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Welcome to ON Organic

Evan Elford, New Crop Development Specialist, OMAF & MRA

As we continue into the harvest season, a helpful guide for cover crop planning is the Cover Crop Decision Tool created by the Midwest Cover Crops Council (MCCC). The tool includes Ontario based information for a variety of cover crops and their best function in the field including weed management, fertility benefits, and soil building functions to name a few. There are separate options for use in field crops and for vegetable crops. To learn more, please visit the website at www.mccc.msu.edu/selectorINTRO.html

Also, mark your calendars for the 2013 Bilingual Agricultural Workshops Day at the Alfred Campus, University of Guelph taking place on September 12th. This event is organized by OMAF and MRA and the University of Guelph-Alfred Campus. Producers and industry stakeholders will learn useful and up-to-date information on dairy production practices, farm business management and research findings pertaining to the industry. Much of the program will be devoted to interactive workshops and networking. For more information about the day, please see the events section of this newsletter.

As always we welcome your comments and any suggestions for topics in the newsletter. Thank you once again to our contributing authors and to EFAO, OCO and others who pass along our newsletter on a regular basis.

Subscription to this newsletter is easy and free. For details go to the webpage:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/subscribe/indx.html#organic>

The newsletter is also posted on the OMAF and MRA website at:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/organic/news/news-organic.html>

The French version of these newsletters is available at:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/french/crops/organic/news/news-organic.html>

The OMAF and MRA Organic pages are linked from:

<http://www.ontario.ca/organic> and <http://www.ontario.ca/biologique>

Pasture Records

Jack Kyle, Grazier Specialist, OMAF and MRA

Keeping pasture records is an important part of good pasture management. With written records you can see the results of management changes as well as weather impact on both forage and livestock performance. If you have these records you will be able to draw a number of comparisons between years that will provide valuable management information.

With a set of records that provide details of what has happened you can accurately compare month to month and year to year performance. A pocket notebook and or a three-ring binder can form the basis for a good system. If you want to expand to a more complex computer spread sheet at some future date you can.

Your records should include weather data- amount of rainfall, frost dates, and extreme summer temperatures. Forage or sward information on species mix in the pasture, additional fertility applied, and pasture growth at different times during the grazing season. Livestock information including size, type and number of animals on the pasture, frequency of moves to new paddocks, beginning and ending dates of the grazing season, amount of residual forage and any supplemental feed required. This is a long list but the records can be as simple or as complicated as you wish.

There are a number of tools to assist in measuring the amount of forage present. Height and density are the two important components.

The use of a grazing stick or a rising plate meter will help in determining the quantity of forage present. There is such a wide variation in the species composition of our Ontario pastures that the accuracy of these measuring devices leaves a lot to be desired.

If you take a close look at the pasture density and height along with current stocking rate you should be able to estimate the number of animal days per acre that is present.

A notebook will provide the basics for the record keeping and will over time give a clear picture of your grazing management.

By recording and accumulating this information you will be able to make grazing decisions that will have a positive benefit to your operation.

At regular intervals during the grazing season (every two weeks would be optimum) you can establish the amount of forage available in each paddock and create a graph of your grazing wedge. This graph will show the amount of forage available in a paddock at that point in time. The wedge should be a line declining from the paddock about to be entered to the paddock that the livestock just left. This wedge graph will indicate if there are problems in one or more paddocks and also allow you to project future forage needs.

Each year is different in the grazing business but with information you will be able to analyze the differences and manage your pastures for maximum returns.

Weed Barriers for Perennial Crops

Sean Westerveld, Ginseng and Medicinal Herbs Specialist, OMAF and MRA

Controlling weeds around perennial horticultural crops can be challenging, regardless of the production system. Perennial weeds can be particularly difficult to control within the crop row because pulling them out by the roots is often not possible and hoeing is rarely effective without damaging the crop. Weed barriers for perennial crops need to be durable to last the many years the crop is in the ground. Physical weed barriers increase initial establishment costs, but these will often be offset by reduced labour costs over time.

