ATLANTIC AGROLOGY NETWORK NEWSLETTER

COUNCIL UPDATES

In This Issue:

NBIA - nbia@nsagrologists.nb.ca

Spring is in the air and summer is just around the corner for a new growing season. Since January, the NBIA Council has had monthly conference call business meetings discussing several initiatives and completing ongoing projects. The Communication and Marketing committee has been continuing to do the upgrades and enhancement of our NBIA webpage with the assistance of a hired consultant working together at improving and populating the information and necessary resources. We are looking to see this new page up and running by the summer to enable the members to enjoy and provide information. The Professional Development Committee has also been busy reaching out to members on interest topics to organize events to develop virtually in 2021.

Finally, the NBIA manual has been fully revised and updated and a new exam format and questions have been approved and utilized already to new candidate members in becoming Professional Agrologists.

During our November 2020 AGM, it was suggested by members that funds budgeted but not used for a face-to-face meeting go towards a donation to charity to help the needy. After much research The NB Food Depot Alimentiare Inc. was chosen and approved by Council as the recipient to purchase local food to be distributed to all 60 Food Banks in the Province. A cheque in the amount of $5,000 was presented to them at the beginning of February 2021.

Membership remains consistent with 178 Professional Agrologists, six pending applications and three Articling Agrologists being scheduled in very shortly to write their exam. 79 PD forms for 2020 have been received as of April 1/21.

Our 2021 AGM will be held virtually by Zoom on May 14, 2021. The focus of the AGM will be our general business meeting and to honour our award recipients. At our upcoming AGM, a new council will be determined and a new president will step in my position.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all members a safe and enjoyable upcoming spring and summer and a reminder to please support local as best you can during these challenging and tough economic times.

Nicole Williams, P.Ag.
President

NLIA – NLAgrologists@gmail.com

Because of the continuing Covid situation, the NLIA AGM will be via Zoom again this year. We have changed our AGM date to Monday, April 26th. In the last few months, we have been considering several topics for online presentations which could be offered to our members. Topics will deal mostly with local agricultural innovation and local success stories. The Eastern Newfoundland Science Fair, which was cancelled last year, is going ahead this year but, in a limited format. Projects will be judged for advancement to the Canada Wide Science Fair but, not for awards by any outside organizations. NLIA usually presents an award to the student(s) having the best agricultural project in the Junior Division.

We accepted two new membership applications last year and have two new member applications in progress.

Nick Kelly, P.Ag.
President

NSIA - info@nsagrologists.ca

The Nova Scotia Institute Council has been working on strategic direction to better meet the needs and expectation of our members. Some key areas that we have developed action plans for include: communications plan targeting students, potential members and farmers; improving equity, diversity and inclusions; and, programs. We look forward to the work that will be done in each of these spaces and better supporting our membership.

Coming up, we have our AGM on April 21st. Much like our AGM last year, we will be holding this meeting virtually. If last year was any indication, the online format was a great success as we had turn out from regions of the province we wouldn't normally have members attend from. Look forward to seeing you all there!

Maxine MacLean, P.Ag.
President

PEIIA – info@peiia.ca

The past few months have been relatively quiet for the PEIIA as we have been following the Covid-19 guidelines and limiting gatherings. Council has continued to meet as necessary to keep the regular business of the organization up to date.

The PEIIA held our Annual General Meeting on April 7, 2021. This year's meeting consisted of a several guest speakers followed by our business meeting. We're pleased to share that membership has approved the amendments to our Bylaws to allow for the Technical Agrologist (T.Ag.) designation and membership category. Moving forward, all permit holders in the Institute will be recognized as Technical Agrologists.

A new Council was also elected at the AGM. The PEIIA Council for the 2021-22 year will be as follows:

President - Gwen Vessey, P.Ag.
President Elect – Ryan Barrett, P.Ag.
Past President – Steve Howatt, P.Ag.
Registrar – Mike Nabuurs, P.Ag.
Treasurer – Laura Dickson, P.Ag.
1st Year Councillor – Heather More, P.Ag.
2nd Year Councillor – Lindsey Birch, P.Ag.
Councillor at Large – Michelle Dyment
AIT Representative – Evan MacDonald, AIT

I'd like to wish all Agrologists a safe and prosperous spring season. Here's hoping 2021 will be a little more normal than 2020.

Gwen Corrigan Vessey, P.Ag.
President

JOB POSTINGS

NBIA:

Please frequently check NB Jobs for updates.

NLIA:

Please keep checking the Job Board for new employment opportunities.

NSIA:

Assistant Professor in Agronomy – Dalhousie University Faculty of Agriculture (closing May 1, 2021)

Please routinely the Job Postings page on our website. The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture (NSFA) also has an online Job Board for agriculture related jobs in the province.

PEIIA:

Please frequently check the Careers page on our website for updates.

Agrologists Agronomes CANADA

Job postings nationwide can also be found on the **Agrologists Agronomes Canada (AAC)** Employment Opportunities webpage.

TRENDING TOPIC

Is it Really About Butter?

