

Report from the
VEGETABLE COMMITTEE
To the 89th Annual General Meeting of the
CANADIAN HORTICULTURAL COUNCIL
Westin Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario
March 11, 2011

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

In 2010, the fresh produce sector experienced relatively good yields in Eastern Canada. In the spring, warm temperatures allowed producers to harvest 10 to 15 days earlier than usual, depending on the variety. At the beginning of July, however, extreme heat, followed by heavy rain, adversely affected the yield of some products, in particular leafy vegetables. Some producers suffered crop losses of close to 20% on average, which were nonetheless offset by consistently good price levels. In Western Canada, yields were generally reported as average, in a context of cold and very rainy weather.

Labour

The impact of successive minimum-wage hikes is beginning to be felt by producers in their business costs. For example, in Québec, the minimum wage has risen by 30% since 2003, and the other provinces have seen similar increases. During this same period, the consumer price index has risen by 13%. Such conditions, in addition to the loonie's parity with the US dollar, threaten to jeopardize the development and financial situation of our farm businesses over the short term. We must find creative solutions, and hope the government will introduce programs aimed at stimulating technological development to preserve our farms' competitiveness.

Price committees

The Association des jardiniers maraîchers du Québec, with the assistance of the Conseil québécois de l'horticulture, has set up two new price recommendation committees for lettuce and celery. Their purpose is to determine a floor price to be respected. This initiative had a positive impact, particularly on the price of celery, as the committee was able to contact a stakeholder in Ontario and Michigan. This action resulted in acceptable prices being maintained in Eastern Canada and the US Eastern Seaboard.

Canadian Agri-Science Cluster for Horticulture

Unfortunately, neither of the two projects on vegetables put forward in the framework of the Canadian Agri-Science Cluster for Horticulture was accepted. These projects, whose objective was to find a solution to the major problem of infestation by the cabbage maggot and onion maggot, were not approved by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada for reasons that remain obscure.

In closing, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the dedicated team at the national office of the Canadian Horticultural Council for defending the interests of the horticultural sector in Ottawa.

Respectfully submitted,

André Plante
Chair, Vegetable Committee
March 11, 2011