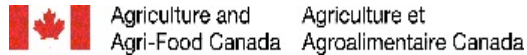




PEI ADAPT Council Agri-Newsletter



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Horticultural Therapy Workshop; April 21

Ask any avid gardener why they pursue their hobby and their answer will likely touch on the therapeutic value of working with the soil.

“There are plenty of studies that indicate you are less stressed if you have your hands in the soil,” said Thomas MacLellan of the P.E.I. Agriculture Sector Council. That is the basic principle behind horticultural therapy, a movement that is growing right across the country.

MacLellan is the special projects co-coordinator for the council, and organized a workshop on the topic slated for April 21 at the Farm Centre in Charlottetown. The workshop is part of a larger study, funded by the P.E.I. Adapt Council, to assess the potential from creating an HT Program on PEI.

The session will feature Christine Pollard, a registered horticultural therapist in Vancouver Island, and Dr. Norma Goodyear from the Nova Scotia Agricultural College. The Truro school is offering a course in horticultural therapy for the first time this year.

“This is a concept that can work on P.E.I. on so many levels, and I am getting a lot of interest in the session,” said MacLellan. For anyone with physical or mental disabilities, working the soil can teach a number of skills. For example, the physical work can be of terrific benefit to people who have had a stroke. It offers a way to become active again that is often more enjoyable for many than traditional forms of physical therapy.

MacLellan is also convinced it fits in well with a new government strategy on aging. “Many seniors find themselves at a loss when there is no one left to nurture, when they have been care-givers for much of their lives. If they are taking care of a garden, they start to feel like care-givers again,” he said.

The horticultural therapy program can also be used for youth at risk to teach a number of vocational skills. “You learn a lot taking care of a garden or working on a farm: sometimes without even realizing it.”

MacLellan said the session will attract people in health and education fields, geriatrics, youth workers, and those who work with the physically and mentally disabled. He hopes to use the session as a springboard to launching a horticultural therapy program in the province. “I like to think of it as food for the soul,” he said. “It should also help generate a more positive image for the agriculture industry.”

PEI Blueberry Producers Test Organic Plant Inoculate

Source: Atlanticfarmer.com, 03-Apr-2009

PEI Organic Fruit & Berries Ltd. has signed an agreement with Origro Inc. of Burlington, Ont., to be its Atlantic Canada distributor for its line of Endo-Fight™ plant inoculants. This line of products is proven to be one of the most capable, organically certified plant inoculants available. Endo-Fight™ contains naturally occurring endophytic inoculants which is present in almost all soil types around the world.

Endophytic fungus species are beneficial and contribute to the uptake of plant nutrients. They rapidly colonize plant tissues, establishing a symbiotic relationship. Endo-Fight™ also allows plants to better tolerate plant stresses, reducing environmental stress factors such as drought, disease, temperature extremes, and chemical and microbial pollutants.

President Alan Hicken stated "It is very important for us to have these tools for us to transition away from chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Processing quality healthy berries is important to our company, our producers and community. This is also a great fit with the development of our company's certified organic compost and compost tea operations. Our goal is to work with producers particularly Wild Low bush blueberry growers towards a sustainable agriculture system. With many of the critical issues in agriculture today, it is important to have more investment in research of this kind. Recently, our company was successful in a PEI ADAPT project on Sustainable Pollination.... This we hope will benefit the entire agriculture industry which is dependent on pollination."

Todd Mason, agronomist for Origro Inc., says “The success of Endo-Fight™ has been shown in greenhouses, turf, berry, and crop production worldwide. We are working in a number of countries and look forward to work in PEI and Atlantic Canada.”

Hicken is coordinating a sustainable pollination research project beginning May 1, for an innovative delivery system on Wild Low bush blueberries using Endo-Fight™.

“This agreement with Origro Inc. would not have happened without the assistance of Dr. Jim Kemp at the University of PEI in cooperation with Dr. Peter Kevan, University of Guelph” commented Mr. Hicken. “We expect to have these researchers in PEI for a Sustainable Pollination forum on June 12 & 13th, 2009.”

Kevin Carver, an Island blueberry producer and longtime friend of Hicken's, is providing his farm for the preliminary field trials.

Hicken says, "The health of our soil, crops and food is our primary objective. Providing healthy fresh fruit and berries in an ecologically sustainable agricultural system is our goal. We thank in advance of this project our major funding partners the PEI Wild Blueberry Growers Association and Executive Director Beth McMahon of ACORN (Atlantic Canada Organic Regional Network) with support from the PEI Department of Environment and Agriculture Minister George Webster. We also want to recognize the PEI ADAPT council which is providing funding for our project and the many other projects which directly benefit PEI Agriculture."

