



Agri-News

August 4, 2008

Shop, Eat and Experience Alberta's Local Food

The Local Market Expansion Project has grown out of a number of initiatives such as Dine Alberta, ag tourism, regional cuisine, farm direct marketing and farmers' markets. A strategic plan has been formulated around the increasing demand for products and experiences from local markets and the opportunity involved in this trend to help this sector of Alberta's agriculture industry grow and progress.

This project is intended to offer farmers opportunities to gain knowledge and skills required to fulfill these markets, broaden their market access, meet and partner with other like-minded producers and stakeholders, and ultimately capture enhanced profit at the farm gate. Industry partner groups also benefit from this project as a win-win opportunity to meet common goals and provide benefit to mutual client groups.

"There are four strategies based on consumer trends – healthy, local, green and convenient," says Sharon Stollery, business diversification, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Stony Plain. "These are trends that are really driving consumers today."

The four strategies that make up the Local Market Expansion Project include:

1. attracting new entrants to the industry and working with producers already in the industry to enhance their business skills
2. building alliances so that many smaller farms and producers can work together to maximize their success.
3. facilitating programs that drive consumer awareness – programs such as buy local or others that all members of this sector can fit under
4. identifying regulatory barriers that could impede this sector and taking steps to remedy those barriers

"There are a lot of activities associated with this project already well underway," says Stollery. "Programs such as the agri-preneur scholarship is expanding, and resource development

for food safety and pricing are being worked on. We are working with existing provincial associations and regional groups to help them form beneficial alliances. The team is also working with other partner groups, such as Travel Alberta and Growing Alberta, to develop a culinary tourism alliance that will concentrate on the burgeoning opportunities in that area."

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Research focused on consumer demand and a benchmark project to determine where this Alberta industry currently stands are underway. Knowing where the industry is at is a first step in determining its potential. The program will also address industry or regulation barriers and update guidelines; for example, the farmers' market guidelines.

"The bottom line is that there is opportunity for farmers in this growing industry segment," says Stollery. "It may be a different perspective for many farmers, but there's opportunity and there's profit to be made. There is also an opportunity for consumers who want to source local product and support local farmers."

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

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New Members Appointed to the Alberta Grain Commission

Greg Porozni, chair of the Alberta Grain Commission (AGC), is pleased to announce that three newly appointed members will begin serving on the Commission effective August 1, 2008. Alberta Agriculture Minister George Groeneveld appointed Edmund Lefsrud, Gerard Oosterhuis and D'Arcy Hilgartner to the AGC.

Ed Lefsrud farms and grows seed in the Viking area. He currently serves as president of the Canadian Seed Growers' Association and in the past has served on the board of the Alberta Branch of the Canadian Seed Growers' Association. Lefsrud was instrumental in the formation of the Seed Industry Partnership (SIP), a union of the provincial government, municipal seed plants and seed growers.

Gerard Oosterhuis farms in the Bow Island area. He has served as a board member of the Alberta Soft Wheat Commission and of the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC). Oosterhuis also serves as the chairman of the Palliser Triangle Marketing Club.

D'Arcy Hilgartner is a Camrose area grain farmer. Hilgartner has extensive experience in managing the finance and marketing aspects of the farm operation. He is also a member of the Battle River Research Group.

Lefsrud, Oosterhuis, and Hilgartner are welcome additions to the Alberta Grain Commission. Together they bring a wide array of industry knowledge and experience to the AGC table.

The mission of the AGC is to provide progressive farm-based advice to the Minister and appropriate groups to promote a prosperous, sustainable, and market-driven farm and agri-sector.

More information can be found on the AGC website at www.agiculture.alberta.ca/agg.

The other members of the AGC are:

- **Greg Porozni** - Vegreville- Farmer (Chairperson)
- **Henry Dechant** - Fairview- Farmer
- **Daniel Greene** - Carmangay- Farmer
- **Dennis Nanninga** - Barrhead- Farmer
- **Terry Young** - Lacombe- Farmer
- **Carol Bettac** - Department Member
- **John Brown** - Department Member

AGC positions were publicly advertised.

