerdon said. “We just figure we’re more efficient if we grade at the barn. We grade after they go through the washline.”

The washline is automated, but grading is now done by humans with eight people on the grading line. The potatoes go across rollers that turn each potato so all sides can be seen by the graders.

In Norfolk, our advantage is we can grow early so we can try and be the first to market with potatoes.

“They pick off the bad-looking ones so if they’re green or cut by the harvester,” he said, saying size is not a criteria. Potatoes smaller than those for the 10-pound bags are either B size or minis. These go in baskets or boxes and are sold to a wholesaler.

Any bad potatoes are removed and sold to a feedlot for cows.

The restaurant market is one developed by Norfolk Potato Company from Gerdon visiting local restaurants and promising consistency and local product. During the summer and into fall, he only digs potatoes for the orders he has so the potatoes aren’t stored too long. When his local potatoes are sold for the season, he still procures potatoes from other provinces to keep his customers supplied.

Besides potatoes, the other crop the Broekstras grow is rye for rotation.

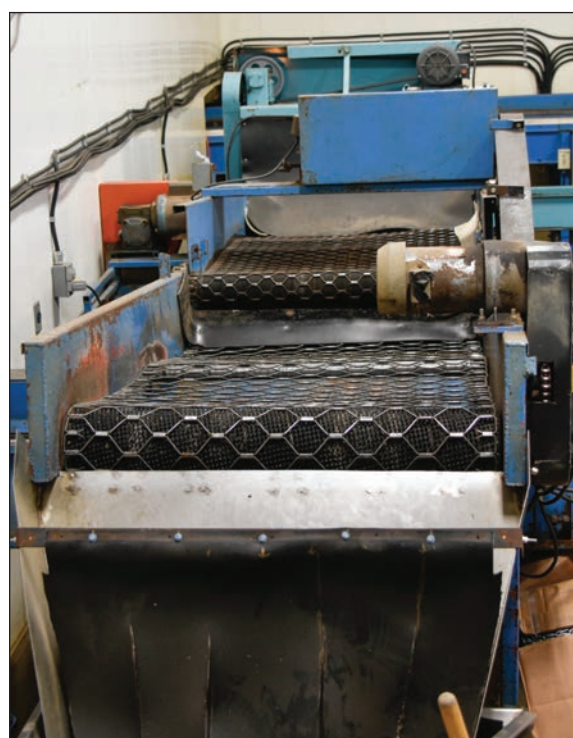
“The rye is nice since we can plant it right after harvest,” Gerdon said. “It holds our sandy soil together here in Norfolk. It gets established before winter to limit blowing.”

One value-added product available for restaurants is ready-peeled potatoes and pre-cut fresh French fries and home fries. More information is available on the company web site at www.nopoco.ca

And not surprisingly, with all his time in the field, he has never seen a rattlesnake. 🌱



The machine for barring 10-pound bags still requires human assistance to get the final product



This conveyor is part of a system that washes the potatoes and sorts them according to size. Human eyes are the quality control that keeps the product consistent.

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PRESS RELEASE

Growing Potatoes is one-part art and one-part science



An early blight control trial of Luna Tranquility® conducted by Bayer. This 'Norland' variety was naturally infected with the early blight pathogen (*Alternaria solani*).

Photo Source: Dr. Piara S. Bains, Agri-Research Ltd., Edmonton



An early blight control trial conducted by Bayer. The 'Norland' variety treated with 600mL/ha of Luna Tranquility®.

Photo Source: Dr. Piara S. Bains, Agri-Research Ltd., Edmonton

Farmers in Norfolk County know that growing potatoes is one-part art, one-part science and a lot of hard work. The job isn't easy, and potato growers need all the support they can get.

Bayer's family of potato products are there to help – with some new and some tried and trusted products that can empower your crop to reach its full potential.

For those in Norfolk County, Velum® Prime nematicide can be an important tool in your potato line-up. With a unique mode of action for nem-

atode control, it can help support the crop's yield potential. Velum Prime also controls powdery mildew and suppresses early blight and black dot.

Another familiar name is Ernesto® Silver, a fungicide seed-piece treatment that helps get your crop off to the best possible start by protecting your potato seed-pieces from seed and soil-borne diseases. With its distinct red formulation, you get protection you can see.

Last but certainly not least, you can rely on Luna Tranquility® fungicide to help keep your potatoes looking great throughout the season. With two active ingredients (fluopyram Group 7 and pyrimethanil Group 9), Luna

Tranquility offers proven, protection against early blight, brown leaf spot, white mould and black dot.

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Gary Godelie's 'have potatoes, will travel' approach pays off through farmers markets

Gary Godelie's transition from traditional tobacco farming to a 'have potatoes, will travel' approach to farmer's markets has given the Otterville-area producer an expanded respect for the contemporary consumer.

"There are a lot of good people out there," said Godelie. "And they will be dedicated to you if they reach that comfort level with you."

The Godelie family's entry into vegetable production began in the early 1990s with a roadside sweet corn stand, supporting Gary and wife Blanche's children through high school and beyond. But it was a downturn in the tobacco industry which pushed them into more regular production.

"Eventually we saw the need to get serious," said Gary.

His father had grown potatoes and they would prove the entry point, burlaps bags sold locally

as well as eventually table potatoes and 'little creamers' for that market. The last year Godelie grew tobacco, he was down to just 15 acres in conjunction with potatoes and sweet corn.

"We were forced to do that, we had no other choice."

His entry into farmer's markets came following an information session in Toronto, and the opportunity to join 'My Picks' markets, designed for farmers only.

"I liked that idea," said Godelie, who signed up for two. Their 3 p.m.-7 p.m. operating window allows fresh produce picked and delivered to the consumer that day.

Godelie's first market was an eye-opening experience, inundated by a steady stream of customers hunting farm-fresh strawberries. His cashbox float was quickly overwhelmed, and Godelie asked a chatty, older gentleman who had attached himself to his left ear, if he'd get change for him, handing the virtual stranger cash and walking him walk away.

Godelie was questioning himself after the gentleman left and strawberry-hungry customers continued to press forward.

"I thought uh-oh, there's a hundred bucks gone. But it wasn't long, and there he was with my change for me," Godelie recalled, faith in the essential goodness of human nature reinforced.

You are selling, but you are also there to be able to get to spend a few minutes, say hello, just get to know people. The product is utmost, but it's important to build these relationships and friendships and interact with each other

Heading home that evening after 'selling out in no time flat,' Godelie was 'whistling Dixie.'

"I never would have dreamt it would have gone like that. However, after years of experience, I've come to realize there are many variables in markets and some disappointments."

Farmers markets are certainly not a licence to print money. However lessons learned through intimate farmer-to-consumer interaction are instructive for an agricultural industry striving to bridge a rural/urban gap of potential misunderstanding.

"You are right face to face with customers," says Godelie. "It's all marketing, right?" he added. "You've got to put that extra effort into it."

To be clear, Godelie is fully supportive and respectful of larger agricultural operations required to feed the massive appetite of big-box grocery outlets.

"You need a lot of product to keep the shelves full," he said. "We need those farmers too."

"They're not factory farms, they're just larger farms. They are doing things right too with regard to safety and quality. It's just different marketing."

The farmer's market approach is one that cannot feed the masses Godelie concedes.

"But there is a spot for us."

Consumer curiosity in who is producing their food and how they are doing so is paramount.

"There is always questions being asked," says Godelie, who sees them not as a challenge, but as an opportunity not only to enhance communication and understanding, but engage in crucial relationship-building.

"You are selling, but you are also there to be able to get to spend a few minutes, say hello, just get to know people. The product is utmost, but it's important to build these relationships and friendships and interact with each other."



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“Saying ‘Hi, how’s it going’ - not just throwing the product at the person and taking their money.”

If there is a complaint, the farmer will be there to hear it and be able to deal with it the following week. Customers will also bring up concerns or perceived issues around GMOs and pesticides, for example. Answering from the platform of a farmer they have built a relationship with rather than an anonymous social media influencer is advantageous. Godelie is able to explain his position and opinion, finding the fact they have a certified on-farm safety program a definite plus.

“It’s important the customer feels comfortable you are not misleading them, what you say you are doing, you are doing.”

Godelie will confirm he uses pesticides, and outlines not only why, but the fact they are following best practices.

“Give them assurance we are doing things in a responsible way,” he explains, adding the fact he’s feeding his own family members and grandchildren the same produce he’s offering at the market. “I’m certainly not going to do anything foolish when I’m growing their food.”

Farmers markets operate on a tight budget, with the assistance of volunteers to operation and promote them says Godelie. More successful ones tend to emphasize the shopping experience aspect, adding activities like face-painting for kids or musical buskers to enhance a consumer outing.

“It’s a struggle, some can almost support themselves, most need a little help to keep the plate spinning.”

Provincial governmental support for farmer’s markets has been ‘pulled back’ says Godelie.

“That’s problematic, if anything they should be increasing support to ensure the success of farmer’s markets in Ontario,” he said, alluding to their role in not only promoting Ontario agriculture, but better farmer/consumer understanding.

“If we could do more of that stuff, the would be great.”

Godelie’s daughter Christine and son-in-law Jason D’Hulster are continuing the family tradition, including the on-farm outlet near Otterville and taking the business into the future.

“And that’s the way it should be.”

The farmer’s market experience is not for everyone Godelie says, but for a producer who is also a people person, able to not only interact with, but understand the needs of their customers, it can be both a profitable and positive two-way experience.

“First, they want good produce,” Godelie concluded. “But I think they also appreciate and respect the farmers.”



Otterville farmer Gary Godelie took his potatoes and other produce on the road, learning a number of valuable lessons in producer/consumer relations along the way.



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PRESS RELEASE

BA Miravis® Duo fungicide now registered on potatoes and specialty crops.

Previously registered in several vegetable crops, Miravis® Duo can now help potato growers safeguard quality and yield against early blight, in addition to several other costly diseases.

At the core of Miravis® Duo is ADEPIDYN® fungicide along with difenoconazole (Group 3), which provides an added layer of protection and built-in resistance management.

Depending on their geography, potato growers can expect to make multiple in-season applications of a fungicide specifically targeting early blight. With every application of Miravis® Duo, growers can also control brown spot while protecting against Botrytis and white mould. Ongoing changes to the use pattern of multi-site fungicides also means a shift from traditional foliar disease management. The broad-spectrum activity of Miravis® Duo helps fill this gap and is the only non-chlorothalonil fungicide on the potato market offering activity against Botrytis.



Photo taken in Saint-Laurent-de-l'île-d'Orléans, QC, in September 2020. Two applications of Miravis® Duo were applied versus two applications of the competitive standard treatment within the grower's foliar program. Performance evaluations are based on internal trials, field observations and/or public information. Data from multiple locations and years should be consulted whenever possible. Individual results may vary depending on local growing, soil and weather conditions.

"We believe that Miravis® Duo is going to help growers streamline and simplify their spray programs by being able to treat multiple costly threats with one product," says Janette Stewart, National Horticultural

Marketing Lead with Syngenta Canada.

