



Learn Agri-Food Network

April to May
2006

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

Four places to attend a Learn Agri-Food Meeting

There are two meetings left until a summer break for ag-entrepreneurs to visit and learn from one another at Learn Agri-Food Network meetings. And there are four areas to attend one. Join us on May 9 and June 13.

How did this growth in connection happen? Learn for your own business from our experience : a communication (read promotions) plan with a good product works wonders. Word of mouth brings about half the people out to network meetings. This newsletter reminds others to come while newspaper coverage helps bring in new participants. One thing leads to another.

Did you see the great articles in the April 13, 2006 Western Producer? Lianne Read was interviewed about Learn Agri-Food and got a whole page of story and photos on her Silver Valley operation. You can too. Send someone a story. Tell one at a Learn Agri-Food meeting or phone someone on the back page of this newsletter and introduce your product and yourself. We are always looking for ways to promote the diversified agriculture industry.

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

- Falher—MD Building
- Rycroft—Alexander's
- Grande Prairie—Provincial Building
- 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.

Falher Group Focused on Agri Tours

Each month the group in Falher switches between saskatoon growers, honey producers and gift marketers. Expecting the fruit people, Elaine Stenbraaten took a saskatoon information package to distribute at the April meeting and will mail it soon.

Instead, the conversation was about promotion with agriculture and tourism type tours. Elaine reports that Julie Gour, Peace Country Baskets, Linda Prudholme, Rosewood Meadows and Kabal Gill, SARDA are planning a tour July 22 . Watch for details.

Action counts. They have a provisional budget and are searching for support. Julie drafted a tour outline and they are organizing a meeting with possible tour stop hosts. At the moment it's a 10 hour tour!

At the May 9 meeting in Falher Arnie Meyer, the *Berry Basket*, and a saskatoon grower will talk about commercial sized saskatoon operations . He'll report that the future is bright indeed for native fruit in the prairies and that for the very first time in his 20 year operation, buyers are contracting in advance and promising money up front. The work between planting and harvest includes about four years and lots of money and energy. The weak link in the process happens after that . What does it take to harvest 30,000 pounds from 23,000 row feet of bushes? How can the fruit be cleaned and frozen within hours of that harvest? The answers aren't easy but the profit potential seems to be there. Arnie will speak from 4:00 pm at the SARDA meeting room in the MD building and then will stick around for the Learn Agri-Food Network meeting at 7:00 pm.



Julie Gour, Elaine Stenbraaten & Linda Prudholme Warrior reviewing plans for July.

...continued on page 2



Bees and Beef in Triangle

A great group participated in the first meeting at the Triangle Community Hall. Rachel Kemp established the new Learn Agri-Food Network location so High Prairie entrepreneurs can talk business. Karen Goad says five people representing four businesses shared ideas. Four beekeepers including one making and selling direct value added bee products and personal care items and one beef cow calf operator who is enrolled in the Tender Beef Co-op and Premium Beef program came for the evening.

The meeting started with introductions, of course and the question, "What is your greatest challenge in business?" Production and marketing were the big winners.

There was some good venting and great brainstorming of ideas to promote agriculture to urban consumers and get people to buy Alberta. Elana Kemp said, "Albertans don't buy local because they don't know what products are from Alberta and often it's hard to find out. Without promotion of local products, for example clover honey, the urban customer buys blended honey from the store to put in their tea. That's the flavour they associate with honey. Like pure maple syrup, the flavour and texture are very different than those of a non-blended source. People prefer what they are used to and it becomes the quality standard."

The Peace Country Sun was discussed as an under utilized opportunity. Rural distribution is okay, the group said, but we need to get this information into the hands of urban consumers. It's nice to read what others are doing but the rural community already knows the issues facing agriculture. A brainstorm of urban distribution avenues produced: libraries, sport facilities (hockey and soccer arenas, gymnastic and dance studios, swimming pools, curling rinks), doctor and dental offices, and farmers' markets. It was noted that we have to make the publication fun and offer something for the whole urban family. Include a farm cross word for bathroom readers,



Heather Porrill and her Star Bright Farm products at the MD of Clearhills Trade Show.

colouring contest for kids, test your ag knowledge quiz for adults and did you know (quick farm/ag facts) for the grazer.

Karen Goad, as the government person, says she'll talk to Diane Rinne at the Peace Country Sun. It's connected to the Grande Prairie Harold Tribune. See page four about how YOU can help.

