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Potato Sustainability Alliance elects executive committee

The [Potato Sustainability Alliance](#)'s board of directors selected new executive committee members at its winter board meeting during the 2024 Potato Expo in Austin, TX.

The board elected Tracy Shinners-Carnelley of Peak of the Market Ltd. to serve as chair and Mike Wenkel of National Potato Council as vice chair. Also newly elected to the executive committee is Shane Sampels of Sysco, who will serve alongside Ritchey Toeve as the two additional committee members.

In between meetings of the board of directors, the executive committee provides guidance to PSA staff and oversight on the organizational strategy, budget and annual work plan. Outgoing executive committee members Jolyn Rasmussen of J.R. Simplot and Tommy Jackson of Syngenta will continue to serve on the PSA board of directors.

"PSA's board of directors is an active, engaged group representing the entire potato value chain," said CEO John Mesko. "Our executive committee drives our higher-level strategy and helps us navigate the potato industry. Over the course of the year, I get to work closely with this group to help us achieve our goals and objectives. PSA is very fortunate to have this great group of people serving in this important role."

Tracy Shinners-Carnelley, board chair – Shinners-Carnelley is the vice president of research, quality and sustainability at Peak of the Market Ltd. She leads research on variety evaluation, improved pest management and agronomic practices for fresh market potatoes. Shinners-Carnelley also spends time working with growers in their fields and packinghouses, supporting activities in these same areas. She has a passion for working closely with the industry on challenging crop protection and production issues, both provincially and nationally.

Prior to joining Peak of the Market, Shinners-Carnelley spent 10 years with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, as a plant pathologist and potato pest management specialist. She has a bachelor's degree in Agriculture from Dalhousie University, a Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from the University of Alberta. In 2020, Shinners-Carnelley was appointed as an Adjunct Faculty of Graduate Studies in Agriculture at Dalhousie University.

Mike Wenkel, board vice chair - Wenkel joined the staff of the National Potato Council in June of 2019 as the chief operating officer. His responsibilities include overseeing the day-to-day operations for the organization as it works to represent the interest of the U.S. potato industry in Washington, DC. He is responsible for the creation and operations of the Potato Leadership, Education, and Advancement Foundation (Potato LEAF) whose inaugural fundraising campaign exceeded \$2.1 million in 18 months. A native of Michigan, Wenkel brings over 25 years of experience to the organization. He served as the executive director of Michigan Potato Industry Commission for seven years prior to joining NPC; was employed at Michigan Farm Bureau, where he served as the manager of the membership and field services department. His responsibilities included managing all aspects of membership for the organization's 193,000 members, including the annual volunteer membership campaign, coordinating and overseeing the training of new field staff and developing training for county leadership.

Shane Sampels, executive committee member - Sampels has 30 years of food industry leadership and technical knowledge. He is an industry recognized leader in food safety, quality assurance, sustainable agriculture development and processing. His product knowledge base includes agricultural products of canned, frozen, produce, beverage and manufactured grocery.

He successfully implemented several innovative programs within the food industry including sustainable agriculture initiatives, produce food-safety databases and plant design and construction including new business startup. Sampels is currently acting as the senior director of quality assurance at Sysco and the subsidiary FreshPoint. FreshPoint is a leading distributor of fresh products specializing in produce. Sampels was also director of quality assurance for produce, frozen, canned and beverage products for the Sysco Brand Product Programs.

Ritchey Toevs, executive committee member – Toevs is a second-generation potato grower from Aberdeen, ID. He and his family raise 950 acres of frozen processing potatoes at Toevs Farms, where they also grow wheat and barley. Toevs is active in National Potato Council, Potatoes USA and Idaho Potato Commission. He received his bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Idaho.

Photo: Newly elected PSA executive committee members with CEO John Mesko during the winter board meeting at Potato Expo in Austin, TX: Shane Sampels, Mike Wenkel, Tracy Shinners-Carnelley, John Mesko, Ritchey Toevs.

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