In addition to potatoes, Miravis® Duo is now registered in bulb, root and brassica vegetables, along with ginseng and stone fruits.

Learn how to level up your fungicide program at Syngenta.ca/Miravis-Duo-potatoes, contact your local Syngenta Sales Representative, or call our Customer Interaction Centre at 1 877 SYNGENTA (1 877 964 3682). 🌱



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Potatoes the ‘what’ but how and why also important at Emre Farms

For Charles ‘Chuck’ Emre, it’s not only the what but the how and the why.

Emre Farms’ ‘what’ is a mixture of potatoes, asparagus and cover crops with the ‘how’ directly related to the third, a back to the future approach optimizing the latter’s natural benefits.



Charles ‘Chuck’ Emre is encouraged to see a fifth generation stepping forward to continue a family farming tradition. Pictured here, left to right, are: Charles Emre, Linda Emre, Nick Bell, grandson Lukas Bell and Emily Bell (nee Emre).

“We’re not doing anything new,” Emre said. “We are merely going back to what our grandfathers did. Before commercial pesticides and fertilizer were available, this is how they farmed.”

Diversified use of cover crops puts another tool in a farmer’s box says Emre, in effect a modern incarnation of pioneering principles.

“We are utilizing a system that combines what’s available with what worked for them.”

Emre is a fourth-generation farmer whose base of operations is a piece of Norfolk County property his great-grandfather settled on in the early 1930s. Chuck’s father Charles Sr. began a transition out of tobacco, which has evolved to a focus more on potatoes than asparagus.

“Over time, we’ve gradually shifted.”

What began as 75-pound burlap bags of potatoes for sale became 50-pound burlap sacks, and subsequently ten-pound paper bags and cartons, mirroring a similar varietal transition from the original red and white.

“We can offer more than two dozen types of potatoes based on package size, potato size, and colour.”

Emre potatoes are grown, harvested, sorted, packaged and then delivered from the farm. Marketed through the Ontario Food Terminal, over 90 per cent end up in Ontario, with the balance also enjoyed in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and United States.

“It’s what our farm has morphed into over the years,” says Emre, adding that like his counterparts, the family



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▲ Charles and Linda Emre display some of the two dozen types of Emre Farms potatoes based on package size, potato size, and colour.

◀ Charles Emre in a field of mustard he utilizes as a natural rotational fumigant helping promote soil-friendly potato cropping practices.

business has tried to adjust to market demands. “That’s what all of us do.”

The successful effort has resulted from a highly-valued team considered an extended farm family. Emre credits long-term members, including one who started as a teenager currently in his mid-40s whose parents worked for his parents, and offshore workers with 25-plus years of service, contributors Emre considers work with rather than for the operation.

“We work together,” he emphasized.

Challenges are part of farming he continued, on an annual, monthly, weekly and daily basis. Those too have morphed over time Emre believes, becoming more, rather than less stressful.

“Our biggest challenges today are dealt with from within our offices,” he said. “Mother Nature still plays her form of cruel jokes on us, but I can deal with the weather a lot easier today than what’s coming with COVID-19, or certain regulatory hurdles.”

Two decades of soil amendment investigation in part through the use of cover crops instigated by membership in the Ontario Soil Network has not only provided complementary support for commercial cropping but an outlet for constructive creativity and the development of a side interest.

“That’s sort of been my therapy over the last few years,” says Emre.

Cover crops is a broad term including nitrogen fixers like radishes or clover which may be inter-seeded with corn. Or a multi-species pollinator-friendly blend featuring sunflowers, peas, oats and turnips planted post-harvest of a rye crop, for example, for beneficial biomass and soil-amendment.

“You are encouraging a diverse eco-system both above and below the soil.”

These crops may not be harvested commercially, but along with long-term soil improvement can provide significant benefits for those which are. A primary example is mustard crops Emre rotates with potatoes. Not to be confused with mustard grown to ultimately grace hot dogs, this variety is high in glucosinolates. Rather than harvested it is flailed (macerated), incorporated and sealed

into the ground, acting as a natural bio-fumigant replacing its chemical counterpart.

Broad-based benefits are such one crop of potatoes per 24 months per unit of ground is an acceptable tradeoff.

“It’s a different mindset,” said Emre.

Having experienced the impact of Canadian/U.S. dollar or Canadian dollar/Euro exchange, Emre has worked at developing a home grown option. Following three years of western field trials, he looks forward to planting the first seed propagated in Canada this spring, 2021.

“I’m pretty excited about it.”

Therein lies a portion of the ‘why’ for a proponent of the Ralph Waldo Emerson quote on success capped by the phrase ‘to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived, this is to have succeeded.’

A desire to grow and share the best possible crops Emre is happy to serve to his own family in a manner promoting soil structure and health

while cutting down on pesticide and commercial fertilizer use is part of that definition.

“We know we can’t eat them all, so we look at it as it’s not just our crop, it’s everybody’s crop.”

So too is a view combining stewardship with ownership.

“Our name is on the deed to the farm and we are the ones responsible for the taxes, but at the end of the day we are just tenants on the land we occupy. Right now it’s my turn, but we are not here forever.

“When the next tenants start here, if we can leave the soil better than we found it, I think that’s pretty satisfying.”

And finally, it also incorporates continuity, the potential to take a grandchild hunting on the same piece of ground his grandfather took him, or the fact he and wife Linda’s daughter Emily and son-in-law Nick Bell have joined the operation for the past couple of years, and Emily’s brothers, still in school, have also expressed interest.

“It comes down to improving our soil health and seeing the next generation coming along. To know that we’ve done this and there is a fifth generation that has started here is fulfilling and enjoyable.”

We know we can't eat them all, so we look at it as it's not just our crop, it's everybody's crop.

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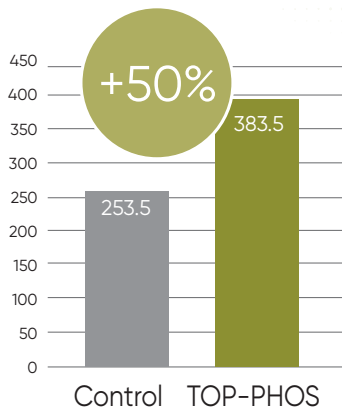
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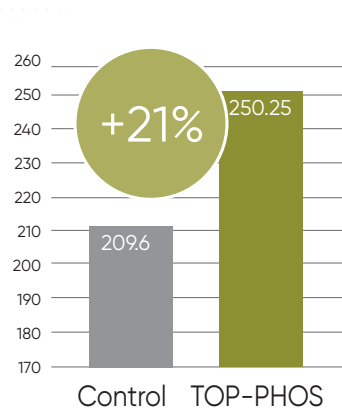
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'Feeding Canada' highlights symbiotic relationship between migrant workers & Norfolk farmers

A local filmmaker is putting together what she describes as a 'hero story of COVID' highlighting the symbiotic relationship between foreign migrant workers and Norfolk County farmers.

"My goal is to build understanding and appreciation for the workers and to show the huge impact this program has for them at home, but also here too," said Tanya van Rooy of Howl at the Moon Films.

"We depend on them, but they depend on us too, big time."

The Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program has had an 'immense' economic impact in developing countries while providing dependable and committed labour for jobs Canadians won't or can't fill, says van Rooy.

"Migrant workers are an absolutely essential cog in the wheel of Canadian agricultural production," says van Rooy, whose experience

as a tree planter helps her understanding of giving something up for gain and getting a leg up in life. "I wanted to get the positive side to the story out because the program is a major success."

"It provides an opportunity for people who don't have an option at home."

'Feeding Canada' is a four-part series, whose 15-minute segments are to air spring, 2021 through the BellFibe TV Network + Digital Platform, reaching a potential national audience of 1.67-million says van Rooy. Shot through the fall and winter of 2020, it encompasses the risk/reward calculation workers

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faced before deciding to come to Canada during a global pandemic, takes a deeper dive into the economic and knowledge-based impact their sacrifice to come here and resultant labour here provides back home, explodes the myth they are taking jobs away from Canadians, explores how COVID impacted the 2020 experience, and finally how community support grew and manifested itself for those Trinidadians unable to return home.

"It was amazing to see it up close through them and experience it with them," said van Rooy.

A Norfolk native who grew up on a tobacco farm along Turkey Point Road, she was inspired to become a film maker through the medium's unparalleled communicative powers.

"I like the art of film, seeing how you can convey a message to a huge group through something that is entertaining."

A love for photography led her into contact with an independent film makers group, and van Rooy joined in creative projects in order to learn the craft. Her early work included a black-and-white feature on a \$10,000 budget which opened the Hamilton film festival, ultimately winning top honours.

"I was broke, but really into it," she laughs.



Hassel Kennedy is featured in 'Feeding Canada', a four-part documentary series exploring the symbiotic relationship between foreign migrant workers and Norfolk County farming operations.

A variety of work has led her back home to Norfolk, and successful application for Bell Media regional production.

COVID certainly challenged the process.

"It was constant pivoting," says van Rooy, expressing sincere appreciation for her production team and in particular the farmers who provided the opportunity for interview invitations. No individual

farmer or farm will be identified in the project, due to predominantly negative contemporary social media commentary.

"We don't want them to be a target," van Rooy explained.

Her biggest thanks however go out to the workers who shared their experiences, turning blank statistics into the deeply personal stories each and every participant carries.

"It was such an honour to meet them and be able to tell their stories," said van Rooy.

And while each was different, there was a commonality in 'huge hearts' prepared to accept personal sacrifice and physical work in order to better their own lives and that of their families.

"It's a bit lost in Canadian culture," van Rooy concluded. "And a beautiful thing to see." 🌱

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Organic premium profit potential comes with increased input costs, workload



Tota Farms Agri-Business Manager Alicia Givens says going organic offers profit potential, but comes with increased input effort and expense.

On the face of it, organic agricultural returns sound attractive - and they can be.

But Tota Farms Agri-Business Manager Alicia Givens cautions there is no magic wand, no substitute for constant attention to detail, input effort and related expense for producers trying to organically get where they need to be.

"It's not an easy thing," she cautioned. "It's definitely a challenge, but if you are willing to put the work into it, it can be profitable."

her husband Brian are currently transitioning into her family farming operation.

Their Brant County shift to organic corn and soybeans began in 2014, and following a required a three-year (36-month) certification period where substances prohibited under defined guidelines can't be used, certified organic crops came off for the first time in 2017.

You've got to farm your ground organically for three years, but can't sell it organically

"You've got to farm your ground organically for three years, but can't sell it organically," Givens explained, a requirement effectively adding to input costs.

In broadly simplistic terms, conventional farming begins with planting treated seeds, supported by a cultivation and spraying regimen which suppresses pests, weeds and diseases. Organic farming essentially takes access to conventional pesticides and herbicides out of the equation.

