

CANADIAN

January/February 2013

Meat Business

The Beef, Pork & Poultry Industry Magazine

Meat Prices Expected to Rise in 2013

Major takeovers by
JBS and Olymel

Innovators Awarded
in Banff

Time to approve
meat irradiation
long overdue

pg. 5

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Time to approve meat irradiation long overdue

HUMAN ILLNESS CAN be caused when E. coli 0157:H7 bacteria are transmitted through improperly cooked beef, raw fruits, uncooked vegetables, unpasteurized apple juice and cider, unpasteurized dairy products, untreated drinking water, and contact with certain animals.

The bacteria enter meat processing establishments on the hides and in the intestines of contaminated cattle. Meat processors have adopted new technologies and procedures and invested in physical and antimicrobial interventions to minimize the presence of bacteria on meat products. These achieve a substantial reduction in E. coli 0157:H7 bacteria, but do not eliminate all pathogens.

Unfortunately, although rare, incidents of human infections from improperly cooked ground beef do occur. These outbreaks, and the unnecessary human suffering associated with them, could be reduced substantially by a simple regulatory amendment.


In 2002 Health Canada completed an exhaustive scientific review of the irradiation of ground beef. The examination encompassed dose, efficacy, odour, appearance, shelf life, composition, nutrition and toxicology and concluded that: "Food irradiation can improve food safety by killing disease-causing bacteria such as E. coli and Salmonella" and no significant adverse consequences were identified for the other factors.

By that time, Canada had approved irradiation for potatoes, spices and several other foods. During the 1980s, a joint Food and Agriculture Organization/ International Atomic Energy Agency/ World Health Organization expert committee examined the safety of food irradiation. That review supported the adoption, in 1983, of a General Standard for Irradiated Foods by the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Program, the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

The Canadian review was completed five years after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration had concluded that irradiation is safe for refrigerated meat and meat by-products, and three years after the Food Safety and Inspection Service had published a food irradiation ruling. Canada's food safety regulations fell even further behind on Nov. 30, 2012 when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration expanded approval for ionizing radiation to treat "unrefrigerated (as well as refrigerated) uncooked meat, meat by-products, and certain meat food products to reduce levels of foodborne pathogens and extend shelf life."

In 2009, Canada's Listeriosis Investigative Review reported that food irradiation has proven the "... single most effective method of eradicating bacteria, and it does not alter appearance, taste or texture of foods."

Irradiation technology offers an internationally accepted and proven methodology for further reducing the potential presence of pathogens in meat. Health Canada approval of this scientifically validated technology would not only reduce human illness and suffering but would decrease healthcare expenditures, improve confidence in Canada's food safety system and benefit Canadians economically. Approving irradiation of meat would also provide Canadians with the opportunity to exercise individual choice in their purchase of either regular or irradiated meat – a freedom which Americans have long enjoyed, but denied to all Canadians except those purchasing meat and poultry while vacationing in the U.S.

Ten years have passed since the Government of Canada proposed that the Food and Drug Regulations be amended to permit the irradiation of fresh and frozen poultry and ground beef. It is now time for the government to act and to finally approve this well-researched, safe, efficacious and long overdue illness prevention technology. 

James Laws, P.Ag. is the executive director of the Canadian Meat Council.



Expensive Eating

Meat prices expected to rise in 2013, reports warn.

By Alan MacKenzie

EXPECT MEAT PRICES to increase by five per cent or more in 2013.

ConAgra Foods, one of North America's largest food companies, recently released predictions of the top 10 food trends for 2013, compiled by "Supermarket Guru" Phil Lempert, who noted some consumers will move away from meat-based proteins.

According to Lempert, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates the cost of both beef and chicken will increase by at least five per cent due to the 2012 drought and declining supply. As a result, he anticipates a major shift in North America's protein food supply away from meat-based proteins and shifting to meatless proteins like eggs, nut butters, tofu, beans and legumes.

He also noted there will be a shift toward "snackable mini-meals" and frozen foods.

