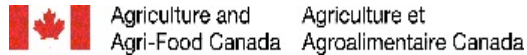




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## *PEI ADAPT Council Agri-Newsletter*

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Vol. IX; No. 4;

March 13, 2010

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**Eddie Dykerman, Chair PEI Agri-Food Alliance to Address ADAPT AGM:  
'Vitality in Agriculture'**

**PEI ADAPT Council AGM/Conference**

**Rodd Charlottetown Hotel; Wednesday March 24, 2010**

(Other Guests include: Margaret Webb, Tom Gilbert, Greg and Tania MacKenzie)

The PEI AgriFood Alliance was incorporated as a not for profit company in October 2009 as a recommendation from the Report of the Commission on the Future of Agriculture and AgriFood on Prince Edward Island.

The purpose of the PEI Agri-Food Alliance is to:

- Serve as a facilitator and catalyst for the development and implementation of multi-partner strategies and initiatives that build the agriculture and agri-food economy of Prince Edward Island.
- Monitor and report on progress related to the implementation of the recommendations in the Commission on the Future of Agriculture report.

*AFA FOCUS*

The Prince Edward Island Agri-Food Cluster focuses on growth opportunities based on product differentiation, innovation, and collaboration.

### *Unique Products from a Unique Place*

If you have a differentiated product that requires partners that are open to new ideas and can deliver quality and sustainability, then we could be the perfect fit for you.

### *Innovation Island*

Our focus is on supporting innovation in sectors such as Agri-Food, Bioscience, and Renewable Energy.

### *Collaboration Comes Naturally*

Highly interconnected research, industry, and government partners are seeking new

## **What Can Hardwick Really Teach the Rest of Us?**

by Melissa Pasanen

*Editor's Note: Tom Gilbert, another Keynote speaker at ADAPT's AGM (March 24), is from Hardwick Vermont. A feature story on him and the theme of his presentation was printed in the ADAPT Agri-News, March 1, 2010 (archived at [www.peiadapt.com](http://www.peiadapt.com)). This article is a review of a recently published book on Hardwick, 'the town that food saved.'*

Book titles are always tricky, but the title of Ben Hewitt's new book, "The Town That Food Saved," put me on hyperbole alert before I even saw the advance proof. To be fair, that was only partially the fault of the title.

You'd have to live under a rock in the Vermont food and farming world to be ignorant of what's going on around Hardwick, the Northeast Kingdom town that is the subject of this book and of the identically titled article by Hewitt published on Gourmet magazine's website in October 2008. In fact, anyone interested in food and agriculture in Vermont is so aware of all the attention paid by everyone from Emeril Lagasse to Dan Rather that the very mention of Hardwick often prompts eyeballs to roll even as people acknowledge that yes, there are good things going on in Hardwick. There is perhaps a wee bit of jealousy involved but, more importantly, a justified feeling that there are other places in Vermont doing valuable work to re-imagine and rebuild a local food system so why does Hardwick get all the press – and now a full-length book?

Hewitt, thankfully, is sensitive to the aggressive claim his title makes and also, as a seasoned freelance journalist, he is fully aware of how the media can build a nice little story into the next best thing since sliced bread – or rather, a hearty unsliced loaf of local baker Charlie Emers' bread, as good an icon as any to represent a return to a pre-Wonder bread food system. For journalists, Hewitt points out early in his book, Hardwick's agriculture-based renaissance offered a story that "was just so damn...perfect...neatly wrapped in recycled paper and adorned with a big, fat biodegradable bow." In the end though, thanks to Hewitt's capable and insightful storytelling, Hardwick makes a very useful case history of how one rural, downtrodden town has been reinvigorated through efforts to grow new businesses that happen to be food-based at a time when America seems to have finally accepted that our industrialized food system needs to change.

While Hewitt spends some time on facts and analysis, mostly he lets the characters drive his narrative and illustrate his points, making the book a truly engaging read. Hardwick provides good material and Hewitt has an eye and ear for illuminating and often entertaining detail. (Although there are few cases of TMI - as in the case of Tom Stearns' expertise at armpit farting.) Among the many colorful personalities, though, if there are heroes in this book they'd come in the unlikely form of Ralph and Cindy Persons, a couple "on the wrong side of 50" who might start their day with apple pie and cold pizza along with a Bud Light and Clamato "breakfast beer." The Persons operate a mobile slaughterhouse and, Hewitt argues, "have done more for their town's food security, quality, and accessibility than anyone else... For \$50, Ralph and Cindy will come to your home, shoot your pig in the head, make a deep slice in its throat to sever the jugular veins, hoist it into the air..., skin it, remove its viscera..., and saw it neatly in half." Their chapter concludes with Ralph Persons explaining, "I like to tell people little things... Like how to cook heart so the whole family will love it, or make liver so their kids will eat it." Of course, Hewitt reflects, it's little things like this that make all the difference.

The Persons are part of the old guard Hewitt describes – from multi-generation farmers to the back-to-the-landers of the 70s and early 80s – who have been doing the local food thing for decades or longer and just quietly go about their business while the media fusses over the new young crop of "visionaries." This dichotomy, it turns out not surprisingly, is the biggest conflict in the story. As one of the old-school, hippie generation of local farmers, Annie Gaillard of Surfing Veggie Farm, puts it to Hewitt: "I think we're all on the same page on how to make this a better planet, but they make it sound like there was nothing here before." At least one of the lower key members of the new guard, Tom Gilbert of the Highfields Center for Composting, acknowledges this point: "There's a lot of hype right now... We have not created a new food system in Hardwick; we're just rebuilding and utilizing an infrastructure that was already there. I think we let the media get ahead of us."