Givens grew up on a farm, unofficially apprenticing under her father Tim's tutelage, before adding a three-year business diploma from Fanshawe College. She and



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"It's a whole different way of farming," said Givens of a required learning curve.

Organic seeds must be untreated, opening the door to initial loss.

"Right there you can lose seed to pests."

"We haven't had too, too many issues," Givens added of the latter's broader seasonal threat. "But there have been a few years we've had pests."

Any disease treatments must be from a permitted substance list. Their weed control program might be summed up as 'cultivate, cultivate, cultivate' with a very pricey emergency backup, if required.

"You have to cultivate constantly to control weeds. We just cultivate and if weeds do get out of control, we send our guys in to hand weed," Givens added. "Which is very expensive."

Some organic producers report 'ramping up' over time to production targets, but Givens says they achieved results of 45-50 bushels per acre for soybeans, roughly comparable to conventional farming, and 'around 175' for corn initially, and consistently.

"But we apply manure, cultivate, irrigate and do what we have to do in order to make sure we get those bushels."

The resultant organic food-grade beans are sold to grain elevators in South-Western Ontario, not one specific destination, and the corn purchased by mills where it is converted into organic livestock feed. A bushel of organic beans may bring between \$29 and \$30, corn, between \$9 and \$13. This represents a significant premium over conventional beans and corn, even with their current strong performance of around \$14 and \$5.50, respectively. Conventional prices are up this year says Givens, but organic options don't seem to follow that trend, staying around standard, if elevated expectations.

"The organics are really steady."

Organic return numbers are definitely attention-grabbing, but Givens emphasizes inputs are also correspondingly higher.

"The prices are there, but the costs are there too - it's not cheap. I just can't stress enough how much work producing the crop is. It can be a bit tedious and you have to be very attentive and keep eyes on it throughout the entire season."

"You need to stay on top of it and you need to do things well, or it can get out of control before you even blink."

Organic production is definitely not for everyone she concluded. But those willing and adaptable to its uniquely-challenging requirements, may be able to take advantage of the opportunity.

"It's a whole lot more work, but if you are able to do the work, and do it well, there is more profit potential too." 🌱

PRESS RELEASE

BASF receives label expansion for fungicide Serifel

CALGARY, AB, January 20, 2021 – Today, BASF Canada Agricultural Solutions (BASF) received Health Canada PMRA label expansion for Serifel®. New for the 2021 growing season, Serifel is an innovative biological fungicide with multiple modes of action now available for use on a range of fruiting, leafy, root and cucurbit vegetables, and berries. Serifel was previously registered for use in targeting powdery mildew and botrytis in grapes.

"Serifel's strong performance and low use rate will make Serifel fungicide an excellent addition to growers' current disease management programs," said Anne McRae, Technical Services

Specialist, Horticulture, BASF Canada Agricultural Solutions.

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Steve (left) and Brad Blizman grew up on the family potato farm on the outskirts of Delhi. Under the guidance of their parents and grandfather, the pair have now made the family farm their business. (Contributed photo)

Potatoes never get old on the farm or around the table

Brad and Steve Blizman grew up digging, not for gold but for the riches found in a good hill of potatoes. These third generation farmers started on the farm lending a hand wherever it was needed when they were kids and are now sustaining their two families on what they grew up knowing and learning along the way.

Discovered in the 16th century by Spanish explorers in Peru, the modern potato is grown worldwide today. It was largely the Irish immigrants who introduced the potato to Canada in the early 1900s. It didn't take long before others quickly learned of the delicious taste but also the versatility of the vegetable.

Steve Blizman Senior, the grandfather to Brad and Steve, saw an opportunity for his farm on the outskirts of Delhi on the West ¼ Line as potatoes had become a cheap reliable food staple. The next 48 years would see much change, but change the Blizman family could be most proud of.

Today, potatoes are Ontario's largest fresh vegetable crop and the average annual crop in the province is about 37,000 acres — Brad and

Steve Jr. harvest 450 acres of that total. They have another 200 acres of cover crops like corn and beans. Their grandfather regularly visits and is continually astounded at how far the farm and industry has come and how it continues to evolve.

"Grandpa Steve is 86 and still comes around and he sits on a bench. He can't believe the automation and the speed at which we can produce," Brad said. Compared to the days when he threw the potatoes in hampers and washed them with a garden hose — things are very different."

Their grandfather as well as parents Bob and Karen are credited with teaching the boys the ropes of growing spuds. As for the marketing side of things, Brad can recall making



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midnight trips to the Ontario Food Terminal when he was just 14 years old.

“That’s what taught me a lot about marketing – the good, the bad and the ugly,” he explained. “It proved how quickly the industry changes – almost everyday.”

Although they no longer sell at the terminal, the lessons and relationships the young men built in the wee hours of the morning outside Toronto are ones they rely on today as contracts are negotiated.

“I enjoy sales,” Brad said. “Although it can be stressful at times, at the end of the day you end

Grandpa Steve is 86 and still comes around and he sits on a bench. He can’t believe the automation and the speed at which we can produce

All sales off the Blizman farm are now fresh market – table stock as Brad described them. The majority of their potatoes – 80 per cent -- make it into Ontario grocery stores while the remaining 20 per cent are sold on the East Coast of the United States. In local stores it’s hard to pick out any one farm’s potatoes these days as grocery chains now have their own independent generic bags.

As with any farm this past growing season, COVID-19 created numerous hassles especially around offshore labour. But Brad explained each week brings new challenges most years and being organized and realizing anything can happen is key to meeting those challenges head on.

“That’s farming,” Brad chuckled. “You pray for the best.”

It does seem no matter how much time passes, no matter how much the industry changes the love of potatoes and all the ways they can be enjoyed never grows old. 🌱



Brothers Brad and Steve Blizman are fourth generation potato farmers and grow 450 acres of potatoes – 80 per cent of the potatoes can be found in Ontario grocery stores while the remainder cross the border into the US.

up working with good people in the business.”

Although potatoes were once thought to be an easy crop to grow in Ontario due to the long hot summer days, cool nights and plentiful water, increased demand and increased competition has meant growers have had to adapt over time.

The Blizman brothers don’t get much down time on the farm as winters are spent sourcing seed from Quebec and Manitoba, as well as solidifying contracts with companies. Brad also sits as Vice-Chair on the fresh side of the Ontario Potato Board.

When seed arrives, usually sometime in March, it is stored in a climate-controlled facility until fumigation and plowing is completed. Planting begins mid-April, as long as the risk of frost is not an issue, and continues through May and often into early June. Getting seed into the ground early gives the brothers an opportunity to get into the early market. Seventy-five per cent of their crop is white potatoes and the rest yellows.

Once planted, the brothers spend a few weeks on the land cultivating and hilling up. Then herbicide for weed control is applied. After that work is complete, Brad said all you can do is pray for water.

Potatoes are 80 per cent water; therefore, irrigation is a must most years. This past growing season the Blizman brothers began irrigating early June and wrapped up 14 weeks later in September. In the midst of watering harvest arrived mid-July, which was a daily task right into November.

Although potatoes are underground, and are at less risk of frost damage in the earlier months of the year, once the ground frost hits around October, the crop can develop what is called cold weather bruising. Like most crops, timing is everything and of course Mother Nature always has her role to play.

When it comes to getting the work done, many hands make lighter work and Brad said Blizman Farms would not be the success it is without their workforce of about 20. More than half the team arrives from Mexico each year and the rest are locals who drive truck.

“Our workers are like family to us,” Brad said. “Some of our guys have been coming up for 12 or 13 years and I text them all year round.”

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Agriculture and energy: partners in prosperity, drivers in recovery

A perspective from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers

Agriculture and energy have more in common than you might think.

Both industries are national in scope, both are continually finding ways to operate with less environmental impact. And both are essential to Canada's economy.

A truly national industry

As one of Canada's largest industries, the oil and natural gas sector contributes some \$100 billion annually to the country's GDP and provides more than 500,000 direct and indirect jobs. The industry works with suppliers and manufactures all across the country. For instance, outside of Alberta, Ontario is the largest supplier of goods and services to the oil sands, which in 2016-2017 spent \$1.89 billion and worked with more than 1,100 Ontario suppliers. Through its multi-billion dollar national supply chain, oil and natural gas is truly a national industry.

Improving environmental performance

Like farmers, ranchers and orchardists, Canada's natural gas and oil producers have a keen understanding of what it means to actively commit to stewardship goals – reducing impacts on air, water and land. Ongoing environmental performance improvement has always been critical to maintaining a responsible, vibrant and competitive natural gas and oil sector in Canada. To that end, the sector has been doing much to reduce emissions, manage water more effectively, reclaim disturbed land faster and enhance biodiversity. Just one example among hundreds: by developing innovative technologies, the oil sands industry alone has reduced per-barrel greenhouse gas emissions by more than 20 per cent since 2009 and continues to reduce emissions.

Vital to Canada's economy

Energy and agriculture are strongly entwined and producers in both industries have a clear line of sight to reducing environmental impacts.



When it comes to calls for a 'green' recovery — agriculture and energy are already there, leading the way to a better future for Canadians.

Over the coming year, as we emerge from lockdown restrictions, phrases like 'new normal, post-pandemic and economic recovery' are on our minds. Canadians are looking to industries from tourism and manufacturing to agriculture and energy to restart our recovery.

To learn more about the connection between the natural gas and oil and agricultural sectors:

Using chicken feathers to purify oil sands process water: <https://context.capp.ca/articles/2020/profile-chicken-feathers>

Petroleum in Real Life: Food, Fertilizer and Fuel: <https://context.capp.ca/articles/2020/pirl-fertilizers>

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Tuber weight - oz	ALPINE Foliar: 8.1	+9.4%
	Check: 7.4	
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PRESS RELEASE

Top-Phos a success on potatoes in Ontario

TIMAC AGRO Canada introduced Top-Phos to Ontario with the objective of tackling challenges related to phosphorus blockage in the soil. Commercialized in 40 countries and finalist of the 2019 Ag in Motion Innovation Program in Saskatchewan, Top Phos (scientifically known as complexed superphosphate) is a new and innovative source of P fertilizer for Canadian growers.

Potatoes were a key crop targeted, considering that irremediable phosphorus blockage on potato fields can reach up to 80% in Eastern Canada(1). 2020 field trials validated the agronomics behind Top Phos, as shown in Figure 1. The varieties observed were Colomba Yellows, Envol Whites, and Fenway Reds. Yield increased from 21% to 50% against MAP. Similar trends were also observed in PEI (Innovator and Burbanks).