Physical weed barriers are most suitable for perennial horticultural crops that do not spread over time such as lavender, some medicinal herbs (e.g. Echinacea), perennial culinary herbs, many berry and fruit crops, tree nuts, hops and nursery crops. Plastic mulches are less suitable for spreading crops such as asparagus, June-bearing strawberries, and cane berries, since spread of these crops and/or emergence of new shoots can be restricted.

There are many different types of weed barriers, each with specific advantages and disadvantages. There are three main types:

Organic mulches (e.g. straw, wood chips, hulls, bark, leaves, sawdust, paper)

Advantages:

- The cheapest option available. While they may need to be re-applied over time, the costs are significantly lower than the use of plastic mulches.
- Do not restrict water or air flow to the soil and can improve aeration of the soil by preventing pounding rains from destroying soil structure.
- Restrict the growth of annual weeds and some germinating perennial weeds
- Their breakdown over time can increase organic matter content of the soil, increase moisture holding capacity, and improve microbial action in the soil
- Soil and air temperatures around the plant are moderated, reducing the impact of hot and cold periods

Weed Barriers for Perennial Crops (Cont'd)

Sean Westerveld, Ginseng and Medicinal Herbs Specialist, OMAF and MRA

Disadvantages:

- Perennial weeds can push through the mulch if growing in from between the rows or beside the field. Hoeing or other manual controls can be difficult without disturbing the mulch and introducing soil to the surface.
- Usually have a high carbon to nitrogen ratio, and microbial action to break them down will rob the soil of nitrogen. Nitrogen must be added to the crop to compensate.
- Large seeded weeds can germinate and grow through the mulch. The mulches can contain volunteer grain (straw) or weed seeds that can also grow through the mulch.
- Can increase or decrease soil pH, potentially affecting the growth of the crop if soil pH is already marginal for the crop.
- Can contain pathogenic organisms that may attack the crop (e.g. *Fusarium* in wheat straw). They may also promote a humid environment around the stem and roots of the crop, which can promote disease
- Break down over time and must be re-applied on a regular basis



Figure 1: Straw mulch around young hop plants.

Solid Plastic Mulch

Advantages:

- Less expensive than woven plastic mulches
- Provide a solid barrier that is impenetrable by most weeds, depending on the thickness of the mulch
- Can be applied by machine and the crop can be planted mechanically into the mulch, reducing establishment time and labour costs.

- Many different colours and types available that are suitable for a wider range of crops
- Can provide a significant increase in soil and air temperatures around the crop, which may increase growth of some crops.

Disadvantages:

- Can restrict aeration of the soil and promote some root diseases
- Mostly impenetrable by rainfall or overhead irrigation, therefore requiring drip/trickle irrigation
- More difficult to fertilize after establishment with organic sources (e.g. compost)
- Generally less durable than woven plastic mulches
- Temperatures can be excessive during heat waves and may damage some crops, especially young plants in contact with the mulch. Different colours are available that do not cause the same heating effects.
- High costs for removal and disposal. For certified organic production, plastic mulches must be entirely removed from the field before they begin to breakdown.
- Re-application if the mulch has broken down is not usually a viable option



Figure 2: Lavender plants on solid black plastic mulch.

Weed Barriers for Perennial Crops (Cont'd)

Sean Westerveld, Ginseng and Medicinal Herbs Specialist, OMAF and MRA

Woven Plastic (Fabric) Mulches

Advantages:

- Generally the most durable and can last a decade or more, depending on the grade.
- Impenetrable by most weeds while still allowing water and air flow through the mulch
- Drip/trickle irrigation not necessary
- Sturdy enough to allow for foot traffic on top, therefore suitable for Agri-tourism operations (e.g. display garden of lavender)
- Both white and black types available that are suitable for a wide range of crops

Disadvantages:

- Most expensive
- While mulch can be laid by machine, transplants often have to be planted by hand.
- Fabric can fray if the edge of the planting hole is not burned to melt the fibres together
- Similar temperature, organic fertilization, and disposal concerns as solid plastic mulch.



