

Growing Tomorrow

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BC Food Safety Boosted By New Program

A newly announced \$2.6 million initiative will enhance and promote food safety systems in BC's food processing industry.

Initially, the federally funded initiative will raise awareness within the non-federally registered food processing industry of food safety issues and the importance of implementing standardized food safety systems such as those based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP).

Outreach activities will be delivered by the Food Protection Services group of the BC Centre for Disease Control in partnership with regional health authorities, the industry and the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

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Strict biosecurity measures aim to prevent the spread of avian influenza.

BC Biosecurity Plan Offers Funding Opportunities

With a value approaching \$1 billion, the Fraser Valley poultry industry is a significant contributor to the local and provincial economy. The H7N3 avian influenza outbreak in 2004 had a devastating effect on the sector, leading to some aggressive joint industry-government initiatives.

Avian influenza outbreaks are difficult to control. It's more effective to prevent outbreaks or limit their impact through defensive measures. These measures include strict biosecurity protocols on and around farms and an emergency response plan

that works with local and provincial agencies to prevent avian influenza from spreading once it's detected.

The Poultry Industry Biosecurity/Emergency Response strategic plan outlines three goals to be accomplished by Dec. 31, 2007:

- > A mandatory and auditable biosecurity program to enhance protection against an infectious disease outbreak;
- > An emergency response management plan to handle such an outbreak;

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Biosecurity Plan *continued*

> An effective and comprehensive risk management initiative to help provide fair compensation to producers in the event of an outbreak.

Provincial and federal funding totaling more than \$3 million is intended for industry-led shared-outcome projects that support the strategic plan in one or more of the following ways:

- > Actively engage the poultry sector to contribute to the development and adoption of biosecurity protocols;
- > Expand the sector's capacity to prevent and respond to infectious diseases in commercial and non-commercial flocks;
- > Integrate sector-led piloted and tested projects into future federal, provincial, territorial government and industry initiatives.

IAF administers the funding, which is provided by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (MAL) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). MAL and AAFC also provide technical expertise to the BC Poultry Association and the Poultry Industry Advisory Management Committee, which guides the project funding process.

For further information on developing proposals, applicants should refer to the strategic plan, available at www.iafbc.ca/poultry/index.htm and contact program administrator Lynn Elwell at 250-294-0617 or email: lynnelwell@shaw.ca ■

Horse Sense Available Online



Rider, Sidney Truefitt, competes in the Little Britches Rodeo at Nukko Lake near Prince George. Photo: Steven Dubas

With the horse industry heavily influenced by world markets, it's essential BC producers and owners remain competitive. Education is key to the sector's sustainable domestic growth as well as its potential to increase exports.

Last year the Horse Council of BC (HCBC) launched a pilot project for online equine education. The project is designed to increase competitiveness and assist in the growth and development of the BC equine industry by expanding the operating skills and knowledge base of its members through web-based education.

The HCBC site now hosts five courses – some of which are free – directed at the organization's 19,000 members as well as interested horse owners or potential owners. More courses will be available in the near future. The training has five areas of concentration: coaches and officials, industry administration, stable management, introduction to horses and environmental farm planning.

Course accessibility made it a good collective outcomes candidate under the federal

Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food (ACAAF) program. With additional funding from Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, along with support from all provincial equine associations, the training program has welcomed hundreds of participants.

Thanks to the Internet and ACAAF funding, the BC-born program is available to horse enthusiasts across Canada.

"Nova Scotia held a live session on preventing abuse using our online course with about 50 people in attendance," said Vicki Pauze, executive director of HCBC. "For a small community, this was great."

"Online education makes sense for an industry that doesn't hold conventional hours of business and is scattered across the province," said Pauze, who has since resigned from HCBC. "Though similar programs exist at online universities, this program is less time-intensive and more action-oriented. The education gained is immediately applicable to the practical elements of the producer's enterprise."

Local educators can use the program to gain credit toward their required annual professional development hours. Before the online program, all course work had to be done in person.

