June 4, 2007

This Week is Environment Week

2007 seeding date extension

Cool, wet spring weather, with recent snowfall in the western areas of the province, has created seeding delays this spring for many farmers. The 2007 recommended seeding deadlines have been extended to assist producers concerned about how these inclement weather conditions will affect their insurance coverage.

Currently, Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) insures all crops seeded up to June 20, 2007. However, in a normal year, to be fully covered for quality (grade) loss, producers must seed by the recommended seeding dates. Producers who seed after recommended dates are not covered for quality (grade) loss and may have uninsured causes assessed.

In order to help producers who have been unable to get onto their land to seed this spring, the May 31, 2007 deadline for wheat, argentine canola, flax, mustard, mixed grain and oats is extended to June 5, 2007. As well, the recommended seeding date of June 5, 2007 for barley, spring triticale, spring rye and polish canola is extended to June 15, 2007.

These extensions do not apply to crops with specific seeding deadlines in the Contract of Insurance, such as field peas, dry beans, potatoes, grain corn and several other specialty crops. The reporting of seeded acres deadline is 10 days after seeding is complete or in any event, June 20, 2007.

For further information, please contact the local District Office, or AFSC Insurance Call Center toll-free at: 1-888-786-7475.

Contact: Dwayne Campbell
Senior Manager, Insurance Operations
(403) 782-8227
Showcasing Alberta’s food safety surveillance system

The Food Safety Division (FSD) of Alberta Agriculture and Food will get a chance to show off its surveillance system and share ideas with other world experts at a major disease surveillance conference being held at the University of Alberta in June 2007. The FSD is co-hosting the Canadian Association of Veterinary Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine (CAVEPM) conference with the Alberta Veterinary Research Institute, on June 6 to 15, 2007. Funding is provided in part by the federal government through the Food Safety Initiative of the Agricultural Policy Framework.

Pablo Romero-Barrios, an FSD veterinary epidemiologist who has been helping to organize the event, says the conference will focus on four themes:

• surveillance systems used in food production
• zoonoses, public health and food-borne diseases
• emerging diseases and issues, including avian influenza
• disease prevention, control and biosecurity

“This is a great opportunity to showcase what we do with surveillance in Alberta, more specifically the Alberta Veterinary Surveillance Network (AVSN),” says Romero-Barrios. “Both the conference and the associated courses provide a really good learning opportunity for Albertans and a chance to network with scientists from other countries, which is also very important.”

On June 6 and 7, 2007, a team of veterinarians including Dr. John Berezowski, Dr. Sylvia Checkley and Dr. Pablo Romero-Barrios, will offer a comprehensive introduction to contemporary surveillance. The conference follows on June 8 to 10, 2007.

Romero-Barrios says he expects many of the FSD scientists who attend the event will benefit from talking with officials from other countries. While Alberta boasts one of the most effective and innovative approaches to animal health surveillance in the world, sharing information always bolsters the progress of science.

Among the four speakers at CAVEPM will be Paul Kitching, head of the Canadian National Centre for Foreign Animal Diseases, and Angus Cameron, a renowned epidemiologist from Australia. Cameron will also present a post-conference course, Advanced methodologies for food safety and animal health, from June 11 to 15, 2007.

For details or updates, visit the conference website at www.avri.afhe.ualberta.ca/cavepm-2007.

Contact: Nora Abercrombie
Communications/Marketing Leader
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Dine Alberta seeks producer and restaurant participants

The Dine Alberta program, now in its fifth year, is actively seeking producers who are interested in providing local foods to participating restaurants throughout Alberta. There is a significant increase in food service demand for locally grown, raised and processed fruits, field grown or greenhouse vegetables, grains, cheeses, chicken, beef, pork, lamb or alternative meats such as bison and elk.

“Food service provides a viable market outlet for many producers who are currently direct marketing their products at farmer’s markets or through farm gate sales,” says Janice McGregor, new venture specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Food, Stony Plain. “Local foods are in demand as chefs and consumers seek to purchase and prepare foods that have a regional flair. Food that is “less traveled” can be picked at its freshest and peak of flavor and can be on the dinner table within a matter of hours without traveling thousands of miles.”

Many chefs and consumers are passionate about supporting locally grown products. The restaurants that support Dine Alberta in September every year often purchase and feature regional foods on their menus all year long. Despite the seasonality of many fruits and vegetables, chefs will go out of their way to feature daily specials or fresh sheets to be able to use fresh ingredients when in season. From “white table cloth” establishments to corner delis, coffeehouses and ethnically themed restaurants, chefs and caterers have creatively found ways to incorporate the wonderful foods grown in Alberta on their menus.

