



MEAT PROCESSING INVESTMENT REBATE PROGRAM ISSUES FIRST GRANT



Natural Valley Farms recently received a grant of almost \$630,000 under the new Meat Processing Investment Rebate Program. The company is the first to receive a grant under the program, announced in June 2005, as part of the province's \$37.3 million meat strategy.

The Meat Processing Investment Rebate Program offers a 15 per cent rebate on construction costs for federally registered new plant construction or expansion. The rebate also applies to costs associated with a change of status from provincially regulated to federally registered status, or a move from federally registered status to European Union (EU) status.

"The Meat Processing Investment Rebate has helped us tremendously, especially as a \$5.6 million start up business," Natural Valley Farms President Ken Piller said. "The impacts and spin offs have been more than we ever anticipated. We currently employ 53 people, and we expect this number to grow as we add new projects."

The rebate program is intended to cover the primary processing of red meat including cattle, hogs, bison, sheep, goats, deer, elk, llamas and alpacas. In the case of secondary processing, both red meat and poultry are eligible.

"We designed the rebate program to encourage new and expanded slaughter and processing capacity in Saskatchewan," Agriculture and Food Minister Mark Wartman said. "This is important to our industry to help reduce our reliance on shipping across the border into the United States. Natural Valley Farms' Wolesey plant has created local jobs, and has allowed our beef producers to participate in the value chain by retaining ownership of their value-added product until it is shipped for distribution."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Call toll free 1-877-874-5365; or
- Visit www.agr.gov.sk.ca and click About Us | Programs and Services | Other.

PROVINCE INVESTS \$3.3 MILLION IN MEAT PROCESSING

Expanding meat processors in Saskatchewan received a big boost recently from the introduction of a \$3.3 million provincial toll processing service at Thomson Meat's plant in Melfort.



Toll processing allows a new or expanding company to have its product custom-produced in a federally-

inspected facility until it can afford to build a plant of its own. Toll processing services have been identified by the industry as a necessity to allow Saskatchewan food processors to bridge the gap between product development, commercial scale production, and building market share.

"Toll processing will enable our agriculture industry to process more of what we produce in the province," Wartman said. "It has the potential to enable the development of new meat products for specialized or niche markets and thereby create new businesses and jobs for Saskatchewan."

"Toll processing complements the work of the Food Industry Development Centre," Saskatchewan Food Industry Development Centre Board Chair Amos Skinner said. "At the Food Centre, we do product development and help companies test their product in the marketplace. Thomson Meats will allow companies to do commercial-scale production and marketing to grow their business."

"The capability that is being set up with this initiative is very important to help build our industry," said Canadian Prairie Lamb President Gord Schroeder. "We are encouraged by the support being provided by the province to the value-added processing we do here in Saskatchewan."

Toll processing is the third of three initiatives outlined within the \$37.3 million Meat Processing Strategy unveiled in June 2005. The first initiative was \$1.2 million in funding for the Saskatchewan Food Industry Development Centre to support the creation and development of new food products. The second was a \$32.8 million Meat Processing Investment Rebate program to encourage processing plant expansion or construction.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Thomson Meats Ltd. at (306) 752-2802.

Regional economic development conference held in Meadow Lake

On Oct. 27, 2005, the Northwest Regional Economic Development Authority (REDA) in Meadow Lake hosted a regional economic development consultation event. The purpose was to facilitate discussion and analysis of economic development and strategic planning.

"Longer term planning is needed to take advantage of opportunities and deal with issues before they become problems," Northwest REDA Economic Development Officer Barry Lewis said. "The Weyerhaeuser announcement in Prince Albert will have a ripple effect on Meadow Lake. Having a plan is very important right now."

Leaders from the local business community, First Nations, and provincial and municipal governments discussed a full range of issues and challenges that confront northwest Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food staff from North Battleford's Agriculture Business Centre took part in the conference.

"It was an excellent opportunity for us to learn more about the economic development goals of local residents and to network with the people who will make it happen," said Glenn Barclay, forage development specialist with SAF.

