

INFORMATION

Yukon Agriculture Branch Quarterly Bulletin

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NEW GROWING FORWARD AGREEMENT WILL DRIVE LONG-TERM GROWTH IN CANADIAN AGRICULTURE

In mid-September, Yukon hosted the annual meeting of Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Agriculture. It turned out to be a milestone meeting with an agreement reached on new policy direction in Canadian agriculture.

Growing Forward 2 shifts the focus of government from income support programs to investment in strategic initiatives in innovation, competitiveness and market development.

The new *Growing Forward* agreement reduces coverage in two business risk management (BRM) programs, AgriStability and AgriInvest.

AgriStability is a margin-based program that allows producers to protect their farm operations against large declines in farm income. Starting in the 2013 program year, producers will receive an AgriStability payment when their income in the program year drops more than 30% below their historical reference margin. Under the previous agreement, producers received a payment once their income dropped more than 15% below their historical reference margin. The AgriStability fee will be adjusted and reduced accordingly to make the program less expensive for producers.

AgriInvest is a self-managed producer-government savings account that allows producers to set money aside that can then be used to help manage small income shortfalls, or to make investments to reduce on-farm risks. Under the new agreement, producers can deposit up to 1.0% (instead of 1.5% as under the previous agreement) of their allowable net sales each year into an AgriInvest account and receive a matching government contribution. Although the limit on matching



Federal Minister of Agriculture Gerry Ritz and Energy, Mines and Resources Minister Brad Cathers sign the Certificate of Commitment for *Growing Forward 2*.

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MESSAGE FROM THE AGRICULTURE BRANCH

Fall is fading fast and another busy winter is on the horizon. Yukon just finished hosting an important meeting of Agriculture Ministers and Deputy Ministers from across Canada, who were here to conclude an agreement on the new *Growing Forward 2* Policy framework. The Ministers' meeting prompted a concurrent meeting in Whitehorse by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, with industry delegates from across Canada presenting alternative policy views on the future of Canadian agriculture to Ministers and their Deputies.

Between the two groups, over 160 delegates arrived in town keeping department staff hopping, entertaining, driving, touring and meeting at a pace that left us all in awe of what just happened and in need of a good weekend off. Thanks to all that helped out, particularly the Yukon producers that contributed farm products for the "Taste of Yukon Reception" and Caribou Crossing banquet. What a great time of year to showcase our farms and Yukoner's ability to produce top quality agriculture products to the rest of the country. Well done.

Next up, we have the North of 60° Agriculture Conference and Banquet on November 2-3, 2012. This year we celebrate the 25th year of service to the agriculture industry as a Branch and we are planning a grand series of seminars and a

big time Yukon Grown and Raised banquet. The seminars this year will include a variety of interests including keeping your livestock healthy, farm bookkeeping and accounting, opportunities in Yukon agriculture and a presentation on the Yukon Irrigation Strategy. The banquet on Saturday night will have music by Joe Loutchan, a live auction featuring Russ Tait in support of Freedom Trails Therapeutic Riding Association, and a guest or two from the early days of the Agriculture Branch and YAA to help us celebrate. Yukon grown and raised farm products will, as always, be featured on the menu and the Farmer of the Year will be awarded recognising an outstanding contribution to Yukon agriculture in 2012. Banquet tickets go on sale right after Thanksgiving weekend on a first-come first-served basis. Additional conference information can be provided by calling the Agriculture Branch at 867-667-5838.

On a sadder note, Yukon agriculture lost another good friend and supporter over the past summer when Hugh Bradley passed away in August. Hugh arrived in Yukon as a university student in 1952 for summer work at the Dominion Experimental Agriculture Sub-Station near Haines Junction. The following year, while again working at the experimental farm, he and a co-worker were able to make an agreement for the purchase of Pelly

Farm. After enlisting Hugh's brother Dick and a fourth partner, the young men arrived at the farm in June 1954 and Hugh had continued farming there for the past 58 years. The story of the farm before and after the Bradley's arrival was and continues to be an important chapter in Yukon history.

Hugh was an educated farmer having obtained his Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture from the University of Alberta in 1954 and was recognised for his agriculture accomplishments by obtaining both Yukon and university honours including, Yukon Farmer of the Century in 1999, a Commissioners Award in 2004, and the University of Alberta Honour Award in 2011. He has been a mentor to many who wanted to farm in Yukon and always made time for visitors arriving at the gate or off the river.

