

InFARMation

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Message From the Agriculture Branch

This has been some winter and I am not talking about the weather. I don't believe I have ever seen the Yukon Agricultural Association (YAA) get so much free press coverage as has occurred over the past few winter months. "Hats Off" to YAA for raising the profile of the association!

It would seem a lot more folks now realize that the YAA is alive and doing well and is intent on pursuing some clear goals and objectives related to rural and industry development.

We are now working with proponents of the indoor riding arena to help them identify suitable sites for the proposed riding facility project. The Land Application Review Committee (LARC) supported the concept of a riding facility but not on lands within the research forest.

I was pleased to see that the public land application review process worked as it should and took into consideration everyone's comments and concerns. It was also encouraging to see the widespread support for the proposal elsewhere in the greater Whitehorse area. I commend the Yukon Agriculture Association for all of their hard work on this issue and wish them every success with future projects.

Well, on a final note, here's hoping all you folks have a great spring and please enjoy this edition of our Agriculture Branch InFARMation.

David Beckman, Director

Agricultural Policy Framework

Yukon agriculture producers now have a new resource available to them for seeking financial assistance under the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) – the Canada-Yukon Agricultural Policy Framework Program Information Guide.

The Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) is a long-term action plan for Canadian agriculture. The APF offers programs that provide the agriculture and agri-food industry with the tools, services and options to strengthen business, increase prosperity and meet the demands of consumers.

The APF Program Information Guide is now available at the Agriculture Branch on the 3rd floor of the Elijah Smith Building in Whitehorse, or online at www.emr.gov.yk.ca/agriculture. The guide provides a comprehensive list of new and existing federal and territorial programs available to Yukon agriculture producers. This issue of InFARMation highlights several new programs available to local producers.

Assistance is available to agricultural stakeholders to enhance their businesses in the areas of economic growth and viability, food safety and food quality, environmental sustainability, business development and science and innovation.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligible applicants must have reported a minimum of \$10,000 in gross farm sales to Canada Customs and Revenue Agency in at least one of the last three tax years or be considered a new entrant. All agricultural commodities, including supply management are eligible for APF programming.

Funding offers for agricultural groups and organization, not-for-profit associations and government

will be based upon the identified need of the project, the project's benefit to the territorial agri-foods industry, the overall viability of the project, and the expected impact, reach and results of the project.

New Entrants

Individuals, partnerships, cooperatives or corporations that are establishing a new agribusiness are considered to be new entrants for the purpose of this program, if the following conditions apply:

- They have been in operation for less than six years and have established or are intending to establish a commercial agribusiness; or
- At the discretion of the Implementation Committee, applicants such as producers of perennial crops (raspberries, Christmas trees, etc.) who do not meet the above condition may be considered a new entrant for the purpose of the APF.

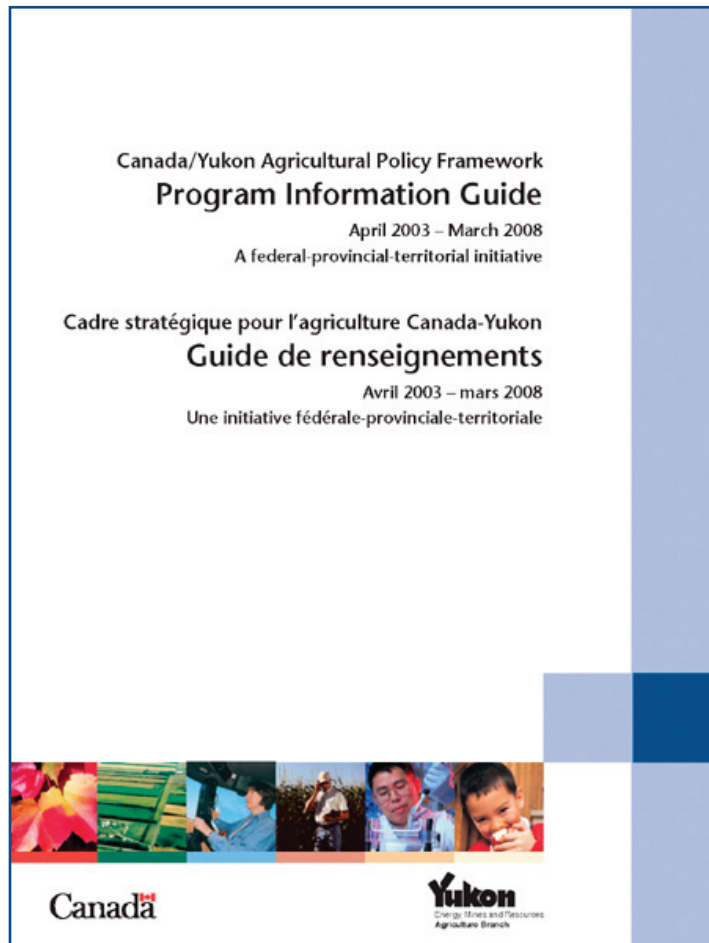
Funding commitments will only be made to those new entrants who have obtained agricultural training/education, received on-farm work experience, demonstrated commercial farm viability, and have made a significant financial investment in their farm business.

