



ADAPT Council Industry Newsletter

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Thank you.

Phil Ferraro, Editor, Executive Director PEI ADAPT Council

In This Issue:

Is Agriculture a High Technology Industry?
Making Top Grade
Polishing Up The Spuds
Back to School with Locally Grown Foods
AgriAHead05 - Agriculture Virtual Exhibition

Is Agriculture a High Technology Industry?

Well, it may not be the first example that pops into mind when that phrase is used, but the answer is a definite "yes." Today's producers have embraced technology for everything from milking cows to locating pests in the field.

As in most other industries, that technology is expensive. Since the machine is designed for a specific task, that means it often sits idle for weeks, even months at a time. That challenge is especially daunting in cases where a producer is thinking about expanding into a new crop— one without a proven track record in the province.

The technology is needed to grow and harvest the crop— yet if the crop doesn't work out, the producer could be stuck with thousands of dollars of virtually useless equipment. Currently, there are five producers across the province growing seed canola and this year, he branches out into growing commercial canola for oil extraction. . The province is now exploring the possibility of establishing a plant that will extract the canola oil.

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), two growers have purchased a windrower capable of cutting both commercial and seed canola as well as other crops such as flax.

"We are really pleased with the way the machine is working so far," said Gerard Mol, one of the partners in the project. Both Mol and Peter Boswall, the field crop specialist with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, said the machine has several advantages over a conventional cutter. For example, Boswall pointed to a vertical knife on the front of the machine

that separates any canola that gets tangled together. He explained "if you don't have that vertical knife, then you are pulling the crop out of the ground and it will plug the machine eventually." He explained canola generally grows higher than most grain crops, so the machine has the clearance to allow canola to flow under the machine. He said otherwise, the crop will develop into clumps and that makes it harder to trash when going through the field with a combine. As well, Boswall said the machine has a double knife drive, as oppose to most machine which have only a single knife. That means less strain on the knife and less chance it will buckle or twist.

Mol said he also grows some flax and the machine has worked equally well for that harvest. He grows 30 acres of flax and his co-owner, T.L.Herweyer has 100 acres. Boswall said even if the number of commercial canola growers expanded to 20-30, there would probably still only be the need for two or three windrower machines and the cost could be shared.

Boswall said the machine can easily do up to 12 acres an hour. Unlike other crops, canola can be cut when its wet— in fact, it is preferable to be cut with a little moisture since it goes through the machine easier.

He said there is currently no market for commercial canola right now, and this year's pilot crop will be sold to Co-op Atlantic and will be put in poultry rations. Mol said the windrower is adjustable so he can take the machine through the field without driving over crop that has not yet been harvested. Since canola tends to be brittle, he said driving over the crop would virtually wipe out production for that portion of the field.

Making Top Grade

W.P. Griffin Ltd. is poised to lead the Canadian potato industry when it comes to grading the crop.

With financial help from the P.E.I. ADAPT Council (which administers the Canadian Adaptation and Rural development Fund in the province from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada), the Elmsdale company is planning to instal a Newtee RV 12 optical grading system.

"As far as I know we will be one of the first in the country to have this system," said company president general manager John Griffin. "It is already starting to become quite popular in Europe."

Griffin said the equipment is on order and he expects to arrive later this fall. After that, estimated it will take some time for staff at the facility to become acquainted with the equipment.

He explained the system, which brings visual imaging to the grading process, can be designed to specific varieties and volume requirements. He predicted machinery will prove to be a major asset in filling speciality orders. The company packs under four brand names: Dole, Griffin, FoodTrust, and Bud the Spud. W.P. Griffin Inc. is a family owned business founded by John's father— Wilfred Patrick Griffin,

W.P. Griffin Inc. presently farms 1,100 acres of potatoes, 950 acres of grain, 650 acres of hay and has 350 beef cattle in a finishing feed lot. John's brother, Peter, is the Vice-President and Operations Manager.

The new system is just the latest step in a long history of commitment to innovation and food safety. The farm has installed a system that allows for traceback of any product to directly to the field it was grown and the day it went through the plant.

The company's potato wash plant under went a major expansion and upgrade in the fall of 2004. Earlier this year, the plant received an "excellent rating" from the American Institute of Baking. The institute is a recognized world-wide as a leader in offering accreditation to the agricultural

and food-service industry.

Polishing Up The Spuds

In the world of sales, presentation is everything.

That mantra is just as true for agricultural products as it is for cars or televisions. Consumers want their food not only to be safe and tasty— they want it to look good. There is a perception that if it looks good, it will be good when it eventually ends up on the table.

Rik VanNieuwenhuzen is determined the the potatos grown on his Mount Albain family farm will be well presented. 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) the operation is now in the process of installing a Wyma Vegetable Polisher.

"We hope to have it operational by the end of the summer," Rik said. "I understand it will work on carrots as well, but we just plan to use it for potatoes."

Wyma is a New Zealand based company that is exporting its washing and polishing technology world-wide, as it now does business in 14 countries. The VanNieuwenhuzen operation is the first Island customer for the polisher.

Resembling a space-age drum, the machine washes the spuds with shafts of brush that rotate counter-clockwise. The technology has proven to be a hit in t New zealand and Australia, where it is used to prepare an estimated 90 per cent of vegetables for market.

Accoridng to a brochure from the company, the machine removes the silverly skin off carrots, as well as cleaning out the eyes and crown and polishing them. For potatoes and parsnips, it removes dirt from the eyes and stalk indents and shines them up for the end customer.

"We are really anxious to try out the technology," Rik said. "We want to present our cusotmers with as pleasing a product as possible."

Inspection windows at the sides and ends of the machines allow the operator to view the mahcine in action. As well, there is a variable speed control to suit the vegetable being harvested and any local conditions.

Back to School with Locally Grown Foods

Farm to School - More than 200 universities and 400 school districts across the nation will serve locally grown food in their cafeterias this year. New York, Florida, Kentucky and North Carolina have state-level farm-to-school programs to provide educational opportunities for students, build connections with local farms and motivate children towards lifelong healthier eating habits.

California has a farm-to-school bill in the legislature and many communities without state legislation have started successful programs within their school systems.

http://www.foodsecurity.org/farm_to_school.html#casestudies

<http://www.cce.cornell.edu/farmtoschool/policy/newyorkstate.cfm>

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/ky/>

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/nc/>

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/fl/>

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/map.htm>

AgriAHead05 - Agriculture Virtual Exhibition

The second International Virtual Agriculture, Exhibition;
And will stay on the air 24 hours a day 7 days a week,
for a period of four months till Dec. 31st, 2005.

This virtual exhibition is designed to look like a conventional agricultural exhibition, exhibitors present their goods, products and know how, communicate and relate with the exhibition visitors and even take part in conferences, seminars and discussions that are to be held during the exhibition. The exhibition's innovative interface is user friendly thus enabling YOU to visit all booths, and enjoy the virtual exhibition as a realistic experience.

To those of you who are interested in;

- meeting potential partners,
- looking for new unexplored markets,
- finding new products,
- promoting an unknown startup,
- gathering information about new developments in Agriculture and related fields,
- searching for new potential investments,
- buying Agricultural and related products or just look around a real interactive virtual exhibition,

you may enter enjoy and experience the; Agriculture Virtual Exhibition at:
<http://www.agriahead.com>