



Learn Agri-Food Network

Choose a Network Meeting Near You

Issue 3.8
August to September
2005

The Rycroft meetings were so useful to entrepreneurs that many became regular attendees, with some driving several hours to attend the meetings over the past two seasons.

This fall will have meetings in three locations each month to bring the opportunity closer to you.

With four to six businesses in



attendance there is more time to discuss problems and solutions for each person.

Every meeting is different. Topics the business people bring to the table is what gets discussed. Taste tests with written evaluations are the most interactive. Feedback on labels and packaging, pricing options or distribution ideas were all valuable.

Join us for one of these Peace region Learn Agri-Food Network meetings

- Peace River
- Rycroft
- Grande Prairie

They will usually run the first Tuesday evening each month from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Attend the location most convenient to you.

Learn Agri-Food Network Meetings Grow

The Learn Agri-Food network supports agripreneurs in sharing information with peers to build businesses of ag or rural based experiences, products and services.

The purpose of the meetings is for business owners share their challenges with others and find possible solutions.

The process (or agenda) includes these things:

- meetings run from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Supper or other group meetings might happen before 7:00 and conversation can continue after 9:00 but the meeting is over then.

- someone acts as a meeting 'facilitator' to start and conclude the meeting, anyone can do it and they (and everyone in the room) try to keep the conversation on track.
- every person in the room introduces themselves in a round table routine. Sometimes the facilitator poses a question there might be a 'theme' for the meeting. Sometimes it's just name, business, and something you're working on, challenged by or proud of.
- if there are guests they are asked to introduce themselves, in rotation, listen to the business participants and offer thoughts where they might

be useful.

- everyone helps ensure that the conversation from 7:00 to 9:00 addresses the needs of the business representatives present.
- the Learn Agri-Food Network Team (see page 4) coordinate the newsletter and news columns in the Peace Country Sun to let people know where and when upcoming meetings and educational events will be held. They attend LAF Network meetings as often and possible and will certainly be at the September to December meetings this fall.

Contents:

Choose a Meeting	1
Network Meetings Grow	1
The LAF Network Team	2
Measuring Growth	2
Tradeshows	3
Dine Alberta	3
Gift Certificates	3
LAF Network Team	4
Events to Attend	4
Scholarships	4

We're on the web:

<http://www.peacecountrycanada.com>

Look for The Innovation Network and then Learn Agri-Food

The Learn Agri-Food Network Team: or... who ya gonna call?

Meet your Learn Agri-Food team members. In the photo (left) moving from left to right, back row first:

Jim Smith is your contact if you want to innovate. To The Innovation Network, that means, move an idea to profit. Their network helps businesses connect to resources all along the system. This includes education, partners in development, advice.

Elaine Stenbraaten is a business coach with Alberta Agriculture. Elaine mans the department hot line for small business development inquiries and so hears the wide array of ideas people have for making money. She has great connections inside the department. She is our advocate for CETAC West, a terrific training opportunity for entrepreneurs. Call Elaine and see if she can help you get there next session.

Jerry Kitt provides industry connection and contacts. An organic grower and direct marketing entrepreneur himself, Jerry brings a large dose of common sense to our group.

Karen Goad connects us to projects in Alberta Agriculture such as Farm Direct and Food Safety. She's co-writing a food safety manual for farm direct marketers, farmers' market managers and vendors. Karen is a superb editor. If you'd like any of your promotional materials reviewed, ask her for help.

Gail Briggs is the processor in our group. She speaks on behalf of the individual entrepreneur and advocates for industry. Gail keeps us up to date on what the industry is up to.

Martine Bolinger is the young blood with Alberta Agriculture. She connects us to ag tourism and the woodlot industries as well as the Dine Alberta program. Call Martine to converse on your business and especially marketing ideas. She'll help you think of new ways to think.

Susan Meyer coordinates this newsletter and the Proudly Peace Full Products column in the Peace Country Sun. Karen & Martine write more than half the columns, but Susan is always asking for input from YOU.

Gary Christopherson (no photo) is an industry consultant who is interested in many things. Gary is now working on geo-caching, a project to bring tourists into areas of the Peace region. He tells us about this project. If you have a place that could use promoting, Gary's the guy for you. Investment attraction is also an interest. In Gary's world, this means finding money to invest in our Peace region businesses and he means from micro to medium sized businesses.



Most of the Learn Agri-Food Network Team

"It's hard!" That's how Martine Bolinger, the youngest member of our group describes her view of small business and the energy it takes to be an agripreneur.

Your Growth Plan—Measurement Tools

You will find your growth plan much easier to implement if you create measurement tools to tell you how you're doing along the way. These need not be overly complex.

You need to decide the things that are most critical to achieving your growth objective and then find a way to measure them. If, for instance, you think

competitive pricing will determine your fate in the marketplace, you could assign one employee to be your mystery shopper. Have them make a weekly trip to an outlet where your products are sold along side those of competitors just to make sure you're not being undersold.

It's easy to overdo measurement, spending valuable resources collecting

data that isn't useful. But that doesn't mean all measurement is bad.

Think about your measurement process. What do you use? How often, and how much energy does it take?



Tradeshows: Know your purpose in attending

Tradeshows are a great way to showcase your products and identify new buyers. Gail Briggs, who attended the first Prairie Finds show at Klondike Days, summed up her experience this way.

