



June 2019 Edition

OSCIA PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER

Message from the President – Les Nichols



Welcome to the 2019 crop season. Certainly, as I write this in late May, it would be an understatement to call it a challenging planting season! As of May 24, there is still a significant portion of the corn crop still to plant and very limited if any soybeans in the ground. The winter wheat crop ranges from good to very poor. In true farmer optimism, I am sure the crop will all get planted, hopefully by the time you receive this newsletter!

The program staff at Guelph are very busy working through a significant number of applications to the recent Canadian Agricultural Partnership intake. Applications are still under review, but decisions are anticipated to be released by July 10th. Stay tuned for dates for future intakes of the Partnership. I would certainly encourage you to have a look at the Partnership guidelines that are available on the OSCIA website and have your workshops completed and your projects planned for application on the next intake. I would also encourage you to check the website on a regular basis and sign up to the list serve for updates and announcement of other programs.

(<https://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/upcoming-events/>)

As you look through this newsletter, I encourage you to take notice of the many field days, tours, and other events that your local and regional Soil & Crop Associations are planning for the coming months. These events are always a great learning experience and a great social event.

It is important to remember the real goal and value of OSCIA and your local Soil & Crop organization – “*Farmers actively seeking, testing and adopting optimal farm production and stewardship practices*”. Those on farm trials



Nomination forms available on the OSCIA website – click on “Association/Soil Champion Award”

and field level demonstrations are still the basic and major priority of the membership. We are certainly fortunate to have an excellent group of OMAFRA field staff across the province that support these field projects, but it is the time and effort of our farmer members that make these field level trials and demonstrations happen.

Most important of all as you work through another stressful and challenging crop season is to look after your health, both physically and mentally. Crop & livestock production can be dangerous. Make it a farm priority to work safely regardless of the workload. Taking unsafe shortcuts to try and save a few minutes just isn't worth the risk. Your family is counting on you to come home! Also, your mental health is just as important as your physical well being! Unfortunately, there still seems to be a stigma to asking for help with a mental issue and even more unfortunate that some of us have witnessed what can happen when warning signs are ignored.

Hopefully by the time you get this newsletter all the crop is in the ground and doing well. I look forward to seeing you at upcoming Soil & Crop events this summer. Take time for family and friends and work safely.

Les Nichols, OSCIA 2019 President

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER,
ISSUED ALONGSIDE 11 REGIONAL NEWSLETTERS
AND OMAFRA CROP TALK,
TO UPDATE SOIL AND CROP MEMBERS

In this Issue

- Message from the President
- Changing the Conversation About Mental Health on Canadian Farms
- Don't Miss Out On Your OSCIA Plot Signs
- Crop Advances – On-going Research Resource
- OSCIA Association Development
- OSCIA New Provincial Directors – Welcome!
- OMAFRA Field Crops – Contact Information

Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

1 Stone Road West, Guelph ON N1G 4Y2
Phone: (519) 826-4214 or 1-800-265-9751

Website: www.ontariosoilcrop.org



OSCIA Association Development Update

With several new skills development resources in place and membership engagement noticeably growing, continuing to increase engagement remains a priority for the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA). The positive decisions made by its Board of Directors to offer skills development training is an outcome of listening to what the local associations needed and acting upon it.

The local and regional secretary treasurer training continued in 2018 with a strong focus on addressing many common challenges that were identified through earlier surveys. Participants found the training to be relevant and helpful in fulfilling their roles.

As technology evolves and time becomes the 21st century's most precious commodity, more and more organizations are turning to videos for corporate learning and training. With the support of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (the Partnership), OSCIA is going to do just that.

“Through the Partnership, we are providing the knowledge, tools, and training that the agriculture sector needs to succeed”, said Marie-Claude Bibeau, federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. “The Government of Canada is pleased to invest in accessible and practical methods of delivering resources to support future agriculture leaders in Ontario.”

“Our government is committed to removing barriers for our agri-food sector to grow and be more competitive in the global marketplace,” said Ernie Hardeman, Ontario's Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. “Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, we're supporting industry efforts like this to develop and train the agriculture sector leaders of today and tomorrow.”

OSCIA's goal over the next two years is to create a series of training modules in video format ranging from 5 to 15 minutes in length that target membership recruitment and board governance. While meeting the needs of more than 50 local and regional executive boards, this cost-effective initiative will give the association the ability to keep its volunteers engaged in skills training, provide a consistent message, and accommodate different learning styles.

