



Learn Agri-Food Network

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September LAF Network Topics of Interest

In chats with participants at each of the three September meetings, it seems these topics were of interest to participants:

Nutrition Labeling: For food processors, the requirement for nutrition labeling is being phased in over the next couple years. Big companies will be expected to comply first, then smaller and eventually you, too, will need to have correct information on your food labels. The easiest way to start becoming aware of what the requirements will be is to study the labels of Kelloggs, Kraft, General Foods, McCains. Collect some labels and see what is consistent and what different products have. Ask us for an in-service and we'll discuss the next steps for readiness.

Time Management

Balancing the work of being all things in a

small business along with family and life is a huge challenge. Is there need for a priority setting WORK shop? One where we each take and give coaching in figuring the first three of the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People:

1. Be proactive
2. Begin with the end in mind
3. Put first things first

Understanding and Building a Relationship with Health Inspectors

There was great sharing in Peace River apparently on how to meet, greet, use and understand the various inspectors. Should we invite some of them to a session so we can all learn how they act, what they do and what we need to do to stay legal?

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.

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

Make an Impact in Small Ways

The September Dine Alberta program and the upcoming Peace Country Bison Association gala raised our awareness that local pocket books can make a difference to local rural communities and businesses. We have the power to influence buying.

Persuading restaurants (and chefs) to put Peace region and Alberta food on their menus is good. Getting them to tell and sell this to customers is even better. It's a

circle affair though. Most of us either eat out or help organize events where caterers and chefs cook for community events.

Our checklist for supporting our neighbours and ourselves should include:

1. ask the organizer to get the caterer to "buy Alberta".
2. tell the participants that it's local food on the menu.
3. ask participants to thank the chef for serving local.

Think about using these ways to tell people:

- posters
- table tents cards
- supplier business cards on tables
- logos of producers on menus or programs.

Contents:	
Last Meeting	2
Food Safety Information	3
Dine Alberta Lessons	3
LAF Network Meetings	3
LAF Network Team	4
Events to Attend	4

Enclosed: a business profile template for practice and other events this winter

We're on the web:
<http://www.peacecountrycanada.com>
 Look for The Innovation Network and then Learn Agri-Food

News from Learn Agri-Food Network Meetings



Rycroft

The group in Rycroft, where there have been monthly gatherings for a year, enjoyed being smaller. Each person had more time to describe their successes and challenges. A theme emerged as the entrepreneurs shared their time management challenges. Just what does a business owner do to manage all the tasks of production, finance and marketing while keeping up to date on business needs? Perhaps a workshop this winter will address some of these questions.

Tracy Jouan of Mooseberry's Fine Food & Gifts showed off her new packaging and asked for feedback. There was consensus on the professionalism of all her printed promotional material, including the packaging.

Grande Prairie

All four of the businesses attending the Grande Prairie Learn Agri-Food meeting do some of their selling at the farmers' market. They shared ideas on how to sell outside the market and also produced creative ideas on how to ensure that customers at the market could easily and attractively see the wide variety of products. Ideas, of course, are a 'dime a dozen' so the group went further and listed some themes for follow-up work. The examples listed here are meat related since most of the participants sell meat products, but could be good ideas for any commodity:

- as a customer leaves the booth, whether they buy or not, tell them about another booth to check out. Examples included Gerty Sorenson, Mini Creek talking about Glendean bison sausage, who might direct the customer to Harmony Way organically grown chicken, who might ask "have you visited Gerty Sorensen to see how her lamb and Christmas turkey is looking?"
- ensure pricing for profit that must include all the costs a direct marketer incurs. It was noted that we do all the things the value chain to the grocery store does – and without the economies of scale. Therefore, if a customer makes a price comparison to Safeway, be

ready with the gentle and excited benefits talk about local, the short trip from farm to table through well known processing centres, knowing (& trusting) the source, and the extra service of "I'll advise you on how to make a great meal".

- go ahead and run out of a product, on occasion and have ready a (hand printed so it looks fresh) sign that says something like: Oops – customer demand was bigger than I guessed, this week. We ran out of.....

Labeling and especially nutrition labeling received a fair bit of conversation, as did each person reminding themselves to pay attention to detail and every opportunity to send their name and phone number away with the customer for follow-up purchases. The five producers (six if you count Susan), all said they learned from the conversation about their own businesses. Eldeen Kjemus brought bison pepperoni to taste. That got us to looking at those label issues again. We enjoyed the evening thoroughly.

