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Using Social Media to Help Grow Your Business : Tweeting From the Farmhouse

By: Noelle Munaretto

Trevor Herrle-Braun (@Herrles Market) is not a big believer in marketing. Neither is his family. “It’s not something that we had ever used,” says Herrle-Braun, of Herrles County Farm Market in St. Agatha, Ont. “We don’t advertise as a rule in our family. We prefer word of mouth.” But when Herrle-Braun stumbled upon Twitter in March of this year, the speed and ease of communicating in 140-character chunks caught his eye.

“With our business, time is of the essence,” he says. “If I can throw out a quick little blurb it works.” Today, with over 700 followers, the Herrle’s Farm Twitter feed is capturing a wide audience by sharing authentic stories from the field and the farmhouse. “All through the planting season I did a hashtag called tractor tweets,” says Herrle-Braun, adding that he would tweet directly from the field about crops he was planting like peas and sweet corn.

He also mentioned how tweeting from his phone during his workdays allowed his customers to better understand exactly what kind of labour and effort goes into running a full-scale farm. “It’s educational because it puts a personal touch to the business. Our followers can actually connect with a family member,” added Herrle-Braun. “If you’re just going to advertise your business that’s not what social media is about.

At Springridge Farm in Milton, Ont., Niki Hilton (@springridgenow) is a social media manager with a mission. She's been tweeting on behalf of the farm since February 2010, and has since been spreading the word about the farm's products, festivals, tours, and special offers to her 900 plus followers.

To read the full article see: <http://ontarioculinary.com/?p=4824>

New Regulations for Wine Industry

Agriculture Minister John MacDonell announced new regulations that will encourage and support the continued growth of this rural-based agriculture sector. These new regulations establish a minimum Nova Scotia content of 85% for grape wines and 100% content for non-grape wines.

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20101117005>

Consumer Trends: Pet Food in Russia

Russia is among the world's economic leaders, posting an average Gross Domestic Product growth rate of 7% per year over the last 10 years. This economic growth, the sizeable gap between prepared and unprepared pet foods and an increase in disposable income all contribute to the increase in demand for premium pet food products. The Russian pet food market is worth US \$1 billion and is forecast to be one of the fastest growing in the world. They imported US \$176 million in prepared dog/cat food in 2008, up 189% from 2004. Canada tripled its exports between 2004-2008, with 3.3 million kg of prepared dog and cat food being exported to Russia in 2008, with a value of CAD \$5.07 million. <http://www.ats-sea.agr.gc.ca/eur/5306-eng.htm>

Source: Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada

Biomass Could Fuel Economic Self-reliance

By Andrew Haden; Oct 26 2010

The conversation about sustainable energy is really three related conversations about transport, electricity and heat. Energy sources to effectively satisfy each of these needs vary by region. In the Pacific Northwest, the abundant and long-lived forests offer a clear choice for heat energy: biomass.

The temperate forest countries of northern Europe offer a glimpse of the biomass industry's potential. Over 20 percent of the energy used for electricity and heat in Sweden, Finland and parts of Austria is supplied through biomass. Stockholm heats all its buildings from four central heating plants, the largest of which is biomass fueled, a strategy known as district heating. State-of-the-art European boilers, like the ones imported to heat a hospital in Burns, Ore., and the new airport facility in John Day, Ore., are 20 percent more efficient and burn 70 percent cleaner than those manufactured in the United States.

Renewable, reliable, non-polluting

The sustainability of any energy source can be judged by three metrics. It must be renewable, reliable and non-polluting. In the twentieth century, the biomass boilers installed for heating commercial and institutional premises often faced reliability issues. With those concerns alleviated by modern technology, today's discussions largely center on the industry's renewability and its pollution emissions.

The renewability of biomass energy depends on infrastructural factors like the size, location and types of facilities. As with many kinds of infrastructure, it's important not to get locked into systems that may prove unsustainable over the medium to long term. Biomass electric generation facilities that have no adjacent process heat consumer, and so vent their waste heat to the atmosphere, are particularly vulnerable to lock in because they are typically larger than heating facilities and operate at less than 30 percent efficiency, whereas heat boilers of U.S. and European manufacture are roughly 70 and 85 percent efficient, respectively.

