

The CATALYST

Believing in Alberta



FALL 2005

INSIDE:

Agricultural Advocates are raising the bar

page 2



Determining Quality - "Rapid Fibre"

page 3

The Grain Chain: Alberta's first

page 5

Eat Potatoes for Health

page 6

Environmental Stewardship

page 7



Addressing and building leadership in Alberta

by Alf Cryderman

Agriculture and Food Council has a mandate to provide change, opportunity and leadership development for the Alberta agri-food industry. Through the Innovation in Agribusiness Management Fund, Council is providing opportunities for Alberta industry members to build their skills and knowledge in areas of leadership and management development.

The Advanced Leadership and Management Development Program (ALMDP) assists primary producers and value-added entrepreneurs to develop their skills as business managers and leaders. It provides up to \$7,500 per person annually to help future leaders obtain education and training to fully develop their leadership potential.

"Educational opportunities provide a life-changing experience," says Brenda Stryker, Chair of Council's Innovation in Agribusiness Management Fund, which provides source funding for ALMDP. "Education takes a person outside their comfort zone, enabling change and growth. Communities benefit by having people bring home new ideas from their educational experiences and sharing them with family, friends and colleagues, so they too, can experience growth in their business and personal lives. The small amount of money we invest is multiplied many times and it can only be good for our industry to make people better at what they do."

Linda and Dan Wester farm near Tilley in southeastern Alberta. With support from ALMDP, they both took the Canadian Total Excellence in Agricultural Management (CTEAM) course for Canada's leading farmers. The CTEAM program is structured as four one-week modules over two years.

Building Leadership continued on page 2

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Agriculture & Food Council
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Building Leadership continued from page 1

Dan Wester says, "CTEAM provided a lot of learning and understanding and for me; it answered the question: where do I go from here? Exposure to this program gave us ideas and options for our future and we are bringing it back home by organizing seminars and programs in our community. It gave us a new basis for understanding and a vision for learning."

Funding support from ALMDP can cover 100% of enrolment costs and up to 50% of associated expenses like travel and accommodation for eligible courses. Participants should complete an ALMDP application prior to starting their course work. When their course is complete,

participants must provide documentation and receipts to ALMDP before reimbursement. The program is on a first come - first served basis for a minimum of 10 participants per year. The current application deadline is March 31, 2006.

Support for the ALMDP is provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Agricultural Policy Framework Renewal Chapter and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development through Council's Innovation in Agribusiness Management Fund.

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Linda and Dan Wester



Agricultural Advocates are raising the bar

by Alf Cryderman

Photo courtesy of Olds College

In 1999 Olds College started a very successful and unique program to find and develop Alberta's agricultural leaders for tomorrow.

Every year as many as 15 students, designated as Agricultural Advocates, become ambassadors for agriculture, representing Olds College at trade shows, industry meetings and conferences. They also give the media a student perspective on the future of agriculture.

"Agricultural Advocates are all excellent students and strong leaders, on and off campus," says Brad Dowell, a Master Instructor and Ag Advocate Mentor at Olds College. "In them we see our future. Our industry needs new ideas, new energy and new leaders and that's what we are working hard to develop with our Ag Advocate program."

"We expect Advocates to become leaders in the industry and their communities by

building on their well-rounded education here at the college, and they are doing it," adds Dowell. "As ambassadors for everything that is positive and good about agriculture, their enthusiasm, commitment and vision are daily testaments to this industry's bright future."

There are already about 50 Advocates, all Olds College graduates, out making their mark in industry. One Advocate, Cheryl Jolly, is a very youthful President of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association in Regina. The Ag Advocate motto is "once an advocate, always an advocate," making agricultural advocacy a life-long mission.

Advocates are selected through a rigorous interview process involving current Advocates

and Mentors. Essays, resumes, community involvement and grade point averages are also considered. Most have an agricultural background and they represent a wide variety of Olds College programs.

Funding support for Ag Advocate workshops, seminars and meetings is provided jointly by the Agriculture and Food Council's Innovation in Agribusiness Management Fund and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Additional support comes from Growing Alberta, Olds College, Friends of Olds College and the industry at large.

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Determining Quality - "Rapid Fibre"

By AFC Staff

Fibre production from diversified livestock such as alpaca, llama, bison, elk and angora goats is increasing. Rapid and objective assessment of quality characteristics and yield of unprocessed samples is key for buyers and processors. A direct analytical method being studied at the Natural Fibre Centre may be the solution to traditional time-consuming and expensive laboratory analysis of producer samples.

