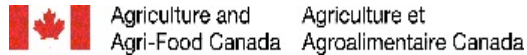




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## *PEI ADAPT Council Agri-Newsletter*

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Vol. VIII; No. 12;

September 17, 2009

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### **USDA Launches 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' Initiative to Connect Consumers with Local Producers to Create New Economic Opportunities for Communities**

WASHINGTON, September 15, 2009 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan today announced a new initiative - 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' - to begin a national conversation to help develop local and regional food systems and spur economic opportunity. To launch the initiative, Secretary Vilsack recorded a video to invite Americans to join the discussion and share their ideas for ways to support local agriculture. The video, one of many means by which USDA will engage in this conversation, can be viewed at USDA's YouTube channel, [www.youtube.com/usda](http://www.youtube.com/usda). Producers and consumers can comment on the 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' YouTube playlist, as well as submit videos or provide comments on this initiative by e-mailing [KnowYourFarmer@usda.gov](mailto:KnowYourFarmer@usda.gov).

"An American people that is more engaged with their food supply will create new income opportunities for American agriculture," said Vilsack. "Reconnecting consumers and institutions with local producers will stimulate economies in rural communities, improve access to healthy, nutritious food for our families, and decrease the amount of resources to transport our food."

The 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' initiative, chaired by Deputy Secretary Merrigan, is the focus of a task force with representatives from agencies across USDA who will help better align the Department's efforts to build stronger local and regional food systems. This week alone, USDA will announce approximately \$65 million in funding for 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' initiatives.

"Americans are more interested in food and agriculture than at any other time since most families left the farm," said Merrigan. "'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' seeks to focus that conversation on supporting local and regional food systems to strengthen American agriculture by promoting sustainable agricultural practices and spurring economic opportunity in rural communities."

In the months to come, cross-cutting efforts at USDA will seek to use existing USDA programs to break down structural barriers that have inhibited local food systems from thriving. Today, USDA announced a small initial group of moves that seek to connect local production and consumption and promote local-scale sustainable operations:

- \* USDA's Risk Management Agency announced \$3.4 million in funding for collaborative outreach and assistance programs to socially disadvantaged and underserved farmers. These programs will support 'Know You Farmer' goals by helping producers adopt new and direct marketing practices. For example, nearly \$10,000 in funding for the University of Minnesota will bring together experts on food safety and regulations for a discussion of marketing to institutions like K-12 schools, colleges, universities, hospitals and other health care facilities.

- \* USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service proposed regulations to implement a new voluntary cooperative program under which select state-inspected establishments will be eligible to ship meat and poultry products in interstate commerce. The new program was created in the 2008 Farm Bill and will provide new economic opportunities for small meat and poultry establishments, whose markets are currently limited.

- \* USDA's Rural Development announced \$4.4 million in grants to help 23 local business cooperatives in 19 states. The member-driven and member-owned cooperative business model has been successful for rural enterprises, and bring rural communities closer to the process of moving from production-to-consumption as they work to improve their products and expand their appeal in the marketplace.

- \* USDA's Rural Development will also announce a Rural Business Opportunity Grant in the amount of \$150,000 to the Northwest Food Processors Association. The grant will strengthen the relationship between local food processors and customers in parts of Idaho, Oregon and Washington, and will also help the group reduce energy consumption, a major cost for food processors.

As the 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' initiative evolves, USDA will continue to build on the momentum and ideas from the 2008 Farm Bill and target its existing programs and develop new ones to pursue sustainable agriculture and support for local and regional food systems.

### **Soy Hardy Ltd., Alberton, P.E.I. – one of this year's Top Ten Innovators**

*From: Prince Edward Island Food Technology Centre Newsletter*

Soy Hardy Ltd. of Alberton, Prince Edward Island, has been selected as one of the top ten innovative producers by Food in Canada magazine.

Today everybody is looking for an inexpensive and healthy snack food. Now a 99 cents bag of

soy nuts from Prince Edward Island can be a total meal replacement . . . so says the Hardy family of Alberton, PE. John Hardy of Soy Hardy says his work with soy nuts goes all the way back to 1986. At the time he was a certified organic dairy farmer. "I was selling a lot of the soy nuts at school in the beginning," he says.

John and his father, Sydney, designed and built the roasting machine to cook the soy nuts, which come in three flavours: Sea Salt, All Dressed Up and Fire Hot. The constant rotating of this machine gives the roasted soy nuts their unique flavor. "No other company has the same taste," says John, but he notes he cannot give away all his roasting secrets.

Working at first in both dairy and soy, the Hardy's decided to get out of dairy in 1997. By 2002 they were producing tofu and soy nuts exclusively. John's son, Matthew, works with him on a daily basis mixing tofu and roasting soy nuts.

Initially they had designed a 114 gram bag that sold for \$2.50, but the family soon learned this was not popular. "We went to a 40 gram bag for just 99 cents and found people would rather pay the lower price," says John.

