

Ontario Ginseng Growers say 'Yes' to a representative association

OFPMC has recommended to the Minister that the Ontario Ginseng Growers' Association be designated as the representative association for all producers of ginseng in Ontario under Section 12 of the *Farm Products Marketing Act*, with the authority to impose an annual license fee.

A recent expression of opinion vote showed that a majority of Ontario ginseng growers supported being represented by a province-wide association.

A total of 86.8 per cent of ginseng growers representing 64.1 per cent of the acreage of those casting valid ballots voted in favour of the Ontario Ginseng Growers' Association. The vote meant that growers

also supported the association having the authority to collect a mandatory annual license fee of \$50 per acre. The funding will be used to further the association's objectives of enhancing marketing efforts for ginseng growers, promoting markets for Ontario ginseng, and funding ginseng research. There are approximately 260 ginseng growers in Ontario growing about 4,800 acres of ginseng with a farm gate value estimated at \$70 million annually.

A total of 78.4 per cent of the 264 growers who received ballots participated in the mail-in vote, which was conducted by the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission. The vote, held between March 26 and April 6, 2001 asked the following question:

"Are you in favour of the Ontario Ginseng Growers' Association being designated as the representative association for all growers of ginseng in Ontario, and collecting an annual license fee of \$50 per acre on every acre of ginseng in production from such growers to finance the association's activities to stimulate, increase and improve the marketing of ginseng in Ontario?"

There are only two associations that have been previously designated under Section 12 of the Act and these are the Ontario Coloured Bean Growers' Association, and the Ontario Canola Growers' Association. Both were designated in 1988. ■

Upcoming Annual Meetings and Conventions 2001			
Date	Organization	Location	Telephone
June 18-19	Ontario Agri-Business Association – Grain Conference	Huntsville	519 822 3004
July 5	Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board – Annual Meeting	Delhi	519 842 3661
July 31	Ontario Apple Marketing Commission – Annual Meeting	Mississauga	905 858 1060
Aug. 27	Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board – Annual Meeting	Stratford	519 767 6537
Sept. 5 – 6	Ontario Agri-Business Association – Fertilizer Conference	Grand Bend	519 822 3004
Sept. 10	Ontario Agri-Business Association – Feed Conference	Guelph	519 822 3004
Sept. 30 – Oct. 3	National Dairy Council – Annual Meeting	New Brunswick	519 822 3004
Oct. 14	Canadian Restaurant and Foodservice Association – Hostex/AGM	Toronto	416 923 8416
Oct. 23	Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Producers' Marketing Board District One	Leamington	519 326 2604
Oct. 25	District Two	Ancaster	

This information is provided strictly for our readers' convenience. Please note that organizations may restrict attendance to some or all of their agenda items. Please contact each organization for more information on programs, agenda items open to non-members, and location. While the Commission endeavours to ensure this information is correct, readers are responsible for confirming its accuracy with individual organizations before making any plans to attend. ■



Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission N e w s l e t t e r

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US Retailer Markets IPM Produce

Produce growers who have adopted rigid IPM guidelines have found a market for 'value-added' products with Wegman's. In 1995, US retailer Wegman's Food Markets Inc., introduced fresh market sweet corn and subsequently they now offer frozen and canned produce from products grown following 'integrated pest management' (IPM) practices. "The IPM label represents the combined efforts of dedicated growers, Wegman's, Comstock Michigan Fruit, and Cornell University," says Bill Pool, Manager of Agriculture Production and Research for Wegman's. Mr. Pool has been overseeing

the program since its inception in 1994. **Wegman's Connection to its Growers** Wegman's Food Markets, Inc started as a produce push cart operation in 1916. Currently it is a privately owned



upscale retail chain in New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Fresh produce remains the focal point of the store. Wegman's features high quality produce from around the world including Ontario. However, Wegman's also focuses on offering locally grown produce. "We have a strong connection to local suppliers, " Pool maintains. "We feature growers in ads, TV commercials, and on pictures in our stores."

The IPM Program
'IPM' is a multifaceted approach to the problems growers face due to insects, diseases, weeds, and other agricultural pests. It focuses on alternatives to

chemical pesticides, such as prevention and monitoring, biological controls, and pest-resistant plant varieties. Crops and weather are carefully monitored. Pesticides are only used when crops are threatened with significant damage. In the

The backs of the labels explain that "Through IPM, growers use less pesticides over time by taking other steps to reduce pest damage. Your purchase supports the efforts of growers who truly care about the environment."

case of Wegman's, it is a science-based program developed by rural extension at Cornell University. The consumer views the program as environmentally friendly.

For the Wegman's program, growers need to adopt rigid documentation procedures for their pest management practices. Certification is based on a point system. A grower must meet 80% of the total points to use the Wegman's IPM label. There is no specific list of prohibited or allowable pesticides (other than those mandated by law) however each pesticide and its usage is assigned points based on its environmental impact. Nearly 3,500 acres of fresh and processing vegetables were

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OFPMC New Staff Update

New General Manager Appointed to Commission



Aileen MacNeil joined the Commission in early May as General Manager. As the GM, Aileen is responsible for ensuring that the Commission's is provided with the necessary

information, analysis and recommendations to assist in its decision making. In addition, the GM ensures effective implementation of Commission decisions and that these decisions are compatible with the Commission's strategic directions.

Aileen began her career with the Ministry in 1986 working on policy issues. She joined the Commission in 1990 as a marketing analyst. While with the Commission, Aileen worked with a variety of commodities including dairy, eggs, turkeys, fresh grapes, and tender fruit. Most recently she coordinated safety net policies for the Ministry.

