



**Sustainable Canadian  
Agricultural Partnership**

Competitive. Innovative. Resilient.

# Belvedere Orchard

*Helping keep farms  
in the green*



**Canada**

# Innovative apple storage solution offers grower fresh marketing opportunities

As one of the emerging players in Prince Edward Island's (PEI) apple industry, Teo Herweijer, owner of Belvedere Produce in Brookfield and Vice President of the PEI Tree Fruit Growers Association, says he is finding ways to address the marketing challenges created by this year's huge harvest of apples across the continent.

"Right now, everyone is finishing picking and it's a full North American market," he says. "It's probably going to be tight for the next four months."

But while acknowledging the challenges for local growers, Herweijer also sees it as an opportunity to explore new market avenues. He's pleased to have the control of storing around 200 bins of apples at a cool three degrees Celsius in a new on-farm refrigerated unit.

"We built this facility last year and used it for the 2023 harvest," he explains. "We were still bringing Honeycrisps out of storage in June, and the quality remained excellent."

Herweijer cultivates 14 apple varieties, including Cox's Orange Pippin, Honeycrisp, Gala, Ambrosia, Ginger Gold, Sunrise, Gravenstein, and familiar names like Golden Delicious and Cortland. He is also growing exciting newcomers like Wild Pink and Crimson Crisp.

The establishment of the refrigerated storage facility was made possible with federal and provincial funding through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, providing a significant boost for the startup.

"Setting up something like this is costly, especially since we're just getting started," says Herweijer. "Any support that helps us bring products to market is immensely appreciated, as it strengthens our foundation."

With over 40 years of farming experience, Herweijer launched his apple orchard business in 2019, inspired by his parents' apple farm in the Netherlands.



Teo Herweijer admires apples ready for picking from his orchard in Brookfield, PEI.

He planted 10 acres of dwarf apple trees, carefully arranged in an easy-to-pick trellis system. However, in the fall of 2022, post-tropical storm Fiona devastated his orchard, flattening 30 percent of the trees.

"It was a rough night and a challenging fall, but we picked ourselves up—and this year, we had a wonderful crop," he says.

Together with his wife, Elena, Herweijer manages the orchard, which includes around 10,000 trees, each yielding roughly 100 apples. That adds up to an impressive million apples ready for market.

A highlight of their marketing plan is the Belvedere Orchard U-Pick, open throughout September and October, where visitors can enjoy fresh apple picking.

In addition, Herweijer partners with local restaurants and retailers to supply high-quality, healthy, locally grown produce to Prince Edward Island.

As he continues to explore new markets, Herweijer remains focused on the quality of his apple varieties and, with Elena's support on brand development and marketing, on building a strong name for their business.

“We promote our product and our brand,” he says. “If we can produce apple varieties that people love and they see the effort we put into offering a high-quality local product, we believe that can foster strong relationships with returning buyers.”

“We are also proud to give back to the community by donating three per cent of our apple sales to the QEH Foundation, supporting the acquisition of essential medical equipment for PEI’s largest hospital.”

Looking ahead, Herweijer plans to rebuild the orchard to at least 10 acres and introduce some new varieties to Prince Edward Island. He acknowledges, though, that choosing which apples to grow involves some risk.

“Once you plant a tree, you’re committed,” he says. “If you misjudge demand, you can’t just pull them up and replant the next week—it doesn’t work like that.”

To reduce this risk, Herweijer keeps an eye on buying trends across the country, especially with new varieties gaining popularity.

“People are always looking for something fresh, and we’re succeeding because we offer such a wide selection,” he says. “We try to bring in varieties catching on in other markets to see if they thrive here.”

“When happy customers tell you they love what you’re growing, you know you’re onto something good.”



Teo Herweijer displays apples being stored in the refrigerated storage facility made possible with funding from Sustainable CAP.