

FPA set to unveil 'revolutionary' wholesale market prices project

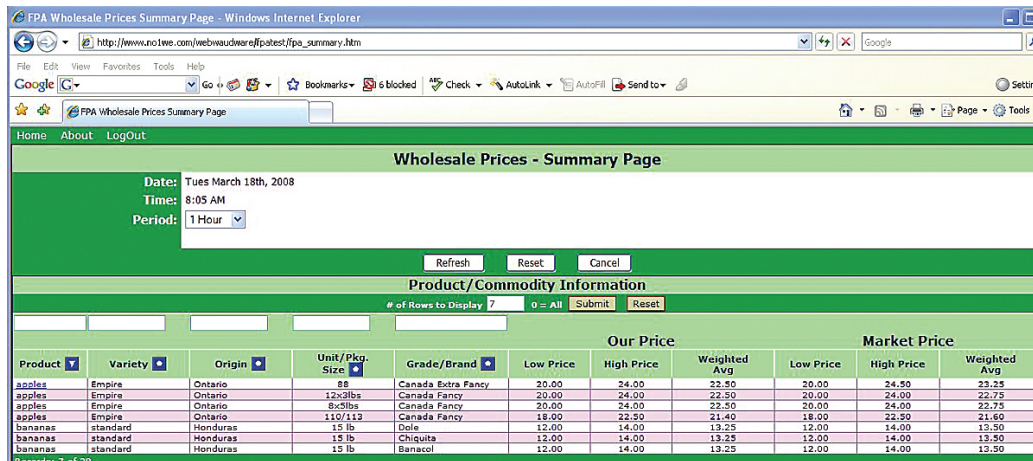
BY JOEL GEBET

The Fresh Produce Alliance is preparing to take the wraps off its new wholesale market prices project.

"We've been working on the project for a year-and-a-half, and we think it's a revolutionary method of collecting markets information for the horticultural sector, something that's ever been done before," Ian MacKenzie, the alliance's general manager, told *The Produce News* Oct. 21.

The alliance works on projects that try to build a better business environment for the fresh produce industry in Canada on behalf of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association, the Canadian Horticultural Council and the Fruit & Vegetable Dispute Resolution Corp.

Mr. MacKenzie said that the two-part project, which culminates in March, electronically extracts data to come up with a wholesale price for commodities on the four major markets in Canada: Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary.



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL http://www.nctwe.com/webware/fpa/test/fpa_summary.htm. The page title is "FPA Wholesale Prices Summary Page". It features a "Wholesale Prices - Summary Page" section with filters for Date (Tues March 18th, 2008), Time (8:05 AM), and Period (1 Hour). Below this is a "Product/Commodity Information" section with a table of products and their prices. The table has columns for Product, Variety, Origin, Unit/Pkg. Size, Grade/Brand, Low Price, High Price, Weighted Avg, and Market Price. The data is organized into two main sections: "Our Price" and "Market Price".

Product	Variety	Origin	Unit/Pkg. Size	Grade/Brand	Low Price	High Price	Weighted Avg	Low Price	High Price	Weighted Avg
apples	Empire	Ontario	88	Canada Extra Fancy	20.00	24.00	22.50	20.00	24.00	22.25
apples	Empire	Ontario	12x5lbs	Canada Fancy	20.00	24.00	22.50	20.00	24.00	22.25
apples	Empire	Ontario	8x5lbs	Canada Fancy	20.00	24.00	22.50	20.00	24.00	22.25
apples	Empire	Ontario	110/113	Canada Fancy	18.00	22.50	21.40	18.00	22.50	21.40
bananas	standard	Honduras	15 lb	Dole	12.00	14.00	13.25	12.00	14.00	13.50
bananas	standard	Honduras	15 lb	Chiquita	12.00	14.00	13.25	12.00	14.00	13.50
bananas	standard	Honduras	15 lb	Banacol	12.00	14.00	13.25	12.00	14.00	13.50

A screen shot of the FPA's soon-to-be-released market prices web site.

WaudWare, a Brampton, ON-based software-development company that specializes in software for businesses in the produce industry, was hired to write the web-based software for the project, and the firm's president, F. Charles Waud, said that the wholesale market information web site is nearly completed.

"If a wholesaler agrees to give their sales information, they can log into web site and see consolidated information, including highest price, weighted average and lowest price over a timeframe, like the last hour, two hours, four hours. And they can go into more detail on a product-by-product basis," Mr. Waud told *The Produce News*, adding that the site doesn't have any limitations on items.

"For companies that

participate with us, it gives back in real time their average weighted price against the average weighted price for the market," Mr. MacKenzie said. "It's important for a [wholesaler] who's selling green beans on the Toronto market at 6:30 [to know] if he's below the market price and that he should be trying to bring himself up to the market price if not surpassing it. Reports are all available at a click of a mouse, that's how instantaneous this can be and that's the little carrot that is out there hanging for them to want to participate because it is going to give them really good market information back in their hands in a timely fashion."

Mr. MacKenzie said that some of that data would be exported to the InfoHort web site,

an information collection and dissemination system designed to provide the most current data on horticultural commodities across the country and what he described as "Canada's version of *Market News*," he said. "InfoHort has been erroneous and very untimely for years and years now, and the new software will allow us to upload and populate wholesaler-retailer prices, f.o.b. prices and weekly shipments as well."

Mr. MacKenzie added, "It's a very exciting time. It's taken a little longer to get companies onboard, but anyone we talk with are very keen on participating because they see the usefulness of the information back to them."

The project has officially started in Toronto with five

wholesalers, and Mr. MacKenzie said that he is currently in the process of introducing the project to wholesalers in the other three markets.

The second phase of the project will collect f.o.b. prices electronically for

apples and potatoes as well as weekly shipments for them, and it will give participants an average weighted f.o.b. price vs. the provincial average weighted price on a weekly basis, Mr. MacKenzie said, adding that potato shippers in New Brunswick, Ontario, Prince Edward Island and Quebec and apple shippers in Ontario were asked to participate.

"Market News is still using market reporters to manually collect information, the [Canadian] government and [produce] industry don't have the resources to do that, so this is why we went the electronic route," Mr. MacKenzie said. "When it's up and running, it will be something that other countries might want to take a look at."