

## News Release

### **Wanted: Ontario farmers to grow hazelnuts** *Fledgling industry ready to start planting trees*

*For Immediate Release*

Simcoe, Ontario, June 12, 2013 — Erie Innovation and Commercialization is looking for farmers who are interested in being part of one of Ontario's newest crops, hazelnuts. Varieties have been identified that will grow well in Ontario's climate and the emerging sector is now seeking farmers who are willing to start planting some of these trees.

"We have an identified market potential in Ontario for hazelnuts that's equivalent to about 10,000 hectares of trees," says John Kelly, Vice President of Erie Innovation and Commercialization, an initiative of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association. "Hazelnuts can be grown anywhere in Ontario that apples are, and the revenue potential for this crop is significant."

It can take four years for hazelnut trees to start bearing fruit and seven years before they hit full production. By then, however, the potential net return is estimated at \$2,000 per acre. Brantford's Ferrero Inc., which manufactures Nutella and Ferrero Rocher chocolates, currently imports its hazelnut supply but is very interested in accessing a stable, locally grown source.

As part of a major hazelnut research project currently underway to help establish the hazelnut industry in Ontario, researchers have been screening hazelnut varieties for resistance to eastern filbert blight and the ability to withstand Ontario's climate, as well as establishing methods for fast and reliable propagation of seedlings. The project, which involves OFVGA, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, University of Guelph, Ontario Centres of Excellence and industry partners, also includes gathering market intelligence, helping the industry get organized and planning for the infrastructure the industry will need as it grows.

"We are now at the point where we need growers who are willing to commit to hazelnuts by putting some trees in the ground," says Kelly. "This is an exciting new opportunity for Ontario farmers, especially for those who farm in our current tree fruit growing areas, such as Essex and Niagara."

Anyone interested in planting hazelnuts or learning more about the opportunity should contact Erie Innovation and Commercialization at 519-426-7913.

Investment in this project is provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program. In Ontario, this program is delivered by the Agricultural Adaptation Council.

Erie Innovation and Commercialization is part of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, dedicated to pursuing a regional approach to agricultural diversification to ensure the continuing economic stability and sustainability of the sector. Visit [www.erieinnovation.com](http://www.erieinnovation.com)