



## **December 2013 NEWSLETTER**

### **Presidents Report**

Looking out the window one thing is clear, winter is around the corner (if not here to stay). At this time we like to reflect back on the year that was and look the future and plan to take advantage of the opportunities available to us. I've written out a few things we're thinking of at this time in hopes you might find an opportunity for your farm as well.

1. Local Food Fund – If you were like me you greeted the announcement of the Local Food Fund as a welcome opportunity to market and increase exposure of our crops. The LFF intakes have already opened and applications have been accepted. The pool of money available is as large as the scope of a project they are accepting. If you spend money as an association, a buying group or a farm promoting local food, this fund should not be passed up! You can find more information and the application form on the website <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/localfood.htm>
2. Register for OBGGA Annual Meeting – Be the time you read this the North American Strawberry Growers annual meeting in North Carolina as well as the Great Lakes Fruit and Veg show will have passed. Not to fear, this year's agenda for the OBGGA annual meeting promises premier speakers from across North America on the hot button

issues our membership has been most concerned with. Mark the dates on your calendar; you won't want to miss this one (February 18-19<sup>th</sup>).

3. Secure Plants for 2014 Planting – As we enjoy this 'down time' in our year, it is important to prepare for next season. If you have not yet secured your plants for next spring, I'd recommend you make sourcing them a top priority this month.
4. Share Your Experience – This year at the AGM we will be offering a marketing track concurrent with growing track. We will be offering a panel decision with successful members sharing their insights on work with paid and non-paid media. We will be looking for the best in each corner of the province. We're looking for the members you consider most successful with online, print, TV, radio marketing, as well as the simple but important on farm marketing to sit on our panel. We want to know the names that pop into your mind when reading that. You can email me ([will@heeman.ca](mailto:will@heeman.ca)) or Kevin ([kevinschooley@bell.net](mailto:kevinschooley@bell.net)).

I always find that around this time I look at the calendar as a friend and in March it becomes my enemy. I wish you all the best at planning and preparing over the next few months and look forward to seeing you all in Niagara Falls for the AGM.

Will Heeman, President

### **From OBGGA Headquarters**

There is lots of news in the berry industry. Normally we are pretty upbeat but we have some issues facing the

industry and our organization as a whole. You will read about some of these issues in the newsletter and we will focus on some of them at our annual meeting in February. Berries continue to be a consumer favorite so we need to stay on top of the challenges that face the industry.

I hope you will make every effort to attend our upcoming annual meeting as well as the berry day at the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention. Your education committee has come up with a great program with something for everyone.

All the best!

Kevin

## Achene Report

The Achene committee met in November to discuss activities that took place over the summer months including plant grower inspections and verification trial results. The Achene committee continues to work on revising our propagation guidelines to include propagation through plug culture.

The Achene committee has found someone that is interested in becoming our new inspector.

The plant propagation program is funded by the purchase of tissue culture grown strawberry plants by propagators. Northern varieties of strawberries are an important part of the orders but the largest portion of our orders have come from sales of southern varieties that are grown both here in Ontario as well as Quebec and Nova Scotia. The Achene committee found out that our largest buyer of these plants will be getting out of the southern plant business after a total crop failure that had severe financial ramifications for that grower.

We are now looking to see if we can drum up any new business with the remaining propagators to make sure the propagation program continues at New Liskeard.

Your Achene Committee will be meeting again in mid December to continue to work on these new challenges

Sincerely,  
Paul Watson  
Achene Committee Chair



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## Membership

Please take the time to fill in the attached membership form and return it as soon as you can.

## National Raspberry and Strawberry Research and Promotion Council Update

The Raspberry agency has wrapped up the scheduled hearings and now the panel will make its recommendations to the Farm Products Council of Canada and the Federal Minister of Agriculture.

So we are now waiting to hear what decision will be made.

The Strawberry proposal is expected to be submitted over the next week and then a comment period and hearings will be held over the next several months before a recommendation is made. We will discuss this at our annual meeting to give everyone a clearer picture

If you have any questions feel free to contact Kevin at the OBGA office.

## **OBGA Promotional Items**

We have a good supply of Aprons (lap and bib type) along with a recipe cards and promotional brochures. If you are attending the Annual Meeting or the Fruit and Vegetable Convention and would like a few items put your order in and I can get them to you with no delivery fees.