Figure 3: Lavender plants on black woven plastic mulch.

It is also possible to combine organic and plastic mulches. Cheaper plastic and fabric mulches can break down if exposed to UV light in the sun. Covering these with an organic mulch can prevent breakdown and can provide a very effective weed barrier at a lower price. However, the plastic mulch must be removed before it begins to break down and this could be very difficult to achieve once covered with layers of organic mulch over time.

Depending on the crop and the between-row spacing, growers often have the option to combine a weed barrier in the row with a living ground cover (e.g. grass, clover) between the rows.

These can be kept under control by mowing. However, it is important to consider how much these plants will compete with the crop for nutrients and water. For lavender production, evidence suggests that plants grown with grass between rows grow slower than the same cultivar grown with a solid fabric mulch within and between rows. Irrigation and fertilization may have to be increased to compensate for the competition. While legumes such as clover can fix their own nitrogen, this nitrogen is only released when the plants are killed and competition may still be an issue when the plants are growing.

Plastic and fabric mulches used for annual crop production are not usually durable enough to be used for perennial crop production, unless growers only need to control weeds during the establishment year. Plastic mulches should be 2 to 4 mil (1 mil = 0.025 mm) thickness or thicker for perennial crop production. Woven plastic mulches are often sold as ground covers for nurseries and should have a lifetime of longer than 5 years. Organic mulches should be 5 to 10 cm (2 to 4 in.) thick to provide an effective weed barrier, while not restricting growth of the crop.

Not all organic or plastic mulches are permitted in organic production systems. Polyvinyl chloride mulches are not permitted. Organic mulches must come from a source that has not been genetically engineered and has been managed with only permitted substances for at least 60 days prior to harvest. Growers should always check with their certification body to determine if a mulch is permitted. Specific restrictions apply to biodegradable plastic mulches, but these are not usually durable enough to be used for perennial crop production unless weeds only need to be controlled until the crop is established.

Funding Opportunities

Ontario Farm Innovation Program

OMAF and MRA is supporting the development and adoption of on-farm innovations that can increase the ability of farmers to respond to changing demands and opportunities and improve on-farm profitability. The Ontario Farm Innovation Program (part of Growing Forward 2 a federal, provincial, territorial agreement) will provide funding for applied research projects and on-farm demonstration projects that showcase new on-farm innovations. The program is open to non-supply managed farm organizations and to individual farmers in partnership with commodity organizations. OFIP is delivered by the Agricultural Adaptation Council (AAC). For more information please visit the AAC website: www.adaptcouncil.org/program-details.php?id=0c4d8n5f1t2q

Growing Forward 2 - Helping You Reach Your Goals

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

With a focus on innovation, competitiveness, and market development, Growing Forward 2 programs are designed to help the industry capitalize on opportunities and contribute to the economy. Whether you are just starting out, or have been in business a long time, Growing Forward 2 will offer practical and flexible programs that can help you reach your goals.

New Funding for Organisations and Collaborations under GF2:

The Agricultural Adaptation Council (AAC) is a delivery partner for two new GF2 programs for projects involving organisations and collaborations:

1. Capacity building – funding for skills development and training, assessments, planning, etc. More details can be found in the [Capacity Building Program Guide](#).
2. Project implementation – funding for implementation of plans, applied research projects, etc. More details can be found in the [Project Implementation Program Guide](#).

For more information on these two programs, please visit the AAC website at: www.adaptcouncil.org.

New Funding for Individual Producers under GF2:

The Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) is a delivery partner for GF2 programs for projects involving individual producers.

1. Capacity building – funding for skills development and training, assessments, planning, etc. More details can be found on their [website](#).

For more information on this program, please visit the OSCIA website at: www.ontariosoilcrop.org.

