



Learn Agri-Food Network

March to April
2006

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

Saskatoons Growing at Falher

Elaine Stenbraaten reports that after the zero turnout at the February meeting in Falher she was expecting a nice chat with SARDA's Kabal Gill. Joyfully however, when she arrived at 6:45 people were waiting. In all seven business people plus Kabal Gill, SARDA, and Elaine attended. All were Saskatoon growers and apparently Ray Arcand was the catalyst and after all his work, he wasn't able to make it himself. Apparently the newsletter and Call of the Land are our best tools of communication (and Ray, of course – Thanks, Ray!)

The participants focused on their Saskatoon orchards, the difficulties of getting their orchards growing with the challenges of disease, pests such as deer, moose, birds, insects and weeds.

Another challenge is time. Most are grain farming and or working full time. A revealing comment was "its hard to put time into something that's not bringing in any money yet, it goes to the bottom of the list of priorities".

Most of this group are focusing on commercial production. Some are going further to look at value adding while some are doing a bit of U-Pick (Suzanne Maisonneuve, B & B & S'toons and Daryl & Myrna Duffy.)

There was a lot of discussion on disease & insect management reported by Elaine. Arnie Meyer, **The Berry Basket** will bring his production presentation from the Fruit Growers Association of Alberta's Berry School to Falher the afternoon of May 9 for a discussion on production and processing as well as a view into potential for commercial markets. Watch for more. A good harvest and sales last summer have the Meyer's heading on holiday between now and then.

Thank you Elaine Stenbraaten for this report.



Clem & Emile Bourgeois & Daryl Duffy discussing saskatoons

Write a Mission Statement

Business to business coaching includes conversation and even homework in Rycroft. At the March 14 Learn Agri-Food Network meeting Barb Barrs discussed business planning she is doing. Since her business

is a growing concern and her goal is to make it support her without an outside job, Barb approached Gail Briggs for a bit of mentoring and they started with purpose and the writing of a mission statement.

The whole group decided to get on the bandwagon and like Barb, prepare the start of their business mission statements for the group to review at the April meeting. Gail Briggs, then shared some of the CETAC West training. She says a mission statement puts words to your business dream. The challenge is to write answers to these questions:

- ◆ where do I want to take this business?
- ◆ how do I want to get there?

The mission statement will set the standard for your products and services and if you post it lets your customer know what you are about. A search on the internet for the book from The Entrepreneur Magazine: Start Your Own Business produced a link to help you:

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/0,4621,311664,00.html>

Barb also reported a joyful break from her pottery for a holidays, especially since the 'couples registry project' created so much additional work for her.

The Rycroft group welcomed Doug Zamorsky, to his second meeting. He's having the bison he raises, made into Teaze Kick Ass Jerky. Most of the animal is used and once dried the product comes out to about 15 pounds of sliced meat jerky and 80 pounds 'chop & form'. New thoughts include marketing jerky sticks and burger patties. He

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

- Falher—MD Building
- Rycroft—Alexander's
- Grande Prairie—Canceled in April
- Triangle—Community Hall

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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then packages and sells to about 12 stores including Tags in Rycroft, By-Way ESSO, and stores at Blueberry Mountain, Bezanson and Eaglesham. Doug says it's selling fast. At issue is the distribution which takes a lot of energy and time.

Ann Toderian, Mama T's, announced that the Rycroft Farmers' Market opens in May. She's been busy as the Alberta Farmers' Market Association director planning a regional workshop and advising other markets.

Coveralls for Kids, Kathy Meyer wants to put this quote from Thomas Edison on her tags: "Opportunity is missed by most people because it looks like work and is dressed in coveralls." She reported the Call of the Land interview with Jack Howell produced lots of calls and sales. She will be doing the Hines Creek spring trade show again.

Branding the Peace Director, Heather Porrill reported on association activities.

Speaking for Star Bright Farms, Heather said she needs to find a way to NOT have to go around checking the product at each and every store and display. One of her solutions is to label her products with the name of the store for their own promotion. They like the advertising of having a 'co-packer' of their own and they pay her up front for the product instead of on consignment.

It's been noted before that Heather is the strong 'marketing passionate' member of the group. She initiated a group discussion on the creation of a Peace products catalogue which schools could use as fund raisers. We look forward to hearing what project will come of this.

Tara Sallis, Birch Hills Bath Company made a batch of soap so that her son could take photos for a display. When the shutter stopped snapping they had 32 pictures of the equipment and final packaged products. Tara says an added value of making one sale is getting others. Her products were put on a list for appropriate gifts at events used by the City of Grande Prairie resulting in calls.

Gail Briggs, Briggswood Country Preserves continues to get herself fit and in shape. She's been busy coordinating the display and booth on the Meet the North conference in Edmonton in May. She thinks "Feed your own community first", is a good quote to share with people who pile on loads of advice on how to grow or expand product line. Gail says "we need to focus."

Thanks to Barb Barrs for this report.

Organics and Marketing

At the last LAF meeting in Grande Prairie, Larry and Susan King, Harmony's Way Farm, pondered a major business decision. This meeting, they shared the outcome with the group: last year they had a fairly good size market garden, this year they will plant only what they can handle. The **CSA** program (**C**ommunity **S**upported **A**griculture) seems like a fit for them. This program is quite common in the eastern provinces such as Ontario. It's a values based system. The customer shares both the risk and the rewards with the farmer. Consumers who 'buy-in' to this program, pay an up front fee at this time of year and receive a crate of food as it ripens for harvest. Some weeks they might get only two or three veggies while other weeks lots of variety and even quantity to share with their neighbours. The Kings have a contact in Ontario for discussions on how to set it up and do the pricing. Two interested supporting families will pick up their weekly crop at the farmers' market or even travel to the farm for a couple hours of work weeding and harvesting. Kings, having started to talk at their booth about Community Supported Agriculture say many folks at the market are already aware and knowledgeable. The Grande Prairie group enjoyed listening to the catalogue of products that might find their way into the weekly crate: asparagus, three kinds of beans, carrots, rutabagas, garlic, green & bulb onions, peas, salad greens, chards, potatoes, tomatoes, raspberries, rhubarb...

