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Welcome to “ON Organic”

Hugh Martin, Organic Crop Production Program Lead, OMAFRA

Welcome to the March 2010 issue of ON Organic. Spring will soon be here and many farms are getting their seed deliveries and are starting seedlings in the greenhouse. This month's newsletter gives you more information to start the new season with. Some more late winter meetings to attend and details to watch out for as the season progresses.

Thanks to Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO) and Organic Council of Ontario (OCO) for forwarding this on to their email lists, and I encourage you to share it with other colleagues who may find it useful. As always we welcome your comments.

Subscription to this newsletter is easy and no cost. For details go to the webpage: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/subscribe/indx.html#organic>

The newsletter is also posted on the OMAFRA 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 OMAFRA Organic pages are linked from: <http://www.ontario.ca/organic> and <http://www.ontario.ca/biologique>

The ON Organic Team

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Linda Cooper – OMAFRA, Client Service Representative

Planning for Success

Doreen Collins - Marketing and Customer Service Program Lead/OMAFRA

A speaker at a recent workshop stated: "Spend less time **in** your business and more time **on** your business". What does this mean to beef producers? The idea of spending more time developing or examining your business plan rather than working in the field or barn to ensure the day to day activities are operating efficiently may not seem too exciting!

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce e-learning centre cited ten key reasons why small businesses fail, and the number one reason was: "Lack of an adequate, viable business plan." If developing and maintaining a business plan for your operation seems like a daunting task - remember that a business plan is a game plan or road map for a defined period of time.

Why Plan? Planning is essential as it helps define goals, outlines roles and responsibilities, sets a benchmark to record and compare progress and provides essential documentation usually required by financial institutions and government assistance programs.

First and foremost you need to develop a Strategic Vision or a statement of where your business is headed; a Business Mission or a statement of how you do business; and key objectives and goals - once these are established you are ready to tackle a business plan.

Example:

Strategic Vision:

Farm XYZ become the leading producer of grass fed beef in the county

Business Mission:

Farm XYZ will produce quality beef products for the local market.

Key Objectives and Goals:

Expand direct sales to include 20 families, 3 restaurants and 2 speciality shops.

These three components now provide a clearer picture of who you are and where you want to go with your business. Planning also includes developing a business plan that reviews the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of your operation.

Strengths and Weaknesses are the two things that are in your control, while Opportunities and Threats are less in your control, and even be totally out of your control such as the weather, world markets, etc. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses will help in addressing and dealing with the opportunities and threats that come your way.

Much attention is given to conducting a SWOT analysis of

your business in the Quest for New Farm Value™ - Value Plus workshops (developed by the Canadian Farm Business Management Council and Gary Morton of Morton Horticultural Associates) being held this winter across Ontario. An exercise in the workshop includes participants:

- Listing three business **STRENGTHS**. Examples: Enjoy producing high quality beef; family members are engaged in the business; enjoy working with people and building customer loyalty.
- Listing three business **WEAKNESSES**. Examples: Little focus on financial records to understand what areas of the business are declining or growing; marketing efforts are too broad and not focused; no written business plan in place to direct the business in the short and long term.
- Listing three business **OPPORTUNITIES**. Examples: Growth in interest by consumer in local food, growing support for the farmer; proximity to growing urban markets.
- Listing three business **THREATS**. Examples: weather; world markets and economics; food recalls.
- Once you have conducted your SWOT analysis you are in an excellent position to develop a plan that examines how you will build on your strengths and opportunities, improve weaknesses and manage threats.

The components of a successful business plan include a production plan, human resource plan, financial plan and a marketing plan. The marketing plan is often the most challenging to prepare as it involves trying to understand the consumer and the ever changing marketplace.

A comprehensive marketing plan examines global and consumer trends; reviews the marketing mix of product, price, place and promotion; and provides details of how you will market your product or service over a certain period of time.

For those new to marketing their product or service, marketing is often described in terms of the 4P's. The 4P's affect every marketing decision you make from production to the end user and include:

Product: Your product or service

Price: What you will charge for it

Place: The path your product will travel to get to the end user

Promotion: How will you let people know about it

Once you have addressed the 4P's of marketing for your product it is important to continually evaluate if your marketing plan is gleaned the results you had hoped for. If not you will need to re-tool your plan going forward. For information and resources on business planning visit: The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) - Business Management Unit website at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/agbusdev.html>

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/facts/08-051.htm>

Subscribe to our OMAFRA Agricultural Business Update Newsletter at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/news/index.html#agbus>

Helpful workshops and Training:
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/gvfp/index.htm>
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/conference/quest/index.html>

From OMAFRA Virtual Beef Newsletter <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/beef/news/vbn0210a2.htm>

Water Testing Basics

By Sandra Jones, On-Farm Food Safety Program Lead/
OMAFRA

Many food safety programs recommend testing the water used for irrigation and agricultural chemical or commercial fertilizer application. If pathogens are in the water, the water may contaminate the produce.

