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Editorial

It's no secret that times are a bit tough and unpredictable right now for so many people, right across our country. Farmers are no exception as we deal with concerns stemming from sudden and unprecedented shifts due to COVID-19. In the livestock sectors a lot of issues are arising from slow downs and shut downs in our processing chains. It shows us how interconnected all the steps of our food supply chain are. Farmers can grow and produce food but it's our processing sector that transforms those raw products into consumable food stuffs. Right or wrong, our processors all deal with a lot of rules and red tape which ultimately drives many smaller processors out of the market place and creates an environment that favours very large and highly efficient players. There are benefits to this type of a system but also many disadvantages. One of the major disadvantages that we seem to be faced with again and again is that when a large processor goes off-line, for any diverse number of reasons, it leaves whole sectors of our ag. industry reeling. Every. Single. Time. I don't have the knowledge and insights to have a lot of the answers to this dilemma but I suspect that a system that allows a larger diversity of processors to, not only survive, but to thrive, may result in benefits for consumers and farmers alike. One example off the top of my head is that our major grocery store chains all have rules in place that they will sell meat supplied only from federally licensed abattoirs, and not from provincial plants. I don't have a big solution in mind or a ground breaking idea to bring forward. In this crazy time we are in right now, and in the tough months and maybe years that are yet to come from the fallout of all this, let's all try to support local food systems as much as possible. Make buying meat at a local butcher shop a habit, pick Ontario produce in the grocery store, look for the blue cow or blue Canadian milk symbols on your dairy products, look for local sources of your favourite foods whenever it's possible for you to do. Be kind to Canadian farmers of all sizes and shapes, they are all feeling a degree of stress right now. Be sure not to share misinformation about food and farmers. Make a point to share and pass along their positive stories and messages. Be proud of all the farm families in your community behind that food and share in the bounty and great variety of what is grown, nurtured and cared for right here in our own backyards. Taking care of each other through tough times will benefit us all in the long run.

Written by Anna Haupt, McCutcheon Farms – Farm "Tails" From Moo to You

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Letter to the Editor

Our family appreciated reading the great article in the recent Norfolk Farms (spring issue 2020) about the Sharp/Walker families' hazelnut industry driving forward. We were pleased to see this article featured in the centre of the issue along with many advertisements related to the hazelnut business. One of whom we contacted after seeing their ad and recently met with.

In reading this article as well as the other one about 'Jewels of Kilt', I found it very inspiring to learn about the various stages of the hazelnut industry here now in Ontario. Everything was so optimistic which will help your readers understand what things are like for this new thriving industry in Ontario.

I have shared your publication with many friends and family!

All the best,
Tori W.
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Farmers appreciate Help NorFarms

It didn't take long for three farms to get their groceries during the first 60 minutes of operation at the Help NorFarms warehouse.

Open Thursdays and Fridays at 8 a.m., co-organizers Matt Wilkinson of Wilkinson's Your Independent Grocer on Main Street in Delhi, and Jim Norman, president of the Delhi and District Chamber of Commerce, both wore masks as they waited for the day's 11 customers.

First-timer Mariette Stefek of Stefek Farms arrived ahead of her timeslot of 8 a.m. at the warehouse on Argyle Avenue in Delhi. She'd already placed

her order online a day or two earlier. She picked up some bottled water, pop, eggs and sugar for the eight Mexican temporary workers who are on their farm. There are usually 21 here to help with the potato and tobacco crops, but not this year, she said. The farm is hindered by the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit's quarantine rules of only three people to a bunkhouse and the farm only has three bunkhouses, she said.

After unloading items into the back of her van, Mariette paused to note how quick her shopping excursion had been and to voice her appreciation for the establishment of Help NorFarms. "I think it's great. I can't say enough about how much we appreciate Matt and Jim for getting it going. It's been a lot of work for them."

Graig Bouw was the next farmer to arrive. After answering COVID-19 questions about his health, he was accompanied by a volunteer between the aisles of canned, bagged and boxed foods. Volunteer Wes Wilson had already weighed some fresh produce for the Bouw Farm order of four pounds of Roma tomatoes, two heads of lettuce, two bags of carrots and some garlic.

Graig, who was very satisfied with the grocery pickup process, said that so far there are only two seasonal foreign workers at his tobacco farm. He is expecting four more but not sure when they'll arrive.

Next, a pick up arrived just in time for the 9 o'clock slot. Employees Mattson Demarest and Owen Kot were getting the Ryder's Farm order. Thirty-six offshore workers are already at the Lynedoch-area farm where they are picking asparagus. They'll also help with the ginseng, sweet potato and onion crops.

It took two carts to get all the food over to the truck and the guys quickly unloaded boxes of cereal, numerous pounds of bananas and some frozen blueberry muffins, among several other things.

Afterwards, Mattson commented on the pickup experience. "It's all been very easy. It's very organized and very simple," he said.

The orders are billed through Wilkinson's Your Independent Grocer, so no money changes hands at the warehouse. There are close to 200 items available at the warehouse. More items might be added as needed. Almost 50 farms are currently participating. 🌱




Graig Bouw had a cart of food for the order placed by G&J Bouw Ltd. Only two of the offshore workers have arrived at the tobacco farm so far.



Mattson Demarest (left) and Owen Kot picked up the order at the Help NorFarms warehouse quickly and easily. They were getting the order for the Ryder's Farm at Lynedoch.



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New way of grocery shopping eases worries and saves time for farmers with offshore workers

Help NorFarms is up and running. It's the online shopping experience, brought about because of the COVID-19 pandemic, where farmers can source food for their temporary seasonal workers without ever setting foot into a grocery store.

By the long weekend in May, 30 farmers requiring food for 150 workers were already customers of Help NorFarms. "It was a successful start, but we are not anywhere near capacity," said Jim Norman, one of the organizers. He's expecting numbers to increase as the growing season unfolds and more seasonal workers arrive.

Jim is retired after a 41-year career with the Royal Bank that included 16 years at its headquarters in downtown Toronto. He is also president of the Delhi and District Chamber of Commerce. A few years ago it was about to fold but now boasts 60 members from within Delhi as well as Langton and Vanessa.

The pandemic brought many things to a halt, including farming. "The economy around here is based on agriculture," he said, and our farmers are struggling. Consequently, the question had to

be asked: "What could Delhi and District Chamber of Commerce do to help?"

It was a little over a month ago when Jim, on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, approached local business, Wilkinson's Your Independent Grocer. Matt Wilkinson and Loblaw's were soon on board with the idea of providing an alternative for farmers and their workers. Together, the Chamber and Wilkinson's came up with a plan where farmers could order food online and then pick up their order at a spot separate from the grocery store.

Matt Wilkinson, who has been selling food to the Delhi community for 15 years, pointed out how intertwined the local economy is with agriculture. As COVID-19 spread, we quickly learned it'd be a big problem for the farmers, he said, and that we needed to help them.

Warehouse space became available at 300 Argyle Street. Cleaning and painting was quickly done. A forklift was needed so one was offered free of charge; and so were the services of a graphic artist; along with carts for hauling groceries; fire extinguishers; and masks and gloves for participating farmers and the Help NorFarms volunteers. All in all, 22 businesses

have gotten on board, and over 30 volunteers are helping.

A five-page submission was also prepared for the Health Unit and approval received. As well, an online ordering system had to be prepared. No small feat for any volunteer organization, it was accomplished by Tim Norton, a friend of Jim's from his Royal Bank days.

Please turn to page A15 →



Jim Norman, (left) president of the Delhi and District Chamber of Commerce; Matt Wilkinson (centre) of Wilkinson's Your Independent Grocer; and volunteer Wes Wilson are shown inside the Help NorFarms warehouse in Delhi. It's a grocery service specifically for farmers.

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Godelie Family Farm extending to another

Christine D'Hulster's education-financing project has graduated into a full family commitment to producing quality local produce.

"This is where we're meant to be," said D'Hulster, nee Godelie, of her and husband Jason's decision to take over from her parents Gary and Blanche. "We love the lifestyle it provides and we're proud of what we do."

"It's hands-on and a family commitment we do together."

The Godelie Family Farm produce shed has become a familiar fixture on the south-east corner of the intersection of Oxford Roads 59 and 19 east of Otterville, formalized expansion of a sweet corn stand



From left, Christine, Ashton, Audrey and Jason D'Hulster are embracing a family future together in agriculture production.

created in the late 1990s and grown as an offshoot of supporting Christine and her three siblings' education fund.

"We built it up and then we all left," she recalls. "My dad (Gary) was kind of like, 'Now what?' He took what we started and went with it and everything else kind of spiralled off of there."

Ultimately, Gary Godelie would transition out of tobacco and into potatoes and sweet corn as core specialties, adding lesser amounts of strawberries, raspberries, tomatoes, peppers and other crops to support the

It helps us get up every day and makes each and every task we have to accomplish have deeper meaning and connectedness to a greater purpose.

stand's operation under Blanche Godelie's direction ("Now, that's me," Christine interjected) as well as bringing in additional local produce - clearly labelled to identify its origin - to broaden offerings.

Five years ago, 'born-and-bred tobacco farmer' Jason D'Hulster's change in career presented an opportunity at an opportune time to explore another opportunity in agriculture by joining and helping

to continue the broader Godelie family business. Inspired by NDHS's Jeff Overeem, Christine had gone on to a career as a high school teacher, and while she remains employed in that passion as head of the tech department at Holy Trinity Catholic High School in Simcoe, she felt a pull back to

her rural roots.

"It's almost like the farm was calling me," she admitted.

Admittedly, not even immediate family members are always able to work cohesively, and the experiment began with a one-year trial period for all involved, including father and son-in-law.

"For the most part, they get along pretty well," laughed Christine. "They make it work."

In fact, Gary's habit of introducing Jason as 'my son-in-law' led to the new business's moniker representing a transition five years in the making: Son-In-Law Produce Ltd.

"That's exactly how it came about," Christine explained.

The new company will look a lot like the old, its arrival marked semi-officially by mounting of a new sign on the produce shed. Potatoes and sweet corn will continue to be major crops, along with the addition of green beans on an expanded scale, with thrice-weekly shipments to the Toronto Food Terminal planned for 2020. A fourth farmers' market is being added in the GTA in Mississauga, 7 a.m. till noon Sundays, to go along

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with Saturday from 7 a.m. till noon in Waterdown and Wednesday and Thursdays from 3-7 p.m. at Bloor and Borden, and East Lynn Park, respectively, with Gary manning the booths at each.

"He loves it, it's his retirement dream," said Christine. "He can go, he can interact with people."

"He's proud of the business and proud of the products."

Gary still finds his way out to the fields, but the family transition will allow both he and wife Blanche to pick their spots rather than being responsible first in a rural version of retirement, enhanced by family continuity in a business built quite literally from the ground up.

A potential third generation is already more than waiting in the wings, Audrey (12) and Ashton (9) D'Hulster growing their own herbs and onions respectively, for the various market outlets, quizzing their grandpa about sales upon his return.

"Both kids definitely have an interest," said Christine. "Ashton loves getting dirty and getting out there and Audrey enjoys the entrepreneurial side and getting to know our customers."

Balancing two careers may be a familiar if demanding approach for modern farm families, but Christine sees hers at least as related through connection to community. As a teacher, she is preparing students for their futures, as a farmer, she enjoys producing locally sourced, grown and supporting produce, a passion and mindset helping her and her family move forward.

"It helps us get up every day and makes each and every task we have to accomplish have deeper meaning and connectedness to a greater purpose."

Admittedly, this year has brought unique challenges and obstacles well beyond the agricultural norm.

"Didn't think 2020 would be this overwhelming," Christine laughed, doubling down however, on the rightness of their actively farming return home.

"I never thought I'd be back here, that's for sure," she concluded. "But we're here loving it, living the dream." 🌱



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Norfolk farmers facing incredible stress

Brett Schuyler was not at a loss for words.