## **Ontario Makes History for Farmers and Food Banks**

*Ontario is the first province in Canada to pass tax credit for farmers who donate produce to local food banks*

The Ontario Government made history by passing an amendment to Bill 36, the Local Food Act, to include a tax credit for Ontario farmers who donate fruits and vegetables to Ontario Food Banks. The Ontario Association of Food Banks has been working alongside MPP Bob Bailey for over three years on this initiative, and would like to thank MPP Bailey for all of his hard work and perseverance on this measure. A tax credit of this type has been introduced to Queen's Park many times with support from all three political parties, but unfortunately never passed due to timing issues. This summer, Premier Wynne began to champion the tax credit for farmers, and worked to ensure that it would be added to Queen's Park's fall agenda.

With this amendment to Bill 36, Ontario farmers will be eligible to receive a 25% tax credit based on the fair market value of the produce that they donate to food banks and other charitable food programs.

A large portion of food bank clients do not receive the proper daily servings of fruits and vegetables as suggested by Canada's food guide. Local food banks rely heavily on the generosity of farmers to ensure clients receive nutritious produce. Fortunately, many local farmers consistently support their neighbours and communities by donating to food banks, without any form of compensation. Finally, this tax credit will help reimburse some of the costs Ontario farmers incur from harvesting and transporting the produce to food banks and ultimately to the 400,000 individuals that the Ontario Association of Food Banks serves collectively each month.

The Ontario Association of Food Banks' partners in the agricultural community support this tax credit, and are pleased that the government has taken leadership on this amendment. While this current tax credit is only eligible for fruit and vegetable growers, it is the hope of the Ontario Association of Food Banks and Ontario food producers that this credit will in time expand to include protein and dairy items, which are also desperately needed in the fridges and freezers of Ontario's food banks.

"The Ontario Association of Food Banks applauds the Ontario government for this tax credit, and for acknowledging the importance of food security in communities across this province," says Bill Laidlaw, Executive Director, Ontario Association of Food Banks. "While it is great to see a tax credit of this kind created and passed by the provincial government, there is more that needs to be done, and more that can be done, to eradicate hunger in Ontario."

This tax credit will be applicable on all fruit and vegetable donations from Ontario farmers to local food banks come January 2014. Food banks are currently in desperate need of produce, especially with the holiday season quickly approaching. The Ontario Association of Food Banks urges all farmers and supporters to continue to help their local food bank with donations throughout the remaining months of 2013, and into the New Year.

### **C.O. Keddy Nursery Inc.**

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### **Have you confirmed your Strawberry Plant Order?**

There is an expectation that plant supplies will be tight for planting the spring of 2014.

There are several reasons for a potential shortage. Virus continues to be a problem for growers in Ontario and other provinces. The recommendation for those growers with these issues is to remove affected plantings and replace them with clean plants and then protect them from infection along with remaining

plantings on the farm. There were also some poor plantings in 2013 as a result of poor plants purchased from another province last spring.

Strawberry Tyme will not be selling any Summer Dawn, Summer Ruby, Summer Gem and Summer Evening. These varieties are susceptible to Anthracnose and in 2013 heavy rains resulted in levels of anthracnose greater than 1% in these plantings.

If you have not ordered and confirmed your order you should do this as soon as possible to avoid disappointment and end up keeping plantings that really need to be taken out.



### **Growing Forward 2 Funding Assistance Program for Producers, Organizations and Collaborations**

Growing Forward 2 (GF2) is a federal-provincial-territorial program aimed at encouraging innovation, competitiveness and market development in Canada's agri-food and agri-products sector. In Ontario, farm, food and bioproduct businesses, collaborations and organizations can build their own plan and select opportunities to help grow their profits, expand their markets and manage risks.

#### **Areas of Focus for GF2 Funding Assistance**

Producers, organizations and collaborations can apply for funding assistance in six focus areas, with an emphasis on innovation:

- Environmental and Climate Change

- Assurance Systems (Food Safety, Traceability and Animal Welfare)
- Market Development
- Animal and Plant Health
- Labour Productivity Enhancement
- Business and Leadership Development
- Integrated Pest Management Planning.
- Cost of Production Assessment.
- Succession Plans, Expansion Plans, Human Resources Plan, Business Plan.

### **Capacity Building Funding Assistance**

Cost-share is available to support eligible clients to acquire additional skills, to undertake in-depth assessments and audits, and to develop business plans.

Building capacity helps prepare clients to apply for further cost-share to implement a project. Applications for capacity building funding assistance will be accepted on a continuous basis.

