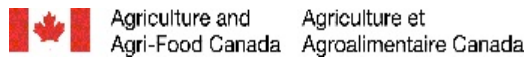




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New Market Options for Maritime Beef

In today's tight markets, farmers are working hard to ensure they receive maximum value for their product. Sometimes that means looking at new and innovative ways to send their animals or crops to market. The old maxim "this is the way we do it because this is the way we have always done it" quite often just doesn't work anymore.

The Sussex and Studholm Agricultural Society owns one of the two cattle auction barns in New Brunswick. It has now joined forces with industry groups from the beef and dairy sectors, as well as the federal and provincial government, to hire the consulting firm Eco-Resources. The New Brunswick Agricultural Council has provided funding for the study under the Advancing Canadian Agricultural and Agri-Food program.

"We have asked the consultant to look around the world at jurisdictions that are roughly the same size as New Brunswick and see how they market their animals," said society spokesman Dave Arsenaault.

He explained live auctions are now the order of the day in New Brunswick. There has been some concern expressed about whether bring large numbers of cattle together heightens the risk of disease. Arsenaault said nobody within the industry wants to do anything to jeopardize production or prevent producers from achieving the best possible return.

"There may be more efficient ways of doing things— perhaps we could go to internet auctions," Arsenaault said. "These are the type of things we want the consultant to study."

In addition to its research, he said the consultants will be talking to the various players within the industry. Arsenaault said there has been little change in the way cattle marketing has been done in the province for a number of years and "we felt the way to go was to step back and look at things

through the eyes of a neutral third party."

What happens as a result of the study will depend largely on what the consultant recommends. Arsenault explained they may well conclude the current system is the most cost effective method. If not, he said the report will suggest possible changes that will have to be considered by both industry and government.

While the study is specific to New Brunswick, he expects it will also generate considerable interest in the other Atlantic Provinces. He explained "the situation is pretty similar throughout the region— that's why we want to look at other areas that were similar in size— there is no use comparing us to the west or the major cattle producing areas in the United States because their volume is just so much bigger.

As Oil Costs Continue to Rise, the Search Continues for Alternative Fuels

The Middle Musquodoboit Agricultural Society is attempting to test pellets made of reed canary grass as a heat source. Society spokesman Jim Higgins said the idea also holds out the hope of revitalizing underutilized agricultural land in the Middle Musquodoboit area.

"That was really the driving force when we started looking at this project," he said. "The number of farmers in our area is declining and the land is just sitting there— this might be a way to realize some commercial income."

The society is the driving force behind the annual Halifax County exhibition for over 120 years. It has received \$9,629.27 towards the cost of the project from Agri-Futures Nova Scotia.

"We have certainly proved the pellets can be produced cheaper than wood pellets," Higgins said. "It burns clean and is very efficient."

However, he said there is one major challenge to overcome before they can look at trying to take a system into commercial production. Since grass does have a high acid content, he said hydrochloric acid could be produced during the burning process. Since that product is highly corrosive, he said it could cause some damage to equipment.

"That is something that we are going to have to work through," he said. "There is quite a bit of interest in the project, especially among landowners and right now we are trying to attract a client that can take a look at a commercial product."

A co-operative has been formed to look at the idea of building a stand alone grass pelletizing facility. However, Higgins said commercial viability is still some time into the future.

"However, I am optimistic," he said. "The price of oil is likely to remain high for some time and as long as that is the case people will be looking at other options."

The grass pellets were higher in ash than pure wood pellets, but Higgins said that problem could be handled through alternations in furnace design and operation. The pellets held together well, with only one per cent disintegrating in destructive testing held as part of the project.

During the project, a wood-grass hybrid pellet was also looked at, but it was ruled unworkable because the temperature necessary to dry down the bark portion of the fuel were too high for the grass portion of the pellet.

ACAAF Program Provides Positive Impact on Island Agriculture and Agri-Food Sectors

The following project summaries illustrate the impact of PEI ADAPT's ACAA program in the agricultural and agri-food industry.

In each case the project was conceived in response to certain issues or constraints affecting the ongoing viability or future development of a sector in Prince Edward Island.

The project participants have attempted to investigate or evaluate particular options for dealing with challenges to the viability of existing industry sectors, and/or opportunities or constraints on perceived opportunities.

Editor's Note: In the coming weeks we will be reporting on additional success stories that would not have been implemented without major financial support from ADAPT's ACAAF program.

Storing and Marketing Canola

Background

There is an interest among some farmers in oilseed production. One of the gaps in planning information is the feasibility of storage.

