

# The Potato Minute

June 1, 2021



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - Terence Hochstein

What a difference an inch of rain makes. After going through the last five months of very little measurable precipitation, the southern part of the province finally got some wet snow/ rain over the May long weekend. With no moisture carryover from last fall, and a fairly mild winter, the irrigation systems were running full bore to get many of the crops out of the ground. It has always been said that an inch of rain has more benefit than two inches of cold irrigation water to start the season out.

As an industry, we are expecting to see about a 5000 acre increase across the province this year, as we inch closer to the 2019-acre levels. It is hoped that as the world starts to recover from COVID-19, the potato industry will continue to grow across the province. Although the demand for the potato is still not back to where we would like it to be, it has once again, become very evident that the average North American consumer continues to make our vegetable the one of choice. The way they are purchased may have changed slightly, but they are still going into the homes of a large percentage of the North American population.



Potato plants emerging May 28th- Serge Langeweg of Torlang Farms

Manitoba, having experienced a very similar winter weather pattern, also welcomed the 1.5 -2-inch rain event over the weekend. Although, not enough to keep everything going, but it's a good start. Their irrigation ponds were virtually empty, due to no winter runoff. Here in Alberta, we are very lucky to have the irrigation infrastructure that we have, as the growers in Manitoba must rely on winter snow melt to fill their own irrigation ponds. There is some aquifer water available and limited river water as well.

On the east coast, the story is a bit different, with word out of PEI only about 50% seeded because of a very cold and wet month. New Brunswick, as well, had an early start but has also run into the same weather patterns and still has not completed their planting.

On the seed front, most of our seed growers in central and northern Alberta will have planting wrapped up by the 1st of June. Many of these areas went into winter with excellent soil moisture, having experienced two very wet years in a row. Unlike the south, our northern seed industry relies almost exclusively on mother nature to supply the water to grow their crops.



The launch of the province's re-opening plan, gives us hope that we will still be able to have our 2021 PGA Convention and Tradeshow in Red Deer, November 22-24th. Please stay tuned to future editions of the Potato Minute for more information on this great event.

With the weather warming and the crops beginning to grow, take the time to embrace all that we can and enjoy the season.

***"The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be."***

*Until next month,*

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## SEED COORDINATOR UPDATE - Stacey Bajema



Seed Growers in Alberta are very grateful and excited to be kicking off a new crop season! Up in the north, we have more ideal planting conditions than we saw last year, as we have good moisture in the soil, without the excessive wet spots that plagued the 2020 planting season. Our Southern Alberta seed growers are reporting dryer conditions with a few wind events, but irrigation access in these areas will be a mitigating factor. Overall, we are optimistic about planting season 2021.

As our seed growers are kicking off their planting season, we want to say thank you to the tissue-culture labs in the province who are winding down their season for the year, as plantlets are being sent out to greenhouses across north-central Alberta for mini-tuber production. The care and attention to detail given by our tissue culture and greenhouse growers are vital to the success of our entire industry here in Alberta.



Top Left: Royal Adventure Farms Lab Top Right: Haenni Farms Greenhouse

After a quiet winter, here at CDCN, it is great to see some spring action, as the site welcomes researchers and students from various agriculture programs for the upcoming crop season. I have also spent this month preparing for two new PGA staff members, a lab technologist, and a research scientist, who will work on our new research project here, at the PGA North office for the next two years. It is good to be building for the future and moving forward, given the past year and a half of uncertainty.

### PGA Research Project Announcement

The Potato Growers of Alberta is proud to launch our newest project, the **“Establishment of a platform for rapid diagnosis of current and potential potato diseases in Alberta”**. The 2-year project is jointly funded by our partners, the Alberta Plant Health Lab and Results Driven Agriculture Research (RDAR), with \$343,844 granted by RDAR.

***“We are excited to fund this initiative that will advance the rapid detection and diagnosis of potential threats to Alberta’s potato producers. ”***

**-Clinton Dobson, RDAR  
Research Director**

The Alberta potato industry contributes over one billion dollars to the Alberta economy annually. We have a thriving commercial and agri-food industry in this province supported by a strong seed potato sector, which has become the largest Canadian exporter of seed potatoes to the United States. This success is built on our reputation for quality, disease free potatoes grown by the producers in our province.

