

# Vineland launches new automation consulting service

Offering ranges from assessments of existing technology to customized solutions

**BY LILIAN SCHAER**  
Ontario Farmer

Vineland Research & Innovation Centre (Vineland) is now offering automation consulting services for the horticulture sector.

Labour is a long-standing challenge for growers and the COVID-19 pandemic has only served to exacerbate the issue, leaving the industry to intensify its search for solutions.

It can often be hard to know where or how to take the first



**Vineland Research & Innovation Centre is home to Canada's Automation Research Cluster, where projects like an automated cucumber picker are in development.**

step into automated technologies, whether it is helping with scouting crops for disease and

pests, automating irrigation or improving data collection and analysis.

And that's where Vineland's new service is designed to fill a gap in the industry. Its team of in-house automation experts includes researchers, engineers and business specialists with knowledge and experience in data science, robotics, computer vision and systems integration.

According to Vineland, because horticultural operations can vary widely, there's no single, off-the-shelf solution to meet all needs. That's why the consultative process typically starts with a technology assessment and consultation – and solutions can involve automating a single task or an entire production system.

For fruit and vegetable farms who already have some auto-

mated systems on hand, the Vineland team can offer suggestions on how to improve, expand and optimize the existing technology. For others, the answer might lie with a customized solution.

There's an opportunity to learn more about automation in horticulture on March 30 with a free Vineland-hosted virtual showcase.

Speakers include Niki Bennett, Innovation Adaptation & Plant Protection Lead with Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers; Mycionics Inc. CEO Michael Curry; Vineland's Director of Automation Hussam Haroun; Next Generation Manufacturing Canada CEO Jayson Myers; Vineland CEO Ian Potter; Ray Price, President of Sunterra Group; Bioenterprise Canada CEO Dave Smardon; Kerry Wright, CEO of the Canadian Agri-Food Automation & Intelligence Network; and Chris McQueen, Vice President of Operations at Vineland.

Niagara Region-based Vineland is also home to Canada's national automation research cluster and is leading three projects through that program. In development are a cucumber harvesting robot, an automated mushroom harvester, and a smart irrigation system for potted greenhouse plants.

More information about the automation consulting service is available by emailing [info@vinelandresearch.com](mailto:info@vinelandresearch.com).

To register for the automation showcase, visit <https://www.greenhousecanada.com/webinars/sponsored-now-more-than-ever-building-canada-wide-automation-solutions-for-horticulture/>.

## CFFO supports allowing Russian N

The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario is lending its support to the Ontario Agri-Business Association which is asking the federal government to waive its new tariff on nitrogen imports from Russia.

The tariff was announced May 3 as one of many measures to punish Russia for its unprovoked invasion of The Ukraine.

Fertilizer Canada said 85 to 90 per cent of the nitrogen for Eastern Canada is imported from Russia.

The CFFO and OABA want shipments that were underway before the tariff was announced to be allowed to dock in Canada and offload without application of the new tariff.

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Mitch Clark

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Bryan Smith

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Derek Hill

519.501.7839

Tyler Hoover

519.263.2450

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