



Learn Agri-Food Network

Issue 3.11
December 2005 to
January 2006

Supporting agri-preneurs in sharing information with peers to build **businesses** of ag or rural based experiences, products and services.

Celebrate Success and Move to New Goals

Celebrating 2005 success produced joy and plans for more at the last Learn Agri-Food network meetings.

“2005 was a good learning year”, says Gerty Sorensen, Mini Creek Farms. “There is still lots to do, though. I know I need better signage.”

At the Grande Prairie meeting the participants including Larry and Susan King, Harmony's Way Farms, discussed ways to raise prices when they need to cover greater input costs. Each buyer seems to have a dollar amount they are willing to bring out of their pocket. Is it \$5 per purchase at Farmers' Markets? \$50 maximum for a restaurant? The group suggested using that figure and then copy laundry soap and potato chip producers: decrease the size of the package. Adding the cost per serving on the package was an idea being discussed in Rycroft on the same evening—and we don't even have video conferencing yet. (Come to the pricing workshop with Bob Cobbledick for more pricing ideas.)

Raising prices to cover increasing input costs was discussed at two meetings.

The laughter at Alexander's restaurant was so exuberant, other diners may have wished they could join the group. The stories had a familiar theme: experience a challenge, avoid it for awhile, meet it, let others help, help others and reach a level success not you couldn't anticipate.

Everyone said thanks for health and help. Kathy was grateful for Gail Briggs and Gail's health. She shared her joy in Canada having four distinct seasons (as well as the super roads this year in the Peace).

Christmas sales were the business opportunity of the year for most. It takes lots of energy to sell in one month the greatest per cent of a year's worth of product. The solution is to be prepared well in advance next year. December is NOT the preferred month to process, manufacture and produce, not to mention package, label, price or box.

Shows in Rycroft, Grande Prairie and the Art Centre in

Fairview all provided great opportunities. In Dawson Creek a show right before Christmas was aimed at the last minute shoppers.

Lianne Read, Silver Valley Fibres, now has three knitting machines for her variety of woollen products. She's looking for ways to get the knitting done and the group brainstormed a few ideas. Just before the temperature goes down to 10 below, is the best time to promote. Lianne says her goal is to spend more time designing.

The Burnt River Clay open house was a new experience for Barb Barrs and most successful. She was pleased with the Peace Country Sun article and the promotion through it. She said even though Susan Meyer keeps reassuring entrepreneurs that the writing will endeavor not to

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

- *Falher*
- *Rycroft*
- *Grande Prairie*

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

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Lianne Read is missing. Her story of celebration caused enough joy for Heather, Gail, Barb, Kathy and Tara to show joy for the camera.

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embarrass, but... Both Susan & Lianne clarified the promise. Susan that the writing won't make the business owners look snooty, big headed or excessively prideful. Lianne said the articles will often say such complementary things that it IS embarrassing in that regard. "Handle it! They aren't going to stop."

Reflecting on 2005, Barb said the gross income from her clay ware was 3 to 4 times previous years as people start to know how to find her. Her goal is to make the clay works replace her job.

"People love it when I use Peace country products", says Heather Porriell. Star Bright Farms products contain a variety—the sampling biscuits Heather used had Briggswood pickled peppers—resulting in rave reviews. Packages are being created by marrying products using a new (to her) large heat sealer, purchased at a close out sale.

Reformulation of product to include olive oil was a 2005 success for Birch Hills Bath Company's Tara Sallis. She went to twice as many Christmas sales this year (four compared to two). Tara celebrated the success she and Heather had at Farm Women's Conference. This was the first time she's talked about her business to the public.

The congestion in markets and trade shows at big and popular tables was a concern to addressed by vendors. Some plan to attend the provincial conference in Leduc in January. They are going to ask vendors and managers at other markets: what do you do about traffic flow? how does it work? The resulting ideas can then be considered. The group understands that no one person sees a problem from all sides—or a solution either, for that matter.

Gereon & Petra Hoentgesberg, honey producers from Debolt told Elaine Stenbraaten their business story. One of the unwritten goals of the Learn Agri-Food Network is to ensure entrepreneurs are comfortable speaking proudly about their products and services.

All in all: lots of success, challenge and plenty left for 2006.

Head, Heart and Handbag

As sellers of goods and services it is important to try and understand what motivates customers. 3-H Design Theory (Head, Handbag, and Heart) explains the basic reasons a customer buys something. It is a quick and easy to remember breakdown especially for those who were in 4-H.



The head is about need:

"I am out of toothpaste, time to buy."

The handbag is about price and value:

"It's on sale so I better stock up."



The heart is about desire:

"I love that and have to have it."

Thank you Martine Bolinger for this adaptation.



Seen at the Christmas Market in Grande Prairie—a mother/daughter routine. Jody & Doreen Pellerin, Backyard Alpaca, demonstrate knitting and yeti gloves—now there's a great name!



We're on the web:

<http://www.peacecountrycanada.com>

Look for The Innovation Network and then Learn Agri-Food



Education to Help Business

Alberta Farmers' Market Provincial Workshop

This is the annual 'professional association' update for vendors and managers at Farmers' Markets. Marketing ideas or handling conflict with customers and neighbours are two sessions. Karen Goad will launch **Marketing Food Safety**, a manual for farm direct marketers. Share a ride, a room and come home charged up for a great market year.