As Hugh's wife Wenda recently recalled, "Hugh always enjoyed reading *INFARMation* when it arrived – even if he didn't always agree." Debating agricultural practices with the Bradleys has always been a pleasure for us here at the Agriculture Branch and a tradition that we hope to continue with the next generation of Bradleys. Hugh's wisdom and welcome will be missed by all in the agriculture community who knew him and our condolences go out to the family during this difficult time.



Growing Forward 2
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contributions will be \$15,000 a year, down from the current \$22,500, Yukon producers would need over \$1.5 million in allowable net sales to be impacted by this change.

There are relatively few Yukon producers that subscribe to either the AgriInvest or AgriStability programs so the effect of these reductions is not nearly as significant here as in other areas of the country.

The good news for Yukon farmers is that the reductions in funding for these BRM programs have allowed governments to re-invest a portion of the savings into non-business risk management programs that support the development of local industry. Support for non-BRM programs is expected to increase by 50% under Growing Forward 2 with investments in research and innovation, skills development and training, food safety and on-farm best management practices. There is also a new focus on improving agriculture infrastructure, particularly in areas of irrigation infrastructure and ecological goods and services.

At the press conference following the Agriculture Ministers meeting, Yukon's Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources Brad Cathers said "Growing Forward 2 is important for Yukon with its emphasis on investment in innovation and market development. We are pleased to have worked collaboratively to reach this important stage in support of our sector's transformation."

The new agreement sets the stage for FPT governments to complete bilateral agreements, so programs will be in place by April 1, 2013, when the current framework expires.

LEASE AGREEMENT SIGNED TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Government of Yukon has signed a 30-year lease agreement for a 65 hectare parcel of land on the Mayo Road to enable the Yukon Agricultural Association (YAA) to proceed with planning for a central agriculture facility to serve the industry and the Yukon public.

"The Yukon government is pleased to set aside this land for central agriculture infrastructure as part of continuing to fulfill our commitment to support the development of agriculture infrastructure that improves food security, facilitates access to market and encourages local production of food," said Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources Brad Cathers. "This lease agreement will facilitate the development of infrastructure to support continued growth of Yukon's agriculture sector by helping industry take steps to address current needs and opportunities, as well as looking to the future by enabling long-term planning of shared infrastructure."

The lease agreement will enable the YAA to use the land to promote and support growth of the agriculture sector of Yukon's economy by working with producers to develop infrastructure that improves access to market for locally grown food products.

"The Yukon Agricultural Association is very happy that the lease agreement has been signed," said Yukon Agricultural Association president Cain Vangel. "This positions the YAA one step closer to achieving our vision of creating the infrastructure required for the Yukon agriculture industry to grow and supply more local food to Yukon residents."

The terms of the lease require that any services provided on the site must be offered on an equitable fee-for-service basis.



The rectangle on the middle-left marks the location of the YAA lease on the North Klondike Highway, between Burma Road and Policeman's Point Road.



YUKON PRODUCER PROFILE

HIGHLIGHTING PRODUCERS AND THEIR AGRI-BUSINESSES

This column is an opportunity to introduce readers to farm operations in Yukon. This segment features Yukon's amazing producers, farm products and how farmers are overcoming some of our climate, production and market obstacles. This edition of the Yukon Producer Profile presents:

ELEMENTAL FARM

On the North side of the Takhini River, with a strong gust of wind, Elemental Farm was born. A new farming duo, Bart Bounds and Kate Mechan, along with their young daughter Juniper, are operating a self-sufficient and environmentally conscious farm.

Bounds and Mechan live off-grid in a yurt on farmland owned by an acquaintance. This land was previously used to grow grains, but had lain unused for several years until by chance Bounds came across it. With the land cleared, a water source on site and access-road ready, the potential was recognized. The landowner agreed to the couple's proposal and now a year and a half later the place is literally alive again.

Bounds and Mechan do not have a formal lease agreement in place, although they are working towards getting one, and are operating on

the good faith of their acquaintance. If not for this unique relationship they would not be farming in Yukon, as the high land prices in the Whitehorse region are unattainable.