The company is now listed with Sobey's and Co-op supermarkets. Just last year they also began selling the tasty treats at the Bestofpei Store and Riverview Country Market, two "buy local" stores in Charlottetown. John notes that these two stores put the product on the shelf immediately. Both he and Matthew work at sales and he notes that they cannot take a concept to a retailer, "It has to be the actual finished product."

While their tofu does very well in Atlantic Canada, the soy nuts are also off to a great start. And the best customers, according to John are young folks with allergies to peanuts, or anyone who wants a healthy alternative snack. Besides their latest product release (Frozen Soy Dessert) the father and son are now thinking of a new product, soy butter that could be made successfully with the current equipment. John chuckles when he remembers how the idea of roasting soy nuts materialized. "My mother-in-law was roasting them in an oven and adding salt and they tasted pretty good, so that's when my father and I designed and built the first roasting machine."

Prior to launching the Soy Nuts products on the market, the company approached the Food Technology Centre for technical assistance in determining the right packaging and nutritional labelling, and to conduct a shelf-life study of the Soy Hardy line of Soy Nut products. With technical assistance provided by FTC and considerable effort by the company, the Soy Hardy certified organic line of roasted Soy Nuts was launched in August 2006.

*Note: The P.E.I. Food Products Development Fund will assist Prince Edward Island businesses with projects conducted at the Food Technology Centre. Companies from our neighbouring provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia also have funding support available from their provincial governments for product development activities conducted at FTC. Contact Yaw Dako, Food Technologist (902) 569-7699.*

## **Is Farming the Dream Lifestyle of the Younger Generation?**

*By Makenna Goodman, Chelsea Green Publishing.*

Alongside the cultural idolization of growing your own, there has been a notable increase in college graduates who opt to spend their first year out of college on a farm. These, mind you, tend to include (but are not limited to) folks who could otherwise get jobs in the film, art, banking, engineering, psychology, academic, etc. worlds--if they need a job at all. But more than just recent graduates; there is a growing number of young people opting out of school altogether, or on the flip side, actually up and leaving the corporate world after years to start farms, collectives, co-operatives, and even communes. There are kids quitting their high-level jobs in the city, moving to small-scale farms or homesteads. And there are a number of flush youths who are cashing in their trust funds--in some cases--for cows. But why? Because unless you invest in a big-organic company that sells to WalMart, there's not much money in farming. It's a touch-and-go kind of life, incumbent on the weather, commitment, responsibility, and hard work. In this economic climate, especially--look at all the dairy farms going under--why is farming becoming a desirable life for young people who have the luxury of choice?

Some might say it's a passing trend. Some might say it's because there's a dearth of "real" jobs, and farming is a good interim experience until the economy perks up. But perhaps it's something more profound: you know, a deeper desire to get back to the agrarian life. Or, a more emotional reaction--a re-establishment of home values, a switch in the long-term goals of the entitled, and a deepening need for connection to one's food, and work ethic. Perhaps we're looking at a new world of homesteading, manual labor, and life on the land. A life of farming, in other words.

But are these kids real farmers? Because alongside manual labor, some of them might also be writers. Or painters. Or teachers. Some of them might not even sell their food; they're just into living off the earth's bounty.

According to Gene Logsdon--to whom Wendell Berry refers as "the most experienced and best observer of agriculture we have"--the answer is yes, they're real farmers. If they're serious about it. If they love it. If they work hard. In his book *Living at Nature's Pace: Farming and the American Dream*, he talks about this very issue:

It seems to me that, living at nature's pace on our little farm, I come closer to making my living from farming in a literal sense than "real" farmers. Carol and I raise most of our food including our meat, and some for other family members, keep a garden almost an acre in size, produce half of our home heating fuel from our own wood, derive most of our recreation and satisfaction from our farm, grow corn, oats, hay, and pasture, keep a cow and calf, two hogs, twenty ewes and their lambs, a flock of hens and broilers, and sell a few lambs and eggs. I'm sure I spend more time living on our farm than any industrial farmer in our county does. When they are not golfing in Florida or fishing in Canada, they spend a lot of time in the coffee shop or in my office telling me how farming is going down the drain....But urban people are also bringing agrarianism back to the cities. Developers build subdivisions that look and function like yesterday's villages or neighborhoods. Gardens and home businesses are planned into the landscape, as are nearby retail and service shops. Some communities even utter the almost forbidden words, "neighborhood schools" again. New neighborhood houses of worship in the ghettos, small and humble and unassuming, return in the shadow of the abandoned

cathedral-like churches. A surge of market gardening and farmers' markets recalls those years not so long ago when thousands of tiny truck farms, using horse manure for compost in their hotbeds and coldframes, supplied their cities with vegetables and fruits nearly year-round. The term "urban farming" turns out not to be an oxymoron. Chicago is even encouraging animal husbandry as part of its urban farming projects. In the heart of Cleveland, in the shadow of skyscrapers, horses plow garden plots. And with the returning agrarian spirit comes its wonderful offspring, agrarian ingenuity

