

Organic corn shows yield potential

Beechwood Ag hosted a meeting recently that drew 100 or so organic producers

BY JEFFREY CARTER
Ontario Farmer

Corn is currently among the most profitable organic crops and, according to the experience of organic manager at Beechwood Agri Services, yields can be strong as well.

Andrew St. Pierre tested 14 different varieties representing genetics from Horizon, Pride, Dedell and Maizex at his Waterloo County farm near Haysville last year. Yields ranged from a low of 163 bushels per acre for a 2450 CHU variety to a high of 218 bushels for a 2550 CHU variety.

The site was an old pasture, which provided St. Pierre with an advantage, as did applications of compost and beef manure.

St. Pierre spoke at Beechwood's organic grower meeting attended by about 100 farmers from as far away Windsor in the southwest to the Ottawa area in Eastern Ontario. While Beechwood buys corn, its main business are IP soybeans, both organic and conventional.

"Know what variety you're growing. Know the specs. Beans are being sold by variety; they're being branded," he said.

End users know when they move from one variety to another when food-grade soybeans are being processed. St. Pierre encourages farmers supplying Beechwood to maintain good communications with their buyers, keep different varieties segregated and make sure they take a representative sample if the beans are stored on farm.

Beechwood was offering a 15



Andrew St. Jean: Line up a buyer before planting spelt

cent, organic signing bonus at its grower meeting in Ailsa Craig on April 11.

Prices were listed for organic soft red wheat, corn, soybeans and barley at \$13, \$11, \$20 and \$8.75 per bushel, respectively.

Concerning the spelt market, St. Pierre used the word "awful" to describe the outlook and suggested growers line up a buyer before planting the crop.

With the organic grain and oilseed industry, St. Pierre said there's been a lot of growth and that tests the supply chain's processing capacity. "Everything has to come together to have a cohesive supply chain," he said.

St. Pierre said his family

farm converted to organic production in 1999. He also worked for an organic farmer – Orville Becker – when he was in high school.

Beechwood Agri Services was founded in 1997 by its general manager Paul Kremer and brothers John and Fred O'Neil. The IP soybean market was the original focus but the business has since broadened its mandate to other areas, including organic soybeans and other organic crops including corn, wheat, barley, oats, barley and peas.

It's also expanded its facilities from its single location at Beechwood (south of Nairn) in Middlesex County where soybeans, organic and conventional, are handled. A second location was purchased at Parkhill in 2002 where organic corn is received, dried and stored. The Arkona location acquired in 2009 is a primary storage location for several organic crops.

Beechwood has also been operating a steam flaking mill for corn, barley, oats and wheat at Arkona since 2015. Steam flaking improves gain and feed efficiency when fed to livestock.

Beechwood also sells corn, soybean, wheat and cover crop seed. To learn more, visit the company's website.

Fee instead of compliance proposed

Developers may be able to get off the hook of complying with Species at Risk requirements. They might be able to pay a fee instead. But the proposal apparently does not extend to farmers.

CTV news reports that the Ford government is proposing to create the Species at Risk Conservation Trust to oversee

these charges and put the money toward large-scale measures to protect and recover those species.

Environment Minister Rod Phillips said applicants could pay a regulatory charge instead of completing "some of the more onerous and lengthy requirements of a permit."

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- 1- New Holland 520, manure spreader, top beater, poly floor, good..... \$2,250
- 1- Husky 8'x8", trailer manure pump, 540 pto, all hyd w/ load pipe..... \$12,500
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