This project will establish a system for early and rapid diagnosis of all potato diseases which have the potential to limit yields and prevent market access for our growers. We are taking a proactive approach to disease management by providing our growers with an assurance platform that will allow us to respond quickly to plant health concerns before they become damaging to our industry. These protocols, which will be optimized for use in Alberta, will be adopted by the Alberta Plant Health Lab, expanding their capacity for rapid diagnosis. They will also be shared with Alberta researchers and labs going forward.



Left - Right: Will Feindel (Lab Technologist), Stacey Bajema (PGA Seed Coordinator), Dr. Junye Jiang (Project Lead)

The Potato Growers of Alberta welcome Dr. Junye Jiang as the research lead on this project, as well as Will Feindel as our lab technologist. They will be working out of the Potato Growers of Alberta North office and the Alberta Plant Health Lab for the next two years, and we are excited to have them join our team!

We are very grateful for the support from the Government of Alberta and RDAR for enabling this project to come together. We are happy to be building partnerships for the continued success of our industry!

## Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Please remember to submit your paperwork to your regional CFIA office to request field inspections for the 2021 crop year. Fees will be invoiced upon submission of your application and will reflect the 2% inflationary increase for the 2021 crop year. Remember to request PCN testing for any lots destined for export in the 2021/2022 shipping season.

## Temporary Foreign Workers

The federal budget brought a temporary extension to the current Mandatory Isolation for Temporary Foreign Workers Program. Employers can claim the full \$1500 benefit until June 15, 2021 and then the amount will be reduced to \$750 until the program comes to an end on August 31, 2021.

Temporary Foreign Workers already working on Alberta farms are eligible to receive their vaccinations here in Canada. As they have no Alberta healthcare cards, they need to register through Alberta Health Services directly, as pharmacies will not be able to accommodate them.

## Edmonton Regional Agriculture Master Plan

The Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board is hosting an engagement survey on the draft Regional Agriculture Master Plan (RAMP) on its "Let's Talk RAMP" website.

Municipalities in the Edmonton Metropolitan Region have recognized that a strong future for agriculture starts with the land. The RAMP is the first-ever regional planning initiative for agriculture in the Region.

The decisions made will affect the 13 cities, towns, and counties in the Edmonton Metropolitan Region.

The engagement period runs from May 17 to June 8.

[Find out more and participate in the stakeholder engagement](#)



The Potato Growers of Alberta are once again proud to sponsor the Alberta Young Speaker for Agriculture competition as part of the Calgary Stampede week of events. Due to the pandemic, the competition will be held virtually this year. This competition encourages Alberta youth (age 11-24) to develop their communication and leadership skills while presenting their ideas on agriculture.

Please visit the [Alberta Young Speakers for Agriculture](#) website for further details on the competition. Registration closes on June 30, 2021. It would be great to see some of our future leaders in the potato industry join the competition!

If anyone has any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me at anytime.

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Spud Smart Roundtable Webinar

# POTATO SEED CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Register for free

Live on Tuesday, June 8 - 12 p.m. CDT

Proudly Sponsored By:

**BASF** **McCain**

We create chemistry

**About The Webinar:** There's a lot that happens before seed potatoes end up planted in your fields. In order for you to be able to grow the best potato crop you can, seed growers work hard to get that seed ready for you. In this webinar the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) will give you an overview of the process they require Canadian seed potato growers to follow to certify their seed for

sale. We'll also have a potato seed grower explain what happens on the ground for growing seed and getting it ready for planting in your fields.

**Guest Speakers:** Christopher Dunbar, Potato Program Specialist with CFIA & Jake Hoogland, Seed Potato Grower with Hoogland Farms in Millet, Alberta



## AGRICULTURAL DIRECTOR - Thomas McDade

It was certainly great to see some rain this last weekend. The moisture was very much needed, as it has been a very dry and windy spring. With the warmer temperatures forecasted for the upcoming week, I do anticipate that all the potato crops in the south will be up by the end of next week.