Aileen brings strong leadership, team building, and communication skills to the General Manager's position, as well as sound knowledge of the regulated marketing systems provincially and at the national level.

Communication and Education Analyst Joins Commission Staff

Dean Post will be fulfilling the duties of Graham Howe for the next six months. Dean will be responsible for communication and education issues.

Previously Dean worked with the Market Development Branch of OMAFRA coordinating the delivery of trade events and communication for those processors and producers interested in exporting.

Graham Howe is on a six-month leave exploring Canada with his family. He will be returning in November. ■

US Retailer Markets IPM Produce

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grown for IPM labeling in 1996. All the growers involved in the project exceeded the required point level by about 15 percent. An independent third party audits the program to ensure compliance.

The Cornell Connection

In 1994, Bill Pool and others from Wegman's sat down with researchers from Cornell University. "We asked what kind of things can we do together that can combine the strengths that Cornell has and the strengths that Wegman's has to optimally benefit the growers and producers in the state of New York", says Pool.

The result of the meeting with Cornell was a pilot project to introduce IPM-grown fresh market sweet corn at one store in Rochester, NY. The program was well received by consumers as the corn sold quickly from the store. Customer surveys indicated that 90% of consumers were more likely to purchase IPM-grown than conventional produce. In addition, 61% of consumers would accept blemishes for either pesticide-free or IPM produce.

Consumer reaction and education

Wegman's shoppers were so positive about the chance to choose IPM-grown, fresh-market sweet corn the following summer that Wegman's decided to expand to IPM-grown canned sweet corn. In 1996, Comstock Michigan Fruit, Wegman's supplier of processed fruits and vegetables, easily found 10 of its growers who had already adopted most of the available IPM methods, and a deal was struck. The resulting processed vegetables were marketed using a unique label identifying the product as IPM-certified. The backs of the labels explain that "Through IPM, growers use less

pesticides over time by taking other steps to reduce pest damage. Your purchase supports the efforts of growers who truly care about the environment." In 2000, Wegman's introduced frozen vegetables to its list of IPM-labeled products.

Wegman's now offers sweet corn, greenhouse tomatoes, asparagus, and sweet cherries as part of its IPM-labeled products. IPM-labeled products are sold in the stores for the same price as other Wegman's-brand vegetables. "We view the IPM products as value-added", says Pool. "The program ensures a market for the growers and the grower cost of documentation is offset by the decreased cost of pesticides."

In return, Wegman's promotes the program to consumers and seeks to connect the consumer to agriculture. "Consumers have very little connection to agriculture," admits Pool. "Initially consumers had almost no knowledge of IPM practices and how it can benefit the environment." The IPM label is promoted via brochures, signs, in-store videos, television, and newspaper ads. Each year the demand and interest for IPM-labeled products grows. The success of the program has encouraged Wegman's to continually seek new products.

One reported anecdote states the effect Wegman's IPM education program has had on consumers. Dr. Christine Gruhn, a biology professor at Nazareth College in Rochester, NY routinely asks her freshman biology class whether any of them knows what IPM means. The answer is usually a unanimous "no". In the fall of 1996, eight out of 20 students reported "yes". The students reported the source of their knowledge to be "Wegman's". ■

OFPMC Update

The following is a summary of issues recently addressed by the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission.

Apple Commission Review

A review of the Ontario Apple Marketing Plan, as commissioned by the OFPMC, is now underway. The Commission has retained the joint services of JRG Consulting and Jayeff Partners to undertake the independent third party analysis for them. JRG Consulting and Jayeff Partners will be presenting their final report to the Commission in August.

Individual growers and stakeholders are invited to participate in the review.

Comments may be sent by mail to JRG Consulting Group, 39 Fieldstone Road, Guelph, Ontario N1L 1B4, by e-mail to: john@jrgconsulting.com or by fax to (519) 836-3505. All input will be considered in the assessment of the options for the future of the Apple Marketing Plan.

The review will include an analysis of the Apple Marketing Plan and the marketing authorities that have been delegated to the Ontario Apple Marketing Commission. It will also identify the causes of producer dissatisfaction and the impact on stakeholders of maintaining or terminating the plan by consulting with a cross-section of industry players.

Potato Arbitration Dispute – Update

Arbitrations in the potato industry are being challenged by buyer/processors. The Potato Board's motion with the Ontario Superior Court of Justice to have the matter turned back to be dealt with under the regulated marketing system has been denied. The court is proceeding to hear the motions by five processors to have the arbitrated awards set aside and to order a re-negotiation.

IAPO meets with Commission

Mr. Wayne Martin, General Manager of the Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario (IAPO) met with the Commission. IAPO is a non-profit corporation owned by Status Indians in Ontario. There are about 200 First Nations farmers in Ontario growing cash crops as well as beef and hogs. The IAPO offers loan programs to First Nations farmers as well as providing extension and advisory services.

Turkey Board Requests Realignment of Districts

The Commission accepted a request from the Ontario Turkey Producers' Marketing Board to amend its regulation thereby reducing the number of districts from

seven to four. The number of directors will remain at seven with two directors elected from districts one, two and three, and one director from District 4.

2001 Vegetable Agreements and Awards

The Commission passed Orders declaring the Agreements and Awards for Marketing of the following vegetable crops with various Ontario processors: tomatoes, sweet corn, green peas, carrots, peppers, cabbage, cucumbers, green and waxed beans, butternut squash, cauliflower, pumpkin, beets, and lima beans.

Asparagus Board Update

Ed Dehooghe has been appointed the new Chairman of the Ontario Asparagus Marketing Board.

Asparagus is not being processed in Ontario this year; however the board has arranged for some of the processing crop to be delivered to a processor in Quebec. ■