Some examples of Capacity Building activities are:

- Cost-share fees for qualified consultants (e.g. Professional Engineer) to conduct an assessment.
- Produce a written report and plan that provides recommendations for implementing improved irrigation and fertigation management BMP's (e.g. field and greenhouse operations).
- Energy Use Assessment for existing farm buildings that will reduce the dependency on power and fossil fuels and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Prevention plan for Wildlife Damage - help reduce crop, livestock or property damage caused by managed wildlife species.
- Market Assessment, Marketing Plan, Communication Material Design.

### **Implementation Funding Assistance**

Clients may be eligible for cost-share for projects that help to achieve their business goals. Applications for project implementation will be reviewed and assessed based on merit. Having a detailed business and/or work plan, budget and applicable permits and approvals in place prior to submitting an application will increase your success in securing cost-share.

Individual farm businesses may be eligible to receive up to \$350,000 over the five-year program (April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2018)

Producers are strongly encouraged to attend a free capacity building workshop such as Canada-Ontario Environmental Farm Plan (New 4<sup>th</sup> edition) and Growing Your Farm Profits.

### **Important Dates:**

**June 26, 2013** – ongoing application intake for Capacity Building Funding Assistance from all eligible clients

**October 28, 2013 to December 12, 2013** – Application intake for Implementation Funding Assistance from organizations and collaborations

**December 16, 2013 to January 30, 2014** – Application intake for Implementation Funding Assistance from all eligible clients including, producers, organizations and collaborations

**Please visit the GF2 website at:**  
[www.ontario.ca/growingforward2](http://www.ontario.ca/growingforward2)

OMAF and MRA have a full listing of programs and services for Ontario farmers on the website and in the

Factsheet 'Programs and Services for Ontario Farmers'. For more information please visit: [www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/acts/progserv.htm](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/acts/progserv.htm) or call the OMAF and MRA Agricultural Information Contact Centre to request a hard copy of the Factsheet at 1.877.424.1300.



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## Mark Your Calendars!

### OGA Annual Meeting

Embassy Suites, Niagara Falls  
February 18, 2014

### Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention

Scotiabank Convention Centre, Niagara Falls  
February 19-20, 2013  
[www.ofvc.ca](http://www.ofvc.ca)

## Is this the end of Berry Research in Ontario?

Adam Dale  
Professor emeritus,  
Dept of Plant Agriculture  
University of Guelph

Over the last twenty years, Federal and Provincial Governments have moved

from fully funding agricultural research to a matching model of government grants and industry funding. Also, they have moved away from funding programs to funding short-term projects. This has meant that two things have happened: 1) scientists are not being replaced and 2) the horticultural industry is struggling to find funding to support research.

In the last year, the berry industry has lost three breeders/researchers, none of whom has been replaced. Chaim Kempler in BC, Sharokh Khanizadeh in Quebec, and myself.

To help address the funding issue, the OBGGA developed the Ontario Strawberry and Raspberry Plant Propagation Program when governments were no longer willing to provide this service. This program now provides some funding through royalties and service fees, and a voluntary check-off.

However, plant propagation is a risky business. In my thirty years in Ontario, I've seen a steady stream of issues which cycle through the propagation programs in Canada: trueness to type issues, mutations, virus contamination, and plant death from fungal pathogens. The cycle continues.

In 2012, two Nova Scotia propagators ceased propagating because of virus issues, and this year the last major propagator in Ontario, ceased propagating for the Florida market. This time because crown rot from *Colletotrichum acutatum* killed many of the plants in Florida.

Consequently, the OBGGA's ability to raise research funds is now considerably diminished in the near term, if not-eliminated.

Over the years, the OBGGA has contributed to the research projects at the University of Guelph's research stations at Cedar Springs, New Liskeard

and Simcoe. The last set of grants, which finished this year, were used to investigate high tunnels for dayneutral strawberries and raspberries, study the effect of Voens covers on raspberries, breed for glyphosate resistance in June-bearing strawberries and breed dayneutral strawberries and primocane-fruiting raspberries. These were all supported by the OBGA.

Becky Hughes, John Zandstra and I have one project on berries still running, that is to investigate high tunnels and breed dayneutral strawberries. This funding ends at the end of April 2014. So what next? The OBGA has applied to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada for five years of funding under the Growing Forward 2, Agricultural Innovation Program for dayneutral strawberries and raspberries in protected cultivation. Initially, AAFC said that they would match industry contributions 75% to industry's 25%. Recently they told us that they would give priority to applications that were matched 50:50. The best we could do at that time was 37%.

