

# THE POTATO MINUTE

February 2025



#potatoloversmonth

Growing Healthy Potatoes Together

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - Terence Hochstein



The week of January 6th, over 40 people from Alberta attended the 2025 edition of Potato Expo in Orlando, Florida. There were a few mornings where the temperature in Southern Alberta was actually warmer than the thermometer in Florida. On a positive note though, if it would have been held a couple of weeks later, we may still be there as the southeastern part of the US was inundated with a, never before, winter blizzard that left many areas crippled for days. Potato Expo remains the place where the entire North American industry comes together for a few days all in the same location. Between the meetings, speaker sessions and the tradeshow, a lot of folks are able to get together for networking that would otherwise be impossible to do in a few short days. Although hectic at times, this conference pays dividends to all who attend the annual event.



it. For now we will do what we do best and that is to grow potatoes and we will let the politicians do their job. Other than that, I have no comment as it is out of my hands." As an industry, we cannot stick our heads in the sand. As growers, we need to lobby for our seed industry and trust that our processors are doing the same for the rest of the industry.

On the local front, the south continues to keep its eye on Mother Nature. With a relatively dry, warm, open winter the accumulated snowpack is still not where it needs to be. It started out relatively well in November, but the past couple months have not been conducive to making water for spring runoff. February to April are traditionally our biggest snow months so we have lots of time to make up for lost ground. As the calendar soon flips to February, the North American processing industry jumps into contract discussions with their respective processors, with both feet. Every year presents a whole different global scenario and all of this factors into the work that is required to reach an amicable settlement. Although the PGW growers have already reached their settlements, the rest of North America has a lot of work in front of them. The outcome and success of these annual discussions not only affects the livelihood of our process growers, but it also affects what our seed growers do, in some cases for many years to come. This whole process takes a lot of time and patience, two of the finer qualities of contract negotiations.

The spring is traditionally when many of growing areas host their annual conferences. Last week, a number of growers and industry attended the Idaho Potato Conference. This week growers have the option of attending the Washington/Oregon Potato Conference or Manitoba Potato Days. Regardless of what you choose to attend there is always opportunity to learn something new.

Until next month,

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PGA Growers, Board & Staff taking in Potato Expo in Orlando



One of the hot topics at this year's event was the potential trade tariffs between Canada and the US and how this may affect our industry. If I have been asked once, it has been a hundred times, how will this affect the Alberta potato industry? My answer has been the same since the first time I was asked, "I don't know what this may or may not look like. We cannot live in fear of something that is only rhetoric at this time. If and when it happens this industry and everyone else will have to come up with a solution to deal with

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## GOV'T RELATION - POLICY / SEED UPDATE - Stacey Bajema



The seed crop is tucked away safely for the season. There are some shipments headed over the border, but we are still another month away from shipping to really pick up. Growers are busy talking with customers. As an industry, we highly encourage customers to come down to the farms and put eyes on their seed for the upcoming planting season. Keeping an open dialogue between the seed grower and commercial grower is essential for a smooth shipping/ planting season.

Many Alberta seed growers will also be travelling through the winter months to various conferences and shows to network with their customers. Idaho, Washington and Manitoba all have great shows and opportunities for learning in January. If you haven't had the opportunity yet, we highly recommend putting these shows in your calendar for next year.



Completing potato inspections in Hawaii

I recently had the opportunity to head down to Twin Bridge Farm on the island of Oahu, for our 2024 Western Canada Post Harvest test program. This program is important to catch any disease issues that could be in a seed lot before shipping, and is important to meet the certification requirements of some of our trading partners in various US states. This program would not be possible without the help of ES Crop Consult, CFIA, Phyto Diagnostics Laboratory including various volunteers from the western provinces.

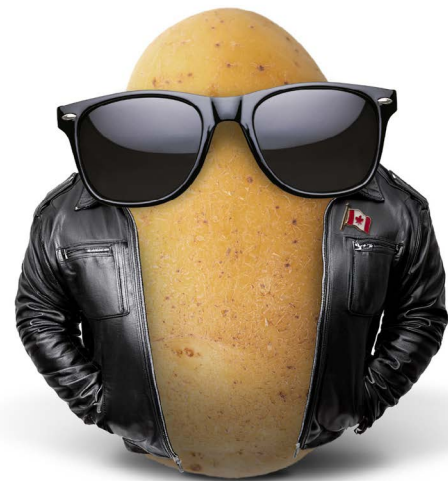
On the policy side, possible tariffs on US exports are weighing heavy on the minds of Alberta potato growers. We have very strong partnerships with our neighbors to the south with a highly integrated supply chain, whether you are talking processing, fresh or seed potatoes. A 25% tariff on US exports will be debilitating for the potato industry and the Potato Growers of Alberta continue to advocate on growers' behalf to try to mitigate potential impacts.

