

Using technology in your farm business

Today's agri-professional has greater access to business building support than ever before. From the comfort of your laptop you can choose from a variety of funding options and revolutionary products all designed to improve your day-to-day farm operation and increase your profitability. Following is a selection of websites which offer everything from financial assistance and online classes to downloadable applications, all designed to help you navigate your way to a more successful future.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Programs and Services for Rural Canadians

Offered by the Government of Canada, this selection of programs covers everything from cash advances to food research and development, to market competitiveness strategies. It is your one-stop-shop for information on federal programs, services and contacts that can help you to streamline your business and improve your bottom line. Visit www.agr.gc.ca/eng/programs-and-services to browse available options.

AgPal Program and Service Finder

This is a web-based discovery tool developed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) to help farmers and others in the agriculture and agri-business sector find the federal, provincial, and territorial programs and services that specifically apply to them.

Wherever you're based in Canada, there are local partners and government organizations in place to help you with the assistance and information you need—but sometimes finding the right one can be a challenge. AgPal was designed to put all of that information at your fingertips. Visit <http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/programs-and-services/agpal-program-and-service-finder> to get started.



Agriculture Apps & Software

TractorPal Inventory and Maintenance App

This handy app keeps inventory and maintenance records for all your personal agriculture machines and attachments, including cars and trucks of all brands. TractorPal enables you to log all of your large and small machinery and automobiles including tractors, pickups, lawn mowers, cars, combines, sprayers, loaders, skid-loaders, backhoes, attachments, and more. You can also record each item's maintenance (e.g. changing oil, filters, tires,

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

and irregular repairs), and the app will remind you when service is required. Available for Android, iPad and iPhone devices. You can download the free trial, or purchase the full version for \$9.99 at <http://tractorpal.com/>.

Agri Farm Management

This cloud-based farm management software helps farmers improve their productivity and profitability. It enables you to plan, monitor and analyze all the activities on your farm: track finances including seasonal workers and machinery, even monitor the weather and detect pests. Download the free 14-day trial version, or read more about

it at <http://www.agrivi.com/farm-management-software/>.

FarmFan App

Connect with casual farmers' market shoppers via e-mail and text messages—remind them of opening times, products available, and reward them with discounts or loyalty points.

It's a fun way to stay connected and encourage visitors to your local farmers' market. To find out more about how it works, visit <http://www.farmfanapp.com/info>.

AgSquared: software system for small farmers

AgSquared is an online record-keeping

platform that is designed for small-scale mixed vegetable growers. It started on a simple premise: that better plans, streamlined management, and more complete records can help make farms more productive, more profitable and more sustainable.

AgSquared includes a set of planning, management, record keeping, and analysis tools that work together to help your farm run more smoothly. Your seasonal crop plan transforms into your daily task list; your task list serves as the starting point for your records; and your records become the foundation for the next year's crop plan. Sound interesting? Visit <http://www.agsquared.com/> for more information. ●

On-the-spot payment options from Moneris

In our spring issue we discussed various remote payment devices available for today's tech-savvy entrepreneurs. These two devices from Moneris are additional options in the same vein.

The **Moneris Payd** device is similar to SquareUp's Square: it plugs into your smart phone, the customer's credit card is swiped through, and payment and e-mail receipt options are managed on the screen of your smart phone. The Payd device accepts up to three credit

cards (MasterCard, Visa and American Express) but does not accept bank debit cards. There is no monthly fee to use the Payd device, but a 2.65% per-transaction fee is charged.

The **Payd Pro** device is about the size of a smart phone. In addition to accepting the three credit cards, the Payd Pro also processes bank debit cards and includes the e-mail receipt generating option.

Fees are \$20 per month plus the 2.65% credit card transaction fee, but there is no charge for *Interac* debit transactions. The monthly fee is lower if the vendor chooses the "insert card" payment option rather than manually punching in the card number. Because the insert function uses chip

technology the customer does not have to sign for the purchase. The Payd Pro connects by Bluetooth to your cell phone so you can e-mail or text the purchase receipt to the customer; and the Payd Pro app on your cell phone offers a report function that allows the vendor to confirm transactions occurred.

One satisfied user we spoke to reports that the Payd Pro device has allowed her to really expand product sales at shows. At the last show she attended, she estimated her minimum daily sales total at \$2,500, with approximately a 50/50 split of cash and debit/credit sales. Without the e-payment option she estimates she would have lost about 25% of her total daily sales.

For more information, or to register for either device, visit www.getpayd.com. ●



The Moneris Payd device (far left) attaches to your smart phone. The Payd Pro is a hand-held device that also connects via Bluetooth to your cell phone to access the internet, and has its own interface for inputting sales data.

BC2016: NAFDMA is Coming to Vancouver

Jump on the 31st Annual Bus to Learning

Up to 1,000 of the continent's top farm direct marketers will be at the 2016 North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) convention January 31 through February 5, 2016 in Vancouver and Abbotsford.

This international event returns to Canada for only the fourth time in its 31 year history. Its last Canadian destination was Grow West in Calgary in February, 2007.

More than 40% of Grow West participants said their farm income increased by over \$20,000. Not bad for a three or five day investment of time that will leave you wired, tired and inspired for change.

Visit www.farmersinspired.com starting December 1 to sign up for the all-inclusive Ultimate Networkers Package and immerse yourself in five days of in-depth learning through the highly acclaimed bus tour farm visits, educational sessions, workshops and a Live Business Exchange trade show. Or choose the three day Education Program Package.

The Bus Tour for the 2016 NAFDMA Convention's Ultimate Networkers will be a unique experience of learning and camaraderie. Pick your learning focus: retail, production, education or entertainment. Jump on your chosen bus

and visit world-class farm markets and unique ag-tourism operations as they highlight their farming roots, share new ways to increase profits using the strong values of integrity and authenticity and showcase business strategies that work.

