



ADAPT Council Industry Newsletter

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PEI ADAPT Council Annual General Meeting

Circles of Success: Towards a More Diversified and Sustainable Food System

PEI ADAPT Council Annual General Meeting

Friday April 1, 2005

Holiday Inn Express

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

9:00 - 10:00 a.m.	AGM; Business Meeting
10:15 - 11:30	Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food, PEI Value Chains & Developing Solutions to Emerging Issues
11:30 - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch - Key Note Address: Innovations in the Food Sector
1:00- 4:00	Capturing Market Opportunities, ADAPT Project Showcase & Information Sharing and Policy Development

REGISTRATION IS FREE and is open to anyone with an interest in the future of the Island's agriculture and agri-food production. However, seating is limited please register in advance by calling 368-2005 or 675-4640.

P.E.I. a Relative Newcomer to Agri-tourism

P.E.I. is a relative newcomer to the field of agri-tourism that affords the industry in this province a chance to learn both from the successes and the mistakes of others. With that in mind, the newly

formed P.E.I. Agri-Tourism Club sent a representative on a bus tour to Pennsylvania, Kentucky and New York organized by the Ontario Fresh Marketing Association. The P.E.I. ADAPT Council, which administers the Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development Fund in the province for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, provided financial assistance for the trip.

Sarah Jane Bell, who is co-chair of Island Club, carried the province's colours on the trip. Bell, who works at Robinson's Farm Market in Albany, said the trip not only provided an opportunity to see long-established agri-tourism operations, but a tremendous opportunity to network with other delegates.

There were over 50 people on the tour representing 20 farms in Ontario, Alberta and Quebec. Bell said during the five days "I made great contacts throughout Canada, Ohio and Indiana, all of which were more than happy to share their secrets of success and lessons learned from failures."

Bell said one of the key lessons from the trip was the need to work together to promote the fledgling industry. She added "there are so many successful individuals and organizations that have achieved great accomplishments, so we have to utilize those resources."

She said the itinerary included eight farm markets, two wineries, a forest discovery centre, two upper scale farm markets and two international markets that offer a host of agricultural products from around the world.

Bell said many of the farm markets she visited offered much more than the fresh produce for sale. There were mazes, mini golf, rides, bakeries and crafts--in short something for the entire family. She added "we visited establishments which originated as farms, began retail and now fine dining is a key component."

The co-chair has already had an opportunity to brief her fellow members on the trip and received a good deal of positive feedback. Bell said one of the main issues facing the agri-tourism sector now is the rising cost of liability insurance and she gained a number of suggestions for dealing with that issue as well.

"All of the markets I visited had their own signature product or identity such as blueberries, apples, cows, fine dining or quality entertainment," bell said. "It is important for agri-tourism club members to develop and promote their signature product and market it to the maximum."

She said one operator in Ohio had some good advice she passed on to the group— "remember to do agri-tourism to sell produce, not vice versa." Bell said she is convinced such trips are the only way for Island operators to stay in tune with an ever changing industry.

P.E. I. May Soon Be Involved in Slow Food Movement

The "slow food" movement may sound like a group for those who don't like to rush the dining experience, but in reality it is a world wide network aimed at encouraging consumers to support local producers.

It currently has 83,000 members worldwide and a P.E.I. chapter (actually called a Convivia) may soon be formed. With funding help from the P.E.I. ADAPT Council (which administers the Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development Fund in the province for Agriculture Canada), Brian Turner attended Terra Madre- a World Meeting of Food Communities, held in Turin, Italy last October. Now the long time NFU member is working at establishing an Island presence for the movement.

"It was a fantastic conference and I had an opportunity to meet people from all over the world," he said. "I have lots of ideas and now I am going to get some interested people together and figure out where we proceed from here."

Turner explained the slow food chapter would help to expand on such current initiatives as farmers markets and the new beef processing plant in Albany by hopefully bringing local products to even more consumers.

He is hoping the slow food chapter would be able to convince supermarket chains to feature more Island produced products, thereby ensuring increased markets and an improved bottom line for producers.

"The approach and philosophy of the Slow Food Movement is such that contemporary and niche marketing of farm products can be diversified to maintain the farm, but also meet the growing desires and interests of consumers," he said.

Founded by Carlo Petrini in Italy in 1986, Slow Food opposes the standardization of taste, defends the need for consumer information, protects cultural identities tied to food, safeguards foods and cultivation and processing techniques inherited from tradition and defend domestic and wild animal and vegetable species. Slow Food has offices in Italy, Germany, Switzerland, the USA, France, Japan, and Great Britain.

