

Hello and welcome to the 2021 annual meeting of the American Hazelnut Company. For obvious reasons we are having a virtual meeting this year. Maybe this will be a model for a future hybrid meeting.

Much of the information normally presented at the meeting is furnished this year in the form of written or video format on the AHC website.

Material Presented:

- Board Chair statement
- Financials
- Minutes of Previous Annual Meeting
- Process and Equipment changes/improvements
- Operating Agreement/Policy Revision

No board members are up for election or re-election this year. But, hope you will consider running for the board next year. There are still other ways to be involved with AHC through communications, sales, operations and node activity.

We have had a change in general manager. Until recently, Brad Niemcek has been doing fantastic job of single-handedly coordinating sales, marketing and production as well as participating in those duties. Production has now become the purview of Paul Ronsheim and sales has gone to a committee made up of Pam Saunders, Brad Niemcek and Mike Lilja with outside consultation from Connie Carlson of the University of Minnesota.

We made some changes to the Operating Agreement and policies. Most of the change was to bring the wording of the two documents into agreement, but we did make one change and that was to require members to supply nuts to the company. It made sense to require those of us who are members to help support the company by contributing nuts. Required contribution is based on ownership percentage. A membership vote will need to be taken to approve those changes. That vote will be held during the live video portion of our annual meeting. Details are available at the website

We had intended to have quarterly in-person meetings this year at varied locations around the region. Because of Covid, those did not happen. The idea was to help bring the board a little closer to those growing nuts and make everything we do, more accessible. It is our sincere wish as a board to have that happen, but suspect it will not be until 2022.

A sales and marketing committee was established to create a uniform sales effort for those of us who are doing that now as well as to create material for the membership who would like to help promote our products in their area, or help with our sales efforts at events such as FEAST, the Minnesota Garlic Festival or other such events. We were sidetracked a little as we took on an on-line holiday sales and marketing effort with the help of Mike Lind. Sales details are available at the website.

Sales in 2020 were okay, but with changes in the make-up of product demand. Flour sales were way up with kernel sales also up and oil sales off. We are currently out of flour because the oil press is down and new one is on the way. Because flour was selling so well, we have run out and are currently selling oil from what we have in stock. We have a reasonable supply of local nuts along with plenty of nuts from Oregon for the flour/oil process when we get our new press.

New products are in development with the help of Northland College in Ashland under a grant from the state of Wisconsin. There were a few options for new product and with the board's input, flavored nuts were chosen first. Samples and a tasting rubric were sent to people with food development experience and those responses are now just coming back to us.

With the money raised last year and the ability to leverage it through the University of Wisconsin new equipment was purchased and installed to improve our processing efficiency. Jason Fischbach has led this effort and has a video report on it.

There is some exciting news about plant development. Finally, with most of the issues around micropropagation resolved, cultivars will be available soon. The first plants are going to large scale trials and for the rest of us, it should only be a year or two before they are more readily available. So, now is the time to establish you hybrid seedlings as boarders and universal pollinators. Jason Fischbach will provide more details about this topic.

I wish you all well and looking forward to seeing you via Zoom on the 16th.

Mike Lilja
Board Chair