We are testing out a new piece of equipment this year for in-field monitoring. The PGA purchased two Soiltech Sensors that provide reports on soil moisture, humidity and soil temperature, as well as local weather conditions and rainfall. It will be interesting to see what value can be derived from these sensors throughout the growing season.

Once again, the PGA, University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College will be running the summer in-field surveillance and research projects:

- The PAMcast reports will start in the second week of June
- The weekly late blight and insect monitoring reports will also resume in late June.
- The U of L is continuing with the Canada Potato Early Die project, and has soil sampled 30 fields that they will be monitoring throughout this growing season. The intent is to take tuber samples from these fields this fall, in order to assess the impact of the Verticillium levels identified in the soil samples on the tuber development and yield.
- Lethbridge College is continuing with the Variable Rate Irrigation Study
- The U of L (Michele Kenschuh) has also launched a Blackleg research project, and will be doing some in-field work during the growing season
- Jonathan Neilson from the Research Station, is continuing with the storage project that is focused on the best management practices of storing damaged tubers from adverse weather events
- Alberta variety trial plots have been planted at CDC South. Lethbridge College is managing this project.

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### Research Activities at the University of Lethbridge

In May, we visited the eight selected fields planted with Russet Burbank, collected soil from five geotagged areas in each field, and sent the samples to the designated CanPEDNet labs for analyses. These repeated cycles of soil sampling through the fall and spring seasons, followed by comparison of verticillium and nematode levels with tuber yields, may look somewhat boring, but we need multi-year replicates to confirm the validity of the observed results. Working with Thomas McDade (PGA), we expanded PED field data collection by placing four Soiltech wireless sensors

in potato fields.

These sensors allow us to



*Atta Ur Rahman placing sensor*

observe in-field soil moisture, temperature and humidity online at any given time points, thereby providing useful insights into soil conditions throughout the entire growing season. It is indeed convenient, as we see real-time soil

data remotely from the comfort of our lab computer or cell phone.



*L-R: Abigail Clapton, Sara Baleras, Annelise Den Hertog, Dylan Jones*

On May 17th, we started the 3rd season of our Potato Pest Monitoring Program. We have a great team of four U of L students and graduates: Abigail Clapton and Sara Baleras will be working on spore trap samples, with a main focus on the occurrence of the late blight pathogen *Phytophthora infestans*, the early blight pathogen *Alternaria*, and *Fusarium* species. Annelise Den Hertog and Dylan Jones will examine the sticky cards for the presence of potato psyllids (*Bactericera cockerelli*), green peach aphids and some other insects. We encourage cross-training of our students so they will become proficient in all tasks. On May 27th, we received our first spore samples from the fields. With higher number of lab numbers (currently, we have ten!), we will be adding a new Zeiss Axioskope 5 microscope, specifically to strengthen the efficiency of our spore trap project.

Among other news, with help from our colleagues and the Canadian Collection of Fungal Cultures in Ottawa, we have established a comprehensive in-vitro collection of major potato pathogens, which includes the most important fungal, oomycetal and bacterial species. These pathogens will be used as positive controls for molecular diagnostics of potato diseases, as well as in a variety of other plant pathology projects.

We anticipate a very busy and exciting summer. The lab is brimming with students, and this is great for moving our program forward.

*-Submitted by Dmytro Yevtushenko*

## PROVINCIAL NEWS



photos by Scott Gillespie

## 2021 PEST MONITORING PROGRAM

The 2021 Pest Monitoring Program has begun. Insect cards and spore samplers have been placed around the province and will be analyzed at the University of Lethbridge, by Dr. Dmytro Yevtushenko and summer students working under his direction.

We would like to thank all financial partners, as well as all cooperators across the province who are monitoring the cards and samplers throughout the growing season:

- Canadian Agricultural Partnership
- Potato Growers of Alberta
- Government of Alberta
- Government of Canada
- Old Dutch Foods
- Frito-Lay Canada
- McCain Foods (Kelcey Aleman)
- Cavendish Farms (Ross May and Colby Robertson)
- Lamb Weston Canada (Ryan Friesen)
- Taber Home & Farm (Barb Nakashima)
- Down to Earth Labs (Justin Quinton)
- AAFC Lacombe (Patty Reid)
- SLM Spud Farms (Johanna Ypma)
- Quattro Farms (Emily Snowden)
- Hoogland Farms (Jake Hoogland)

- Scott C Gillespie Agronomy (Scott Gillespie)
- Promax Agronomy (Russ Stewart, Jeff DeHaan, and Laurie Lyczewski)

The first report is scheduled to be emailed out Friday, June 4th. The weekly reports are for registered growers, and approved industry cooperators only.

