



# Agri-News

December 21, 2009

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## AgChoices 2010 Conference

Alberta farmers and ranchers who want to take their business in a new direction are invited to attend **AgChoices 2010** being held in Red Deer on February 10, 2010. This annual one-day conference will explore business opportunities and strategies to position farm businesses to meet changing market and consumer demands.

“The theme for this year’s conference is **See the Market. Seize the Opportunity**,” says Jodi Murphy with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. “Leading-edge speakers and a farm panel discussion will stimulate thinking about how to connect your farm business to a world of market opportunities. AgChoices features high-impact speakers with wide-ranging personal and academic expertise in business development.”

- Ted Bilyea, food industry consultant, Toronto, ON, will address the global picture of agriculture, trends and opportunities in agriculture and how that may impact Alberta producers
- Ron Witherspoon, farm business consultant, Regina, SK, will talk about how Alberta primary producers can position their businesses to capitalize on what consumers want in the global and Canadian marketplaces
- Kay Olsen, leadership consultant, Medicine Hat, AB, will introduce participants to the philosophy of appreciative inquiry and to a process that will help them turn challenges into opportunities and bring a positive lens to new ideas
- a panel of four Alberta producers will discuss how they evolved their farm business, the changes they made and challenges they faced along the way
- George Groeneveld, Alberta’s Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, will speak about the Alberta government’s vision for a strong and sustainable agriculture and food industry

“The Ag Info Market’s idea-packed, rotating information sessions are back for **AgChoices 2010**,” says Murphy. “Participants can choose from 15 topics that include: local food market opportunities, best export markets for barley, value chain tools and resources, ‘must do’ management strategies for your farm, and many others.”

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

The registration fee for **AgChoices 2010** is \$95 per person (GST included) or \$75 each when two or more people from the same family or business attend. Student registration is \$45. The registration deadline is February 5, 2010. Register by calling toll-free 1-800-387-6030, or download a registration form online at [www.agriculture.alberta.ca/agchoices](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca/agchoices)

Contact: *Jodi Murphy*  
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## **New Premier's Award Celebrates Healthy Food for Albertans**

A new Premier's award program will recognize food processors, producers and researchers for their work in creating healthy foods for Albertans.

The **Alberta Food for Health Awards – a Premier's Award** aims to stimulate and encourage the creation and development of healthy food production and research.

"We want to recognize the outstanding work being done by our food processors, producers and researchers in providing better food choices for Albertans and for consumers throughout the world," said Premier Ed Stelmach. "This new award program will help to promote the healthy food products that are available right here in Alberta."

This Premier's award program will recognize innovation in five categories: healthy food sold through farmers' markets, retail operations, food service, and vending machines, as well as research on healthy food products or processes. The winner in each category will receive \$10,000 to be used toward eligible business expenditures.

Complete award criteria and application requirements are available at [www.AlbertaFoodforHealthAwards.com](http://www.AlbertaFoodforHealthAwards.com).

The deadline to submit an application is February 1, 2010 and award recipients will be announced in March 2010.

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## **Landowner Sessions Available in Your Area**

The Farmers' Advocate Office (FAO) is embarking on a series of energy information sessions, scheduled for the winter and spring of 2009/2010. This project is intended to help landowners understand the life cycle of energy activity as it relates to their surface land base and be proactive in managing risk associated with energy activity. This project is supported under the Growing Forward initiative which is a new commitment from Canada's Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Agriculture to develop an Agricultural Policy Framework that better positions the agriculture industry for success.

"The FAO is partnering with local groups in each location to host the upcoming sessions," says Carol Goodfellow, assistant Farmers' Advocate - land and energy. "General information sessions can be followed up with detailed interactive sessions if requested. The advanced interactive sessions are intended for those who have attended the general information session and wish to expand on risk mitigation specific to their land."

Over the past month the FAO has presented the *101 Session* in Provost, Camrose, Rycroft and Valleyview. Information on dates, locations, local contacts and registration forms will be available on the Farmers' Advocate website at [www.farmersadvocate.gov.ab.ca](http://www.farmersadvocate.gov.ab.ca) and through the local contact person in each of the communities.

These sessions can also be requested for presentation at group annual meetings or even regular meetings if time permits. The FAO anticipates working closely with landowner groups, synergy groups, agricultural societies and associations or any rural gathering. The sessions are set up to accommodate any group size or variety of interests. Also, the question and answer portion can be customized for each group.

"If you let us know your needs we will do our best to suit them," says Goodfellow. "Don't miss out on the opportunity to have a session in your area!"

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## **Have You Completed Your Planning for Next Year?**

With harvest complete and winter here, it is time to evaluate last year's business and plan for next year. It's a time when producers can check to see if they are on the right track or need to make a few changes.

"Never guess when evaluating your business success or lack of success," says Kathy Bosse, new ventures specialist with

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. “The facts are those that come from your financial information. Take the time to go over and analyse this information. If you are uncertain about options, be sure to seek out professional help.”

The following steps may help producers evaluate their information and assist them in making an informed decision:

- **define the situation** – be realistic about how the business is doing, remembering that not everything happens immediately
- **look at alternatives** – think about all the different ways a business could change, decide if some fine-tuning can be done to the business to take advantage of new products or markets or if some of the activities should stop – do the ‘homework’ before making changes
- **take action** – develop an implementation plan, including a timeline, marketing plan, management structure and financial plan
- **evaluate** – any change to the business should always be evaluated so successes can be correctly attributed to changes that have been made

“There are no easy answers to business success,” says Bosse. “The one guarantee is that you will spend a lot of time and energy in the development and operation of your business, so it is important that you enjoy what you do.”