Elemental Farm's main products are market greens, which are sold at the Fireweed Market and through a small CSA. They also sell the greens to the Alpine Bakery for their box program, the Takhini River Lodge and various restaurants around Whitehorse. Along with the plant beds on site, they have a greenhouse and raise three different types of chickens (red-Sussex cross Plymouth, brown leghorns, and red chanteclers), turkeys and goats. These animals are for personal benefit and not for sale. The entire farming operation is performed in a way that minimizes impact and is done manually wherever possible. The watering system is all gravity-fed from springs located further back on the property and fertilizing is done by hand.

While enjoying some freshly picked wild strawberries, Bounds and Mechan discussed the philosophy behind their farm. Their goal is to provide good, organic food to all Yukoners, including low-income and isolated individuals and families. They would like to contribute to ensuring all people have equal access to healthy food.

"Food brings people together and creates community," stated Mechan. And this statement is

inherent to Bounds and Mechan's lifestyle and guides why they do what they do. They aim to continue to bring community together over food and provide highly nutritious, less processed produce to help improve the diet of Yukoners.

And this is just the beginning. In five years they hope to have a larger CSA, have grown into organic grain production, perhaps build a co-op or collective with others who share their goals and lifestyle choice, have a larger greenhouse, more animals, and expand into more culinary and medicinal herbs. They are also very interested in education and would like to set up an apprentice program to teach their low-impact techniques and serve as a model for future farms.

Elemental Farm is not without its challenges. With the frosts that happen frequently throughout the summer and the dryness of the climate in the Takhini River Valley, the lessons to be learned are endless. By operating in a fashion that aims to minimize impacts and by using shared equipment and good old fashioned hard work, Elemental Farm is a beautiful system where each piece contributes to the whole. The excess greens help to feed the animals who in turn weed and provide fertilizer. An ingenuitive system of small chicken coops mounted on skis, so they are mobile, ensures the entire space benefits from the birds' habits. They

help remove pests in the soil and fertilize the ground. When they are not needed on the growing beds they provide weed control along the edges of the fence.

Elemental Farm, like all farms, has its difficulties, but the highlights far outweigh any negatives. For Mechan being able to eat the foods they had grown during her pregnancy and then to see the joy on her daughter's face when she now picks her own food makes all the hard work worth it. Bounds enjoys working with the community in a progressive manner and is highly motivated to leave a soft farming footprint. The response received weekly from customers reinforces their belief in growing locally.

Bounds and Mechan find the organic farming community in Yukon very supportive and sharing. The cooperative nature and relationships they have developed with other local farmers has been a plus.

During the winter months they hope to visit farms outside Yukon and continue to learn and bring new ideas back to their farm. Bounds' astuteness in observing the results of his experiments and incorporating all of what he is learning ensures that Mechan and Bounds have many years of growing ahead of them.

The farm's name poetically encapsulates the reality that on any given summer day, all the elements of weather can be experienced in Yukon and each plays a role in

giving rise to a bountiful crop in our short growing season. Elemental Farm embraces the surprise and beauty of each shift and celebrates the variations that surround them.

QUICK FACTS:

Operators: Bart Bounds and Kate Mechan

Years in business: 1.5

Driving distance to Whitehorse: 50 km

Markets serviced: Whitehorse

Operation: Small CSA, box program and market garden greens

No. of Potential Customers: 30-40 through their box program, Fireweed market clients

Growing season:
Planted – 2nd week in May;
First harvest – early June;
Planned harvest – Early September through early October.

Lessons Learned:

- Frost preparation and being ready for it to happen at any time.
- Patience. As a young farm, the lessons and experimentation are ongoing.
- Realizing just how much you can do with so little. A lot of food can be grown in a small space.
- Yukon and the Takhini River Valley are a good place to learn farming.



YUKON PRODUCER PROFILE

We are currently looking for our next producer to profile. This column is an opportunity to introduce readers to some of the interesting farm operations in Yukon. The segment features a variety of Yukon's amazing producers, farm products and stories of how farmers are overcoming some of our climate, production and market obstacles.

If you want to suggest a Yukon farmer or even volunteer to be featured in an upcoming issue, contact the Agriculture branch through the information at the bottom right corner of page 8.