Project

The Prince Edward Island ADAPT Council funded a project to study the feasibility of storing canola. Project partners were six farmers who undertook to grow the crop, the Prince Edward Island Department of Agriculture and the Prince Edward Island Grain Elevators Corporation (P.E.I. GEC)

Goals

The main objective of the project was to determine the feasibility of storing canola for farmers involved the production of canola.

Summary

The project consisted of storing and identifying a market for four hundred tons of canola grown by six local farmers.

The six growers formed a pool for the handling and marketing of the product. P.E.I. Grain Elevators Corporation managed the pool for the growers. The grain was marketed to Co-op Atlantic by the P.E.I. department of Agriculture.

Waste Grain as Fuel

Background

This project grew out an issue which has been a concern for the P.E.I. Grain Elevators Corporation for some time. A certain amount of barley and grain is infected with fusarium. The problem is usually handled in the harvesting process by combining high wind with slow speed over the ground by the combine. However, this scatters a certain amount of inoculum in the field increasing the probability of future infection.

Project

The Prince Edward Island ADAPT Council funded a project to study the feasibility of burning the fusarium infected grain and other waste grain as fuel.

Goals

The main goal of the project was to determine whether waste grain could be marketable as fuel.

Also, the goal was to create a better way of disposing of fusarium infected grain. New gravity bed cleaners now available provide a way of separating infected grain from the crop brought in for storage and salvaging the remainder for the market.

It was thought that burning the infected grain would provide supplemental heat in the drying process at an estimated potential annual saving of \$160,000 in the drying operations.

Reduced drying can benefit the growers in the form of higher grain prices.

Summary

The study found that fusarium infection levels fluctuate sufficiently to provide a problem for a burner that is only capable of burning grain. Therefore, it was decided to identify potential multi-fuel burners. A small unit was found in Spring Valley that burns small volumes of barley. Another unit was found on the internet but on travel to North Dakota to examine the unit it was found to be currently burning coal.

The study found that no off-the-shelf, multi-fuel burner approved by Canadian Standards Association (CSA) is currently available.

A significant benefit of this study is the identification of the opportunity to design and develop a prototype multi-fuel burner capable of burning waste grain or other material and reducing costs in grain drying or other agriculture related operations.

Organic Dairy on P.E.I. Alternative Bovine Health Care

Background

Demand for organic products continues to exceed supply in Canada.

Growth in all sectors of the organic industry continues but still does not meet demand. There is a growing demand by consumers in Atlantic Canada and in Prince Edward Island for organic milk but there has not been any supply.

Project

The Prince Edward Island ADAPT Council is assisting two projects to develop an organic dairy industry in the province.

The two commercial dairies in the province are contributing funding to the groundbreaking project to create an organic milk industry in the province. The dairy farmers in transition are receiving financial assistance for the transition period from the provincial government of Prince Edward Island.

The Prince Edward Island ADAPT Council is funding the Alternative Bovine Health Care Project to develop expertise and resources to care for the health of the dairy cows in herds which will be raised without regular administration of antibiotics in feed.

Goals

The main goal of the project is to have commercial organic milk production on stream in the province in 2008.

The two commercial dairies in the province, farmer owned Amalgated Dairies Limited (ADL), and Purity Dairy have each promised to pay a 20% premium for the organic milk to the producer.

Summary

The organic dairy initiative now has 5% of the 225 dairy farms in Prince Edward Island in transition to organic production. The province is leading the Atlantic region in the growth toward an organic milk industry.

The Greenhorns: a documentary film about young farmers

The Greenhorns is a documentary film that explores the lives of America's young farming community—its spirit, practices, and needs. As the nation experiences a groundswell of interest in sustainable lifestyles, we see the promising beginnings of an agricultural revival. Young farmers' efforts feed us safe food, conserve valuable land, and reconstitute communities split apart by strip malls. It is the filmmakers's hope that by broadcasting the stories and voices of these young farmers, we can inspire another generation of optimistic agrarians.

Our aim is to valorize the role of younger growers who continue to refine farming practices, to innovate in new markets, and to reclaim land under sustainable management. With this film, we hope to build the case for those considering a career in agriculture—to embolden them, to entice them, and to recruit them into farming.

This film will challenge us to look squarely at the prospects and choices for American food security in the coming years. But it's not a political attack; nor is it meant to make you feel bad about what you eat. This film documents those who are establishing solutions to our contemporary crises. The stakes are high, but so are our chances of preserving our farmland, our food supply, and the practice of family farming if we can inspire more of America's youth to return, in any degree, to the soil that feeds us.

