



Agri-News

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Rhodiola Rosea Processing Plant Opens in Thorsby

Alberta has the world's first Rhodiola rosea processing facility. Rhodiola rosea is the de-stress herb that has found a market thanks to the diligent work of Alberta producers and the support they received from the Alberta government.

Alberta Rhodiola Rosea Growers Organization (ARRGO) organized the grand opening of the ARRGO primary processing facility for Rhodiola rosea in Thorsby on October 30, 2009. The facility was officially opened by Premier Ed Stelmach and Minister of Agriculture George Groeneveld. Premier Ed Stelmach stated that as a former agriculture minister, he was especially delighted to see this project and this facility open.

"The town of Thorsby has kept a keen eye on the developments at the facility over the past few months, and the Mayor Allan Gee, along with several other town officials, have made several eager visits to note the progress," says Judy Zastre, ARRGO director. "ARRGO worked hard to complete the facility for this year's harvest since it has already sold all of its crops through 2012."

Research for the growth and commercialization of Rhodiola rosea was done in-province, and ARRGO has worked very hard to establish a market for their product. "It took a team of over 75 professionals, working on everything from learning to cultivate the crop all the way through to designing the product that would be in consumers' medicine cabinets, to help ARRGO achieve the results we see today," said Dr. Susan Lutz, senior development officer with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's Functional Foods and Natural Health Products branch and the Alberta Agriculture project lead for the Rhodiola rosea project.

This new facility represents growth in rural Alberta and will help growers process this new crop, and it also represents growth in agriculture employment in the province.

"The world-wide demand continues to grow and ARRGO requires many more Alberta growers of Rhodiola rosea in order to meet the demand for the root," says Zastre. "ARRGO is the only known commercial group growing and processing Rhodiola rosea in the world. Rhodiola rosea, a medicinal herb, used extensively overseas in Europe and Asia, is just becoming

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known to North Americans. *Rhodiola rosea* is known scientifically as an adaptogen and works with the body to stabilize stress reactions and improve energy.

“Although it is not native to Alberta, *Rhodiola rosea* is well suited to grow in Alberta, particularly in the areas north of Red Deer or at higher elevations and can be found growing wild in a few locations in Canada and in other climatically similar regions such as Siberia and Norway.”

For further information on *Rhodiola rosea*, contact ARRG0 at 780-789-3301 or e-mail info@arrgo.ca

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Summit Meeting on Watershed Issues

Watershed leaders from around the province gathered in Camrose on October 26 to 28, 2009, at the annual Watershed Planning & Advisory Council (WPAC) Summit. Hosted by the Battle River Watershed Alliance (BRWA), the summit featured a variety of speakers including Alberta Environment Minister, Rob Renner, and Alberta Environment Assistant Deputy Minister, Rob Penny.

“The discussion on watershed issues was lively,” says BRWA manager, David Samm. “This Summit always provides an excellent opportunity for leaders from all of Alberta’s major watersheds to gather and share information on current and emerging issues.”

The Summit featured a presentation by University of Alberta Professor, Dr Peter Boxall, who discussed the importance of supplying ecological goods and services from wetland restoration and other agricultural beneficial management practices. Additional speakers included David Hill, from the Alberta Water Research Institute, Dr. Lars Hallstrom, from the Alberta Centre for Sustainable Development and Terry Sly, from the Alberta Water Council and others who talked about fund raising, public participation and cumulative effects management. Presentations were also made on Alberta’s major watersheds, including the Battle, Beaver, Bow, North Saskatchewan, Red Deer, Oldman and Milk rivers, as well as Lesser Slave Lake and the South East Alberta watersheds.

“The Summit was a unique chance to collaboratively discuss the provincial **Water For Life Strategy** with key watershed partners, and discuss watershed issues and the Government of Alberta’s Land Use Framework,” says Samm.

