

Atlantic Canada Cranberry Industry Update – March 2010

Summary:

Over the last fifteen years, cranberry production in Atlantic Canada has increased substantially and the region as a whole has proven itself to be a viable and attractive new development region for this crop. Production surveys for the 2009 crop suggest that there are more than 54 commercial growers in the region producing a crop in excess of 100,000 barrels from approximately 750 producing acres of cranberry beds (Table 1). Average yields are improving and further gains are expected on this front. Significant price drops over the last year have reduced the overall crop value but it is still nearly a \$6 million (farmgate) contributor to the agricultural economy for the region. This contribution will continue to grow in the coming years with significant acreage increase expected, particularly in New Brunswick and Newfoundland.

Table 1. Atlantic Canada Cranberry Production and Marketing Survey for 2009 Crop

Variable	Cranberry Production Survey for Atlantic Canada in 2009				TOTAL
	NS	NB	PEI	NFLD	
No. of growers	17	22	15	-	>54
Producing acres	200	454	74	24	752
Yield (bbls)	22,250	71,000 ^a	6,000	3,550	102,800
Yield/acre (bbls)	112	156	81	148	137
Unit Price (\$)	\$63	Variable – in low range	\$40 - processed \$236 - fresh	-	-
Value (\$)	1,400,000	4,000,000 ^b	279,886	-	>5,679,886

a – average of old and new producing beds

b – includes processing

Nova Scotia Cranberry Industry Update

Prepared by: John Lewis, M.Sc., P.Ag.
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Since 1996, Nova Scotia's cranberry acreage has grown from 46 acres to a reported 280 acres in 2009 and will continue a gradual expansion over the next few years. Of the reported 280 acres in 2009, only 200 acres were reported to be in production. The large

nonproducing fraction is in large part due to a significant amount of newly planted acreage in 2008 and 2009 but is also due in part to the loss of two growers and their associated beds being left unmanaged and unharvested in 2009.

As of 2009, there were 17 producers reporting a crop of 22,250 bbls from 200 harvested acres. Of this production, about 20% is sold to processors while 80% is sold to fresh or frozen whole berry packers. About 5% of the latter fraction is used for various value-added products produced in the province. Average first transaction price for the 2009 crop was estimated to be about Cdn \$0.63/lb (weighted for all market categories) and the total value of the crop was calculated to be about \$1.4 million. Production issues noted in 2009 included problems with poor pollination due to a cool wet spring; high cranberry fruitworm pressure; fertility management; and cranberry girdler. One grower also expressed concerns over the new proposed "Wetland Policy" in Nova Scotia which if enacted would have serious implications for his operation.

Despite individual grower successes, average cranberry yields per acre in Nova Scotia are currently not where the industry would like them to be and it is a goal to increase them to levels comparable with other production regions in North America. The average yield has increased steadily from a low of 60 bbls/acre in 2002 to a present high of 112 bbls/acre so this goal is certainly possible. Increasing grower knowledge and experience are keys to this process and events like the biennial Atlantic Cranberry Management Course make this possible. As well, the Nova Scotia Cranberry Growers Association (NSCGA) facilitates information sharing among members with well-attended events like their summer tour. Despite these positives, there are some significant gaps in infrastructure that no doubt contribute to the less than stellar production history in the Province. For example, there are a number of isolated growers in the Province making knowledge and equipment sharing for improved management more challenging. Also, there is a shortage of pest scouting services in the Province and growers continue to struggle with consistent management of the major insect pests including cranberry fruitworm, black-headed fireworm, cranberry girdler, and cranberry tipworm. In time growers will improve their management but it is a slower process than would be possible if adequate scouting services were available.

There has been a modest amount of research support for Nova Scotia's expanding cranberry industry in recent years. Dr. Kenna MacKenzie of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Kentville has conducted valuable research on alternative pollinators (including bumblebees and leaf-cutter bees) in cranberries. As well, Glen Sampson from the Nova Scotia Agricultural College has conducted research on improved weed management and contributed data for minor use registration packages. As well, the NSCGA supports national minor use projects that have led to a number of new product registrations and greater harmonization of pesticide labels between Canada and the USA.

From an extension standpoint, AgraPoint has one specialist (the writer of this report) who is responsible for cranberries as well as the other berry crops in the Province. The broad scope of his responsibilities has challenged his ability to support this developing sector to the level that is required. A number of IPM workshops have been organized and

education support activities such as helping to organize the Atlantic Cranberry Management Course are helpful but more is needed. With this in mind, it is a pleasure to announce that AgraPoint has hired an additional Horticulture Specialist beginning in the spring of 2010 who will have some responsibility for cranberry extension in addition to that provided by the author. Together, they will also offer consulting services in the form of “nutrient management planning” and other grower specific projects.

