

17th Annual North of 60 Agriculture Banquet
Minister Archie Lang
Masonic Hall, 6:30 p.m. November 6, 2004

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- Good Evening, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you this evening. I will keep my comments brief as I know we have an excellent spread of Yukon grown organic products to enjoy tonight.
- The Yukon government recognizes the valuable contribution agriculture makes to our economy. Given the topic of today's conference I would like to specifically recognize the important contribution organic agriculture makes to the Yukon.
- The Yukon government recognizes that organic agriculture, while still only a small part of the industry as a whole, is one of the fastest growing agricultural sectors in Canada.
- And local organic operators provide both economic and environmental benefits to the Yukon. Organic farmers take an approach to agriculture that is sustainable and in sync with the environment.
- We are taking steps to support the continued growth and development of organic agriculture in the Yukon. In our recent review of the Agriculture Policy we identified a number of ways in which the new policy could support this sector of agriculture.
- Some of the things we are currently doing to support organic agriculture include:
 - working closely with the organic growers association;
 - supporting marketing efforts of organic farmers through funding under the Agriculture Policy Framework;
 - helping to get organic farm inspection and certification in place;
 - ensuring organic farmers have access to federal/territorial programs and funding through the Agriculture Policy Framework; and
 - we have provided financial support for producers attending organic conferences and training seminars.

Agriculture Policy Consultation

- Speaking of the Agriculture Policy - I'd like to take a moment now to thank all the people who worked so hard on the public review of this policy, and the people that took the time to provide their comments and ideas on the direction our new agriculture policy should take.
- There were a number of areas that were of particular interest to Yukoners – including organic farming, agriculture land availability, agriculture land subdivision, and how the new policy will address participation in programs through the Agriculture Policy Framework – or the APF

Agriculture Policy Framework

- The APF is an important element of the Yukon agriculture industry.
- The APF has allowed us to strengthen the local agriculture industry by doubling Yukon agriculture program dollars with federal dollars for development in the areas of food safety and quality, environment, renewal, science, and innovation and risk management.
- We are working with the Association and industry to enhance, strengthen and expand programs under the APF that will encourage the growth and stability of the Yukon's agriculture industry.
- Yukon agriculture producers are making use of these programs. For example:
 - Yukon agriculture producers participated in the Circumpolar Agriculture conference in Sweden in September. Thirteen delegates from the Yukon received funding through the Science and Innovation Chapter of the APF.
 - Yukon producers are now able to take advantage of the Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization Program, another APF Program – a federal/territorial program that provides Yukon farmers with protection against declines in their annual income.
 - And the Transportation Incentive Program – under the Food Quality and Safety Chapter of the APF – it offers farmers equal access to the licensed abattoir, regardless of where they farm in the Territory. This program is being administered in partnership with the Yukon Agriculture Association.

- The Transportation incentive program is only one example of the work we do in partnership with the Yukon Agriculture Association. We recently increased their core funding from \$15 to \$25,000, recognizing their larger role in administering programs such as the Transportation Incentive.
- And back in March we were able to direct \$270,000 in transition funding from the Federal government directly to the Yukon Agriculture Association for program development and to assist producers in developing the agriculture industry in the Yukon.

Closing

- The Yukon industry faces a number of challenges including access to capital, cost of production, lack of infrastructure and competition from non-Yukon producers.
- But through the development of programs under the APF, continued partnership with local agriculture organizations and the hard work and time invested by you in this industry – I am confident we will be able to overcome these challenges and enhance opportunities for Yukon’s agriculture industry.