

Québec on track with new weeder

by Yvon Douville and Èdith Phaneuf

When Robert Desmarais is asked what he wants to do in life, he replies with a big smile on his face: "A farmer as well as an inventor!" This is because Desmarais produces carrots at the same time as developing agricultural equipment that makes a farmer's job easier.]

For several years he has been working on a machine he calls "a multifunctional weeder." At the present time, this piece of equipment is well-advanced in the process of mechanical weeding; with carrots, for example, it can weed within two centimetres on each side of the row.

According to Desmarais, "the time devoted to manual weeding has been greatly reduced. If this piece of equipment works well with carrots, I'm certain that it will show up to be very interesting in other horticultural sectors as well."

The weeding process is based on disks set on an axis bar that are readily moved into place using hydraulics controlled by the operator. The lateral displacement is large enough so that the disks can weed in one position and makes ridges in another. The machine can weed nine rows at a time but will eventually be adjustable for a variable number of rows.

The equipment design is still in the prototype stage. The flame burning weeder and seeding components still need more fine tuning. An operator is still required as well as the driver of the tractor.

Nevertheless, Desmarais is confident in view of the progression to date. This year, he has conducted some innovative technology trials in collaboration with the Centre de développement d'agrobiologie. Supported by the Green Plan, the trials will compare the performance of the machine with both herbicide treatments and that of complete manual weeding. If all goes well, the inventor hopes to put the multifunctional weeder on the market during the winter of 1994.

Who knows, maybe one day Desmarais will find his name as celebrated as that of Lely, Bezzerides and Hatzenbichler!

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