His lawyer had prepared him well for the process of a legal hearing. However, there was simply too much to say, too much, too important, quantifying life rather than mere livelihood too close to home for one physically, mentally and emotionally-exhausted person to convey. And with the weight of Norfolk County's single most pervasively-stressful year of agricultural adversity imported into the moment, Schuyler found himself unable to respond.



Brett Schuyler (left, holding his daughter), explains a facet of the family business to a visitor (right) during a farm tour.

"I just couldn't talk, the Chair ended up taking a 10 minute break," he admitted. "I haven't had something like that happen to me in a long time."

The question was ice-breaking small talk: 'How are things on the farm?'

To be fair to one of Norfolk's leading young agri-businessmen, there's a lot hanging on his response. Figures presented at the hearing indicate 60 per cent of Ontario's fresh farmgate produce comes from Norfolk County. The viability of the industry speaks not only to the area's economic health, but Canadians' ability to source adequate quality product grown under Canadian standards, in very real terms, national food security.

Evolved reality carries broader questions, but practically means a significant percentage of that food is produced through the critical contributions of skilled, experienced, dependable and committed foreign migrant workers.

In a normal non-COVID year, Schuyler Farms welcomes over 200, a number significantly curtailed by factors such as Haldimand-Norfolk medical officer of health Dr. Nesathurai's Section 22 order, limiting capacity to three people per bunkhouse, host countries not allowing workers to travel, processing delays and other factors.

The impact on ability to source labour limited Schuyler Farms pruning operations, meant \$800,000 worth of asparagus was left in the field and casts massive doubt on approaching labour-intensive cherry and apple harvests.

"We are just asking to be treated the same as the rest of Ontario," says Schuyler, who brought forward what he sees as a more broadly representative appeal to that ruling. "It's our name on the sheet, but there are a lot of farmers behind it."

The appeal was launched 15 days after the 'three per bunkhouse' order was initiated March 26th, the hearing ran Monday, May 25 to Monday, June 1, at a combined cost Schuyler estimates, of roughly a quarter of million dollars. A response to or decision on the appeal was anticipated to take an additional two weeks.

The issue's complexity was underlined by a recent COVID outbreak within Norfolk, highlighting the attendant challenges, both physical reality and optical negativity.

"They did everything right," said Schuyler, alluding to a reported \$700,000 expenditure for enhanced physically-isolated quarantine accommodation. "And then they get the outbreak."

Allowing zero migrant workers into Canada would be preferable from a purely medical perspective, particularly perhaps to those with a disconnect to practical agricultural reality, no comprehension on how their food is produced. The reality of zero migrants would also arguably translate

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into significantly curtailed production, potentially threatening Canadian food security.

There is also the personally-painful negative light migrant workers are being presented in in some quarters.

“What I’m seeing is ‘stay home’ and these men and women who are accepting risk and putting it all on the line to come here and grow our food, being treated like they are a high-risk disease vector,” said Schuyler. “Not everyone feels that way, but I’ve seen a lot of comments like ‘Don’t let them come.’

“I believe that is unjust and embarrassing for our society. Instead of that, there should be an outpouring of support and respect for these people instead of what they are getting.

“The whole situation is just disheartening.”

Potential alternatives include local labour or the equivalent of an urban-sourced agricultural temp agency. Both present opportunities and concerns, including a lack of skilled experience, as well as what some see as enhanced risk for community-sourced transmission, compared to quarantined migrant worker populations.

There are reasons temporary foreign workers have evolved into a significant percentage of Canada’s agriculture’s labour force, and remain the first option for many farmers, who best case, may be looking at half their usual numbers.

Bringing in a migrant workforce brings attendant risk of an outbreak, not bringing them may effectively mean leaving produce in the field. Balancing that risk-reward equation appropriately is the unenviable task for Norfolk’s farmers as well as elected and appointed officials, a crucial and complicated calculation carrying ramifications for the county’s long-term agricultural viability, health care system, economic outlook and ultimately, Canadian food security.

“The last time I checked, it was important to have food,” Schuyler commented wryly, frustration stemming in part from being called essential and ‘told to get to work, but then not being treated as an essential workforce.’

“Don’t tell us we are essential and then put handcuffs on us,” he said, adding later, “I’m not sure our society understands we have to be operational and work to produce food.”

The farmer way is to tough it out, to get through it, adjust to contemporary reality of a full crop and limited workforce.

“We have to put a plan together, but we do not think about it right now because we are just hoping it gets better. But we are all starting to realize that’s not going to happen.”

Leaving food in the field is already occurring with asparagus, says Schuyler.

“And then it will go into the next crop. And then the reality becomes since we import so much from the United States we’d better hope to high heaven there is a surplus.

“I just have a feeling Trump is not going to send us food over Americans.”

Quite obviously, Schuyler has a vested interest, but also a deeply personal commitment to producing rather than sitting it out.

“If we are going to see a bunch of food not get grown this year or left in the field, you want to know you at least tried. If we are going to see a bunch of farmers suffer this year, you want to know you at least tried.

“But the big one is, if we are going to be short of food this year, you want to know you tried.”

Of all years, 2020 is one for those with access to a piece of ground, seeds or plants, a bit of horticultural knowledge and a work ethic to take food security into their own

hands. Ironically, the huge majority of Canadian consumers who are 0-for-4 on those counts are also unaware this year carries significantly elevated possibility their extended cheap food holiday could end or outright shortages occur, the pivotal role foreign migrant workers play in Canadian food security, and the incredible stress farm families are subject to. Some will exit voluntarily, others will not survive the year, each will be affected. They are due the respect and support Schuyler spoke of for migrant worker counterparts.

And that, in brief, incomplete terms, is how ‘things are on the farm.’

“This is taking a big toll on a lot of people around me,” Schuyler concluded, voice betraying multi-tiered exhaustion, sense of humour and laugh intact, but tinged with bitterness and frustration, rather than trademark optimism. “That (not being able to speak) wasn’t to put a show on, that’s just what happened, it just tells you something is going on. It was strange to me how it creeps up and you don’t realize it until something happens.

“And it tells me if this is happening to me, there are a lot more people out there dealing with the same thing.” 🍏



Brett Schuyler (third from left), flanked by three of the over 200 migrant workers who are integral to the family operation, during a previous season’s apple harvest.



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Tom O'Neill of the Norfolk Fruit Growers Association is about to retire. He's been an industry spokesperson for local apples that are sold across Canada and around the world.

Tom O'Neill retiring from NFGA

A key player in the continuing success of the Norfolk Fruit Growers Association is retiring. Tom O'Neill steps down from the role of general manager at the end of June.

For 37 years, Tom has been a driving force in the packaging, storing and year-round promotion of locally grown apples that are consumed here in Ontario and now around the world.

"I've had a really good job and I've worked for good people who've been forward thinking," Tom said

Born and raised in Halifax, he attended the Nova Scotia Agriculture College before heading to the University of Guelph's Ontario Agriculture College. He graduated in 1978 and got a job with a custom farmer in the Campbellville area where he stayed for the next few years.

He returned to Nova Scotia and got married in 1980. He and Christine are parents to Caitlin, Tristan, Ariadne and Liam.

The couple was back in Ontario in 1982. Then, in May 1983, Tom was hired as a management trainee by the Norfolk Fruit Growers Association. Reporting to Keith

Collver, Tom recalls that some 45 people worked in the plant and there were about 10 salaried staff. In 1985, he became production manager at the facility; and in 1991 was named general manager. His career has spanned 37 years.

The most popular eating apple when he joined NFGA was the McIntosh, followed by the Empire in the 1990s and now in 2020, it's the Gala and the Honey Crisp. Orchards are a long-term investment, he said, so it takes time for different apple varieties to come to market.

The Norfolk Fruit Growers Association was established as a growers' co-operative in 1906 by James E. Johnston. It helped small acreage apple orchards to pool and market their fruit. Now in 2020, there are five members of the co-operative growing large acreages. It is run by a board of directors, with grower Marshall Schuyler as president.

Over the years, Tom has been involved in improvements in grading, inspections, fruit quality, and packaging. In 1987 there was a plant addition and cold storage was a big part of it. The building is a good example of the history of controlled atmosphere history, he said, with the storage rooms at differing sizes based on the information that was available at the time. Some 900,000 bushels can now be accommodated. It lets us put a good quality product in front of consumers, he said.

He was a member of the Ontario Apple Marketing Commission before it dissolved in the early 2000s; replaced by Ontario Apple Growers where he's sat on the fresh apple advisory committee.

Tom has also been involved with the U.S. Apple Association for quite a few years, serving as the Canadian representative. As a result, he's attended many annual marketing meetings in Chicago to discuss upcoming crops.

The best part of his job, he said, is that he's been able to sell apples all over the world. He's had the opportunity to travel to see how Norfolk's apples are received in other places.

He's also represented NFGA at the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and on the Canadian Horticulture Council.

As news of his pending retirement has spread, Tom has been honoured by several groups and organizations. He received the Outstanding Achievement Award last November from the Ontario Produce Marketing Association honouring his dedication to the Ontario Apple Marketing Commission, Ontario Apple Growers and the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers.

Tom also had the distinction last year of representing the organization when NFGA was inducted in the Norfolk County Agriculture Hall of Fame.

He's also been active in the Rotary Club of Simcoe since his former boss, Keith Collver, introduced him to the group in 1989. Over the years he's held various executive positions both at the local club level and at the District level. In 2017, he led a District 7090 vocational training team in fruit production to the Shepparton and Goulburn Valley areas of Australia.

Tom said he doesn't have any definite retirement plans, although he is staying on in an advisory role until the end of December. He praised his successor Hayden Dooney who moves into the position of general manager in July. "There's a good young team ready to take over. It's a really positive thing for the industry and the association," Tom said. 🍏

THE

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Growing together



On behalf of apple growers and others that represent the industry, The Norfolk Fruit Growers' Association and its management would like to thank Tom O'Neil for his many years of dedication and service to this industry.



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Find irrigation system problems quickly

With sandy soils and large areas of high value crop production it's well known that Norfolk is the most irrigated county of Ontario. The 2016 numbers for Haldimand-Norfolk report almost 33,000 acres of irrigated production, which is 27% of the total Ontario irrigated area (Agricultural Census).

What you may not know is whether your system is applying the water you expect to all parts of the field.

Poor Distribution Uniformity (DU) means that some plants are receiving extra water and others are receiving a lot less. This can mean reduced yields due to overwatering and underwatering in the same field!

In Ontario, DU assessments have generally uncovered that portions of the field are not receiving enough water and drought stress is occurring.

In addition, poor uniformity (DU) can mean that portions of the field are overwatered. This leads to losing water down below the roots – wasting your money on too much energy (fuel or electricity). Water moving down below the roots means that your nitrogen is also moving away from your plants – leading to lower than expected productivity (and nitrate pollution). Overwatering also leads to plant disease.

How can I measure the DU (Distribution Uniformity) of my irrigation system?

The equipment required is: pitot tube and pressure gauges (can be purchased at your irrigation dealer), graduated cylinders, and a set of 50 containers all of the same size. For drip these can be small, about 500ml, and for overhead, buckets all with the same opening size (diameter of about 30cm).

The OMAFRA You Tube channel has a video showing “How to Measure Pressure and Flow in Irrigation Systems” in a drip irrigation system. Using the OMAFRA approach, you will check key areas of the field using a step by step method. The location furthest from the pump is generally where we see low pressures or plugging which causes poor uniformity. Therefore, measure near to the pump, mid-way from the pump and farthest from the pump. You will measure both pressure and flow in the system. This will help identify the cause of the problem and how to fix it.