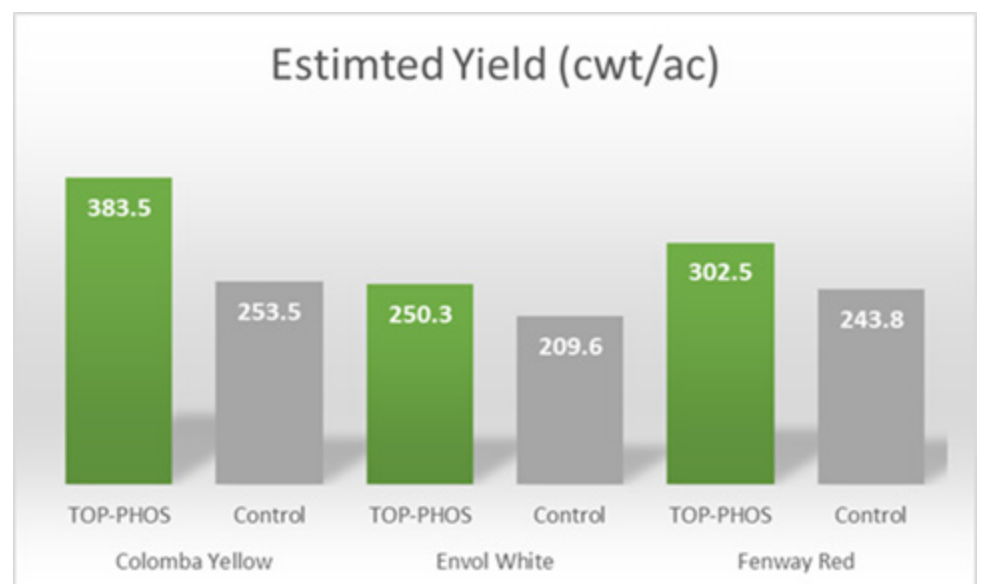
TIMAC AGRO markets its technologies through ag-retailers and boosts a team of 11 Agronomic Technical Consultants (“ATCs”) to support its Ontario operations. Business Unit Manager Corinna Ward said : “Our motto is “Think Different & Farm Better”. We are here to help any farmer or retailer that seeks to do things differently, bridging performant and sustainable agriculture. We are fully integrated, we believe in proximity and tailor-made solutions. This is what makes TIMAC AGRO unique”.

A family-owned business operating since 1959, TIMAC AGRO is new to the Canadian market, but leverages on a global network of 2,400 ATCs visiting 20,000 farms per day. The Company wishes to validate its results with potato growers and seeks to introduce additional lines of products in Ontario. Ward says that “although we have seen very positive results here in Ontario as well as other countries with similar soil types, we always want to replicate results locally to ensure the growers are getting consis-

tent return on investment”. To learn more visit ca.timacagro.com or follow TimacAgroCanada on Twitter.

References :

KHIARI, Lofti, and PARENT, Léon-Étienne. Phosphore et Pomme de Terre : Diagnostic et Solutions , Soil and Agri-Food Engineering Department, Laval University, - [https://www.agrireseau.net/pdt/documents/V12N5%20-%20PDT\(1\).pdf](https://www.agrireseau.net/pdt/documents/V12N5%20-%20PDT(1).pdf)



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PRESS RELEASE

BASF receives Health Canada PMRA registration for Merivon fungicide

Merivon provides long lasting, broad spectrum disease control and advanced plant health benefits improving yield potential and quality

CALGARY, Alberta, February 9, 2021 – BASF Canada Agricultural Solutions (BASF) has received registration for Merivon® fungicide from Health Canada’s Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA). Merivon fungicide harnesses the power of two active ingredients, Xemium® (fluxapyroxad) and AgCelence® (pyraclostrobin) to address key diseases like black rot and bitter rot in apples, and Septoria leaf spot and botrytis gray mold in blueberries. Also registered in stone fruit, leafy vegetables, cucurbits, strawberries, root and bulb vegetables, Merivon fungicide is available for the 2021 growing season.

“With its unique combination of active ingredients, Merivon fungicide works across disease lifecycles providing continuous redistribution and extended residual protection even under adverse conditions,” said Trevor Latta, Brand Manager, Corn, Soybeans & Horticulture with BASF. “The combination of the two active ingredients offers more consistent disease control to help maximize yield and quality potential for growers.”

Growers can learn more about Merivon fungicide and all other BASF Canada Agricultural Solutions products by visiting www.agsolutions.ca.



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Estimate of Canadian Potato Production Dec 6, 2019

Source: Statistics Canada Table 32-10-0358-01 (000cwt) Dec 6, 2019

Province	2017	2018	5-yr avg	2019 Est.	Diff Vs. 5yr Avg.
NFLD.	63	56	64	54	-15.6%
P.E.I.	24,463	22,600	24,575	25,200	+2.5%
N.S.	432	365	409	416	+1.7%
N.B.	15,159	15,670	14,914	16,400	+10.0%
Que.	12,505	11,221	11,933	12,739	+6.8%
Ont.	7,830	6,919	7,509	6,705	-10.7%
Man.	22,200	20,300	21,154	19,700	-6.9%
Sask.	1,625	1,454	1,612	1,500	-6.9%
Alta.	20,572	21,762	19,963	21,718	+8.8%
B.C.	1,824	2,100	1,871	2,145	+14.6%
Canada	106,673	102,447	104,105	106,577	+2.4%

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FARMS

NORFOLK COUNTY - ONTARIO'S GARDEN

SECTION C / ISSUE 16 / WINTER 2021



Popcorn goes high tech

Popcorn is key to another generation continuing the family tradition of farming in Norfolk County that dates back 170 years.

Blair and Livia Townsend are carrying on the farming practice with Ontario Popping Corn Company, located on Reg. Rd. 60. Their company is a great example of farmers finding a value-added niche.

Popcorn was originally an alternative crop for Blair's father Robert when he was looking to diversify from tobacco 35 years ago.

"They started this business and got far too busy to follow through so my husband and I decided to buy it," Livia said.

Robert Townsend was well known in the area for starting a lumber mill with his partner Bert Abbott.

The Townsends' main operation is on a farm that has been in the family since the 1940s. It's adjacent to the one their ancestors settled on in the 1850s. Historical documents show a mill was established on that property, but is long since gone. Blair and Livia bought the original farm when they needed to expand.

Blair said popcorn is grown "the old school way". Herbicides can be used in the spring to keep weeds down, but Round-Up can't be used.



Selling under its Uncle Bob's label, Ontario Popping Corn has a wide variety of unique products available, including Pop-A-Cob, coloured varieties and seasonings.

A spraying program for fungus and insects, similar to what is used with sweet corn, follows.

About 150 acres of popcorn are grown annually, with most of it in traditional yellow. This is split

Please turn to page C2 →

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Popcorn goes high tech

Continued from page C1

between yellow butterfly and yellow mushroom. Smaller acreages are planted in six other varieties, which include strawberry red, Shamu blue, ancient grain, purple passion, white hull-less and organic.

Organic is grown in designated fields with no pesticides and no commercial fertilizer. Manure can be used that has been certified by the Organic Council of Canada.

Asked about how the organic variety started, and has grown to about 20 per cent of volume, Blair answered, "We need as many products as we could create. We got into organic in a small way and over the years it has grown."

After planting, the popcorn operation involves a lot of innovation and technology.

Like other corns, the popcorn is rotated in the fields. It can't be rotated with field corn though as cross-breeding could occur. Other crops grown are soybeans and food grade beans.

Harvesting is a two-step process. For the regular popcorn, picking is done with a combine.

"My husband tweaked the combine so it doesn't destroy the popcorn kernels," Livia said. "It is different than field corn in it cracks more easily. The timing has to be



Ontario Popping Corn is a family operation where all members of the Townsend family play a role. Left to right are: Blair, Livia, Tanner, Courtney and Mitchell.

right for harvest because if it is too moist it will crack."

The Pop-A-Cob, which is a unique product for Ontario Popping Corn's Uncle Bob's brand, are all picked and cleaned by hand. With these unique products, the entire cob is put in a microwave to pop. The result is much more tasteful than traditional microwave popcorn.

Although it grows from a corn plant, the similarities with field corn end at the combine. After that, processing is unique and involves more computerization.

The drier for popcorn differs from a traditional corn drier, although it's still done in large bins but with a different configuration on the inside and different airflow. "If you dry

popcorn too quickly, you can crack the kernel."

After drying, the popcorn needs to be cleaned and sorted. A series of conveyors sort the kernels by size. They are also polished in this process. The last step in this process is all kernels going through a computerized optical sorter. This specialized piece of equipment is set up to examine each kernel and recognize cracked, spotted and other imperfect kernels and use an air jet to remove them.

Packing is done by hand, in smaller bags for retail and large 50-pound bags for commercial operations. The smaller bags include 900-gram plastic bags sold at local retailers and smaller 250-gram bags that are sold both individually and

as part of gift boxes. Although it has taken a hit this year with COVID-19 restrictions, Uncle Bob's Popping Corn is often sold as part of fundraising programs through schools.

There are also popcorn seasonings, microwave poppers and other value-added products sold by the company.

The company has grown to the point that, according to OFA statistics, it's the largest popping corn producer in the country. It is Local Food Plus Certified and Certified Non-GMO. The Townsends received the Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation in 2011.

Company growth reached the point another generation is involved. Son Mitchell assists Blair with the land work, cleaning, bagging and loading trucks while daughter Courtney runs the warehouse, processes orders and gets products out the door. Livia oversees the office. Another son Tanner has an outside job, but still assists with marketing. During harvest, one off-shore labourer is employed as well as two local ladies.

While Ontario Popping Corn Company has grown in leaps and bounds since its inception, more growth is planned through seeing new varieties, markets and value-added options.

"We need something new to keep things exciting," Livia said. 🌱

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Neighbours asked Larry “What are you doing?
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Larry Davis at one of the fields spread with biosolids by Wessuc Inc.
Director at OFA (Ontario Federation of Agriculture).

“Neighbours ask what are you doing? You soil is darker!”

Larry started getting asked this question after he started land applying biosolids. He currently works with Wessuc Inc. to get his multiple fields spread.

The first time Larry worked with Wessuc was in 2010. Wessuc spread biosolids on his fields and since then they have continued working together over the years. Wessuc has cleaned out his storage tanks, and applied biosolids onto his many fields.

“The next year, when the soy beans were all grown, you could see right to the line were the spreading stopped.”

Larry stated that his plants were fuller, richer, and healthier by applying biosolids just once. You don’t have to apply them every year but when Larry’s neighbours asked if he was applying them again he replied “Yup! It’s good for the soil!”

When asked about the Wessuc Larry replied “The company who does it is very, very respectful; great staff! They are a good company, good and respectful on the road, or the side of the road! They are conscientious about what’s going on around them!”

Larry Davis has been farming since day one, it is no wonder he plays a leading role in the OFA (Ontario Federation of Agriculture). After a fruitful year of crops a OMAFRA came down to look at soil pits. They checked the soil structure, and the soil pit showed that the earth worms were there and the earth was richer where the biosolids were applied!

“It’s pretty important to bring the nutrients back into the soil that we have taken away.” Larry sees the importance of keeping our soils healthy. The field we were standing on was covered with a layer of dirt but underneath was all gravel, yet the soil was rich, and the plants a vibrant green.

