



---

## *PEI ADAPT Council Agri-Newsletter*

---



Vol. VII; No. 7



August 1, 2008

### **In This Issue:**

"From Our Atlantic Woods"; Non-timber forest products directory  
Championing Public Health Nutrition Policies  
Emergency Planning Animal Disease  
First Study Finds MRSA in U.S. Pigs  
New Research and Technical Bulletins from OACC  
Are Biotech Crops Failing?  
Food Is Gold, So Billions Invested in Farming  
Rice Scare Gets People Eating Potatoes  
Scientists Use Scent to Control Japanese Beetle Populations  
Eight Rules of Leadership

### **"From Our Atlantic Woods"; Non-timber forest products directory**

The Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources is teaming up with representatives in all four Atlantic Provinces and the state of Maine to create a non-timber forest product (NTFP) directory called, 'From Our Atlantic Woods,' where you can publish your NTFPs and services for free. What are non-timber forest products (NTFPs)? NTFPs are any goods or services derived from the forest which do not include conventional wood products such as timber and pulpwood. Examples include everything from raw resources like fiddleheads, mushrooms, birch bark and fir pitch to value-added products like maple syrup, rose hip jelly, berry wine, bent willow furniture and also non-consumptive services such as, eco-tourism and guided bird watching tours.

The goal of the 'From Our Atlantic Woods' directory is to facilitate the development of a vibrant, diverse and sustainable NTFPs industry in the region. The directory, which will include photos, recipes, information on historic and modern uses, harvesting information and more will be available online and in a printed format. Copies will be distributed at Sobeys outlets, farmers' markets, NS-DNR offices, tourism booths, craft fairs and other venues as well as from the listees' places of business. If you, or someone you know, would like to take advantage of this FREE promotional opportunity please contact Sarah d'Apollonia at 1-866-226-7577 or email [woodlot@gov.ns.ca](mailto:woodlot@gov.ns.ca). Or, if you wish to seek additional information on this project, please visit [www.ntfp.infor.ca](http://www.ntfp.infor.ca)

### **Championing Public Health Nutrition Policies (Ottawa, October 22-23, 2008)**

Health and food-policy experts, policymakers, and journalists from across Canada and around the world will explore how to reform public health nutrition policies, at the historic Fairmont Chateau Laurier Hotel; in Ottawa on October 22-23, 2008.

The conference will look at school foods, nutrition information on labels and menus, food taxes, marketing to children, reformulating foods to minimize added salt and harmful fats, and much more.

For details and to be notified by e-mail when registration opens later this month, visit [www.cspinet.org/canada](http://www.cspinet.org/canada) .

### **Emergency Planning Animal Disease**

The quicker the response, the quicker the return to normal.

That is the watchword in the agricultural industry when it comes an animal or disease outbreak. There are strict protocols that are put in place once the presence of a plant or animal disease is officially confirmed. However, valuable time can be lost between the initial discovery and diagnosis.

To help bridge that gap, the Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Egg Producers and the Nova Scotia Turkey Products Marketing Board are developing a poultry emergency response operational plan. The effort is being co-ordinated by AgraPoint International and Agri-Futures Nova Scotia is contributing \$55,578 to the project through the Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Foods program.

A committee chaired by Alex Oderkirk of AgraPoint has been meeting for several months developing the plan and the accompanying resource manual. Oderkirk, who is co-ordinator for the annual Atlantic poultry conference and a director of the Atlantic Poultry Research Institute at Nova Scotia Agricultural College, said the key was bring all of the players to the table.

“We have vets, provincial and federal government officials, processors, hatcheries, feedmills and producers on our committee,” he said. “We want to ensure everybody is on the same page.” Oderkirk said the final aim is to have a document that all of the players agree will kick into place any time a disease is even suspected. He said the group has already developed a draft policy and has conducted several test runs.

“We are doing some fine-tuning but to some extent this will always be a work in progress,” Oderkirk said. “What we try to do is increase biosecurity and stop the threat from spreading.” In a global marketplace, stopping a threat before it can spread can often mean the difference between retaining a market or finding a border sealed shut. He said once a finding moves from suspected to confirmed, the the existing federal and provincial protocols then kick into place. Oderkirk said lessening the impact also means the federal and provincial governments will have to pay less in compensation and emergency funding programs. Oderkirk said the committee members have made a commitment to keep meeting on a quarterly basis to address any refinements that might have to be made to the document.

