

What we've been working on...

The Explore Local Initiative is creating the framework required to grow a local market system in Alberta, which will shorten the distance from farm to plate. In a local market system members work directly with producers or those who provide benefits to the producer.



With staff from across the department involved in various capacities, collectively we facilitate the sustainable growth of a local market system through research, education, collaboration and alliance building with local market stakeholders.

We are excited to share the highlights of our year!

A vibrant local market system has customized policy, legislation and regulations for the local market industry.

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM POLICY PROJECT

Staff from across Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) explored key issues impacting local food systems and recommended actions to address them.

Project lead Bill Reynolds believes that these recommendations will provide a solid guideline for assessing and setting future priorities for Explore Local.

- Environmental scan/literature review of local food system issues was completed.
- Six key local food system policy directions were proposed for ARD action.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see clarity on local food system policy issues through an industry stakeholder needs assessment. Further research will support the proposed policy directions.

FOOD SAFETY PROJECT

Explore Local adopted a collaborative approach to food safety in local markets.

Project leads Karen Goad and Eileen Kotowich know that Alberta Health Services, Alberta Health and Wellness, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and ARD's Regulatory Services Division and Explore Local are committed to having local market producers know and understand applicable regulations and food safety best practices. These regulations and best practices are critical components of successful local market operations. In addition, solid relationships between these agencies have been established, which resulted in joint extension activities.

- Joint activities included interagency meetings and an industry/staff focus group session, as well as a new local market food safety home study course, Marketing Food Safely e-book, and the addition of food safety resources to existing facts sheets.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see the Food Safety Division and Explore Local work on a project proposal to create six new regulatory fact sheets and extend the information through two extension events.

*A vibrant local market system has sustainable local market value chains:
Order - Grow - Value Add/Process - Distribute.*

Research shows the producer's share of the final product sale price is highest for the direct marketing supply chain at almost 75 per cent.

LOCAL MARKET SUPPLY CHAIN CASE STUDY PILOT

This foundation research was designed to help us understand the value of the local market opportunity.

Project lead Mimi Lee reports that this pilot study will increase our understanding of various business models for successful local food supply chains and provide good performance indicators about the local market industry.

- Pilot case study of the differentiated beef sector (grass-fed, natural or organic) examined the value of products sold through direct marketing, intermediated and mainstream grocery supply chains.
 - ✓ Three performance indicators were assessed: producer share of revenue, food miles and fuel use per unit, and economic benefits to the local area.
 - ✓ Results indicated the producer's share of the price is highest for the direct marketing supply chain where the producer retained almost 75 per cent of the final price.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see data collected from at least three additional local market supply chain case studies to help benchmark performance of the local market industry

FRUIT & VEGGIE BUSINESS CASE

Data collected over three years from at least 32 producers in the fruit and vegetable industry will help benchmark the value of the local market horticulture industry and facilitate the growth of local products.

Project lead Kathy Bosse looks forward to the completion of the case study and dissemination of findings.

- Second year of cost of production research was completed.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see the final year of data collection and new producer tools will be created from the findings.



POULTRY ABATTOIR PROJECT

A viable business option?

Project lead Bert Dening is assessing the mobile abattoir as a viable business option for the local market poultry industry.

- Mobile poultry abattoir unit prepared and outfitted.
- Business case initiated.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see the slaughter of various types of birds to determine the efficiencies and effectiveness of this mobile unit, as well as the completion of the business case.

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There is strong interest amongst all players in the supply chain to address distribution

GROW THE LOCAL FOOD SUPPLY RESEARCH PROJECT

Research identified the barriers new entrants face when getting into local markets.

Project lead Brent Andressen finds that new entrants want more than face-to-face opportunities for learning. The term “distributed learning” is very relevant to their needs.

- Conducted Focus groups and semi-structured interviews with 24 participants to identify key barriers (access to capital/finance, training/education, marketing) and offered steps to address them.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see new training opportunities using a variety of learning platforms in Explore Local programming.

DISTRIBUTION PROJECT

Industry and Explore Local staff identified distribution as a barrier to local markets.

Project lead Kathy Bosse listened when producers said the lack of effective and efficient distribution systems for local markets is a major barrier to growth.