"Not only will there be an increase in male and Millennial grocery shoppers, but there will be a dramatic shift in the sizes

of meals and an emphasis on frozen food," Lempert said in his report.

The University of Guelph also released an outlook report in December – the 2013 Food Price Index, an annual examination and discussion of Canadian retail food prices, which said beef and pork prices will rise 4.5 to 6.5 per cent, due to rising grain prices for cattle feed and higher production costs in the pork industry.

"Retail food prices are expected to grow faster than inflation and to increase steadily in the coming years," stated Sylvain Charlebois, associate dean of research and graduate studies in Guelph's College of Management and Economics.

Last year's Food Price Index predicted an overall increase of no more than two per cent, which the university said accurately reflected real Canadian retail prices.

Predictions in the University of Guelph report are based on factors affecting retail food prices, including climate, economic risks, energy costs, currencies and trade, and Canada's food

distribution and retail landscape. They also considered domestic fundamentals such as consumer debt and inflation.

As with last year, climate was noted to be the most unpredictable economic driver of food prices.

“The coming year may see climate impacts on food prices incur bigger effects,” said economics professor Francis Tapon, who also worked on the forecast. Current markets lack adequate



“Any sort of production disruption without quality buffer stocks will be felt much more strongly on Canadian wallets.”

– Francis Tapon, University of Guelph

reserves to safeguard against unforeseen shortages or demands, he said, and must be rebuilt in 2013 to help mitigate consumer food prices.

“Any sort of production disruption without quality buffer stocks will be felt much more strongly on Canadian wallets,” he noted.

Overall, the University of Guelph researchers predict general food expenditures will increase between 1.5 and 3.5 per cent in 2013.

Other predicted price hikes in the report include 1.4 to 2.7 per cent for grains and 3.5 to 5.0 per cent for eggs, due mostly to increases in animal welfare-based technology.


However, the university researchers said they expect that competition in Canadian food retailing to heat up with the arrival of Target stores. The U.S. mega-retailer plans to open 124 stores across Canada starting in March 2013, which the researchers hope will create a price war and eventually drive down food prices.

The Guelph researchers said they hope more awareness of rising prices will help reduce food waste, now at about 38 per cent of food purchased by Canadian households.

“Restaurants are not doing that much better, with nearly half of all food purchased going to waste,” Charlebois said.

The price gains will be felt around the world, according to global financial services Rabobank, which said in a January report that global beef prices will reach record levels in 2013.

The group said the final quarter of 2012 saw the beef market characterized by slightly larger global supply, driven mainly by the natural recovery of herds in Brazil, Argentina and Australia. This, combined with a relatively lethargic world economy, has weighed on prices across the globe.

“The scenario is worse where production is set to decrease, such as North America and Europe, which poses additional pressure for beef companies located in these regions to pass on rising cattle prices to consumers,” stated Rabobank analyst Guilherme Melo. “Additionally as such countries rely on grains to feed their animals they are likely to see a reduction in their competitiveness in the international market.” 



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The Not-so-Bright Future of Canada's Food Processing Industry

The harmonization of container sizes between Canada and the U.S. is not a trivial matter.

By Sylvain Charlebois

WITH THE STRENGTH of the Canada dollar, the rise of input costs and demanding food distributors, the food processing sector in this country is being squeezed on all sides, and it may get worse.

The Harper Government planned to repeal standardized container size regulations for various foods in the fall of 2012, with a phase-in period, seeking to harmonize container sizes between the U.S. and Canada. Yes, food product containers are different here, and Canadian-based food processors are heavily invested in the current system; the government, however, recently appeared to show restraint, and plans to have more formal consultations on the issue. This is good news, as it will give time for Canadians to fully appreciate what's at stake.

First, a little history: It all started in 2011 as a federal budget one-liner. Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's federal budget document contained a single sentence, mentioning

its aim to change the rules on container sizes; and why not? Current policies were implemented some time ago by the metric-friendly Trudeau government, while the U.S. maintained its imperial system. In the 1980s the Mulroney Government attempted, in vain, to address container size discrepancies between the U.S. and Canada. As a result, over the years it has become a minor trade barrier issue, and the Harper Government stated its intention last year to rectify the situation with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), the federal agency responsible to monitor containers coming from the U.S.

