



Field Notes

Helping You Succeed • Volume 6 Issue 2 • Fall 2016

2016 NAFDMA Convention a great success

Of the over 200 attendees at the *31st Annual NAFDMA (North American Farm Direct Marketing Association) Convention* held in February, nine Alberta entrepreneurs were there thanks in part to a Participant Sponsorship Program (PMP) offered by Alberta Agriculture and Forestry and *Growing Forward 2* (GF2).

Under this one-time program, successful applicants were eligible for reimbursement of up to \$2,000 (75 percent) of their 2016 NAFDMA Convention fee. Acceptance in the program was based upon the successful completion of an application form.

The goal of the program was to enable Alberta farm direct marketing producers and agri-tourism operators to attend the conference and transfer the knowledge gained to their operations and to other operators in the province in an effort to increase the Alberta farm direct and agri-tourism industry.

The nine attendees were Kreg Alde, Broken Tine Orchard; Amy Mifflin and Kelly Board, Prairie Gardens; Veronica Zdrodowski, Shady Lane Estate; Karen Shaw, Kayben Farms; Steven Souto, Steve and Dan's Fresh Fruit; Blaine Staples, Jungle Farm; and Joe and Helen Doef, Doef's Greenhouse.

The Convention, held in February 2016, consisted of a bus tour that guided participants through various agri-businesses in the



The Alberta attendees take a bus tour break.

Vancouver and Abbotsford, B.C. area.

Over three full days the bus took participants from Langley to Granville Island and from Pitt Meadows to Sumas. Attendees made connections and gained knowledge from a variety of entrepreneurs, including craft brewers, diversified agri-tourism operators, multi-generational on-farm retailers, vintners and farmers' market vendors.

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Three of the many stops made on the NAFDMA bus tour. For details about the 2017 convention, please visit www.farmersinspired.com.

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In addition to the first-hand experiences of the bus tour, timely and targeted educational sessions provided insights on everything from selling local food items at farm concessions, to creating new profit-making areas like on-farm restaurants or even daycares.

Tips on reducing theft on the farm, repurposing old products into profits and ways to increase your businesses' exposure and profitability through social media were also touched upon.

Feedback

Following the conference, the nine sponsored delegates were asked to provide feedback on their experience.

Would you recommend the convention to other Alberta farm direct or agri-tourism operators?

- It was a great experience and learning opportunity; from networking, to learning how to properly market your business.
- I would highly recommend attending. This was my first conference and I was amazed at the diversity, sharing and experiences of the program.
- Although I have much experience in the field of direct marketing at farmers' markets (40 plus years), I'm still learning from leading experiences such as these NAFDMA conferences.
- The information and feedback I received from both the sessions and other operators was invaluable.

Did your participation in the Convention help you to achieve your business goals?

- Networking was one of the most useful components and I got to meet several (operators with) businesses very similar to mine. It allowed us to compare our experiences and even in some cases, help co-promote each other.
- Our business goals for 2016 have been

EVENT TAKE-AWAYS

Overall, the conference was deemed a resounding success by all who attended. Some of the most effective lessons learned included:

Consumers want to connect to producers through believable, relatable, authentic and compelling farm stories.

Capitalize the experience: plan to the last detail.

Partner up. Create connections and promote your partners.

Upsell with product signs, digital displays, dynamic pricing structures and unique bundling.

Avoid over diversification. Do everything you do really well.

New products, new ideas: frozen smoothie fruit blends; apple blossom pastries, porch chairs, photo shoot rentals and sweet corn pizza.

A snack bar drives store sales. Adding a snack bar can triple product sales.

Be relevant to the lives of your consumers. Educate, educate, educate.

Use innovation to overcome challenges: space-limited expansions, structure options, parking, terrain and layout obstacles, labour, product waste.

To hear more about the NAFDMA experience, register for the Explore Local webinar 9am, October 12.

enhanced by attending the conference in Vancouver, B.C. We intend to increase our exposure to potential clients/customers using social media and traditional advertising.

- I hope to increase on-farm events, which value-add the produce we grow on our farm. We will investigate a cottage winery, as we saw that many farms were producing excellent fruit wines with berries from their farms.
- There are so many new ideas that I am definitely going to apply this season.
- I came out of NAFDMA pumped and excited, ready to teach my staff new ways of dealing with situations and complaints.

Did you, or do you plan to, apply or share your learnings in your operation?