How often to test your water will depend on a number of factors. If you grow a crop that can be consumed raw (e.g. lettuce) and the water you use to irrigate varies over time (e.g. river or pond fed by runoff), test your water at least a couple of times a year so that you have a better understanding of your water risk. Seasonal environmental changes or the presence of effluents or run-off can greatly affect the quality of a water source. In a study posted in *Water Research* (2009), Dr. Graham Wilkes and researchers noticed seasonal patterns where pathogens and parasites were most frequently detected during the fall months in Eastern Ontario's South Nation River basin. *Cryptosporidium* was detected in over 70% of the samples and the bacteria *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* were detected in 15% and 34% of samples respectively.

Rainfall and run-off can do more than just add pathogens to a water source. These events can disturb the natural "settling" process of pathogens that may already exist in the water. The Wilkes' study saw an increased detection of pathogens days after high accumulated rainfall and spring/fall discharge. The researchers believed that the disrupted sediment and vegetative matter in the water courses caused the spike in pathogen detection. So be aware that bacterial levels can increase significantly in water sources even a few days after heavy rainfall - especially if you need to overhead irrigate a crop that can be consumed raw with this water.

While testing for a specific pathogen is possible, it is less expensive to test for an organism that can indicate the potential for pathogens in the water. Currently, generic *E. coli* may be the most appropriate indicator for predictive efforts. The higher the numbers of *E. coli* present in the water, the greater the likelihood that Dr. Wilkes also found pathogens present.

The current recommendation is that *E. coli* should be at or below 100 bacteria per 100 ml water. This value is similar to Ontario's Recreational Water Standards. If the water is considered "safe" to swim in, it is also a low risk for contamination of food crops.

When testing your irrigation water, collect the water sample at the point where it contacts produce, such as at emitters or when it leaves the guns or risers, or when it "rains" down on the crop. Refrigerate the water sample immediately and have it transported under refrigerated conditions to a water testing laboratory within 24 hours. For more information, see the OMAFRA factsheet, "Improving On-Farm Food Safety through Good Irrigation Practices", Order No 05-059.

Reference:

Wilkes, G.A *et al.*, (2009). "Seasonal Relationships among Indicator Bacteria, Pathogenic Bacteria, Cryptosporidium Oocysts, Giardia Cysts, and Hydrological Indices for Surface Waters within an Agricultural Landscape." *Water Research*, 43(8), pp. 2209-2223.

Apple Growers! Save the Date to Learn More about New Tools

By Leslie Huffman, Apple Specialist, OMAFRA

Ontario apple growers will have some new tools to help make sound decisions for their orchard operation. These aren't the next snazzy pruning saw or a silver bullet to control pests, but this interactive software will be very useful in the 2010 season and beyond.

With funding from the Ontario Apple Growers and the Farm Innovation Program, the OMAFRA Apple Team has been working with consultants to develop two software programs - Ontario AppleIPM and Fruit Tracker. **Ontario AppleIPM** will provide important information on scouting and identifying pests in apple orchards, while **Fruit Tracker** will allow you to track pesticide use for each orchard block and for each buyer.

Plans are being made to introduce these tools to growers through a series of half-day workshops across the

province. Save these dates to attend an apple workshop being offered near you. Participants will receive free CD copies of both software programs. Don't miss out - attend one of the following workshops:

- March 25 Mettawas Restaurant, Kingsville
- April 1 OMAFRA office, Simcoe
- April 7 OAG boardroom, Vineland
- April 8 Keeler Centre, Newcastle
- April 13 Marsh Street Community Centre, Clarksburg

Register by calling the Ontario Apple Growers at 905-688-0990.

Soil Health - Putting it to the Test in Ontario

Anne Verhallen - Soil Management Specialist (Hort Crops)/ OMAFRA

Orchard management, with the sod cover and long term plantings, has the potential to greatly improve soil health. The absence of tillage with its potential damage to soil, suggests that beneficial soil fungi populations should thrive and contribute to improving soil structure.

Adam Hayes and I have been working with Dave Hooker and Bill Deen of the University of Guelph to examine the Cornell Soil Health Assessment, to test and adapt it for use in Ontario. During 2009, we sampled the long term crop rotation and tillage trials at Ridgetown and Elora. Over the next 2 years we are committed to using the Cornell test to assess soil health on a wide variety of grower fields across Ontario as part of this trial. Our Soils Team is interested in collecting samples from a number of different orchards under different management approaches and of varying ages to include in this project.

If you are interested in including your orchard in our study; please contact me at:

Anne Verhallen, Soil Management Specialist (Hort.)
519-674-1614 or through email anne.verhallen@ontario.ca. I can't guarantee that every orchard offered is included due to time constraints and travel. If you are interested in learning more about the Cornell Soil Health Assessment see their website at www.hort.cornell.edu/soilhealth/extension/manual.htm

From OMAFRA Orchard matter Newsletter <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/hort/news/orchnews/2010/on-0210a2.htm>

Don't Gamble With Your Water Supply!