Despite its minor status, the harmonization of container sizes is not a trivial matter. The Canadian food processing sector is far different than that of America. First, the cost to produce food products is much higher in Canada, due to supply management. For example, input and labour costs for dairy and poultry are much more expensive here. The

recent surge of the Canadian dollar has only made matters worse. Our regulatory systems are very different as well. Canadian exporters to the U.S. face numerous regulatory and border challenges when entering the market, while U.S. products enter the Canadian market with little delay. Many U.S. processing methods and standards are also very different from Canada's. Unless a major harmonization push accompanies these new policies, few Canadian plants can meet current U.S. rules.


Nonetheless, the regulatory changes affecting container sizes may be just the push the industry needs. Many Canadian processors have outdated equipment, rendering the sector inflexible and unable to swiftly react to equally rapid changes in the marketplace. Indeed, some of the food recalls we have seen in recent months may have been caused by archaic industrial practices and under-



The Canadian food processing sector is far different than that of America.

capitalization of infrastructure. The elimination of these regulations will force food processors to finally update their equipment, or to leave the industry altogether. All told, this effort towards harmonization may very well help the food processing sector. That said, Canadians should recognize that U.S.-based processors are significantly advanced, and an array of regulations and standard discrepancies should be addressed before looking at the issue of container sizes. Food processors in Canada are not afraid of a little competition; however, they are seriously concerned about prejudicial competition.

Moving forward, this is an issue that Canadians should care about. The public discourse around food sovereignty of late has been mainly about farming. Achieving food sovereignty requires more than just growing our own food, though. It is about synchronizing our supplies with demand, building communities in both rural and urban Canada, and fostering efficient relationships across food value chains. Food processing has the ability to leverage all these things. Connecting domestic supplies of agricultural commodities in an increasingly heterogeneous market of food products requires robust distribution systems, and the cornerstone to any reliable food distribution systems is processing.

For the sake of food sovereignty and our agricultural economic prosperity, the future of food processing in our country should matter to all Canadians. Growing food is important, but to build our capacity to add value to what we grow, for us and for the rest of the world, is imperative. Harmonizing container sizes between the U.S. and Canada is an interesting proposition, but many more pressing issues, long overdue for debate, deserve our attention at the moment. 

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois is associate dean of the College of Management and Economics at the University of Guelph. This article is reprinted courtesy of Troy Media (www.troymedia.com)

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Lovin' Lamb in Alberta

Producers meet to learn precision flock management techniques to help keep up with high consumer demand.

WITH LAMB NOW one of the hottest selling proteins in the province, over 100 producers in Alberta recently gathered to advance their skills and knowledge to deliver even greater quality meat while integrating technology for real time productivity and efficiency.

A special educational presentation on Precision Flock Management (PFM) in was held in Leduc on Jan. 5. The event was coordinated by Alberta Lamb Producers (ALP), Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development and funded by the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency.

Producers were eager to hear the experiences and insights of Manitoba producer Patrick Smith, a former university professor in mathematics and computer science, and owner of Sarto Sheep Farm since 1974. His technological and business approach to practical farming processes has resulted in a more efficient operation while producing more high quality product for a hungry market.

Smith is owner-manager of over 2,300 Rideau Arcott ewes and rams, with breeding and lambing every two to three weeks year-round. With over 266 per cent total drop per year from ewes of 18 months or older combined with a low mortality rate, that's over 5,000 lambs per year. He says the bigger his flock grew, the more he required the strict protocols to deliver results that would pay for his investment, including:

- Maintain detailed records and track data and performance in real time with radio frequency identification (RFID), Bluetooth-linked equipment, and flock data management software to generate production, health, sales and financial reports to ensure all decisions are fact-based.
- Lower labour costs by establishing systems to handle standard operations that are based on managing animal groups. Effective group management enables precise management of breeding, lambing, weaning and marketing of multiple lambs, with low mortality rates and self-sufficient ewes that rear their lambs little human intervention.
- Flock management systems and replacement selection help promote ewes who breed every eight months in mostly a confined but spacious setting, with monitored heat, light, feed, detailed nursery care, and rigorous selection and culling to ensure vital ewes and lambs.
- Marketing and sales systems support regular communications with buyers that has built relationships and a reputation for lamb quality and reliable shipments year round. Smith adds there is no perfect system and that PFM is challenging the way producers look at managing all their systems. There are always new challenges for any business.