In a letter of support for the Sustainable Pollination project, Minister Webster wrote “Agriculture is one of our province’s main economic engines and the pollination of plants is obviously critical to the producer’s success. The potential benefits are considerable, giving farmers a reliable source of pollination, setting aside habitat in farmed areas and encouraging the use of native species”.

Wayne Roberts, Toronto Food Policy Council

No-Nonsense Guide to World Food: Understanding the Food System and How it Works

‘Farming is hard and smart work! But, no matter how hard and smart you work, you are not likely to make a go of it farming in a global commodity market,’ says Mr. Wayne Roberts, Executive Director, Toronto Food Policy Council.

Roberts recently spoke at the PEI ADAPT Council’s AGM/Conference, ‘Focus on the Future.’ His presentation was a combination of analytical and practical knowledge. He is world renowned for his analysis of the food system and for the past two summers he has spent time on PEI working on farms doing manual labor.

Roberts pointed out that 40% of what we grow winds up in the waste stream and that we spend \$1.5 billion/year on waste handling - more than we spend on nutrition education. According to Roberts, the cost of disposing of food packaging is subsidizing the food system. Much of our garbage is transported around the world for recycling. Our food travels an average of 1500 miles. Our garbage travels even farther! Another oddity which he pointed out is that we spend \$400 billion on the diet industry. That is more than we spend on education. Meanwhile schools are closing for lack of funds and obesity is an epidemic, national problem!

Farming is the biggest occupation and biggest cause of land use, and the biggest source of labor in the world. With a global population of 6 billion people, and each person eating an average of three meals a day; there are 18 billion meals being eaten each day. If government is going to invest in economic stimulation, Roberts says that, agriculture is the most valuable investment to

make. \$1 invested in agriculture creates \$5 in the economy.

Roberts recognizes one of the major problems with our food system can be attributed to monopolization. He believes it is government's responsibility to restrict monopolies and restore access to land, and markets, to farmers rather than corporations. As an example, Roberts mentioned that Cargill has virtual control of all seaports for shipping grain. He also cited the company, Sodexo, which has over 500,000 employees. It purchases and supplies food to large corporations; most people have never heard of this company.

According to his analysis, agriculture is the one industry that can save the world from global warming if it is allowed to function the way that it was intended (i.e. sequestering carbon and feeding local consumers). One third of global warming emissions comes from agriculture. Roberts believes that investing in agriculture to become a solution rather than a cause of climate change could have huge implications for both the economy and the environment. And the solutions are not complex.... put more carbon in the ground, cover crop field and plant trees in hedgerows, improve nutrient management.

The answer to the problems in agriculture cannot be found within agriculture itself. We have to look beyond agriculture to find the answer. "In poetry, the poet can only be as good as the audience and in farming, the farmer can only be as good as the consumer." He believes in empowering people, and communities by taking small steps to do the right thing.. 'Small steps create solutions to big problems,' he says.

Roberts used examples of Ghandi in India, the Zapatistas in Mexico and immigrant farm workers in the USA to demonstrate how united efforts can improve the conditions of farmers. In Mexico, where multinationals are using GMO corn and endangering the viability local farmers to continue producing their native staple crop, farmers have adopted the motto, "No country without corn, No corn without country." When USA farm workers protested for a 1.5 cent increase in the retail price of tomatoes, farm labour income improved by 70%.

In North America, consumers need to embrace ethical decisions when buying food. In addition to boycotting injustice, Roberts, who considers himself an agitator for positive change, is an advocate for 'buycotts;' supporting fair trade and spreading positive change.

He pointed out that the University of Toronto (largest campus in North America) has embraced a commitment to buy local food with a 10% premium to farmers. He recognizes that this may be a small step. However, he points out that if all the universities in North America adopted this philosophy, their combined efforts would represent the 26 largest economic force in the world.

While Roberts supports local food systems as a means of supporting local agriculture, regional sovereignty and food security, he is not a purist in the 'locavore' sense. He encouraged the audience to support 'foods of locality' - growing foods in regions where they do best.

Roberts made his case for 'foods of locality' by explaining that the food transportation system is incredibly efficient. It costs 1 cent to ship a pint of strawberries from California to Toronto. Although some food scientists would like to genetically modify foods or build infrastructure to

grow a crop that would normally not be found in our region, he says it makes more sense to put our efforts into growing what naturally grows best in each region.