The time spent on the buses between stops is designed to help you get the most



out of your touring experience. Learn about your fellow travellers during the introductions, share ideas and take-aways from the tour stops in facilitated discussions and take part in team building activities that you can bring home to build the team you need.

Granville Island is a featured visit for Ultimate Networkers. Browse the wide variety of art, craft and specialty stores.

Take in the crown jewel of the Island, the Public Market, which hosts a diverse array of high quality, handmade and local products. Visit the Kids Market to gain inspiration for your own business from over 25 shops, services and activities geared toward children and their families.

NAFDMA's educational program offers attendees the valuable knowledge of its peer-members and industry leaders through general keynote sessions, concurrent breakout sessions, and a variety of both on- and off-site workshops to help enhance your smart business practices and provide fresh ideas for continued business growth. Choose from five concurrent sessions each day that discuss the latest trends in farming, food, and fun including areas of business management, marketing, technology, and a spotlight on the tour hosts.

The Live Business Exchange at the annual convention is your face-to-face opportunity to experience in a trade show setting the innovative products and services that professionals in the industry have to offer. Finding out about new products and services to advance business back home is one of the key purposes of attending the convention. ●



We've got a Webinar for you!

Webinars posted on the Explore Local website offer operators good business information on diverse topics.

Browse upcoming webinars on page 4, or check out previously recorded sessions at www1.agric.gov.ab.ca

Upcoming Events

WEBINAR SERIES

EXPLORE LOCAL BUSINESS GROWTH (case story)

Dec. 8, 9 AM MST, Free

Andrea and Jeff Cleland have owned and operated Arber Greenhouses in Wetaskiwin for over 10 years. Given constraints on their property, the Clelands have been forced to grow better instead of bigger and will discuss how they've diversified and grown their operation in spite of these obstacles.

Registration link: <http://bit.ly/1Nhk2Rx>

THE BUMBLE BEETS WAY

JAN 12, 9 AM MST, FREE

Four years ago, Sarah Preston of Bumble Beets Farm made the decision to start a CSA on her farm near Tofield. She started small by testing her CSA on a handful of friends, and grew each year. Sarah will talk about getting started with CSA, growing a customer base, balancing production with marketing, and keeping it all going year after year.

Registration link: <https://albertaagriculture.webex.com/albertaagriculture/onstage/g.php?MTID=e39ab62590347ec3549c9c34757b84562>

WORKSHOP SERIES

HORTSNACKS AT NIGHT: COST OF PRODUCTION

Times vary per location, \$15 (incl. dinner), DEC 8, Red Hat Co-op, (Redcliff), DEC 9, Arber Greenhouses, (Wetaskiwin), DEC 10, Grande Prairie Provincial Building, (Grande Prairie)

Erin Pirro of Farm Credit East will dive into the issue of cost of production, calculating it in your operation and

how to address a multitude of production scenarios.

HORTSNACKS AT NIGHT: HUMAN RESOURCES

7-9 PM FREE (snacks provided)

JAN 12 (Okotoks), JAN 13 (Wetaskiwin), JAN 20 (Fairview)

Kristen Cumming (Cantos Performance Management) is passionate about agriculture and small business human resources in Alberta. She'll be sharing current trends in performance management including goal setting, providing feedback and generating engagement.

PRICING PRINCIPLES: MOVING TO RETAIL

9:00 AM - 3:30 PM, \$25 incl. GST per person (incl. lunch, max. 15 ppl)

JAN 12 (Leduc), JAN 14 (Airdrie)

Obtain a basic understanding of changes required to your pricing strategy when moving from farm direct to retail markets. You will learn how to price your products for profit, understand the components of pricing for the retail market and discover retail buyers' needs.

For more information contact: Jan Warren, jan.warren@gov.ab.ca or 403-381-5844 (toll-free in AB, dial 310-0000 then the number).

MARKETING MADE EASY

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM \$25 (incl. lunch)

JAN 20 (Fort Saskatchewan)

This workshop examines selling products at Alberta approved farmers' markets and beyond. Learn strategies for creating a lasting first impression, identifying your target clients and making them choose you. Discover

tools and insights for marketing, merchandising and displays. Learn why social media is important and how to use it to increase profile and profitability.

For more information contact: Delores Serafin, delores.serafin@gov.ab.ca or 780-427-4611 (toll-free in AB, dial 310-0000 then the number).

FARM DIRECT MARKETING FORUM

JAN 21 (Stony Plain) 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM \$25 incl. GST (incl. lunch)

An open forum for those interested in starting or growing a farm direct marketing food operation that have more questions than answers. Bring your questions about food regulations, business start-up, pricing and more!

For more information: Cindy Cuthbert, cindy.cuthbert@gov.ab.ca or 780-538-5287 (toll-free in AB, dial 310-0000 then the number).

SOCIAL MEDIA BOOTCAMP

9:30 AM - 4:30 PM, \$25 (incl. lunch)

FEB 2 (Lethbridge); FEB 4 (Grande Prairie)

Can't tell Twitter from LinkedIn? Never logged on or created an account before? Megan Madden of Southpaw Communications will cover social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Minimal pre-course will be required. Optional follow-up webinar available.

For more information contact: Dustin Morton, dustin.morton@gov.ab.ca or 403-742-7571 (toll-free in AB, dial 310-0000 then the number).

For more information on any of these events, visit explorelocal.ca and click on the "Events" tab.

Field Notes

is published up to four times per year and is available online at explorelocal.ca. For further information about anything you've read here, or to be included on our email list, please contact Robyn Berg at robyn.berg@gov.ab.ca.