Are you irrigating on your farm? You must have a "Permit To Take Water" (PTTW) issued by the Ministry of the Environment to withdraw more than 50,000 litres of water in a day, from any water source (well, stream, lake, pond on your property or even a drainage ditch).

Attend an OMAFRA PTTW application workshop or get an application directly from the Ministry of the Environment (your local office or 1-800-265-7672 or www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/water/pttw.htm). The OMAFRA workshop will take you through the application forms for both new and renewing applicants. Workshops are being planned across the province and are listed at www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/facts/pttw_course.htm. Next workshops are planned for Essex, Chatham/Kent this spring, and Vineland and Simcoe this fall. Please register by calling 1-877-424-1300.

The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture have a Surface Water Specialist who can assist you. on a fee for service basis (519-763-6160 or water@ofvga.org). For a list of other consultants offering PTTW services see www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/consultants.htm.

Don't gamble with your water supply. Apply for your PTTW. Renew your existing PTTW before it expires. Register for a PTTW application workshop today.

Double Whammy - Mating Disruption for Codling Moth and Oriental Fruit Moth

Hannah Fraser - Entomology Program Lead (Hort Crops)/ OMAFRA Vineland

Apple growers now have a new mating disruption tool for managing codling moth (CM) and oriental fruit moth (OFM). Isomate-CM/OFM TT is a twist-tie type dispenser similar to those already available for effective management of OFM, but with the additional benefit of reducing mating of and subsequent damage caused by CM. The dispenser is designed to provide activity for the entire season for CM and up to 90 days for OFM.

Isomate-CM/OFM TT works most effectively where both the target populations and the risk of movement from unmanaged areas are low. Growers who have used mating disruption for OFM for several years have, in many cases, been able to rely on this tool as a stand alone pest management strategy. However, mating disruption for CM is a little trickier and when used alone will not provide adequate control in most commercial orchards.

When this technology is combined with existing IPM programs, pest populations and pesticide use can be reduced over a number of seasons. Depending on site pest pressure (determined by monitoring trap catch and damage levels), insecticides for one or both generations of CM are generally recommended to avoid unacceptable damage at harvest. A few general tips to make mating disruption for CM work:

- Use large (> 10 ac or 4 ha) regularly shaped blocks. Area-wide management works best - talk to your neighbours.
- Orchards should have low to moderate pest pressure.
- Unsprayed hosts within 300 m of treated areas can be major sources of mated female moths, and border sprays may be required.
- During the first year of using mating disruption, follow a standard spray program for both generations and monitor extensively for this pest.
- For Year 2 and where populations are low, limit insecticides to the first generation.
- In subsequent years, use results from monitoring and damage assessments to determine if insecticide applications can be reduced further.
- Codling moth flight can be monitored in treated blocks using special "super lures" (10x lures, CM DA lures), and traps should be placed in the upper portion of the canopy in disrupted blocks. Numbers in traps help determine the need to apply supplemental insecticides.

For more information on mating disruption:

Chapter 2 of the 2010-2011 version of Pub 360 OMAFRA Fruit Production Recommendations (see www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/pub360/2ipm.htm#pest).

Mating Disruption for Management of Insect Pests, Order No. 03-079 www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/03-079.htm

From OMAFRA Orchard Network Newsletter <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/hort/news/orchnews/2010/on-0210a9.htm>

Managing Bacterial Disease in Transplant Production: Tomato and Pepper

Janice LeBoeuf - Vegetable Crop Specialist/OMAFRA

Tomato and pepper transplant growers play a very important role in managing bacterial diseases. We have products that can kill bacteria very effectively on greenhouse surfaces (commercial disinfectants). If applied to a plant, however, they would kill it along with the bacteria. The products we can use on the crop are not able to eradicate bacteria quite as effectively, so we need to focus on keeping bacterial

populations as low as possible right from the start - on the seed and in transplant production.

Ideally, seed from disease-free fields would be used for all of our tomato crops. In reality, we can never be certain that our seed is completely clean, so additional measures are taken to reduce the risk of disease.

Seed extraction alone, whether through fermentation or acid methods, is not a reliable method of eliminating bacteria on the seed. Extraction should be followed by a hot water, acid, or chlorine disinfection. All seed lots should be disinfected by one of these methods.

For full article go to OMAFRA Vegetable Viewpoint newsletter at <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/hort/news/vegnews/2010/vg0210a1.htm>

So Where in Ontario Can You Grow Sweet Potatoes, Anyways?