The morning session included Rural Development Minister Clay Serby and Maynard Sonntag, Minister responsible for First Nations and Metis Relations. Serby spoke on the four key components of his rural development strategy which were identified by the Action Committee on the Rural Economy: building on Saskatchewan's natural advantages, supporting research and innovation, enhancing and promoting Saskatchewan's competitive advantage and broadening the provincial economy through enhanced training at all post-secondary institutions. Sonntag spoke on the potential of the Aboriginal population and how education was the key to economic success.

Al Scholtz, executive director of the Saskatchewan Agrivision Corporation, and Doug Elliot of Sask Trends Monitor also gave presentations.

In the afternoon, the meeting broke into roundtable workshops to examine regional economic strengths and weaknesses and to prioritise regional goals and objectives.

"I am very pleased with the success of this process," commented Lewis. "Our challenge now is to determine what can be initiated in a timely manner, and what needs to be addressed in the short- and long-terms."

Lewis is incorporating the information into the Northwest REDA's new long-range strategic plan that will determine common goals and objectives for the future of the northwest. The plan will be available to the public in early 2006.





SASKATCHEWAN OFFERS GUIDE TO ENCOURAGE PUBLIC'S PARTICIPATION IN LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS



Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food has produced a booklet that offers livestock development proponents tips on how to approach and talk to rural communities about their development plans.

"The support of the local community is essential to the success of any economic development initiative," says Jacquie Gibney, director of the Livestock Development Branch. "The purpose of the Guidelines for Public Participation in Livestock Development is to try to ensure that local citizens and developers

have a full and frank discussion of any potential livestock development."

While many towns, villages, rural municipalities and citizens are eager to attract the economic activity associated with a beef feedlot or hog barn, they are also concerned about issues such as potential pollution, odour, noise, increased truck traffic and the effect of that traffic on roads and highways.

"It is quite understandable that people will be concerned about the impact a major development will have on them and their community," says Gibney. "Most, if not all, of these concerns can be resolved or at least mitigated through open and honest communication between the public and the proponents. That's why we, as a department, strongly encourage proponents and citizens to talk to one another. It won't eliminate all conflict, but it will get the concerns out in the open where they can be discussed."

Gibney draws attention to a quote by American humorist Will Rogers in the

booklet's introduction: "People want to know you care, before they care what you know."

"We believe that the livestock industry cares about doing good business and developing in a manner that supports community goals and objectives over the long term. This begins with effective discussions at the outset of a project," says Gibney.

The booklet briefly discusses the current process for decision making in Saskatchewan and the role played by the provincial agencies, as well as the responsibility for land use planning in local communities. Other sections provide hints on preparing for events, options for meeting and communicating with the public, how to work with the media, and suggestions on making public meetings effective.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Call Livestock Development Branch, SAF, at 787-9112; or
- Call your local SAF Agriculture Business Centre.



AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP PLANNING SHINES IN LOWER SOURIS WATERSHED



Ross Madsen has worked hard to make the 4 Creeks Agri-Environmental Group Plan a reality.

While producers across the province develop environmental farm plans (EFPs) for their operations, a group of producers in south-eastern Saskatchewan is piloting a group approach to environmental planning.

Ross Madsen is Co-Chair of the 4 Creeks Watershed Advisory Committee, which began looking at water issues in the Lower Souris watershed in 2004.

"With all the drainage and land levelling activities in our area, I and other producers started to wonder if local economic activities around agriculture were starting to affect the quality of water in our watershed," said Madsen. "We decided it was time to take stock of our agricultural practices."

That decision led to the formation of the 4 Creeks Watershed Advisory Committee.

The committee is comprised of representatives from Rural Municipalities surrounding Stoney, Jackson, Graham, Gainsborough, Pipestone and Antler Creeks – thus covering the entire Lower Souris River watershed.