The network of Slow Food members is organized into local groups, which, coordinated by leaders, periodically organize courses, tastings, dinners and food and wine tourism, as well as promoting campaigns launched by the international association at a local level. More than 800 Convivia are active in 50 countries The movement also has its own publishing company and its own institution of higher learning in Italy- the University of Gastronomic Sciences.

Organic Co-op Putting Finishing Touches on Marketing Tool

Islanders will soon be seeing a lot more about organic food production everywhere from country fairs to shopping malls.

The organic sector has been one of the fastest growing segments of agriculture over the past several years, not only in P.E.I. but right across North America. The industry has traditionally served a niche market, but is now attempting to reach a wider marketplace.

To help the P.E.I. Certified Organic Producer's Co-op achieve that goal, they are developing a table top display and promotional material that will travel the province in the months and years ahead. The group has received financial assistance from the P.E.I. ADAPT Council (which administers the Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development Fund in the province for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.)

"We are just putting the finishing touches on the display now," said David MacKay, the group's executive director. "A lot of our members, especially Gary Ogle, have devoted a good deal of time to the project over the last few months."

MacKay explained the idea is to take it across the Island wherever they could tap into a crowd—community fairs, the P.E.I. Expo agricultural meetings and church groups and malls. With plenty of pictures and enough information on organic products and growing methods to give consumers basic information and to encourage conventional farmers that may be considering the organic route to explore the idea further.

"We considered putting all of the information on our website on the display," MacKay said. "However, we didn't feel many people would take the time to read it all in that setting— we will be brochures people can take home and we can direct them to our website for additional information." MacKay said several studies done on the organic sector indicate between 70-80 per cent of the all organic food consumed in Canada is important. He added "that gives us tremendous potential to increase our market share by educating consumers about the high quality of organic products that are growing locally."

Consumers are placing an ever increasing importance on food quality and safety and MacKay said the certified organic seal of approval on a host of island products is the customer's assurance the product was grown in a safe and environmentally friendly manner."

MacKay said representatives of the industry will be attending as many events as possible to answer any direct questions. He added "we see this as a great way to help reach out to the non-farming public and tell them about the high quality organic products that are grown right here on P.E.I."

New Bale Shredder Could Offer Producers More Flexibility and Versatility

Ever wonder what happens to those hay bales that are a standard part of the Island landscape during the summer and fall.

Well, they usually end up as livestock bedding or feed and they are broken down with a device known as a bale chopper or shredder. They are usually mounted on a trailer or cart hauled behind a tractor in the case of smaller bales or mounted on the tractor in the case of larger bales.

Now, a P.E.I. company is exploring a new approach. With funding help from the P.E.I. ADAPT Council (which administers the Canadian Adaptation and Rural development Fund in the province for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada), Double R Manufacturing of Crapaud has developed a working prototype bale shredder known as the "bed master that could offer producers more flexibility and versatility."

Company president Paul Fox said the company now hopes to bring the device to the point where it is ready to go into commercial production. Fox explained the device is designed to fit on new or existing tractors with a minimum 40 horsepower engine, making it ideal for smaller growers.

The machine is relatively compact with a size of five and a half square feet and has a base weight of 1,000 pounds. Fox explained the small size allows it to work in small spaces with little head room. The machine is also being designed to keep the dust often associated with the bedding process to a minimum.

Fox said the prototype has already undergone some field testing in Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and P.E.I. Based on that feedback, he said the company is now working to develop attachments that will handle such things as self-loading, side delivery and a bottom fan delivery. Fox hopes these attachments will allow the shredder to meet the requirements of livestock growers, but for crops like strawberries, blueberries, ginseng and vegetables.

The self-loading feature would free up a tractor that would normally be needed to load the shredder. Heavier bales can weigh up to 2,000 pounds and would require a tractor equipped with a pay loader. As well, Fox explained the shredder with an appropriate spreader attachment could be used quite effectively by strawberry growers. Mulched material to control weeds could be chopped up to a desired length and deposited on the plants and between the rows without damage to the plant itself. In fact any farmer wanting to incorporate organic matter into the soil could spread the mulch with the spreader and then work it into the soil through subsequent tilling. Fox said it is difficult to say how long it will take before the attachments are ready for the market.

"We're still very much in the experimental stage right now," he said. "There is a lot of trial and error involved and some days you make a lot of progress and some days you don't."

The firm currently has two employees, but Fox said if the machine progressed to the point of commercial production it would mean a significant increase in year round jobs. He added "we're really excited about it and we're keeping our fingers crossed."