In conclusion, Nova Scotia’s cranberry industry has grown significantly since 1996 and will continue slow growth over the next several years. It is a unique industry dominated by fresh fruit production although the processing fraction is growing. Higher average yields are an industry priority but slow progress is being made here. Greater research, extension, and consulting (in particular crop scouting services) support are required for more rapid adoption of best management practices and improved yields. However, progress is being made and the industry is generally positive and progressive. Additional extension support is being mobilized to help support this promising sector and there is a sense of optimism for the future.

New Brunswick Cranberry Industry Update

Prepared by: Roger Tremblay P.Ag.
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The New Brunswick cranberry industry has grown tremendously since the construction of new cranberry beds back in 1994. By 1998, the first cranberries were harvested. The high quality of the fruit is due in part from our climate conditions but would not occur without the help of our very knowledgeable New Brunswick cranberry growers.

Total harvest has reached 9 million pound and has been produced by 22 farms. This harvest comes from 454 acres which gives an average of 19,823 lb per acre (average of matured and new producing beds). Some farms have reached over 40,000 lbs per acre!

With two receiving stations in operation in New Brunswick, most of the fruit is now cleaned (wet harvest) before it is sold outside the province. A portion of the crop was harvested with the semi-wet equipment and some was dry harvested. Some of the crop is processed as juice, wine and for the baking ingredient industry. New Brunswick has now added some freezing capacity.

Twenty nine acres of new cranberry beds were planted in the spring of 2009. Depending on the construction undertaken during this winter there could be 200 acres planted in the spring of 2010 (spread across six farms). Some of these are existing farms while others were under construction in 2009. Another 400 acres are expected to be planted in 2011.

PEI Cranberry Industry Update

Prepared by: Chris Jordan, P.Ag.
Berry Crop Development Officer,
PEI Department of Agriculture

- 1) In was anticipated that total production in 2009 would be higher than reported. One grower experienced unexpected frost damage on ten acres and eliminated his crop. A second grower sustained significant damage from cranberry weevil resulting in reduced yields. A third grower continues to struggle with Black Vine Weevil, but has had some success using nematodes as a control measure.
- 2) There are two growers who are actively expanding their acreage, but this expansion is slow.
- 3) The majority of the 2009 crop in PEI was purchased by a local processor.

Newfoundland and Labrador Cranberry Industry Update

Prepared by: Richard Oram, P.Ag.
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Planting in NL

New Planting NL			
Program	2008	Acres Planted	Acres Prepared for Planting 2010
Pre-Commercial Cranberry Project	9	22.	24
GF-W Cranberry Project	0	0	72
CIPD	0	0	43
Total	9	22	139

Production 2008 – 2009 NL

Production 2008 – 2009 NL				
Year	Acres Harvested	Acres Idle or Mowed	Total Production	bbl./Acre
2008	27.5	4.5	383,000	139
2009	24	8	355,000	148

PRE-COMMERCIAL PROJECT

- Proponent – Federation of Agriculture
- Partners – ACOA, DINTRD, DNR, R & D Producer Partners
- Goal – Move research & development sites to commercial size operations
- Status – Development complete – 31 acres planted – 24 ready to plant in 2010

GRAND FALLS-WINDSOR CRANBERRY PROJECT

- Proponent – Town of Grand Falls-Windsor
- Partners – ACOA, DINTRD, DNR, 10 New private Entrants
- Goal – To establish the first cluster of cranberry farms in the Exploits Valley Region.
- Status – Environmental approval and engineering plans have been completed on 10 sites. Design work has been done on 40 acres for each site and most sites have the capacity for much larger developments. Site development has started on all 10 sites and there are a total of 72 acres at various stages of development.

CRANBERRY INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

- Proponent – DNR
- Partners – Potential and existing Newfoundland & Labrador Cranberry Farmers
- Goal – Assist in the development of new cranberry acres; up to 100 acres per year for 5 years. This program provides \$15,000. per acre planted. The participants must construct fields to the standards provided in the program in order to receive this payment.
- Status – 43 acres under construction through this program in 2009-2010.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

- Participation in the weather data project with Dr. Joe Deverna
 - **Status – Year 2 of a multi-year study.**
- Growth of Frozen Plants (A study to monitor the growth rate of plants grown in greenhouses in November through February – stored in freezers until June and planted compared to plants grown as a spring crop and planted.
 - **Status – Year 1 of a multi-year study.**

- Growth Comparison of Cranberry Vine Parent Material (A study which documents the growth rate of cranberry plugs from parent material held in hanging baskets in the greenhouse compared to vines taken from the fields)
 - ***Status – Year 1 of a multi-year study.***