Melanie Filotas - Specialty Crops IPM Specialist/OMAFRA; Alan McKeown - Associate Professor of Vegetable Physiology/University of Guelph

The sweet potato is a tropical plant native to Central and South America, with most commercial production occurring in warm regions with very long frost free periods. Given this, many people are surprised to learn that sweet potatoes are commercially grown in parts of Ontario, mostly along the northern shore of Lake Erie. Over the past few years we have received numerous calls from people in other parts of the province wondering whether sweet potatoes can be commercially produced in their area. It is difficult to give a set answer to this question. The best thing to do is to review the growing requirements of the crop and determine whether conditions in your area are appropriate. In this article, we will provide answers to some of the most common questions we receive on this topic.

What are the environmental requirements of a sweet potato?

With apologies to Anne Murray, you can think of sweet potatoes as being somewhat like snowbirds - happy to spend time in Canada as long as they're out before it gets too cold. Sweet potatoes require extended frost-free growing periods with long days and warm nights. They cannot tolerate freezing temperatures, and should not be planted until all danger of frost has passed. Sweet potatoes are also easily damaged by exposure to chilling temperatures below 10-12°C for more than a few hours, and roots need to be harvested before soil temperatures drop below these levels. These factors combine to make the growing season in Ontario run typically from early June to September. Other factors are also important, including soil type. In Ontario, sweet potatoes

seem to grow better on deep, fine sandy soils with relatively low levels of organic matter and clay content. These soils warm rapidly, which may contribute to the successful production of sweet potatoes in Ontario.

The key questions are: can you produce sweet potatoes of marketable size within the frost-free season in your area and can you get your desired acreage harvested before soil temperatures drop to chilling levels?

My plant hardiness zone is the same as that of the north shore of Lake Erie - can I grow sweet potatoes commercially?

An area's climate can be mapped in several ways, including hardiness zones, heat units and length of growing season, among others. Hardiness zones are based on winter hardiness, reflecting an area's minimum temperatures for perennial species such as trees. They are not appropriate for determining whether sweet potatoes, an annual crop produced only in the summer, can be grown in an area. Crop heat units (CHUs), which use a mathematical calculation to describe daily accumulations of heat throughout the growing season, are more appropriate for use on annual vegetables. Originally developed for corn, heat units are calculated daily from planting to harvest using the daily maximum and minimum temperatures for a given area. A crop heat unit map for corn and other warm season crops in Ontario can be found in OMAFRA's Agronomy Guide for Field Crops (Publication 811) or on the OMAFRA website (www.omafra.gov.on.ca). Our best estimate is that commercial production of sweet potatoes requires 3000 CHUs or more. It may be possible to grow sweet potatoes with less heat but yields will be lower and more variable from year to year.

Does variety matter?

Absolutely. Most sweet potato cultivars available for commercial production are developed in the southern United States, where growing seasons are much longer, and consequently the majority require a minimum frost-free period of 100-125 days. However, there is considerable variation among cultivars. Short season cultivars such as Beauregard, do better in northern regions. While you can experiment with longer season cultivars (e.g. 120 days), there is a much higher risk of climate-induced crop failures.

Would plastic row covers help?

Research from the United States and elsewhere has shown that season extension tools such as black plastic, clear plastic and row covers can be an effective means of increasing soil temperature, allowing sweet potatoes to mature faster in cooler areas. However there are costs associated with buying and disposing of the plastic, as well as any specialized planting equipment needed for such a system. Furthermore, removing soil-applied plastic mulch prior to harvest is problematic and expensive. You will have to factor in these

associated costs to determine whether producing sweet potatoes under plastic or row covers is economical.

If you are interested in trying to grow sweet potatoes in a more northerly climate, we recommend that you start small. Grow an acre or two to determine whether roots reach marketable size in a reasonable time period in your area, and whether you can harvest the crop before the soil reaches chilling temperatures in the fall. Remember, temperature can fluctuate considerably from year to year. This can dramatically impact yield and, in some regions, you may be able to achieve economically viable yields only in certain years.

From OMAFRA Vegetable Viewpoint newsletter <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/hort/news/vegnews/2010/vg0210a3.htm>

Alternative Perimeter Trap Crops for Squash

**Hannah Fraser - Horticultural Crop Entomologist/
OMAFRA**

Cucumber beetles are serious insect pests of cucurbit crops, causing direct damage by feeding and indirectly through transmission of diseases including bacterial wilt. Management typically involves cultural practices such as altered planting dates, monitoring for pest activity and the use of pesticides targeting adults. Perimeter (border) trap crops have also been used to help control pest populations and reduce pesticide use.

Perimeter trap cropping (PTC) is a technique used in IPM to reduce pesticide use through adjustments in crop layout. An alternative host plant attractive to colonizing pest insects is planted to completely encircle the main crop. The trap crop may be from the same or different plant family as the main crop, as long as it is more attractive to the pest for feeding or egg-laying than the main crop. The effectiveness of this IPM technique can be improved by spraying a pesticide on the PTC (but not the main crop) when the insect pest arrives, preventing or reducing movement into the main crop. Another advantage of spraying only the trap crop is that many of the natural enemies are preserved.

