

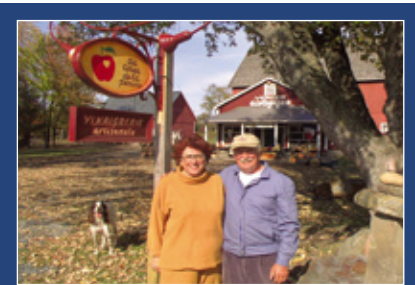


A MESSAGE

from the President of the Canadian Horticultural Council

Steve Levasseur
CHC President (2009-10)

“ Future demographics point to the need to double global food production by 2050, if not sooner. This is a challenge our sector is ready to take on and contribute to. ”



Steve and his wife, H el ene, live in Frelighsburg, Que. where they cultivate more than 10,000 apple trees for fresh market and value added products.

The opportunity to be involved in the launch of this new publication is indeed exciting and well aligned with the Canadian Horticultural Council’s goal and desire to strengthen communications with members, allied industry partners, policy and decision-makers, regulators and beyond. The goal is to ensure all are abreast of the issues so as to maintain and create new awareness of our challenges and collectively seek solutions.

Of course, we will also be looking to promote our success stories...and there are many of them.

Fresh Thinking — the choice of title speaks for itself. As producers it is who we are and what we do. It is our commitment.

OUR SECTOR

Over the past three years, considerable effort has been dedicated to developing a communication tool that showcases the importance of our sector in Canada’s agriculture and agri-food industry.

The diversity of our over 100 fruit and vegetable crops, some 20,000 producers, as well as the vast and varied geographic distribution from coast to coast play a key role in land use, job creation and prosperity. We are in the food business as well as the health business and are a major contributor to the Canadian economy, a fact we need to highlight to our politicians, both provincial and federal. We are indispensable players in land sustainability and we must not be afraid to say so.

Another undeniable aspect of our presence on the land is our contribution to food self-sufficiency. Future demographics point to the need to double global food production by 2050, if not sooner. This is a challenge our sector is ready to take on and contribute to. We will, however, need to dedicate considerable investment, both in terms of financial support and research and innovation. To succeed, we will need to rely on the commitment and contribution of our governments as well as our own ingenuity and succession planning.

Over the past few months, we have had numerous opportunities to share our concerns, and in some instances solutions, with policy makers. Some of these concerns are impeding our development and, if we are to successfully resolve the challenges mentioned above, a new partnership must be defined. Discussions in recent months with government officials provide a glimmer of hope. However, to guarantee this partnership, we look to secure a strong commitment from our Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Gerry Ritz.

A final aspect I would like to address is the possibility of a partnership with Health Canada to ensure our ability to promote horticultural products by way of health claims and qualified statements. Recent discussions have indicated this may be possible. Remember that we are in all likelihood the only sector which can say “Eat more — no problem!” Health claims would also enable us to attract new members and consolidate our membership base, because I am convinced that all of the above can only be achieved with a united, consistent and credible presence.

The theme of this, our 88th Annual General Meeting is Stronger Together. The CHC’s mission has stood firm since 1922... A commitment to advance the growth and economic viability of horticulture by encouraging cooperation and understanding to build national consensus on key issues so as to deliver unified and clear representation. There is no question in my mind that we are, and will continue to be... Stronger... Together. We’re counting on you!