### **Now, Markets Cultivate Farmers: Competition high for local produce**

By David Filipov; Boston Globe; August 25, 2009

It is 5:30 a.m., and that means Kate Stillman is scrambling through her family's crowded barn, counting out bouquets of cut flowers, checking the freshly picked peaches, black peppers, blueberries, bok choy, and mesclun that employees of Stillman Farms are packing into plastic bins. Genially, she gives orders. The bins pile up in three large, white box trucks bound for three farmers markets across the state. The work will end around midnight, when the trucks are back and the empty bins unloaded.

Lately, every day is farmers market day for the Stillmans. Direct sales at farmers markets, once a small part of their business, now account for more than 60 percent of their revenue. They have started to grow the specialty crops that marketgoers seek - celeriac, lemon cucumbers, and coosa squash - and that extend their growing season to match the markets' schedules.

And this year, after adding a seventh market day - Sunday - to their schedule, they have started to turn down invitations to sell at newer markets.

The Stillmans' pleasant predicament epitomizes the current state of the farmers market business in Massachusetts. Normally, farmers seek markets where they can sell their wares. In Massachusetts, the markets are hustling to find the farmers. Spurred by the growing demand for fresh, locally grown produce, the number of markets in the state shot up from 88 in 2002 to 199 at the beginning of this month.

"They are competing for more farmers to come to the markets," said Scott Soares, commissioner of the state Department of Agricultural Resources. "The farmers are getting the opportunity to more or less be more choosy about the markets they go to."

And the proliferation of farmers markets is changing the way farmers do business, Soares said. Massachusetts farmers are switching from staple items to a more diverse offering of specialty crops that they can sell directly to consumers. Direct sales for Massachusetts farmers, which accounted for \$31 million in 2002, had risen to \$42 million by 2007, according to the US Department of Agriculture census. And although the amount of farmland in densely populated Massachusetts has not increased, the number of farms has, from 6,075 in 2002 to 7,691 in 2007.

The increasing number of small farmers offering their fresh wares at markets has brought some prices in line with mass-harvested produce available at supermarkets, said Jeff Cole, executive director of the Federation of Massachusetts Farmers Markets. And while local farmers only can

produce a small fraction of the food Massachusetts residents need, they have an unmatched ability to adjust to the needs of their customers, and the vagaries of the season, Cole said.

Stillman, 28, personifies the farmers market generation. She grew up on her parents' farm. She helped out with the bouquets. She graduated from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with double major in agriculture and business. And she met Aidan Davin, now her husband and business partner, at the Copley Square farmers market.

Selling to farmers markets allows her to do her own advertising ("My customers know that they can get a certain level of quality," she said), market research (what are her customers buying from the stalls next to her?), and customer relations (sure, the pumpkins drowned this year in all the rain but would you like to try our coosa?).

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To woo farmers, markets compete by offering lower prices for operating a stall, easier parking, better locations. They also try to attract a broader range of customers by accepting electronic banking transfers and coupons used by people on food assistance programs. Once a market earns a good name, the tables can turn. In January and February, when Donna Ingemanson was leading an effort to start a farmers market in Braintree, she researched the area's demand for locally grown produce and pitched farmers on the advantages of her location.

She went through "a couple of hundred" vendors before she finally was able to secure the lineup of 16 or 17 that currently sell at the market on Saturdays. She said the market has been such a success that she now has a waiting list of farmers hoping to get in on the action.

One of the farms that sells at Braintree, C.N. Smith Farm Inc. of East Bridgewater, makes most of its money from its pick-your-own operation and a garden center. Normally, after Labor Day, it would stop selling at farmers markets - which account for about 20 percent of its sales - and focus on the hay rides, school tours, apple-picking and pumpkin-picking that make the fall its best season. This year, the owner, Chris Smith, decided to stay in Braintree through the end of its season on Oct. 31 - to keep his place.

### **Business Alliance for Local Living Economies**

BALLE-NS (Business Alliance for Local Living Economies - Nova Scotia) is a new business network taking flight in Nova Scotia. It is part of an international movement of local networks that are working to build green and vibrant local living economies. Locally-owned, independent businesses that are committed to "The Triple P Bottom Line" (People- Planet- Profits) are at the core of what BALLE is all about.

Visionary business and community leaders like you will gather on Thursday October 1st, 2009, 6-10 pm at the Waterfront Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College in Dartmouth, to celebrate Nova Scotia's local living economies movement and to network with folks who are as passionate about what BALLE stands for as you are. Comedian Bill Carr will MC the event, Tom Stearns, CEO of High Mowing Seeds in Vermont will give an inspiring presentation, and much more.

For more information on BALLE see: <http://balle-novascotia.com>