Learning Opportunities

Theory and Principles of Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Horticulture

The University of Guelph will be offering a number of courses on sustainable urban agriculture in the Fall 2013 semester. For more information please visit the University of Guelph Open Learning and Educational Support website: www.open.uoguelph.ca/offerings/offering.aspx?hold=y&id=4313

Or call 519.824.4120 ext. 55000, email: info@opened.uoguelph.ca

Conferences, Meetings and Tours

North American Manure Expo

Date: August 20 & 21, 2013

Location: 413 Arkell Road, Arkell, Ontario

The 2013 Manure Expo will focus on precision manure management and will include commercial field demonstrations, educational sessions and commercial vendor displays.

August 20: Half-day bus tour featuring lagoon agitation equipment demonstrations, a stop at a dairy-based anaerobic digester, a tour of Husky Equipment in Alma, followed by supper at the Alma Community Centre. Buses will be departing from the University of Guelph – Arkell Research Station at 11:30 a.m.

August 21: Informative seminars on manure management – including compaction, valuing manure, precision management and technology demonstrations – plus see the latest and greatest in manure handling equipment, including demonstrations of solid and liquid manure spreaders plus composting equipment.

Attendance is free for both days but pre-registration is required. Tour Day has limited seating so register early to avoid disappointment.

For more information and to register please visit the website at: <http://www.agannex.com/manure-manager/manure-expo> or by Tel: 1.888.599.2228

2013 EFAO Bus Tour to Eastern Ontario & Quebec!

Date: August 22 – August 24

Visit 8-10 farms, a mixture of vegetables, dairy, cash crops, and on-farm processing.

Overnight stays in Ottawa & Cornwall

Highlights:

- Anaerobic digester
- Sunflower milling
- Cover crop research
- Organic dairy research
- On-farm dairy processing
- And more!

To register for the bus tour contact: info@efao.ca, Tel: 519.822.8606 or 1.877.822.8606 to hold your spot now!

McVean Farm Harvest Table, 2013

Date: August 25, 3 - 8pm

Location: McVean Start-Up Farm, Brampton, Ontario

All proceeds go to start-up farms, farmers and programs and services through FarmStart. Tickets are \$100.00 + HST each (all \$100.00 ticket purchases may receive a charitable receipt for \$50.00); \$50.00 + HST for farmers;

\$50.00 + HST for children under 12; Babes in arms are free (under two years).

For more information please visit: www.harvesttable.ca or www.farmstart.ca.

To purchase your tickets please contact: Cherie Bauman, FarmStart Administration, email: cherie@farmstart.ca OR tel: 519.836.7046 ext.103

Canada Outdoor Farm Show

Date: September 10-12, 2013

Location: Woodstock, Ontario

For more information please visit the website at: www.outdoorfarmshow.com

2013 Bilingual Agricultural Workshops Day – Alfred Campus-University of Guelph

Date: September 12, 2013

Location: Alfred Campus, University of Guelph

The second edition of the Bilingual Agricultural Workshop Day will be held in Alfred on September 12th 2013. This event is organized by OMAF and MRA and the University of Guelph-Alfred Campus.

One of the primary objectives of the day is to provide producers and industry stakeholders with useful and up-to-date information on dairy production practices, farm business management and research findings pertaining to the industry. A second objective is to bring stakeholders together under one roof to allow for an exchange of information between farmers, agricultural service suppliers, researchers and OMAF and MRA staff.

Simultaneous translation service will be offered to all participants again this year and presentations will be made in both English and French.

This year's agenda includes two formal presentations focusing on Biosecurity on the Dairy Farm and The High Immune Response Technology: Disease Resistant Genetics.

The rest of the program will be devoted to interactive workshops, networking and meeting researchers. Participants will be divided in small groups and each group will move from workshop to workshop every thirty minutes.

Conferences, Meetings and Tours (Cont'd)

Four workshops will take place concurrently:

Quinoa and Other Alternative Crops (Evan Elford, OMAF and MRA)

Dairy Nutrition Clinic; Molds and Mycotoxins (Tom Wright, OMAF and MRA)

Assessing Cow comfort in the Barn (Elsa Vasseur, University of Guelph)

Developing a Heifer Selection Strategy Using Tools Such as Genomics and Sexed Semen (Mario Mongeon, OMAF and MRA)

Participant notes from last year:

- “The workshops were great because they allowed us to have more personal and interactive relation with the presenters”
- “I really liked the fact that there were workshops and we did not sit still all day”
- “The manure reading workshop was very new to me and I will use this at home”
- “I found it very efficient to go from place to place in small groups and the content was very interesting as well”

For more information, please contact: Mario S. Mongeon, OMAF and MRA at 613.679.4288

FarmStart: Introduction to Pastured Pigs

Date: September 14, 9:30am – 4pm.