- I will be applying a long list of learnings to our operation immediately and as budget can allow, I will continue to add into our business.
- We sent two delegates to the conference in Vancouver. They have returned and have shared their experiences, insights, contacts and pictures with other members of the company.
- I will apply my learnings directly in my strategic planning, and day-to-day execution of our activities on the farm. For example, I now have a strategy to turn a customer complaint into a robust system on improving customer service, and our staff training program.
- We will greatly improve our on-farm value-added food service sales by 50 per cent by adding field to fork dinners. Our goal is to have one booked every weekend.
- Yes we will be using the information from the sessions to select a POS system for our farm. This will help us to track customers and get better information about the nature of our sales as well as track inventory. ●

Treating farm animals humanely

It's not a pleasant scenario, but sometimes farm animals can be injured or develop health conditions that may require emergency treatment, and in the event they are unfit for travel, even immediate slaughter.

When such situations arise, it is important to consider the welfare of the animal and act in the most humane way possible to mitigate suffering.

There are three options available for dealing humanely with these animals:

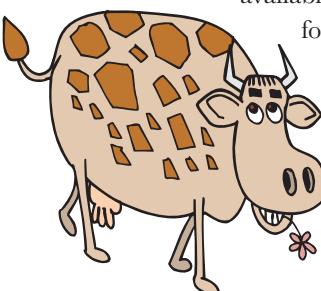
1. Euthanize the animal.
2. Contact a *mobile butcher* to slaughter the animal. Using this option means the meat is considered uninspected and cannot be sold—it can only be consumed by the owner and his immediate family.

For information on the emergency slaughter of feedlot cattle, visit [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/beef11992](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/beef11992)

3. Contact an *appointed inspector* to provide inspection—which allows the meat to be sold with Alberta.

For information on the appointed inspector program, visit <http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/general/progserv.nsf/all/pgmsrv456>

Increasing the awareness of the options available to producers for emergency slaughter helps to ensure humane handling and improve animal welfare. ●



The benefits of using a business consultant

Whether or not to start a new business can be a tough decision to make on your own. Expanding an existing business also presents its own challenges: do you have the necessary resources, time, money and knowledge? What are the potential risks and the benefits? How long will it take before you can turn a profit?

The New Venture Specialists at Alberta Agriculture and Forestry can help you answer these questions. They offer customized business coaching and market research knowledge that can help you avoid the pitfalls of costly mistakes and move your ideas forward more quickly.

They also can link you to programs such as *Growing Forward 2*, that may help you access appropriate expertise and services to grow your business.

A good first step is to create a business plan that outlines the steps necessary

for growth and lists the potential pitfalls associated with each step of the process. This will help determine if your plan is a feasible one before you invest time and money in a venture that ultimately proves unsuccessful—remember that not investing in a bad business venture is a successful decision.

A business coach is another avenue that businesses should consider. Consulting an expert in a given area can reveal details about your business that would otherwise have gone unrecognized or created barriers to growth. A new pair of eyes can be invaluable to your success.

Visit www.growingforward.alberta.ca for more information or to register for new program announcement notifications or speak to a New Venture Specialist at 310-FARM (3276). ●

Productivity Improvement Project

In 2014, Explore Local implemented a two-year pilot project with interested farm direct marketers to increase efficiency of their farming businesses by applying lean thinking principles.

Lean thinking is a systematic approach used to identify and eliminate waste while adding value for your customers and increasing profitability.

This year, Explore Local will again be offering the full program with both the introductory and advanced workshops planned. **The registration deadline for Productivity Improvement 101 is October 3, 2016.**

Participants who complete the introductory workshop can apply for acceptance into the advanced workshops, as well as the on-farm assessment program component.

For further information, please see the attached flyer, or visit explorelocal.ca. ●

Online Resources

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry offers a variety of helpful information to help you improve the functionality of your business. The following is a list of web-links that may be of interest.

Pricing Series

Lots of great information on pricing and selling your products, as well as a really good pricing video that gives a brief overview of basic pricing considerations:

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/bdv11351](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/bdv11351)

The following pricing factsheets have been updated:

Pricing Processed Food Products:

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex1137?opendocument](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex1137?opendocument)

Pricing Horticulture Products:

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex918?opendocument](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex918?opendocument)

Cost of Production Calculator

Whether you're a producer or processor, starting a new business or growing your existing one, knowing how much it costs to raise, grow or process your product is very important to increase efficiency and overall profitability of your business.

The new venture specialists with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry have created an e-learning tool on cost of production. This series will introduce to you the concept of cost of production and discuss three key areas: (1) the importance of knowing your cost of production (COP); (2) understanding COP, and (3) using

COP for decision making.

The calculator will include three example scenarios to help put these new learnings into practice as you calculate your own cost of production: (1) a vegetable growing operation; (2) a value-added food processing enterprise, and (3) a meat (beef) processing venture. Currently only the vegetable scenario is available for viewing, but the complete tool will launch this winter with all three scenarios.

