IF YOU'VE EATEN TODAY— THANK A FARMER.

IF YOU'VE EATEN AN APPLE TODAY— THANK A BC APPLE GROWER.

AND YOU THOUGHT WE SPENT OUR DAYS IN THE ORCHARD PICKING APPLES.

SCHOOL FRUIT AND VEGETABLE NUTRITIONAL PROGRAM

Sara and Troy Harker of Harker's Organics

MEET TROY AND HIS WIFE SARA HARKER OF HARKER'S ORGANICS

There are a lot of steps involved in bringing food to the table. Planting and tending crops is just one of our many jobs as growers. We also spend a lot of time hauling crates, selling our produce at markets across the province, and balancing the books.

At Harker's Organics we practise 'sustainable agriculture'. What does 'sustainable agriculture' mean, anyways? For us, it's about taking care of what we have now so that there is something to pass down to the next generation — you! How do we do that? With every decision we make with our business (that just happens to be farming) we remind ourselves of these 3 goals:

1. To earn a fair living from our farm for our workers and for our family.
2. To play our part in supporting and making our community viable.
3. To minimize the impact our farming practices have on the environment around us and to make sure whatever resources we take – such as water and soil, are put back in for future generations.

My family settled in the Similkameem Valley in 1888, just 17 years after British Columbia became Canada's sixth province. One of the first fruit trees planted on the property in 1914, a Snow Apple, still stands on the farm today. Over the last 120 years our family farm has raised dairy and beef cattle, grown crops and various fruit trees. It was my parents, the 5th generation of farmers, who converted the farm back to its original roots as a sustainable and organic farm.

Our farm is a very diverse place. I like to say we have a very big garden! Our 'garden' is comprised of around 18 acres of fruit trees and 8 acres of ground crops. Everything we grow is started from seed in our little 1,200 square foot greenhouse. It's amazing to plant a baby seed in the soil, transplant it when it becomes a seedling, plant it in the field when it has its true leaves and harvest the fruit of it as an adult. What a cool lifecycle.

What's the best thing about being an apple grower? We get to do what our family has always done — grow food for people.

Photo courtesy of Harker's Organics

aitc.ca/bc

MOTHER NATURE – FRIEND AND FOE TO FARMERS EVERYWHERE...

Mother Nature always has plenty of surprises for farmers across Canada. While we look at the weather forecast to decide what to wear, a farmer is trying to determine how it will effect not just her day, but her entire season and livelihood. Not enough rain, too much rain, when the rain falls, the sequence of weather — it all affects her crop. A grower needs to plan for the worst and hope for the best.

HERE'S HOW AN APPLE GROWER MIGHT READ THE WEATHER FORECAST...

FORECAST CALLS FOR A WET SPRING THIS YEAR...

Hmm, that's bad news... wet spring = no flying bees = no pollination = no fruit crop.

NO RAIN IN EXTENDED FORECAST...

Oh, oh...that could mean a drought year causing stress on my trees. My older trees should be able to handle it, but I'll need to spend more on irrigating the younger trees with their less established roots if I want them to produce any fruit this season.
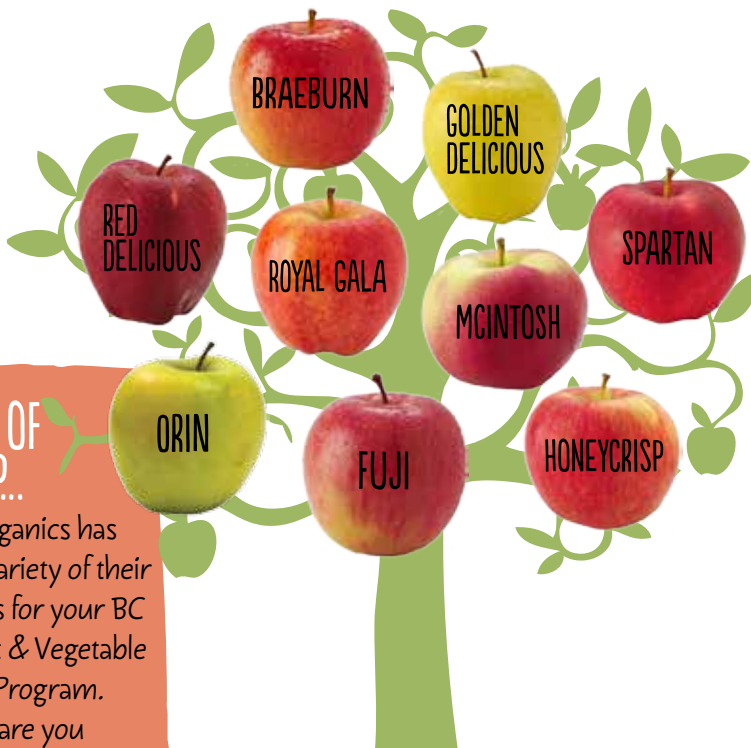
EARLY FROST WARNING...

Ok, I know my apples are among the hardiest of fruit trees and can take a lot of heat or cold. I could leave the apples on the tree and they should recover from even a couple of freezes. On second thought, I'd better not take a chance and hustle to harvest my crop and get it into storage earlier than I'd planned.

? CAN YOU REPORT THE IDEAL WEATHER FORECAST FOR HARKER'S ORGANICS FARM?

BRAEBURN
GOLDEN DELICIOUS
RED DELICIOUS
ROYAL GALA
SPARTAN
MCINTOSH
ORIN
FUJI
HONEYCRISP

THE PICK OF THE CROP...

Harker's Organics has selected a variety of their finest apples for your BC School Fruit & Vegetable Nutritional Program. Which one are you snacking on today?

DO THE MATH...

BC produces nearly 30% of apples grown in Canada – a quantity ranging from 135,000 to 195,000 tonnes per year. British Columbians consume 25% of those apples while the rest are exported.

How many tonnes of apples do BC residents consume each year?

_____

1 lb = 454 grams = 3 medium apples
1 ton = @2,205 lbs = 1,000 kg
If BC produced 150,000 tonnes of apples this year, approximately how many apples is that?

_____

(Hint: it's huge!)