BC has 37,000 horse owners, 12,035 horse farms and more than 113,000 horses. The sector adds \$9.74 million annually to the provincial economy.

IAF funded half of the \$47,575 project to develop and deliver the 15 online modules. The project included creation of a template for online module development and delivery that HCBC will share with industry.

For more project information, visit www.hcbc.ca ■

Agassiz Producers Find New Markets

Farms on less than 10 acres or lots with annual sales under \$50,000 constitute 25 per cent of BC's agriculture economy and have incredible potential for growth.

The Fraser Basin Council (FBC) took this knowledge and with the help of IAF funding, launched a project designed to connect local farmers with nearby consumers. A survey was created to establish the state of agriculture in the tiny District of Kent and assess the area's products and markets.



Pennti Hanninan of Canadian Hazelnut introduces hazelnut production to Vancouver's top sommelier Brent Hayman and crew of Raincity Grill.

"We identified the product-ready producers from the ones that were emerging in small lot agriculture," said Marion Robinson, Fraser Valley FBC manager. "We clustered the product-ready producers and formed the Agassiz Producers Group."

This group – a collaboration of Kent area farmers facilitated by the FBC – boosted the Agassiz area's contribution to the local dining scene. That's why Vancouver's Raincity Grill featured an Agassiz tasting menu last summer.

There's a growing market for niche quality products. The Agassiz Producers Group currently supplies new markets, like Raincity Grill, with hazelnuts and hazelnut products, hand-made cheeses, wasabe, pea tops, oyster mushrooms and coho salmon. New products are expected this season.

"Intangible project outcomes include urban community and agriculture integration. It's like the bumper sticker

says – 'Grow something and you grow yourself'," said Ken Schwaerzle, chair of the Kent Ag Advisory Committee.

"Agriculture is an outstanding community-development vehicle."

The FBC brings together government, private sector and citizens groups to find common ground and develop made-in-the-community solutions to regional and basin-wide sustainability challenges. IAF provided \$13,500 through the Small Lot Agriculture Initiative, a branch of the Agri-Food Futures Fund, toward the total project costs of \$32,000. (The report can be found at www.fraserbasin.bc.ca under publications. More information about the Small Lot initiative is available at www.bcfarmfresh.com/services.asp)

"2010 is a pivot point towards new sustainable economies, but things don't end there," said Robinson. "Consumers are increasingly seeking the quality product that BC is so good at. Feed them, and they will come." ■

Yes SIR... Moth Fight Continues

The codling moth is the BC tree fruit industry's most damaging and costly pest. A longstanding area-wide community initiative in southeastern BC, which has proven highly successful at applying nature-friendly technology to the control of this moth, is moving into a transitional phase.

The goal of the 14-year-old Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release program (SIR) is to manage codling moth in the participating fruit-growing regions of the Okanagan, Similkameen, Creston and Shuswap Valleys to the point where no chemical interventions and minimal sterile insect release are required. Significant

pesticide reduction has allowed many growers to access new markets, and the program has enabled some growers to obtain and maintain organic certification.

With \$1.6 million in assistance from IAF, a transitional program is being implemented in 2006-07 which includes a more intense monitoring and enforcement component encompassing all of the urban areas as well as all buffer-zone areas, in addition to the work in orchards.

This transition program allows SIR to continue providing the following services:

- > Wild codling moth control to all orchards through release of sterile moths;
- > An area-wide system of surveillance through neighbourhood risk-rating maps, trapping, banding and in-season harvest damage assessments;
- > Compliance with SIR guidelines in both commercial orchards and urban backyards; and
- > Reduction of moth populations using an environmentally safe strategy.

For more information, visit www.oksir.org ■

Growers Look to Control Greenhouse Pests Naturally

Demand for reduced-risk methods of pest control to produce high quality and healthy greenhouse vegetables continues to build in BC.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is the challenging, environmentally friendly course adopted by growers to meet this demand and grow a better product. IPM is a holistic approach that includes biological, physical, cultural and, as a last resort, chemical methods to control pests. Biological pest controls introduce predatory insects – like ladybugs and mites – into greenhouses to battle problem bugs.

