

Workshop Title:

Organic Strawberry Production

Speaker:

Robert St-Arnaud

Executive Summary:

Farm Jardins Bio Campanipol is an agricultural farm that offers PYO strawberries. Speaker, Robert St-Arnaud is the major driving force behind this Quebec agro-tourism business. In a very practical way, speaker explained their rotation methods, planting, fertilization, and maintenance in order to produce their organic strawberry PYO business. Speaker also explained some of the common challenges and difficulties of organic farmers such as insects and disease, while also explaining specific issues that he has faced within his experiences. He concluded with his vision for the organization.

Main Notes:

- ◆ Farm in Quebec: Jardins Bio Campanipol
- ◆ Used plastic cover, mini-tunnel, drip irrigation
- ◆ 20 years of production
- ◆ Panels of strawberries available especially at the beginning of the season
- ◆ The Kiosk has been a great advantage and marketing opportunity
- ◆ Agro-tourism with PYO– big demand
- ◆ Production of strawberries among others – it's not their specialty thus the strawberries aren't held to unrealistic standards
- ◆ Surface being cultured = 0.8 ha

- ◆ Rotation on “heavy” soils
 - Rotation = Sugar corn/ Cruciferous/Hearicot-peas/Strawberries
implantation/Strawberries harvest year 1/Strawberry harvest year
2/hay cover year 3
 - Rotation on irrigated soil, lighter
- ◆ Planting – 4 x 2 feet, 5-6 varieties (mixtures of ripening time, mid season
to late)
 - Planting in August (An 1)
- ◆ Speaker strives for varieties that can adapt
- ◆ Use plastic mulching and manual planting
- ◆ Certain varieties have specific laws that protect against breeding and
crossing eg: Cleary
- ◆ Speaker found that it was more expensive to produce their own plants
rather than just buy them

Fertilization

- ◆ Dry poultry manure (Actisol)
- ◆ Implementation: in 2016: 1130 kg/ha in 4 inputs, June 7 and 26, July 10
and August 2 – according to PAEF, 1200 kg/ha
- ◆ Renovation: 450 kg/ha in 1 application in 2016, July 30 (Sometimes
applied twice)
- ◆ Green oat fertilizer incorporated
- ◆ Compost = 20-25 t/ha during implantation
- ◆ Fertigation tried after the collection of year 1 crop, first try in 2015

- ◆ Results were not observed because froze before results were drawn
- ◆ In 2016, Ferti Nitro (plant nitrogen) was used

Maintenance/Upkeep

- ◆ Mechanical weeding: Hatzenbichler comb and/or rubber Finger Weeder
- ◆ Manual weeding in the row when stolons appear (2 to 4 passages depending on the season)
- ◆ No irrigation
- ◆ Plastic mulching

Watching the size of the stolons

- ◆ Speaker has found success in removing them later
- ◆ Drip irrigation
- ◆ Winter protection in 1st year by floating P-40 cover
- ◆ In October
- ◆ Encourage the development as long as possible
- ◆ Effective until the temperature under the cover becomes below 2 degrees
- ◆ 2nd Winter; mulching

Insects

- ◆ Dull bug: there is no one treatment
- ◆ Trounce (1 to 3 treatments per season)
- ◆ Anthonomus: no current treatment
- ◆ Plant a strip of alfalfa

Sickness

- ◆ Gray mold
- ◆ Virus-depletion: strategies are still being developed
- ◆ They identified that it wasn't a large enough issue
- ◆ Renovations: pruning and shrinking the rows; fertilization; pruning foliage, removing stolons

Harvest

- ◆ 2 years
- ◆ Production: variable (see numbers on "System de production" slide)
- ◆ They use the extras that aren't sold to make other products like frozen strawberries, jelly
- ◆ They are starting to find connections with their varying production
- ◆ Strong rain, with birds

- ◆ Workforce to accomplish harvest
- ◆ Both regular and seasonal
- ◆ Local staff
- ◆ Mixed payment system (scheduled)
- ◆ Minimum wage payment

- ◆ Problems and Challenges
- ◆ Declines in the market?
- ◆ Analysis of seedlings

- ◆ Winter survival
- ◆ Labor and productivity
- ◆ Irrigation methods to consider
- ◆ Development and keeping the value of the PYO concept
- ◆ In general:
- ◆ Improved performance/production
- ◆ Protection against heavy rain and birds (insect net to test)

- ◆ Other Challenges
- ◆ Overlapping operations (strawberries and other crops)
- ◆ Workforce for harvesting
- ◆ Capacity to dispose the goods outside of the delivery/open days

- ◆ Vision
- ◆ Specialization: Organic strawberries available from the end of May to October
- ◆ Possible with developed techniques but this necessitates:
- ◆ A network of distribution that is well organized (GES)
- ◆ A packaging system that is adapted to all stages