Application Process

All Yukon Renewal, Food Safety, Food Quality, and Science and Innovation applicants must submit applications to the Agriculture Branch.

Environment, National Renewal and Business Risk Management Program applicants will be required to apply through application processes outlined in those chapters.

A representative will review the project proposal and supporting documentation and provide comments on



the proposed project. The proposal may require further assessment by a departmental specialist. The proposal is then sent to an APF Project Evaluation Committee for review.

Incomplete applications will be rejected and returned to the applicant for further information.

Application Deadline

Applicants must submit their proposals and all additional documentation for Yukon Renewal, Food Safety, Food Quality, and Science and Innovation Programs to the Agriculture Branch by the first of each month.

For additional APF information, pick up the APF Program Information Guide at the Agriculture Branch or contact us at:

**Room 320 – 300 Main Street,
Elijah Smith Building,
Whitehorse, Y.T.
Tel: 867-667-5838
Fax: 867-393-6222
Email: agriculture@gov.yk.ca**

Web sites:

Please note that the program information on the following web sites will continually be updated as information is available and programs are finalized.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada web site:
www.agr.gc.ca/puttingcanadafirst

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources web site:
www.emr.gov.yk.ca/agriculture

The following sections highlight various new programs now available in the APF Program Information Guide. For further information regarding general conditions and application procedures, who can apply, eligible costs, and maximum funding levels, pick up your Guide at the Yukon Agriculture Branch or reach us at the contact information listed above.

Yukon Renewal Programs



There are six Yukon renewal programs available to Yukon producers in addition to national renewal initiatives.

1. Human Resource Development Initiative

This initiative will provide learning opportunities and resources for farm managers, farm families, farm workers and service providers to enhance the management abilities, improve the skills and knowledge required to evaluate new business opportunities. Emphasis will be placed on, but not limited to, training opportunities related to renewal, science and innovation, on-farm food safety and food quality, and environmental stewardship.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to, courses, seminars, workshops, travel and exchanges and any other activity that will develop the human resource capabilities of the agri-foods industry. In addition, education and training courses identified through a demonstrated needs assessment to help diversify or add value to an existing agri-business. Communications tools such as websites and newsletters that provide access to agricultural information and develop educational resources are also eligible.

2. New Entrants Development Initiative

This program provides opportunities for new farmers to enter into an agricultural internship program or have access to industry mentors. Other initiatives provide information or services specifically designed to encourage new entrants in agriculture.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to, providing up to a 50% subsidy of intern wages to a maximum of \$5,000 per

year to learn a trade in Yukon agri-food production or processing. Assistance in securing a Yukon agriculture industry mentor will be available to beginning farmers by providing honorariums for mentoring services. Mentors will be selected in conjunction with training identified in a beginning farmer's business plan and training needs.

Other activities may include, but not limited to, agriculture in the classroom; agricultural youth development and leadership programs such as the Yukon 4-H Program and other activities that encourage new entrants to the agriculture industry.

3. Market Development Initiative

This initiative provides resources to investigate and capture new market opportunities and enhance the competitive capability of the industry.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to, cooperative marketing activities; secondary processing and value-added initiatives; product development activities; market development strategies; participation in marketing events; and support for marketing organizations including farmers markets and agri-tourism ventures. Industry organizations and governments may also be eligible for sector specific promotional activities and agriculture awareness activities.

4. Agriculture Development Initiative:

This initiative provides funding to develop agriculture projects that enhance regional economic development and contribute to sustainability in rural communities. Proposals will be accepted that support the commercial development of agriculture, introduce new technologies and processes and further develop regional agricultural and country food opportunities in rural Yukon.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to, community gardens, farmers markets, cooperative agriculture infrastructure, such as cold storage or grain storage facilities, community kitchens and activities that encourage the commercialization of native country foods.

5. Diversification and Value Added Initiative

This initiative provides assistance to producers that diversify their operations to take advantage of market opportunities that will increase profitability of the farm. This program also provides assistance to further process or develop products that add value to primary agriculture

products. The program encourages partnerships and alliances that improve the competitiveness and commercialization of the agri-foods sector.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to, activities that diversify an agribusiness and introduce new local agri-foods products and activities that add value to local agriculture products through processing.

6. Land Enhancement Initiative

This initiative is designed to improve the utilization of existing, titled farm land that was previously developed for agricultural use and has not been used for agriculture for several years. Applicants will have to provide a development plan that describes how the activity will contribute to an increase in agricultural land use and production.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to, removal of tree and shrub re-growth, rocks, and roots, minor drainage and land leveling, disking and rotor tilling, seed bed preparation, fertilizer and seed.