As part of the Government of Alberta’s **Water For Life Strategy**, WPACs have formed in nine of the province’s 11 major watersheds, with the last two WPACs in the process of being formed.

“WPACs report on the state of the watershed and develop integrated watershed management plans,” notes Samm. “They also engage all levels of government, stakeholders, and the public in watershed management and provide a forum for discussion of watershed issues.”

For more information, go online to www.waterforlife.alberta.ca

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Funding for Nursery Landscape and Greenhouse Vegetable Production

In order to assist farmers in the marketing of crops and livestock, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) initiated the Advance Payment Program (APP) as a financial loan guarantee that provides easier access to credit through cash advances. This means improved cash flow throughout the year, since producers are able to meet their financial obligations and benefit from the best market conditions. In addition, the cost to farmers is usually less than alternative market funding.

The highlights of the APP program include the first \$100,000 being interest-free, with a maximum total cash advance of \$400,000 in any given crop year. Any monies loaned over and above the interest-free portion bears an interest rate of bank prime. Therefore, significant savings can accrue for the producer, since the loan is well below market interest rates.

Also of advantage to producers is the relatively simple and straight-forward application process. There are some caveats attached to the APP program, such as maximizing the cash advance at the lesser of the government portion of a producer’s CAIS/Agristability reference margin (66.5 per cent X reference margin) or a producer’s specific amount based on the number of units to be sold. In addition, farmers must repay their loans as the agricultural product is sold, and they must be able to demonstrate that there was an actual sale of the product.

The APP program is now available for Alberta producers. Applications became available in October, 2009 and must be postmarked by February 28, 2010. The APP Program for Alberta producers is administered by ACC Farmers’ Financial, and more information can be found on the ACC website at www.accfarmersfinancial.ca or call ACC toll-free at 1-888-278-8807.

Contact: *ACC Farmers’ Financial*
1-888-278-8807

2009 4-H Hall of Fame Inductees Announced

Alberta's 4-H program is recognizing Melvin Clark and Ellen Bonde for their outstanding community leadership and dedication to Alberta's youth by inducting them into the 4-H Hall of Fame.

"Our 4-H programs rely on the many volunteers who give their time, energy and talents tirelessly to clubs across Alberta," said George Groeneveld, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. "Melvin and Ellen are prime examples of the high quality of leadership that inspires our youth, and fosters the next generation of leaders in the province's agriculture industry and rural communities."

After reviewing this year's nominations, it was agreed that Melvin Clark and Ellen Bonde both exhibit the level of involvement and exceptional qualities that Hall of Fame recipients are known for. Melvin has been in a leadership role for more than 44 years in the Sturgeon 4-H District and continues to be an active leader. Ellen, who currently sits on the Alberta 4-H Council, has been involved in the Rocky District for more than 31 years and is the driving force behind the foreign exchanges to Japan, Finland, Korea and Taiwan.

Melvin and Ellen join the ranks of 71 Alberta men and women inducted into the 4-H Hall of Fame since it began in 1971. They will be officially honoured during an induction ceremony at the annual 4-H Leaders' Conference in Red Deer, January 9, 2010.

Each year, Alberta 4-H Hall of Fame inductees are recognized for their outstanding contributions to 4-H program development and/or its members, and leadership at the local, regional, provincial, and at times, national level. Candidates are nominated by members or leaders from their local clubs and councils, and nominations must be backed by community references.

For more information about Alberta's 4-H Hall of Fame, visit www.4h.ab.ca.

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Local Food Workshops Targeting New Entrants

Local food and local food economy are all-the-buzz in the media. Sometimes the jargon associated with this industry changes so quickly that it's hard to keep up. So what does this all mean to Alberta food producers?

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Growing Forward and the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association are hosting a series of **Explore...Local Foods, Local Markets** one-day workshops this fall and winter to help demystify what it means to sell into local markets.