Peace River

Peace River was a new spot for the Learn Agri Food meeting. Three businesses were joined by a consultant who offered assistance in using the federal government's Scientific Research & Experimental Development program for product research.

The three entrepreneurs at Peace River are in the food business, so there was good sharing about building relationships with the health and food inspectors. They discussed the value chain from kitchen through gift baskets or farmers' markets and the need for food safety protocols.

Peace Country Baskets is gearing up (as were all the processors) for the Christmas season. Julie Gour ensures that her basket ingredients are appropriate and each item is compatible with the others. Soap and food in one basket is rarely successful because of cross over of the fragrances.



Food Safety Information for you and your customers

Peace Country Health has a great newsletter. The spring issues describes regulation changes for food & food establishments. There is also information on temporary food establishments (for events, for instance.)

At the Alberta Farmers' Market Association (AFMA) workshop and meeting in Rycroft, there were a number of comments about the wealth of information

www.pchr.ca/PeaceCountry/pages/about_pages/Spring2005again_3.pdf

available from health inspectors. There was no fear, only welcoming comments from participants there—and there weren't even any health inspectors in the room.

The next meeting of farmers' market vendors and managers will be in about 6 months and an invitation to the local and provincial inspectors will be extended.

"I'm an 'entrepreneur junky'," says Tara Sallis, Birch Hills Bath Company. To encourage others, she and Heather Porrill are speaking about the Learn Agri-Food Network at the November 17 & 18 Farm Womens' Conference in Grande Prairie.



Rycroft meeting participants say the Mooseberry's presentation was awesome.

Dine Alberta—What we learned

The media in this region are ready to help. That's one of the things the Learn Agri-Food Network Team learned when we took staff from Sun FM, CJXX and the Grande Prairie papers out to a Dine Alberta restaurant. In conversation, they said they love to be told about events. We could learn from this.

The radio people said they love sound bites. They get frustrated when they hear people speak eloquently at a meeting (where

they don't have a microphone) who then will not answer questions in an interview. For free promotion, be ready with some key messages about your product. We call it your 'elevator speech'. Write out some lines and practice them while boiling, shearing or moving your products.

Food works well too. There is no question that smell, taste and the offer of free food makes a story.

Learn Agri-Food Network Meetings

If you know the dates, share them we were told. So, here are the Tuesday night dates for our meetings this year. Put them on your calendar and tell others for us.

October 18, 2005

November 15, 2005

December 13, 2005

January 10, 2006

February 14, 2006

March 14, 2006

April 11, 2006

May 9, 2006

June 11, 2006

Great opportunities for sharing ideas and information.

Learn Agri-Food Network Meetings

*Tuesday, October 18, 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— The Travellers Hotel—meeting room beside the dining room.

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—Country Roads RV (from the corner of highways 43 & 2 drive west 2.5 miles. It's in the red barn.) Here's a map to print:

www.countryroadsvrpark.com/Park_Map.jpg



For Peace Region agriculture entrepreneurs.

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

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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

<p>Tuesday, October 18 7:00 to 9:00 p.m Peace River Rycroft Grande Prairie</p>	<p>Learn Agri-Food Meeting A chance to re-group your business plan, build connections and get help.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions of you and your business • Share information from your business profile to create key messages
<p>October 27</p>	<p>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 Univeristy of Toronto, and demographics specialist</p>
<p>Tuesday, November 15 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Learn Agri-Food Meeting A chance to re-group your business plan, build connections and get help.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions of you and your business • Your written materials show and tell—get & give feedback
<p>To be announced during the day, probably</p>	<p>2010 Winter Olympics Opportunities A workshop to explain how to become a supplier to the Olympics (and advance functions). Watch for details.</p>
<p>November Edmonton</p>	<p>Alberta Horticulture Congress</p>
<p>December 8 & 9 Grande Prairie</p>	<p>Finding Agreement Constructive Collaboration fro Communities A Workshop for Leaders in Business This is the course for negotiating agreement so that a long term relationship is built.</p>
<p>Texas (Coming to Alberta in 2007)</p>	<p>North American Farm Direct Marketing Association Conference http://www.nafdma.com/Texas/ If selling direct to the consumer is your bag, you would love to tell us you attended this one. If it seems like the right thing for you, call one of us about a scholarship to help pay your way.</p>
<p>We enclose a list of winter events that might be of interest.</p>	