THE POPULARITY OF PLANT PROTEIN WAS A HIGHLIGHT OF THE PULSE AND SPECIAL CROPS CONFERENCE

The 2019 Pulse and Special Crops Conference held in Montreal attracted visitors from all over the globe to Canada as it does each year.

This year, Alberta Pulse Growers (APG) was the only provincial grower organization that was able to send farmers to participate in the event. APG sent Chair Don Shepert and Director Greg Stamp, while Pulse Canada supported its Chair, Allison Ammeter, who is also an APG Director.

Plant protein was an overarching theme for this year's conference in August. Besides the typical trade discussions on market outlooks, economic outlook and global crop condition topics, the Canadian Special Crops Association (CSCA) wove in messages about the plant protein opportunities and participating companies who are active in the plant protein market (and some who are just looking to enter). The connection on the plant protein side of things this year was not just about accessing the market trend of using plant proteins but also discussing the value of using pulses and capitalizing on Canada's unique and positive attributes of plant protein from a sustainability perspective.

"The Pulse and Special Crops Convention is always an important meeting place for trade and other pulse industry participants to meet, network, and learn," said Ammeter, who brought greetings from Pulse Canada. "With the worldwide trend towards more plant-based foods, and the use of plant proteins in foods, there was an extra buzz this year among all participants. Add in the extreme pressures the industry has faced in the past couple years due to market access issues, and the necessity of working together and being well informed was obvious. For me, as a producer and a member of the board of Pulse Canada, I found myself very proud of the high quality of presenters and information presented, and very excited about the future of the pulse industry in Canada!"

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois (Canadian Agri-Food Foresight Institute), Dr. Chris Marinangeli (Pulse Canada), and Samara Foisy (Loblaws) formed a panel to discuss plant protein opportunities and how businesses are adapting to the trend, which many key food businesses view as more than a fad. The discussion acknowledged that there are still logistical problems to work out, such as the location of products in the typical grocery store: Are they in their own section or integrated into the familiar sections where dairy milks and plant milks are side-by side on shelves? Even what to call the products is still being discussed, such as can plant protein products be called meat or yogurt? Regulations continue to hold back the innovation on product development and all panelists agreed that updating the Canadian regulations on protein would be a great step because current regulations on protein equivalency is tested using a protocol that is not in favour with many other countries, and Canada is behind on this. Consumers are looking to be flexible in their diet choices and many are becoming flexitarians by adding additional plant-based options more frequently. These shifts have the potential to

impact health and the environment in a positive manner.

A processing panel also discussed the opportunities that Pulse Industries Canada and Buhler can provide to processors.

Meanwhile, an official from India updated the convention membership on how his country has progressed since the policy on food security was announced in 2017 and India's goal of being food sufficient. Mr. Dharmendra, Additional Secretary and Financial Adviser, department of Consumer Affairs Ministry of Food and Public Distribution, responsible for supply management of pulses and oilseeds, reported that the minimum support price mechanism triggered increased pulse production by Indian farmers. He highlighted the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between India and the Global Pulse Confederation that will focus on increased information sharing on production, consumption research, promotion and trade, joint collaboration, global crop plantings, and harvests, as well as focus on scientific warehouses and other logistics.

The convention also included specific market outlooks for the various pulses grown.

For the Field Pea Market Outlook, a panel of industry members and market analyst Chuck Penner of Leftfield Commodity Research focused on where the yellow and green pea markets were headed. They noted that Canada's new reality is approximately three million metric tonnes of production, and movement for this past year was generally consistent throughout the year. There is an expectation that this will be the same for 2019-20. China (predominantly feed growth), Bangladesh (surprising and unknown to where these shipments are actually headed) and India were the key export locations for movement of Canadian product. The Black Sea region is becoming a competitor in markets, but the area has been hit with excessive heat and production will be down. The US and EU are seeing recovered production and are expected to have decent crops. Total Canadian exports will likely be 3.5 million metric tonnes. The panel explained that domestic uses in North America are still 'muddy' and hard to nail down statistically.

The main message of the Dry Bean Market Outlook was that the dry bean market is flat. Cindy Brown from Chippewa Valley Beans assessed the market taking three years of data from each market class and basically all market classes are flat, and the market is in balance. Viterra provided commentary about the western prairie production being good to very good so far. North American crop had some late seeding challenges, a Hensall Coop representative reported.

Another panel discussed the chickpea markets across the globe. They determined that Canadian chickpea carryover is approximately 144,000 tonnes. The US focuses strictly on domestic use and has increased its stocks slightly. Russian chickpea exports have increased and a full surge is anticipated. The Mexican crop has seen a cutback in acreage, but is still having a record year. It is anticipated that the Canadian acreage for 2019-20 is about 370,000 acres with Saskatchewan leading a larger acreage total over the past 10 years.

A highlight of the conference was the presentation of the CSCA Industry Appreciation Award to Tony and Frances Gaudet of Belle Pulses, which is a licensed APG dealer.

To wrap up the conference, a Port of Montreal tour was offered by one of the significant sponsors to the conference. Ray-Mont Logistics hosted a group of conference participants on a tour and reception on the last day. APG's Greg Stamp was pleased to participate in the tour and share what he learned.

The Port of Montreal is a government body that runs like a private business to manage the port. There are four people who work for the port leasing properties and doing upkeep. Any profits are put back into the port facilities and expansions or upkeep. A Port of Montreal representative commented that the Canada-European Union (EU) Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) agreement resulted in refrigerated containers increased 400% both incoming and outgoing from Europe, Stamp noted.

The tour included visiting CanEst, a port terminal that was resurrected after not being used. It has 95 silos and can fill 100 containers a day of bulk grain, including soybeans, pulses and grains from the west, and organics. CanEst has bulk to bulk, bulk to container, and bulk to truck capacity.

Participants in a tour of Ray-Mont Logistics learned that this company is a freight-forwarding company and container filler. They transfer from bulk rail or bagged or bulk product from container to container.

"Ray-Mont was very interesting," Stamp said. "For example, they never put lentils or grains in storage silos. If it comes off a bulk rail car or bulk from container, it goes into a filling bin. It then gets put in 50 kg bags and loaded in a container and stacked for later shipping positioning. Or it may be loaded bulk into a container that's stood up vertically to get the max weight in. Other times they will offload bags by hand (one person on each end of a fancy conveyor belt machine moving 50 kg bags) from a van truck or 53-foot container into a 20-foot container. Ray-Mont is also planning on expanding. This style of flexibility allows very nimble and precise shipping to end users."