The Triangle group also wants to see ag on the school curriculum. It's especially important now that we're more than one generation removed from the farm.

There was good discussion on ag assistance programs and how frustrating producers find them. The Team will pass along that thought, too.

Thanks to Karen & Elaine for the reports and the photos.

Contact a Health Inspector

The public health inspector's business is the protection of the public's health. Rob Kielly a public health inspector from Peace Country Health spoke at the *Opening Your Gates to Farm Tourism* workshops in Dixonville and Falher. Rob assured our group they do a lot more than harass people. They are responsible for a wide variety of things ranging from tattoo parlours to swimming pools to work camps to food.

Public health inspectors want to work with you, not against you. They do hundreds of inspections a year. Very few (in the order of two or three dozen) health orders are issued and prosecutions are very rare. Through education and working together, they are usually able to find a way to protect the public's health in a manner that is acceptable to all.

As of March 31st, 2006 the food regulation has been changed slightly. To view or print a copy of the new Food Regulation the web site is <http://www.qp.gov.ab.ca/index.cfm> Once on the site, type "Food Regulation" in the Catalogue Search window (located in the upper right hand corner) and hit search. Select Food Regulation Chapter/Regulation: 31/2006. A copy of the regulation can be purchased or you can select "View this Document" and print the copy off the screen for free.

If you enjoy typing, this web address gets you closer, but my oh my, what a handle:

http://www.qp.gov.ab.ca/catalogue/catalog_results.cfm?frm_isbn=0779744160&search_by=link

If you have any questions concerning construction or permit requirements prior to operating, please contact a Public Health Inspector for clarification. Here are some phone numbers:

Grande Prairie (780) 513-7517

Fairview (780) 835-4951

High Prairie (780) 523-6450

Peace River (780) 624-7260

Valleyview (780) 524-3338

Go to the Peace Region Health site for more information:

http://www.pchr.ca/PeaceCountry/pages/ourservices_pages/community_pages/environmentalhealth_pages/foodsafety.html

Great opportunities for sharing ideas and information.

Learn Agri-Food Network Meeting

Tuesday, May 9, 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 — The Ag office in the Provincial Building.

Mark your Calendars

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

May 9, 2006

June 13, 2006



Scholarship for a Farm Renewal Makeover:

Troels and Laurie Hanson, LTH Farms of Fairview received one of three scholarships by showing in their application "quality,

innovation and passion" in demonstrating innovative thinking and creative ideas for growing and diversifying their farm business. There are lots of reasons for reading the mail. You can apply for scholarships, send in an application and then ... the sky is the limit. Look for the logo for Renewal programs.

Dine Alberta 2006

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 her information).



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

E—mail Susan with your ACTION . We'll get it in the paper. Challenge one another!

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, 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 Two hours to talk business with like minded rural people. Come to the Triangle Community Hall, Falher MD Building, Alexander's in Rycroft or the west end of the Provincial Building in Grande Prairie.
June 5 and 6 8:30 am - 4:30 pm Grande Prairie	Food Safe Course - Sanitation Program for Food Handlers. A 14-hour course about safety preparing and storing food to prevent illness. Level I and II Certificate Program. For information call Marilyn Olson at (780) 513-7517
July 29	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.
September	Open House at NAIT & Custom Bike Building —a gigantic opportunity to show off the Peace and its products to bikers from near and really far. Call Kamie Currie if you'd like to strut your stuff: (780) 835-0377

Getting the Word Out

How many of the ideas on this checklist do you use to get your Peace Full products and services into the hands of urban consumers?

- Distribute posters or flyers at public health clinics, doctors and dental offices where parents and kids sit waiting
- Supply product and service flyers to visitor information centres
- Provide gift certificates for perishable products or services to include in gift baskets, trade shows and conferences
- Speak at community events - library information evenings, Mothers Time Out meetings, playschools, service clubs, church groups
- Nurture new networks. Join the chamber of commerce. Tell other members what you can do and how you can work with them. It's all about who you know.
- Take in product samples with an interesting story about your business to the morning and drive home hosts on local radio stations. Do it regularly over the season. Buy a small amount of advertising and you'll multiply your promotion many times.
- Host school tours or special events - mother and child look alike contest on Mother's Day, harvest festival, home and garden tour, photo contest
- Offer classes and workshops featuring your products or services
- Partner with community organizations on your farm. Host a blood drive, fire truck display or SPCA adopt-a-stray event

We're on the web:

www.peacecountrycanada.com

Look for The Innovation Network and then Learn Agri-Food