Attendees were also able to tour Smith's farm virtually, with a nine-minute video that took a look at all of the aspects of business. Links to the video will be available later this year on the ALP and Alberta Agriculture's websites for producers to access 24/7.



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Tim Devries, who took in the presentation, has only been managing sheep for three years in Lacombe. He believes attending presentations like Smith's builds his skills and makes it easier to be successful in the lamb business.

"I can take this information back to my operation with confidence," he says. "The sheep industry has been so welcoming and it comes from meetings like this. If I'm struggling, the other guys will share willingly. That's quite refreshing."



Only 41 per cent of the lamb consumed in Canada is produced in our country. The remainder is imported from countries such as New Zealand.

Ronald den Broeder, the newly elected chair of ALP, says that only 41 per cent of the lamb consumed in Canada is produced in our country. The remainder is imported from countries such as New Zealand. He would love to see the day when Alberta producers help to fill more of the national demand for quality lamb produced right in our own backyard.

"The lamb industry is very competitive now," he says. "Producers are making better business choices and are looking more closely at their investments in capital and labour. They are enhancing


their traditional farming concepts with modern technology. The collaboration we have had with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development has been invaluable in this."

Sue Hosford, sheep specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development states that the growing demand for lamb and the associated opportunity for lamb production have been on industry radar for more than a decade. By working together industry and government have developed plans to help capture market and business opportunities. A strong industry capable of withstanding commodity market fluctuations while turning out a consistently high quality product for consumers needs the commitment of every stakeholder.

"Since 2004, there has been joint investment of close to \$5 million in research, support programs, pilot projects, communications, information materials and skills training in the lamb industry," she says. "Our joint Precision Flock Management Project focused on getting new technology like RFID data management systems into use in more operations. It developed improved business management tools like the SheepBytes and the Flock Snapshot to assist producers in improving their lamb businesses."

SheepBytes is an online tool that helps adjust feeding rations. The Flock Snapshot is a cost of production tool that analyzes the information into performance measures such as cost per lamb sold, income per lamb sold, labour cost/lamb, and feed cost/lamb.

"The competition for resources, advancing technology and a changing global lamb market are demanding high level flock and business performance," she adds.

ALP is a producer directed and funded organization that is a dynamic partner in building a sustainable, thriving industry for sheep producers. For over 40 years, the group has been providing every producer with a voice and ongoing representation to government and other industry members. 

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Canada Beef's New Producer Website

Site designed to provide information, resources and discussion to Canadian beef producers.

THE CANADA BEEF INC. website is geared to Canadian beef producers and has lots of information, just a click away. The site has been up and running for a few months, and is designed to provide information, merchandise and resources that may be useful when selling, discussing or promoting Canadian beef.

"We designed the site with the producer in mind. Every week we get requests from beef producers for resources, images and information they can use at the farm gate, farmers' market, on their own website or in their promotional material. We tried to make it easy to get those resources through this website," said Annemarie Pedersen, Canada Beef's stakeholder communications manager.

The main tools available on the website consist of Resources, News Room, Beef Ambassador and The Brand newsletter, and provide a wide range of information and tools.

In the Resources tab, producers will find direct links to image libraries, industry fact sheets, recipe booklets and information.

Canada Beef announcements and industry information can be found in the News Room while Canada Beef information is available in the Stakeholder Updates section as well

as in the quarterly newsletter, The Brand. The calendar, Upcoming Events highlights industry events and is open to anyone who has an event they would like to announce.