Canada-Yukon Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program



The Environment Chapter of the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) provides support to implement initiatives aimed at stewardship of soil, air, biodiversity and water in and around farm land in the Yukon. One of these initiatives, the Canada-Yukon Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program provides assistance to the Yukon to encourage agricultural producers to complete a voluntary environmental farm plan for their farm.

The completion of an environmental farm plan allows a producer to gain a better understanding of the agri-

environmental risks that may be associated with their farm operation.

Participation by producers in the EFP process is voluntary and completed EFPs remain the property of the producer. At no time in the EFP process are copies of completed environmental farm plans provided to the federal or territorial government.

To address risks identified in the EFP, incentive funding is available under the Canada-Yukon Farm Stewardship Program (CYFSP) for targeted on-farm actions or Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs). The producer will have to provide proof of a completed and reviewed EFP to be eligible to apply to this program.

The Agriculture Branch will be the primary contact for producers who wish to participate in the EFP program. The Agriculture Branch will coordinate the “matching up” of planning advisors with producers interested in participating in the program. The Agriculture Branch and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will contract an independent certified planning advisor. Agriculture Branch and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada staff will also be available to provide technical assistance to individual producers who are completing environmental farm plans.

Food Safety and Quality Program



The Food Safety and Quality Program of the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) is designed to provide support to develop and implement initiatives that identify and/or minimize food safety risks or otherwise increase the safety of food produced in this territory, including the safety of people working in the industry that might be exposed to various risks inherent in the industry.

Food Safety Strategies Initiative

This initiative encourages the creation, implementation and partnership in the development of food safety strategies for all agri-food commodities in the territory. These strategies will allow standardized creation, development and implementation of the HACCP or HACCP-based systems on the farm and in the processing sector.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to, activities that support and create in partnership with government and National Producer Organizations the development of food safety strategies. More specifically, the initial program will provide support to access recognized Food Safe Level I and II training courses.

Regulatory Compliance of Food Safety Initiative

This initiative contributes to the regulatory compliance of food safety and food quality, health and safety issues associated with agribusiness activities. The focus is on food safety and food quality legislation that producers and processors require in emerging sectors. The initial undertaking will be a regulatory review of existing legislation within the Territory and how food safe legislation is dealt with in other areas of Canada. Following this initial step, the focus will shift to identifying emerging areas of Agriculture in the Yukon that require legislative support for it to advance.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to, providing regulatory support for food safety and food quality activities in support of HACCP or HACCP-based requirements: or other food safety and quality measures as they arise.

Traceability Initiative

This initiative contributes to the implementation of federal/provincial/territorial traceability systems which will establish a framework for data sharing, management and integration throughout the agri-foods sector. As a result, national food safety and quality linkages will be formed. Territorially, the program will focus on continuing the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) monitoring program and support for participation in the national livestock identification program.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to, activities that support the development and implementation of traceability systems based on national standards with linkages to national food safety and quality linkages.

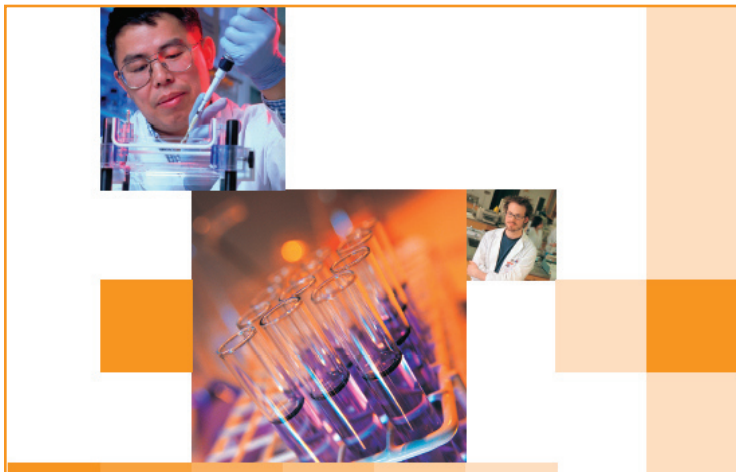
Food Safety Processing Utilization Initiative

This initiative encourages the creation, implementation and partnership in developing incentives to increase use of standardized processing facilities.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to, activities that support the broad based use of facilities that provide standardized food safe outcomes.

Yukon Science and Innovation Program



Circumpolar Education & Exchange Initiative

This initiative is to provide learning opportunities for farm managers, workers, youth and service providers to participate in information exchange with other circumpolar agricultural regions. The primary function of this initiative will be to sponsor participation at the Circumpolar Agriculture Conference in 2007. Emphasis will be placed on information exchange that provides for the sustainability of circumpolar agriculture.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to, preparations, travel and exchanges for oral or poster presentations, information gathering, network development, youth development or other activities that contribute to the development of circumpolar agriculture. Proposals for attendance should contain an outline of benefits to Yukon agriculture and contain an information dissemination plan outlining how you plan to share the knowledge with other members of the agriculture industry.