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### Blast From the Past

1990, Jim Visser, Alberta Marketing Board Director promoting Alberta seed potatoes at tradeshow in Moses Lake, Washington



## Hey there, Spud.

Are you looking for higher-yielding, disease-free potatoes? Alberta has you covered. Our cold climate, long summer days and cool evenings deliver the vigorous seed you're after.

Chill with us.

Seed Directory

[albertapotatoes.ca](http://albertapotatoes.ca)



## AG RELATIONS UPDATE - Rebecca Wieler



On January 17th, 2025, the University of Lethbridge hosted a Potato Research Symposium. This event was split into two sessions. The first was oral presentations from a variety of researchers from the University of Lethbridge, as well as Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The second was a poster session featuring student presentations and an opportunity to network.

The first presentation by Scott Gillespie discussed soil health highlighting the importance of soil cover, living roots and biodiversity, including soil health practices and their practical application in the Southern Alberta region.



Dr. Larry Flanagan presented on the variation in crop water use efficiency among cultivars of potatoes. The objective of his study was to test for variation in leaf-level and crop level water use efficiencies among eight cultivars of potatoes that are grown in southern Alberta. Results indicated that there were no significant differences among cultivars for *leaf-level* water use efficiency, however significant differences were observed among cultivars for *crop level* water use efficiency.



Muhammad Subhan Shafique presented on examining fungicide efficacy against powdery scab of potatoes in Alberta. Powdery scab is caused by the soil-borne plasmodiophorid pathogen *Spongospora subterranea* f. sp. *subterranea*, which causes root galls and tuber skin blemishes, plus serves as a vector for the potato mop top

virus. A field trial was conducted throughout three growing seasons across various sites to evaluate the efficacy of five in-furrow chemical treatments provided by Syngenta. No significant differences in total tuber yield were observed among treatments in any of the varieties. These results highlight variations in treatment efficacy based on cultivar and disease manifestation.

Joseph St. Louis discussed using plant growth promoting products to minimize the negative impacts of defoliation on potato plants. This project examined whether plant growth promoting can either prevent damage due to defoliation or improve recovery. Simulated hail damage was done by

manually defoliating potato plants during the growing season. Potato plants defoliated during the potato bulking showed the greatest negative impact, as measured by tuber yield and quality.

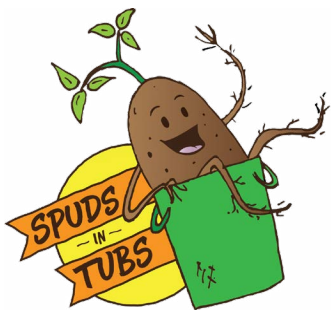
The last presentation by Dr. Jonathan Neilson discussed the studies examining environmental impacts, genetic screening or agronomic management practices focused on in-field and at-harvest measurements but often do not assess tuber storability. Dr. Neilson provided an update on methods to assess potato tuber quality with a focus on seed and processing markets and how they can be incorporated into crop and storage management on farms.

Along with the presentations, the poster sessions included the following:

- National Potato Variety Trials
- Minimizing Shrink Loss in Potatoes in Storage
- Non-Destructive Quality testing of Potatoes Using NIR Hyperspectral Imaging and Machine Learning
- Molecular identification of pathogens in potato plants with disease symptoms
- Identification and Characterization of *Alternaria* Species from Airborne spore samples in Southern Alberta
- Plant Regeneration from leaf Protoplasts Isolated from Cultivated Potato
- Variation in Crop Water Use-Efficiency Among Cultivars of Potato
- Assessment of the Efficacy of Fungicide Applications on
- Powdery Scab of Potato in Alberta: A field Evaluation
- Potato Pest Monitoring Program: Early Detection of *Phytophthora Infestans* Spores using Spore Traps
- Potato Pest Monitoring Program: Potato Psyllids
- Diagnostics of *Phytophthora Infestans* from airborne spore samples and in vitro cultures
- Production of uniformly transformed potato plants expressing various combinations of host defense peptides
- Diversity of Soil Nematodes from Irrigated Agricultural Regions of Southern Alberta, Canada
- Exploring the Microscopic World: Identification of Plant-associated nematodes with light and scanning electron microscopy
- Potato Blackleg in Alberta

This event showcased Potato Research by the University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge Polytechnic, as well as Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. It was a great opportunity to learn and network with the Potato Researchers in the Province.