In order to help make sure the emails don't go into your spam folder, please add [laurie@promaxag.com](mailto:laurie@promaxag.com) to your addresses. As well, if you should be receiving the emails but are not, please email Laurie to confirm you are on the list.

- Laurie Lyczewski, Promax Agronomy



## PUBLIC AGENCY OPPORTUNITY RECRUITMENT POSTING

**Irrigation Council**

**Competition #: 724**

**Ministry: Agriculture and Forestry**

**Opening Date: 05/18/2021**

**Closing Date: 06/08/2021**

**Role: Public Member**

### Role Required

The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is seeking applications from individuals interested in serving as a public member of the Irrigation Council.

### Location

The office of Irrigation Council is in Lethbridge. Irrigation Council occasionally attends various meetings outside of Lethbridge, within southern Alberta or in Edmonton. All board meetings are conducted virtually during COVID-19.

### About the Agency

The Council's mandate is to:

- Make recommendations to the Minister on issues related to maintaining a strong, efficient and sustainable irrigation industry and act as an appeal body in accordance with the Irrigation Districts Act (the Act);
- Establish policies and procedures for the administration of the Irrigation Rehabilitation Program, to ensure accountability for the public's ongoing investment of funding to rehabilitate irrigation district infrastructure;
- Make recommendations to the Minister on issues related to rural water development in support of economic and rural viability within areas that can be served by irrigation districts; and
- Provide policy recommendations to the Minister pertaining to water allocated to irrigation districts with respect to economic and rural development, municipal demands and the protection of the environment.

Read more...

Source: [alberta.ca](http://alberta.ca)



## SAFETY CORNER



This month's letter is E:

## Energy Isolation

**Risk zones:** Farm yards, buildings/structures, shops, equipment, machinery

Ask yourself:

- Am I authorized to perform this task?
- Am I trained in Lock Out Tag Out procedures and in the task that I am going to perform?
- Have I identified all the energy sources?
- If I restart the equipment now, am I certain all of the guards are securely in place and everyone is in a safe location?

## Hazardous Acts:

- Not de-energizing or locking out circuits or systems prior to performing repairs or maintenance
- Making adjustments or repairs to tools or machines without disengaging the power
- Not blocking all parts before working on or under them
- Not relieving pressure from hydraulic lines before starting work
- Leaving tractor forks/buckets raised after use

## What Can Result:

Electrocution, entrapment, amputation, crush injuries, death, burns, lacerations, broken bones, internal injuries, spinal injuries, compartment syndrome, nerve injuries, chemical injuries ranging from acute to chronic and mild to severe

## Lock Out Tag Out (LOTO) Saves Lives

Lock Out Tag Out refers to practices and procedures that protect workers from the unexpected energization or start up of machinery and equipment, or the release of hazardous energy during repair or maintenance. Lock out devices hold energy-isolation devices in a safe or "off" position and must only be removed by the person who applied them. Tag out devices are warning devices that an authorized employee fastens to energy-isolating devices to warn others not to re-energize the machine or equipment.

Source: [agsafeab.ca](http://agsafeab.ca)

## Do:

- Inform all affected individuals of the equipment you are locking out and if it is for repair or maintenance reasons
- Confirm that all energy sources are isolated, locked and tagged out of service
- Verify there is zero energy in equipment and test for residual or stored energy
- Follow all Lock Out Tag Out procedures
- De-energize, lock out and tag out all energy sources yourself
- Block equipment/machinery against motion after it has been locked out and tagged out
- Relieve hydraulic and pneumatic pressure after equipment has been locked out and before performing maintenance
- Replace all guards before returning the equipment to service





# Minister Bibeau announces investment to strengthen trust in Canadian agriculture



Agriculture and  
Agri-Food Canada

News release

May 19, 2021 – Ottawa, Ontario – Agriculture and Agri-Food  
Canada

Today, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, announced an investment of over \$244,000 to support the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity's (CCFI) work to build public trust in Canada's food system. The announcement followed Minister Bibeau's meeting with several members of the organization.

