



# Learn Agri-Food Network

February to  
March 2006

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

## Where to Find Information

At the **Rycroft** meeting, Tara Sallis, Birch Hills Bath Company, Gail Briggs, Briggswood Country Preserves & Ann Toderian, Mama T's, were excited. Their products were purchased by the Branding the Peace organization for gift baskets going to the 12 teams at the womens' world curling in Grande Prairie in March.

Four bars of soap from Tara, two kinds of Anne' pickled garlic and hospitality sized jars of heritage berry jelly from Gail will go into each basket.

Ann and Gail brought up the issue of nutrition labeling. They will be required to comply with these regulations January 2007. A workshop session to help them make sure they are ready is needed, they said.

The group also discussed ongoing issues with time management, workplans and their busy lives.

Elaine shared the latest Explore Direct E-News about the coaching offered in Airdrie as well as the info on the Ag tourism & Table Top Selling workshops (see page 4). All were interested.

Ann Toderian purchased the Food Safety manual at the provincial farmers market conference. It will be a great resource. (See page two.)

Ann says she is looking at co-packaging as an alternative. Elaine Stenbraaten and Ann will be doing some work on that. Ann also discussed AFMA & Branding the Peace.

The entrepreneurs discussed tools for business planning including the interactive business planner on the Community Futures site.

Thanks to Elaine Stenbraaten for these notes.

The two business couples in **Grande Prairie** used the two hours bounce ideas off each other. Five people in the room generated so many ideas, problems to discuss and areas for study that the meeting took a bit more than the two hours.

We started with intros, including a description of personal passions. Since Jerome Backmeyer and Sarah Grant are in the beginning stage of a home

based business, Susan described the three part Sirolli philosophy about **successful businesses** needing passion in ALL three areas: product (or service), financial management and marketing. It appeared no one in the room was passionate about marketing or financial management. We attempted (unsuccessfully) to even name a marketer. Both couples need a business partner (investor or advisor) who would build and execute the marketing plan for their businesses.

In the financial management area we identified the accountant who does the Grande Prairie Farmers' Market finances as an example of the financial management person needed. Both Larry King and Sarah described how she advises on how to make

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

- Falher—MD Building
- Rycroft—Alexander's
- Grande Prairie—Alberta Agriculture

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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Harmony's Way Sue & Larry King at their booth at the Grande Prairie Farmers' Market. The pepperoni is terrific.



decisions to increase profit.

Larry and Susan King, Harmony;s Way, Farm identified labour as their issue when deciding how much market garden to plant. The question under the question went from labour availability to how much labour the business can afford. That led to two questions: how much they can sell? and how much off farm income they generate to pay for said labour?

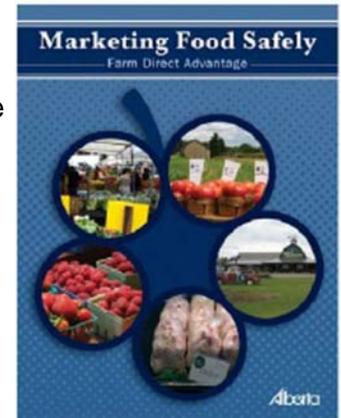
Review of the questions showed that the *key question* involves selling. In the Holistic Management language, this is the *weak link*. Yet again, in their business plan for the market garden enterprise, we were back at the finding a passionate marketer.

Finding none in the room we resolved to change tack and brainstormed 'how to sell'. Everyone became excited, pulled out notebooks and started writing. It should be interesting to see what they say at the next meeting.

We tackled Jerome and Sarah's issue of what to 'grow'. We had a great time brainstorming the possibilities. We than used a direct market solution to selling and reviewed the ideas we'd generated around a twelve month calendar for income. Who knows, they may need a greenhouse for Christmas potted herbs and dried herb wreaths?

Notes by Susan Meyer

Alberta Agriculture has developed a distance education tool for farm direct marketers. **Marketing Food Safely** is a workbook and reference manual that includes information on pertinent legislation and the prerequisite programs as they apply to marketing activities. Farm direct marketers who complete the 16 chapters will have a better understanding of the factors that contribute to foodborne illness and enough information to develop a food safety plan for their farm direct operation.



**Wanted:** Farm direct marketers, farmers' market vendors and managers to work through our new *Marketing Food Safely* manual and provide evaluation comments. We are particularly interested in protein (meat, dairy, poultry etc) producers and market managers. This workbook and reference manual includes information on pertinent legislation and the prerequisite programs as they apply to marketing activities. Call Karen Goad (780) 538-5629 or email [karen.goad@gov.ab.ca](mailto:karen.goad@gov.ab.ca) or Betty Vladicka (780) 427-0840 today. Ask about our introductory offer for approved evaluators.

### Ideas from the Internet

[www.newfarm.org/features/0504/farmmarkets/index\\_print.shtml](http://www.newfarm.org/features/0504/farmmarkets/index_print.shtml)

Customers love signs and explanations. You must label everything with a name and a price. For some reason, food without prices doesn't sell well. Many people are too shy to ask directly about prices. But there is much more you can say.

How much does it weigh? How do you cook it? What is it called? How hot are the chilies? How is it different? Where is your farm? Why is it scarce? (WE HAD A FROST) Why do the apples have spots? (WE DON'T USE FUNGICIDES) One of my mother's most effective signs: WE GROW REALLY GOOD BEANS.

#### Suggestions for other handouts:

- Write a description of your farm (location, acres, ownership, family history, crops, animals, climate, workers). Write a description of your methods of production. Are you organic? What integrated pest management mean? What is grass-fed beef mean?

Why is it better than grain-fed? What breeds do you raise? Why? If you answer a question often, write it down. Save your time and help shy customers who will read a sign but won't ask you a question.