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What Do You Know About WTO?

When it comes to agriculture a global market represents opportunity. Canada is the fourth largest exporting nation. In today's global market, international trade is critical to success.

An ambitious World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement that delivers a commercially meaningful outcome is essential for the future growth and competitiveness of Canada's and Alberta's agriculture and agri-food industry.

Alberta supports an agreement that focuses on expanding market opportunities and enhancing the international competitiveness of its producers, ranchers and processors. An agreement that eliminates export subsidies and significantly reduces tariffs and trade-distorting domestic support will substantially improve market access and level the playing field for all of Canada's agriculture and agri-food industries. Once the trade agreement has been signed, the Alberta government is committed to working with all sectors of the industry to help transition to the new trade environment.

Just how important is international export to Alberta's agriculture industry:

- 97.9 per cent of Alberta's producers depend on exports
- in Canada, 92 per cent of producers, the majority in every province, depend on exports
- sales of export dependent commodities account for \$25 billion, nearly 80% of Canada's annual farm gate receipts
- as Canada's second largest international exporter of agri-food products, Alberta's exports in 2007 were \$6.6 billion
- Alberta's top five exports are wheat, live cattle, canola seed, beef products and pork

Based on an independent analysis commissioned by the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance, it is estimated that each day without a WTO agreement represents a loss of roughly

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\$10 million in potential exports for Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry. The same analysis estimates that a strong WTO agreement could mean an additional \$3 billion per year in agriculture exports for Canada, and about \$1 billion for Alberta.

An Update on WTO Talks

George Groeneveld, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, was in Geneva July 21 to 26, 2008, to represent Alberta's agriculture trade interests and advocate for a strong agreement that both levels the playing field and expands opportunities for Alberta's producers, processors and agri-food businesses. Groeneveld's meetings in Geneva, included sessions with Canada's agriculture and trade ministers and the Canadian chief negotiators, as well as agriculture ministers from other provinces and representatives of WTO member countries, which are key markets for our provincial industry. Groeneveld brought strong voice to Alberta's trade interests during a critical stage in WTO talks. At the same time as the Minister's mission, federal trade and agriculture ministers from WTO member countries were meeting at the invitation of the WTO Director General to resolve outstanding issues in the agriculture and industrial goods negotiations. While in Geneva, Groeneveld also represented the Alberta government's positions on trade issues affecting industrial goods and services.

Updates on the status of the WTO agriculture agreement can be found online at www.agriculture.alberta.ca, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's website and go to the Trade page.

Alberta's Animal Protection Act

The new Alberta Animal Health Strategy is set to be released for public consultation in August 2008. Contained within the strategy is an animal welfare component with several goals that will improve welfare of all animals in Alberta and increase the understanding among Albertans of their responsibility for assuring animal welfare.

"There are many misunderstandings when it comes to the laws surrounding animal protection in Alberta," says Adrienne Herron, livestock welfare tech transfer specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Red Deer. "For example, many people believe that only the owner of an animal can be charged or considered responsible for the welfare of the animal. In Alberta, you don't have to be the owner of an animal to be charged under the *Animal Protection Act* (APA). The APA states that any person who fails to prevent an animal from being in distress can be charged."

Animal distress, in the APA is defined as animals not being provided with adequate food, water, veterinary treatment, reasonable protection from injurious heat or cold, or if an animal is injured, sick, in pain, suffering or abused, subjected to undue hardship, privation or neglect.

This definition does not include the possible distress caused by reasonable and generally accepted practices. Animals in distress that result from an activity carried on in accordance with the regulations or in accordance with reasonable and generally accepted practices of animal care, management, husbandry, hunting, fishing, trapping, pest control or slaughter are exempt from the APA.

Fines for APA convictions are serious. The maximum fine set out in the APA is for \$20,000 and, if convicted, a prohibition order preventing the convicted person from owning animals could be issued.