Circumpolar Research & Demonstration

This initiative is to provide the opportunity to share and/or carry out applied research with other circumpolar jurisdictions. There may be opportunities to obtain

research results and information which could be applied in the Yukon. In addition, collaborative research and demonstrations may be possible to be carried out between circumpolar regions. For example, the Yukon may not be able to perform a certain experimental trial in the territory but could perhaps fund it in another similar climate and jurisdiction.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to research and demonstration trials, research field trips, research literature reviews, specific research seminars and conferences.

Yukon Research & Demonstration

This initiative is to compliment and advance current research and demonstration programs in the territory. Currently most research and development projects are carried out by the Yukon government's Agriculture Branch.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to supplies, research initiatives, field preparation and maintenance, project design etc.

Circumpolar Ambassador

This initiative is to establish and foster a better working relationship with the Canadian Circumpolar Ambassador. Communicating and working in closer cooperation with this office may open up additional educational, research and funding opportunities.

Eligible Activities:

May include, but not limited to communication activities, travel, network development or other activities that contribute to development of circumpolar agriculture.



What Spuds Should I Grow This Year?

Here is some information on potato varieties to consider for your garden this year:



Yukon Gold

Is not from the Yukon, but it does have yellow flesh. It is reliable, medium yielding and stores well. Considered a good potato for both boiling and baking with good flavour, although it is a bit dry and needs to be boiled slowly to avoid turning them into paste. They are susceptible to scab.

Norland

Early maturity with good yields, this is one of the best fresh boiling potatoes you can grow in the Yukon. It won't stay dormant as long as some later varieties and it tends to lose its bright red colour in storage. This is a great looking spud with shallow eyes. Moderately scab resistant.

Russet Burbank

The standard in baking potatoes but also great for boiling and frying. It requires a long growing season which also means that if you can get them to size up in our short summers, they will also stay dormant in storage a long time. Fluctuations in soil moisture will cause this variety to produce knobby potatoes. Good disease resistance.

Warba

A local producer calls this "one ugly potato". Every potato has a different shape and the deep eyes make peeling a chore. Still, it's very early and has reasonably good boiling qualities.

Shepody

A big white potato that has excellent flavour and can be boiled, baked or fried. Shepody is highly susceptible to common scab which makes crop rotation a must. It has medium yields, medium maturity and long storage qualities.

Kennebec

Another big white that sometimes grows so fast that hollow heart becomes a problem. This is the French fry variety advertised on Earl's restaurant chain menu. Smooth skin and shallow eyes, a mid-season variety that will stay dormant in storage a long time.

Bintji

Yellow flesh with a smooth yellow skin and shallow eyes. This potato tastes as good as it looks and is good for baking, boiling or frying. Bintji produces a high number of small potatoes. Susceptible to scab.

The Agriculture branch has a list of potato varieties grown in Canada with descriptions of their qualities. Contact Tony at 667-3417 for more information.

*"A weed is a plant that has mastered every survival skill except for learning how to grow in rows."
-Anonymous-*

Alaska 2004 Crop Summary

The 2004 crop summary from Alaska arrived in our office recently and it is always interesting to compare yields and prices with our neighbours to the west. All prices listed below are derived from harvest yields and production values and are reported in US dollars.

Growers harvested 4,100 acres of BARLEY for grain in 2004. Production was 145,000 bushels with a yield of 34.5 bushels per acre. Production value at \$500,000 represents \$3.45 per bushel or \$119.00 per acre. OATS for grain was harvested from 1,300 acres in 2004. A yield of 31.5 bushels per acre was realized with production of 41,000 bushels. Production value of \$100,000 would equal \$2.44 per bushel or \$76.86 per acre.

Hay farmers harvested 21,000 acres in 2004 with a production of 28,000 tons. Grass hay made up 20,800 acres and grain hay, mostly oat hay, accounted for the remaining 700 acres. The all hay yield averaged 1.33 tons per acre and the average price was \$230 per ton.

Potato growers harvested 810 acres in 2004 with production totalling 177,000 cwt, or 21.8 tons per acre. The preliminary production value was \$3,469,000 or 19.6 cents per pound.

Source: Alaska Agricultural Statistics Highlights Bulletin, February 2005

Water Licencing for Yukon Farmers

Getting the water you need for that bumper crop may require a Water Licence. In doing so you can help to manage one of our most valuable resources.

A Water Licence can make sure you have access to publicly owned water, formalize your water rights so that you have priority access in the future, and can document your historic use.

Please keep in mind that the illegal use of water is a threat to other water users and may result in charges being laid under the Waters Act.

A Water Licence is required for most commercial scale irrigation operations but some smaller operations may not require one. The licencing threshold is based on the maximum amount of water you may need to use in one day.