The potential for PTC in reducing damage to the main crops has been demonstrated in other crops such as peppers, cabbage and potatoes. Research indicates that Blue Hubbard squash is an effective border for butternut and summer squash for management of cucumber beetles and squash vine borers. However, the crop may have limited market demand. Successful pollination is important for many cucurbit crops to maximize yield. Pollinating insects including honey bees and native specialists have preferences to different flowering plants. On the down side, if PTC varieties are more attractive than

the main crop, yield could be reduced due to competition for pollinators. On the plus side, if PTC varieties attract more pollinators to the area overall, yield may increase.

In a recently published study by Adler and Hazzard (2009), researchers at the University of Massachusetts, different PTC were examined in terms of their impact on insect damage to and pollination of butternut squash (Environmental Entomology 38:207-215). Crops chosen for the PTC included Blue Hubbard, buttercup squash (cultivar Burgess), zucchini (cultivar Embassy), and wild gourd mixed with zucchini. The results indicate that both buttercup squash and zucchini are as attractive to cucumber beetles as Blue Hubbard (wild gourd was unattractive). There was no evidence that any of the border crops evaluated in this trial competed with the main crop for pollinators. The authors conclude that buttercup squash and zucchini as viable alternatives to Blue Hubbard as PTC for butternut squash.

Tips on making PTC work include: (1) practice crop rotation and plant crop at least 1 km away from where you did last year; (2) completely encircle the crop; (3) large square or rectangular blocks work best; (4) plant the trap crop a little earlier than the main crop; (5) manage cucumber beetles in the trap crop - don't allow them to overrun and kill it; (6) keep the trap crop healthy. In areas with higher pressure, the PTC should be multiple rows wide. If more than 0.1-5.0 beetles/trap crop plant are found during scouting activities, supplemental insecticides in the main crop may be required.

From OMAFRA vegetable viewpoint newsletter <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/hort/news/vegnews/2009/vg1009a1.htm>

NEW Vegetable Production Recommendations 2010-2011

The new edition of OMAFRA Publication 363, Vegetable Production Recommendations is now available. The cost is \$20 plus GST. Discounts are available if you order 5 or more copies.

Order online: <https://www.publications.serviceontario.ca/ecom/> (type 363 into the search box at the top right). You can also order by phone through the Service Ontario Contact Centre, 416-326-5300 or 1-800-668-9938 (toll-free).

Many OMAFRA offices will have this publication in stock. If not, you can place an order at OMAFRA or Service Ontario locations across the province.

Beyond Production Agriculture – A Business Information Bundle (BIB) for Producers

The Business Management Unit of the Agriculture Development Branch is pleased to announce the launch of the Business Information Bundle (BIB) for producers Titled: *Beyond Production Agriculture* which will assist producers who wish to further value-add their product or services.

The site is now active and can be accessed at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/valueadd-bib/index.htm>

The BIB was developed as a result of farmers wanting go beyond producing a basic product and add more value to capture new or emerging marketplace opportunities and capture higher returns. The interest in value added agriculture from producers also resulted OMAFRA's partnership with the Canadian Farm Business Management Council to offer the *Quest for New Farm Value™ – Value Plus* workshop held across the province since 2005.

This new website will assist stakeholder access to information for developing a value added product or service through easy-to-use groupings of information and links.

It also provides clear information for the producer regarding regulatory requirements and obligations when value adding a product or service.

Retailer Trust Gives Back to Food Processors and Farmers

Natural health products and grocer The Big Carrot in Toronto funds a small charity to give back to its community. [Carrot Cache](http://www.carrotcache.com/) at <http://www.carrotcache.com/> has just launched its first ever Innovation Prize for organic farmers. In 2010, the \$500 Innovation Prize will be awarded for best, innovative, low cost solution to planting, managing, harvesting, post harvest handling, or processing of food grown on your small Canadian organic urban or rural farm. The first year's prize will encourage organic farmers to share creative ways to build their farms' balance sheet as well as the soil.

To apply submit photos, videos (not to exceed 5 minutes) and a brief description including cost of the project to: marylou.morgan@sympatico.ca

Please type in e-mail subject field: Innovation Prize.

Information for Ontario Food and Beverage Processors

OMAFRA's Business Development Branch is pleased to announce the launch of the Business Information Bundle for Food and Beverage Processors. The site is now active and can be accessed at <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/industry/BIB/welcome.htm>.

This new website provides convenient, easy-to-use groupings of information and links for developing or growing food or beverage businesses. It also provides clear information on regulatory requirements and obligations.