A Producer’s Guide to Selling Locally Grown Foods to Restaurants and Foodservice has been developed and is available on the Dine Alberta website at www.dinealberta.ca. The guide provides tips on pricing, quality and supply, targeting restaurants, contacting chefs and food safety. The information is especially useful to producers who are considering sales to restaurants or looking for marketing information.

The Dine Alberta 2007 producer sign-up package and Dine Alberta 2007 producer sign-up package are also available on the Dine Alberta website. Producers and interested chefs are encouraged to download the applications and return them to the Dine Alberta team for inclusion in this year’s program. Producers and restaurants can check the site to view types of products, restaurants and sample restaurant menus, and to access the Alberta Regional Cuisine Sourcing Directory. Every participating producer and their products are listed in the directory, and chefs use the directory as a source for products throughout the year.

“Participating in the Dine Alberta program is not a passive exercise,” says McGregor. “We will work with producers to help define their products and provide contacts for specific restaurants. However, it is up to producers to use the

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restaurant directory on the Dine Alberta website or to take action to target specific restaurants and chefs to introduce their products. Chefs have told the Dine Alberta team that producers often wait to be contacted first rather than taking the steps to showcase their products and demonstrate how products could fit with other menu items.”

Another advantage of the Dine Alberta program is the Dine Alberta Passport. The passport lists all the participating restaurants throughout Alberta. It is a handy and useful guide for consumers and tourists, helping them determine where to dine during the year. As part of the “culinary tourism” experience, supporting local producers and regional cuisine restaurants is often the highlight of visitor’s travel plans.

“When dining at an Alberta restaurant that features locally grown foods, remember to ask them if they are part of the Dine Alberta program,” says McGregor. “If they aren’t, encourage them contact the Dine Alberta team for further information.”

Deadline for restaurant sign-up for the 2007 program is June 15, 2007. “There are currently over 70 returning restaurants registered for this year, but we are always looking for new participants who support the concept of regional cuisine and purchase from local producers,” adds McGregor.

All registered producers will be included in the final Dine Alberta directory, and on the Regional Cuisine Sourcing Directory on our website.

For more information on the Dine Alberta program, visit www.dinealberta.ca or phone McGregor at (780) 968-3553.

Contact: Janice McGregor
(780) 968-3553

Grow West audio CDs available

Alberta Agri-preneurs who missed the farm direct marketing event of the year can still benefit from the information shared during the 2007 North American Farmers’ Direct Marketing Associations (NAFDMA) Grow West conference. All of the conference sessions were audio taped and are now available for purchase.

“Direct marketers who are wondering how to market in rural areas, how to cash-in on ag-tourism or how to work within the direct market regulations will find the audio CD collection invaluable,” says Kerry Engel, with Alberta Agriculture and Food’s Farm Direct Marketing Initiative and Alberta chair, Grow West, Edmonton. “The information shared at the Grow West convention held in Calgary, in February, is of great value to Albertans starting out in ag-tourism, thinking about direct marketing and ag-tourism, or expanding their business.

“Learn from a host of North America’s lead farm direct marketers, including John and Laura Hughes from Milton, Ontario. From their roots as a small pick-your-own, the Hughes’ business has grown to include not only growing fruit and pumpkins, but hosting 18 birthday parties a weekend, offering school tours to 25,000 children, selling giftware from their restored 19th century barn and running a busy food department with a scratch bakery, lunch menu and gourmet food.”

The session CDs can be ordered separately or as an entire set. For more details and information on the session CDs, visit NAFDMA’s website at www.nafdma.com.

Contact: Kerry Engel
(780) 644-2967

Become a ‘locavore’ and a ‘causumer’

Vendors, market managers and market supporters know the multifaceted benefit farmers’ markets play in an area. Markets help foster vibrant and sustainable communities, keep more dollars in the local economy and create places for people to enjoy. Through the work of many hands, markets come alive to facilitate a landscape of exchange for those simply in need of a local product with a personal touch.

The growing popularity of farmers’ markets attests to the fact that consumers are using their purchasing power — dollars and cents that is, to reflect their own value systems. According to the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, the Hartmann Group reports 62 per cent of the consuming public (U.S.A.) now wants to buy food that is consistent with their values.