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## SPUDS IN TUBS 2025 KICKING OFF

Schools from Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Lethbridge, Taber and Medicine Hat and surrounding areas will be picking up their Spuds In Tubs kits next week to begin the 2025 program. Almost 4000 students will be participating this year and the

PGA and Ag For Life organizations are excited and anticipating another great growing experience. Thank you to our incredible sponsors for your donations that go toward the program, allowing no cost to schools.

The Spuds In Tubs Program began in British Columbia several years ago by a potato producer in BC, Bill Zylman, now the Canadian Potato Council Chairman. He came up with the idea to teach kids in schools about agriculture and giving them an opportunity to grow potatoes in tubs. He reached out to BC Ag In The Classroom and

they worked out all the details to run the program and it's been a huge success every since. He just lights up everytime it comes up in conversation. With the help from BC AITC, Alberta adopted the same program last year.

Spuds In Tubs is geared toward grades 3-9 students. The learning outcomes fall into the Alberta education curriculum, within many subjects and grade levels, such as science, biology, health and english to name a few. The goal is to connect students to agriculture through this hands-on experience and give them the eyes to see where their food comes from. We are fortunate to have a potato grower to participate in virtual tours on his farming operation throughout the 4-5 months of the program to help students understand more indepth about the farming aspect and ask any questions they may have. We're all looking forward to a successful Spuds In Tubs year!

- Deb Brewin, Communications & Promotions Director



L-R: Cody and his staff from Edmonton Potato Growers packing facility helping us bag the seed potatoes. Trina and Deb from the Potato Growers of Alberta, Kaisha and Stephanie from Ag For Life organization getting the teacher kits ready for delivery

### THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

#### MCCAIN FOUNDATION

**RUSSET SPONSORS:** ALBERTA POTATO INDUSTRY ASSOCIATES, EDMONTON POTATO GROWERS, INDEPENDENT CROP INPUTS, OLD DUTCH FOODS, SIMPLOT, CAVENDISH FARMS, LAMB WESTON, WORDMAN FARMS LTD., MIYANAGA FARMS LTD., SLM SPUD FARMS LTD, FW SEED POTATOES

**TUBER SPONSORS:** GRASSY LAKE POTATO CO., JAKECO HOLDINGS

**Seed potatoes donated by EPG**  
**Fertilizer donated by ICI**

Thanks to all the participating greenhouses:  
Salisbury Greenhouses (Edmonton)  
Parkland Nurseries & Garden Centre (Red Deer)  
Bluegrass Nursery & Garden Centre (Calgary)  
Green Haven Garden Centre (Lethbridge)  
Sunnyside Nursery (Taber)  
Windmill Garden Centre (Medicine Hat)



Connecting Students  
to Agriculture

# FROM THE OFFICE

## FEBRUARY IS...



### Potato Lovers Month

#potatoloversmonth



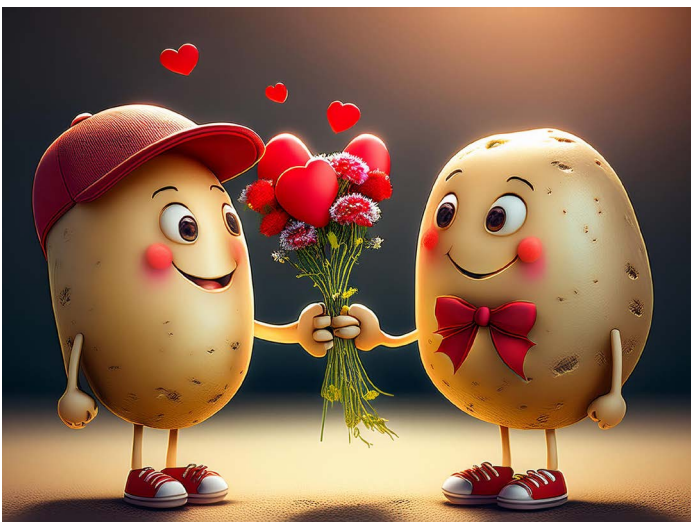
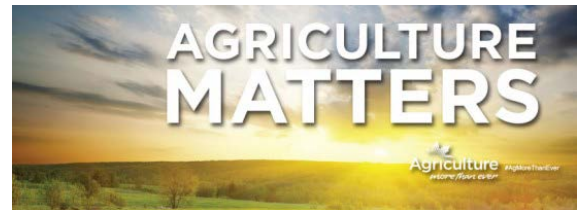
## CANADA'S AGRICULTURE DAY