- 71 participants attended a provincial forum to discuss distribution issues.
- A Red Deer pilot attracted input from 38 producers, logistics specialists and chefs on possible solutions to local market distribution challenges.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see further dialogue with distributors and others to determine their distribution needs and challenges. Interest for an Edmonton distribution pilot will be gauged.

KNOWLEDGEABLE BANK OF PRODUCERS

Explore Local staff and partners delivered targeted and timely extension programs.

Project lead Karen Goad reports that 13 extension events, involving approximately 665 participants, and six new resources were developed in 2010. Extension events included industry field days, Explore/Expand customer service workshops, pricing consultations, and more. Two fact sheets *Selling to Foodservice and Hospitality* and *Community Supported Agriculture in Alberta* were some of the new resource materials.

- Local market extension events and resource materials attracted new local market entrants and increased production volumes.
- Strong working relationships with provincial and regional stakeholders such as ag fieldmen and industry association staff were key to effective, targeted extension programming.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see extension activities that use a variety of delivery methods and target those either new to the local market industry or pursuing a new local market channel.

A key success factor was our involvement of and collaboration with regional stakeholders.

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Explore Local is a catalyst for creating linkages between local market producers and appropriate marketing channels.

LOCAL FOOD EVENTS and CHEF COLLABORATIVES

Explore Local planted the seeds for collaboration and harvested community engagement. Collaborative relationships between producers and chefs or within community initiatives such as Dine Kalyna and Long Lunches can enhance producer efficiency, profitability and market access. Project lead Marlene Abrams confirms that seeding the idea of working together toward a common goal yields community driven local food events and producer-chef collaborations.

- Five local food event workshops triggered at least nine local food events
- A new fact sheet *How to Organize a Local Food Event* was created.
- An Edmonton area Chef Collaborative was formed that can now be duplicated elsewhere.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see industry led producer collaborations.

A vibrant local market system has a collaborative local market culture.

ENHANCING LOCAL MARKET ASSOCIATIONS

Explore Local sees value in working toward a unified industry voice.

Eileen Kotowich notes strong working relationships with association board members and staff can facilitate conditions for a unified industry voice.

- As ex-officio board members for the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association and Alberta Farmers' Market Association, Explore Local staff provided advice and guidance on government protocols, funding programs, provincial industry issues, strategic planning and more.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see a new process to effectively engage and work with local market industry groups implemented.

CULINARY TOURISM

Explore Local supported the creation of the Alberta Culinary Tourism Alliance.

Project lead Marlene Abrams knows collaboration with Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation and other stakeholders was key to establishing the Alberta Culinary Tourism Alliance.

- Three culinary tourism workshops, attracting 125 producers, processors, chefs and stakeholders, provided momentum for the formation of the provincial Culinary Tourism Alliance.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see the Alberta Culinary Tourism Alliance work to help producers enhance industry efficiency, profitability and market access.

A high functioning Explore Local Initiative gets the job done.



*Explore Local
delivers educational
resources local
market producers
need to succeed.*

COMMUNICATIONS

Consistent messaging raised awareness for Explore Local.

Project lead Vince Ohama believes communication tools will anchor our future success.

- New initiative key messages and communication tools provided valuable, consistent messaging about Explore Local, its goals and its impact. New tools included a brochure, website, two display formats, Explore Local lunch events, as well as a quarterly e-newsletter.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see an emphasis on industry events and e-newsletters to provide stakeholders and producers targeted information and updates on Explore Local.

DATABASE PROJECT

Explore Local has a client relationship management tool.

Project lead Cindy Cuthbert knows building a strong working relationship with the Information Technology Division was instrumental to getting the job done.

- Phase 1, the database consolidation, was completed. This entailed consolidating five project databases into one and confirming accuracy of the data with more than 2,700 producer members.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see further cross referencing and follow-up as well as a staff training component.

STRATEGIC FOCUS

Explore Local secures its long term direction for the future.

Project lead Carmen Andrew sees maintaining a long-term, strategic focus as a priority for Explore Local.

- Conversations with three key stakeholders in the local market industry gave Explore Local staff strategic insight into the global industry and identified common challenges.
- Completing the Explore Local strategic plan resulted in clearer focus and direction.

What's next

- **2011/12** will see updates to the strategic plan and a continued long-term initiative focus.

For more information:

Visit www.explorelocal.ca

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