In conclusion, Roberts pointed out that Canadians have some of the cheapest food in the world in proportion to income. In the 1940's we spent, on average, 30% of our income on food. Today it is below 10%. He also believes that we have become a meat obsessed society and that we need to regain a balance in our food consumption; avoiding fads and extremes.

Mr. Roberts noted that food has the following abilities: it is a place where ordinary people have power; and when you do one thing right with food, you do many things right.

We need to help the agriculture industry, as well as the auto and manufacturing industries, he claims. However, Roberts says we must realize that agriculture is the most innovative, efficient and productive industry in the world and investing in agriculture will provide the greatest return in stimulating all levels of the economy.

Farmers need to determine a way to produce less and earn more- to move agriculture from quantity to quality (i.e nutritional and environmentally sustainable). When the problem of fair pricing is solved, then things will be more the norm.

Wayne Roberts' most recent book, No-Nonsense Guide to World Food: Understanding the Food System and How it Works, is referred to, by the publisher, as an essential guide to an important issue, a book that will appeal to students, food professionals and activists, public health staff and concerned citizens -- anyone who aims to understand the world food system and how it can be improved.

For more information, please refer to the Web Site: http://www.toronto.ca/health/tfpc_index.htm.

Farmers Need Fair Pricing

Source: The Guardian, by Steve Sharratt; Date: 18-Mar-2009

Wayne Roberts of the Toronto Food Council says the lack of competition in the food industry practically guarantees farmers a poor price.

Consumer prejudice and expectations for cheap food must end if farmers are ever going to earn the profits they deserve, says a member of the Toronto Food Policy Council. "It's a two-way street and the consumer has to adapt," according to author and lecturer Wayne Roberts. "The farmer can't be expected to adapt to continuous low prices."

Roberts was a guest speaker at the P.E.I. ADAPT Council annual meeting in Charlottetown and told a packed crowd the time has come to restore respect to farming. "We have the real economy and the unreal economy in this world and that's why we have problems," he said. "The federal government should restrict monopolies and restore competition in the food industry." Roberts, who has spent two summers on the Island working at commercial farms to better acquaint himself with the upheavals in agriculture, told the luncheon only two per cent of farms are

producing the most important staple — fruits and vegetables.

“In North America we are fixated on the meat diet and that’s like driving a Hummer.” The Toronto Food Council, he said, is working to increase percentages ever so slightly each year to include more local and sustainable food. “We need fair pricing and we need to champion the quality of agricultural products and not the volume.” Roberts said while 30 per cent of family income was spent on food in the 1960s, less than 10 per cent is spent today, only emphasizing the inequities facing farmers.

The City That Ended Hunger

A Visit to Belo Horizonte, By FRANCIS MOORE LAPPÉ

<http://www.counterpunch.org/lappe03182009.html>; March 18, 2009

"To search for solutions to hunger means to act within the principle that the status of a citizen surpasses that of a mere consumer."

In writing *Diet for a Small Planet*, I learned one simple truth: Hunger is not caused by a scarcity of food but a scarcity of democracy. But that realization was only the beginning, for then I had to ask: What does a democracy look like that enables citizens to have a real voice in securing life's essentials? With hunger on the rise here in the United States—one in 10 of us is now turning to food stamps—these questions take on new urgency.

To begin to conceive of the possibility of a culture of empowered citizens making democracy work for them, real-life stories help. For me, the story of Brazil's fourth largest city, Belo Horizonte, is a rich trove of such lessons. Belo, a city of 2.5 million people, once had 11 percent of its population living in absolute poverty, and almost 20 percent of its children going hungry. Then in 1993, a newly elected administration declared food a right of citizenship.

The new mayor, Patrus Ananias—now leader of the federal anti-hunger effort—began by creating a city agency, which included assembling a 20-member council of citizen, labor, business, and church representatives to advise in the design and implementation of a new food system. The city already involved regular citizens directly in allocating municipal resources—the "participatory budgeting" that started in the 1970s and has since spread across Brazil. During the first six years of Belo's food-as-a-right policy, perhaps in response to the new emphasis on food security, the number of citizens engaging in the budgeting process doubled to more than 31,000.

The city agency developed dozens of innovations to assure everyone the right to food, especially by weaving together the interests of farmers and consumers. It offered local family farmers dozens of choice spots of public space on which to sell to urban consumers, essentially redistributing retailer mark-ups on produce—which often reached 100 percent—to consumers and the farmers. Farmers' profits grew, since there was no wholesaler taking a cut. And poor people got access to fresh, healthy food.