Looking for quick information on industry partners? The Links tab is a great resource national and provincial associations are listed including mailing address, phone, email and website including a link to the Canada Beef Inc. corporate website. And if you want to promote Canadian beef and show your pride in the beef you produce, check out the Merchandise tab where shirts, jackets and hats are available for purchase.

Another great way to share your pride in the industry is to engage with some of the Canada Beef social media networks. Whether you are already on Facebook or Twitter, sharing your pictures on Flickr, or just thinking about joining these communities, there are many ways to tell your story to consumers and other stakeholders. Check out Beef Ambassador for all the ways you can become engaged with social media and a great overview of the various channels and how best to use them.

The home page is www.canadabeef.ca/producer.
- Canada Beef Inc.

A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and red tie is smiling and looking towards the camera. He is standing in a large warehouse aisle with high ceilings and industrial lighting. The background shows rows of shelving units filled with various items, possibly agricultural products or supplies.

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XL Acquisition Accomplished

As expected, JBS USA acquires Canadian operations of XL Foods, launching JBS Food Canada.

By Alan MacKenzie

ON JAN. 10, JBS USA officially announced it will purchase the Canadian assets of XL Foods, including the Lakeside facility in Brooks, Alta. that was at the centre of an E. coli outbreak and massive beef recall last year.

JBS Food Canada Inc. has now assumed ownership of the Brooks facility, as well as a beef packing plant in Calgary, Alta.; a feedlot in Brooks, Alta., and the adjacent farmland acreage supporting the feedlot operation.

Under no scenario will JBS Food Canada assume any of XL Foods' debt or liabilities, the company noted.

JBS USA, a wholly owned subsidiary of JBS SA, a company that is 30 per cent owned by the Brazilian government, originally announced its intention to purchase XL Foods' assets on Oct. 17 when it took over management of the Brooks facility in the midst of the recall of over 2,000 beef products. The facility was shut down for over a month by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and reopened Oct. 29 under JBS USA's management.

"After several months of careful consideration of the option and nearly three months of successfully managing the Lakeside facility, we have determined that the Canadian operations will serve as an important asset to our strategic global beef production model," Bill Rupp, president and COO of JBS USA Beef, stated in a release. "We look forward to partnering with Canadian producers to deliver quality Canadian beef to customers around the world."


The agreement provides JBS USA an exclusive option to purchase XL's two U.S.-based beef plants, located in Omaha, Nebraska and Nampa, Idaho. These two facilities have a combined capacity to process 2,200 head of cattle per day.

The company said it is awaiting regulatory review from U.S. authorities before exercising this option.

Prior to Christmas, a group of over 40 U.S. organizations issued a letter to the U.S. government urging an expanded in-depth investigation into the JBS proposal. The groups, including R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America and the National Farmers Union, believe the proposed takeover would reduce competition and "seriously harm both cattle producers and consumers."

On Dec. 5, the company announced William Van Solkema as president of JBS Canada.

Van Solkema was president of sales and operation for XL Foods from 2004 to 2009, and most recently served as a consultant for XL Fine Foods, the company's value-added processing business. Other experience in the Canadian beef industry includes senior management positions at the Cargill High River plant in Alberta and the Canada Packers plants in Winnipeg and Calgary.

"I personally worked alongside (Solkema) at the High River plant and have complete confidence in his ability to manage our operations at the Brooks facility in Alberta," Rupp stated. 

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Olymel Acquires Big Sky Farms

Company moves into hog production for first time with \$65 million purchase.

ON JAN. 21, Olymel announced it acquired the Canadian assets of Big Sky Farms Inc., the second largest hog producer in Canada. Based in Humboldt, Sask., Big Sky Farms went into receivership last September mostly due to soaring feed costs and depressed hog prices.

Olymel and Ernst & Young Inc., the court-appointed receiver of Big Sky Farms, entered into a purchase and sale agreement on Oct. 16 at a purchase price of \$65.25 million. No higher bids came in for the company and the transaction was concluded Jan. 20. Olymel subsidiary OlySky is now owner of the taken over operations, which will continue under the Big Sky Farms name.