For travelling guns, rely on pressure gauges mounted at the hose reel and



Rebecca Shortt checks moisture content

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and fix them before impacts to crops occur

gun to monitor pressure. Set out a line of buckets (all the same size) perpendicular to the travel path and extending beyond where you expect water to be thrown. After the gun has passed, measure the volume of water in each bucket. Calculate the additional water that would come to those locations by overlap (the previous and subsequent pulls). Calculate the depth of water applied by dividing the volume by the area of the bucket opening. Now compare the depths using the DU equation:

.....
New way of grocery shopping...
Continued from page A6

The online order includes photographs of products making it easier to understand by those seasonal workers who can't read English. Each item is accompanied by a bar code, helpful for Wilkinson's who process the payments.

Most products are Loblaw based. However, Grace Foods, with a distribution centre in Toronto, is supplying some Mexican and Jamaican favourites. For instance, the Grace soda is a hit with Jamaicans. So is the Grace cock soup mix so there are about 2,600 packages now at the warehouse.

The same online ordering system is also set up to track inventory at the warehouse, so volunteers aren't caught off guard, while farmers can only order amounts from what is currently available.

Supplies like rice, beans, cooking oil, sugar and bottled water are placed inside the warehouse and marked with numbers that are in the same order as they appear on the online order form. It's designed to help farmers get what they need and to get it as quickly as possible.

An on-site climate-controlled transport houses some fresh foods like tomatoes and bananas. And there's no need to worry because there are dozens of rolls of toilet paper on hand.

Chamber secretary Sharon Lang is the farm co-ordinator. She has been in contact with various farms to explain the service and to help each get enrolled. Just like other online services, each user (farmer) has their own I.D. and password for the website.

All orders must be placed by Tuesday with pickup days being Thursday and Friday. Shifts are 8-12 and 1-5. Farmers are given a time to be at the warehouse. On the first day of operation (May 21), individual farmers were in and out in 10 minutes, Jim Norman said. "We've tried to make it as simple as we could."

In addition the new service takes some of the anxiety out of the shopping process. Some seasonal workers don't want to go shopping in town for fear of catching the virus; while some local people are concerned that they could catch it from the visitors, so the online grocery service eliminates the possibility.

Safety is a main concern, Jim said, noting that Help NorFarms must comply with Loblaw's food safety standards and government health and safety rules. Plus, there are additional guidelines to be followed because of COVID-19. Safe distancing rules are in place and there are arrows on the floor at the warehouse for all to follow. Participating farmers, along with the volunteers, are aware of the importance of following the guidelines. "We don't want anybody getting sick," Jim said. 🌱

Average of the lowest quarter of the depths

Average of all the depths

The target DU for traveling gun systems is 85%. The target DU for drip systems is 95%.

Always purchase and install a flow meter on your irrigation system. Write down the reading (how much water was used) each day. This will show if there are changes over time, which alerts you to plugging, wear or leaks.

In Ontario, the most common problems have been identified as:

Drip

Filtration unit constantly plugging leading to reduced pressure and areas of the most distant fields receiving NO WATER

Drip tape runs too long with reduced pressure at the ends leading to LESS than HALF the amount of WATER at the ENDS of the ROWS

Overhead

Not enough overlap between traveling gun pulls leading to some areas with TWICE as much WATER as needed, potential nutrient leaching and increased disease

Taking time to make sure the system is operating as expected will save you from wasting time by over or under irrigating parts of the field every time you irrigate.

I will be happy to answer questions by email. I will also take bookings for an OMAFRA irrigation system assessment for the 2021 irrigation season (*limited availability).

Rebecca Shortt

Water Quantity Engineer, OMAFRA

Rebecca.shortt@ontario.ca

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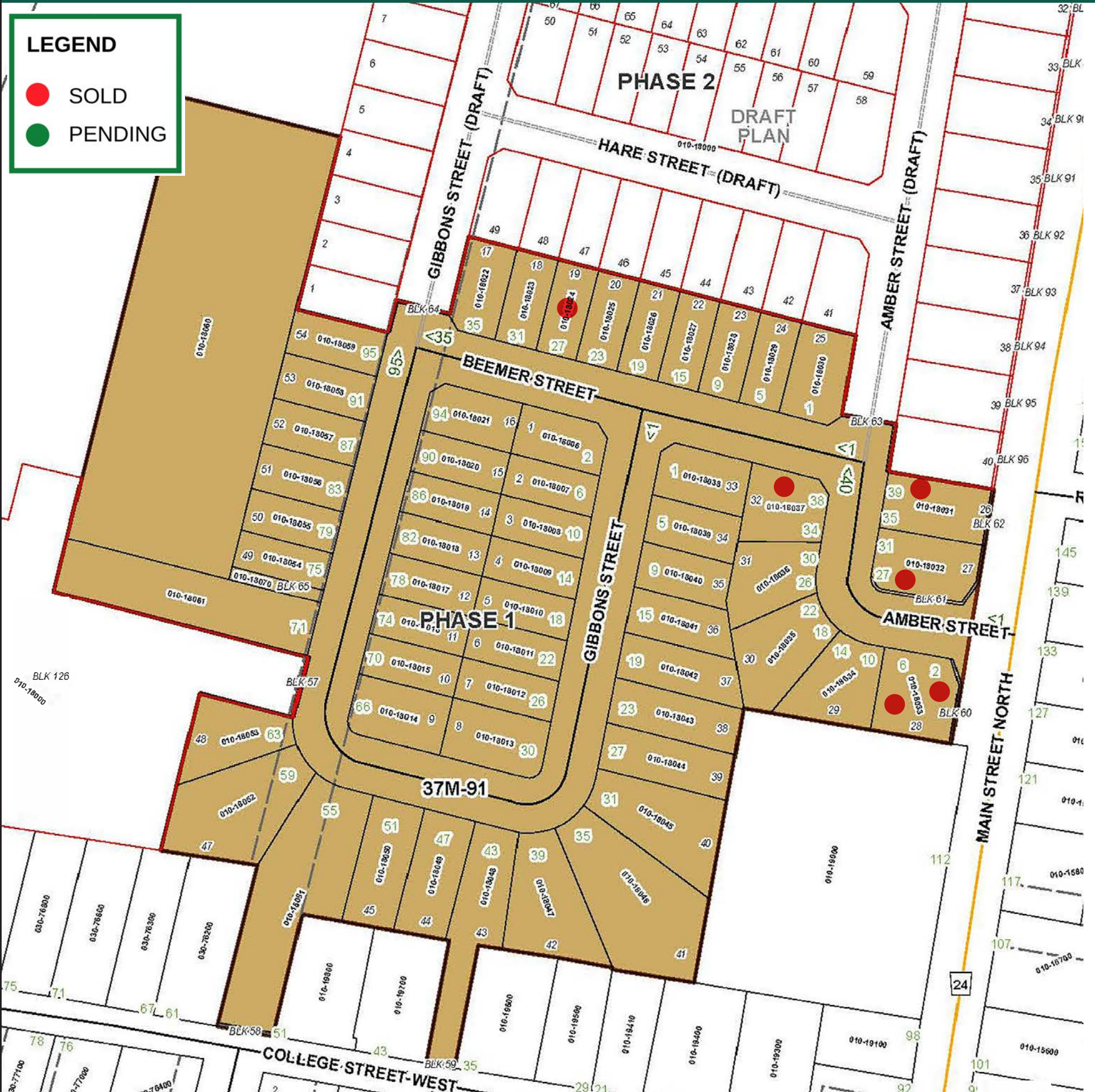
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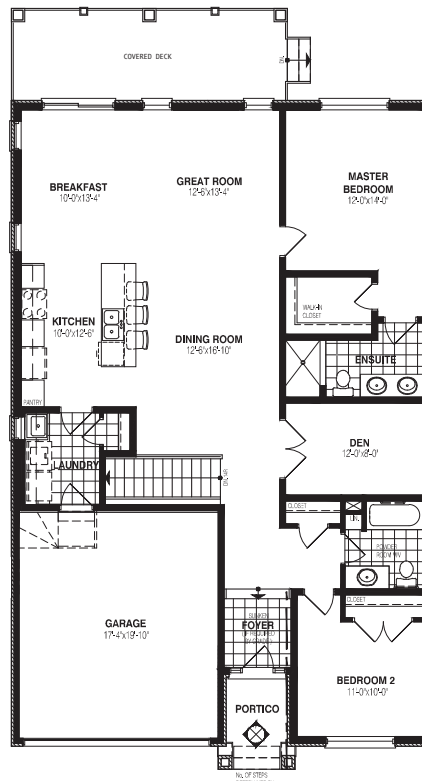
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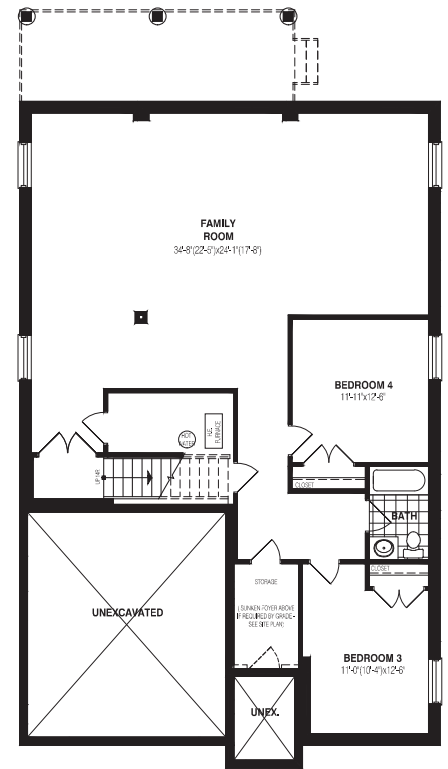
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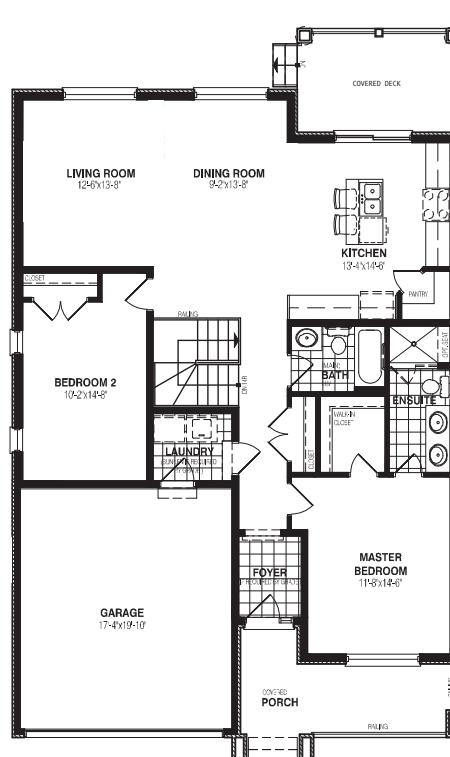
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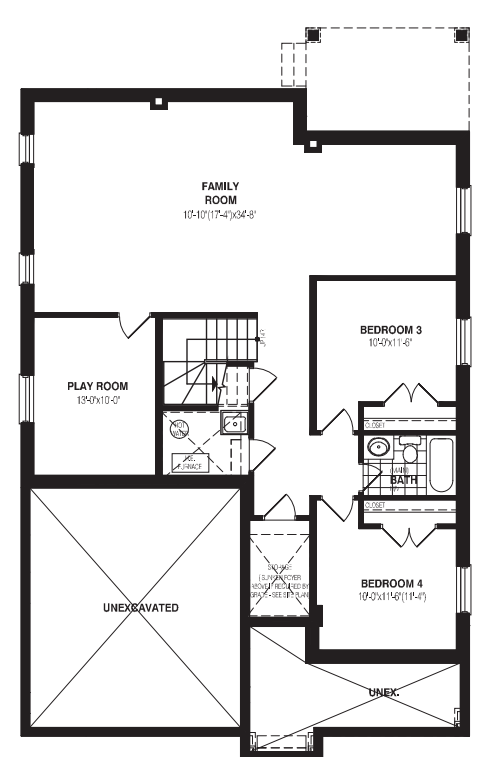
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"I think that's a good message for any business, but especially agriculture," said Brett Schuyler of Schuyler Farms Ltd. "It's trying to get ahead on things and adapt and evolve."

