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**‘Vitality in Agriculture’
PEI ADAPT Council AGM/Conference
Rodd Charlottetown Hotel
Wednesday March 24, 2010**

Tom Gilbert, Keynote Speaker to Address ‘Developing Agricultural Economies and Sustainable Markets - ‘The Hardwick Model’

Editors Note: This report is adapted and condensed from the article; ‘Uniting Around Food to Save an Ailing Town,’ by Marian Burros; for the New York Times

For complete story see:

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/08/dining/08verm.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1

With a pioneering spirit, young artisans and agricultural entrepreneurs, in Hardwick, Vermont, are working together to create a collective strength never before seen. Rian Fried, an owner of Clean Yield Asset Management in nearby Greensboro, which has invested with the entrepreneurs, said he’s never seen such cooperative effort.

“Across the country a lot of people are doing it individually but it’s rare when you see the kind of collective they are pursuing,” said Mr. Fried, whose firm considers social and environmental issues when investing. “The bottom line is they are providing jobs and making it possible for others to have their own business.”

In January, Andrew Meyer's company, Vermont Soy, was selling tofu from locally grown beans to five customers; today he has 350. Jasper Hill Farm has built a \$3.2-million aging cave to finish not only its own cheeses but also those from other cheesemakers.

Pete Johnson, owner of Pete's Greens, is working with 30 local farmers to market their goods in an evolving community supported agriculture program.

Tom Gilbert, Executive Director of Highfields Composting Institute. Highfields original vision was to provide educational resources, on composting, to the farming community. It has expanded to emphasize the broader priority of promoting and advancing soil security in Vermont.

He also helped start the Center for an Agricultural Economy, a nonprofit operation that is planning an industrial park for agricultural businesses.

Vermont Food Venture Center, is where producers can rent kitchen space and get business advice for adding value to raw ingredients. Mr. Meyer said, "it sees the benefit of being part of the healthy food system." He expects it to assist 15 to 20 entrepreneurs next year.

"All of us have realized that by working together we will be more successful as businesses," said Tom Stearns, owner of High Mowing Seeds. "At the same time we will advance our mission to help rebuild the food system, conserve farmland and make it economically viable to farm in a sustainable way."

Cooperation takes many forms. For the past two years, many of these farmers and businessmen have met informally once a month to share experiences for business planning and marketing or pass on information. They promote one another's products at trade fairs and buy equipment at auctions that they know their colleagues need. More important, they share capital. They've lent each other money for short-term loans.

To expand these enterprises further, the Center for an Agricultural Economy recently bought a property to start a center for agricultural education. There will also be a year-round farmers' market and a community garden, with a greenhouse and a paid gardening specialist.

Recently the Center signed an agreement with the University of Vermont for faculty and students to work with farmers and food producers on marketing, research, even transportation problems. Already, Mr. Meyer has licensed a university patent to make his Vermont Natural Coatings, an environmentally friendly wood finish, from whey, a byproduct of cheesemaking.

Some of the agricultural related businesses that spawned from the 'Hardwick Model'

The Center for an Agricultural Economy

Claire's Community Supported Restaurant

Clean Yield Asset Management

High Mowing Organic Seeds

The Highfields Institute

Investors Circle

Jasper Hill Farm
Pete's Greens
Vermont Natural Coatings
Vermont Soy Company
Vermont Institute for Artisan Cheese at The University of Vermont

Mr. Meyer grew up on a dairy farm in Hardwick and worked in Washington as an agricultural aide to former Senator Jim Jeffords of Vermont. “From my time in Washington,” Mr. Meyer said, “I recognize that if Vermont is going to have a future in agriculture we need to look at what works in Vermont, and that is not commodity agriculture.”

The brothers Mateo and Andy Kehler have found something that works quite well at their Jasper Hill Farm in nearby Greensboro. At first they aged their award-winning cheeses in a basement. Then they began aging for other cheesemakers. Earlier this month they opened their new caves, with space for 2 million pounds of cheese, which they buy young from other producers.

The Vermont Institute for Artisan Cheese at the University of Vermont is helping producers develop safety and quality programs, with costs split by Jasper Hill and the producers. “Suddenly being a cheesemaker in Vermont becomes viable,” Mateo Kehler said.

Pete Johnson began a garden when he was a boy on his family’s land. Now his company, Pete’s Greens, grows on 50 acres. He has four moveable greenhouses, extending the growing season to nine months, and he has installed a commercial kitchen that can make everything from frozen prepared foods and soup stocks to baked goods and sausages. In addition he has enlarged the concept of the C.S.A. by including 30 farmers and food producers rather than just a single farm.

“We’ve encouraged the apple producer who makes apple pies to use local flour, local butter, local eggs, maple sugar as well as the apples so now we have a locavore apple pie.”

“Twelve years ago the market for local food was lukewarm,” Mr. Johnson added. “Now this state is primed for anything that is local. It’s a way to preserve our villages and rebuild them.”

Woody Tasch, chairman of Investors Circle, a nonprofit network of investors and foundations dedicated to sustainability, said: “What the Hardwick guys are doing is the first wave of what could be a major social transformation, the swinging back of the pendulum from industrialization and globalization.”