Located on the campus of Olds College, the Natural Fibre Centre is developing prediction equations of alpaca and other animal fibre quality characteristics based on a direct analytical method of measuring the carbon, nitrogen and sulphur (CNS) content of unprocessed samples. This may lead to new efficiencies in the assessment of quality and yield of raw fleece samples.

"There is huge potential for the application of animal fibres in the production of textiles, medical supplies, structural products and fibre composites," says Ruth Elvestad, Manager of the Natural Fibre Centre. "The identification of fibre characteristics is critical to realizing these commercial opportunities."

With support from the Agriculture and Food Council, through Alberta's share of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's CARD investment fund and in partnership with the Diversified Livestock Fund of Alberta and the Olds College Centre for Innovation, Elvestad hopes this project will have commercial application and facilitate growth of the natural fibre industry.

"While researchers at Texas A & M University are developing a near-infrared reflectance spectroscopy (NIR) technique to monitor quality characteristics of sheep wool, our growing diversified livestock industry in Alberta necessitates development of NIR prediction equations for our species. Correlation of our CNS values for alpaca fibre samples with wet chemistry and NIR wool data will enable us to rank the relationship between various quality characteristics," says Elvestad.

Testing of samples using the Leco CNS-2000 analyzer in the lab at the Olds College Centre for Innovation continues, with 400 samples having been logged into NFC's database to date.

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Council's Human Resource Projects Underway

By AFC Staff

The Agriculture and Food Council's Human Resource Projects focus on two areas of need identified by the Council specific to human resource management in Alberta's agri-food industry.

These two areas of need include the development of a human resource information network known as the Human Resource Information Exchange Centre (HRIEC) initiative and the creation of producer business networks known as the Peer Network Project. In pursuing these projects, the Agriculture and Food Council continues its commitment to addressing issues and opportunities that were identified by the Ag Summit and Agrivantage processes.

The goal of the HRIEC initiative is to develop a centralized provincial reserve of agriculture human resource information that will provide a clear and consistent picture of career opportunities in all aspects of the agricultural sector.

The Peer Networks Project identifies four key strategic initiatives which are as follows:

1. Establish structures and processes that facilitate peer group formation
2. Foster the establishment of two types of peer groups - production forums and business management forums
3. Establish a dynamic resource network
4. Establish interregional linkages with other agricultural peer networks and learning organizations and intra sector linkages with other industries

Both projects are anticipated to be completed in late 2007. Funding to support development and implementation of these projects is provided by the Council's Innovation in Agribusiness Management Fund, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Agricultural Policy Framework Renewal Chapter.

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The Grain Chain: Alberta's first grain industry value chain off to a great start

By Bev Whitmore BSc RD MBA, Value Chain Specialist, Value Chain Initiative

Getting new products into the market place is no small feat. The risk is high and the effort great. If this risk and effort can be reduced by all of the companies in the supply chain working together closer and smarter, a competitive advantage is established.



This is just what happened in the Barley Baked Product Value Chain. Calgary Co-op, Byblos Bakery, Schroeder Milling, the Alberta Barley Commission along with resource representatives from AAFRD Agri - Processing and the Agriculture and Food Council's Value Chain Initiative teamed up to share their ideas, resources and skills to launch two barley baked product lines in Calgary Co-op on September 22, 2005. Two flavours of a savoury barley bun, cheddar and feta rosemary and three flavours of Barley Bites - spice, apple raisin and chocolate chip caught consumers' attention.

The team was involved in product development, product branding, the marketing campaign, the launch as well as media interviews and in-store promotions. The challenges of each stage were met through a team effort and a sincere desire to meet the project goals of launching new barley baked products into a

retail chain. As with any new group it takes time and effort to develop synergistic relationships. After the launch the team continues to follow the consumer response over the next few months, promote and market the products, and consider ideas for the next wave of barley baked goods.

"Most people only know barley as an ingredient in beer" says Doug Robertson, chair of the Alberta Barley Commission, a farm group representing the Alberta barley growers." That's only half the story. Barley is also a source of nutritional advantages for health conscious consumers." Barley grown in Alberta is high in dietary fibre, rich in soluble fibre and is shown to reduce blood cholesterol and regulate blood sugar levels. This provides great opportunities in the future for delivering more value to the consumer.