He said the plan does not currently cover natural disasters, but added it could be easily adapted to cover eventualities like floods, droughts or hurricanes.

“Obviously, this is something like the insurance on your house or car– you hope you will never have to use it.”

### **First Study Finds MRSA in U.S. Pigs**

Scientists from the University of Iowa have conducted the first test of U.S. swine for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), the bacterium responsible for more U.S. deaths than AIDS. Of the 200 pigs the team tested, 70 percent carried a strain of MRSA, ST398, that is known to affect humans. The scientists found that almost half of 20 workers on local pig farms carried the same strain of MRSA, suggesting a route to the wider community. So far no one has tested MRSA patients in U.S. hospitals to identify whether they carry the strain. The federal government is testing meat (but not livestock) for MRSA, but hasn't released its results. In the United Kingdom, at least three people are known to have contracted the ST398 strain (see article at <http://ucsaction.org/ct/w7wXLJ4164by/>), and experts are speculating that they probably contracted it from handling or eating meat. Read more from the Seattle Post Intelligencer at <http://ucsaction.org/ct/wdwXLJ4164bU/>.

"The recent wave of MRSA-related illnesses and deaths among otherwise healthy students and athletes is very troubling," said

Margaret Mellon, director of UCS's Food and Environment Program. "We need to determine as soon as possible whether some of those illnesses and deaths are traceable to the overuse of antibiotics on swine farms."..

For more information see: here is the blog story:

<http://blog.seattlepi.nwsourc.com/secretingredients/archives/140336.asp>

and

<http://www.webmd.com/news/20071016/more-us-deaths-from-mrsa-than-aids>

### **New Research and Technical Bulletins from OACC**

The OACC 'E-Zine' recently arrived in my email. With numerous reports packed into one issue that may have widespread interest among readers of this news letter as well. The reports include:

- Weed Management for the Transition to Organic Vegetable Production
- Transition from Intensive Tillage to No-Tillage and Annual Cropping Systems
- Benefits of No-Tillage & Organic Systems for Grain Production & Soil Health
- Comparison of Organic & Conventional Systems on Nutrient-Depleted Soil
- Approaches to wireworm control in organic potato production
- Nitrogen supply in stockless organic cereal production
- Organic soybean production in Atlantic Canada (PDF, 348 kb)
- Helping wheat compete (PDF, 347 kb)
- The connections between wheat cultivar choice, breadmaking quality and soil microbial communities (PDF, 348 kb)

To view the complete newsletter with these reports and more go to:

<http://www.oacc.info/FriendsE-zines/june2008.asp>

### **Food Is Gold, So Billions Invested in Farming**

By Diana B. Henriques New York Times; Published: June 5, 2008

Huge investment funds have already poured hundreds of billions of dollars into booming

financial markets for commodities like wheat, corn and soybeans.

But a few big private investors are starting to make bolder and longer-term bets that the world's need for food will greatly increase — by buying farmland, fertilizer, grain elevators and shipping equipment.

One has bought, Canadian farmland and enough storage space in the Midwest to hold millions of bushels of grain. Another is buying more than five dozen grain elevators, nearly that many fertilizer distribution outlets and a fleet of barges and ships.

And three institutional investors, including the giant BlackRock fund group in New York, are separately planning to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in agriculture, chiefly farmland, from sub-Saharan Africa to the English countryside.

“It's going on big time,” said Brad Cole, president of Cole Partners Asset Management in Chicago, which runs a fund of hedge funds focused on natural resources. “There is considerable interest in what we call ‘owning structure’ — like United States farmland, Argentine farmland, English farmland — wherever the profit picture is improving.”

These new bets by big investors could bolster food production at a time when the world needs more of it.

The investors plan to consolidate small plots of land into more productive large ones, to introduce new technology and to provide capital to modernize and maintain grain elevators and fertilizer supply depots.

But the long-term implications are less clear. Some traditional players in the farm economy, and others who study and shape agriculture policy, say they are concerned these newcomers will focus on profits above all else, and not share the industry's commitment to farming through good times and bad.

“Farmland can be a bubble just like Florida real estate,” said Jeffrey Hainline, president of Advance Trading, a 28-year-old commodity brokerage firm and consulting service in Bloomington, Ill. “The cycle of getting in and out would be very volatile and disruptive.”

By owning land and other parts of the agricultural business, these new investors are freed from rules aimed at curbing the number of speculative bets that they and other financial investors can make in commodity markets. “I just wonder if they need some sheep's clothing to put on,” Mr. Hainline said.