Karmen Kyle is the Beneficial Management Practices Technician working with the group planning project. Although the group project is her first priority, she encourages producer members to also do individual EFPs, because this process allows them to assess impacts of their own management practices.

"The intent of the group planning approach is to promote good land and water management practices with one issue in mind: the watershed," said Kyle. "In the Lower Souris project, we are addressing surface water quality."

The main advantage of the group approach – or, to use its official name, the Saskatchewan Agri-Environmental Group Planning initiative – is that it provides a one-on-one contact between technician and producers to help them develop and complete their projects, all of which focused on the health of the 4 Creeks Watershed.

"One of the first things we did was to identify the issues that needed to be dealt with," said Kyle. "A scan document, which identified all environmental issues around air, soil, water and biodiversity, was developed.

"The document was then presented at a meeting of area producers, who ultimately decided that surface water quality was the greatest concern in terms of run-off, wetlands, permanent and intermittent creeks."

The way Kyle sees it, the process gave producers an opportunity to take ownership of the project. "The collective decision-making process ensures the success of the initiative. We are now starting to involve additional producer members in the group planning, and they will submit an application in the spring."

The three-year pilot program is valued at \$340,000 and runs until March 31, 2008. With the success of this project, the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan are now looking for proposals from other watershed groups.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Call Karmen Kyle, Beneficial Management Practices Technician, 4 Creeks Watershed Advisory Committee Inc., at (306) 452-3292; or
- Visit www.agt.gov.sk.ca, click on the Agricultural Policy Framework badge on the right side of the page, and click Environment.





JUDGES DAZZLED BY AGRICULTURE HERITAGE POSTER CONTEST ENTRIES

More than 800 students across Saskatchewan entered the Agricultural Heritage Poster Contest. Judges were dazzled by the vibrantly coloured animals, barns, tractors and farm families depicted.

The poster contest sponsors, Agriculture in the Classroom, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, and Saskatchewan Crop Insurance, invited students to create a poster celebrating 100 years of agricultural activity in the province.

Students from grades one to six depicted the importance of agriculture and agricultural products in their daily lives, while posters produced by older students in grades seven to nine focused on agricultural innovation over the past century.

Entries were divided into groupings of grades one to three; grades four to six; and grades seven to nine.

Prizes of \$75 and \$50 were presented in each category from Q-Line Trucking of Saskatoon. The prizes were presented at the Celebrating Agricultural Education banquet held at the Saskatoon Hilton Garden Inn on October 18. The event was attended by both teachers and agricultural producers from across the province, as well as Agriculture Minister Mark Wartman.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Visit www.aitc.sk.ca/postercontest.htm.

GRADES ONE TO THREE



1st Place
Amy Manske, Saskatoon



2nd Place
Tracy Irwin, Estevan



3rd Place
Deborah Manske, Saskatoon

GRADES FOUR TO SIX



1st Place
Lukas Wipf, Kenaston



2nd Place
Jordyn Leib, Balgonie

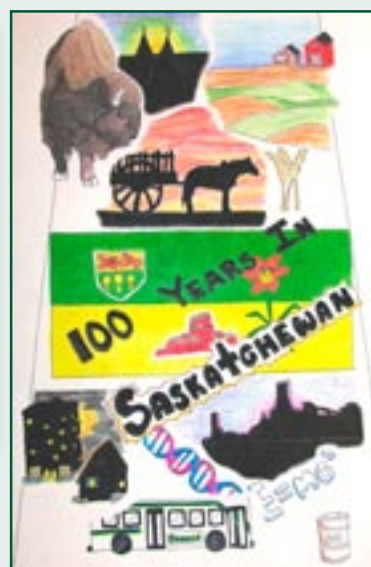


3rd Place (tie)
(Top) Rylan Schmidt, Waldheim
(Bottom) Reba Decker, Kenaston

GRADES SEVEN TO NINE



1st Place
Morgan McKellar, Outlook



2nd Place
Lia Wilson, Saskatoon



3rd Place
Sonya Wipf, Kenaston