An apple orchard's transitional operation illustrates the concept, given trees can bear mean-



The Norfolk Cherry Company processes roughly 80 per cent of the Canadian tart (Montmorency) cherry crop.

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ingful fruit in between two to six years, and last up to 65, a lifespan which potentially extending past a variety's peak consumer desirability.

"What really kills trees is the marketplace," Schuyler explained. "The tree usually wants to live longer than the markets want them.

"It's a challenge, a real challenge."

In broad terms, varieties including Ambrosia and Fuji that Schuyler Farms planted this spring are gaining consumer favour, along with Honey Crisp and Gala.

"They are a pain to grow and cost more to produce," said Schuyler, in comparison to other traditional varieties.

There are also micro trends within the macro requirement to change he added, 'redder' Galas being considered more desirable.

"It drives you nuts," he laughed. "But you've got a real problem unless you're prepared to change."

The classic Canadian 'Mac' may not be the sexy beast it once was says Schuyler, but is still holding its own compared to Empire and Spartans for example, which are on a definite downward trend.

Transitioning to more consumer-desirable varieties would be the simpler option, but before ripping out healthy trees, Schuyler Farms is investigating repurposing their crop from fruit to juice production in an attempt to capitalize on the potential of an evolving Canadian hard cider marketplace.

"Juice is certainly not more lucrative," says Schuyler, "but we are hoping to turn a non-viable crop into a viable one."

The fact margins are finer in the juice industry effectively requires harvest mechanization.

"You can't afford to put a hand on a juice apple," explained Schuyler, who travelled to England to investigate and ultimately purchase a mechanical ground-based harvester broadly used there. To the best of his knowledge, it's the only one in North America.

"I'm excited about the opportunity," said Schuyler. "The Canadian hard cider industry is growing rapidly and they are going to find they need top-quality juice.

"There is a lot of potential there."

Schuyler Farms Ltd. is also a major player in the tart or sour (Montmorency) cherry industry and shareholder in the Norfolk Cherry Company which processes roughly 80 per cent of the Canadian crop.

There is a saying illustrating Ontario's crop size in comparison to its western American neighbouring state, namely that Michigan (home to two-thirds of the U.S. crop) rats eat more cherries than Canada produces. However, the presence of Norfolk's climate and prime





cherry ground which can look a lot like former tobacco ground, rolling sandy terrain ideally with frost-free sites on hills, creates a competitive growing region. Southwestern Ontario is also closer to the prime cherry market on the Eastern Seaboard.

"So we definitely have a logistical advantage," said Schuyler.

The industry requires between 50 and 100 acres of new planting per year to remain viable, with Schuyler Farms responsible for

a significant percentage of that. Trees are sourced from the west coast (Washington State) or alternatively closer to home from sites including Plantigro Nursery Ltd. near Ruthven in Chatham-Kent.

"We prefer to buy our trees from a Canadian source," said Schuyler.

The effective requirement for mechanical harvesting means trees must be around ten years of age for commercial production, a life cycle extending up to 25 years.

The tree usually wants to live longer than the markets want them

"The shaking of a mechanical harvester is tough on trees, but hand harvesting is tough on people," Schuyler explained. "So take your pick."

Tart cherries are typically harvested in early July, transported to the Norfolk Cherry Factory, chilled in a water bath to preserve physical integrity through pitting and processing, sorted for quality and packed for quick freezing, preserving them at their peak of flavour and freshness.

Pie production still dominates the marketplace, however Montmorency cherries are increasingly being recognized as a 'super fruit'

rich in anti-oxidants and melatonin, touted as beneficial to relieve joint pain including arthritis and gout, helpful in regulating the sleep cycle, as an exercise recovery drink, and additionally a promoter of gut and heart health.

Schuyler is a fan of Terra Beata tart cherry juice, bottled in The Maritimes and available at Sobey's, as well as 'craisins' featuring dried cherries which he sources through The Bulk Barn. He however remains at heart, a traditionalist.

"These are good options, but I like to get my melatonin through a pie." 🌿

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Remi Van De Slyke Chair of the Ontario Ginseng Growers Association

Ontario ginseng growers face uncertainty during COVID

Over the past few months we've heard repeatedly the sentiment, 'unprecedented times'. Well, in farming the statement rings true across all fields, including ginseng.

You'd be hard-pressed to find any aspect of life COVID-19 hasn't wreaked havoc on but the agricultural sector has been hit hard and the effects may not be fully realized immediately. Today, the level of uncertainty and disruption is huge.

King Lake farmer Remi Van De Slyke is chair of the Ontario Ginseng Growers Association (OGGA) – a non-profit organization representing the province's 150 producers who grow, harvest and sell ginseng root. The majority of these producers live and farm right here in Norfolk County.

Van De Slyke has farmed the sandy soil of Norfolk County for a long time and began his interest in ginseng in the 1990s alongside his brother. Van De Slyke also grew tobacco until 2008, when the downturn in the industry led him to make some changes in his operation. He took his hobby of hops and made

it part of his main business, along with ginseng.

Over the years there have been many storms to weather regardless of the crop, but Van De Slyke says nothing compares to the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has dealt devastating effects across the world.

"It's like sitting in a boat with no motor or sail," Van De Slyke said.

Good farmers understand an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure; however, there was no time to be pre-emptive in this pandemic situation. All markets around the world are in the same position and nobody has an advantage over another.

"It does help when everyone is on the same page and recognizes the situation," Van De Slyke said but warned, "Everyone is hoping



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for the best but we can see if this continues the damage will be irreversible.”

The OGGA currently has a consultant stuck in Scotland – he’s been locked down for several weeks. This consultant cannot leave to make business contacts around the world, which is largely how OGGA sells Ontario root.

“That’s how we do business, especially new business and we had so much lined up – we had big plans to market into Europe and Japan,” Van De Slyke explained. “Now, everything is on pause because those personal meetings cannot happen. These meetings are so important when it comes to establishing those new partnerships.”

Ginseng sells wholesale for between \$20 and \$40 per pound. That’s good money but ginseng has a long justified reputation as being a finicky crop to grow. Conditions like frost and hail have wiped out entire crops, which is devastating when harvesting occurs only in year three or four.

While the industry has been plagued by disease and volatile market conditions over the past few years, Van De Slyke admitted there was a bright side to this spring’s abnormally cold days.

“The pandemic delayed the covering of the coverings,” he explained. “In a normal year that may have resulted in burning of the crop from the sun.”

Pandemic or not, there’s a great deal at risk considering annual export revenues ring in at about \$280 million. That’s an average of about 2,700 tonnes of Ontario root shipped overseas. Ontario is the world’s largest exporter of American ginseng to China.

“We are hoping governments around

Ginseng is a perennial herb that produces a highly sought after root as the final agricultural product. It has long been seen as beneficial for stress relief, boosting energy and regulating blood sugar.

the world will see it beneficial to provide a lifeline,” Van De Slyke said. “There’s nobody that will escape. Helping people is critical and I’d rather government err on being more generous than not.”

While hindsight is often 20/20, Van De Slyke feels perhaps governments should have acted sooner. An earlier shutdown of the borders and key services may have gone a long way in helping to create a different narrative.

“I am thankful for what our governments have done for citizens but we as farmers are labeled essential but yet there are so many rules on us right now. Items were not necessarily thought out right from the top down.”

Locally there are restrictions with regard to the offshore farm labour. Van De Slyke hires locals but knows so many farmers, who are and will continue to have labour issues, which impacts their entire operation.

“When it’s time to go, it’s time to go and the crop doesn’t wait,” he said. “Everyone is working hard to get things done. Guys are tired but there’s a long way to go. We will keep doing what we are doing and we are hoping for the best.” 🌱

Haldimand-Norfolk Junior Farmers Partake in Roadside Clean Up

Socially distancing while doing community betterment



On Sunday, May 24, several Haldimand- Norfolk Junior Farmers members participated in giving back to their community by cleaning up Highway 6. 8 members of the club met in Hagersville, wore orange safety vests and worked together to pick up any garbage waste! Pictured here left to right Rinske and Inka van der Steege, Hannah Ross, Dan Smith, Danial Schweyer, Renier van der Steege, Oscar Peters, Justin Smith Submitted by Charlotte Huimea



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That plan has become known as ALUS, and Norfolk County residents have played a huge role in taking it from wonderland to reality.

ALUS, or Alternate Land Use Services, was the brainchild of Ian Wishart, then the president of the Keystone Agriculture Producers. A

was the third participant in the pre-pilot. He is a former tobacco farmer, who was transitioning to

longhorn cattle ranching when ALUS started.

“Fundamentally we had to re-invent this farm from tobacco,” he said. “While cattle are a part of it, the fact we could grow our stewardship based on ALUS brought a new opportunity.”

Initially, Gilvesy started with a project to keep the cattle from walking through a cold-water stream on the property. Later, he added a field of native prairie grass and a pollinator hedgerow for wild bees.

The Gilvesys found when they were rewarded for their stewardship it added to the farm business.

Gilvesy grew with the ALUS program in Norfolk. One of the original concepts was that a Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC) made of farmers should govern the program, which Gilvesy joined. In 2008 as the program grew, the pre-pilot became a pilot, and later a full-fledged program. In that time Gilvesy and Dave Reid became travelling advocates for the program and made presentations on ALUS across rural Ontario.

Eventually becoming the PAC chair, Gilvesy started fundraising

for ALUS. The next step forward occurred when the W. Garfield Weston Foundation decided to invest in Norfolk.

“Their investment eventually led to the addition of other communities, starting with Vermillion River in Alberta,” Gilvesy recounted.

Even today – with the exception of PEI - ALUS is supported mostly by non-government funding, although there is intermittent government support for various initiatives within the program.

The growth of the program across Ontario and Canada continued until 2015 when there were eight community programs. At that point, the board of Delta Waterfowl Foundation decided the program was mature enough to become its own entity. In May of that year, ALUS Canada was officially launched and Gilvesy named the CEO.

“A relationship with ALUS often begins because your work as a steward is recognized with money,” Gilvesy said. “When you live with ALUS a while you see more, that there is a community around it, there’s creativity and fundamen-

Continued from page A24 →

Farmers realize they are part of the solution to a lot of things, like climate change mitigation, biodiversity, species-at-risk and flood control

partnership was struck with Delta Waterfowl and the concept grew.

Norfolk Federation of Agriculture and the Norfolk Land Stewardship Council embraced the concept in 2006 and launched a pre-pilot to test the program. This was the second pilot in the country, and the first in Ontario. Since the first program in Manitoba didn’t survive, Norfolk’s is now the oldest in the country.

Dave Reid, then the coordinator of the Norfolk Land Stewardship program, was one of the original advocates of ALUS. He worked with Fred Judd from the Norfolk Federation of Agriculture to get it on the ground.

Bryan Gilvesy, who lives south of Tillsonburg in Norfolk County,

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Bryan Gilvesy, now CEO of ALUS Canada, started his involvement with the program when he signed up as a participant to the program and then became a member of the Norfolk Partnership Advisory Committee. Bryan and wife Cathy raise Texas longhorns on the YU Ranch, south of Tillsonburg.

Continued from page A23

tally we are building value for the farmers of Canada. That means we (farmers) are part of conversations we haven't been part of for a long time. Farmers realize they are part of the solution to a lot of things, like climate change mitigation, biodiversity, species-at-risk and flood control."

One of the offshoots of Norfolk's initial efforts occurred after Prince Edward Island environment George Webster attended the pilot launch in 2008. The island was having an environmental issue at the time and ALUS quickly became the solution and a well-funded provincial program.