If your proposed irrigation system requires 300 cubic meters of water - 66,000 imperial gallons - or more on any given day, then you will need a Water Licence. That amount of water does not go all that far when it comes to irrigation.

You will need to know what your water needs will be before undertaking your irrigation project. The Water Resources Section at Environment Yukon can help you assess your water needs and help you determine if you will need a Water Licence for your project. Water Resources is located on the third floor, room 310, Elijah Smith Building at 300 Main Street in Whitehorse or call us at 667-3171 and ask to speak to a Water Inspection Officer.



Potato Crop - Yukon Grain Farm 2004

There are a number of formulas that you can use if you would like to do some calculations to determine the volume of water needed to irrigate a crop.

The simplest one that works quite well goes like this: Let's say you want to put down "one inch" of water on your field to satisfy your moisture deficit. How many cubic meters of water would it be and how many

hectares could you water before a Water Licence was required?

$$1 \text{ inch} = 2.54 \text{ cm} \dots\dots\dots 2.54 \text{ cm} = .0254 \text{ m} \dots\dots\dots 1 \text{ ha} = 10,000\text{m}^2$$

$$\text{Therefore - } .0254 \text{ m (of water)} \times 10,000 \text{ m}^2 \text{ (1 ha)} = 254 \text{ m}^3 \text{ (of water per/ha)}$$

You now know you will need 254 m³ of water per/ha of land to be irrigated.

300 m³ is the per/day water use threshold that triggers the requirement for a Type B Water Licence.

Therefore, by dividing 254 m³ of water needed per/ha into the 300 m³ licencing figure you will discover that you can irrigate 1.18 ha per day with a one inch application of water before you need to apply for a Water Licence.

A Water Licence can be issued for up to 25 years. The term of the Licence generally reflects the time period requested by the applicant. The board can, in response to specific concerns, issue a Licence for a shorter term.

You can apply for a renewal prior to expiry and you can apply to the Board to have the Licence assigned to a new owner if you sell your property.

You can pick up a Water Licence application form at the Yukon Water Board office 106 – 419 Range Road. Phone 867-456-3980. More information and forms are available on line at www.yukonwaterboard.ca or email them at ywb@yukonwaterboard.ca



Two cows were talking in the field one day.

First Cow: "Have you heard about the Mad Cow disease that's going around?"

Second Cow: "Yeah, makes you glad you're a penguin, doesn't it?"

Information about the “NO GMOs IN THE YUKON” Group

A group of people have been meeting about once a month to inform themselves about GMOs and what their effects are having here in the Yukon. They have put together a pamphlet that outlines 10 myths about GE foods and where GMOs can be found, or not found. This group also provides web sites where people can go to for more information on the issues. *“We are closely watching what is happening in PEI, where a group of people are working on making the whole province GMO free.”*

If you wish to be added to a group list, or have any questions about the group, please contact no_gmo_yukon@yahoo.ca.

Companion Planting

Companion planting is best described as the establishment of two or more plant species in close proximity so that some cultural benefit (pest control, higher yield, shading, etc.) is derived. This symbiotic relationship, whether it be mutualism (both partners benefit) or commensalism (one partner benefits) occurs in all natural plant systems, and can be manipulated in a home garden setting with crop plants. The concept of companion planting embraces a number of strategies that increase the biodiversity of an agroecosystems. Here are some of the scientific foundations to how companion planting works:

- **Trap Cropping:** A species is selected because it is more attractive to pests and therefore distracts them from the main crop.
- **Symbiotic Nitrogen Fixation:** plants which are able to fix nitrogen (ie: making nitrogen readily available), such as most legumes, may benefit neighbouring companions which can't as easily access nitrogen.
- **Biochemical Pest Suppression:** Some plants exude chemicals from their roots and/or above ground structures which suppress or repel pests, therefore protecting their neighbouring. Such plant-plant chemical warfare, where one partner is negatively affected and the other is unchanged (amensalism), is a process referred to as **allelopathy**.

- **Physical Spatial Interactions and Nurse Cropping:** Tall-growing sun lovers sharing space with lower growing shade-tolerant species. This also provides windbreak for some individuals.
- **Refugia:** Also referred to as beneficial habitats. Where a companion plant provides a desirable environment for beneficial insects, particularly those which prey on pests.

The following table lists a number of gardening plants and their suitable companions.

