Panel Discussion

Fred Dollar–Kentdale Farms Organic Produce, North Winslow, PEI

Kentdale Farms started as a dairy farm back in the early 1970s, and we continued in the dairy business for 25 years until we came to a point where we had to either expand the dairy operation or move on and do something else. In 1999 we did that, but back in 1993 or 1994 we started an ecological way of farming. We cut back on our fertilizer use and spray use on our grain fields, and we moved on and the transition from conventional to organic wasn't a problem because our hay fields had been out in hay long enough that we didn't have a heavy residue of chemicals on our land. So in 1999 we started the transition to organic and started dabbling with some organic potatoes and moved forward from there. In 2001 we were certified with MCOG and then in 2003 we switched over to OCPP in Ontario.

We farm about 275 acres and work on a one in four or five year rotation, that being from hay to wheat to potatoes back to wheat and hay. Each year that there is wheat there, we underseed with a triple mix. We started last year, and I think it's going to work well for us. After the wheat is harvested (that's milling wheat), we go in with a chisel plow. Most of what we're doing is trial and error, and if it doesn't work, we'll have to try something else. We've grown about 50 acres of potatoes the last couple of years, and last year we applied for seed certification on our three varieties, and they all passed the field tests and the virus tests with negative virus levels in all three varieties. We market mostly in the table stock market on the wholesale level and at the farm gate.

I guess we do have not too serious a problem with the Colorados. We have some, but not that they're a problem.

Q: What variety of milling wheat do you grow?

A: It's Barrie; I think it's Barrie.

Q: Do you have livestock and use your own manure?

A: No, we haven't had any livestock for the last couple of years, and what we're doing is probably a green manure. We leave the hay in the field and spread it and hope for the best.

Q: Do you use animal manure?

A: We have had manure, and we usually put that on in the fall and then you have less weeds from a fall application rather than spring. We started doing it in the spring; we used to have a lot of lamb's quarters pretty near as tall as I am and I tried putting it on in the fall and plowing it under. Very few weeds.

Q: Can you get uncontaminated manure?

A: It's hard to.

Q: Are there any sources of N other than legumes and manure?

A: We use liquid sea weed, a foliar spray of liquid seaweed.

Q: No blood meal or kelp meal or anything?

A: No.

Q: Can you comment on why you're growing those particular varieties?

A: Of potatoes? Not really. Just that we grow a round white which is Superior which was readily available and handy and which is a reasonably good potato. We grow a red skin; we started with Chieftain. I didn't like them, so we switched last year to Dark Norland Red, and I think they're a better potato but they're still hard to handle, I think. The one I like the best is the Goldrush–it's a russet variety. They're easier to handle and they're a lovely potato to eat and the demand for them is reasonably good. There are a lot of people that like the red ones too.

Q: What makes them difficult to handle? Bruising?

A: The red ones? Yes, they seem easier to bruise. Thin skin. You've got a bit of *Rhizoctonia* or silver scurf, they show up. They look alright when they're dry, but when you wash them it shows up.