Mark Lapolla, an adviser to institutional investors, is also a bit wary of the potential disruption this new money could cause. “It is important to ask whether these financial investors want to actually operate the means of production — or simply want to have a direct link into the physical supply of commodities and thereby reduce the risk of their speculation,” he said.

Grain elevators, especially, could give these investors new ways to make money, because they can buy or sell the actual bushels of corn or soybeans, rather than buying and selling financial derivatives that are linked to those commodities.

When crop prices are climbing, holding inventory for future sale can yield higher profits than selling to meet current demand, for example. Or if prices diverge in different parts of the world, inventory can be shipped to the more profitable market.

“It's a huge disadvantage to not be able to trade the physical commodity,” said Andrew J. Redleaf, founder of Whitebox Advisors, a hedge fund management firm in Minneapolis.

Mr. Redleaf bought several large grain elevator complexes from ConAgra and Cargill last year for a long-term stake in what he sees as a high-growth business. The elevators can store 36

million bushels of grain.

“We discovered that our lease customers, major food company types, are really happy to see us, because they are apt to see Cargill and ConAgra as competitors,” he said.

The executives making such bets say that fears about their new role are unfounded, and that their investments will be a plus for farming and, ultimately, for consumers.

“The world is asking for more food, more energy. You see a huge demand,” said Axel Hinsch, chief executive of Calyx Agro, a division of the giant Louis Dreyfus Commodities, which is buying tens of thousands of acres of cropland in Brazil with the backing of big institutional investors, including AIG Investments.

## **Are Biotech Crops Failing?**

Bollworm Evolves Resistance to Bt Cotton

By Dan Shapley

The genetically modified cotton that was designed to make the Bt (that's short for *Bacillus thuringiensis*, a bacterium) toxins that kill boll weevils has been thwarted by the bugs, according to new research to be published in *Nature Biotechnology*. The bollworm is the first pest to evolve resistance in the field to so-called Bt crops, according to University of Arizona entomologists.

Bt-resistant populations of bollworm (*Helicoverpa zea*) were found in more than a dozen crop fields in Mississippi and Arkansas between 2003 and 2006. The first resistant worms showed up just seven years after the genetically modified crops were introduced, in 1996, according to the analysis of monitoring studies.

"What we're seeing is evolution in action," said lead researcher Bruce Tabashnik.

The bollworm is a major cotton pest in the southeastern U.S. and Texas, but not in Arizona. The major caterpillar pest of cotton in Arizona is a different species, known as pink bollworm (*Pectinophora gossypiella*), which has remained susceptible to the Bt toxin in biotech cotton. U.S. farmers planned to plant 13.2 million acres of cotton in 2007, according to the National Cotton Council of America. And more and more of that crop – now 87% in 2007 – is grown genetically modified seeds, according to the USDA. Worldwide, 400 million acres of Bt corn have been planted since 1996.

Pesticide resistance is a common problem, but this is the first time a pesticide manufactured by the plant itself – rather than sprayed on crops by farmers – has inspired the evolution of resistance in a pest. Scientists had expected the bollworm to develop resistance because Bt resistance is a dominant trait, so even hybrid resistant/nonresistant offspring are resistant to the Bt toxin; to stave off the development of resistance, farmers planted plots of non-Bt cotton to minimize the selective pressure for resistant bollworms.

The researchers, whose research was funded by the Department of Agriculture, did not see their results as a condemnation of genetically modified crops. The bollworm is the only one of six caterpillars studied that showed resistance, and the length of time it took to develop resistance – seven or more years – "refutes some experts' worst-case scenarios," according to the researchers. Further, they said the use of Bt cotton reduced the spraying of pesticides, which kill additional insects besides the bollworm and related pests.

"The resistance occurred in one particular pest in one part of the U.S.," Tabashnik said. "The other major pests attacking Bt crops have not evolved resistance. And even most bollworm

populations have not evolved resistance."

Still, as with other pesticides that prompted resistance in pests, the solution to this problem that geneticists have hit upon is to up the ante with increased toxicity. Instead of a single Bt toxin, cotton is now being engineered to produce two.

### **Rice Scare Gets People Eating Potatoes**

By Haim Bior

The expectation of higher rice prices has generated a jump in potato consumption. Several grocery chains confirm that potato purchases are up.