Today, nationally ALUS is approaching 1,000 farmers participating through 27 different community based programs in six provinces. Together they have enrolled 27,183 acres in the program.

Officially, ALUS Canada's mantra now is: "ALUS Canada makes it possible to offset your environmental footprint through agricultural stewardship. ALUS invests in farmers and landowners who are producing acres of clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat and other ecosystem services in communities across Canada."

Credit was given to some of the programs largest advocates by Gilvesy. Local MPP Toby Barrett has been a large ALUS proponent since the early days, and introduced a Private Member's Bill promoting the concept. Wishart is now a MLA in Manitoba, and promoting it there. Bob Sopuck, who was Delta Waterfowl's western vice-president of policy was an early advocate and became elected as an MP and was the program's champion on Parliament Hill. Dave Reid co-wrote the ALUS concept documents with Dr. Bob Bailey, Delta's eastern vice-president of policy.

Over the years, Gilvesy has talked to thousands of people about ALUS at hundreds of speaking engagements across Canada. Recognition for the program has included a Premier's Ag Innovation Award

Gilvesy is proud ALUS is a farmer-led program and farmers feel they are the program owners.

"People feel they are partners in ALUS," he said. "It's the value of developing a grass-roots program that recognizes the value of community." 🌱



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SQF certification at heart of Great Mountain Ginseng expansion

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But it's the internal structure and design, easily washable food-grade materials, which will allow the company to provide industry standard-setting SQF-certified (Safe Quality Food) product for an evolving ginseng marketplace.

"We're just looking toward the future," said General Manager Alex Yeh. "We want to provide what we think our customers want."

"We don't want to play catch-up, we want to be ahead of the curve, at the forefront of our industry."

Yeh's grandparents began the family's relationship with the popular herbal treatment, reputed to have wide-ranging physical and mental health benefits. Yeh's parents Charles and Diana helped out on the original farm but expanded operations to include buying ginseng for the overseas market under the Chin Tai Ginseng brand. The company subsequently opened a retail outlet in Toronto under the Great Mountain Ginseng label, establishing its original warehouse along Highway #24, north of Waterford 13 years ago. Charles is currently in more of an advisory role while Diana remains active, Yeh's brother Schelling oversees operations from the head office in Toronto and Alex, who moved to Norfolk County in conjunction with construction of the original warehouse, is in charge of production and farm gate liaison. The role includes a focus on communicating how the company is progressing and adapting to their industry partners.

"We work closely with our farmers."

To the best of Yeh's knowledge, the business has the only centralized grading facility (outside of on-farm activity) located outside of Asia. In conjunction with the desire to expand, the decision to include recognized SQF certification capability, and attendant traceability furthers this existing capability.

Yeh believes the precedent-setting move will establish Great Mountain Ginseng as the first industry grading facility to attain the standard. It is not a requirement, however a lot of larger companies either require it, or are anticipated to do so in the future.

"This is just kind of that next step up," said Yeh, noting Costco for example, currently requires the certification.

SQF is the North American counterpart to BRC (British Retail Consortium) certification, recognized in both The United Kingdom and Europe.

"You can get both," says Yeh, who says the company's current focus includes expansion in this continental marketplace with a val-

ue-added product line featuring ginseng candy, powders, coffee, tea and milk tea.

"We are always innovating, trying to change with the markets."

The expansion, located two farms north of the current Great Mountain Ginseng facility, includes storage, processing and office space.

"There will also be a showroom out front for people who want to buy wholesale," said Yeh.

The original structure was on a 3.8-acre parcel which ultimately limited size. The new facility is on a much-larger farm.

"If we ever need to expand further, we will be able to."

Yeh credits OMAFRA's Joe Turner, Laura Gibbons and Erin Panek, Business Development Canada's Rowda Mohamed, and Kyle VanHeugten of VanHeugten Construction for being instrumental in the project.

"They have all been extremely helpful throughout this whole process."

Construction started in 2018 with completion of Phase I (storage) that November. Phase II (the processing area) became operational mid-May, 2020 with offices, change rooms and the showroom still to be completed.

"We had a pretty good business going until January," Yeh said, managing a wry laugh.

"There's not as much going on, but it seems you're more tired because of the stress."

COVID 19 has closed the operation's retail outlets, but Yeh is pleased production has been able to continue, maintaining steady employment for the company's 20-plus full-time workers.

"People depend on our business."

The 'blip' driven by a global pandemic aside, Chin Tai Ginseng has a strong customer base, and Yeh believes the significant investment risk will be rewarded by a proactive move to the forefront of evolving industry standards.

"They kind of go hand-in-hand," he summed.

Production costs will rise because of the extra work and attention to detail to achieve the SQF standard.

"(But) we're hoping that translates into people appreciating what we're doing," Yeh concluded.



Alexander Yeh



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Ethanol plant a

Supplying corn for ethanol in fuel has made a huge difference for cash crop farmers.

With 33 per cent of Ontario's corn demand going to ethanol, it's literally been a game changer. Grain Farmers of Ontario (GFO) estimates approximately 3 million metric tonnes of corn are used annually in ethanol production. It is the second largest market for Ontario corn, only behind animal feed.

"It's given us another market nearby to Elgin and Norfolk. That's a positive," said Scott Persall, GFO director for Elgin and Norfolk. "It's helped increase demand in Ontario and that's helped keep the price firm."

With good prices, Persall said it aids farmers in keeping a normal rotation between corn, soybeans and wheat while making a profit. There's been an extra boost with IGPC increasing its production. Outside of IGPC, there are also ethanol plants in Chatham, Sarnia and eastern Ontario.

Norfolk farmer Arpad Pasztor, a GFO Elgin and Norfolk committeeman and former director, agreed ethanol has been a price booster for cash crop producers.

"It's probably added at least \$1 per bushel to the price of corn," he said. "It's given us a pretty good market for our corn, better than the traditional feed market."

That's added approximately another \$200 per acre, dependent on yield, to the value of the crop. This is something that's important with input costs being so high.

"Without ethanol, the price of corn would be in the dumpster," he said. "It would probably be less than \$4 per bushel."

Between additional jobs and increased on-farm profitability, the IGPC plant has been a boost to the local economy.

The local plant

The IGPC ethanol plant in Aylmer has expanded with increased demand for its product, but has gone through ups and down in the last couple of years.

IGPC Ethanol Inc. is a subsidiary of Integrated Grain Producers Co-operative Inc. It was established in 2002 after the government started signaling there was going to be a demand for ethanol and offered grants for enterprises that could fill this mandate. In the middle of Ontario's cash crop belt, a group of farmers and agri-business people got together and did a drive to get members and raise capital to make the dream reality.

Aylmer was chosen as the location since it is in the heart of the province's grain production area. Located just off Highway 73, there is easy access to the 401 and the plant has rail accessibility.

Located on the north side of Aylmer, the plant was built with a capacity of 40 million gallons and opened in October 2008. Further efficiencies boosted the capacity by another five million gallons per year and an investment in new technologies boosted it to 50 million gallons.

A \$120 million investment doubled the capacity to 100 million gallons in 2018. Parts of the plant were already sized for the expansion.

"It was mainly the process part of the plant that had to be doubled," said Ashton Nembhard, CEO-CFO.

The plant receives corn already dried and conditioned from both commercial elevators and farms. Once the corn arrives at the plant, it is ground and pretreated prior to fermentation. In fermentation, the starch is broken down into sugars, and yeast is added to convert the sugars into a beer with a 14 to 15 per cent alcohol content. This is distilled to drive off the water and unfermented material, with the end product being pure ethanol alcohol.

The alcohol is then denatured by adding a small percentage of gasoline. Nembhard explained this is to prevent human consumption. The end product is then shipped to gasoline terminals to be blended for consumer fuel.

Taking a step back in the production process, the starting product of corn creates three different - equally portioned - end products. Besides ethanol, there is one-third corn co-products, or distiller grains, that are used for feed and one-third carbon dioxide.

Nembhard said this is not bad carbon dioxide, but more of a put and take scenario.

"It's the carbon dioxide the corn plants sequester during growth and that's released during fermentation," he said.

The carbon dioxide is not directly released into the atmosphere either. Approximately 50 per cent is sold to Air Liquide, which also has a plant on the Aylmer site. That company sells the carbon dioxide for soft drink carbonation, for injection in greenhouses to stimulate plant growth and as a food preservative. It does not result in carbon sequestration credits.

Today, IGPC sits on 49 acres and its latest update came online in October 2018. The plant employees



boost for farmers

75 people, ranging from stationary engineers who oversee the boilers and high-pressure plumbing in the plant to electricians, millwrights and process operators.

The company has 650 co-operative members. Some of these are also owners who have also contributed equity and received preferred shares.

Nembhard shares running the operation with Kevin Norton, the CEO-Chief Operating Officer. Nembhard has been there since 2012. A chartered professional accountant by training, he grew up in Mississauga and started with IGPC as director of business analysis, then became CFO before moving into his present capacity.

IGPC's mission statement is: "To be a profitable agricultural processing business, which maximizes shareholder value through strategic business development, while adhering to our corporate values."

For the outsider, IGPC would be sitting pretty right now towards that mission with Ontario increasing the ethanol content in gasoline. As of Jan. 1, 2020, Ontario gasoline has to have 10 per cent ethanol, which is a doubling of the previous 5 per cent rate. However, there have been both some agriculture related challenges, and added economic global pressures.

"Right at the time the expanded plant was put in service in October 2018, we started receiving corn with high levels of vomitoxin," Nembhard said.

Vomitoxin, also known as DON or Deoxynivalenol is a mycotoxin that results from the presence of Fusarium fungus. Many livestock animals, with varying impacts, cannot process Vomitoxin. It must be mixed with feed with no levels of vomitoxin to be used.

"The problem with vomitoxin is it doesn't affect the ethanol production but feed production," Nembhard said, explaining feed producers can only take limited amounts. As a result, the price received for vomitoxin-infected corn was down for farmers and the profit from the feed portion of the business also slid.

At the same time, the price of ethanol, which is based off Chicago prices like corn is, also went down. Ethanol produced in Canada is either used domestically or shipped to the United States. However, American ethanol is both used there and shipped to China. In 2018, the U.S. was in the height of its trade war with China, meaning there was an impact on ethanol exports, and prices went down with the over-supply. Of the 16 billion gallons of ethanol produced in the U.S., 14.4 is consumed domestically thus making the US reliant on exports to maintain the supply-demand balance.

"It was probably the most challenging year the business faced," Nembhard said.

A new year brought a new situation, though. The 2019 crop saw virtually no vomitoxin in the corn crop. In fact, it was the lowest since IGPC started.

"We did have quite a favourable rebound in distiller grain prices," Nembhard said.

With the fiscal year-end in September, things were looking rosy with the better crop and the increase in ethanol production when Coronavirus hit the world. To fully understand the impact, one needs to look at the business cycle for ethanol plants in Ontario. January to March is the slowest period in terms of demand with people driving less, but the plants must run and can't concentrate on maintenance

so the systems don't freeze up. In the spring, demand goes up as people drive more, but the plants must then work on maintenance.

When corona hit and people were told to isolate in their homes, there was a severe destruction for both ethanol and gasoline demand throughout North America. Again, this impacted the price.

For the plant itself, with 170 to 200 truck movements in and out of the site per day, work has been done to reduce risk of the disease for employees, but the plant is still running at full output.

"Once the economy gets back on its feet and people resume driving, it will bounce back," Nembhard said. "The question is when will that happen and nobody knows that at this point."

What is sure is the IGPC model has been a success and will get through this latest challenge. 🌱



IGPC Ethanol Inc. sits on 49 acres in the north part of Aylmer's business park. It opened in 2008 with an output capacity of 160-million litres of ethanol. That's more than doubled to 400-million litres



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Focus on 4-H Leaders Sharon Judd and Lorraine Vogel

4-H relies on many people to run its programs. Most of these people are volunteers, and they are the lifeblood of the organization. Without the volunteers, very little could be accomplished.