"The Olymel executive welcomes Big Sky Farms employees into the Olymel family, and wishes to assure them that it will make every effort to put the company back on a profitable footing," stated Olymel president and CEO Réjean Nadeau.

"This acquisition is in line with the policy of strengthening the capacity of our processing and value-added product manufacturing plants, for both the domestic market and export outlets," Nadeau added. "Although this is its first foray into the swine production industry, Olymel plans to draw on the expertise of its owners who are already involved in the production sector to take advantage of all possible synergies in order to integrate Big Sky Farms into its operations."

Founded in 1995, Big Sky Farms employs more than 400 people. With a herd of 42,000 sows, it has annual production of one million hogs.

Previous to the acquisition, Olymel did not raise hogs. However, for many years Big Sky Farms has been a leading supplier to the Olymel hog slaughterhouse and butchering plant in Red Deer, Alta. The Red Deer facility employs more than 1,300 workers and has a weekly slaughtering capacity of 90,000 hogs. Olymel said that in addition to supplying hogs to its Red Deer plant, Big Sky Farms will maintain its business relations with the company's customers and suppliers.

"Despite a few difficult years, Big Sky Farms remains a gem, and has extensive expertise in its field. The arrival of Olymel, one of the largest food processing company in Canada, with its in-depth knowledge of the pork industry, offers many prospects for outlets on both domestic and international markets. This acquisition also represents an important source of stability for hog production in western Canada. Members of the Big Sky Farms management and its continuing employees can now look to the future with optimism," noted former Big Sky Farms CEO Casey Smit, who is now Olymel's vice-president of production. [M](#)

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Innovative protective solutions for the food processing industry



Ansell recently announced new additions to its VersaTouch brand, a line of versatile hand protection and apparel solutions for the food processing industry. Featuring Polar Bear cut resistant technology, the new VersaTouch 74-730 and 74-731 cut resistant gloves and the complementary VersaTouch 74-732 cut resistant sleeve raise the standard in worker safety and comfort for the food processing industry.

The technology utilizes advanced material science as well as proprietary spinning and knitting processes to deliver enhanced cut protection without sacrificing comfort. It can be found in the new VersaTouch cut resistant 74-730 and 74-731 gloves with enhanced cut protection in high-risk areas providing the ultimate in safety and dexterity. These gloves also incorporate Ansell's patented knitted variable stitch design (KVSD) used to reduce hand fatigue as well as advanced fiber technology to manage moisture and hand temperature.

As the perfect complement to the 74-730 and 74-731 gloves, the new VersaTouch 74-732 sleeve is designed with an engineered yarn that includes Dyneema, a high-performance synthetic fiber, to provide ANSI Level 4 cut resistance. The new sleeve is also designed with a wider opening than existing sleeves – allowing for easier donning, improved mobility and a more relaxed fit than competitive cut resistant sleeves.

For more than 100 years, Ansell has been recognized for continually innovating and leading the hand protection and protective clothing industry with specialized solutions that meet the unique challenges faced by workers across sectors. Every Ansell product, including the VersaTouch brand, is backed by in-depth end user research to deliver expressly tailored solutions, without compromising productivity.

www.ansell.com

Company has largest offering of Green Seal-certified towel and tissue products in North America

Cascades Tissue Group announced it has achieved Green Seal Standard, GS-1 re-certification of Sanitary Paper Products for its entire line of Cascades and North River

away-from-home towel and tissue products.

In September 2011, Green Seal made major revisions to its GS-1 standard. The standard was first established more than 20 years ago for products such as bathroom tissue, facial tissue, paper towels, napkins, wipes and placemats. Overall, it sets the environmental, health, and social requirements for sanitary paper products and comprehensively addresses environmental life-cycle issues spanning raw materials, manufacturing, packaging and product use and performance.

With this latest development, Cascades now offers 114 branded products, all made from 100 per cent recycled fiber.