Biomass for the rural Northwest

Rural communities around the Pacific Northwest are especially good candidates for biomass. Most rural communities in Oregon and Washington have been bypassed by natural gas utilities and must rely on expensive fuels such as oil, propane or electricity for heating. Also, as rural Northwest communities are often situated in or near forested landscapes, they can reduce both fire risk and greenhouse gas emissions, while increasing economic self-reliance, through long-term forest management that utilizes waste wood for biomass heating.

A full-fledged biomass industry is estimated to be able to sustain over 4,500 full-time jobs in Oregon, with similar numbers in neighboring states. Biomass heating represents the kind of homegrown sustainability that needs our support.

Andrew Haden is vice president of A3 Energy Partners. He focuses on developing infrastructure in rural communities that increases economic self-reliance using local natural resources.

Public Health Releases 2010 Nutritious Food Basket Report

Each year, Region of Waterloo Public Health conducts grocery store pricing to monitor the affordability of a basic nutritious diet for individuals and households. This year, the weekly cost of a the Nutritious Food Basket for a "reference family of four" is \$168.45. To access the 2010 fact sheet for the Nutritious Food Basket in Waterloo Region, see: [Food Basket](#).

***Editors note:** Using these same statistics, for Prince Edward Island (population 136,000), our annual local food bill is estimated to be approximately \$300,000,000.*

According to the Business Alliance for a Living Local Economy (BALLE) capturing the existing local market with healthy nutritious food, could result in an annual economic multiplier benefit in excess of \$2 billion to PEI's economy.

Nova Scotia Land Review Committee Report

This year long study takes a serious look at the amount cleared land required, for Nova Scotia to have enough land in production to provide its residents with a Canada Food Guide quality diet, were they forced to rely solely on their own production.

The report lists over 20 recommendations, including a strong case for preserving farmland with 'Land Trusts.'

It would take approximately 235,537 ha. against the current active land base of 181,915 ha.

This is without making allowance for whether the current land base is capable of growing all the types of crops necessary.

For instance, some land would be too steep for continuous grain production or even a grain rotation, in some instances. Another factor not taken into consideration is that approximately 38% of agriculture production never reaches the consumer for a variety of reasons: spoilage, off-grade, blemishes, etc. This fact alone would raise Nova Scotia land requirements by another 89,504 ha. And, all these calculations do not take into consideration the probability that some land will be used for biomass.

Given the ever changing global situations, Nova Scotia may well need more cleared land in the future. For a copy of the report see <http://www.gov.ns.ca/agri/> (Large report, slow to download.)

Amount of Land Required for Food Security on Prince Edward Island

By extrapolating the information provided in the NS Land Review Committee Report (see above), we calculated the land required for food security on Prince Edward Island to be approximately 20% of current land in agriculture. Theoretically, PEI has the capability of filling its own needs while continuing to export.

Land required per person: .25 hectares*

PEI Population: ~ 136,000

Total land required: 34,000 hectares*

Current Production: 171,295 hectares**

* *Source: Health Canada – Adapted from Nova Scotia Land Review Committee; 2010*

** *Source: Statistics Canada; 2006*

Feb 8-10, 2011: Canadian International Farm Show-Toronto, Ontario

This is the 25th anniversary of the largest indoor farm and equipment show in Canada. Exhibitors will have the opportunity to network with industry professionals, showcase new products, meet existing customers and network with new ones. Exhibitors will also have the opportunity to participate in a targeted media campaign that will attract rural property owners, businesses, small farmers, livestock producers, organic growers and those interested in pursuing the farming lifestyle. Visit the [www site](#) for more information

Northeast Potato Technology Forum; March 16-17, 2011

Crowne Plaza Lord Beaverbrook Hotel; Fredericton, NB.

The forum is a two day event for potato research and extension specialists to meet and exchange technical information of benefit to the Northeast potato industry. Participation is open to all private and public researchers, extension specialists, growers, and other potato industry personnel who would like to share information.

Visit the [website](#) for all the details on registration, hotel reservations online, submitting your presentation title and conspectus guidelines.