Norfolk 4-H is fortunate to have many dedicated volunteer leaders who really enjoy their role and watching kids develop personal skills. A couple of these people are Lorraine Vogel and Sharon Judd.

Lorraine Vogel was an active 4-H'er as a young person, completing over 25 clubs in both Agriculture and Life Skills between the ages of 12 and 21, the allowed ages for 4-H in those days. She enjoyed the extras 4-H had to offer, taking part in Regional Conference and an inter-provincial exchange trip to Saskatchewan, winning awards for judging at

Norfolk and Western Fairs and receiving the Outstanding Senior Member Award (partial list only!). Her interests as a club member ranged from clubs such as Veterinary to Farm Machinery to Action Wear to Essential Edibles to Quilting to Bread Winners to Leadership and many many more.

When her first child was 10, Lorraine re-entered 4-H as a volunteer leader. She has now filled a leadership role for 15 years in Norfolk County and has led or assisted with 47 projects, in topics ranging from heritage studies, livestock studies, sewing, baking and crafts, wildlife and outdoors

studies, and more. One very interesting club is Alternative Agriculture, which explores different aspects of agriculture that kids wouldn't otherwise be exposed to.

Sharon Judd grew up in the 4-H program in the Niagara region. She completed more than 18 clubs, gaining both the county and provincial awards, took part in an inter-provincial exchange to Alberta and became a junior leader before attending university. She has been a 4-H leader in Norfolk for 20 years, working each year with the dairy club and one other



Sharon Judd

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Continued from page A30

one, ranging from square dancing, to outdoor living, sewing and food clubs on milk or chocolate.

Highlights for her are the Dairy Achievement Day and Inter-club show at Norfolk County Fair, “kind of like a Royal practice,” and then taking the team to the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair for the TD Classic show.

Sharon and Lorraine agree that part of the attraction of 4-H is of watching the kids change, grow and mature, as Lorraine puts it, “from shy bashful children into confident, self-assured young adults.” She adds, “I enjoy seeing the members faces when they learn something new; I love to learn about different things and I get to have the kids join me for the adventure. We all get to Learn to Do by Doing.” 🌱



The 4-H Dairy Club (2019) that Sharon Judd and Lorraine Vogel are volunteer leaders for. Back row from left, Leader Paul Tattersall, Noah Michaud, Stein Backx, Elizabeth Lablanc, Leader Sharon Judd, Rinske vanderSteege, Reinier vanderSteege, Evelyn Harai, Liz Sullivan, Cassie Vuccic, Leader Lorraine Vogel. Front Row, Megan O’Neil, Alison Kirkland, Bronia Helder, Darcy Smuck, Conner Snively. (Photo credit Anna vanderSteege, Leader).

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- We all get to “Learn to do by Doing”

COVID-19 cripples local Asparagus crop

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a big bite out of Norfolk County's asparagus crop.

In early June during the peak harvest period, a cluster outbreak of the coronavirus caused the province's largest producer to abandon his entire crop.

About 400 acres, representing 3 million pounds of asparagus and 17 per cent of all the asparagus grown in Ontario, were abandoned on the Scotlynn Group's farm near Vittoria. In addition to local markets, the international company also supplies asparagus to several major grocery chains.

The shutdown was necessitated when 164 of their 207 Mexican workers tested positive for the virus. A further 53 tested negative.

An infectious disease specialist has expressed confidence that the outbreak originated outside Canada.

Scott Biddle, president and CEO of Scotlynn Group, initiated measures to place his workforce in quarantine and disinfected bunkhouses, offices and vehicles.

Biddle attempted to recruit local help offering \$25 an hour to harvest the crop.

"It was unbelievable the amount of people who came out to give us a hand," he said. "However we weren't able to salvage the crop with locals."

"We tried and went down fighting," Biddle added.

Bernie Solymar, executive director of the Asparagus Farmers of Ontario, said several other local producers were also forced to abandon their crops because of labor shortages.

But Solymar said improved growing conditions have restored production.

"We went from an empty pipeline to a full pipeline in five days," he said.

The total number of lab-confirmed cases in Norfolk County is 589.

The Scotlynn workers are currently in self isolation, including 120 housed in Brantford hotels for a 14-day isolation period.

"I want to assure everyone that it is our desire to return everyone to work as soon as it is safe to do so," Biddle said.

Skelton crews will attend to farm operations to tend sweet corn, melons and other crops they grow in the area. Scotlynn has undergone a full cleaning and will be completing mandatory weekly testing.

He would not put a dollar value on the loss. He added there is no crop insurance nor is it a claimable event in terms of business disruption.

Biddle said they did everything they could to protect the community going above and beyond federal and health unit guidelines,

He confirms the company will be paying the workers that are being quarantined. 🌱



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NORFOLK COUNTY - ONTARIO'S GARDEN

SECTION B / ISSUE 14 / SUMMER 2020

Horsefeathers! (or Horses and Feathers)

Both Glen and Isabel Miller were born and grew up in the local area, he lived near Jarvis and she lived east of Cayuga. Glen's family has lived on the ninth concession his whole life, although he has lived on several different farms. He is the third generation of the Miller family to farm these acres.

The couple married in 1978 and moved to their present location north of Jarvis in 1980. At that time they were in partnership with his brother Allan with dairy and crops. The milk-

ing herd was at the home farm and the young stock was housed at Glen's place.

In '87 Glen and Isabel built the chicken barns, producing hatching eggs for Cuddys,



Please turn to page B5 → Isabel Miller, left, and 4H'er Jessica Willis with "Kallie"



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Bill Nightingale, President of Nightingale Farms Ltd. and Norfolk Organic, says 2020 will mean 'big adjustments' for area producers facing an uncertain labour supply to plant, nurture and harvest crops.

Nightingale cites efficiency and innovation as keys to success

Bill Nightingale Jr. wasn't about to throw in the towel.

But the realist in the president of Nightingale Farms Ltd./Norfolk Organic was looking forward to uncharted - and turbulent - 2020 waters.

"We're just going to have to make some big adjustments," he said at the tail end of a March spent dealing with the agri-business ramifications of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Paramount among these was the availability of foreign labour through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) many of Norfolk's farmers - and a majority of other area businesses benefitting from their financial impact and productive farms' agriculturally-related economic spinoff - have come to depend on.

Nightingale for example, was facing a full asparagus harvest, potentially with access to less than a third (24 of 80) of his regular employee numbers.

"This year is going to be a lot of challenges."

This may well be a year in which those suggesting SAWP workers are taking jobs away from Canadians will have an opportunity to step up and fill what is virtually certain to be a huge void.

"Be my guest and I'll cut (asparagus) with them," said Nightingale, suspecting those who do, may be in for a surprise, the job itself weeding out the local labour pool significantly.

Ironically, in what can safely be described as a COVID-19-challenged produce year with the potential for soaring prices or even shortages if farmers are unable to plant, grow

and harvest crops, Nightingale believes people may well be more in tune with what they're eating than usual.

"Everyone is locked down and trying to eat healthy," he said. "I really think people are going to focus on eating healthy when they're at home anyways."

Consumer eating habits aside, suggesting 2020 will pass through uncharted waters is more than a safe statement.

"Getting there is going to be a challenge," Nightingale summed up. "Just going to face the challenge and do what we've got to do."

Frank Nightingale founded the family operation in 1950, beginning with strawberries and tomatoes.

One 'grandpa' grew those crops, another tobacco Nightingale Jr. explains, which continued to be a family crop until 2002. Bill Nightingale Sr. took over 'in the 70's' says his son and namesake, who began at the helm of a three-generation effort in 2004.

"We don't stop, we're six days a week, year-round," said Nightingale Jr., whose most

consecutive days off in the past ten years has been four. "We haven't stopped in 15 years.

"I get to play hard too,"

he laughed by way of explanation. "Word hard, play hard sort of deal - that and I like to put puzzles together, when it works and balances out your failures, it's very satisfying."

Ontario produce producers have to work hard Nightingale contends, in order to counter a significant competitive disadvantage in terms of electricity, natural gas and labour costs enjoyed across international and provincial lines. Nightingale admits to monitoring European trends, because of his assertion it's the only place in the world more expensive to operate in, than Ontario.

"The only way I can compete with Michigan, Ohio and Quebec is to be more efficient than them, or I won't survive."

If there is a provincial advantage, Nightingale says it's in two earlier weeks of productive season and another at the end over Ontario's north-eastern counterpart.

"We get paid in those three weeks."

The Nightingale Farms Ltd. and Norfolk Organic seasons begin with 150 acres of organic and conventional asparagus, followed sequentially by 30 acres of organic and 150 conventional zucchini, three weeks of conventional peas (20 acres), 500 acres of conventional green beans which represent the operation's largest crop, 80 acres of conventional eggplant, 35 of organic colour bell peppers grown in high tunnels, 20 acres of conventional speciality peppers ("The hot ones"), 10 acres of hemp and finally, organic (60 acres) and conventional (100 acres) sweet potatoes.

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"It's quite a few items, but that's where we're at," said Nightingale, admitting each discipline comes with its own unique requirements and skill-set and it would be easier from an agronomy standpoint to have a single-crop focus. "It's more so I can lean on one or another, based on trends," he explained.

"It's mind-boggling, but for some reason, I like puzzles," he continued with a laugh, explaining beyond buffering one commodity having a bad year, diversity including a broadened sweet potato effort has extended his season in order to employ and retain quality full-time staff on a year-round basis.

"You can't do it six months on and sixth months off like you might have used to."

The two family operations employ around 25 full time says Nightingale, with an additional 120 or so seasonal workers. That number is significantly down from a peak of 300 plus, a drop directly related to



'machine-driven' innovation producing more tonnage for less labour hours, a pathway Nightingale believes is essential to remain competitive.

"That's the only way I feel I can survive."

He does approach innovation with more caution - "I used to run before I walked, now I walk before I run," but as an example, cited a \$1.3-million investment in a processing line resulting in significant and ongoing labour efficiencies.

"You've got to shave costs year after year, day after day."

Beyond controlling expenses in a highly-competitive global marketplace, Nightingale believes producers have to both anticipate and move with consumer trends, resulting in their company with the creation of Norfolk Organic in the early 2000's.

"It took me ten years to make any money on organics," says Nightingale. "But it's come along."

And again, he believes the current COVID-19 pandemic will only enhance the organic market presence.

"I believe it's the future."

Nightingale's Norfolk Organic colour peppers stand as a perfect example of in-

novation and market awareness, the concept of high tunnel habitat (a semi-controlled plastic-contained growth environment 28 feet wide and 14 feet high) trialed over a dozen years ago.

"For two-and-a-half months you can buy organic peppers that taste better than hot house for half the price."

In conclusion, that combination, along with pure determination, are what has gotten Nightingale Farms Ltd. and Norfolk Organic to this point, and will help carry it

forward through inarguably the most challenging agricultural year in many.

"What lets me stay afloat is trying to be efficient and innovative," Nightingale concluded. "If I just rested on my heels, I don't think we'd be where we are." 🌱

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Agriculture and Agri-Food Industry Safety During COVID-19

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is working closely with stakeholders and other partners to keep Ontario's food supply chain strong.

Coronaviruses are spread person to person through close contact. While employers always have an obligation to maintain clean worksites, that obligation is under sharper focus due to COVID-19.

Here are some tips for employers to use:

- Provide ways to properly clean hands, by providing access to soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Have all employees and visitors wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water before entering the workplace and after contact with surfaces others have touched.
- Include handwashing before breaks and at shift changes.
- Provide a safe place for workers to dispose of used sanitizing wipes and personal protective equipment.
- Clean washroom facilities.