Dr. Leslie A. MacLaren, P.Ag.
Professor emeritus, Dalhousie University, Truro, NS

Sometimes it feels like current news topics are less about substance and more about disturbing people; the current flurry of articles about palm-oil-based supplements and butter seems designed to upset people about the quality of their food supply rather than to report on real-life happenings. After all, in real life, we haven't determined whether butter is harder – butter varies in palmitic acid content and hardness across brands but we don't know historically whether they are on average harder now than a few years ago. Dairy Farmers of Canada is trying to find out. If it is harder, it will be difficult to tell why.

Although butter is one of our least processed and simplest foods to make, varying the cooling and agitation processes while it's being made can change its hardness. No doubt creameries adjust these parameters to optimize butter fat content and hardness – after all, we want to balance hardness, which makes flakier croissants and slows oxidation leading to rancidity with spread-ability, how smoothly it covers that fresh bun. Since we know milk fat composition varies with season, stage of lactation, and feeding regime, common sense says that creameries have always had to adjust processing conditions to create reasonably consistent hardness in the butter.

From a milking cow health perspective, supplementing with palm-derived supplements is a way to give high-producing cows an energy boost and better balance their diets. For those producers who choose to use these supplements, they are provided at low levels – usually 0.5-2% of diet. Such saturated fat supplements, particularly those very high in palmitic acid (C16:0, the predominant fatty acid in palm oil), bypass the rumen of the cow and are absorbed as a high-quality energy source with less likelihood of disturbing her rumen metabolism than other fat supplements or grain. In addition to helping correct the energy balance of the cow, the supplement increases milk fat production. Milk fat synthesized in the cow's mammary gland consists of dozens of different fatty acids including a naturally high proportion of palmitic acid. A higher availability of palmitic acid from supplements may marginally increase its proportion, however it's been observed that the

cow's biological process for milk synthesis automatically adjusts the balance of other fatty acids in the milk so that overall fluidity is maintained. This is presumably why milk fat does not necessarily increase in hardness with increased palmitic acid intake in so many studies.

The science says that IF butter is harder, it is unlikely to be due to palmitic acid supplements. The negative reaction by some to the idea of supplementation of dairy cows with oil-palm derived products is no doubt disappointing to producers. The producers I've met take it as a personal responsibility to maintain healthy high-producing animals while considering all options to reduce costs, which in turn help keep food costs lower. Feed availability and quality varies from year-to-year, and palm-oil derived supplements are often a good nutritional and economical choice. High producing animals reduce the environmental resources required to produce a unit of food, whether it is milk or meat. On the flip side, some consumers were no doubt surprised to find out that not all animal feed is produced locally, and may be uncomfortable with the use of these products, given the historical controversies around oil palm use from human health and environmental perspectives.

Like saturated fats from animal products, palm oil use in human foods was associated with cardiovascular risk in early epidemiological studies. Nonetheless its use has increased dramatically as it was considered a positive substitution for trans-fatty acids in baked and other processed foods. As the evidence base for fatty acid nutrition effects on human health and longevity continues to broaden and improve, it has become clearer that there are not 'bad' and 'good' fats, and that palm oil and other saturated fats, such as dairy fats, are complex foods that can contribute cardiovascular and other health benefits (for a detailed review, see Visioli and Poli, 2020).

It's fair to say that the words 'palm oil' have negative environmental connotations in the minds of most of us, recalling the sensational reports of the burning of rainforests to make way for palm cultivation in Indonesia and Malaysia that was criticized widely as production was expanded. Production continues to expand. More sustainable production standards have been developed and adopted by many major producers, although criticism and skepticism regarding the certifications remain widespread. Asia is the primary market for oil palm products, so boycotts in North America or Europe are unlikely to affect production even though the oil is used in a huge range of baked goods and processed foods and oil or its derivatives in beauty products, shampoos as well as animal feeds and other industrial processes. The oil palm is extremely productive – so productive that as a high-quality energy crop it is difficult to find alternatives that have less of an environmental footprint, once the plantations are established. For example, soybean oil yields are estimated to be 8-10-fold lower than those from oil palm, and much of the world's soybean production is now in Brazil on land that was previously rainforest. Complicating the story further, the development of this industry has brought jobs and improved prosperity to rural Malaysia and Indonesia (although likely imperfectly) and certainly the industry's growth has increased food calories available for large segments of the population in India and Asia. There is no simple story of environmental rights and wrongs for oil palm production, just as there is no simple story for most of our major crops – I remember the outrage over expanding banana and pineapple plantations, which barely get a mention today. Minimizing the environmental impact of food production is necessary as our population grows, but it is expected that each of us will have different opinions of how to achieve it. Agriculture and food research that includes environmental considerations must be priorities for all countries.

Choice is an important aspect of our abundant food supply in Canada. Consumers working to completely avoid foods that have a connection to the oil palm should consider milk, butter and cheese produced in Canada's milk from grass-fed cows' program or organic dairies. For those consumers that wish simply to reduce foods derived from the oil palm, the Organic Council of Canada describes clearly and concisely why butter is a better option than a popular margarine, Becel. Transparency in food production is required, and I appreciate that our producer organizations in Canada have so quickly responded to the questions raised in social media about palm-derived supplement impacts on butter, and asked farmers to stop using such supplements while research is carried out on butter hardness. It is an interesting question, although I suspect the answer will yield fewer articles than the question did.

Additional information on this topic can be found within the "**Palmitic Acid Q&A**" YouTube video, by Daniel Scothorn, P.Ag. Scothorn Nutrition