“We depend on the cities to keep their waste separate. If we could keep human waste and industrial waste separate and keep it out of the stream for processing biosolids, then the product is great! The soil is a great filter and the products we grow will take the product back.” Larry stresses the importance of keeping the waste water streams healthy so that the soils are healthy.

He has been living and breathing farming since he was a young boy. Larry pointed to his hat which had the slogan written “In soil we trust.” Larry is a strong believer in healthy soil, biosolids, land application, and wants to share the benefits with others! Larry grew up in Brant wants to see the county continue to grow and thrive!



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GOING, GOING, but not yet gone

As a young lad, Garry Bartlett tagged along with his dad to frequent auction sales. As a young man wanting his own business, auctioneering looked interesting. He attended the Worldwide College of Auctioneering in Mason City, Iowa in 1976 where he learned the art of the auctioneer's chant and the business aspects of any type of auction. Following this he returned to Haldimand county to start out on his own.

At one of his first auctions, he was interrupted halfway through the sale by "Grandpa" Webb Slack. "You're doing ok, son", he said, "Want you to see me at Hagersville on Friday." The job at Hagersville Auction Centre, now run by Slack's great grand-daughters, lasted for 37 years.

Garry has auctioneered at many sales in Haldimand and Norfolk, mostly farm, household and antique sales. He has been part of car auctions in Oshawa and Toronto, where multiple auctioneers sell up to 2000 cars in a day.

Auctions are usually put together when a family farm is sold or to clear out an estate. Garry has some interesting memories of var-



Garry Bartlett in action at an auction. Left to right, father Ken Bartlett, Denise Reid, Garry Bartlett, Bruce Williamson, daughter Crystal Bartlett.

ious items that have come under his hammer. "Some of the antiques are interesting," he remarked, mentioning a carved walking stick topped with a royal crown that sold for \$2300. He also recalled a collectible car – a 1955 Chevy, and a still for making homemade brew.

He chuckled as he mentioned a sale in Port Dover, which was supposed to be a 'small evening sale.' That one ended up lasting two days – from 6 pm to 3:30 am the first day, and from 10 am to 5 pm the next. The family had found more stuff in the house than was expected.

The most valuable things he has sold are real estate and large farm machinery, while some of the most surprising and interesting items are exotic animals. He has sold a monkey and a camel, a female llama cria (baby), and ostriches and emus at \$5200 for a pair. The first pot-bellied pig he sold brought \$650. He has auctioned for the Canadian Ornamental Pheasant Game Bird Association at their twice-yearly sales.

For many years Garry's dad Ken stood by his side as clerk for his sales; following his retirement Denise Reid has worked in that capacity. Garry's daughter Crystal now works with him as well.

Garry mentioned one man, the late Bruce Williamson, who attended most of his sales and was always willing to make a bid to start the ball rolling. Garry learned that if Bruce said, "to start," that he wasn't really interested in the item, but if he just bid an amount, then it was something he wanted.

Garry stated that 2020 has been, "a dead year due to COVID."

He has sold a monkey and a camel, a female llama cria (baby) for \$10,000, and ostriches and emus at \$5200 for a pair.

He is still auctioneering when he can but has so far resisted the trend to do on-line sales, as he knows how time

consuming it would be to photograph and catalogue each item. For now he is working at stump grinding and post hole digging, but for the future, he plans to, "keep on going for another 20 years." 🌿



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Norview Gardens Ltd. grows into a successful ornamental grasses niche

Paul Scharringa has grown into a successful niche in the 'other' grass market.

"These are landscape plants," he explained of Norview Gardens Ltd.'s expertise as one of Canada's leading decorative grass suppliers - which can be confusing to some. "They think it's marijuana" he laughed.

Scharringa grew up in the greenhouse business, his family growing tomatoes, cucumbers and lettuce before transitioning into flowering bedding plants. He and his brother started a garden centre in Kitchener, experience which convinced Paul his heart lay in growth rather than retail.

He was able to source OMAFRA tobacco diversification funding with the assistance of Mike Columbus, taking this route after his initial crop choice was already taken. Scharringa was seeking a niche he explained, rather than entering the 'dog eat dog' world of established crops.

"I thought hey, let's try something different. And here we are - ornamental grasses."

Decorative grasses are landscaping plants Scharringa explains, ranging in height from a few inches to three, four or even five metres. Low maintenance - essentially only requiring pruning in the spring, they are valued for visual attractiveness, hardiness (some can tolerate road salt), erosion control and ability to thrive in sunny or shady locations.

"There is a grass for every occasion," says Scharringa, noting they contribute to a landscape even dried up during dormancy, they are targets for birds, frost and snow.

"They are very attractive in winter too."

Upon the company's 1996 founding, a few American entities were supplying ornamental grasses, but none to his knowledge in Canada.

"I think we were one of the first ones this side of the border."

At the time, landscaping perennials were just starting to take off says Scharringa, and grasses 'were unheard of.'

"That was totally uncharted waters."

Norview Gardens' 2628 Windham Road 19 property was selected for its beauty and as a great place to bring up a family. Operations began with three small greenhouses totalling 6,000-square-feet in total area and an initial selection of 35 varieties of grasses and perennials such as bleeding hearts. The latter were included for diversification, but the popularity of decorative grasses led to an exclusive focus three years into the venture.

"It kind of took right off."

Norview Gardens quickly became the ornamental grass source for one of Canada's largest nurseries, says Scharringa.

"To this day, they are still our biggest customer."

Grasses are grown outside, dug, 'bare-rooted' and split into individual plants. They are sold either as plugs or liners (smaller plants like trays of pepper or tomato plants) or as larger plants in one or two-gallon pots, ready for landscape planting.

"The landscape-ready stuff is more local," Scharringa explains.

Plugs or liners are often sourced by greenhouses or garden centres who grow them to a landscape-ready size. Norview Gardens ships product all across Canada, but its main markets are in Ontario and Quebec. Its greenhouse space is divided between processing and growth of the two end products, a constantly-shifting workspace of growth process.

"The place is always full," says Scharringa.

There are of course, challenges.

"It's like any other farm venture, there are always surprises," says Scharringa, listing weather, bugs and disease. "It's all part of growing."

Across its history, the business has gradually evolved to 250 varieties of ornamental grasses, 150,000-square-feet of greenhouse space, employs between eight and 12 during quieter and busy seasons respectively, and has seen Paul's son Jeff join the venture as co-owner.

"Pay your bills and then go ahead," Paul Scharringa summed up. "That's how we built this company."

And while he has found agricultural success in a niche, it's very common principles which have propagated its ongoing growth.

"Price is important, but it's not always the most important," Scharringa concluded. "It's always quality and service which are number one." 🌿



At left, Norview Gardens Ltd. founder and President Paul Scharringa, and son Jeff (right), who is a co-owner of the ornamental-grasses production business.

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Billiards bragging rights up for grabs with Persaud's return home

As of Friday, January 22nd, billiards bragging rights were up for grabs inside the DeDecker bunkhouse.

Until that point, they had indisputably been owned by Rishi Persaud. But as of that date, Persaud was finally getting on a plane to return to his Sangre Grande-area, Trinidad home.

"Very excited," he said, quite prepared to exchange his cue stick for a delayed Christmas celebration with his wife and two children.

Persaud has been working for the DeDeckers through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program since 2016, attracted by the promise of more and steadier employment than in his home country.

"It pays more and a sure job every day," says Persaud, who uses the money earned to pay bills, purchase food and support his wife and their children, aged six and two.

He came to Canada for the first time 'for the experience', returning after enjoying it and finding it financially productive. This year was complicated by COVID-19, with those choosing to come taking a risk.

"We had to pay for everything but weren't guaranteed a flight."

He and his bunkmates did make it to Canada August 17th, months after their regular May arrival timeframe. They expected to return home in October, but after preparing mentally and physically, including taking a COVID test, were informed their flights were cancelled.



From left, Vincent Williams, Rishi Persaud, Joseph Yearwood and Keiroy Subit are among a group of Trinidadian migrant workers who faced an extended stay in Canada. Persaud boarded an airplane Fri., Jan. 22 in order to head home while the remaining three have elected to stay for the 2021 season.

When you help out your family, it helps you out in the long run

"That was a painful one," Persaud summed up of an extended period of limbo. "Nothing to do, just in the bunkhouse waiting, you don't know what's going on."

The fact they were able to apply for and receive EI

certainly has helped, Persaud forwarding it on home, where his children and wife are in lockdown.

"She's just waiting as well, it's hard for her and the kids."

In between climbing the bunkhouse billiards rankings, Persaud did get to experience his first snow, finding it a mixed blessing.

"It looks good on TV," he explained. "But it's cold."

Farmer Quinton DeDecker did what he could Persaud credited, seeking information and a solution.

"It was only recently we got an answer."

Persaud looks forward to seeing his family and 'maybe a friend or two' upon his return, and also taking clothes and toys to his kids. He

plans on returning to work in Canada again - in 2022.

"Next year, not this year," he confirmed following what certainly has qualified as an experience.

"I don't regret it, but good and bad."

Persaud is returning home with the blessings of his bunkhouse mates. Unlike their married counterpart, Keiroy Subit, Vincent Williams and Joseph Yearwood have elected to take advantage of an opportunity to stay in Canada for the 2021 work season extended by the Canadian government in light of 2020's special circumstances. In part, Subit's decision is predicated on the uncertainty of being able to return to work in Canada in 2021, should he return to Trinidad now.

"We are not sure how the circumstances will take place if we go back home."

He came to Canada in 2020 warned there may be difficulties returning home due to COVID considerations.

"But I didn't expect it to be like this."

He is a 'tradesman' in Trinidad, working in carpentry, painting, welding, construction and drywalling, finding the regularity of work and return better in Canada.

"For betterment, to help out at home, moneywise," Subit explained of his motivation, supporting his parents and other relatives financially. "When you help out your family, it helps you out in the long run."

He does miss family and friends, but aside from a non-productive routine of 'no work, just staying home,' watching TV, eating and playing billiards,' it hasn't been horrible.

"I've always wanted to experience winter - a first time for everything," he said, embracing the cold. "The only thing I mind is the windchill."

If Subit had to sum the entire experience up in one word, it would be 'interesting.'

"At the end of the day, it is what it is," he shrugged. 🌿

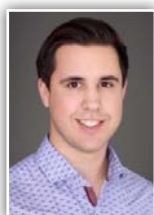


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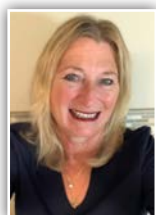
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Robinson Family farm

Jason Robinson and father George of Courtland go against the image of farmers being generations-old operations that have expanded.

George operated a farm equipment business in Courtland, Robinson Farm Equipment. In 1990, he bought a farm as an investment. Then, about 10 years ago, he retired from the farm equipment business to farm full time.

Growing up, Jason always had a taste of farming as his grandfather Lyle had a farm in Courtland. Besides running the farm, he did a lot of custom work planting and combining, along with his wife Eleanor. Jason remembers his grandmother and grandfather working as a team providing custom hay baling. Both knew how to operate the machinery and his grandmother taught Jason how to drive a tractor.