Location: Green Being Farm, 221788 Concession #14, Neustadt.

Cost: \$95 (+HST) per person or \$171 (+HST) for a farm team of 2.

Tarrah Young of Green Being Farm will share lessons from her own experiences raising heritage pigs on pasture, as well as innovative and valuable information gleaned from research abroad. Topics to be covered include feeding and grazing options, natural health care, farrowing, breed selection, processing, marketing and economics.

For more information please visit the FarmStart website at www.farmstart.ca or to register follow the link to <https://farmstart.ticketbud.com/introduction-to-pigs>.

When: Saturday, September 14, 9:30am-4:00pm

Where: Green Being Farm, 221788 Concession #14 RR#1 Neustadt. [View Map](#)

100th Anniversary International Plowing Match and Rural Expo

Date: September 17-21, 2013

Location: Perth County

For more information please visit the website at: www.ipm2013.org/about.html

Organic Week 2013

Date: September 21-28

Location: Multiple Locations across Ontario and Canada
“Canada’s National Organic Week is the largest annual celebration of organic food, farming and products across the country. Hundreds of individual events showcase the benefits of organic agriculture and its positive impact on the environment.”

For more information, please visit the Organic Week website at www.organicweek.ca

Permit to Take Water (PTTW) Workshops

The OF&VGA will be hosting PTTW workshops in the OMAF and MRA Simcoe auditorium in 2013 and 2014. The format will be a half day session from 9am-12pm working through the application form in a group setting.

To register please contact: George Shearer, Tel: 519.763.6160 ex. 219

Registration fee: \$20.

2013 Dates:

- Oct 25
- Nov 29

2014 Dates:

- Jan 31
- Mar 28

South West Hort Expo 2013 (Formerly Essex County Associated Growers)

Date: November 19-20, 2013

Location: Leamington Kinsmen Recreation Complex, 249 Sherk Street, Leamington, Ontario

For more information please visit the Essex County Associated Growers website at www.ecag.ca.

Catching the Wave - Guelph Organic Conference & Expo 2014

Date: January 30-February 4, 2014

Location: Guelph University Centre, Ontario

For more information please visit the conference website at www.guelphorganicconf.ca or call 519.824.4120 ext 56311

Links to ON Organic Information & Staff Contacts

OMAF and MRA Horticulture Staff

Horticulture Technology

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Jim Chaput	Minor Use Coordinator	519-826-3539
Hannah Fraser	Entomologist, Hort Crops Prgm Lead	905-562-1674
Kristen Callow	Weed Mgt Hort Crops Prgm Lead	519-738-1232
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Deanna Németh	Nutrient Management Planning Spec.	905-562-1170
Anne Verhallen	Soil Management Specialist	519-674-1614
Vacant	Organic Crop Production	519-826-4587
Denise Beaton	Crop Protection Program Lead	519-826-6594
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Horticulture Crops

Marg Appleby	IPM Systems Specialist	613-475-5850
Eugenia Banks	Potato Specialist	519-826-3678
Wendy McFadden-Smith	Tender Fruit & Grape IPM Spec.	905-562-3833
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Pam Fisher	Berry Crop Specialist	519-426-2238
Janice LeBoeuf	Vegetable Crop Specialist	519-674-1699
Elaine Roddy	Vegetable Crop Specialist	519-674-1616
Kathryn Carter	Tender Fruit & Grape Specialist	905-562-1639
Leslie Huffman	Apple Specialist	519-738-1256
Kristy Grigg-McGuffin	Pome Fruit IPM Specialist	519-426-4322
Marion Paibomesai	Vegetable Crop Specialist	519-826-4963