An introduction to this e-learning tool can be found on the Ag-Info Centre-New Venture website: [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/infl2059](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/infl2059)

and on the Biz info website: [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/bdv11351](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/bdv11351) ●

Seed production grants available



The Bauta Initiative on Canadian Seed Security is offering *Seed Production Capacity Building Grants* for seed producers, farmers, farm workers, seed companies, and students learning about ecological seed production.

Others excited to build their capacity and understanding of seed production are welcome to apply. For more information:

<http://seedsecurity.ca/en/204-seed-production-capacity-building-grants>

or contact:

iris.vaisman@prairieorganicgrain.org ●

Agricultural Youth Green Jobs Initiative

The *Agricultural Youth Green Jobs Initiative* will help fund internships for post-secondary graduates interested in working in the agriculture industry.

Internships must incorporate activities that are environmentally beneficial, at least four months in length and be completed by March 31, 2017.

Applications are now being accepted and considered on a first-come, first-served basis until all funds have been allocated. Candidates must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents, 30 years old or younger.

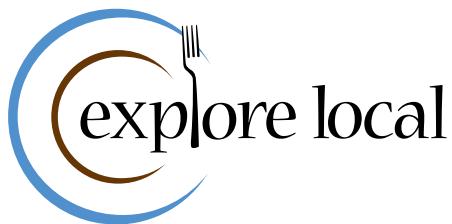
For detailed information on the program including how to apply, please visit: www.canada.ca/agriculture-green-jobs.

Funding for the program is available through two streams:

Stream A – Green Farms: farm operators can apply for matching funding, to a maximum of \$10,000, to hire a Canadian post-secondary graduate to implement projects that are environmentally beneficial.

Stream B – Green Internships: employers (for profit and non-profit groups) who work in the agricultural sector but not directly on farm. These employers can apply for matching funding, to a maximum of \$16,000, to hire a Canadian post-secondary graduate to undertake environmental activities, services or research that will benefit the agriculture sector. ●

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 Donna Skorvorodko at donna.skorvorodko@gov.ab.ca.



PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENT 101

This introductory workshop explores *lean thinking* concepts for growers and small scale processors marketing food direct-to-consumers.



Is this workshop for you?

- Are you aware of opportunities for improvement in your business but do not know how to implement these opportunities?
- Are you committed to taking your business to the next level and willing to dedicate the time and resources to get there?
- Process and productivity improvement is a methodical, gradual approach providing sustainable results. It is not a “quick fix.”
- Registrants will be sent a pre-workshop on-line business assessment toolkit. Allow eight hours to complete. All registrants must submit their completed toolkit by **October 12, 2016**.

Discover how your business can:

- Apply *lean thinking* to add value from field to market, reduce waste, improve profits and margins
- Change processes to increase efficiency
- Develop a culture of learning
- Engage in advanced productivity improvement opportunities

Registration and Information

Date: Wednesday, November 2, 2016

Location: Agriculture Centre,
97 East Lake Ramp NE,
Airdrie, Alberta

Time: 8:15 am – 4:30 pm; LUNCH PROVIDED

Cost: \$30/person

Registration Deadline: October 3, 2016
Register early as space is limited.

**To register call the Ag-Info Centre at
1-800-387-6030**

For more information: Contact Christine at (780) 968-3514 or christine.anderson@gov.ab.ca.



The Productivity Improvement Journey

The Productivity Improvement 101 introductory workshop is the first step towards increased productivity and profitability in your business.

Participants who successfully complete the business assessment toolkit and Productivity Improvement 101 introductory workshop can apply to continue their productivity improvement journey.

Explore Local will offer two advanced workshops and on-site coaching in the winter of 2017 and beyond. Participation will be limited to eight businesses.

All **Productivity Improvement 101** registrants will be eligible to apply for this exciting opportunity.

Questions?

If you have questions contact Christine at (780) 968-3514 or email christine.anderson@gov.ab.ca



Getting into Farming

Information Session

For the Aspiring Farmer



Session topics include:

- Overview of Agriculture
- Business Planning
- Personal Assessment
- Financial
- Land
- Resources/Education

Tuesday, October 18, 2016

Airdrie – Agriculture Centre
97 East Lake Ramp NE, Airdrie, AB

Time

9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
(registration starts at 8:30 a.m.)

Cost: \$25/person (includes lunch)

Registration deadline: October 11, 2016

**To register call the Agriculture and
Forestry Ag-Info Centre
at 1-800-387-6030**