"The Town That Food Saved," winds down with Gaillard extending a hand across the divide to become a board member of the Center for an Agricultural Economy, the nonprofit founded by the new generation. In the last scene of the book, Hewitt takes a spot at the bar of Claire's Restaurant on Main Street and watches a mix of the people he's spent time with during his research arrive to eat carefully prepared, locally raised food. He reflects on what Hardwick can teach the rest of the country about not only relocalizing the food system but also about reconnecting with each other and with nature. "We've forgotten that every economy is ultimately an economy that exists only with the blessing of the sun and the land... Yet we have fooled ourselves into believing that we can usurp these forces through the blunt application of wit and will and the technologies they give rise to," he writes. "That time is coming to a close. Change or be changed: These are the choices. The people of Hardwick have chosen the former."

It wouldn't have made as catchy a title, but Hewitt has made his most important point: Food doesn't save towns. People do.

*Melissa Pasanen is a South Burlington-based freelance writer and co-author of the New York Times notable cookbook, "Cooking with Shelburne Farms" (Viking, 2007). She is food editor of Vermont Life and a regular contributor to The Burlington Free Press and Edward Behr's Art of Eating.*

## **Building Farmers from the Ground up**

By Katrina Simmons; Special to the Mercury; March 03, 2010

GUELPH — Farming is in Sri Sethuratnam's blood. He owned about 28 hectares in India before emigrating to Canada. At the University of Guelph, he pursued his Masters in Rural Studies, but when he started searching for farm experience in 2006, there was nothing available. With no land and no connections, he was shut out. He took an internship in Singapore instead.

Returning to Guelph in the summer of 2008, he landed a position with FarmStart. The organization has two farms that gives new farmers, or farmers new to Canada, a chance to learn about organic agriculture, and build a small farm business, with minimal initial investment. FarmStart provides a small plot of land—up to about one hectare—shared access to tools, tractors and expertise. The program is designed for people who are serious about pursuing organic agriculture as a commercial enterprise.

“We tell people that apply, ‘You’re in this as a farmer. You need to have a viable business plan, you need to cover your time, and eventually you will need an income.’”

FarmStart helps startup farmers to develop that plan; Sethuratnam helps them to evaluate what they are doing. Particularly with farmers new to Canada, he is blunt about the amount of work involved. “In India, if you own 10 acres, you don’t usually do the hands-on work. There is always lots of cheap labour to do that. Here you have to do everything yourself, so I always ask people, ‘Are you prepared to get your hands dirty?’”

Though the people that come to the programs have a lot of passion, they don’t come with a lot of experience. Sethuratnam is impressed by their market savvy though. He has seen what people can do on a small patch of land. “It’s possible to farm on three to five acres and be viable.” Whether they choose a conventional market-garden model, or find a niche market, startup farmers are expected to be covering all of their costs after three years, and be on their own after five.

The Guelph location, and the main incubator farm in Brampton, are both within a stone’s throw of their respective cities. FarmStart wants to develop rural sites in other communities. In the Hamilton area, they have been talking to Settlement and Integration Services to gauge interest and possibilities there.

“I would have given a half a hand and leg to get a job on a farm,” Sethuratnam says of his attempts to break into organic farming in Canada. “Now I’m helping people do what I couldn’t do four years ago.”

For more information on FarmStart, visit [www.farmstart.ca](http://www.farmstart.ca), or call 519-836-7046, ext. 107.

## **Viability of Canadian Agriculture - Updates for 2010**

Free Webinar Archived at: [www.agriwebinar.com](http://www.agriwebinar.com)

Presented By: George Brinkman, University of Guelph

Theme: Agricultural Economics

This webinar provides an update of the performance of the Canadian Agriculture sector in recent years, including an assessment of the impact of the current global financial crisis. The performance of Canadian farmers and producers in individual provinces are compared with the performance of US farmers, showing that Canadian farmers are much more overcapitalized and debt burdened than US farmers. Canadian farmers now have over 6 times more debt and 3.7 times more equity capital invested per dollar of farm income earned than our US counterparts, and are 6 times more vulnerable to rising interest rates.

The presentation also provides provincial examples of current performance and looks at key factors driving crop and livestock prices for the future. The presentation addresses the potential for serious financial difficulties and falling land prices occurring in several years when the global economies start recovering and interest rates rise, and provides 10 management strategies for dealing with a potential financial crisis and correction in asset values.

## **Food Security Study Tour – June 2010**

### **Belo Horizonte, Brazil**

#### **Application due March 26, 2010**

Since 1993, the city of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, has been implementing innovative policies based on the principle of food security as a right of citizenship. The results achieved have been impressive, with programs reaching over 800,000 people daily, or close to 38% of the total municipal population. The city has received Brazilian and international prizes for its initiatives in reducing hunger and malnutrition, as well as the attention of academic studies and popular press throughout the world. In 2009, it was the recipient of the Future Policy Award by the World Future Council ([http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/future\\_policy\\_award.html](http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/future_policy_award.html)).

This study tour will provide an opportunity for learning about food security policy and programs, and to experience part of that learning by studying, first hand, the case of Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Participants will travel to Belo Horizonte for a week of visits and presentations on the many different programs developed by the municipal government to reduce hunger, malnutrition, and general food insecurity in that city.

Schedule for 2010:

Orientation (online): May 10 – June 04

Period in Belo Horizonte: June 06-12

For information on past trips go to

<http://www.ryerson.ca/foodsecurity/projects/brazil/belo.html>