



Garlic Growers Association of Ontario

November 23, 2006

Dear Growers

As we approach December and look back on the 2006 growing season several things that stand out. First the Garlic crop was generally 2 weeks early both in scaping and in harvest, and secondly, the crop was of excellent quality with generally much larger bulb size. Harvest of course had to be done quickly in between rains, during what will end up being remembered as one of the wettest summers on record for most parts of the province. In addition the rain has continued all fall, and has made planting conditions difficult, and less than ideal for everyone. I would hope by now that everyone has successfully finished planting and are wrapping up sales for the season.

Despite poor weather in September the various August Garlic festivals were very successful. I attended the Perth Garlic festival, and the Newmarket Garlic festival and found that consumers really want our product and recognize it as the best. I look forward next season to also attending the Sudbury Garlic Festival and the new Garlic Festival in Stratford that your organization is helping to organize along with the Stratford Kiwanis Club. Farmers markets, direct on farm sales and Garlic Festivals are our best marketing opportunities and allow us as growers to get the best return for our effort. With the continued Chinese dumping of garlic by stating a different country of it's origin than China, it will continue to be difficult for us as producers to get our product into the chain grocery stores. As long as the chain stores promote the lowest priced product, but not the freshest or best quality, then mainstream consumers will not have access to our product. Your organization's (the GGAO) focus in the coming years will continue to be that of promoting our Garlic superior quality and to provide avenues for consumers to experience this and buy it directly. To that end using CORD 1V research dollars we have several projects on the go, and 2 more waiting approval.

Projects Currently we have a multi-year " Clean Seed Project" with University Of

Guelph researcher Becky Hughes to develop clean virus free garlic seed. With researcher John Zandstra in Ridgetown we have the "Allicin Project", which is looking at different cultural practices in Ontario and how they impact Allicin levels, hopefully confirming better Allicin levels here. This winter we will be working on 2 other projects at the same time. The first one will be creating recipe cards that members can use at farmers markets and festivals, and the second project will be promotion of the new Stratford garlic festival. Together these projects will allow us to have a supply for the long term of clean virus free seed which will help all of us improve yields. The projects will also prove scientifically our Garlic's benefits, and will give us the materials (recipe cards), and the new venue (Stratford) for consumers to sample and buy our garlic direct.

Dateline: September 15, 2007: *The Stratford Kiwanis club is excited and has*

begun preparations for an opportunity they believe will become the annual "Great Garlic Festival" focusing on our crops vast array of culinary uses, it's proven nutraceutical benefits, and the enjoyment derived from growing great garlic by many gardeners in Southwestern Ontario, Michigan, and Upstate New York. Kiwanis plans to create a garlic festival with a vibrant program of great food vendors, cooking demos, swinging entertainment for a fall day out with the family, educational talks on the history, growing of garlic, storing garlic , and demos on braiding garlic. Festivals in upstate New York, Perth and Ottawa have provided remarkable venues for growers to have direct contact with consumers who's first interest is the quality, freshness and connecting with the grower on a personal level. During the Shakespearean Festival Season, Stratford draws upwards of 6- 10,000 visitors looking for events to compliment their weekend stay, in a town well known for its own chef's school, and many diverse and renowned restaurants.

So what else is needed for a garlic fest?? ?? Well how about garlic growers. If you are looking to bring your garlic profile and products before a hungry crowd looking to buy local garlic, grown by you an Ontario producer, I believe the fundamentals of this festival are what you are looking for. Any questions, give me a call: 519 272 1742 or email w.ham@bellnet.ca and we get an application out. Warren Ham

WEBSITE

Also this past year we have done a much needed overhaul of our website. I would like to give thanks to my son for volunteering his expertise in this. The updated website has generated many requests for fresh garlic and seed garlic from across Canada. I would encourage everyone to check out the website and we need your contact information for the section entitled "members who buy and sell Garlic". This section has generated several dozen large and small new orders for the members listed there so I would encourage all paid up members to forward me their info at walesfarm@hotmail.com and I will get it posted in time for next season. My background is not very computer oriented and it still continues to amaze me how many people rely on the internet to find what they need. It only takes one new customer to more than cover your \$50 membership fee. Also we have upgraded links to Garlic Festivals in Canada and the U.S., a very informative Garlic site in the U.K. and we have created sections for past newsletters and photos from this years Garlic festivals and Field Day. If you have a good photo from a festival please forward it to me. Hopefully in 2007 we will have a recipe section so that members can download recipes and print up their own promotional material.

The executive will be setting the date and place for the AGM in late March and we will have updates then from the various research projects so I hope to see as many of you as possible. Good luck marketing the last of the 2006 crop and we look forward to bringing you more in the February newsletter.

Mark Wales

President GGAO walesfarm@hotmail.com (519) 773-7352