Plants	Good Companions	Bad Companions
Beans	Rosemary, Peas, cucumbers, Radishes	Onions
Carrots	Chives, Rosemary, Sage, Radishes, Lettuce	Dill
Chives	Carrots	-
Cucumbers	Beans, Carrots, Onions, Radishes	no strong herbs
Dill	Lettuce, Cucumbers	Carrots
Lettuce	Beans, Carrots, Cucumbers, Onions, Radishes	-
Majoram	good to all vegetables	-
Marigolds	plant throughout the garden	-
Nasturtium	Cucumbers, Tomatoes	-
Oregano	good to all vegetables	-
Peas	Lettuce, Beans, Carrots, Radish	Onions
Petunia	Beans	-
Rosemary	Beans, Carrots	-
Roses	Garlic	-
Sage	Carrots, Peas, Beans	Cucumbers
Tomatoes	Basil, Carrots	Corn, Fennel

References:

<http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/complant.html>
<http://colleenscorner.com/Cplants1.html>

Thoughts on Parsnips by Edith MacAdam

At the end of the 2002 growing season I picked up two packages of parsnip seeds on sale, and came across them again just in time for the 2004 planting season. It was my first time growing parsnip. Now 2004 was a stellar growing season all over the Yukon! I had beans and corn ripen without special measures, and the cold tolerant plants thrived in the hot days and warm nights.

The seed package instructions informed me of the long

germination period and the bed preparations. On May 11th I sowed the parsnip in two locations; a raised bed and a planter box. By the end of May I didn't see any seedlings and had decided the seeds were probably not viable, since they were old and had been improperly stored. However, I persisted with watering and the first sprouts were up by June 5th. They were sporadic, but they were there. The plants grew quickly once emerged and the dark green foliage made a nice backdrop to the carrots that shared that raised bed.

The growing season was long and my curiosity did not wait for the frost as I picked a few. WOW! 2" diameter and about 16" long – was I ever surprised, and they were delicious. The planter box sowing produced finger size parsnips (hence a proper and deep bed is beneficial) which were used raw in salads and made into pickles.

It was early October when the frosted foliage of the parsnips did not bounce back, so it was finally harvest time. The soil was starting to freeze on the surface too, and I didn't want to lose the crop. Some of the parsnips were 4" diameter and 20" long, although most were 2-3" in diameter and 18" long! I did not weigh the harvest, but by comparing to the two pound packages at the grocery store I estimated that I had approximately 20 pounds!

I inspected the last pail in mid-December and some of the parsnips had sprouts which I cut off and put in a saucer as you might do with carrot tops.



Now in the -45°C cold snaps, I've used the last of the parsnip in soups and made mental plans for my next garden.

Little did I expect to get so much enjoyment out of parsnips. From reluctantly planting old seeds in May to sprouts in a saucer on the window sill in January, they've lasted till the planning of my 2005 garden! They'll have a spot for sure. Besides being a great northern garden choice, they've given me another choice to rotate with the cabbage family!

We've enjoyed the parsnips in many ways. Here is a

delicious recipe for a simple cream soup.

Parsnip Carrot Soup

- 2 Tablespoon butter
- 1 cup chopped celery (optional)
- 1 onion chopped
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon of fresh thyme (I used 1 teaspoon of dry thyme)
- ½ teaspoon each salt and pepper
- 2 cups each chopped carrot and parsnip
- 4 cup chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar (I used regular vinegar)
- 1 cup whipping cream (I omitted cream/milk and served soup with sour cream on the side) Optional

Melt butter in soup pot then add onion, (celery), garlic and seasonings. Cook about 10 minutes. Sprinkle flour over mixture and stir constantly for about 2 minutes. (Don't brown the flour)! Add 1 cup of broth and stir until flour is incorporated completely. Add remaining broth and bring to a boil before adding the parsnips and carrots. Cook until vegetables are very tender. Remove bay leaf and purée in batches. Stir in vinegar and cream (milk for low fat option) and heat without boiling.

Serves 8 small servings or 4 hearty ones.



In October 2004, the Agriculture Branch contributed to Joanne J. Johnson's trip to attend the Slow Food Conference in Turin, Italy. The following is her report on the conference, events and food issues, presented in global perspective.

Four Days at TERRA MADRE-- An Experience of a Lifetime by Joanne Jackson Johnson, M'Clintock Valley Farm - Growers of Organic Food Yukon

In October of 2004, I attended a Slow Food event called Terra Madre: a meeting of world food communities in Turin, Italy.

The conference organizers had searched worldwide for people who were



farming or making food products, hunting, fishing, and herding in a small-scale, sustainable way. Five thousand farmers and producers were expected to attend. Tom, Claire, and Graham Rudge from Aurora Mountain Farm, and Suat Tuzlak of Alpine Bakery also attended as delegates.

The conference opened on Wednesday afternoon. The opening ceremonies included the first plenary session. Speakers included Vandana Shiva and Alice Waters. Vandana Shiva talked about the rise of industrial agriculture after World War II when there was a surplus of chemicals no longer needed for munitions. The “military-industrial” complex then focused on industrializing agriculture.



One of many fantastic buffets at Terra Madre

Alice Waters worked with a school in California that had paved its playground with asphalt and shut down its cafeteria, making fast food available to students from a little shack on the playground. She persuaded the school to remove the asphalt and replace it with a garden which the students planted and tended and harvested. The cafeteria was reopened and the children learned about growing, cooking and serving food as part of the curriculum.

