For Peace Region agriculture entrepreneurs.

Learn Agri-Food Network Team includes Gail Briggs and Jerry Kitt, as well as:

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The Innovation Network
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Elaine Stenbraaten
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Send submissions to Susan.

For toll free calling of all AAFRD staff dial 310-0000 first.

Bits & Pieces

Good-bye to Tom & Charlotte Openshaw

We will miss the fresh ideas and forward looking perspective of Charlotte & Tom. They are moving to central Alberta to do new work. First day is June 1.

Tom & Charlotte are moving to Bowden to take care of a large facility called Foothills Camps. In addition to handling all maintenance and custodial functions, they even get to care for the horses, we hear. E-mail us on occasion, Charlotte. Take care of her Tom.

CANADA peace country

At the annual meeting, these directors were elected: Dan Dibbelt, Kit Fearon, Fred Jarvis, Marlene Maxwell, Elaine Peterson, Heather Porrill, Bud Powell, Greg Radstaak, Helen Rice & Cliff Travis.
We'll make sour each of them receives our newsletter.

"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

Thomas Edison

Post meeting sharing—Julie Gour & Doris Brocke, Karen Goad, Ann Toderien & Darlene Hegel and Lianne Read & Martine Bolinger.

Celine Dubois & Gary Christopherson

Learn Agri-Food

Issue 3.5
May 2005

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Great opportunities for sharing ideas and information.

Learn Agri-Food Meeting
June 14 at 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

It's the last meeting before our summer recess

It's a celebration and supper event. Bring guests if you like, and as usual, be prepared to learn from others.

Taking you to the next level in agri-business.

The Innovation Network

May Report

Heather Porrill took the challenge in the last newsletter to have one of the group members facilitate the meeting. She is good at it. A round of quick name introductions started the meeting so everyone got their voice in the room and each person felt welcome. Heather then asked for another round of comment where each of the 11 business owners stated needs, issues or questions about packaging and labeling which was the focus of the meeting.

Larry Groner then impressed everyone as a fountain of information on topics ranging from labels to packaging to food safety and legislative requirements. Look to page 3 for some of the tidbits. Larry reviewed the samples processors brought and answered questions. He discussed the range of needs from the basic (it's legal) to the selling features (get customers to look and read).

Gary Christopherson joined us as well. He talked about the project to build a bank of investment dollars in the Peace for use by local businesses in their quest to grow. We need this project and we're going to be awaiting developments. Thanks Gary.

As usual the hardest part of the evening was making a group decision. In the end, we have plans for our June 14 evening. It's the last meeting before summer vacation and it will be a party. See page 4 for costs, details and directions.

We will have an awards ceremony. If you think someone deserves an award for their accomplishments in the past year make it happen!
It's easy:

1. decide who and what for.
2. write a 'citation'. That's the paragraph you read and hand to the recipient. It tells them and everyone else who is receiving your award and why.
3. this is optional—find and bring a momento to give your recipient (you know—the prize).
4. come and present it. Send it with someone else if you can't attend and we'll ensure that any recipients who aren't present get their awards in September.

We'd like to publish the citations in the newsletter or maybe in the Peace Country Sun.

Bring an 'award' and citation for some deserving someone. Tell us your summer business goal.

Attend the Learn Agri-Food meeting on June 14, 2005

Costing & Pricing

The third day of the marketing course included tools and theory for pricing your product. The building blocks are:

- **Costs**—Heather Porrill went right home to her computer and played with the numbers for costing her product. Include everything—how to price your own labour produced lots of discussion. The profit conversation fits here too and Heather says she used three different per cents to compare what happened to her lifestyle as a result of the work she'd have to do in a year to earn it.
- **Competition**—what's out there? where is it? how much are they charging? Lianne Read might have to visit garden centres but perhaps there is 'no real' competition to her latest idea.
- **Customer**— what will they pay to have your product solve their problem? We're sure that Jerry's 'organic and gently raised' product suits his customers joy in caring for the environment.

Silver Valley Fibres socks might have the 'benefits' of fun, in addition to comfort and an opportunity to support local. Who'd have thought selling was another benefit of taking the marketing course?

Labeling & Packaging

Larry Groner took the best things with him, from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). He brought them to us at our LAF Network meeting—information on labels and packaging. He's willing to talk with you about these topics—just give him a call. Here are some of the tidbits we picked up at the meeting:

- text size minimums might be too small for your target customers (think baby boomer and bi-focals)
- the common name of the product must not 'confuse' the customer—CFIA will help
- use someone to check it out before spending for printing—call Larry at 780-766-2897

Benefits over Features

Benefits is the key word here. Customers don't want to know your product features, they want to know what it will do for them. Why should they buy your product over a competitor's? What's in it for them?

Find out what drives your customers to buy. If it's a link to the rural lifestyle, a wish for simpler times, or fond memories of their farm experiences growing up, emphasize the family or heritage farm aspect of your business. If they have a young family, talk up the health and nutrition benefits and great taste. If they're concerned about weight control, focus on the leanness of, for instance, bison products. Find out what's important to them. Understand their values and beliefs and market your products to fill an identified need.

Advise customers on the **health** benefits of Little Burnt Farm saskatoons or Robideau Greenhouse tomatoes and the everyday **comfort** of merino wool socks. Give them tips on how to prepare and serve the produce. Supply 'wash and wear" instructions with your wool socks. Assume that your customers DO NOT know how to handle your products. I'll bet most of your customers don't know tomatoes are linked to reducing cancer rates in middle aged men, saskatoons may help in the fight against heart disease and diabetes, and Silver Valley Fibres merino wool socks are as soft and durable as Smartwool.

Learn Agri-Food Events to Attend

You're welcome. Bring your friends and family.

Tuesday
June 14, 2005
6:00 to 9:00 pm

Sylvan Meadows Golf & Country Club

Located between Rycroft and Spirit River and 4 km south.
Phone them at (780) 765-2228.

Learn Agri-Food Meeting

Our last meeting before summer vacation. Come celebrate, learn and share.

1. supper at 6:00 p.m. We'll pay $8.50 per person for a catered hamburger barbecue including all the salads and condiments. It'll be a cash bar for beverages.
2. go early and golf, if you like. Phone the course at 780-765-2228
3. meeting from 7:00 to 9:00
   Theme: celebrate progress and success with awards (see the May report information on page 1)

July 24 &25
Grande Prairie airport

Grande Prairie Airshow

The Peace Country Recreational Flyers Association is cooking breakfast with Peace region products for the volunteers. Heather Porrill's Star Bright Farm pancake mix was such a hit at Meyer's fly-in breakfast the club is going whole hog on July 24 & 25.

September 13

Rycroft for sure

& Grande Prairie

& somewhere such as Peace River or—you suggest a place!

Learn Agri-Food Network Meeting

In order to spread the word further, we are planning to start another couple groups in September in other parts of the region. Advantages:

- shorter travel
- more time to share with fewer people per group
- education opportunities to bring everyone together for 'cross pollination

If you have any ideas, call one of the Team members from page 4

These members agree to put their contact information in the newsletter so you can call with advice or a question.

Lianne Read—Silver Valley Fibres
780-351-2091
sheepo@telusplanet.net

Charlotte Openshaw—Prairie Dream Organics 780-835-4550
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Kathy & Leo Meyer—Coveralls for Kids
780-774-2051

Tara Sallis—Birch Hills Bath Company
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780-694-2377

Gil & Darlene Hegel—Valta Bison
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Jerry & Sam Kitt—First Nature Farms
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Gail & Stan Briggs
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