FOR THE LOVE OF LINGONBERRY

Alias: *Vaccinium vitis-idaea*, low-bush cranberry, partridgeberry, cowberry, foxberry and many more

Lingonberry is a member of the blueberry/cranberry family *Ericaceae*. It is a low growing, perennial evergreen shrub found in both forested and alpine habitats. Wild lingonberry grows up to 12 cm tall and displays whitish-pink bell-shaped flowers and bright to dark red berries. It is a very common dwarf shrub across the boreal forests of Canada, Alaska, Scandinavia, Europe, and Russia. Cultivated varieties have been successfully developed in Europe though North America has experienced only limited success with these varieties.

Well-drained, sandy or silty loams are the preferred soil of lingonberry. The pH is also very important. Lingonberry thrive in acidic soils with a pH of 4.3-5.5. The ideal organic content is between 2 and 6%. Full sun exposure is recommended for cultivation, but when managing wild stands, removing too many trees too quickly can be devastating. Over the winter, snow cover is critical for survival, and frost protection during flowering can greatly improve yields as well. Trickle irrigation is considered the best option, but avoid over irrigating as rhizomes can be susceptible to root rot.

Lingonberries are capable of self-pollination, but best fruit results with insect pollination, especially bumblebees. The plants reproduce by seed or underground rhizomes. Commercial growers frequently use micropropagation methods also known as tissue culture to grow lingonberry.

Lingonberries have a high benzoic acid content, which translates into



a long shelf life. The berries last 8 -12 weeks in the refrigerator and up to several years in the freezer. They are also very versatile and can be processed into many different products, including wines, liqueurs, syrups, jams, jellies, cheesecakes, and sauces. They are rich in antioxidants, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and magnesium. The plants themselves are considered very hardy and known for surviving cold winters, warm summers, and high winds.

The berry yield in Europe is approximately 80 million pounds per year, but there are a number of difficulties establishing cultivation in North America. Lingonberry typically takes four to five years after planting to bear fruit. Weeding is also a big part of lingonberry management as the plants typically don't cover the entire ground space, at least for the first three years. Many of the lingonberry studies completed in North America report difficulty in management for the first few years with trial and error being the primary management tool.

There is very little lingonberry cultivation in Canada, but Newfoundland and Labrador is the largest North American producer of the berry, known locally as partridgeberry. Native

fruit is harvested from unmanaged stands totalling approximately 96,500 kg/year. Most of the berries are exported frozen, but some secondary processing and fresh local sales are also prevalent. In Yukon, low-bush cranberry (lingonberry) is a well-loved wild berry picked by the buckets for use in baking, sauces, and more.

There is a considerable amount of information about cultivation and production of lingonberries on the internet for those that are interested. The *Lingonberry Production Guide for the Pacific Northwest*, from Oregon State University, is a great place to start. You can download it at emr.ca/infarm03

Did You Know?

- Lingonberry is the national fruit of Sweden (Canada is nationally fruitless)
- Lingonberry has more than 25 common names worldwide
- Winds of more than 16 km/hr are credited with cross pollination of wild alpine and tundra lingonberries

THE 2012 NORTH OF 60° AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE AND BANQUET

Join us Friday, November 2nd, and Saturday, November 3rd, for the 25th annual North of 60° Agriculture Conference and Banquet at the Westmark Whitehorse.

All conference topics are free and open to everyone.

Seminars will include:

- Michael Gates on the longest cattle drive of North America;
- farm financial ratios and accounting with Lance Stockbrugger;
- information on livestock health and opportunities in Yukon agriculture; and,
- an introduction to farm bookkeeping.

There will be coffee and snacks provided.

For the complete agenda please visit www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca

The North of 60° Agriculture Banquet is scheduled for Saturday evening, November 3rd.

The banquet will feature a delicious Yukon grown and raised meal prepared by the chefs at the Westmark.

The evening will also include the presentation of the annual Farmer of the Year Award and a combined live and silent auction handled by Russ Tait in support of the Freedom Trails Therapeutic Riding Association.

Doors open at 6 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m. Every year the event seems to sell out, so get your tickets soon to save your seat for a delicious Yukon grown meal. Advance tickets are available at the Agriculture Branch front desk.

For people attending the conference & banquet from outside of town, the Westmark has a Yukon rate. For more information or to buy banquet tickets, please contact the Agriculture Branch through the information on the back page.