Delivered through the AgriCompetitiveness Program, this investment will help CCFI develop tools to share information with Canadian consumers about food production and enable food producers to share their stories. The investment will support activities like creating new content for CCFI's It's Good Canada website, which profiles real farm families and others working in the agricultural supply chain.

By sharing accurate, transparent information about Canadian food production, CCFI will increase trust in the Canadian food system and in those who produce the food that Canadians eat and enjoy.

Canadians are more interested than ever in understanding how their food is grown and the system that brings it from the farm to their tables. Helping consumers better understand this process and agricultural practices more broadly builds trust, which is essential for the sector's continued growth and long-term prosperity.

Quotes:

"COVID-19 has meant many Canadians are more interested in where their food comes from. Through this initiative the

CCFI will help connect Canadians with food producers, so they can better understand the origin of the food they eat and how it is produced. Our Government will continue to support initiatives that advance public trust in Canada's food system."

- *The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food*

"We are very excited to receive this funding from the Government of Canada for It's Good, Canada. Building public trust in Canadian food is an important component of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership and this support complements the work we've been doing since 2016, when CCFI was formed to help earn public trust in Canada's food system. This contribution will be used to highlight the outstanding work of farm families and others who continue to deliver safe, nutritious food to Canadians and people around the globe."

- John Jamieson, President and CEO, Canadian Centre for Food Integrity

Quick facts

The Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (CCFI) was established in 2016 as a national non-profit charity with a mandate to build public trust in the food system. CCFI is a membership-based organization with members from agri-food corporations, commodity groups, and academia and amplifier organizations. CCFI works to earn Canadians' trust in the food they consume and in the processes and practices that the agri-food industry employs to produce it.

[Read full article](#)

Source: [canada.ca](http://canada.ca)

## YOUTH EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS PROGRAM

The Youth Employment and Skills Program provides a wage subsidy to employers who hire youth for agricultural jobs. The program offers support for 50% of wages to a maximum of \$14,000.

Employers can apply **on or after May 5, 2021** for their project to be considered. Projects may start retroactively



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada

# Canada

as early as April 15, 2021.

Increased subsidies are available to employers who hire indigenous youth and youth facing increased barriers to employment.

[Find out more about the program](#)



## Planting Update May 27, 2021

Potato growers everywhere always look forward to cleaning off the slate and starting a new crop. Seeding in Western Canada is winding up, while growers in the Atlantic region are in full planting mode. Here is a summary of progress to date:

**Prince Edward Island:** Planting conditions in April pointed towards an early spring in PEI, but unfortunately most of May has been cool and wet, creating some delays in planting the crop. Planting is about 25% completed at this time. Acreage could be up above last year, and it is hoped there will not be a drought again like last summer, which will enable at least average or better yields, to increase the overall production needed for existing markets. The province is optimistic that market demand will be increasing this year and into the new year following recovery from COVID. Fresh inventory is low, with packers finishing up early, and/or managing their inventory according to their customer's needs. Seed has also been extremely tight to plant this crop.

**New Brunswick:** Planting is around 85% complete with many farmers having a day or two left to finish up. Soil was cool earlier on, but also very dry, allowing for good progress – some farms have been done for a week or so and have received precipitation in the last few days. There has been some reduction in acres devoted to chip production, however growers were happy to be able to convert those acres to French fry production to meet the needs for increased contract volume in that sector. Limited seed supply was the challenging factor in the shift over. Supplies of old crop in general, have been reduced overall.