After his grandfather passed away, Eleanor sold the farm to Titan Trailers. After graduating, Jason started to work for Cargill and then was an owner in a custom spraying business for 10 years.

After both father and son got out of their related businesses, they started farming full time. The operation has grown and they now farm 1,100 acres, three-quarters of which they own. The land is split between sweet corn, oats and a rotation of field corn and soybeans.

Sweet corn covers about one quarter of the operation. They have a deal with a processor where the Robinsons plant the corn, apply herbicides to keep down weeds, apply insecticides if necessary and then let the crop mature. The processor uses machine harvesting to harvest the crop.

“We just take it to the point it’s ready to harvest and that’s it,” Jason said.

The oats are then planted as a cover crop where the sweet corn was.

“We wanted something after the sweet corn came off,” Jason said. “I don’t like rye because the winter won’t kill it and I would have to defecate it in the spring. With oats, the winter will kill them off.”

The problem was finding oats for seed.

“We couldn’t find any so we started growing our own,” Jason recounted.

The oats have been successful. “It cuts down our chemical use and builds organic matter.”

Besides the oats planted as a cover crop, an additional 25 to 30 acres is planted in March to harvest for seed. “What is harvested is seed for the cover crops in the fall,” Jason said. “Any left over, we sell for seed.”

Winter is time for the Robinsons to service and repair their equipment. They also build some of their own equipment, and in particular irrigation equipment, for both their own use and for others. Winter is also time to truck corn.



Jason, left, and George Robinson of Courtland are relative newcomers to farming, buying their first farm in 1990. Besides their cash crop operation, the duo also build some irrigation equipment for their own use and for others.

In 2003, an elevator to dry and store their corn was added.

This is a family operation with Jason’s wife Arlene helping on the farm when she isn’t busy with her embroidery business. In the fall, the Robinsons hire one person to help with harvest, either driving the truck or grain buggy.

“The rest of the year, we do it ourselves,” Jason said. “We farm based on what we can do because good help is hard to find. If we can’t handle it, we don’t do it.” 🌱



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Dogs on Guard – Predators Beware!

If you drive along the Blue Line near Simcoe you may see lots of sheep grazing orchard land; if you look a bit closer you may spy several big white fluffy dogs amongst the sheep. These are Livestock Guardian Dogs (LGD) – ancient breeds that have been specifically raised to stand guard over their charges – sheep, goats, cattle or whatever livestock they are bonded with.



Chienne, a Great Pyrenees, is backlit by the setting sun as she stands in front of her flock.

Guardian dogs will challenge and scare off stray dogs, coyotes, wolves, bears or cougars - predators that would enjoy a meal of mutton or beef but are not interested in an encounter with a large and unfriendly dog.

These dogs are owned by Carrie Woolley, who runs over 800 ewes in orchards, woodlots and corn fields in the area. The sheep range outdoors year round, accompanied by their faithful guardians. Carrie stated that her losses are less than six per year, mostly lambs in the spring. Her dogs are mostly Great Pyrenees or Maremma; a couple are part Akbash. One of these, Rex, a cross between Pyr and Akbash has killed two coyotes so far this year.

There are many breeds of dogs that have been developed for this purpose, mostly from Europe. One of the most popular in North America is the Great Pyrenees, developed in the mountainous area between France and Spain. Katie Goliboski of Hagersville breeds Great Pyrenees. She stated that Pyrs are the softest of the guard

dog breeds, being not at all people aggressive as a rule. While effective guard dogs against predators, Pyrs tend to bark to intimidate rather than attacking whenever possible. One drawback to Pyrs is that they want to patrol a much larger area than the typical southern Ontario farm, and it requires a five or six foot fence to contain them.

Sheri Purcell tried llamas for protection before getting her first Maremma. She has a lot of coyotes in her area and lost several sheep each year in spite of the llamas, which tended to stay together and not watch the sheep closely. Sheri found the dogs to be, “way better ... no comparison.” She added a second Maremma and found that the dogs became a good team, with “Olive” taking night shift and “Oscar” watching the flock by day.

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Maggie, a Great Pyrenees owned by Carrie Woolley comes close to the fence while her partner Thelma, a Maremma is more suspicious. This pair guards one of Carrie's four breeding flocks and the photo demonstrates the one of the differences between the two breeds.



Sheri Purcell's Maremma Oscar, now retired to a smaller flock on a smaller acreage near Hagersville.

Either one went to aid their partner if an alarm was sounded. In eight years with those dogs, Sheri lost only about four sheep. Sheri pointed out that Maremmas do not wander – they are always with their sheep, and that they are not as vocal as some other breeds. They are not people aggressive but tend to be rather aloof with strangers.

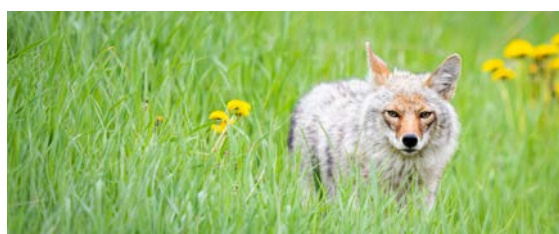
Kuvasz, a Hungarian breed, are a more intense and reactive dog. They are more aggressive and more willing to engage with predators; “If they encounter a coyote they’re going to kill it,” stated Kuvasz breeder Krisztian Vas. Kuvasz work fur-

If they encounter a coyote they're going to kill it

ther out from a flock or herd than Maremmas, and patrol their territory, but are not as prone to wander as Pyrs. Kuvasz are also more aggressive to people; Vas stated that someone cannot go into his flock without him being present.

Other LGD breeds can be found – Akbash, Anatolian Shepherd, Komondor, Kangal, Polish Tatra, Sarplaninac, Tornjak, Armenian Gampyr, Slovakian Cuvac, Caucasian Ovcharka, Tibetan Mastiff and many others. Each breed has its own characteristics with some being very tough and some quite soft.

Those looking to add LGDs to their operation should consider their needs before choosing their breeds. Many mixed breeds are available – these dogs may or may not prove to be effective guardians. It is important to be aware that some may also have temperament issues. 🌿



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Holstein Canada



For well over one-and-a-quarter century, the Holstein Association of Canada has been an important factor in the Holstein dairy industry in Canada. From its beginning in 1884, originally as the Holstein-Friesian Association of Canada, through incorporation in 1901 and forward to the present, Holstein Canada has recorded the history of the breed in this country.

The first Canadian registrations in 1892 (previously done with the American Association) have turned into new records in animals registered in 2019 (316,302 animals registered), a sign of how the Association has become a key player on the Canadian Holstein scene. Friesian was dropped from the breed name in April of 1981 by majority vote at that year's Annual General Meeting. Current membership stands at 10,500.

The 1920s saw the introductions of the True Type model and the Classification system, with Master Breeder Shields debuting in the '30s. Registration of calves born from artificial insemination (AI) was first possible in 1940,

and certification of AI was achieved. 1958 saw the launching of the Star Brood Cow award program.

The 1970s through '90s saw big changes, including the registrations of the first embryo transplant (ET) and Red and White calves. Computerized registrations were also initiated, and ear tagging became mandatory in this time. The first National Judging Conference took place in 1989. During the 90s, the bi-monthly InfoHolstein publication became available for all Association members; the decade also saw some historic firsts, including the first Cow of the Year award (given to Comestar Laurie Sheik) and launch of the first website. The first iteration of Holstein.ca included the Animal Information Sheet (AIS) tool that made pedigree information available online for free, 24 hours a day.

Advancements and achievement came in rapid succession at the turn of the Millennium: the first National Young Adult Holstein Convention, the new head office on Corporate Place in Brantford, the introduction of the Electronic Application (ERA), the establishment of an All-breed Classification

Under this program, no two animals have the same identification anywhere in the country

system, the first Century of Holsteins Award presentation (to Hoskins Farms Ltd.), and the introduction of electronic transfers. All this in just the first seven years!

Progression never stopped, with the launch of the national genomic testing service - in partnership with Semex Alliance - in 2010, the 2012 World Holstein Conference held for the first time on Canadian soil, and the introduction of All-Breeds Registration. Holstein Canada began registration for Canadienne in 2013, followed by Ayrshire in 2014, and Brown Swiss, Guernsey and Milking Shorthorn in 2016. The 1,000th Master Breeder Shield was awarded in 2015 at the National Holstein Convention in Calgary, Alberta.

New, more efficient Herdbook software was launched in 2016, and Holstein Canada became the service provider for Animal Care Assessments as part of the DFC proAction® Initiative. Association classifiers take notes concerning animal care and on-farm assessment results that are passed on to DFC.

Today Holstein Canada stands as a leader in the industry, helping to improve Holsteins across the country. The Association is seen as a leader in dairy genetics, not only here but around the world. It maintains the Holstein Herdbook, and works with the National Livestock ID Program, now under the umbrella of DairyTrace. DairyTrace is a national animal traceability program administered by Lactanet Canada in partnership with Dairy Farmers of Canada. Under the national dairy

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cattle traceability program, Holstein Canada provides tag ordering and customer service for dairy producers outside Quebec. Under this program, no two animals have the same identification anywhere in the country, and tracing animal movements becomes possible for the protection of the industry. Holstein Canada has modified its breed system so that registration numbers match the national ID numbers.

Junior promotion is important to Holstein Canada. Although not a new program, the revamped Junior Member program is working to connect young Holstein enthusiasts with the Association. It is interesting to note that 4-H is now attracting more non-farm kids that haven't had previous knowledge of the Association and Holstein Canada is committed to making a place for these youth. There is also a Young Leader program, which is a big commitment for Holstein Canada.

With genomic research and testing now a common tool to help identify which animals will maximize profitability, Holstein Canada continues to stand ready to assist farmers in using this tool most efficiently and to support Holstein breeders in maintaining their reputation for superior cattle. 🌱



Holstein cows in the herd of Stanley Heeg of Hagersville watch the photographer with interest while standing at the flex feeder where feed is always available.



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DeDecker pulls out chainsaw for unique firewood fundraiser



Charity it is said, begins at home.

It also has begun on the back end of a chainsaw for a Norfolk County farmer, stepping up to the plate or in this case woodpile, in support of migrant workers marooned on his Delhi-area property.

"Had wood to cut, need something to do, so cut wood and put it for a good cause," Quinton DeDecker summed up of a unique back-40 firewood fund-raising project.

In short, DeDecker posted a Facebook message Mon., Jan. 18th, offering pickup truck loads of wood for sale for \$65 cut, or a \$30 DIY option. With the exception of a modest fee to offset fuel and machinery expenses for the former, all proceeds will be donated to Trinidadian migrant workers converted into winter residents by COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions imposed by their own country.

The concept was raised by a neighbour in response to tops left by logging, combined with dead ash trees devastated by invasive borers.

"Gets me out of the house and tidies up the farm," said DeDecker, who received orders for six loads within 24 hours of his initial post. "It's a win-win situation."