Food Bulletin

Minimum wage goes up March 31

Ontario will raise the minimum wage to \$10.25 on March 31, 2010. The province began implementing annual increases early in 2003, raising the general minimum wage from \$6.85 in 2004 to \$9.50 in 2009. Phasing in these increases balance the needs of hard-working families with the needs of small businesses that create jobs.

Increasing the minimum wage is part of *Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy* at <http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/growingstronger/index.aspx/english/default.asp>, which will reduce the number of children living in poverty by 25 per cent over five years, lifting 90,000 kids out of poverty.

New standards for organic products

If you want to call a product organic, Canada has new standards for you to follow. The Canadian organic standards — revised in late 2009 — are now available on the web free of charge. See www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/cgsb/on_the_net/organic/index-e.html for the *General Principles and Management Standards* and the *Permitted Substances Lists*. There are requirements for certified organic production on-farm, as well as for processing, plus some direction for other food handlers to maintain the organic integrity of products.

See the Canadian Food Inspection Agency website at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/orgbioe.shtml> for additional information.

Eliminating pains & strains in the workplace

Did you know that musculoskeletal disorders accounted for 43% of all Workplace Safety and Insurance injury and claim costs in Ontario in 2007? Prevent repetitive strain injuries in

your workplace with a new [interactive, online tool](#) from the Ontario Ministry of Labour. This tool lets users click on body parts to learn about tasks that may lead to an injury, and it recommends ways to reduce potential hazards. Check it out at www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/pains/index.php.

Funding Opportunities

Cut energy costs with PowerSavingsBlitz

Eligible small businesses can save up to \$1,000 in FREE energy efficient retrofits during the Ontario Power Authority's PowerSavingsBlitz. Learn how you can save electricity, save money and help the environment at <http://www.powersavingsblitz.ca>.

Application deadline approaching for Rural Summer Job funding

April 16 is the deadline for applications to Ontario's Rural Summer Jobs Service. The program provides a \$2-per-hour hiring incentive to employers who hire a student, age 15 to 30, between April 1 and Sept. 30. The student must be returning to school in the fall.

To learn more about eligibility requirements and obtain an application form, visit Employment Ontario [online](#) at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/tcu/search.asp?chosen=26> or call 1-800-387-5656.

Employers offering jobs in a rural community can contact [OMAFRA](#). Employers offering a job in northern Ontario can contact the [Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines](#) at http://www.mndm.gov.on.ca/nordev/summer_jobs_e.asp

Consultation

Help get the salt out!

Health Canada's Sodium Working Group wants to hear from stakeholders as it prepares to set sodium targets for individual categories of food. The goal is to reduce levels of sodium in the Canadian diet to 2,300 mg per person per day by the year 2016. Currently, Canadians are estimated to consume 3,400 mg per day.

You can provide feedback by filling out [Health Canada's questionnaire](#) at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/consultation/init/sodium-reduction/target-cible-quest2010-eng.php#ues> by **March 15**.

Have your say about the Canadian Nutrient File online service

Do you have suggestions for improving Health Canada's Canadian Nutrient File Online Searchable Service? Could it be more accessible, easier to use or contain improved content? Fill out the online survey at <https://surveys-sondages.hc-sc.gc.ca/s/cnf-fcen-usability-utilisabilite/?lang=en>.

Training

Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium (EMC)

The Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has joined with EMC to offer all Ontario manufacturers 50 per cent off the cost of Lean training at more than 50 hands-on sessions across the province. Visit www.emccanada.org/calendar for details on these and other events.

Events

March 11 — Speaking Food: Food Processing Human Resource Council Annual General Meeting & Conference, Toronto

Information and inspiration will be on tap at the Food Processing HR Council's first AGM & Conference. The line-up includes food expert Dana McCauley, who will deliver her 2010 Food Trend Predictions, and leaders of these truly Canadian companies: Ganong Bros. Limited, Black Fly Beverage Company and Fancy Pokkett Corporation. More information is online at www.fphrc.ca/uploads/hr/speaking_food_brochure_2010_eng-fre.pdf.

March 17 & 18 — Sustainability: What is Your Green Footprint?, Summerstown & Woodstock

Laura Rourke, EMC Canada's health, safety and environmental specialist, will speak about why sustainability is important to manufacturers and how to measure and improve it. This half-day event takes place in Summerstown on March 17 and Woodstock on March 18. RSVP to Bren McKeachie at bmckeachie@emccanada.org or call (519) 376-0470, Ext. 228 or toll-free 1-866-323-4362. [Learn more at http://www.emccanada.org/documents/emcfoodsec/emcfoodsectorinitiativesustainabilitywhatisyourgre](http://www.emccanada.org/documents/emcfoodsec/emcfoodsectorinitiativesustainabilitywhatisyourgre)

March 25 — Business Summit: Workplace Safety and Insurance, Mississauga

Learn about the latest developments in workplace insurance, health and safety at this event from the Employers' Advocacy Council and Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. [Click here for more details](#). See the [CME calendar](#) at <http://www.cme-mec.ca/on/events.asp> for other upcoming events.