- Bring articles and information about your farm and its role in agriculture. When an agribusiness meat processor recalls tons of beef because of E coli, or E coli is found on organic lettuce, be ready to answer questions from customers. Tell them what you know about agriculture, food safety, or animal welfare. Good customers want to learn about farming and foods. You must help them.
- A brochure with cuts and prices is particularly helpful for meat, poultry, and cheese producers, especially when your prices and cuts are steady throughout the season. Recipes are the indispensable hand-out.

## Celebrating Friends of Ag Entrepreneurs

Kathryn Engel, editor of the Peace Country Sun and Call of the Land host Jack Howell were honored as mentors and friends of ag entrepreneurs last week in Valhalla Centre.

Jack Howell who does many of his Call of the Land interviews by telephone used his microphone and tape recorder at Valhalla with individual business. If you missed hearing the interviews of the Peace Region entrepreneurs connect to Alberta Agriculture's Ropin' the Web where you can listen to them all any time you want. And... we'll play them at upcoming events from a CD too because they were GREAT!

When the media asks for comment, say something. Introduce yourself, your association and its purpose. Local media is part of the community and wants to tell about success. If you team up with another group, let the people know.

Kathryn Engel mentors the Proudly Peace Full column in the Peace Country Sun AND ag entrepreneurs with great energy. Like Tara

Sallis, Birch Hills Bath Company, she might be called an entrepreneur junky. She loves a good story and she can tell one, too. One of our great pleasures is hearing a real story – a well crafted, easy to read (or hear) recounting of an event or description of a product or service.



The man behind the voice of Call of the Land and the woman who encourages Peace ag entrepreneurs. Jack Howell, Jo-Ann Hall, Director, Alberta Agriculture and Kathryn Engel.

Great opportunities for sharing ideas and information.

## Learn Agri-Food Network Meeting

Tuesday, March 14, 2005  
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

There are three facilitated meetings in the region. Share ideas, solve problems and learn from each other. Choose the location nearest you:

**Falher** — The MD Building, park on the west side and look for the door with the sign.

**Rycroft** — Alexander's Restaurant if enough of us go for supper first, they don't charge rent. Meet at 5:45 pm for supper.

**Grande Prairie** — The Provincial Building, enter at the west end of the building. Park on 103 Avenue north of the building. The meeting room is in the Agriculture office.

### Mark your Calendars

Here are the Tuesday **dates for Learn Agri-Food Network meetings**. Please tell others.

March 14, 2006

April 11, 2006

May 9, 2006

June 13, 2006

## A Decision Does Not Equate To Action

"Use plans, analysis, meetings and presentations to inspire action not as a substitute for action." Stanford Professor Robert Sutton

"A classic management error is to assume that making a decision around a table is the same as doing whatever has been decided. The primacy of talking over action in most of our workplaces is why the Nike slogan 'Just Do It' has such resonance and power." Phil Dourado

[www.eCustomerServiceWorld.com](http://www.eCustomerServiceWorld.com)

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  
Fax: 538-5288  
[susan.meyer@gov.ab.ca](mailto: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. 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.**

**RENEWAL.**  
the way to grow

## Learn Agri-Food Events to Attend

**Tuesday, February 28 1:00 to 4:30**  
Community Futures of the Peace Liard  
904 - 102 Avenue  
Dawson Creek

**Learn from Revenue Canada**

- 8 **Small Business Seminar** will cover payroll, GST, PST, and the Income Tax Guide.
- 8 **Electronic Services for Business** will cover internet services available to small business owners.

There is room for 20 people to register for this informative workshop. Get the scoop straight from the "the horse's mouth." It's FREE. To register call Gloria Cleve at 250-782-8748 (Toll Free: 1-877-296-5888)

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

**Learn Agri-Food Meeting**

An opportunity to review your annual business plan with others. Use a check list to rate including your passion for your product or service, (labour, legal and risk issues), your marketing (promotion and sales) and financial planning (tracking and planning).

Nanaimo—Feb. 27  
Abbotsford—Feb. 28  
Creston—March 2  
Penticton—March 3  
Kamloops—March 4

**Marketing Caravan 2006**

A workshop for developing, marketing and selling quality value added farm products and experiences.

<http://www.agritourismbc.org/caravan/>

March 21  
10:00 am – 3:00 pm  
Grande Prairie

**Making Tabletop Sales Count**

Meet visual merchandizer, Rosemary Stefaniuk and go to trade shows and markets with a booth that attracts attention. Cost is \$20/person  
Call (780) 538-6208 to register.

March 21  
Dixonville  
Community Hall

**Opening Your Gates to Ag-Tourism**

March 22  
Falher  
Log Cabin

Carol & Dan Ohler have been hosting business retreats for companies and organizations, including outdoor team-building activities to improve communication and trust within business teams.  
Contact: Martine Bolinger (780) 538-5633

April 8, 2006  
**Grande Prairie**

**Spring Fling Dine and Dance Fundraiser for the Grande Prairie Farmers' Market.** Anticipate a fabulous dinner music by Cotton Wood. The auction is always entertaining and proceeds go to support the Grande Prairie Farmers' Market. For information call Tyla Klassen, Market Manager at (780) 814-8224 e-mail: [gpfarmersmarket@telus.net](mailto:gpfarmersmarket@telus.net)

**Tuesday, April 11 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.**

**Learn Agri-Food Meeting**

Watch the Peace Country Sun on page 6 for locations—or look in the next newsletter.

*We're on the web:*

[www.peacecountrycanada.com](http://www.peacecountrycanada.com)

Look for The Innovation Network and then Learn Agri-Food