Hindsight is 20/20, ironically also when referring to 2020's unique agricultural challenges.

Having purchased a property in 2018 and survived his first 'set up' year as a tobacco farmer in 2019, Quinton DeDecker recalls remembering how much he was looking forward to 2020.

"Boy, was I wrong," he said, managing a wry laugh.

DeDecker's plan in conjunction with his father Noel was four Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) participants arriving in the first two weeks of May, followed by an additional six in July. COVID delayed their arrival, but also created a pool of local labour that is not typically available, bridging the gap until six migrant workers from Barbados arrived in July. The four Trinidadian workers who had expected to arrive in May, got here in August says DeDecker, served

their 14-day quarantine period and were ready for work September 1st.

"On September 18th we froze solid, and were done for the year," said DeDecker, leaving the latest arrivals with 17 days of harvest under their collective belts. "There was work after that, but we wrapped up October 10th.

"Quite the year."

The six Barbadians returned home without issue and the four Trinidadians were prepared to return at the 'tail end' of October says DeDecker, but were denied by home-based regulations.

"They just say, flight cancelled."

Subsequently, Trinidadians have been given the option of returning home or staying in Canada through 2021, where they have been issued adjusted work permits and qualified for EI payments. Rishi Persaud elected to return home to his wife and two children and departed Fri., Jan. 22, planning on coming back to Canada in 2022. Compatriots Keiroy Subit, Vincent Williams and Joseph Yearwood have elected to stay for the 2021 season, through to October.

"A fight to get them here and a fight to get them home," says DeDecker. "You have to feel for them, you want the help here, but you want them to see their families too.

"I guess now it's just make the best of the winter for them so they've got a good Canadian experience."



Far right, Quinton DeDecker has pulled out his chainsaw in support of a unique firewood fundraiser in support of Trinidadian workers (left to right: Vincent Williams, Joseph Yearwood, Keiroy Subit and Rishi Persaud) facing an extended stay on his Delhi-area family farm.

The four Trinidadians transitioned from their regular bunkhouse into DeDecker's man cave, equipped with a pool table and better suited to winter living.

"The community has been pretty good," he added, citing 'outreach' including donations of clothing and groceries. DeDecker also does what he can respectful of COVID regulations to maintain personal contact.

"Try and make them feel they're not alone," he said of activities which have included tobogganing. "Kind of beat them up sledding behind the quad," he smiled.

"Try and make it enjoyable, show them what a Canadian winter is."

The weather hasn't been the issue it might have been anticipated to be DeDecker concedes.

"They keep asking me when it's going to get cold," he said, noting a habit of going into town in shorts raises eyebrows. "So I guess in a way they make us look bad," he laughed.

If there has been a positive to the year, it may be heightened public appreciation for the sacrifice and contribution migrant workers make to not only the Canadian economy, but its food security.

"People actually might have realized a little bit where their food comes from," says DeDecker, 'sickened' by a publicly-funded broadcaster's portrayal of migrant worker programs.

"I think the bottom line is, if we treated people without respect, they wouldn't come back to the same farm year after year or this program would not exist."

The past year's situation has not ideal, however as it extends into 2021 there is a collective effort to accept and meet its challenge.

"Make the best of it and try and help them get through," said DeDecker.

The firewood fundraiser is part of that overall goal, has generated positive comment, and also gives DeDecker something to do while preparing for an upcoming year he sincerely hopes is better than its predecessor.

"Just do what you can to make the most of what you get handed to you." 🌿



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Canadian sunflower growers poised for 'booming' year as acreage and prices climb higher

Demand may also be getting a 'nudge' from pandemic birdseed market

They are one of Canada's top feel-good crops — fields of bright yellow sunflowers have been delivering smiles for road-tripping families for countless summers.

This year, the country's sunflower business may be smiling, too.

Demand and prices for the special crop are both looking good while the number of planted sunflower hectares has grown to its highest level in years.

"It's a time where the industry is booming," said Chuck Penner of LeftField Commodity Research in Winnipeg. "It's at the upper part of the cycle right now."

Though popular across the country, the bulk — roughly 90 per cent — of sunflowers are grown in Manitoba. This summer, the province is growing a lot more.

The amount of sunflowers planted in the province this year has climbed to about 36,400 hectares from roughly 25,500 in 2019, according to the Manitoba Crop Alliance.

Agriculture minister announces details of \$50M program to direct surplus food to those in need

"It's a pretty big jump for us — probably the biggest acreage increase we've seen in a long time," said Darcelle Graham, the alliance's chief operating officer.

Graham said numbers that high haven't been seen since 2015.

"So pretty exciting from a sunflower world," she said.

Though a popular flower across the country, commercial demand for sunflowers is on the rise. One expert says the total number of commercial sunflower acres will probably be close to 100,000 — or 40,500 hectares — believed to be the highest number in years. (Samantha Craggs/CBC)

Canadian growers plant both oilseed and confectionery sunflowers. For years, confectionery sunflowers — typically roasted and eaten as a snack — were the most popular.

But Graham said a lot of the growth recently has been in oilseeds. Some of those seeds end up being crushed for oil, but a high proportion find their way into birdseed.

There are any number of market factors that shape demand and price for sunflower seeds, like any commodity. A leading factor this year is a fairly tight supply of sunflowers in the United States.

People buying bird food

But an apparent rise in the popularity of birdwatching during the COVID-19 pandemic may also be providing a little bit of a lift in the market, too.

"I actually had a buyer say to me the other day that through all of COVID, one thing people are buying more of is bird food," Graham said.

Ben Friesen, purchasing manager for sunflowers at Scoular Canada, which recently expanded its bird food manufacturing facility in Winkler, Man., said it's been a good year.

Scoular's confection sunflower business is important to the company, he said, but the bird

food business "really picked up the pace" and is even stronger this year.

"With ... a lot of people being at home, working from home, I think they have more time to be feeding birds and watching them," he said.

"I think it has probably increased the production and the usage of the bird food."

Tighter supplies in the U.S.

Across the country, LeftField's Penner said, the total number of sunflower acres will probably be close to 100,000 — or 40,500 hectares — which he believes will be the highest number in years.

He said sunflower seed prices have also improved, with confection seed types fetching 30 to 32 cents per pound and oilseed sunflower seeds getting closer to 22 to 25 cents per pound.

"Which is, historically, a strong price," Penner said.

He pointed to regular market dynamics for the increased acreage and demand for Canadian sunflowers, noting sunflower seed supplies in the U.S. have been tighter.

"They had a smaller crop [the last two years], so fairly tight supply," Penner said. "So we've been exporting more sunflowers into the U.S. and that was already happening pre-COVID."

Pandemic-related factors may be providing a "nudge" to prices as well, he said.

For those in the business, what counts is that Canada's sunflower sector might have a year that looks as good as its crops this summer.

"They really look beautiful right now," Friesen said. 🌻



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Bruce Court and Tracey Kloepfer-Court not only operate the grain elevators and are parents but also find time to volunteer with agriculture groups.

Court Farms has become major grain handler in Norfolk

From humble beginnings with three grain bins 14 years ago, Court Farms has grown to become one of the largest grain handlers in Norfolk County.

The path to the present operation with Bruce Court and Tracey Kloepfer-Court operating the grain elevators was a long one, with a few detours along the way.

Bruce's parents Bill and Sally were from the Ottawa area and moved to Norfolk when his father got a job as a PhD chemist working at the Delhi Research Station in the late 1970s. They always had a desire to farm and purchased a farm on the 1st Concession STR outside of Courtland in 1977.

Tracey, who was originally from a dairy and cash farm in Burford, and Bruce met when both attended the University of Guelph to take the degree program majoring in Agronomy. The couple married in 2011. Tracey was working in the crop protection industry until the fall of 2012 when Court Farms reached the point it required her presence full-time.

Bruce built the first bins in 2007.

"At the time, he was taking grain to Cargill in Springford," Tracey recounted. "They approached Bruce to take grain on behalf of them."

Although there weren't natural gas lines running by the farm on the Bell Mill Side

Road, it was at the corner, so Bruce just needed to pay to extend the lines.

"That is one of the good things about being in Norfolk is there was gas on almost every road because of tobacco days," Bruce said. "A lot of counties don't have that luxury."

When the original one-year agreement ran out it was a time of change in the grain industry in Ontario.

"That's when Cargill was getting out of the grain business," Tracey said. "Some of the customers remained here and he started getting new people."

"The co-op in Courtland was closing and Springford was closing," Bruce said. "We didn't think we would get this big. I thought we'd take grain for a few neighbours."

Expansion has taken place every year since except for two. Court Farms now has 14 bins and capacity of two million bushels. Bruce started with one dump



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pit, and now has two. As a farmer, he knows if the truck does not get back to the field quickly it can hold up the combine. With this in mind, he designed the facility so trucks can get in and out as quick as possible. It takes only seven minutes from the time the truck comes in to be weighed to when it is weighed out empty after being unloaded.

The facility's two tower dryers can handle 2,000 to 4,000 bushels per hour, dependent on

Tracey helps at the elevators with unloading and even moving trucks around the yard.

In the spring, Bruce and Tracey farm 2,500 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and rye on rented and owned land. One interesting thing of note is no-till has been used since 1988 when Bill first heard about it at the research station. Preserving the sandy soil, which is prone to blowing, was one reason for this move.

"Another reason we started doing it was that

user. With the majority, the farmer has a contract with Court Farms to deliver so many bushels at a certain price.

A third option, off-farm grain, is a growth area for Court Farms. In this case, the farmers have their own storage facility and deliver their own crop to the end user, but their crop is sold through Bruce.

Content with the present size of the elevator, Court Farms is expanding their off-farm grain



The elevators and dryer of Court Farms are an impressive structure on Bell Mill Side Road.

the corn moisture level. With two dump pits, one can be dedicated to soybeans and the other to corn during the time when both commodities are being harvested. Once the soybeans are off and corn harvest is in full swing, both can handle corn.

Although the facility is highly automated, Bruce likes to keep an eye on it while drying takes place from the middle of October when the first corn comes in until it is all off. This means checking it every few hours around the clock.

Rye and wheat come off in July and August. Before soybeans start in the fall, most of the wheat and rye has been shipped out and the bins are empty. Any that is left is moved to three smaller grain bins on the adjacent property where the main office is and where Bruce and Tracey live. Most of the wheat is used for flour and the rye is sold to Huron Commodities.

Soybeans are shipped to the terminals in Hamilton and can literally end up anywhere in the world.

A lot of the corn goes to the IGPC ethanol plant in Aylmer. The remainder goes to domestic manufacturers for agriculture feed and sweeteners and for export through the terminals in Hamilton.

In 2017, Court Farms partnered with Lofthouse Custom Farming on Best Line in Elgin County. Lofthouse owns the bins but Court Farms buys and sells the grain moving in and out of there. Another 700,000 bushels are handled there.

Court Farms has three trucks of their own and hire additional trucks to move grain in the fall. Court Farms and their drivers' truck about half of the grain they bring in, out. Some customers pick up the grain while some farmers move their own back out.