I attended a national Food Security Assembly in Winnipeg before going to Italy and many of the same issues around food emerged in both places. These were:

- Control of seed use by multinational corporations resulting in loss of diversity in seed and plant varieties, and the introduction of GMO varieties which depend on chemicals and contaminate non-GMO crops.
- The environmental degradation resulting from over-cropping with mono-cultures heavily dependent on chemicals, the large scale hog and beef production, and the water shortages resulting from clearing of forested land to find new fertile cropland.

- The inability of millions worldwide to feed themselves.
- Health issues resulting from obesity and illnesses attributed to over-processed food and food lacking nutritional value, as well as the unplanned consequences of industrial farming such as BSE and Avian influenza.
- Consumers who lack knowledge of agricultural practices and are only interested in the current supply of cheap food.
- The positive growth in the number of organic food producers, the resurgence of farmers’ markets in the “developed” world, and the ideological development of organizations such as Slow Food.

On Thursday morning I attended my first workshop called “Strategies: Learning about farming”. Several speakers, including Alice Waters, made presentations on teaching farming/cooking to school groups, prisoners, and the chronically unemployed, with the aim to teach about nutrition and to raise self-esteem. Each situation was different in different parts of the world, but with common elements: putting people back in touch with the land; growing, tasting, and cooking from scratch; raising self esteem by allowing people to be productive, creative and knowledgeable. The most common obstacles to most of the programs were government bureaucracy,



Food and conversation

vandalism and in some cases, apathy.

Thursday afternoon I attended a presentation by three farmer/authors - Eliot Coleman, Mas Masumoto, and journalist Michael Pollan, called “Communicating with the Masses”. The theme that was prominent in Winnipeg was also here; how to make the average person aware

of food production, nutrition and taste issues. Michael Pollan, who calls himself a Food Detective, practices

investigative journalism in the food production world. His recent book is entitled *The Botany of Desire*, a must read about our ethnocentricities and the plants around us.

Friday morning I walked to a city market in Turin, about ten minutes from the conference hall. It is held every day of the week from about 7 am to 4 pm.



Cutting Parmigiano Reggiano cheese at Salone del Gusto

There is a huge variety of fruit, vegetables, meat, cheese, honey as well as clothing, electronics and leather goods. Many products such as Chiquita bananas are brought in, but there is also much locally produced food. I bought some organic chestnut honey and some fruit and bread to eat for lunch.

Friday's workshop was called: "Growing vegetables, the many faces of production". There were several presenters, three from Africa—Senegal, Gambia and Guinea. They talked about many of the difficulties and few successes due to the shortage of water, the interest of women in being farmers but being unable to legally own land, and the competition for land with multinational companies. There was also a presentation by a man from Spain who talked about a project to grow rare varieties of fruit and vegetables, principally tomatoes, in an area near Valencia.

Friday afternoon after the workshop I made a quick trip to Salone del Gusto, the annual food fair organized by Slow Food, a twenty minute walk from the Palazzo del Lavoro. I managed to spend about an hour and a half at the show seeing only a fraction of it before I had to get

back to get on the bus for Mattie. It featured high quality food from small scale producers, mostly European. For the first time I had a chance to see an olive press producing oil, which I got to taste.

It was a privilege to attend this unique conference as a delegate. It was an experience that I will never forget, as it gave me

a world perspective on food production. It was inspiring. I met people who were struggling to stay alive; for example Julius from Kenya, who struggles to get enough to feed his child one meal a day and has not had rain for three years. I talked to North Americans who are making a living producing artisan products such as bread, juice and cider, and cheese on a small scale. And, people like me growing vegetables, participating in Farmers' Markets or CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). I also had the opportunity to taste reindeer milk vodka made by Russian indigenous herders.



Russian delegates with reindeer milk products

Even though the Slow Food Organization was started in Italy, there are problems there as well, with preservation of farm land and community. On the way to Turin from Milan there is a high-speed train line project that is taking farm land on both sides of the road for many kilometers. In the Susa Valley there is a movement to stop a similar rail line from Milan to Lyon through the Alps. The TAV line will allow trains carrying industrial materials including hazardous ones to move at high speeds through these beautiful villages and farms.



Italian heritage squash varieties

There was tremendous energy at Terra Madre; every spare moment was spent talking about people we had met, things we had seen and production methods. The

organizers had great vision. The basis for the conference was allowing food producers from 130 countries to meet together in formal and informal settings and just let us go. I had some doubts at first about putting national groups together in the accommodations but it worked so well for us. I later read accounts by South American delegates who had been billeted by country and found it extremely useful to meet other delegates from their own countries to exchange ideas and information. There was no language barrier in those informal situations. At the conference simultaneous translation was provided in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, French and Italian.