January 23-24, 2006
Executive Royal Inn, Leduc-Nisku
Contact: Darlene Cavanaugh
Telephone: (780) 644-5377
Email: director@albertamarkets.com

Agri-preneur Scholarship available for Business Learning

Call Karen Goad or Susan Meyer to learn more. In brief—there is a scholarship to attend an event of inter provincial, national or international scope. You go, learn and return with ideas to share with others.

Drop by the office and ask for an application—or call or e-mail and it will arrive by fax, e-mail or snail mail.

Options and Opportunities

Bringing Together Local Entrepreneurs and Industry Experts to Offer Innovative Agricultural Strategies and Share Successes, Challenges and Ideas to Help Producers Become Better Business People and Rural Leaders

February 9th, 2006 8:30 AM - 4:45 PM
Camrose Regional Exhibition, Camrose, Alberta
For More information: Registration Form attached below or call 1-800-296-8112 or view the website www.cre.ab.ca
Keynote Speaker:

Robert Napier, Director Napier Agrifutures, Australia - a firm specializing in strategic planning for agriculture, agribusiness and family farming businesses. Rob studies global changes in agriculture with particular emphasis on the future of family farms. He works with groups of leading farmers in Australia and overseas helping them to seize the opportunities from global changes in agriculture. Rob has a Bachelor of Agricultural Science from the University of Tasmania, a Diploma in Agricultural Studies from Cambridge University and a Master of Economics from the University of New England. **Larry J. Martin** - Ph.D. Mr. Martin is the Director of Canada's only independent agri-food think-tank "George Morris Centre". He is involved in the centre's work on strategy,

 **Acronyms:**
AFMA—Alberta Farmers' Market Association
CRE—Camrose Regional Exhibition
and although there are some people who like to shorten it to:
LAF—we still call it the Learn Agri-Food Network.

strategic analysis, trade and domestic policy analysis and risk management.
Sunterra Farms - has grown from a single central Alberta mixed farm to an integrated family-run agriculture business involved in producing grain, forage and livestock through processing to retail.
Doug Griffiths - Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for Wainwright and is co-chairman of the Rural Development Initiative for Alberta.



Great opportunities for sharing ideas and information.

Learn Agri-Food Network Meeting

Tuesday, January 10, 2005
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

There are three facilitated meetings in the region. Share ideas, solve problems and learn. One of the LAF Network Team will be present at each meeting location. Choose one of:

Falher — We're looking for a spot. Call us with an idea or to find out what we've decided.

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—At the Grande Prairie Provincial Building. Park on 103 Avenue north of the building. We will be in the meeting room in the agriculture office at the west end of the building (where there is a door). We'll leave a not on the north door.

Mark your Calendars

Here are the Tuesday **dates for Learn Agri-Food Network meetings**. Please tell others who might benefit by their presence.

- January 10, 2006
- February 14, 2006
- March 14, 2006
- April 11, 2006
- May 9, 2006
- June 13, 2006

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
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

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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. Members look at business issues and apply 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

**Tuesday,
January 10**
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Learn Agri-Food Meeting

What's your goal for 2006—in your business and in your life? Share ideas, learn from others.

Edmonton
Best Western Cedar Park Inn
January 11, 2006

Basics of Direct Marketing Berries

This workshop will cover topics: location, layout of fields, direct market crop choices, direct market sales options, parking, supervision, customer training, signage, pricing silent salesman.
Contact: 1-800-661-2642 for information/registration costs.

**Tuesday,
January 17, 2006
Dawson Creek**
\$21.10
Phone 538-5208

2010 Winter Olympics Opportunities Workshop



Let's travel together to Dawson Creek for a three hour workshop and enjoy lunch together. See the inserted list of events for more.

**January 23 & 24
Nisku**

Alberta Farmers' Market Association Annual Meeting & Conference

Two days to schmooze with vendors, managers and supporters from across the province. See page 3 for more

**January 25
Grande Prairie**

Pricing for Profit

Bob Cobbleddick, a farm direct marketing industry specialist from Grimsby, Ontario. Don't miss this opportunity to study pricing with an expert.

February 9
8:30 AM - 4:45 PM
Camrose Regional Exhibition

Options and Opportunities

Bringing Together Local Entrepreneurs and Industry Experts to Offer Innovative Agricultural Strategies and Share Successes, Challenges and Ideas to Help Producers Become Better Business People and Rural Leaders (See page 3 for more)

**Tuesday,
February 14**
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Learn Agri-Food Meeting

Bring the "love of your life" and let's talk about balance between home and business.

Early February

Building Relationships with Media

We'll honour Peace County Sun editor, Kathryn Engel and Call of the Land host, Jack Howell for their support of us. They'll tell us what we can do to make it better and easier.

These are the programs we've been hearing you want to attend. We'll know we heard correctly if you call us with your interest in joining us. We'll fix it if you call with 'better' suggestions.



Interest in the 2010 Olympics Procurement session came from industry organizations, people with product that would make good gifts for officials and athletes or food at events for athletes and participants. Imagine Canadian goat and lamb cooked the way they would back home!

The Pricing workshop is tucked up against the AFMA on the calendar because that's when Bob Cobbleddick can travel from Ontario.