In addition to the farmer-run stands, the city makes good food available by offering entrepreneurs the opportunity to bid on the right to use well-trafficked plots of city land for "ABC" markets,

from the Portuguese acronym for "food at low prices." Today there are 34 such markets where the city determines a set price-about two-thirds of the market price-of about twenty healthy items, mostly from in-state farmers and chosen by store-owners. Everything else they can sell at the market price.

Another product of food-as-a-right thinking is three large, airy "People's Restaurants" (Restaurante Popular), plus a few smaller venues, that daily serve 12,000 or more people using mostly locally grown food for the equivalent of less than 50 cents a meal. When Anna and I ate in one, we saw hundreds of diners-grandparents and newborns, young couples, clusters of men, mothers with toddlers. Some were in well-worn street clothes, others in uniform, still others in business suits.

"It's silly to pay more somewhere else for lower quality food," an athletic-looking young man in a military police uniform told us. "I've been eating here every day for two years. It's a good way to save money to buy a house so I can get married," he said with a smile.

Belo's food security initiatives also include extensive community and school gardens as well as nutrition classes. Plus, money the federal government contributes toward school lunches, once spent on processed, corporate food, now buys whole food mostly from local growers.

"We're fighting the concept that the state is a terrible, incompetent administrator," Adriana explained. "We're showing that the state doesn't have to provide everything, it can facilitate. It can create channels for people to find solutions themselves."

The result of these and other related innovations? In just a decade Belo Horizonte cut its infant death rate-widely used as evidence of hunger-by more than half, and today these initiatives benefit almost 40 percent of the city's 2.5 million population. One six-month period in 1999 saw infant malnutrition in a sample group reduced by 50 percent. And between 1993 and 2002 Belo Horizonte was the only locality in which consumption of fruits and vegetables went up.

The cost of these efforts? Around \$10 million annually, or less than 2 percent of the city budget. That's about a penny a day per Belo resident.

Behind this dramatic, life-saving change is what Adriana calls a "new social mentality"-the realization that "everyone in our city benefits if all of us have access to good food, so-like health care or education-quality food for all is a public good."

The Belo experience shows that a right to food does not necessarily mean more public handouts (although in emergencies, of course, it does.) It can mean redefining the "free" in "free market" as the freedom of all to participate. It can mean, as in Belo, building citizen-government partnerships driven by values of inclusion and mutual respect.

And when imagining food as a right of citizenship, please note: No change in human nature is required! Through most of human evolution-except for the last few thousand of roughly 200,000 years-Homo sapiens lived in societies where pervasive sharing of food was the norm. As food sharers, "especially among unrelated individuals," humans are unique, writes Michael Gurven, an

authority on hunter-gatherer food transfers. Except in times of extreme privation, when some eat, all eat.

"I knew we had so much hunger in the world," Adriana said. "But what is so upsetting, what I didn't know when I started this, is it's so easy. It's so easy to end it."

Adriana's words have stayed with me. They will forever. They hold perhaps Belo's greatest lesson: that it is easy to end hunger if we are willing to break free of limiting frames and to see with new eyes-if we trust our hard-wired fellow feeling and act, no longer as mere voters or protesters, for or against government, but as problem-solving partners with government accountable to us.

Frances Moore Lappé wrote this article as part of Food for Everyone, the Spring 2009 issue of YES! Magazine. Frances is the author of many books including Diet for a Small Planet and Getting a Grip, co-founder of Food First and the Small Planet Institute, and a YES! contributing editor.

The author thanks Dr. M. Jahi Chappell for his contribution to the article.

Farm Economic Viability in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

Jennifer Scott and Ronald Colman

GPI Atlantic, August 2008

Are farmers in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island earning enough to stay in business?

- * If not, how will the loss of farms affect jobs and income in rural communities?
 - * Do the prices farmers get for farm products cover their costs of production?
 - * And how do those prices compare to the cost of food in grocery stores?
 - * What, in short, is the future of farming in the Maritimes?
- Is farming still a viable institution in the region, and can it survive?

These are some of the provocative questions raised in GPI Atlantic's report on Farm Economic Viability in Nova Scotia and PEI, which examines trends since 1971 in several key indicators of farm economic viability in the two provinces, including:

- * Net farm income
- * Expense to income ratio
- * Farm debt
- * Total debt to net farm income ratio
- * Solvency ratio (total liabilities or debt divided by total assets or capital value of farms)
- * Return on investment

The report also presents the total economic contribution of agriculture to the provincial economies of Nova Scotia and PEI (including direct, indirect, and induced impacts) and to job creation in the two provinces, and it contains specific policy recommendations to improve farm economic viability in the Maritimes.

For the full report see: http://www.oacc.info/Docs/GPI%20Atlantic/Farm_viability08_opt.pdf