"I did a lot of sampling and talked to lots of people. After the show I received a call from a Calgary company asking to do a gift pack contract. It's a tremendous new market opportunity," comments Gail.

If you're attending a trade show to gather information, use the show guide to develop your schedule. Mark important pages with tabs for easy access eg. exhibitor listing, new events, map, etc. Ask each exhibitor you're interviewing the basic five questions: who, what, where,

when and why. Open ended questions will deliver the most useful information.

To get the most out of your exhibitor experience, assess the cost/benefit ratio before you invest in the booth fee. Find out how many past attendees were from your target market. Examine the classification listings and see what is of interest or use to you. Obtain gate traffic numbers and clock records so you have the best staff coverage during the busiest times. In Alberta Calgary shows are usually bigger than Edmonton.

Keep in mind that show buyers are

looking for products that are new, different or unique and customer service. No matter how good the product is it won't sell if there is no customer service.

Want more information? Talk to Learn Agri-Food Network members Linda Prudholme Warrior, Heather Porritt, Maryse Maurice or Gail Briggs for insight into their experiences at Prairie Finds.

Dine Alberta—September

"The purpose of the Dine Alberta program is to support the family farm;" says Wesley Johnson, AAFRD, Dine Alberta Project leader. "We want to create linkages between farm products and local chefs."

In it's third year, we've managed to increase five-fold the number of Peace region restaurants involved in the Dine Alberta program. That's an increase from one in 2004 to five this year, but it also describes the amount of energy it takes restaurants and local producers to find each other.

"One of our best ways to get into the

Use a gift certificate

Support an Alberta producer. If you need a September gift for someone from your organization, your business or yourself, consider a gift certificate to one of the Dine Alberta restaurants.

Wouldn't it be something if every consumer in the province asked every restaurant "what's local on the your menu?"

restaurant trade is to divide the province into quarters and travel the highway with samples," says Pam Huber, H&H Elk Products.

Dine Alberta is intended to help both sides (farmers and restaurants) with directories and promotion tools.

Celebrate the harvest from field to table. Taste the good food we grow right here at a local restaurant.

We'll report on how it worked in October.



Great opportunities for sharing ideas and information.

Learn Agri-Food Network Meetings

*Tuesday, September 13, 2005
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.*

This year we're offering three meeting locations. Share ideas, solve problems for one another and learn at a facilitated meeting. One of the LAF Network Team will be present at each meeting location. Choose one of:

Peace River—Northern Sunrise County office

Rycroft—Alexanders Restaurant (if enough of us go for supper first, they don't charge rent—meet at 5:45 pm for supper)

Grande Prairie—Provincial Building (enter by the north door by ringing the bell, or the west end door)

For Peace Region agriculture entrepreneurs.

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

Jim Smith

The Innovation Network
Fairview
1-866-835-5005

Elaine Stenbraaten

Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development
Fairview
835-7531

Gary Christopherson

Consultant
Grimshaw
780-338-2000

Karen Goad

Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development
Grande Prairie
538-5629

Martine Bolinger

Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development
Grande Prairie
538-5633

Susan Meyer

Editor
Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development
Grande Prairie
538-5630

Fax: 538-5288

susan.meyer@gov.ab.ca

Send submissions to Susan.

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

The Learn Agri-Food Network Team helps agripreneurs build profitable businesses to grow their industries. It looks at business issues and applies them to the larger industry by supplying knowledge and information, reducing business development barriers and identifying resources.

We help reduce the tuition in the school of hard knocks.

Learn Agri-Food Events to Attend

you are welcome to any or all

Tuesday, September 13 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Peace River Rycroft Grande Prairie	Learn Agri-Food Meeting The first meeting of the fall season: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions of you and your business• The 2010 Olympics—it's an opportunity for many of our businesses.
Tuesday, September 20 Rycroft Ag-Plex 9:30 to 3:00	Farmers' Market Workshop Meet people involved in farmers' markets, discuss signage & insurance. Call Ann Toderian for information: 780-765-2292
Tuesday, October 18 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.	Learn Agri-Food Meeting
October 27	The Grande Prairie Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring: ONE Conference (Outlook on Northern Employment) See more at: www.oneconference.ca Keynote Speaker - Dr. David Foot, author of 'Boom, Bust & Echo' book series, Professor of Economics at the University of Toronto, and demographics specialist
To be announced during the day, probably	2010 Winter Olympics Opportunities A workshop to explain how to become a supplier to the Olympics (and advance functions). Watch for details.

Scholarships to help grow your business

Learning can improve skills, produce product or service ideas or connect you with suppliers, buyers or people who can help.

There are ways to save money getting that learning. Be on the lookout for others, but here's a start:

- Alberta Agriculture invested money in the Peace Value Added Food and Ag Association for Learn Agri-Food workshops and for individuals to attend educational events. It

won't pay the whole cost, but if you have an idea for an expert or find an event of national or international calibre, call Susan, Karen or Martine (look left for the phone numbers) and they'll help.

- Food Beverage Canada is keen on people considering export from Canada. They'll help you get to tradeshows in and outside Canada to obtain that goal. See them at: www.foodbeveragecanada.com



Find a course, workshop, tradeshow or conference that would help you in your business.