The BC Greenhouse Growers' Association (BCGGA) has been innovative in the field of IPM, making it a direct focus of their Industry Development Strategic Plan. IAF contributed \$1 million toward the plan and its implementation.

A key plan element is to enhance the effectiveness and reduce the costs of existing IPM systems. In addition, the industry must develop control methods against new pests. So far, over half of the plan's committed funds have been allocated to IPM projects, a fact which underlines the immediate importance of effective pest management in the greenhouse industry.



This sticky card is used to monitor pests in the greenhouse. *Photo: Perry Zavitz*



A young woman studies the beneficial insects used by BC's greenhouse vegetable growers at an open house in Delta. More than 1,250 people attended two open houses held by the BC Greenhouse Growers' Association last September.

Projects include a study designed to integrate *Dicyphus hesperus*, a "good" bug, into the greenhouse.

"Growers are interested in knowing how this beneficial bug can be best utilized in greenhouses to improve existing IPM programs," said Amandeep Bal, BCGGA program administrator.

A longer-term project, running through 2008, investigates new bio-control agents to manage a significant greenhouse concern – the aphid.

BCGGA is a non-profit organization representing greenhouse vegetable growers in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island. Its members produce 96 per cent of BC's greenhouse vegetables on less than 0.01 per cent of the province's farmland. The greenhouse industry employs more than 2,500 people province-wide. ■

BC Food Safety Boosted By New Program *continued*

Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board Chuck Strahl said that enhanced food safety systems help protect the health of Canadians and that the Government of Canada was proud to be working with the BC Government on this important contribution to BC's food processing sector.

Further along, funding will help eligible, non-federally registered food processing plants to implement food safety systems.

BC's food and beverage processing sector generated \$6.15 billion in sales in 2004, of which \$1.9 billion was exported. The sector, dominated by a large number of small and medium-sized firms, employs 31,000 people.

"This initiative will be particularly helpful for small-scale producers who are working to meet new food safety regulations and will provide even greater consumer confidence in BC's food products," said BC Minister of Agriculture and Lands Pat Bell.

The food safety initiative is part of the Food Safety and Quality component of the Agriculture Policy Framework, a federal-provincial-territorial strategy for long-term sustainability and profitability in the agriculture and agri-food sector. Additional information on the initiative is available at www.agf.gov.bc.ca/foodsafety/apf_1sfq.htm ■

Innovative BC Research Combats Domestic Avian Disease



Being the largest lysozyme producer in the world and the only one in North America might not mean much to a layperson, but to Abbotsford's Neova Technologies and the poultry industry, it means innovation and advancement toward an antibiotic-free product.

A primary concern in the industry, for both producers and consumers, is the overuse of antibiotics at the prophylactic level. In January 2006, the European Union completely banned use of antibiotic growth promotants in animal feeds. It's expected these restrictions will expand elsewhere in the world – and that's where Neova's lysozyme expertise comes in.

With IAF funding, the company evaluated the effectiveness of the application of a lysozyme antimicrobial mixture in poultry feed against necrotic enteritis (NE) in broiler chickens. NE is a domestic avian disease, widespread throughout the world and the cause of an estimated \$2 billion (US) in annual losses to the industry. Lysozyme is effective against certain gram-positive bacteria, including *Clostridium perfringens*, which causes necrotic enteritis.

With nearly half a decade of innovative egg processing experience, Neova, formerly Inovatech Bioproducts,

launched the project in 2004 and expects the final report to be completed by July 2006. The company will communicate project results to the scientific community and to BC poultry producers.

“At this point, things are looking pretty good,” said John Zhang, Neova research scientist. “Lysozyme antimicrobial blends have proven to be as effective as antibiotic growth promotants in controlling NE in both cage and floor pen studies. We're now looking forward to hearing positive results from commercial-scale trials.”