- Sanitize commonly touched surfaces or areas such as entrances, counters, washrooms and kitchens.
- Sanitize shared equipment (where sharing of equipment cannot be avoided).
- Consider a captive boot/personal protective equipment program to limit this equipment's use outside of the production/processing environment.
- Introduce more fresh air by increasing the ventilation system's air intake or opening doors and windows. Avoid central recirculation where possible.

Adjust on-site and production schedules

Lowering staff levels on job sites may be required to maintain appropriate physical distancing. Employers should look at how they can be required to adjust their production schedules to support the impacts of physical distancing, where possible becomes clear.

Here are some tips for employers to follow:

Limit the number of workers to critical number by staggering work schedules.

Consider job rotation.

Reschedule any unnecessary visits to the workplace by supply chain partners, vendors or others who don't need to be there now.

Ensure sanitation of sites and workspaces.

Carry out site planning to facilitate appropriate physical distancing between workers.

Establish rules for any work that requires workers within two metres

of each other. This could include full personal protective equipment.

Offer work-site mobility and transportation, including hoist operations.

Online Resources

- Learn about extended deadlines for Risk Management Programs and contact AgriCorp for questions about programs and services. Farmers now have until June 30, 2020 to apply for or make changes to coverage under





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- Read about how the government continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19, including status of cases in Ontario, symptoms and treatment, laboratory testing, how to protect yourself, how to self-isolate and more. Ontario.ca/covid19
- Agriculture and food jobs in Ontario - Apply for agriculture, agri-food and food industry jobs to support the response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Ontario.ca/Ag-FoodJobs
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's COVID-19 Questions and Answers provide information on labour/temporary foreign workers, trade and trade infrastructure, food supply, financial support and programs, food safety and animal health. <http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/covid-19-information-for-the-agriculture-and-agri-food-industry>
- The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's COVID-19 website contains notices to industry regarding actions to preserve the integrity of Canada's food safety system. Inspection.gc.ca
- Read the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's statement on COVID-19 pandemic for farm-specific information and resources. ofa.on.ca
- OMAFRA Mental Health for Farmers - First Aid Kit . Owning a farm business can be very stressful. If you are struggling with the impact of these stresses, you are not alone.
 - The government of Ontario cares about the well-being of farmers and farm fam-

ilies and recognizes they face unique challenges that can lead to mental health issues.

- There is help out there if you're struggling. Reach out to a friend or other emotional support. Together we can end the stigma that surrounds mental health. You matter, and you're important. We're all in this together. Ontario.ca/mentalhealth
- Financial assistance for Ontario's rural communities and agri-food sector
- The provincial government and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs work together to provide a set of funding programs that support good jobs, attract investment, and help the agri-food industry make and even greater contribution to Ontario's economic success. <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/infores.html>

For more information on the above: Toll Free: 1-877-424-1300
E-mail: ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/covid-19.htm>



Horsefeathers! ...

Continued from page B1

and by the early 90's the dairy cows and quota were sold and replaced with broilers on the home farm.

A big change occurred in 2008, when their older daughter Erin and her husband Adam Matthews developed an interest in working with them. As the younger couple came on board, Glen and Alan dissolved their partnership in the birds, but continued to work their combined 250 acres together, cash cropping corn, wheat and soybeans.

Another change came about in 2016. The hatching business had its problems – primarily in finding suitable help for the two full time and four part time positions they required, but also with a change in the breed of hen involved. This new breed needed different nesting equipment and was not compatible with the set-up they had in the barn. Rather than re-fitting the barn to accommodate the new breed and maintain the status quo, they chose instead to renovate to produce broilers. Isabel indicated that things are much easier now, as the new system is mostly automated and they no longer need hired help. Adam is now managing most aspects of the business. They raise about 25,000 broilers at a time, with each lot taking six to seven weeks to grow to desired weight. Barns are cleaned and sanitized between each group of birds.

Isabel's passion is for her other business – raising miniature horses. She had had riding horses for her girls as they grew, but when one of them died, she purchased her first mini as a companion for the remaining one and discovered a new love. She joked that she, "took downsizing literally." Now she has ten, all of them registered horses. She has one stallion, one gelding and eight mares, and raises

two or three foals each year. She is active as a 4-H leader in Haldimand, leading projects such as an Introduction to Minis, Know Your Horse, Horse Showmanship and Harness Driving (not all every year).

Isabel's younger daughter Nicole and husband Justin Couperus may eventually move back to the area and have some involvement with the farm, but for now, there are no retirement plans. "We're here for as long as we want to be," she laughed. Isabel feels very fortunate to be able to enjoy the lifestyle she has and very much appreciates the sense of family and community that surrounds her.



"Sarah," one of the Miller Miniature Horses enjoying time out in the sunshine.



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To be fair, we were just trying to shoot a few ducks.

But that vague intent morphed into so much more through the logistical and also importantly financial support from a variety of committed individuals working with conservation-minded organizations.

Nephew Nick Sweazey first proposed the idea, indicating the owner of the excavating company he worked for - his uncle and fellow hunter Steve Watts - was amenable to a weekend high hoe project on flatlands adjacent to Big Creek.

"I'll dig a pond in and maybe we'll attract a few ducks and some geese," he suggested, his mutually-beneficial motive being joining

myself, son Jeremy and a friend or few for years, potentially decades of ensuing opportunity.

The concept wasn't unappealing, reflective of locations we had already hunted together. But just for the heck of it, I said I'd call Ducks Unlimited Canada first, to see if there was anything they could do.

Why DU? First of all, name recognition, secondly and importantly, their heritage included a respect for hunting, unlike some other conservation entities. We're not necessarily rabid hunters, but it is part of our family cultural heritage, and the thought of an anti-hunting group bringing that value system or attendant attitude onto our property was a non-starter.

A phone call to DU head office in Winnipeg ultimately led to a site visit from an area volunteer, the sports equivalent of a scout checking if the property and its

I'll dig a pond in and maybe we'll attract a few ducks and some geese



Ducks Unlimited Canada volunteer Phil Holst (foreground) was instrumental in the creation of the Tribe family wetland, here under construction courtesy of Nick Sweazey, right, in the high hoe.

owners might be an appropriate fit for staff and financial commitment. One assumes a similar mindset among the conservationist set, but we felt particularly fortunate with the multi-faceted abilities of Phil Holst, who has since been elected as chair of the DU Canada conservation committee. Holst trapped,

fished, hunted and logged as a youth, entered the entertainment industry as a model, singer, dancer and actor before beginning to build a successful landscaping business in his late 20s. The latter in particular generated a base of business sense, negotiation experience,



The two main water features on the Tribe family wetland.



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design creativity and operational expertise for over 40 completed area projects, with close to another score under consideration.

His excitement palpable, Holst paused on a knoll to outline a cohesive vision for a series of small feeder water features, leading into two larger wetland areas. As he hiked enthusiastically off to inves-

represented by our back lawn while providing habitat for a wide range of waterfowl, amphibians, insects and other creatures, a tradeoff we as a family can accept.

We signed what Holst describes as a 'gentleman's agreement' with DU Canada, respecting the project's sanctity. Some have expressed concern this may nega-

they're kind of pets, with migratory hordes being the target all along.

They may yet materialize, but if they don't, our family is more than happy with the result. Quite literally, every time I pass in or out of our back door, I glance appreciatively at the wetland, thinking "Gosh, isn't that cool," or words to that effect.

Based on our experience, we'd encourage others with a piece of marginal ground considering conservation-based outcomes to explore the help which may be out there. We found DU Canada a

great place to start, but there are also county stewardship organizations (Haldimand Stewardship Council-Norfolk Land Stewardship Council), regional conservation authorities and other organizations to consider both as sources of expertise and funding.

And while it's not as simple as a single phone call, making that call may be the key to translating a simple concept into much, much more. 🌱



The Tribe family wetland was constructed in honour of Jessie (left) and Harry Tribe, whose vision of ownership included conservation and stewardship.

tigate an active spring, I turned to son Jeremy and said, "And we were just thinking of digging a hole."

Holst coordinated like-minded organizations to assist progression from concept to reality beyond DU Canada including Stewardship Oxford, the Oxford County Clean Water Program, and the Long Point Region Conservation Authority. We retained a financial commitment, but beyond sourcing welcome funding, Holst also guided us through the potentially confusing and intimidating permitting process, parallel support streams without which the project would not have happened.

I requested Watts Excavation be included in the bidding process for the wetland's creation, which resulted in not only a successful bid and training under Holst's direction in this specialized field, but Steve Watts executing a major project on one of his properties, and another employee investigating the possibility of doing so on his family farm.

Our wetland was sculpted in the winter, a 1.4-acre feature supported by 8.9 acres of upland habitat. The land quickly healed, returning to a natural vegetative appearance that spring, supported by a mixed LPRCA native species tree planting which will mature over the years along with the wetland. It is designed to absorb excessive water during extreme weather events, holding moisture during drought, while generally improving the water table. We lost about the same amount of beef cattle pasture as is

tively affect our property's value, others suggest the wetland's presence might actually raise it. Although none of us possesses a crystal ball, our best hope is this is a mute point around what we see as a multi-generational memorial project in honour of my sister Lahring and my parents Harry and Jessie Tribe, environmentalists in their own right who viewed stewardship as an integral part of ownership.

Unexpectedly, we were nominated for and received the 2019 Oxford County Stewardship Award, a thing we had no idea existed, but gratefully accepted with respect for our fellow nominee, not as a competition but recognition shared with those who helped make it happen for one stewardship initiative among a progressive agricultural land ownership community.

To date, we have shot zero ducks above the wetland's water features, nor any from adjoining fields. There have been nesting pairs of mallards and wood ducks, but

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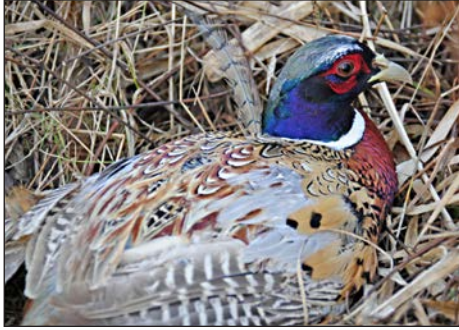


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Pheasants provide niche income for Courtland-area farm

An interest in pheasants has turned into a major farming operation for a Courtland-area couple.



Lisa and Henry VanBrenk, who live on Mall Road, own 54 acres on the north side of the road. When the couple bought the property in 2003, they weren't sure what they were going to do with the land.

"He likes hunting and always thought pheasants were cool," Lisa said. "He grew up down the road from Jack Crawford who had a game farm."

Ten years ago they started with 500 birds. They dug all the posts in by hand in an area thick with mosquitoes.

"We did it for kids, we thought it would be something for them to do," she said.

The first year they didn't sell any pheasants until December, with the birds sold to a game farm. In

year two, they raised 1,200 birds and started selling to a second game farm.

"In the beginning, I was delivering birds and Henry was working," Lisa said. "Now we do them together."

The first three pens were erected by hand, and then the couple rented an excavator to dig the trenches and post holes. The rest was done in phases.

The business expanded in leaps and bounds, and now they raise 30,000 birds per year. There are now 10 acres in pheasant pens.

The year starts for this operation with the arrival of day-old pheasant chicks from the United States. Lisa used to pick up the chicks at the border, but now they are delivered to the farm. The chicks are started in the barn with gas heaters, and go outside when six to seven weeks old.

"Everything is still done by hand," Lisa said. "We put them in crates and move them outside."

Before moving them outside, blinders are put on the birds to

keep them from pecking each other.

For a while, the VanBrenks also raised chukars. These were raised mostly for meat, but they quit to focus on pheasants. When the birds go outside, the pens they go in are 16-foot high flight pens. Corn, sunflowers, grasses and rye are planted in the pens.

"It gives them cover and shade," Lisa said. "Then they're fending for themselves a bit."

The birds stay in the pens until they are sold. This business is labour intensive, with the birds handled four or five times before shipping.