“Shopping for the simple act of buying the weeks groceries in essence becomes a type of causumerism,” says Melissa Zapisocky, leadership training coordinator with Alberta Farmers’ Market Association (AFMA). “A relatively new term, a causumer can be described as someone who looks at how their purchases affect themselves and the world around them. This means that the reasons why a consumer purchases, as opposed to what they purchase, becomes significant.”

Causumers are more likely to ask where a product was grown; if it is pesticide free, natural, free range or organic; and if there is a vegan or vegetarian option. If these types of inquiries sound familiar to producers involved in farmers’ market, it’s because causumers frequent markets.

“North American shoppers are finally catching on to what market supporters have known for a long time now: farmers’ markets are good for everyone,” says Zapisocky. Market goers include the groups who call themselves Locavores (www.locavores.com) who challenge members to eat local; market patrons who want safe and fresh food from a producer they know and trust; and people such as the now infamous couple from Vancouver who gained world wide attention through their stringent, year-long pledge to a ‘100 Mile Diet’ (www.100milediet.org).

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“It is finally market season in Alberta and everyone needs in on some market action and a little bit of consumerism,” adds Zapisocky. “For the duration of the market season and even into the next, take up the challenge to consider a ‘100 Market Diet’. There are approximately 100 Alberta Approved Farmers’ Markets in the province with two thirds holding AFMA membership.

“A 100 Market Diet is as flexible as your own needs are. It begins with a mind shift; a creative effort to connect with local food and people. It grows from there.”

For Albertans travelling in the province this summer, plan a visit to a new market. Think of ways to get others involved, such as inviting a friend along to shop and visit a local market.

Additional ideas for getting involved will be shared in AFMA’s Market Express. As well as sharing her own ideas and adventures, Zapisocky would like to hear from Albertans as well Write to AFMA to share your own 100 Market Diet Success Story for upcoming issues of the Market Express newsletter.

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Agri-News Briefs

12th World Congress on clinical nutrition

The 12th World Congress on Clinical Nutrition - Nutritional Factors in Health and Disease is being held at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, on June 17 to 20, 2007. The congress brings together experts in the fields of nutrition and health from around the world. Presentations and discussions will centre on the role of functional foods, natural health products, designer foods and how lifestyle changes, especially diet, can make an impact in the prevention and treatment of chronic disease, such as diabetes, coronary heart disease, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, and osteoporosis. The congress, hosted by the International College of Nutrition and the University of Alberta, will be of interest to health professionals, food scientists, food industry and those who have an interest in functional foods or natural health products. For more information or to register, go to www.icnsite.org, or contact Sharon Katsiff at (780) 492-0379, e-mail: sharon.katzeff@ualberta.ca.

2007 Rural Safety Day Camps

The UFA, in an effort to help improve rural safety and lessen the number of accidents in rural communities, sponsors Rural Safety Day Camps each year. These regional events provide education and awareness about rural safety issues. The program features hands-on demonstrations of real-life situations. Families can spend the day together, teaching youngsters valuable safety messages. Day camp activities may include information about: large machinery; small equipment; livestock; environmental safety; health concerns and emergency response. A variety of interactive displays and activities will keep children interested and involved. Both indoor and outdoor activities are included, so dressing for all weather is recommended. The 2007 dates, locations and registration contacts and deadlines are:

- Kindersley Events Centre on June 16
  Contact: Prairie West Regional College at (306) 463-6431 by June 8

- Reed Ranch School in Olds on June 16
  Contact: Andrea Church at (403) 312-9800 by June 11

- Fort Kent, LARA Research Farm on June 23
  Contact: Matt Janz at (780) 826-3951 by June 15

- Rycroft Ag Society Grounds on June 27
  Contact: Matt Mortland at (780) 825-5571 by June 20

- Lloydminster Exhibition Grounds on June 28
  Contact: Sam Hardstaff at (306) 825-5571 by June 22

- Holden Complex on July 10
  Contact: Annie Louise Danilak at (780) 688-3928 by June 29

- Spruce Grove Agricultural Society Grounds — July 11
  Contact: Maria Vandersleen at (780) 962-2560 by June 22

- Bezanson Agricultural Grounds on July 14
  Contact: Chris van der Giessen at (780) 539-3761 by July 9

- Taber Agri-Plex — July 18
  Contact: Brenda Engleson at (403) 223-8270 by July 10

- Ponoka Culture and Recreation Complex on August 10
  Contact: Cecilia Dykstra at (403) 783-6750 by July 25