

THE BUZZ



News about the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs – University of Guelph Partnership

June 5, 2009

Vol. II, No. 10

IN THE NEWS

Finding solutions for emerging weed challenges. U of G researchers have found a giant ragweed biotype that is showing resistance to the popular herbicide glyphosate. The plants are able to survive glyphosate use rates that kill normal susceptible weeds. Currently, no weeds in Canada have been confirmed as resistant to glyphosate, although 15 weed species – including giant ragweed – have been confirmed as glyphosate-resistant in other countries. Plant Agriculture researchers Francois Tardif and Peter Sikkema will conduct further greenhouse and field trials on the weed biotype (found only in one identified area in Essex County to date) to confirm resistance as well as to identify potential management options. Researchers will also be working to understand the genetic and biochemical basis for resistance. Read more about this research [here](#).

Corn is focus of genomics research. Corn is one of the world's most important food crops and a major commodity in Ontario, worth more than \$1.5 billion to the economy annually. But global factors are putting stress on productivity, and farmers will need to double yields over the next 30 to 40 years to meet expected demand. Fossil fuels needed for fertilizer and production practices are costly, both economically and environmentally. Research by Dr. Steven Rothstein of the Dept. of Molecular and Cellular Biology aims to reduce the amount of fossil fuels required by targeting the genes in corn that regulate nitrogen uptake and use and altering their activity. This work received the bulk of a \$3.2 million grant for genomics research at the U of G from the Ontario Research Fund, announced last month. Rothstein has been supported by the OMAFRA–U of G Partnership in earlier work to reduce nitrogen fertilizer inputs.

RESEARCH STATIONS

Beefed up research at New Liskeard station. A newly renovated facility has added capacity to the beef research program, addressing issues of meat tenderness and feed efficiency through genomics. Funding for these newest renovations was provided by the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario. Research projects underway at the facility reflect the long-term partnership in beef research between OMAFRA, the University of

Guelph and the Ontario Cattlemen's Association – a partnership that's been around since 1994. The association owns a 150-cow herd at the facility, which is housed in three barns on 500 acres of land. New Liskeard is also home to the Superior Plant Upgrading and Distribution (SPUD) Unit and an agronomy research program. The SPUD unit produces first generation seed potatoes, and strawberry and raspberry plants for Ontario and has recently expanded to include garlic and asparagus. The agronomy research program has diversified from the traditional spring cereal, oilseeds and forage crops grown in the north to include hybrid poplar trees and perennial grasses for biofuel.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Guelph research promoted to the world in Atlanta. Members of the University of Guelph Business Development Office joined 15,000 other industrial, government and academic personnel to network and promote research at the Biotechnology Industry Organization's (BIO) annual meeting May 17-22 in Atlanta. In addition to having a presence at the Ontario pavilion, BDO staff attended one-on-one partnering meetings with companies to discuss University research and technologies, including OMAFRA-sponsored research. Meetings were held with representatives from animal health, vaccines, plant biotechnology and natural products, to name a few. "BIO provides an excellent opportunity to meet with key decision makers from all over the world," says Associate Director Steve De Brabandere. "I have a lot of following up to do with the contacts we've made."

NEWS

Ridgetown renewable energy initiative gets a boost. A wind power company has become the first corporate cash sponsor for a facility at the University of Guelph's Ridgetown Campus. Renewable Energy Systems Canada Inc. announced its support to the Centre for the Agricultural Renewable Energy and Sustainability (CARES) for \$175,000, with the possibility of additional contributions in future years. The Centre is being established at Ridgetown as a hub for applied and adaptive research, training and education, technology transfer, and rural community development in bio-energy and the bioeconomy. Campus Director Art Schaafsma says this kind of investment is integral to the success of the centre. "We're very encouraged that a potential local provider of wind technology approached our campus to support the CARES program. Technology partners are critical to the on-going development of CARES," says Schaafsma.