The pheasants are mostly Chinese ringnecks, but some are bluebacks.

"They give people the feel of a real English hunt," Lisa said.

She credits the success of the business with the farm's sandy soil.

"That really helps for disease prevention," Lisa said, adding the sand is gentler on the birds' tail than dragging through the mud.



The VanBrenk's pheasants are used by Norfolk County as part of the release program for hunters, which has economic benefits for the area.

They get a lot of compliments on the birds flying ability and the long tails.

"We have wild strains in there from China," Lisa said.

Henry is still working part-time, but the pheasant business has turned into a full-time job for Lisa. They rent out the remainder of the land for hay. They used to sell golden retrievers but now concentrate more on stud service with the dogs. 🌿



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Global warming

The effects of global warming has both pros and cons on Canada's agricultural sector, according to a recent study by scientists at the University of Guelph.

The research team modelled prospects for growing major food crops in potential new farmland that may become available as climate change alters growing seasons worldwide. In Canada, the north could become the "breadbasket" of the future.

However, the study warned that this potential "farming frontier" might pose environmental threats from increased carbon emissions to degraded water quality.

"Areas currently not suitable for agriculture are likely to become suitable in the next 50 to 100 years," said Krishna Bahadur, an adjunct professor with the University of Guelph's department of geography, environment and geomatics.

Researchers found Earth's agriculture landmass could increase by almost one-third, including vast new farming prospects in Canada's north.

But Lee Hannah, senior climate change scientist and author of the study, said there are a host of environmental impacts such as soil

carbon emissions, loss of biodiversity and declines in water quality.

"As current agricultural lands become less suitable (because of climate change), there is going to be pressure to develop new frontiers and that's going to come with major environmental consequences like releasing unprecedented amounts of carbon in the atmosphere which fuels additional climate change," Hannah said.

The study combined projections for temperature and precipitation from 17 global climate models with agricultural models that predict suitability for growing 12 globally important food crops. Areas that may become suitable for one or more crops cover an area equivalent to more than 30 per cent of the landmass already being farmed world wide.

Globally, the study found prospective croplands are expected to be most extensive in northern boreal regions where more than half of the landmass is in Canada.

In Canada, four crops—wheat, potatoes, corn and soy—are

cold-tolerant enough to grow in more northerly regions under climate change.

With longer growing seasons, wheat and potatoes might be suitable for cultivations across the northern regions of most provinces and much of the Northwest Territories and Yukon.

Growing food in new areas may promote economic development, reducing poverty and food insecurity, say the researchers.

At the same time, the team calls for policy-makers to balance the need for more food with the potential environmental impacts of more widespread farming.

"The trade-offs between environmental concerns and food production may be very significant," said professor Evan Fraser. "We need to think carefully about environmental sustainability. And any thought of developing agriculture to take advantage of longer growing seasons due to climate change has to be mindful of the role of indigenous governance in these areas. Many of the areas our models suggest may become more suitable for farming are the

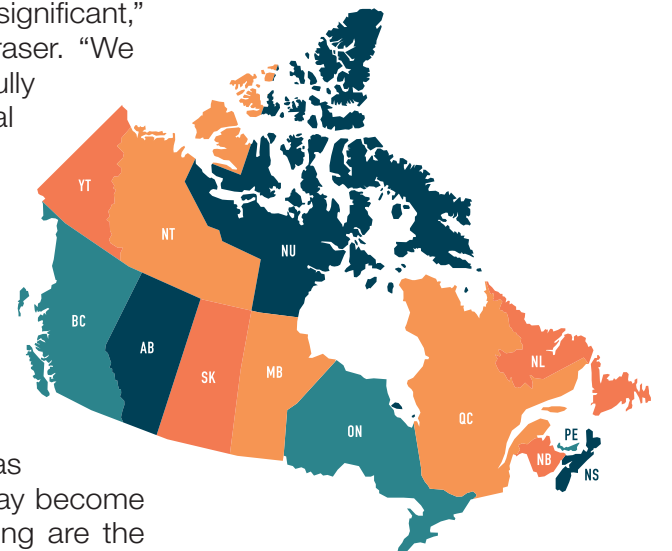
home of a great many indigenous communities."

The researchers recommend promoting farming practices that conserve soil carbon. Other options include shifting to more plant-based diets, reducing food waste, adopting yield-producing technologies and using croplands more intensely.

The world will need to produce an estimated 70 percent more food by 2050 to sustain a human population of 9 billion.

"We need food but we don't want environmental impacts," said Bahadur.

"We need to find a way to balance." 🌱





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Zamecnik recognized by Greenhouse Canada Top 4 Under 40

It takes a village, suggests an African proverb, to raise a child.

Dusty Zamecnik's Norfolk-based translation states his home county's natural, business and human resources provide a great place to raise an entrepreneurial dream into reality worthy of Greenhouse Canada Top 4 Under 40 honours.

"The possibilities in this area and the possibilities in agriculture are limitless," said Zamecnik, recognized by the national organization for his innovative approach to vertical production of plants for off-season Leamington-area fresh strawberry production.

Looking back, Zamecnik was 25 when he first floated his untested concept, one ultimately

supported by not only his family, but area businesses Vandebussche Irrigation, Underhills Farm Supply, Farm Credit Corporation (Simcoe Branch), LMP Excavating and Chris Macdonald Heating and Cooling from within the county, along with Cravo, AMA Horticulture and Meteor Systems from beyond its borders. They were the true heroes credits Zamecnik, for believing in the potential of youth to create an industry segment that didn't and still doesn't exist elsewhere in North America, and whose success is illustrated by the construction of a second greenhouse.



A proud Norfolk County resident, Dusty Zamecnik has been recognized as one of Greenhouse Canada's Top 4 Under 40.

"These businesses stuck their necks out with me for the betterment of the food system and food security to make this program work and went above and beyond. Without their patience and expertise, this would not have been possible."

Zamecnik was nominated by an unknown, but highly-appreciated person ("It could have been my mom," he joked) and judged under criteria including entrepreneurship, revenue generated, proof of growth and impact on the greenhouse industry. He represented Norfolk County along with fellow 4 Under 40 award winners from British Columbia, London and Niagara-On-The-Lake.

"The common denominator between was innovation," said Zamecnik, both 'surprised and pleased' to be nominated, and 'humbled' to be chosen as part of what he emphasizes was a team effort.

"I am nowhere near the best nor a great farmer, but what I will admit to is always trying to bring the right people together and empower them."

Zamecnik described the production program whose development he oversaw to fruition as 'an absolute roller coaster into the unknown.'

"And we still have a lot to learn," he laughed.

The inaugural journey began with an idea of what the end product should look like by delivery come shipping in the fall.

"Ever since then it has been 'Let's find a solution,'" Zamecnik laughed. "Find a solution for problems we didn't know we had."

"All the stages in between, we were figuring it out on the fly."

He denotes the fact his 'skilled, flexible, consistent and committed labour force' has a significant component of migrant workers not with an asterisk of apology, rather an exclamation mark of respect.

"The people who come here from different countries helped create a new system with me. These people definitely take pride in their work and we are learning this program together."

"This is not my award, this is our award."

Zamecnik is fond of saying 'being a pioneer is great when it works out,' a sentiment recognizing innovation does not come with any guarantee. However, wherever he has gone in whatever career, Zamecnik always retained faith in the the agricultural potential of his home country, and his opportunity to find a place within it.

"That's the power of Norfolk that still needs to be reiterated," he said. "These awards come at the end, but everything in between is about where you set up shop and I'm proud to say that is in Norfolk." 🌱

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Stubbe enjoys challenges/rewards of CSA production

Many people enjoy house plants or grow a personal garden.

But being responsible for both the risk and reward represented through a 40-member Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) subscription service is a whole other level of commitment.

"The rubber meets the road when you've got to deliver or the customers aren't coming back," says Chris Stubbe of Arbour View Acres. "But those are the fun challenges."

A sheet metal mechanic/gas fitter by trade, Chris and wife Johanna purchased their six-

coordinated to offer a shade canopy to suppress weeds.

"We can grow four times the volume as you would with single rows," says Stubbe.

Initially, he used 48-inch rolls of black plastic as a combined weed suppressor and soil warmer, but feeling it was incompatible with an organic approach, switched 100 per cent over to black compost last year. It also suppresses weeds and retains moisture, while providing natural soil enhancement.

"We were very happy with the results."

Arbour View Acres delivers or arranges for shareholder pickup of 'a complete offering of what grows in Ontario,' including corn, beans, beets, broccoli, lettuce and salad mixes, squash, melons and arugula.

The variety is wide in part to cover a growing season from June to October, also to protect against the loss of a given vegetable.

"If you have failure of one crop, we have many others to provide you can rely on."

Stubbe's organic approach is not branding, rather the method of farming he knows.

"For me, this is normal, I've never done anything else."

Shareholders do share in the risk, in the sense a catastrophic hail storm could wipe out one part of the growing season. But they also benefit from home-grown flavour and freshness, without the required effort.

"The customer is taking a bit of a leap of faith," says Stubbe, noting following through on the concept with quality produce is vital to

ensure ongoing viability. "They are typically very happy with what they receive."

He is heading into his sixth year, well beyond his 'first rodeo' of 2015.

"That first rodeo was a little nerve-wracking," he laughed. "I'm glad it's behind us."

At the time, Stubbe was a pioneering CSA entrepreneur, and customer education went hand-in-hand with agricultural production. "A lot of people didn't know what we were talking about."

The majority of his customers are rural, counterintuitively perhaps those who have had their own gardens in the past including currently active farmers, people who appreciate the value of their own garden, simply without the time to do it themselves across a full growing season.

"They are too busy running a dairy operation or whatever they are doing, so they buy their veggies from us."

Arbour View Acres is home to Chris, Johanna and their children ranging in age from 3-17. They have other on-and-off-farm income streams including maple syrup production, bedding plant sales, part-time custodial duties at a local church, snow-removal work in the winter, and certified organic cash cropping on other properties.

"We do enjoy living the lifestyle and that comes part and parcel with it," says Chris.

Maintaining production across a full season is physically demanding he allows, and something he may not prefer to do forever.

"I'm not 20 any more," he laughed.

But their CSA is an important component of their family income and something Stubbe believes has virtually limitless potential, if one can tap into the urban marketplace.

"It's a profitable venture if done properly and is something we've certainly enjoyed so far." 🌱



Arbour View Acres Chris and Johanna Stubbe are pleased to offer fresh, local Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) shares for produce from their six-acre Norwich Road farm property.


acre 467 Norwich Road property in 2015.

"And started from scratch," said Chris, whose passion for growing and the outdoors was nurtured while working for a neighbouring cucumber farm from the age of nine onwards through school.

"I love being outside and growing things is just a beautiful thing."

Stubbe describes CSA as producer and consumer sharing the risks and benefits of local food production, through support of small farm operations. Consumers have the option of purchasing either a full (\$950, suitable for a family of four to six, weekly delivery) or half (\$575, two to four, bi-weekly delivery of a full share) share, which entitles them to fresh vegetables over a 21-23-week season (depending on weather) from June to October. New for this year, Arbour View Acres is offering a discounted rate for those picking up from three designated locations, and also continuing a popular local fruit share option, sourced from other farms. Orders are payable in equal instalments, the first due April 30th, the second May 29th. Arbour View Acres has a production capacity of 40 full shares.

Stubbe grows between 30 and 35 different vegetable varieties per season using organic practices on high-population four-inch raised beds 34 inches wide and 100 feet long. Direct seed crops including salad greens, beets and carrots are grown at four rows per bed, six inches apart. Transplanted items such as broccoli or cauliflower are planted two rows wide, interplanted with quick-grow varieties like spinach, lettuces and radishes to maximize space and keep soil covered. The raised beds provide a four-inch advantage when it comes to harvest, the plantings strategically



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