Through support from the Partnership, OSCIA will receive up to \$35,300 to complete this project.

The training modules will not replace in-person training sessions in all situations but will be used as an additional skills development resource. Local and regional associations will be able to access the training and course content from anywhere, at any time through OSCIA's website. The outcomes of this project are to have the ability to keep volunteers engaged and trained, reach a larger audience, provide a consistent message and have a product that can be effectively utilized in a group setting or by single individuals.

Grassroots is a big part of our organization and it truly was reflected in all the great work that has been done this past year. We are looking forward to continuing our initiatives with the membership and growing as a team.

Written by Brittany Roka, Association Development Advisor

Don't Miss Out on Your OSCIA Plot Signs

To keep the momentum going and grow the brand, OSCIA's 18-inch x 24-inch plot signs are available at a reduced rate of \$5.00 for a limited time. The sign not only proudly displays OSCIA's brand but also allows individuals the ability to customize the sign based on the plot treatment in their field.

For those of you who are interested in purchasing OSCIA's Plot Signs, please contact the Executive Assistant at (519-826-3152) or avandeeper@ontariosoilcrop.org



OSCIA Apparel

OSCIA apparel is available at cost through the provincial office – please contact the Executive Assistant to place your order: (519-826-3152) or avandeeper@ontariosoilcrop.org. All available items, pricing, order form and sizing charts are available on our website:

<https://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/association/association-membership/resources/>



Changing the Conversation About Mental Health on Canadian Farms

Farming is a high stress profession—that’s something we all know. The impact of stressors such as bad weather, fluctuating commodity prices, soaring input costs, and an increased level of scrutiny by consumers who aren’t necessarily well-versed on how their food is produced, can all take a toll on primary producers. But when it comes to understanding how that stress affects the mental well-being of farmers, it’s not something we know a lot about or, quite frankly, talk about. But one researcher at the University of Guelph is changing the conversation, bringing the issue of farmers’ mental health to the forefront.

Dr. Andria Jones-Bitton, an associate professor of epidemiology from the University of Guelph, first became interested in the topic of mental health in Canadian agriculture in 2015, and when she looked at the literature, she realized there hadn’t been much research into this issue. So, she initiated a study that surveyed more than 1,100 farmers from across Canada. Her research showed that farmers were highly susceptible to mental health issues and it was approaching a crisis point.

“The research shows that 45% of farmers report that they have a ‘high level’ of stress,” says Jones-Bitton, who was a guest speaker at the OSCIA’s annual conference. As well, her research showed that farmers rated low in resilience indicators, with more than 2/3 scoring lower than the average US population. “When resilience is low, and stress is high, it can lead to anxiety and depression,” says Jones-Bitton. Her research showed that 58% of farmers report a high level of anxiety and 35% meet the criteria for depression. “We definitely have a problem in agriculture,” she says. “Many are feeling helpless and hopeless.” Poor mental health can negatively impact family, lead to burnout and emotional exhaustion, have an impact on the quality of their work and on the welfare of their livestock, as well it can lead to serious health issues.

Jones-Bitton says resilience is something that can be learned, by first acknowledging that there is a problem. “We need to change the culture of talking about mental health in agriculture.” Integrating practical wellness strategies into a farmer’s daily routine can be very beneficial, says Jones-Bitton. Examples include getting adequate sleep, reaching out to family and friends, eating well, taking a break from the farm, getting involved in off-farm social activities and accepting help from others. But she says it’s also important to emphasize that getting professional help—from a doctor, therapist or psychologist may also be necessary. “It’s an illness, not a character flaw,” she says.

<https://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/association/association-membership/resources/> for resources on Mental Health.

Written by Mary Feldskov, Heartland Regional Communication Coordinator (RCC)

Welcome New Provincial Directors

In 2019 OSCIA welcomed two new Provincial Directors, Paul Hagey (East Central) and Andy van Niekerk (Georgian Central).

Paul Hagey has been the farm manager at White Feather Farms Inc., Durham/Oshawa, for almost 18 years. As the farm manager, Paul grows corn, soybeans and wheat. White Feather Farms is mainly a poultry and grain farm, but they also own and operate a country store in Oshawa. Paul also owns an operates his own small cash crop farm and seed business.



Paul grew up on a farm in Waterloo region and graduated from computer engineering, Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology. Paul is a proud husband and father of four.

Paul took a strong interest in soil health 12 years ago and 2 years later joined the local Durham SCIA. Paul has been an active member of Soil & Crop since he joined, serving as director and president on the local board, as well as Director on the East Central regional board for the past 6 years.