Zhang and his team published a 2006 paper on this frontier technology for poultry disease prevention and presented preliminary findings at the Western Poultry Disease Conference in Sacramento, California. Last year, IAF nominated the company for a Canadian Agri-Food Award of Excellence.

“The benefits of this research include increased marketability of broiler chickens worldwide,” said IAF chair Walter Goerzen. “Feed utilization ratios and flock health have also shown improvement with this type of treatment.”

IAF provided over \$133,000 of the project's total costs of nearly \$353,000. ■

John Schildroth – In Memoriam

John Schildroth, a branch director in the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, passed away suddenly in February. He served the Investment Agriculture Foundation as alternate provincial ex officio and previously as executive director.



John was a respected leader within the ministry and the industry. His unique enthusiasm and sense of humour served him in all avenues of his life. He was a

visionary, passionate about his work and a true friend of agriculture.

Throughout his career, John continually supported leading-edge developments designed to move agriculture and food forward. He championed many initiatives for the industry, including agriculture education.

In memory and honour of John, the Foundation donated \$5,000 to the BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation. This program provides educators and students with educational resources that highlight agriculture as an important part of the province's way of life.

John Schildroth will be greatly missed by all who knew him. His legacy will live on in the many areas of agriculture he influenced. ■

April AGM

The IAF annual general meeting was held April 24 in Abbotsford. Members approved the 2005 financial statements and 2006 corporate plan. The corporate plan is available at www.iafbc.ca/what.we.do.htm

IAF seeks new executive director

Rob Simon completed his term as executive director March 31, 2006 and accepted a new position with the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands as Industry Strategic Planning Specialist. IAF has initiated a search for a permanent executive director to manage its business operations and coordinate effective stewardship of its resources and programs.



In the interim, IAF staffer Al Helmersen has been appointed to the position while the recruitment process proceeds.

Livestock Waste Tissue: two new funding programs

The Livestock Waste Tissue Initiative has launched two new funding programs. The first program will help slaughter plants determine the best available options for tissue disposal. In the second program, approved consultants will help slaughter plants apply for a Ministry of Environment permit to dispose of waste tissue. For more information on these programs, visit www.iafbc.ca/livestock/

More funds for Small Projects

After a successful first-year pilot, the Small Projects Program has been extended with an increase to the project funding limit. The program was originally formed to address the needs of smaller industry organizations and to provide expedited funding for applicants seeking less than \$5,000. Projects funded during the first year included demonstration initiatives, applied research and speaker costs. The funding cap of this popular program was doubled to \$10,000.

New program assists slaughter facilities

In April the provincial government announced that IAF will administer \$4 million for the Meat Transition Assistance Program, a program delivered by the BC Food Processors Association. The program will help the industry upgrade or build livestock slaughter facilities that comply with the Ministry of Health's meat inspection regulation. In addition, the province extended the implementation date by one year to Sept. 30, 2007. For information on the program and how to apply, visit www.bcfpa.ca/mies.html ■

Focus on the Future report available

Focus on the Future, an industry-driven province-wide consultation process, wrapped up in early 2006. The final report identifies five key issues important to the BC agri-food industry's long-term profitability: industry organization capacity-building; marketing capacity-building; human resource development; innovation technology hub development; and coordination of programs for branding BC products. Findings have been shared with the provincial government's agriculture planning committee. The complete report is available at www.iafbc.ca/current.initiative.htm

Made-in-BC agriculture plan seeks input

In other consultation news, the BC agriculture planning committee will be holding community meetings in June and September regarding a made-in-BC agriculture plan. The plan will increase public awareness about food production, encourage active First Nation participation, facilitate the industry's growth and diversification, and bridge the urban/agriculture divide. Delta South MLA Val Roddick, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture and a former IAF board member, chairs the committee. For more information about the consultations and alternative submission options, visit www.harvesttohome.bc.ca ■

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