Now that consumers are interested, there is opportunity to continue the momentum. The project team members realized the value of the retail drive value chain projects that result in collaboration and commitment of all of the supply chain partners to decrease the risk and time frame for this market launch. Knowledge and appreciation of the challenges and capacities of each business helped to build new relationships and new capabilities that provide a competitive advantage that is not easily copied. This project sets the stage for additional innovation in barley and providing a wave of barley baked products for consumers.

This project is part of a Value Chain Initiative's Value Chain Retail Strategy that with the assistance of the Agriculture and Food Council's Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development (CARD) fund also shows the

potential of the retail driven value chain strategies for Alberta grown and processed products. The Value Chain Initiative is supported through a three-way partnership between Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Agriculture and Food Council.

For further information on how value chains work and how they benefit their partners, visit the Agriculture and Food Council's website at www.agfoodcouncil.com where you can find the **Value Chain Guide Book, A Process for Value Chain Development** and order the CD **Agri-Food Value Chains - A Practical Guide to Building Customer-Focused Alliances**.

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Eat Potatoes for Health

by Alf Cryderman

While some people frown at the idea that potatoes are healthy, new research in Alberta is showing that there are good things in those tubers. Eating potatoes may even help prevent eye problems.



Potatoes are good for us, containing fibre and vitamin C, but with many people concerned about their intake of carbohydrates, overall consumption has decreased. Potato producers and researchers are looking for ways to make the tubers more popular.

Dr. Michele Konschuh, a research scientist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development in Brooks, says, "We went looking for something in potatoes that the industry could promote and lutein is one of the things we found. It's linked to decreased macular degeneration and other eye problems. It's especially common in yellow potatoes and it gives people a healthy reason to keep potatoes on their plate."

Field trials at Brooks, Edmonton and Lacombe

over the last two years involved growing an assortment of potato varieties and testing their lutein content after harvesting, storage and cooking. The trials involved potatoes for the fresh market and for processors of fries and other potato products. Lutein is quite stable during cooking and sometimes cooking even increases the amount of lutein.

There is even some evidence to indicate that fats (butter or margarine) help human bodies absorb lutein. "This is wonderful news for those of us who like butter on our potatoes," says Dr. Konschuh. "Our research is helping make the claim that potatoes rich in lutein are good for people interested in their health and their taste buds. It should encourage potato consumption."

The Agriculture and Food Council administers Alberta's portion of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's CARD fund that provides investment support for the research. Other partners in the project include Edmonton Potato Growers, the Little Potato Company, Parkland Seed Potatoes Ltd., Potato Growers of Alberta, Solanum International, ConAgra Foods, HZPC Americas, McCain Foods, Maple Leaf Potatoes and Scholing's Produce in Lacombe.

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Environmental Stewardship on Alberta Farms

by Alf Cryderman

All agriculture benefits from increased public understanding and acceptance that most producers in Alberta are committed to environmental stewardship and that many are working hard to make their operations as environmentally sound as possible.

Our Farm
has an Environmental Farm Plan

taking care.
taking pride.

Partners in Progressive Stewardship:
Canada | The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company | Agriculture and Food Council | AEFPC | Alberta | albertaefp.com

The Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) • A FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL-TERRITORIAL INITIATIVE

The AEFPC farm gate sign

The non-profit Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company (AEFPC) was formed in 2002. Modeled on similar plans in Ontario and Wisconsin, the first workshops took place in February 2003. Today, more than 3,000 farmers across the province are participating.

“The whole idea of environmental farm plans came from producers needing to show that they are doing a good job environmentally,” says Therese Tompkins, Program Director for AEFPC. “Our no-cost, voluntary workshops give producers the tools they need to do a complete environmental assessment of their farms. They discover their own areas of high and low environmental risk and use the process to point them to where they'd like to be. Our program can be applied to any kind of operation.”

AEFPC offers local workshops and a workbook so operators can produce their own environmental plan. Then a team of local experts provides a confidential and anonymous review. Producers learn how various agricultural practices affect the environment and their management options for improvements. They learn that managing environmental risk, like market or production risks, is another step towards sustainability.

“Overall, environmental plans seek to improve farm health and safety, maintain or improve water and soil quality, and increase acceptance of

their operation among their neighbours and the public. Many of the same issues keep coming up,” says Tompkins. “Water quality is usually at the top of the list, but so are petroleum and pesticide storage, soil quality and septic systems.”

