



DON CHAPMAN FARMS LTD/LAKEVIEW VEGETABLE PROFILE

The Chapman family has been growing in the Marsh for three generations. Today, there are two parts to this family business; **Don Chapman Farms Ltd** which is managed by Joe Chapman and **Lakeview Vegetable Processing** which is managed by his brother, Jim and supported by his two adult sons, in addition to other colleagues. Lakeview also operates their own fleet of refrigerated trucks and trailers within Canada and the United States. The various aspects of these two businesses work together to provide an efficient and effective vertically integrated operation, starting with the planting and growing of quality fresh vegetables, through to the production and shipping of raw and finished products.

The farm operation currently grows on 2,300 acres of land; on both muck soil in the marsh and mineral soil in higher ground, based around Queensville, East Gwillimbury and south of Newmarket in York Region. The team grows carrots, potatoes, celery and onions with the primary goal of supporting their processing facility. Crops like corn, soy beans and wheat are grown for soil health and crop rotation. Having access to different types of soil has allowed the Chapman team to successfully grow multiple vegetables in soil that suits them best. Joe commented, "Celery does better in the muck and carrots grow better in the mineral soil."

Their celery is processed immediately as it is harvested, over a two and a half month period each year. Carrots are also processed at the time of harvest. These vegetables are cleaned, cut and frozen so that they can conveniently be added into recipes by secondary processors. The final products made from their processed ingredients includes soups, stews, stocks and baby food.

The market for their fresh cut and frozen finished products has changed in recent times, with the ongoing closures of Ontario based processing facilities. Lakeview Vegetable Processing had originally started decades ago, in order to supply local Campbell's soup production. Unfortunately, the last plant left Ontario in May 2019. Thankfully Lakeview has been able to secure other opportunities, primarily based in the USA. Demand for their processed vegetables is so high that Lakeview also contracts with growers from the Marsh and beyond, to have sufficient fresh produce to fulfill their orders. Their processing facility is 42,000 square feet, including a 12,600 square foot IQF facility and 50,000 square feet of storage for raw product on site. In addition to the processing business, onions and potatoes are stored on site and sold fresh on demand to local packers based in Bradford.

Looking towards the future, challenges include ongoing urbanization in the local area as well as securing quality labour. Joe commented, "We are becoming surrounded by housing. It's getting hard to move machinery up and down the road." The organization is aiming to grow opportunities by further improving quality as opposed to increasing their quantity. Investments are planned for ongoing improvements in growing methods, irrigation, as well as mechanization to compensate for labour shortages.

For more information, visit lakeviewvegetable.com