



**For immediate release**

**Solving labour challenges with innovation**

*Vineland report makes tech recommendations for Ontario processing vegetable growers*

**Vineland Station, Ontario, June 23, 2021** — A new white paper lays out how innovative technologies can reduce labour challenges for Ontario’s processing vegetable growers.

The report, written by Vineland Research and Innovation Centre (Vineland) in collaboration with Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers (OPVG), identifies short-, medium- and long-term solutions for the sector.

“Now is the right time to elevate the conversation around automation and the adoption of innovative, labour-saving technologies that can also help growers boost production and be more efficient,” says Keith Robbins, OPVG General Manager. “Labour is a long-standing challenge facing processing vegetable growers that has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.”

In the short-term, growers should adopt cost-effective farm management software to support better labour and supply chain management and consider using technology to control weeds, reducing the need for costly chemical products.

To boost shelf life as a way to cope with fluctuating product demand, Ontario vegetable processors should look to packaging and evaluate the economics and ease of implementation of different options.

The report recommends both growers and processors contact R&D companies developing high-tech agriculture solutions about the possibilities of participating in their pre-commercial trials to gain a better understanding of emerging technologies.

Into the future, opportunities lie with robots and drones to help with field scouting and foreign object detection, harvesting and debris detection and removal. The report also identifies the development of an integrated platform to centralize and simplify management of automated systems as key, as well as ensuring technology solutions are also accessible for smaller farming and processing businesses.

“Vineland is committed to advancing innovation in the horticulture sector and can play a connecting role in bringing together science, industry and growers for technology solutions benefitting the industry,” says Hussam Haroun, Vineland’s Director of Automation.

Tomatoes, carrots and sweet corn are the top three processing vegetable crops grown in Ontario. Labour accounts for 20 to 60 per cent of total production costs depending on the operation and harvesting is the most labour-intensive on-farm task.

Other time-consuming activities include transplanting, weeding, picking and stemming, grading crops and removing debris from field crops.

The complete report can be downloaded [here](#).

This collaboration between Vineland and OPVG was funded under the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' Agri-food Prevention and Control Innovation Program to develop the processing vegetable sector innovation roadmap. Vineland was also involved in the development of sector road maps for asparagus and berries and is now carrying out a similar process to engage advanced manufacturing and automation companies through a collaboration with NGen (Next Generation Manufacturing Canada).

### **About Vineland Research and Innovation Centre**

Vineland Research and Innovation Centre is a uniquely Canadian results-oriented organization dedicated to horticulture science and innovation. We deliver innovative products, solutions and services through an integrated and collaborative cross-country network to advance Canada's research and commercialization agenda. We are an independent, not-for-profit organization, funded in part by the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a five-year federal-provincial-territorial initiative. For the latest on our research and innovation, visit [vinelandresearch.com](http://vinelandresearch.com).

### **About Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers**

The OPVG is a marketing board regulated under the Farm Products Marketing Act and represents nearly 400 Ontario processing vegetable growers producing crops such as tomatoes, onions, sweet corn, carrots, cucumbers, green, wax and lima beans, green peas, squash and pumpkin. OPVG members are family-owned and operated businesses, growing vegetable crops for Ontario food manufacturing companies.

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