Helpful tips for the journey on the road to a successful business:

- produce what the customer wants not what you think they want or what you like
- create a high quality product
- provide a high quality service – good customer service can make or break your business
- start small and grow naturally
- make decisions based on good records
- establish a loyal customer base
- provide more than just a product or service – provide an experience
- keep informed – businesses have to constantly change to keep up with what the customer wants
- plan for the future – set goals for your business and establish a plan of action to achieve them

“Planning and evaluating are very important to the success or potential success of your business – be sure you allow time,” says Bosse. “If you need help in analyzing your business be sure you seek out professional assistance.”

Contact: *Kathy Bosse*  
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## ***A Discussion of Horsemanship for Women at the 2010 HBOC***

Karen Scholl, who developed a horsemanship program especially for women, is one of the presenters at the **2010 Horse Breeders and Owners Conference** (HBOC), which is being held in Red Deer on January 15 to 17, 2010.

“While riding and first-hand experience were her starting point for horse education, Scholl’s formal education began by earning degree in equine science,” says Teresa van Bryce, manager of Horse Industry Association of Alberta. “Scholl attended extensive symposiums and seminars from equine professionals and clinicians, eventually landing at a seminar with Pat Parelli in 1989. She became an instructor in 1995, and taught Parelli Natural Horsemanship courses and clinics for over 10 years. When Parelli moved his operation to southern Colorado, Scholl became president of Parelli Natural Horsemanship. In 2001, she turned her focus to teaching.”

“After all three levels of the Savvy System were established and key corporate objectives were met, I realized that my dream of teaching was not being realized,” says Scholl. “Most people know the feeling of craving more time with horses, and though the daily connection with Pat and Linda Parelli was an invaluable experience, I kept longing to get back to helping people realize their dream with horses and sharing with others what’s been shared with me.”

In 2002, Scholl developed her perspective on *Horsemanship for Women*, addressing the mental and physical challenges that many women face. Most clinicians are men who have vast amounts of experience riding difficult or young horses, but Scholl finds that women appreciate learning from someone that can relate to how they feel.

The 2010 HBOC is packed with presentations on horse health, training, nutrition, breeding, horsemanship and horse industry business concerns. In addition to being a unique opportunity to listen to and learn from a full slate of world renowned horsemen and horsewomen, event sponsors will be on-hand during the weekend to exhibit and talk about their equine products and services.

Conference pre-registration is \$95 per person and cost for additional individuals from the same farm is \$80. Registration at the door will be \$95 per person. Registration includes a copy of the conference proceedings.

For more information about the 2010 conference, contact van Bryce at 403-420-5949 or Les Burwash, manager equine programs, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, at 403-948-8541. Conference information is also available on the association’s website at [www.albertahorseindustry.ca](http://www.albertahorseindustry.ca) or by calling the association at 403-420-5949.

Contact: *Teresa van Bryce*  
403-420-5949

## **Agri-News Briefs**

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### **Irrigation Conference**

The 2010 irrigation conference, being held in Lethbridge on January 11 and 12, 2010, features an excellent line-up of 24 speakers who will discuss all aspects of irrigated crop production. Registration is limited to the first 300 registrants, so early registration is recommended. Registration fee is \$85 per person if made before January 4, 2010, and \$100 per person after January 4, 2010, if space is available. The registration fee also includes coffee breaks/snacks, lunches and a social mixer. To register, contact Bev McIlroy at 403-381-5171 (Visa and MasterCard accepted).

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### **Managing Excellent in Agriculture 2010**

The Canadian Farm Business Management Council is hosting the 2010 Managing Excellence in Agriculture Conference in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, on February 3 to 5, 2010. Innovative farmers from the very large to the very small are finding their niche in the complex mosaic of Canadian agriculture. Success is not confined to one category or one business model. The continually evolving market is creating opportunities for farm managers who are perceptive, creative and nimble. Whether you're the head of a large farming corporation or the successor of a small family farm, the conference is an event you don't want to miss! For more information, an agenda and registration information, visit [www.farmcentre.com](http://www.farmcentre.com) or call Melissa Dumont, CFBMC, toll-free 1-888-232-3262. Early bird deadline is January 13th, 2010. Members of the CFBMC are eligible for a 15 per cent discount on registration rates.

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### **Getting Into ... Local Foods Local Markets**

The Local Market Expansion Initiative is hosting a one-day workshop in Red Deer on January 20, 2010, and in Vegreville on January 27, 2010. The workshop will be of special interest for Albertans who are intrigued about selling into local markets, curious about whether local marketing is a good fit for their business and those who are excited about capitalizing on the opportunity local foods and local markets present. Topics being covered at the workshop include:

- local food trends and an overview of statistics on local markets
- different marketing channels
- opportunities and challenges of the industry
- regulations and barriers
- insurance and food safety
- alternate production practices
- resources and people who can help
- presentations by real producers established in the industry
- check list – is this a good fit for your family or business

Cost of the workshop is \$20 per person or \$30 per farm unit/couple. Prepayment is required. To register, call Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association at 1-800-661-2642. For more information, contact Bert Denning, business development officer with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, at 780-674-8247 or Eileen Kotowich, farmers' market specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, at 780-853-8223.