Tompkins adds, “Now we're working at getting more people on the ground to deliver the workshops and reviews. We already have 24 facilitators, 70 technical experts, 30-35 review committee members and are active in virtually every corner of the province. A valuable management tool like this works best with community support. It makes a world of difference when local people are involved. Hundreds of farm plans are in the works or completed and our goal is 3,000 additional plans for 2005-2006.”

Those producers whose environmental plans are deemed appropriate receive a certificate of

completion and can proudly display a sign that signifies to all that their operation is involved in the environmental farm plan process. Hundreds of signs are up already. There is even financial aid from the federal Agricultural Policy Framework to help producers institute beneficial management practices. Visit www.albertaefp.com for more information.

The Agriculture and Food Council, though funding provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Agriculture Environmentally Sustainable Initiative program, has been a strong investor in the AEFPC company. Over \$968,000 has been invested in development of the initial business plan and costs for two years of implementation of the project.

Further support for AEFPC comes from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development as well as commodity groups, conservation groups, most counties and municipal districts, many agricultural societies, even private companies and farm equipment dealers.

**Contact: Therese Tompkins, Program Director
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More than 3,000 farmers across the province are participating. They discover their own areas of high and low environmental risk and use the process to point them to where they'd like to be. Our program can be applied to any kind of operation.

Visit www.albertaefp.com for more information.

Keynote Speaker Program Reminder

The Agriculture and Food Council's Canadian Adaptation & Rural Development (CARD) Keynote Speaker Program is still accepting applications. The program is designed to assist the agriculture and agri-food industry attract top-calibre speakers to industry conferences, annual meetings, workshops and symposiums. The program will support fifty (50) % of total eligible keynote speaker costs up to a maximum of \$10,000. This may include speaker fees, transportation, accommodation and meals. Applications should be submitted to the Council at least sixty (60) days prior to the event.

For more information visit www.agfoodcouncil.com and follow the links to the CARD Keynote Speaker Program.

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HRIEC staff member looks forward to a new project challenge

Council is pleased to welcome Brad Salomons as the Project Manager for the Human Resource Information Exchange Centre (HRIEC). Brad joins Council from Muscular Dystrophy Canada. Brad has been employed as the National Manager, Education in Edmonton since April 2004 and prior to that as National Education Coordinator and BC Volunteer Coordinator in Vancouver from April 2001 to April 2004.

"I think HRIEC brings real focus to the cultural and economic depth of agriculture in Alberta. Through this portal we are going to be sharing the wealth of both information and opportunity in the industry. Many young Albertans, myself included, are thinking about their hard-earned skills, training, and education, and hopefully we can challenge a few of those to apply their talents in a meaningful and positive way to local agri-food careers."

With degrees in Science (Molecular Genetics) and Secondary Education from the University of Alberta and a strong background in project management and communication, Brad will lead the implementation of Human Resource Information Exchange Centre Initiative.

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Working together across Canada: ACAAf Collective Outcome Projects

One of the innovative aspects of the new Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food (ACAAf) program is the Collective Outcome process. A collective outcome project is an initiative that addresses a multi-regional or national need, with the objective of maximizing benefits to the industry. Collective outcome projects are designed to increase collaboration and form new alliances throughout the sector.

The Agriculture and Food Council will identify project proposals that have broad application, and in situations where more than one council shares the same priority, the projects may be considered under the collective outcomes umbrella. National organizations, working in collaboration with provincial/territorial sectoral groups and councils, also play a key role in the identification and delivery of collective outcome projects.

Increasing collaboration and forming new alliances throughout the sector will be key for future success. The Agriculture and Food Council delivers Alberta's portion of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's ACAAf program.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Jan. 19, 06 - Tiffin Conference Series: "The Evolving Red Meat Market", Lethbridge, contact Kathy Waddell at (403) 329-7212

Jan. 25 - 27, 06 - Farm Tech 2006 Conference, Edmonton, contact 1-866-327-6832

Feb. 9, 06 - Options and Opportunities Conference, Camrose, contact Jennifer Filip at 1-800-296-8112

Feb. 16, 06 - Tiffin Conference Series: "The Prosperous Farm of the Future", Lethbridge, contact Kathy Waddell at (403) 329-7212

The CATALYST



If you have comments regarding this newsletter, or wish to contact the Council on other matters, you can reach us at:

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