Greenhouse, Agroforestry & Specialty Crops

Jim Todd	Transition Crops Specialist	519-426-3823
Melanie Filotas	Specialty Crops IPM Specialist	519-426-4434
Sean Westerveld	Ginseng & Medicinal Herbs Spec.	519-426-4323
Evan Elford	New Crop Development Specialist	519-426-4509
Wayne Brown	Greenhouse Floriculture Specialist	905-562-4141, x179
Graeme Murphy	Greenhouse Floriculture IPM Spec.	905-562-4141, x106
Shalin Khosla	Greenhouse Vegetable Specialist	519-738-1257
Gillian Ferguson	Greenhouse Vegetable IPM Spec.	519-738-1258
Pam Charbonneau	Turfgrass Specialist	519-824-4120, x52597
Jennifer Llewellyn	Nursery Crops Specialist	519-824-4120, x52671
Todd Leuty	Agroforestry Specialist	519-826-3215
Mahendra Thimmanagari	Crop Bioproducts Specialist	519-826-4593

OMAF and MRA Field Crop & Livestock Staff

Field Crops

Horst Bohner	Soybean Specialist	519-271-5858
Ian McDonald	Applied Research Coordinator	519-482-5129
Peter Johnson	Cereals Specialist	519-271-8180
Albert Tenuta	Pathologist, Field Crops Prgm Lead	519-674-1617
Tracey Baute	Entomologist, Field Crops Prgm Lead	519-674-1696
Scott Banks	Emerging Crops Specialist	613-258-8359
Gilles Quesnel	IPM Field Crop Program Lead (Bil)	613-258-8250
Bonnie Ball	Soil Fertility Specialist	519-271-9269
Adam Hayes	Soil Management Specialist	519-674-1621
Greg Stewart	Corn Industry Program Lead	519-824-4120 x54865
Michael Cowbrough	Weed Mgmt Field Crps Prgm Lead	519-824-4120 x52580
Joel Bagg	Forage Specialist	705-324-5856
Christine Brown	Nutrient Mgt Field Crops Prgm Lead	519-537-8305
Brian Hall	Canola & Edible Bean Specialist	519-271-0083

Livestock

Tom Wright	Dairy Cattle Nutritionist	519-824-4120 x56281
Jaydee Smith	Swine Prod Systems Program Lead	519-674-1542
Mario Mongeon	Livestock Specialist (Bil)	613-679-0937
Albert Dam	Poultry Specialist	519-824-4120 x54326
Brian Lang	Dairy Cattle Prod Systems	519-537-8786
Doug Richards	Swine Grower-Finisher Specialist	519-482-3133
Ron Lackey	Feed Ingredient & By-product Specialist	519-271-7407
Anita O'Brien	Sheep & Goat Specialist	613-258-8299
Brian Tapscott	Alternative Livestock Specialist	519-846-3400
Chisptoph Wand	Beef Sheep & Goat Nutrition	519-824-4120 x53670
Brian Pogue	Beef Cattle Program Lead	519-826-5106
Nancy Noecker	Beef Cow/Calf Specialist	613-258-8476
Delma Kennedy	Sheep Specialist	519-846-3398
Steve Naylor	Aquaculture Specialist	519-826-3172
Tom Hamilton	Beef Cattle Production	705-647-2087
Jack Kyle	Grazier Specialist	705-324-5855

Links to Organic Agriculture Information

Organic Council of Ontario (OCO)

<http://www.organiccouncil.ca>

Canadian Organic Growers (COG)

<http://www.cog.ca>

OMAF and MRA Organic Agriculture

<http://www.ontario.ca/organic>

Ecological Farmers of Ontario (EFO)

<http://www.efao.ca>

Organic Agricultural Centre of Canada

<http://www.oacc.info>

FarmStart www.farmstart.ca

Agricultural Information

Contact Centre:

1-877-424-1300

E-mail: ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca

Northern Ontario

Regional Office:

1-800-461-6132

www.ontario.ca/omafra