Due to Jerry Kitt's huge plug about the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) program at a previous Learn Agri-Food Network meeting, the Kings signed up. It's not always a reliable labour source in the sense of people actually coming, but the Kings think every little bit helps!

Susan and Larry are selling hot foods at the market. She had thoughts of an on farm restaurant in her head. The group had a lot of questions and the idea changed into producing good lunches for the oil patch. To illustrate this 'pull' for product, Jerry described the saw crew of the

seismic line which came through his property. Crew members agreed about how hard it is to get good food when working in the field. There are 6-10 guys in a van & it only makes one stop – usually at the Mac or 7-11 store. So, they say, it's subs, chips and pop again! Feeling sorry for the crew, Jerry invited them all to dinner where he served barbecued bison and roast



Lynne Tardif Kabal Gill & Clem Bourgeois discussing saskatoons



parsnips, potato wedges and lots of talk. They toured the farm to see all the livestock. It was a good night. This act of kindness parlayed into the wood being stacked into VERY neat piles for his winter needs.

Jerry sold pork bellies to a Calgary restaurant. He reluctantly phoned the chef about the large invoice for what is usually perceived as a very fatty cut. Unexpectedly, the chef happily described the huge success of the 'slow food' event. They slow-braised the pork bellies with a caramelized sauce and people loved it.

Jerry went to the Organic Conference in BC on a scholarship. He reports the people involved in organic agriculture are upbeat and positive about the future. Many have been in the organic dairy, vegetables, fruits, seeds and oilseeds industry for ten plus years and they all have markets.

A downside is that large corporations see the advantages and are buying up the smaller farms or rounding up the product for their own profit. Ontario organic milk is being shipped to BC. How do we deal with the corporations? We'll deal with local people where they are at! Keeping the human part of our food is one tool.

See page 4 for more on what the organics people are up to, including a film and workshop.

Susan and Arnie Meyer, The Berry Basket, attended the fruit growers annual conference in Red Deer. They came back recharged and excited about the Saskatoon industry and most importantly their operation. Good research is being done on the health effects the berries have on people. The darker the berry the better it probably is for you. It's slow coming but the information about the berries and their nutritional goodness is getting out there.

Jerry will report later on Beef 101 which he will attend in Olds. Thank you Cindy Cuthbert for the report.

PS We missed Jerome Backmeyer & Sarah Grant at the March meeting— and hope they can join us in May with their new baby boy. Congratulations you three.



Great opportunities for sharing ideas and information.

Learn Agri-Food Network Meeting

*Tuesday, April 11, 2006
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.*

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

Triangle—at the Community Hall.

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 — Cancelled for April.

Mark your Calendars

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

April 11, 2006

May 9, 2006

June 13, 2006

Care for your Customer Base

*"A lost customer isn't a lost cause.
You have a strategy for winning new customers.
If you're good you have a strategy "for retaining them.*

The third leg of the tripod is to put in place a 'win-back' strategy for the ones you have invested in but lost."

Jill Griffin, US loyalty expert & author.

Dine Alberta2006

Eat local and Alberta foods in September in participating restaurants. BETTER, though... supply

those restaurants with

your local foods by getting on the producer directory. If you are able to supply and deliver and legally allowed to supply to the food service industry call Cindy Cuthbert (see the back page



For Peace Region agriculture entrepreneurs.

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

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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.

RENEWAL.
the
way to
grow

Learn Agri-Food Events to Attend

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
Tuesday, April 11 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.	Learn Agri-Food Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ In Grande Prairie—the meeting will be replaced this month only by a film commissioned by the organics industry called Future of Food. Go to the Golden Age Centre. Call Susan King at 957-2115 for more information.◆ New at the Triangle Community Hall—outside High Prairie, another Learn Agri-Food Network group and meeting. Thank you Rachel Kemp for kick starting this group.◆ Falher MD Building—go to the west side of the building◆ At Rycroft in Alexander's Restaurant—with a Peace Value Added Food and Ag Association mini meeting over supper before Learn Agri-Food.
April 12 All day	Building Strategic Relationships in the Organics Industry Grande Prairie <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Understand and define your story to clearly state what you offer.◆ Get positive results and develop strong relationships through the messages you create.◆ Learn the latest organic consumer information and how it impacts your business.◆ Identify synergies, through the stories you tell, that will build strong foundations for working together. For information call Keri Sharpe (780) 968-6556 (dial toll-free 310-0000)
Tuesday, May 9 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Falher	Saskatoon Production & Marketing Falher MD Building The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Saskatoon Production—Arnie Meyer, The Berry Basket—a presentation from the Fruit Growers' Society of Alberta 2006 Berry School. We'll share supper by ordering out.
Tuesday, May 9 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.
July 29, 2006	RCMP Musical Ride in Tumbler Ridge with an open air market on that day. If you are interested in a booth, please call 250-242-4499. Remember: Alberta Peace food producers must be legally able to sell their products in BC.

We're on the web:

www.peacecountrycanada.com

Look for The Innovation Network and then Learn Agri-Food