**Quebec:** Spring arrived early for most regions of Quebec providing nearly ideal planting conditions. Planting is about 85% complete with the northern and eastern regions finishing up. Although the spring has been windy and dry, most areas received much needed rainfall yesterday, making for good soil conditions. A slight acreage increase is expected in the fresh and seed sectors while chips will likely remain flat. Processing acres for French fries will need to move up by 15% to accommodate increased contract volumes. There does not seem to be any open seed available. Quality of old crop in storage is good overall, however supply is tight, and a few of the larger packers will just make it to new crop. The Pandemic has brought an increase in demand from the retail sector and the province now expects food service demand to ramp up within a week of seeing restrictions being lifted for sit down restaurants and large group gatherings. If demand

does come back aggressively it will be challenged by low inventories of available supply.

**Ontario:** Planting is about 90% complete and most growers should finish up by the weekend. In the northern area, soil temperatures have been ideal for planting, although cooler for germination and growth. Growers in the south west started planting in mid-April, finishing up ten days ago with hardly any rain delays. Earlier fields have good emergence. Temperatures in that area have been very warm, although dry, and rainfall has been welcomed in recent days. Overall acres in the province should be similar although consistent chip demand could see some shift from the fresh sector into that category.

**Manitoba:** Planting for the Processing side in Manitoba was completed by mid-May. Seed piece development has been good, and the first planted fields of Ranger Russets are beginning to emerge. Soil conditions were extremely dry during planting, however some much needed rain of between 20 and 50mm fell over the potato growing region in the past 7 days. Soil conditions still remain dry at lower depths and some reservoirs remain empty. Some increase in runoff was observed to help bring the Shellmouth Dam Reservoir, which supplies water for irrigation out of the Assiniboine River, to summer operating levels. Seed supplies were tight, but growers were able to source enough to meet the needs for the increased processing acres. Old crop in storages is holding up well and processors continue to run hard with both local and imported raw product. On the Fresh side, planting went well, although similarly into very dry conditions. Reservoirs in the area are mostly empty, although the region did receive an inch of rain last week. Yellow acres are unchanged with red acres down slightly.

**Saskatchewan:** Growers experienced an early spring and like other western areas planted into very dry conditions. The province usually plants around 6,000 acres.

**Alberta:** Many processing growers in the Taber region finished up planting by mid-May. Planting conditions were extremely dry although rainfall amounts of 15-18 mm were reported in the southern area over the weekend. Warm temperatures are providing good growth in the hills. Seed growers in the northern part of the province have about a week of planting left. Soil conditions have been better with good moisture carryover. The province has been a bit long on seed, while table potatoes are almost all cleaned up. Overall acres in Alberta will need to increase as the province returns to 2019 levels.



## FROM THE OFFICE

**British Columbia:** BC had cool but clear weather in April and May, allowing for early and steady planting. Most growers finished up by mid-May. The first early Warba's were planted on March 3rd and came on the market on May 20th, although recent rains have hindered digging. Steady supplies of varieties without skin set for local markets will not be available until well into June. Potato acreage may increase slightly with some shift away from Warba and Chieftain varieties. Shipping of old crop has been steady with firm prices. British Columbia is one of the first provinces to roll out an operational plan post pandemic, and industry is looking forward to the expectation of greater levels of indoor dining within restaurants.

**The Crop Transition Conference will be held this year on Monday, June 14th beginning at 1:00 CDT in Fargo, North Dakota. Hosted by the United Potato Growers of America, it is a great opportunity to view the supply and shipping schedule as old crop transitions into the new. For those unable to travel due to COVID-19 restrictions and isolation requirements, we will be providing a virtual link as well.** The information contained in the UPGC Crop Reports, is gathered from our organization's directors and contacts across the country. Their input is greatly appreciated.

For more information contact: Kevin MacIsaac, General Manager, [Kevin@unitedpotatocanada.com](mailto:Kevin@unitedpotatocanada.com)

*" A father is someone you look up to no matter how tall you grow or how old you are - Author unknown*

# Happy Father's Day

Sunday, June 20th



**PGA** CAMBRIDGE HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTRE \*red deer\*  
November 22 - 24, 2021  
**2021 ALBERTA POTATO CONFERENCE & TRADESHOW**  
November 22 - 24, 2021  
Please book your room early!  
Call 1.800.662.7197  
(ensure you mention PGA room block to receive the group rate)

Please complete your planting records asap



**PAA** THE POTATO ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA  
2021 Annual Meeting  
July 26-29 Virtual Meeting

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