OMAFRA-U of G research program heavily subscribed. The Office of Research – Agri-Food and Partnerships has received 130 proposals from researchers in response to the recent calls for proposals under the seven new themes in the OMAFRA-U of G Research Program. Ken Hough, Director of the OMAFRA-U of G Agreement, University of Guelph, says the number -- which is the biggest ever -- "shows researchers are enthusiastic about participating in the new partnership." Hough says the received proposals also highlight a new push to have more integration between the research themes. Researchers were able to submit one proposal under more than one research theme, and 40 researchers did just that. The proposals are in a review and ranking process now, with the aim being to notify researchers if their applications have been approved by late [June](#) or early [July](#). Another call will be issued this coming fall for a further set of projects to be approved and implemented starting in spring 2010. Read more about the research themes [here](#).

STAFF AND STUDENT NEWS

SPARK-CFCO radio partnership struck. This summer, the Students Promoting Awareness of Research Knowledge (SPARK) program at the University of Guelph will be broadening its radio broadcast audience through a new partnership with CFCO radio in Chatham, Ontario. A series of radio broadcasts on the university's crop and environmental agriculture research projects will be provided to CFCO to meet the needs of the listening area's extensive crop farming community. The emphasis will be new, profitable and more efficient ways to farm. The goal of these radio broadcasts continues to coincide with SPARK's knowledge translation and transfer role. Scientific developments are summarized and communicated through an audio medium that is comprehensible across many demographics. For example, the university's Plant Agriculture department has been instrumental in helping Ontario's corn farmers with weed control, a hot topic in SPARK radio broadcasts. CFCO is owned by Blackburn Radio Inc., the same company that owns CKNX in Wingham, where SPARK research features are heard regularly.

COMING EVENTS

Learn about the science and business of functional foods. Health professionals, producers, researchers and agribusiness professionals will be speaking at the Food Meets Function conference June 17–18, 2009 in London, Ontario. This conference will deliver the latest information on human nutritional science and the healthfulness of functional foods that will be of particular interest for registered dietitians and health professionals. As well, there will be sessions intended for those wanting to learn more about the production, retail and processing aspects of the functional food value chain. For more information or to register, go to www.foodmeetsfunction.ca.

News@Noon. The next News@Noon lunchtime seminar takes place June 19, 2009 in the conference centre at 1 Stone Road W., Guelph. John Melichercik, Co-Executive Director – Laboratory Services Division, University of Guelph, and Rena Hubers, Director – Food Inspection Branch, OMAFRA, will speak about how the Agriculture and Food Laboratory keeps Ontario's food safe. For more information, contact Liz Snyder (519-826-3376, lsnyder@uoguelph.ca) or Robyn Meerveld (519-826-4191, robyn.meerveld@ontario.ca).

2009 Canada's Outdoor Farm Show. This year's farm show takes place September 15-17, 2009 on the grounds of the Woodstock Research Station. It features demonstrations of innovative production systems, and energy and healthy living expos. For more information go to www.outdoorfarmshow.com.

About The Buzz

The Buzz is the electronic community news vehicle for the OMAFRA-University of Guelph partnership.

Editor: Liz Snyder, OMAFRA-UofG programs, 519-826-3376, lsnyder@uoguelph.ca. To contribute, contact Liz or contributing editors Robyn Meerveld, (519-826-4191, robyn.meerveld@ontario.ca) or Owen Roberts (519-826-5207, owen@uoguelph.ca).

Contributors to this issue: Natalie Carter, Brenda Cassidy, Steve De Brabandere, Ken Hough, Grant Maxie, Robyn Meerveld, Liz Meidlinger, Hayley Millard, Rich Moccia, Remo Pallottini, Owen Roberts, John Rowsell, Art Schaafsma, Liz Snyder, François Tardif, Mary Visser Kerr.

Find out more about the OMAFRA-UofG Partnership at:

www.uoguelph.ca/research/omafra/index.shtml

www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/uofg/

Please forward this newsletter to anyone who may be interested.