Andy van Niekerk, brings with him over 19 years of agronomic consulting and sales experience, along with 14 years in the financial industry. Combined with his own farm experience, he knows how to help customers improve their bottom line. Andy has recently developed a crop research partnership, testing out new products to be introduced into the Ontario marketplace.



His “farmer-first” attitude in all his dealings and a never-ending curiosity to learn new things gives Andy the edge on delivering new agronomic technology.

Andy is active in local community, serving as director for the local SCIA, as well he is the past president for Georgian Central Region. Andy is also a long-time director on the board of the Innovative Farmers Association of Ontario, serving as their research committee chairperson. He is also an active member of the Ontario Institute of Agrologists (OIA), having served as Chairman of the Huronia Branch, and into his second year on the Board of Directors of the OIA and is the current Treasurer.

Andy’s passion for agriculture is contagious and his willingness to assist far beyond our borders has taken him to Guatemala to assist the less fortunate. As they say, “Ask a busy person, and you’ll get the job done.”

Crop Advances – On-going Research Resources

Looking for applied research reports? Go straight to Crop Advances on the OSCIA website. Crop Advances is compiled annually by OMAFRA field crop specialists in partnership with OSCIA, industry and academics to inform readers of new technologies, results of field trials and research. It's only available on our website and it's the best place to find information on field crop agriculture.

The reports are categorized into one of six categories (canola, cereal, corn, forage, soybeans and soil) and are presented in pdf format. All reports are conveniently organized by year, some going back to 2003. There is also a section on events that gives readers an overview of accomplishments achieved at FarmSmart, SWAC and similar activities.

Find Crop Advances under “Research and Resources” at: <https://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/research-resources/crop-advances/>

OMAFRA Field Crop Specialists – Regional Contacts

As part of a long-standing support arrangement the Ministry appoints a member of the Agricultural Development Branch’s Field Crop Team to assist each of the 11 Soil and Crops regions. Many have a lead specialist and an alternate.

The Ministry personnel are available to the region and local association to generate ideas for Tier One and Tier Two projects and assist with proper design of applied research projects as well as compiling and interpreting findings.

These folks provide a wealth of technical information and experience and bring tremendous benefit to membership activities.

Please find the names and contact information by region provided below.

Written by Andrew Graham, Executive Director

OMAFRA Field Crop Specialists – Regional Contacts

REGION	OMARFA MAIN CONTACT	ALTERNATE CONTACT
St. Clair	Albert Tenuta , Pathologist Field Crops, 519-674-1617, albert.tenuta@ontario.ca	
Thames Valley	Ben Rosser , Corn Specialist, 519-824-4120 ext. 54865, ben.rosser@ontario.ca	Tracey Bauté , Entomologist Field Crops, 519-674-1696, tracey.baute@ontario.ca
Heartland	Horst Bohner , Soybean Specialist, 519-271-5858, C: 519-272-4827, horst.bohner@ontario.ca	Joanna Follings , Cereals Specialist, 519-271-8180, joanna.follings@ontario.ca
Georgian Central	Meghan Moran , Canola & Edible Bean Specialist, 519-271-0083, meghan.moran@ontario.ca	Michael Cowbrough , Weed Management Specialist, 519-824-4120 ext. 52580, mike.cowbrough@ontario.ca
Golden Horseshoe	Christine Brown , Sustainability Specialist, 519-537-8305, christine.brown1@ontario.ca	Jake Munroe , Soil Fertility Specialist, 519-271-9269, jake.munroe@ontario.ca
East Central	Ian McDonald , Crop Innovation Specialist, 519-824-4120 ext.56707, C: 519-239-3473, ian.mcdonald@ontario.ca	Christine O’Reilly , Forage & Grazier Specialist, 705-324-5855, Christine.oreilly@ontario.ca
Quinte	Christine O’Reilly , Forage & Grazier Specialist, 705-324-5855, Christine.oreilly@ontario.ca	Sebastian Belliard (see below)
Eastern Valley	Sebastian Belliard , Soil Management Specialist, 613-258-8250, Sebastian.belliard@ontario.ca	Scott Banks (see below)
Ottawa Rideau	Scott Banks , Cropping Systems Specialist, 613-258-8359 scott.banks@ontario.ca	Sebastian Belliard (see above)
North Eastern Ont.	Meghan Moran (see above)	Christine O’Reilly (see above)
North Western Ont.	Meghan Moran (see above)	Christine O’Reilly (see above)