

February 11, 2009

Agriculture producers honoured for innovative business-building ideas

Winners of the 2009 Best Practices Awards celebrated at the AgChoices conference

Red Deer... Three agriculture producers from Alberta have been recognized for their innovative plans to further develop their agriculture business and strengthen the province's agriculture industry. George Groeneveld, Minister of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, announced the winners of the 2009 Best Practices Awards at the AgChoices Conference held today at the Capri Centre in Red Deer.

Kayben Farms near Okotoks, Ravenwood Farm Fresh Meats in Caroline, and Spring Creek Ranch near Vegreville will each receive a prize package valued up to \$10,000 to help them take that next step to advance their business ideas.

"Like all economic sectors, the agriculture industry continues to evolve," said Groeneveld. "The Best Practices Awards encourage producers to be pioneers of the modern age of agriculture, exploring how they can enhance or redevelop their business to address industry changes or capture growing opportunities."

"Through innovation and a lot of hard work, Canada's farmers are helping our agricultural sector prosper," said the Honourable Gerry Ritz, Federal Minister of Agriculture. "Our government congratulates this year's award winners for their personal achievements, and for serving as shining examples of best practices in Canadian agriculture," said Ritz.

Winners will be able to customize their prize package to suit their needs by choosing from a variety of prizes including computer equipment, website development, marketing consultation, agronomic services and more.

"Congratulations to our three winners and the many producers who are embracing the challenge of renewal in their business," said Groeneveld. "Your vision, enthusiasm and hard work are making our industry stronger."

This program is funded through the Agricultural Policy Framework, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative that aims to make Canada the leader in food safety, innovation and environmentally responsible agricultural production.

For more information about the awards program and the AgChoices conference, visit www.agriculture.alberta.ca/renewal.

- 30 -

Attachments: Backgrounder with winner bios.

Media inquiries may be directed to:

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Best Practices Awards Program

Across Alberta, farmers and ranchers are renewing their operations for greater future success. These actions may include growing new crops, changing how they raise livestock, adopting new systems, marketing directly to consumers, creating new products or other diversification and business strategies.

Each year agriculture producers from across Alberta are invited to submit their innovative plans to further develop their business for a chance to win a Best Practices Award. Submissions are reviewed by a panel of judges who select three winners who have demonstrated innovative approaches and the planning and implementation required to add value to their agriculture operations.

All Best Practices Awards applicants received free registration to the 2009 AgChoices conference.

2009 Winners:

- **Kayben Farms:** Claude & Judy Kolk of Kayben Farms south of Okotoks have a reputation for providing outstanding products and services. Their farm business includes landscaping, a tree nursery, prairie fruit orchard, and greenhouse. Kayben Farms plans to expand their business to include agri-tourism activities, a café and fruit processing facility in 2009.
- **Ravenwood Farm Fresh Meats:** Tamara Taylor, in partnership with her husband Mark Taylor and her parents, Dayle and Alice Murray, raise and direct-market their own farm-grown livestock through Ravenwood Farm Fresh Meats in Caroline. Their plans for expansion are to add a goat milk dairy and expand their retail store to include a butcher shop, bakery, and deli, as well as expand their product lines to include other local farm and Alberta made products.
- **Spring Creek Ranch:** The Spring Creek Ranch near Vegreville is famous for its Spring Creek Ranch Premium Beef. Kirstin Kotelko, President of Spring Creek Ranch Inc., plans to expand sales of Spring Creek Ranch branded beef by expanding the value chain which includes developing criteria to financially reward ranchers who supply the branded beef program and developing a system for efficient tracking of meat quality data.

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