THE CORNER L.O.T. (LAND, OPPORTUNITIES & TIDBITS)

Land use and land ownership are fundamental to understanding our landscape. A place to live, and by extension, ownership of land are central to our life plan. Agriculture land is a special trust – it provides the ‘home’ that we all seek and an opportunity to provide an income through a wide variety of interesting and challenging activities. This issue of *The Corner L.O.T.* will concentrate on tidbits related to vocabulary associated with land ownership and land parcels.

In Yukon and the four western provinces, land title transfer is tracked under the Torrens system that was developed in South Australia by Sir Richard Torrens in 1858. In contrast, Atlantic Canada and eastern Ontario use a deed system to track land ownership. Under the deed system individuals establish land ownership by demonstrating the continuity of their title with their predecessors in

title. Your current valid title under the deed system is dependent on an unbroken string of correctly executed land transfers. Any irregularity in the transfer process could jeopardize the validity of your current deed. Theoretically, to establish ownership, title should be traced to the original grant of the land from the Crown. Eastern Ontario modifies this system to define a ‘good root of title’ dating back to 40 years from present.

The Torrens system has demonstrated its utility and is now used in many jurisdictions. The great innovation of the Torrens system is that it deals with the problem of establishing a root of title at the beginning of the process. The state registers all lands within its jurisdiction by listing who owns them and who has claims against them. In the Torrens system the registry is definitive and, once the title is verified, no further legal

work is required with respect to ownership. This simplified process greatly increases both certainty of ownership and speed of transfer.

All land ownership is subject to specialized tracking and vocabulary. Real property is **land**, any buildings on that **land**, any mineral rights under the **land**, and anything that is attached to the **land** or building(s) that can be considered permanently attached. Real property is distinguished from personal property, which is everything you own that is not ‘real’ property. The ‘real’ in real property derives from early English common law – the courts considered property ‘real’ if the courts could restore to the dispossessed owner the thing itself rather than simply awarding damages as compensation for its loss. When we ‘own’ land we possess **real** property.

Source: Property Law, The Canadian Encyclopedia.



NOMINATIONS FOR FARMER OF THE YEAR

Last year, we saw a number of both new and seasoned farmers being nominated for the Agriculture Branch's Farmer of the Year award; with the honor going to Lucy and Jack Vogt, operators of Vogt's Veggies at Henderson Corner. With so many success stories in the territory, every fall it's a difficult question: Who should be the 2012 Farmer of the Year?

If you know of a farmer, farm family or farm advocate that has shown the kind of commitment and passion for Yukon agriculture that you feel should be recognized, then this is your opportunity to nominate them for the Agriculture Branch Farmer/Farm Family of the Year Award. Whether they are young or old, have years of experience or are new to the industry, produce hay or promote local food, this is the chance to share their story and showcase the many people who are contributing to agriculture in Yukon.

This year's award will be presented at the annual Yukon North of 60° Agriculture Banquet on November 3, 2012, at the Westmark Hotel and Conference Centre in Whitehorse.

As part of your nomination, please include a brief explanation of why the candidate(s) is worthy of the award. Nominations may link the nominee's contribution to agriculture or agri-business development in Yukon, assistance with the future of agriculture in Yukon, good farm management practices, development of any new or innovative ideas, or any other reason you feel your candidate should be chosen. Nominations must be submitted in writing (letters, facsimiles and e-mails will be accepted) and signed by the nominator(s).

The deadline for nominations is Wednesday, October 31, 2012, at 4:00 p.m.

Submit your nomination to:

In person: Room 320 Elijah Smith Building,
300 Main Street, Whitehorse

Fax: 867-393-6222

Email: agriculture@gov.yk.ca

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Growing Forward Projects

Anyone with a *Growing Forward* agreement needs to complete their project by March 31, 2013, to receive the second instalment of funding.

CLASSIFIEDS



3-year-old Polled Purebred Hereford Bull

Sally is his name, very gentle nature

Contact: Dale Bradley

2M8339 Minto Channel

Email: prrdale@hotmail.com

Fertilizer Spreader for 3 point hitch with PTO \$200

3 Section Diamond Harrow \$300

Call Jack Cable 667-4830

INFARMATION is:

A Government of Yukon newsletter published by the Agriculture Branch of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. If you would like to add or remove your name from the newsletter mailing list, comment on an article or contribute a story, please feel free to contact us.

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