Claire’s restaurant, sort of a clubhouse for farmers, began with investments from its neighbors. It is a Community Supported Restaurant. Fifty investors who put in \$1,000 each will have the money repaid through discounted meals at the restaurant over four years.

“Local ingredients, open to the world,” is the motto on restaurant’s floor-to-ceiling windows. “There’s Charlie who made the bread tonight,” Kristina Michelsen, one of four partners, said in a running commentary one night, identifying farmers and producers at various tables. “That’s Pete

from Pete's Greens. You're eating his tomatoes."

Mr. Stearns said that within one week six businesses wanted to meet with him to talk about moving to the Hardwick area.

"Things that seemed totally impossible not so long ago are now going to happen," said Mr. Kehler. "In the next few years a new wave of businesses will come in behind us. So many things are possible with collaboration."

For more information watch this video, from the show, 'Dan Rathers Reports,' and see for yourself how the people of Hardwick work together as a community and have brought their dreams to reality.

See: <http://vimeo.com/7729181> (Be patient it loads slowly.)

People's Food Policy

The People's Food Policy will be a much needed food sovereignty policy for Canada developed by citizens from all parts of the food system, from all corners of Canada. At our June 2009 Food Action Committee meeting, we conducted a kitchen table meeting around national food policies we'd like to see for Canada, as part of the People's Food Policy Project. Between May and December 2009, you were one of at least 1000 people across Canada who had conversations about food policy that led to 265 policy recommendations. Over the last two months, teams of policy writers have been busy summarizing these submissions into 10 chapters that cover the vast territory of food. Until November 2010, we will continue to hold conversations to further develop the People's Food Policy.

The group is looking for feedback. To give feedback on the policy (Follow this link to see the drafts and provide feedback <http://peoplesfoodpolicy.ca/draft1review> .)

As this unprecedented initiative continues to gain momentum the group hopes to engage as many people as possible.

For More information contact:

Amanda Sheedy, Coordinator People's Food Policy Project (514) 342-5291

<http://peoplesfoodpolicy.ca>

Agricultural Tour of Central Europe

An Agricultural Tour to Central Europe will be organized for a group of 15 farmers from Atlantic Canada. The trip will take place during the month of April, 2010 for a period of 10-12 days. During this time, the farmers will visit the main cooperative farms and agricultural sites and will be able to exchange information on the agricultural production in Slovakia. The trip will include a 2 day visit to major cultural and historical sites in Vienna, Budapest and Prague.

Depending on the number of participants and the cost of the ticket the approximate cost of this trip is \$2,400 which includes air & ground transportation, food & accommodation. If you are interested please contact: Dr. Nabil Rifai, Tel: (902) 893 6714 or 893 7099, E-Mail:

nrifai@nsac.ca

Atlantic Slow Food Movement

Interested in being part of Slow Food Movement in PEI, NB, or NL? The leaders of the Canadian Slow Food convivium will meet in Nova Scotia from April 29 to May 2. This is a great opportunity for anyone in the region who might be interested in forming, or being part of, a local convivium to join the group and learn more. This is a Terra Madre year, which means that Slow Food International hosts their members from around the world at the Terra Madre International Gathering of World Food Communities in Turin, Italy. In 2008, over 8000 member delegates were invited from over 80 countries. Michael Howell, leader of Slow food NS, has been twice and says "This is like the world's biggest best practices mission for supporting local economies, agricultural practices that celebrate local production and the preservation of historical food traditions unique to geographic areas, the people that cook it (ie chefs and cooks) and those that research the importance of food as it pertains to modern society." In 2008 Canada had 200 delegates - Farmers and producers, chefs and cooks, academics whose work in some way is related to food, and youth, representing the future of our food. Invited delegates have their land-based Terra Madre costs (delegate fees, transportation, accommodation and a morning and evening meal) covered by Slow Food once they arrive at the conference. However, each delegate is responsible for the costs of getting to the conference. As delegates have to be invited, anyone in NB, PEI and NL who might be interested needs to have a Slow Food conduit. To know more about Slow Food and Terra Madre, check the international website <http://www.slowfood.com/> . Anyone interested in the spring meeting in NS can connect with Michael at mail@slowfoodns.ca

McCain's Buys Fewer P.E.I. Potatoes

Tuesday, February 23, 2010; CBC News

McCain Foods Ltd. is cutting the volume of potatoes it buys from P.E.I. farmers by 20 to 30 per cent because of falling demand for french fries, Agriculture Minister George Webster said Tuesday.

The cut may mean the company based in Florenceville, N.B., will have to drop about 20 growers, he said.

"For sure, this is a big blow for those individual growers, and where do they go?" Webster said. Growers will have to find other markets or sell their potatoes on the fresh market, which is risky, he said.

"They'll have to do a lot of self-evaluation as to whether they're going to continue in the potato industry in P.E.I."

Webster said the problem is a lower demand for french fries and a tough economy.

McCain's makes about a third of all the frozen french fries produced in the world, according to the company's website.