

Report from the
GREENHOUSE COMMITTEE
To the 88th Annual General Meeting of the
CANADIAN HORTICULTURAL COUNCIL
Fairmont Château Frontenac, Québec City, Québec
March 5, 2010

**To the President and Members of the
Canadian Horticultural Council**

We are a new Canadian Horticultural Council committee; our first meeting was during the 2009 Annual General Meeting. We thank the CHC for the opportunity to form our committee. This past year the Greenhouse Committee has been very busy, working together nationally under the CHC umbrella to ensure the collective success and sustainability of the Canadian greenhouse production sector. We had four meetings, one in-person, and numerous conference calls since CHC's last AGM.

Season Overview

Profitability in greenhouse vegetables has declined over the past several years and there has been little increase in production area. The Canadian dollar at or near par has hit hard in an industry that is heavily involved in exporting. Our profit margins are closely tied to energy costs; there has been a great deal of volatility in that arena in the past few years but 2009 offered some stability. Globalization is also a very major issue. In previous years we have battled for price with products imported from countries such as Mexico with lower production costs, 2009 brought a new wrinkle. Dutch product has always been a factor in our markets but in 2009 they came on cheap and strong. At every turn there was lower priced Dutch product, particularly peppers. Canadian greenhouse product continues to be known for product quality, especially with the implementation of food safety programs, including CHC's Canada GAP, and the use of biological pest controls.

Phytosanitary Issues

Pepper and tomato marketing have both been affected by pest regulatory issues, bringing a new focus to the Greenhouse Committee work. In October the U.S. found false codling moth, a restricted pest, on a shipment of fresh peppers from the Netherlands. The U.S. immediately banned all peppers from the Netherlands. They further required that all pepper shipments from Canada be accompanied by an industry-issued certificate of origin declaring the peppers were grown in Canada or from an approved country. Throughout this issue, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency worked very closely with the greenhouse stakeholders to protect the Canadian industry. They required phytosanitary certificates for peppers from the Netherlands and liaised with the U.S. authorities to keep Canadian marketers moving product into the U.S.

Early this year the CFIA imposed import restrictions on tomatoes to protect the greenhouse industry from another pest, *Tuta absoluta* (tomato leaf miner). There are a couple of dozen countries where the pest is known to occur and they are all now required to provide phytosanitary certificates and declarations when exporting to Canada.

The CFIA initiated a comprehensive Pest Risk Assessment some time ago to evaluate overall pest risk to greenhouses. With the two pest issues we faced this past year, it is now apparent that there should be an increased sense of urgency with this assessment. The CFIA's response to pests and possible introductions is based on the Pest Risk Assessment so it is essential that the assessment be relevant and current. The CFIA worked very closely with our industry and the CHC in addressing the two pest issues and has committed to establishing a broad national strategy for greenhouse pest management. We look forward to creating a joint CHC greenhouse, CFIA and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada task force. It is a tremendous advantage to have representatives from the various government sectors at the table as it allows us to move ahead with the knowledge that everyone has access to the same information.

The CHC Greenhouse Committee extends thanks to the CFIA and looks forward to continued co-operative efforts aimed at keeping the greenhouse sector safe from foreign pests.

Research

The Greenhouse Committee, through the chair, participated in the CHC Science Committee. We are advancing a project entitled *Carbon Dioxide Enrichment in Greenhouse Crop Production using Scrubbed Flu Gas from Biomass Combustion* for consideration in the science cluster proposal.

The Year Ahead

Throughout this year we worked to establish our national priorities and will direct our energies in the coming year to: (not in rank order)

- a national financial protection program - PACA like
- a national definition of a greenhouse
- labour - liaise with the CHC labour committee concerning the low skilled worker program and evaluate results from ongoing consultation and research projects
- alternate energy strategies such as horticultural waste, biomass and biogas
- country of origin labelling - particularly labelling of loose fruit
- refine and tailor business risk management programs
- prices at retail, market information
- support the CFIA in developing a national strategy for greenhouse pest management

In closing, I would like to thank all the members of the Greenhouse Committee and their resource staff for their participation and commitment to the advancement of the industry. I would also like to express my appreciation, on behalf of the Greenhouse Committee to the dedicated team at CHC for their help in defending the interests of the greenhouse sector.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Delli Santi
Chair, Greenhouse Committee
March 5, 2010