Guelph Food Technology Centre (GFTC)

• March 25 — Implementing Canada's New Organic Standard

Learn about Canada's new Organic Products Regulations and their implications for your organic products. [Find out more and register](#) at <http://www.gftc.ca/courses-and-training/default.aspx>

• March 26 — Food Additives, Flavours and Colours: A Regulatory Update

Those familiar with ingredient labelling will gain more in-depth information about the regulations governing additive use for a full spectrum of food products. [Learn more and register](#) at <http://www.gftc.ca/courses-and-training/course-details.aspx?course=RDS08>

• March 30 — Connecting the Dots: Packaging

Gain wide-ranging insight into the latest packaging research, technology and market information. [Learn more and register](#) at <http://www.gftc.ca/courses-and-training/course-details.aspx?course=RDS06>

Information about these and other courses is also available by calling GFTC at (519) 821-1246.

March 29 — Local Food Connection: Farmer/Food Buyer Networking Event, London

This must-attend event brings farmers and food buyers together, one-on-one, to network and explore business opportunities. Farmers will gain more local marketing opportunities, and food buyers (including chefs, caterers, food retailers, **food processors**, distributors, and food-service and institutional food providers) will gain opportunities to use more local food.

Learn more and register at <http://www.ledc.com/newsevents/events/event.php?event=147>, or contact Karen Eatwell of the National Farmers Union at (519) 232-9638, toll-free at 1-888-832-9638 or by email to kareneatwell@execulink.com.

April 6 — Ontario Food Industry Environmental Symposium, Mississauga

Join other food and beverage processors and suppliers to discuss environmental challenges and opportunities. Find out what public opinion polls reveal about consumers' perceptions of the environment and the food they eat, what new and proposed regulations mean for your company, and much more. [Get more information and register](#) at <http://us1.campaign-archive.com/?u=ffd06840f13fa04b165156fb6&id=029068dcb8> by March 19 to take advantage of early registration fees.

May 10-12 — EMC National Manufacturing Conference & Exhibition, Hamilton

Register ASAP to get a **special discount rate** for *Advantage through Excellence: Building the Case for Manufacturing in Canada*. It

is EMC's biggest national conference and networking event ever, and OMAFRA is a key event partner.

EMC has arranged a special price of **\$425+GST** (save \$350 off the non-member rate) on a **limited** block of tickets. Contact EMC's Bren McKeachnie, the Senior Community Development Advisor and Food & Beverage Sector Network Manager at (519) 376-0470, toll-free at 1-866-323-4362 or by email to bmckeachnie@emccanada.org. You can also register online at <http://www.emccanada.org/emconf201>. When entering your payment details, enter code **FOODBEVADV1** to receive your discount. Your registration includes all meals, workshops, tours and takeaways — a \$1,500 - \$1,800 value.

June 1-2 — PROFIT New-to-Exporting Seminar, GTA/Buffalo

Learn about the basic requirements for exporting food and beverages to the United States in this hands-on orientation seminar from Ontario Food Exports. Topics include: export financing, product labeling, U.S. tax laws, U.S. food brokerage, U.S. food distribution, U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and U.S. customs brokerage. For more information, call Jennifer Hannam of Ontario Food Exports at (519) 826-3767 or email jennifer.hannam@ontario.ca.

March 25th 2010: Organic Council of Ontario AGM

Where: Ignatius College, Loyola House, 5420 Highway 6, Guelph, Ontario (just north of Woodlawn)

When: March 25th, 2010, 9:30-4:30, Registration at 8:45
Free for Members, Non-members welcome \$35

Our 4th Annual General Meeting will be held at Loyola House on the historic Ignatius Farm site. This year's event will feature:

- A lunch of Organic Turkey from Janice and Matthew Dick's farm
- Guest speakers
- Sectoral networking
- Review of Ontario Organic Strategic Plan
- Election of our Board of Directors

EFAO Intensive Rotational Grazing by Troy Bishop

March 23rd 10:00 am - 3:00 pm in the Sheburne area

March 26th 10:00 am - 3:00 pm in the Peterborough area

More details on Troy can be seen at [The Grass Whisperer](http://www.thegrasswhisperer.com/) at <http://www.thegrasswhisperer.com/>

Cost is \$20 for EFAO members and \$30 for non-members. Registration is with the EFAO office, 1 877-822-8606 or info@efao.ca. Lunch details and exact location will be forwarded at that time. To make these sessions dynamic and as useful as possible, Troy is also asking for discussion areas prior to the event. Have your grazing questions ready when you register.