David Levy, CEO of the Kama district industries, there is customarily a period of stability with a tendency for potato prices to drop after the Passover holiday. This year has been different.

Wholesale prices of potatoes sold to grocery chains and markets have shot up 10% since the holiday ended this year.

"The soaring price of rice has discouraged many consumers from buying this product, and encouraged consumption of potatoes, whose price (NIS 5 per kilo) has remained stable for many months," Levy said.

Willy Food CEO Yossi Williger said that rice consumption in Israel was down 3% last week compared to the week before. The rising price of rice, he said, is expected to be curbed. "There is no reason not to buy any quantity of rice from a rice-producing country, especially Thailand. No substantial shortage is expected, and the price of this product is expected to increase only moderately," Williger said. "There has also been no hoarding of rice by importers or traders, because news of the crisis came suddenly. By the end of 2009 or early 2009, the price of rice will even drop, because farmers in Asia will increase their cultivated acreage with the recent rise."

The director of the Agricultural Research Organization (Volcani Center), Professor Yitzhak Spiegel, agrees that the price of rice, which has increased because of the involvement of speculators, is expected to drop. "The fear of a shortage of rice is artificial. Within a year or two the problem will be solved, when governments ensure the flow of water in countries that are suffering from a lack of water," says Spiegel. The Agricultural Research Organization is currently preparing a strategic plan, he added, that will provide a solution to a possible shortage of food in Israel and other countries.

### **Scientists Use Scent to Control Japanese Beetle Populations**

Chemical ecologists at UC Davis have been studying an enzyme from the Japanese beetle that could aid us in "controlling the invasive pest that has threatened U.S. agriculture since 1916." Researchers examined the method by which male beetles find female beetles to mate. When the male instead picks up the odor of a female of a different species, he is rendered unable to detect females of his own species. Scientists hope that this discovery will give humans the ability to control the population of the pest.

For full Story see: <http://entomology.ucdavis.edu/news/pnaspaperlealishida.html>

## **Eight Rules of Leadership**

Source: Wikipedia

### **1. Be a visionary.**

In today's information-rich world, people will not follow arbitrary directions given by authority. We will instead follow a cause, a dream, a vision that is compelling. Don't just give us direction, give us inspiration, and we will be your agents of change. That was how Washington was able to lead his troops when Congress did not have money to pay them. His troops weren't soldiers for hire, but rather they were revolutionaries for a better tomorrow.

### **2. Do what you say and say what you mean.**

"I hope I shall always possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of an Honest Man." Washington was held in the highest regards by his fellow politicians and was the only President to ever be elected unanimously. He was among many great politicians during that time, but Washington stood out from the rest because of his integrity.

### **3. Don't make decisions based on popularity; base them on principles.**

According to Mark McNeilly, author of *George Washington and the Art of Business*, Washington "always put the country first. People could trust him to stand above the politics, stand above the fray, and keep the interests of the country in mind." Make sure your decisions stand the test of time.

### **4. Be a keen observer.**

Washington first made his mark in the world by being a geographer. His curiosity with the uncharted regions in Virginia led to his first missions in the military, and eventually gave him tactical advantage as an officer. Good leaders must be aware of the environment in order to to adjust strategies accordingly.

### **5. Be balanced.**

At that time, you had to choose sides. Either you were a Federalist - one who agreed with Alexander Hamilton and believed in a strong central government, or you were a Jeffersonian - one who agreed with Thomas Jefferson and believed in a smaller central government. Although he had his opinions, Washington did not choose sides and decided to have both Hamilton and Jefferson as part of his government. To be a good leader, you must understand the merits of both sides.

### **6. Foster relationships.**

I get by with a little help from my friends. The Beatles may have sung these words about 200 years later, but Washington probably said this as well when talking about France. Without the help of the French Navy, the British would have likely won the war. Great leaders know how their party affects the others, and such leaders constantly reach beyond their specific areas of influence.

### **7. Learn from your defeats.**

General Washington only won three of his nine battles. He was persistent and continued battling and learned from his mistakes, which prepared him for the third and most important victory, the Battle of Yorktown. It was the last major battle before the end of the war, thus illustrating that defeat is merely a set-up for the more important victories in the future.

### **8. Be humble.**

You are not greater than the cause that you represent. Washington was elected for two straight terms and would have easily won his third, but he felt that too much power would have been rested on him. He walked away from power for the good of the country. If you want to be a true leader, know the difference between benefitting yourself versus benefitting the greater good.