Let's celebrate the food we love

### FEBRUARY 11, 2025

Mark your calendars and join our vibrant community, engage in food and agriculture conversations, and help spread the word across Canada with the hashtag #CdnAgDay.

Let's celebrate the hardworking people who bring us the food we love and the essential contributions of agriculture to our nation's prosperity and well-being!



The Happy Potato Showdown sponsored by the Little Potato Company and hosted by Chef RJ Harvey, RDN, CEC, Culinary Director, Potatoes USA, and Aurora Hollenbeck, MS, CCMS, Executive Sous Chef, Potatoes USA at Potato Expo 2025

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When you think potatoes...think Alberta





## MEMBERSHIP

The Alberta Potato Industry Association is composed of individuals from various areas of business, all of whom work with, and alongside, the potato growers in Alberta. Formed in 1990, the APIA facilitates in the networking with growers at events such as the Burgers N Beans, the Alberta Potato Conference Trade Show, and the Annual PGA Golf Tournament. We are very excited to be celebrating 35 years of partnership with the growers this year!

If you are interested in becoming a member, please send an email to [apiamemberships@gmail.com](mailto:apiamemberships@gmail.com). Memberships will be sent out at the end of the year to last years' members, as well as those interested this year.

### LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP RECIPIENTS

**The following individuals are recognized for their long-standing contribution to the APIA and have been awarded a Lifetime Membership to our association:**

Corah, Chuck  
Gash, Brian  
Gouw, Arie

Hacker, Bill  
Jensen, Wayne  
Kaiser, Dave

Mitchell, Peter  
Mrak, Tony  
Nelis, Jacques

Oikawa, Tricky  
Stewart, Russ  
Sandberg, Phil

**The following individuals are members in good standing of the APIA for the 2025 calendar year:**

Alcock, Tony  
Aleman, Mike  
Bauman, Gerald  
Blaine, Justin  
Bos, Tim  
Brehaut, Randy  
Cabernet, Courtney  
Coker, Mike  
Day, Carol  
DeHaan, Jeff  
Draper, Derrick  
Duell, Michael  
Dykstra, Ray  
Fletcher, Blake  
Fletcher, Bruce  
Fletcher, Derrick

Garos, Dirk  
Glas, Cobie  
Goertzen, Nathan  
Gratton, Geraldine  
Gratton, Lawrence  
Haacke, Aaron  
Haan, Hartger  
Hanlon, Brendon  
Iwan, Josh  
Janssen, Tom  
Keys, Scott  
Klassen, Greg  
Konynenbelt, Marlin  
Kwiatkowski, Ryan  
Laaveg, Chris  
Leffers, Joel

Lyczewski, Laurie  
MacDonald, Mike  
Mackinnon, Kevin  
Marshall, Robin  
Meier, Whit  
Menkveld, Andrew  
Michielsen, Frank  
Molenaar, Reegan  
Nelis, Brian  
Nelubowich, Adam  
Nikles, Brendan  
Nyborg, Bruce  
Pickles, Taunya  
Pieters, Kristof  
Pluta, Denine  
Quinn, Dean

Quinton, Justin  
Quiring, Cassidy  
Ritchie, Mike  
Russell, Jessie  
Schuppler, Steve  
Slomp, Harry  
Sorensen, Martin  
Steidley, Cory  
Sydoryk, Terry  
Van Eedan Petersman, Lloyd  
Visser, Daniel  
Vossepoel, Adam  
West, TJ  
Wilson, Barb  
Wynker, Sara