See: <http://www.thegreenhorns.net/home.html>

"cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. they are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands."

- thomas jefferson

Regenerative Farming Practices, Local Knowledge and Regionally Appropriate Technology Favored over Biotech and Industrial Agriculture. By Dan Sullivan

Agribusiness-as-usual was dealt a swift blow in Johannesburg April 7 as 57 nations signed onto a groundbreaking action plan that set a bold new course for developing nations to feed themselves while also addressing pressing environmental concerns.

For More details see: <http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/20080418/fp1>

Long-term Influence of Compost on Available Water Capacity of a Fine Sandy Loam in a Potato Rotation; M. R. Carter, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Research Centre, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada C1A 4N6; (e-mail: carterm@agr.gc.ca).

An improved soil physical structure, associated with organic amendments in crop rotations, can be viewed as an emergent property. A study was conducted to evaluate the effect of applied compost on soil water retention and available water capacity, and other associative soil properties in a long-term 3-yr potato rotation established on a Charlottetown fine sandy loam (Orthic Humo-Ferric Podzol) in Prince Edward Island.

For more information see: http://www.oacc.info/ResearchDatabase/res_compost_potato.asp

Vermont Producers Turn to Mobile Slaughterhouse for Increased Profit

By Peter Hirschfeld Vermont Press Bureau; Jan 14, 2008

MONTPELIER - A mobile slaughterhouse will likely be on the move in Vermont by spring, allowing small Vermont poultry farmers to reap increased profits in new retail markets.

The 32-foot trailer, with a killing room, scalding pot and processing area, will offer small and mid-size farmers the state inspection credentials needed to sell their birds in local cooperatives and grocery stores.

"The plan right now is to have it operational by spring time," said Anson Tebbetts, deputy secretary for the Agency of Agriculture.

The Legislature approved funding for the approximately \$80,000 slaughterhouse last year. The move is part of a larger plan to augment agricultural infrastructure in the state and capitalize on the ever-growing "Buy Local" movement.

For most farmers, trucking live poultry to the nearest USDA facility in southern Vermont is cost prohibitive, rendering their uninspected birds illegal for sale in cooperatives and other retail outlets. The mobile slaughterhouse, which officials say will process up to 200 birds a day, will offer the state-inspection stickers that have thus far kept small farmers out of nearby food stores.

"The key part is inspection, so it opens up every market you can imagine," Tebbetts said.

"(Poultry) could be sold at schools, restaurants, hospitals, back to the state government. That's sort of where we're heading with this."

Neither the Agency of Agriculture nor Rural Vermont, an advocacy group that lobbies on behalf of the state farmers, tracks the number of small poultry farmers in Vermont.

"I don't think there's a clear understanding of how many folks are out there that might take advantage of this," Tebbetts said. "The initial plan is to run 8,000 birds through the unit in the first year, but we really don't know how many folks are out there." The availability of the new slaughterhouse may compel new farmers to enter the wholesale and retail bird market and allow existing farmers to expand their flocks, Tebbetts said. John Clark operates Applecheek Farm in Hyde Park. He and his wife raise free-range boilers, stewing hens and heritage turkeys on their

McFarlane Road operation. Clark benefited from a key agriculture bill passed last year that allows poultry farmers with up to 1,000 birds to sell their meat at farmers markets and restaurants. He said the mobile slaughterhouse will further expand the opportunities. "In my situation, it'll be really helpful because I'll be able to sell in more markets and not be limited by the 1,000-bird limit," Clark said.

"Right now you can't sell to a co-op unless you bring it to a USDA facility, which is really limiting for small-scale farmers."

The mobile slaughterhouse will be leased, sold or rented to an independent operator who will have to offer services at an "affordable" cost, though details are still sketchy. Tebbetts said the state may fund the construction of more mobile units as demand warrants. The mobile slaughterhouse may well provide federal inspection as well, allowing Vermont farmers to sell in national chains like Whole Foods Market, which, according to Tebbetts, has already expressed interest in sourcing whole birds from Vermont. The mobile slaughterhouse will on occasion travel to fairs and field days around the state, where farmers will be able to bring their birds for slaughter on the premises.

A push is now under way to offer similar services for red-meat farmers seeking similar accommodations for their hogs, lamb, goat and beef, though mobile facilities for those products cost about double the poultry unit.

"It's part of the whole strategy," Tebbetts said. "We've worked on promotion and marketing, but we also have to keep an eye on infrastructure needs and give farmers another option, another convenience, to potentially grow their markets."

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