All EFAO farm events are open to the general public. For more details contact the EFAO office, Tel:1-877 822-8606, 519-822-8606 or email: info@efao.ca

March 27, 2010 - Record Keeping for Organic Farmers Workshop by Canadian Organic Growers

Saturday, March 27 ~ 9:00 am - 4:00 pm, Bloomingdale Community Centre, 1031 Snyder's Flats Road, Bloomingdale

One of the most important aspects of organic certification is the requirement to maintain records which enable the inspector to conduct a field to table audit of organic production. This one-day workshop will help you learn the best way to set up a record keeping system, what types of records you need to keep and how your farm operation can benefit from improved record keeping. This course is targeted to producers who are: 1) already organic, 2) in transition to organic, or 3) interested in transitioning to organic. Workshop instructor is Maureen Bostock.

Both courses are \$50 (\$45 for COG members) each, and include a copy of a COG book and lunch. Registration at <http://www.cog.ca/workshops> or by calling 1-888-375-7383. More information is available at <http://www.cogwaterloo.ca>.

Links to Organic Agriculture Information

Organic Council of Ontario (OCO)
<http://www.organiccouncil.ca>

Canadian Organic Growers (COG)
<http://www.cog.ca>

OMAFRA Organic Agriculture
<http://www.ontario.ca/organic>

Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO)
<http://www.efao.ca>

Organic Agricultural Centre of Canada (OACC)
<http://www.oacc.info>

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



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2010 Production Insurance (PI) for organic crops

Your organic crops can benefit from the protection that Production Insurance (PI) provides. PI protects Ontario farmers from yield reductions and crop losses due to adverse weather, insects and disease. Coverage is available on over 90 crops.

Production Insurance helps you:

- Maintain your cash flow in poor crop years with claim payments that compensate you for crop damage or low yields.
- Manage your operation with a more predictable cash flow.
- Provide collateral required to secure loans.
- Stabilize your AgriStability program reference margin over time.
- Gain affordable peace-of-mind by paying tax-deductible premiums that are cost-shared with government.

How to participate

1. If this is your first time applying, or if you would like to insure additional crops, contact Agricorp at 1-888-247-4999. A representative may visit you to review your coverage and help you complete your application.
2. Follow good farm management practices and report crop damage immediately.
3. For PI coverage of organic crops, a current copy of the certification must be provided to Agricorp before any insurance claims can be approved.
4. Meet all deadlines and requirements specific to each crop plan. Details for all our PI plans are available on agricorp.com.

Insuring your organic crops

Hay and pasture

The Forage Rainfall Plan protects your established hay and pasture against drought only. If the measured rainfall at the station you choose during the insured period is less than 80 percent of the long-term average rainfall for your area, a claim may be paid. Premiums and claims are based on the value of your forage crop. You can value your forage between \$25 and \$300 per acre based on the varieties grown and your management practices.

The New Forage Seeding Plans offer a reseeding benefit to compensate you if you have to replant your newly seeded hay or pasture because of an insured peril. You can receive a benefit whether you reseed to the same crop or any other crop. Coverage is available for both spring-seeded and summer-seeded new forage seeding crops.

Grain and oilseed crops

Grain and oilseed PI plans provide a benefit if your actual yield is less than your guaranteed yield. Organic corn, oats, barley and other grain and oilseed crops can be insured under the general PI plans. Your average farm yield may be factored to better reflect your yield.

Your organic soybeans, organic winter wheat and organic winter spelt may be eligible for specialized coverage, including average yield and claim price that account for the unique needs of organic crops.

Vegetables

Your organic fresh market and processing vegetables may be insured under one of the following types of PI:

- Yield based plans that provide a benefit if your total yield is less than your guaranteed yield.
- Acreage loss plans that provide a benefit if your crop does not exceed the yield required to meet production costs for a typical field of that crop. Benefits are provided for spot losses.

Although organic vegetables may be insured under either of these plans, specialized rates have been established for organic processing sweet corn, fresh market carrots and fresh market cabbage.

Other Crops

Agricorp offers a number of other plans for crops such as apples, grapes, honey and hemp. For more information on the plans we offer, including plan-specific features, coverage options and deadlines, call us or refer to our PI Plan Overviews and Information Sheets on agricorp.com.

Insured perils

Agricorp's PI plans provide coverage against a variety of insured perils. For more details on insured perils that are specific to each crop, please visit agricorp.com for the specific Insuring Agreement or Plan Overview.

Enhance your risk management strategy

AgriStability protects you against large declines in your net farming income due to market conditions, production loss or increased costs of production. For more information on how to participate, please visit agricorp.com.

Contact us

1-888-247-4999 (Mon to Fri, 7 to 5)

Fax: 519-826-4118

agricorp.com

contact@agricorp.com

Errors and omissions excepted. Agricorp reserves the right to make corrections if there are any errors or omissions on this information sheet.

For specific legal obligations of Production Insurance, please consult the *Contract of Insurance, Terms and Conditions*. For details on the collection of information and treatment of records, please refer to *Part 1, Section I* of the contract.

Version française disponible