There is one full-time employee, John, to assist Bruce at the farm and elevators. Another is added during busy times to truck the grain and there is a part-time person in the office to assist Tracey. Although administration is her big thing, during busy season

in school full-time then and he (Bill) worked full-time so it saved a lot of time," Bruce said.

And even their children are involved. Their task is to sweep around the elevator and bins when switching from one commodity to another.

The older ones also help load and unload trucks.

Bruce also follows the commodity markets throughout the year. As a supplier to IGPC, they need to have corn available year-round. This means some of it is sold in the fall and not stored, but some is kept right through

to August.

Court Farms works with a few different arrangements for farmers. With some, the farmer delivers the corn; it is dried and stored until the farmer picks the corn up for delivery to the end

business. To that end, they hired former agriculture banker Scott MacKinnon to promote their off-farm purchases and sales.

"We don't have to have the facilities or man hours handling the grain, it's a paperwork exercise," Bruce said of off-farm sales.

As if this couple is not busy enough with the elevators, farming and raising their combined six children, they both are volunteers with farm groups. Bruce is a delegate for Grain Farmers of Ontario for Norfolk-Elgin and Tracey is the secretary-treasurer for Norfolk Soil and Crop Improvement Association.

In the past 14 years, hard work has paid off with tremendous growth for Court Farms.

"It's just worked out because a lot of the commercial elevators are closing and a lot of private guys are filling the holes, and not just in Norfolk," Bruce said.

If this pace will continue for the next 14 years, is something only the future knows. 🌱

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Meuse Brewing Company blends heritage, Norfolk pride

There is a consistency of theme and approach flowing through the Meuse Brewing Company's branding and inspiration.

The river which lends its name to the craft brewery begins in France, charting a course through Belgium, on to the Dutch town where award-winning brewer Mischa Geven was born before emptying into the North Sea adjacent to life and business partner Estelle van Kleef's birthplace. Meuse Brewery takes inspiration from the brewing traditions of those regions, however, the company logo also incorporates Eastern Flowering Dogwood leaves, bridging the gap between heritage and home with this county's official flower.

There is really no place like Norfolk," said van Kleef. "This is where we want to be.

"There is really no place like Norfolk," said van Kleef. "This is where we want to be."

They are not newcomers, she arriving 21 years ago at the age of seven, Geven taking the 'scenic route' through Belgium, Greece and Cyprus before emigrating 16 years ago. Beyond their birth country the couple shares entrepreneurial spirit engendered by parental example, the van Kleefs as the sole Canadian greenhouse producer of potted bromeliad plants outside of B.C., Geven's family founding New Limburg Brewery near Nixon. His

positive experience as brewer for several years and association with van Kleef encouraged them to seek their own unique path.

"As most young people do, we wanted to spread our wings and do our thing," she explained.

Mischa's parents gave their blessing to the endeavour, supportive both on their website and through a contract brew agreement helping defray infrastructure costs during start-up. He and van Kleef purchased and moved to a 25-acre Scotland-area property near the end of 2018, subsequently acquiring what was Wholesome Pickins' offsite retail outlet along Highway 24, with the intention of using it as an associated summer-time bottle shop/sampling space.

They began production in November 2019, initiating the process for 'Saison de la Meuse' to be included in the LCBO the following month. That culminated in May 2020, and was followed by a version infused with Norfolk Cherry Company cherries which turned out to be a 'big hit.'

Coincidentally, an uninvited global pandemic halted 'non-essential' construction plans for onsite production facilities in the farm's barn, and retail development in the adjacent farm market. Shifting gears, the couple reopened the farmers market under the Meuse label, focussing for the moment on locally-grown fruits and vegetables, along with plants, decorative items and preserves.



"The silver lining for us is we've gotten to learn the market side," said van Kleef.


Ultimately, the market will run in supportive conjunction with the brewery. Among other offerings for example, cherries and cherry-based products dovetailing with their infused brew will be featured.

COVID has limited infrastructural, not product development. Saison (French for season) de la

Meuse is brewed in the tradition of a Belgian blond farmhouse ale, originating from traditionally lower-alcohol beverages for farmhouse workers created with local ingredients, the process making beer safer than the drinking the water of the time.

"Over time the style has evolved," said van Kleef, from two to three per cent alcohol by vol-





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Co-founder Estelle van Kleef proudly displays the Meuse Brewing Company's inaugural offering, Saison de la Meuse.



ume, to five to seven. French 'saisons' tend to be sweeter, Belgian lighter and dryer.

"Which is the style we gravitate to."

Geven developed a third beer, 'Extra Hopped Farmhouse Ale' brewed with local Hayhoe hops, its official launch delayed with the cancellation of Eat & Drink Norfolk.

Beyond the Belgian-inspired line, he is also enthusiastically exploring barrel-aged lambic beers, relatable to characteristics wine takes on when aged in varying barrels. Geven won a Canadian Brewing Awards silver medal for a Gueuze-inspired beer, based on the tradition of blending brews barrel aged, typically for between one and three years, fruited in some incarnations for a particularly complex offering.

"When the top critics agree with what you are doing, that's reassuring you are going in the right direction," said van Kleef, proud of three other national and five provincial awards Mischa has been involved in.

"He's one of the most modest people you'll meet, so I'm bragging on his behalf," she smiled.

One might suggest access to quality beer is a plus while attempting to build a new business in the midst of a global pandemic. However, despite its unwelcome presence, neither van Kleef - who has an undergrad in marketing and a masters degree in International Management - or Geven has seriously second-guessed their decisions, or considered seeking alternative jobs.

"That always feels like plan B," she said of a career path longer, but for them, more comfortable.

"Running your own business is rewarding in so many ways," she added. "If you had to sum it up, I'd sum it up as the only option."

Ultimately a 'mom and pop' operation where they do most of the work and maintain control, add their own home-grown organic barley to the mix, and take customers along with them on a productive, enjoyable journey is the goal. In short, elbow room, fresh air, a challenge and a dream.

"If we can make it through this one (year), we should be able to make it through a few more," van Kleef concluded with a laugh, admitting 2020 has not been ideal. "But we have the next 30 years to figure it out." 🌱

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Workforce training programs at Conestoga

Norfolk County has long been recognized as Ontario's Garden with its rich soil, favorable climate conditions, diversity of crops and long-standing family run farms that have provided food for our tables. In recent years it has become clear that there is an increasing need for more skilled equipment operators to take these crops from planting to harvest to table.

Conestoga College recognized this need and are working with the federal and provincial governments, through the Canadian Agriculture Partnership, to launch and deliver a pilot program at Brantford Airport. The new program will expand training opportunities for those currently in the farm sector and also better prepare those who are interested in a career in agriculture to work on farms in many key areas in need. "Conestoga's airport campus is considered a premier training center, delivering the skills that will lead to many meaningful and well-paying jobs" states Phil McColeman, MP for Brantford-Brant. Students will learn new skilled trades that are in high demand in areas such as spraying and fertilizing operations, custom tillage and harvesting operations.

This project is just one of several approved government programs to fill the resurgence of interest from young people, who currently live on farms, to invest in an agricultural education. Until now there has been a lack of post-secondary programming to learn about working on farms. The new course is shorter than other College course, just 16 weeks. It covers basic theory, practical training, electrical techniques, some auto tech training as well and is results focused and doesn't necessarily follow the traditional route to a diploma or degree. In winter, hangar courses will be held in the main building and will include some welding

training. In April students will work full-time in the field on different pieces of equipment.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture said colleges have taken a step back and taken a hard look at the bigger picture when it comes to a recognized need for skilled managers in agriculture. Ontario is recognized as having a diverse agriculture sector and this new program will help meet the labour and training needs of the agri-food sector while supporting those who have a sincere passion for a career in agriculture. This is not only key to our economy but it also ensures our food supply chain continues to produce healthy and nutritional food for all Ontario families.

To ensure the development of this new program, the governments of both Canada and Ontario have announced a commitment of more than \$180,000.00. The project is part of an overall investment of more than \$750,000.00 to help recruit and train workers that are critical in keeping the province's essential food supply functioning and food self-efficiency in Ontario.

Conestoga President John Tibbits said "As well as addressing critical workforce needs in Ontario's agriculture and food sector, the Agriculture Equipment Operator training initiative will provide opportunities for local residents to develop in-demand skills, advance their careers and contribute to the success and well-being of the community. Jobs are becoming more technology-infused and it's more than just driving the machines. Food processing and agriculture is one of the largest industries in Canada but it's often overlooked by young people coming out of high school. We greatly appreciate the province's investment in this important initiative". Hopes are high that the new agriculture program will "grow dramatically" in the future by showing farm children they can

continue to work at home on evenings or weekends and farmers can send prospective employees for training locally. Once the program is off the ground they hope to offer it as a 1 year Ontario College Certificate program.

It has been recognized that access to skilled labour is critical on farms and in processing facilities. This pilot program will help farmers meet their labour needs while also allowing more Canadians to obtain meaningful and challenging employment in the agricultural field. Many children of our already established farmers have shown an interest in continuing the family operations. The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Ont. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, states "A skilled agricultural workforce will unlock the tremendous potential of our agri-food industry and help our farmers and food processors to continue to drive our economy, create jobs and feed Canada and the world".

The development of this pilot program was initiated by the County of Brant's economic development department in conjunction with Conestoga College, the South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation, Libro Credit Union and the Workplace Planning Board of Grand Erie. Russell Press, Brant's director of economic development and tourism stated in a recent interview "We are very pleased that this new program will be delivered in the County of Brant...It has long been identified with rural living, agricultural output and the value of farming. "

If you are interested in this new program or know someone who might be you can visit the School of Trades & Apprenticeship (trades@conestoga.on.ca) for more information and how to apply for next year's intake to be held in January 2022.



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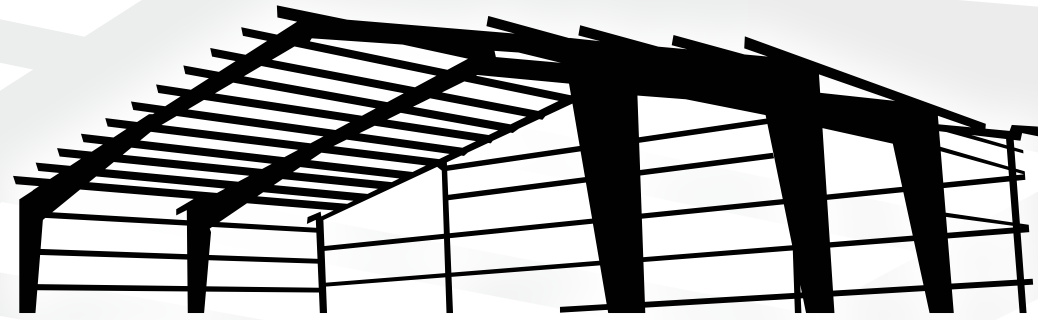
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