Terra Madre was organized by Slow Food, with assistance from the Region of Piedmont, the City of Turin, the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Coldiretti Piemonte (National Farmers Union), Fondazione CRT and New Holland. As one of almost five thousand delegates, my accommodation, food and travel during the conference was subsidized by Terra Madre. My air fare to Winnipeg and Milan was sponsored by the Yukon Government Agriculture Branch.

It is possible to find material on most of the people and organizations mentioned in this article on the Web. SlowWeb, part of slowfood.com has an archive of the speeches given at Terra Madre.

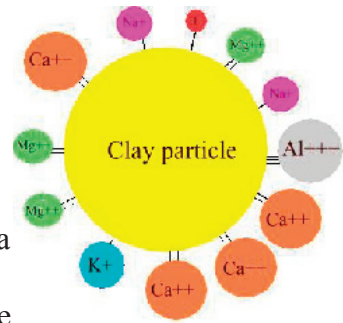


What is CEC?

Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC) is the degree to which a soil can absorb and exchange positively charged ions (cations). Cations, such as calcium, ammonium, and potassium are critical for plant growth. The greater the CEC of a soil, the more locations there are for cations to be connected electrostatically to the negatively charged surface of the inorganic and organic soil particles – this occurs because all soils are negatively charged. CEC varies according to pH, organic matter content, and soil texture. Organic soils have a CEC of 50-100 meq/100g soil, whereas a typical silt loam (common to the Yukon)

measures between 15-35 meq/100g soil.

With finer textured soils there is a greater surface area to volume ratio, providing more surface area for attraction to occur. It is for this reason that, so long as all else is equal, a sandy soil with large sand particles, has a low CEC, and a clay soil with small clay particles, has a high CEC. A tremendous amount of variability can also be noted between different types of clays.



The take home message is: the more CEC a soil has, the more places calcium, ammonium, and other essential plant nutrient (positively charged ions - cations) have to be stored. And, the more loaded soil particles are, the better plant roots are at nutrient up-take, simply because of nutrient availability. This ultimately results in a healthier plant.

The Role of Calcium

Your mom always told you to drink your milk for strong bones. Plants need to do the same.

Plants generally use calcium in amounts second only to nitrogen and potassium. Calcium combines with several other molecules to create the stiffness in plant cell walls. It is also intimately tied to cell elongation and division, membrane permeability, and the activation of some critical enzymes. Root growth is almost completely inhibited with low calcium content. Calcium deficiencies are very rare because the negatively charged soil has abundant Ca^{2+} ions bonded to it. It is rare to see calcium deficiency in Yukon fields, unless the site is very acidic, at which point the calcium ion is less available to be up-taken by plant roots.

There is some controversy as to the usefulness of calcium ratios as a factor in soil fertility. Some texts offer that if the ratio of calcium to all other cations (positively charged ions) drops below 5:1, then the integrity of the root membranes is lost, causing many other elements to become toxic to the plant. Others suggest that so long as there is a balance and the nutrients are present in soils in amounts that are adequate for the crop needs, then the ratio is of no concern. Regardless of the above discussion, Ca:Mg ratios do play a role in soil physical properties. For example, a high calcium to magnesium ratio, where soil has more calcium, allows for better water infiltration.

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 - Plant Nursery shelves and display areas
 - Planting trays / nursery pots

Everything needed to start this spring.

Or

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- Planting trays / nursery pots – Best Offer

Contact: (867) 660-4057

For Sale: Meat Grinder - #22, 1.5hp, comes with extra plates and blades - \$700.00

Contact: 633-8416

Trail Ride Proposals are now being accepted for the summer season Trail Ride Operation at Takhini Hot-springs. Also, a variety of horse tack and gear for sale.

Contact Michael: 633-4553

Fireweed Community Market Society

Downtown Market

Thursday 3 pm - 9 pm
Shipyards Park
May - September

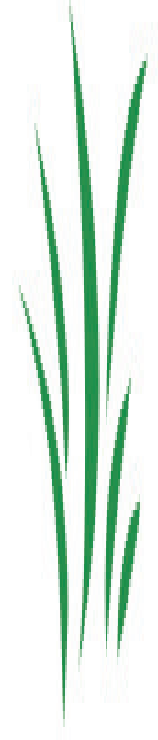
Yukon Made Market

Saturday 9 am - 2 pm
Summer: Takhini Gas
(Corner of Hotspings Road and Mayo Road)
Winter: Hootalinqua Firehall

For information call: 393-4628
fireweedmarket@yahoo.ca

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InFARmation
Department of Energy, Mines and Resources
Agriculture Branch
Box 2703 Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6
Phone: (867)667-3417
Fax: (867)393-6222
Email: tony.hill@gov.yk.ca

Or call Tony Hill at 867-667-3417, outside of Whitehorse at 1-800-661-0408 local 3417, or stop by the Agriculture Branch. We are located on the third Floor Elijah Smith Building.

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