"All animals including wildlife, domestic and zoo animals in Alberta are covered by the APA," says Herron. "This means that both companion animals (pets) and livestock animals are protected by the APA."

Another way Alberta's animals are receiving better protection is in the form of a special dedicated prosecutor. Moira Vane with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's regulatory services has been named the lead prosecutor on all APA related charges.

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development is responsible for managing and amending the legislation and regulations related to the APA. The organization primarily responsible for the enforcement of the APA is the Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). The ASPCA has special constables in all areas of the province investigating complaints of animal distress. If you see an animal in distress, call the toll-free, 24-hour number, 1-800-455-9003.

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Accepting Nominations for the 2008 Canadian Agri-Food Awards of Excellence

Do you know of an innovative entrepreneur in the agri-food industry? Or a young person who is a leader in the field of agriculture? If you do, why not consider nominating them for the **2008 Canadian Agri-Food Awards of Excellence**?

The awards – a joint partnership between Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair – celebrate outstanding achievement in the agriculture and agri-food sector. In particular, six categories are recognized:

1. youth leadership
2. environmental stewardship
3. awareness and education
4. innovation
5. agri-food export
6. voluntarism

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Help celebrate the diversity of Canadian agriculture and its contribution to the Canadian economy by nominating an individual or organization which has made an outstanding contribution in one of these areas.

Winners will be recognized at a luncheon at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto in November. **Nominations close September 15, 2008.**

For more information, contact Christine Moses at 613-759-7938, e-mail: mosesc@agr.gc.ca, or check the information available online at www.agr.gc.ca/cb/index_e.php?s1=n&s2=2008&page=n80718a.

Contact: *Christine Moses*
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Agri-News Briefs

Animal Health Technologists AGM

The Alberta Association of Animal Health Technologists (AAAHT), a group of professionals trained in animal care, is having its 29th annual AGM and conference at the Capri Center in Red Deer on September 19 to 21, 2008. The three-day conference includes sessions on: behavioral services, herd health management software, zoonotic diseases of swine, infection control, an update on PCV-2 disease and control, canine vector bourn diseases, mare and foal care programs, equine respiratory disease, acupuncture and chiropractic care for the equine patient, and many other topics. Special guest presenters are **Brian Keating** (keynote speaker) – Going Wild, a spirit-lifting journey into some of the planet's best wilderness locations and **Paul Isaak** who will add his special brand of hysteria and hi-jinx to the conference banquet. The AAAHT was founded to provide continuing education for the animal health technologists in Alberta and to serve, support and register those technologists. The AAAHT is a non-profit, non-union organization governed by a Board of Directors whose emphasis is on the advancement of animal health technology as a profession so that it's members may better serve the animal health and care industry. Early bird registration (before August 31, 2008) is \$325 for AAAHT members, and registration fees for members after that date and for non-members is \$375. Single day rates and banquet tickets are also available. A full conference outline and registration form are available online at www.aaht.com. For more information, contact Serena, event manager, 780-934-8664 or e-mail: serena.ma@pacificwesternevent.com.

Fall Food Safety Workshops

The Alberta Food Processors Association (AFPA) is holding several food safety workshops once again this fall.

- **Nutritional Labelling** – Calgary – September 25, 2008
- **HACCP I: Documenting Your Prerequisite Program** – Calgary – September 29 and 30, 2008
- **HACCP II: Development of Your HACCP Plan** – Calgary – October 1 to 3, 2008
- **HACCP IV: Validation and Verification of Your HACCP Plan** – Edmonton – October 14 and 15, 2008
- **HACCP V: Effective Auditing of Your HACCP Plan** – Edmonton – October 16 and 17, 2008
- **Detection and Management of Allergens** – Calgary – October 28 and 29, 2008
- **ASQ Certified HACCP Auditor** – Calgary – November 18 to 20, 2008

Full information on the courses, as well as registrations costs and registration forms are available by visiting the AFPA website at www.afpa.com/snq/train.shtml. Early registration is advised.