Now that the Ontario berry industry's support has been severely cut by the reduction in contributions from the propagation program those grants are in severe jeopardy. If those grants are not successful, because of the lack of industry funds, what happens? With existing funds, we can probably continue the tunnel research on strawberries for one year, but the raspberry trials will have to end. Meanwhile, the breeding material can be held for one year. After that, everything will be ploughed down. So how much does it cost to do the research? One full-time researcher plus a full-time technician, seasonal help, operating funds, land charges and overhead, is estimated to cost over \$300,000 per year. Not an insignificant amount. Also, a new variety takes at least ten years to develop, and then

there is no guarantee that the industry will adopt it. Present estimates suggest that only one in ten new varieties will be adopted.

The result is that the berry industry in Ontario has three options, and it is up to the growers to decide which options the industry takes. The first is not to support research and rely on information from other places to advance their industry. The problem is that all North American and European berry industries are facing the same problem: reduced government commitment for agricultural research.

The second is to raise the funding as an industry check off, voluntary or mandatory. This occurs in other jurisdictions, but is difficult to put in place. In Canada, steps are being put in place for mandatory check-offs for strawberries, raspberries and blueberries. This will take at least five years, with no guarantee that the applications will be successful. And, most of the check off will be from imports, and the importers will want that to go mostly for generic marketing campaigns.

The third is that a group or groups of berry growers will go private with the research. This has already happened in apples with the 'Club' varieties. Thus the varieties and production information will not be widely distributed. Also, they have a funding advantage in that they can get their projects matched by government, attract refundable tax credits and get their research done for 15 cents on the dollar.

Whatever the outcome, research to help the berry industry in Ontario, is at the cliff edge and some very rapid action is needed to find the way forward. In my opinion, the berry industry can have a bright future as we have learned how to supply fresh berries for six months of

the year. But it cannot be done without research.

## **Agricultural Credit Corporation**

Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) has been working with agricultural producers since 1992 when it was formed by a coalition of farm organizations. Since that time, ACC has provided in excess of three billion dollars in operating funds to Canadian producers in a number of different agricultural areas including the production of grains for commercial sales, nursery products, greenhouse and field vegetables, fruits, floral products, and more. Essentially, from apples to zucchini, ACC has growers covered.

As capital and operating finance requirements change, the need for financing at a competitive rate is not going to go away. Producers will need to partner with their lenders just as they have with their agronomy suppliers, marketing organizations and associations, equipment dealers and all others involved in their operation. ACC wants to be that partner. The financial solutions available at ACC provide support to all areas of the development of agricultural products; from planting, through harvesting, right until products are marketed.

### **INTEREST-FREE FINANCING ON THOUSANDS OF PRODUCTS**

The *Advance Payments Program* is part of the suite of products available from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). It was designed to give producers access to cash advances for crops being planted or stored, or to assist with costs of raising livestock until they are sold at market. This program provides up to **18 months** of financing for commodities that will be commercially sold, such as grains, oilseeds, fruit and vegetable crops,

livestock, greenhouse, and nursery products. Eligible producers can receive up to **\$100,000 interest-free** with an additional \$300,000 available at Bank Prime Rate. Growers are to participate in Production Insurance or Agristability and are to repay advances as commodities are sold.

### **POST-HARVEST ADVANCES AVAILABLE NOW!**

Over the years, thousands of producers have taken advantage of accessing low cost loans for crops held in storage. By doing so, they are able to access cash to cover ongoing expenses until their crop is sold, or use the loan to take advantage of discounts and pre-pay expenses for the upcoming year. The [Advance Payments Program for Stored Crops](#) was designed to improve cash flow throughout the year and provide better opportunities for marketing commodities. Participation in Production Insurance or AgriStability is not required for the storage program because the crop itself is used as security. The application deadline is February 28, 2014 and advances are to be repaid as crops are sold and no later than September 30, 2014.

### **CURRENT ADVANCE RATES FOR STORED BERRIES:**

- Blueberries: \$0.50/lb
- Raspberries: \$1.30/lb
- Strawberries: \$0.27/lb

At ACC, we are proud to be an innovative organization that adapts to the needs of the agricultural industry. We will continue to look for new opportunities across the country and will work in tandem with government and organizations to increase eligibility into emerging markets.

For more information on [ACC](#) or the programs available please contact [info@agccreditcorp.ca](mailto:info@agccreditcorp.ca) or call 1-888-278-8807