These workshops will be of interest to Alberta businesses that are:

- new to selling direct to consumers
- intrigued about accessing new markets
- excited about new profit opportunities
- curious about how you and your family fit.

"We will be giving an overview of what it means to sell locally," says Bert Denning, business development officer with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's local market expansion initiative. "We will share industry trends, talk about the different marketing venues, give an overview of regulations, insurance and food safety requirements, provide information on different production practices and share resources. We want entrepreneurs who are new to this industry to understand the basics so they know where to target their additional research to help them make informed decisions."

Don Gregorwich, executive assistant with the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association says, "Alberta consumers are actively searching for local food and rural experiences whether that be on-farm, attending farmers' markets or local venues such as restaurants, bed and breakfast operations or teahouses. Farm direct marketing offers a wonderful opportunity to start a home-based business related to meeting these consumer demands. These workshops will give a quick, accurate and complete picture of the opportunity that awaits."

The workshops will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in four locations:

Taber on November 26, 2009

Rycroft on December 2, 2009

Red Deer on January 20, 2010

Vegreville on January 27, 2010

To register for these workshops, contact the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association toll-free at 1-800-661-2642.

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Following in February 2010, there will be a second workshop series titled **Expanding...Local Foods, Local Markets**. These four workshops will be held in four different counties in the Edmonton capital region and will target individuals who are already involved in selling into local markets.

“We want to give entrepreneurs more in-depth information on some of the market channels that were introduced in the Explore workshops, as well as a chance to hear directly from producers selling in those channels what it takes to be

successful,” says Bill Reynolds, local food/ag tourism development officer with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development’s local market expansion initiative.

Details on this workshop series will be made available soon.

This project is sponsored by Growing Forward, a federal-provincial initiative.

Contact: *Eileen Kotowich*
780-853-8223

Agri-News Briefs

Capturing Feed Grain & Forage Opportunities 2009

The 4th biennial conference, Capturing Feed Grain & Forage Opportunities 2009 is being held in Red Deer on December 9 and 10, 2009. Livestock, feed producers and industry agronomists alike will find the conference agenda has been designed to address many of the challenges currently being faced. Topics such as business arrangements, marketing, animal nutrition, managing risk, reducing days on feed and new programs available for the industry are all included on the information packed agenda. For further information or to register, contact Chinook Applied Research Association at 403-664-3777 or contact Stephanie Kosinski toll-free at the Ag-Info Centre at 310-FARM (3276).

Irrigated Crop Production Update

The biennial **Irrigated Crop Production Update** is being held in Lethbridge on January 11 and 12, 2010. Of interest to irrigated crops producers and crop advisors, the agenda includes presentations on agronomic management, pest management, irrigated crops, irrigation equipment, water management, and financial management. For more information contact: Shelley Woods, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, phone 403-381-5839, e-mail shelley.a.woods@gov.ab.ca. To register, contact Bev McIlroy, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, at 403-381-5171 or e-mail bev.mcilroy@gov.ab.ca

Leasing Cropland in Alberta

Landlords with cropland to lease and farmers looking to expand their operation without purchasing land, will find the fifth edition of **Leasing Cropland in Alberta** worth reading. Included in this 50-page book is a sample lease agreement as well as information on:

- different types of leases
- the terms used in lease agreements
- negotiating a lease
- legal issues of leasing
- tax implications
- rental rates

Copies of this book (Agdex 812-5) can be purchased for \$12 by calling Alberta Agriculture’s Publications Office toll-free at 1-800-292-5697. The book is also available online at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications

Agriculture Statistics Yearbook 2008

The **Agriculture Statistics Yearbook**, is a reference document and a principal source of information for users of statistics on the Alberta agri-food industry. The dynamic trends occurring in agricultural and the food and beverage processing sector are presented in the Yearbook’s statistical tables and charts, providing a current and historical perspective. This priced publication is \$10 and can be purchased online at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications or by calling Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development’s Publications Office toll-free at 1-800-292-5697.