The revised GS-1 standard provides more stringent criteria such as increasing the amount of post-consumer material required by an average of 25 per cent, monitoring air and wastewater quality, and expanding product performance and packaging requirements. Products must also adhere to strict requirements related to qualities like weight, strength, absorbency and sheet count and size.

www.cascades.com

Clearly Clean launches recyclable MAP tray for food products

Clearly Clean Products, LLC, recently introduced a recyclable MAP (modified atmosphere package) tray for meat, poultry, entrées and kebobs. The tray utilizes a patented process of applying a peelable, thin liner to an RPET tray, the same material that is used in water bottles. The patented, printed liner provides barrier protection to maintain shelf life and can be customized to meet marketing objectives.

Consumer demand and government regulations are propelling the need for eco-friendly packaging. To date, environmentally focused companies have been forced to see their products placed in foam or plastic MAP trays, which is counter to the sustainability vision.

Clearly Clean's tray is simple for the processors to seal – and easy for consumers to use. In fact, the trays work within existing equipment. And consumers handle the trays the same way they have always done, except they are instructed to merely peel and discard the liners and recycle the trays in their recycle bins.

The tray is manufactured in the U.S. and comes in industry-standard sizes: 10S and 3P. It is also competitively priced with current, non-recyclable MAP trays.

www.clearlyclean.com



System Down

Food Tank to be a “heavily interactive” resource to fix a global food system some feel is broken.

A NEW WEBSITE, launched Jan. 10, hopes to make changes to what its founders call a “broken food system.”

Founded by Chicago-based agriculture expert Danielle Nierenberg and San Diego-based sustainable food system activist Ellen Gustafson, Food Tank: The Food Think Tank is planned to be a “heavily interactive” global resource for food and agriculture related issues that will connect producers, consumers, policy-makers and activists.

According to Nierenberg, the virtual resource is necessary because throughout the globe, more than one billion people are obese, nearly one billion people go to bed hungry every night, and at least two billion people suffer from micronutrient deficiencies. More than one third of all food worldwide – approximately 1.3 billion tons – is wasted annually, she noted.

The site will feature original content – news stories, op ed pieces and blogs – that readers can share and comment on through Facebook, Twitter and other emerging social media sites, and will soon have a new aggregating service that Nierenberg said would be a one stop shop for readers from all disciplines.


“One of the biggest things we hope to do really over the next few months is to create a clearinghouse on the

Food Tank website where information about health-based agriculture, sustainable farming practices, data on specifics on nutrition and food security are available to our readers,” said Nierenberg.

The group is planning several research reports over this year, including ones on food waste prevention and the importance making agriculture both economically and intellectually stimulating for youth.

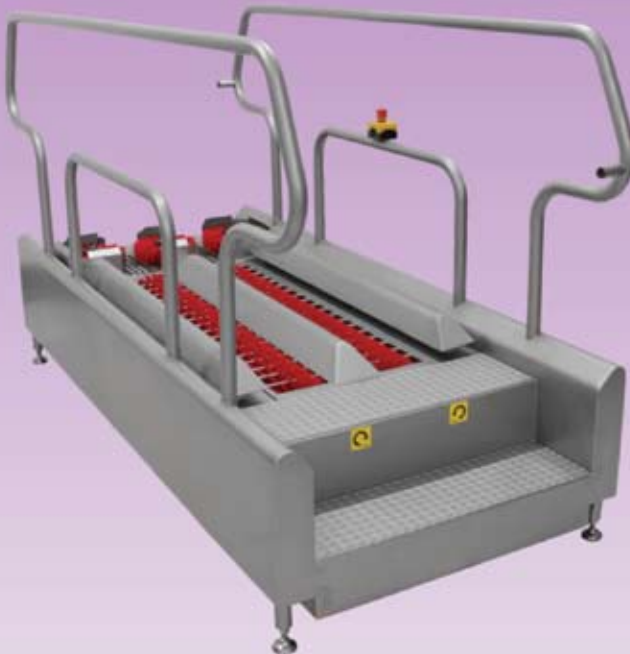
“We’ll also be encouraging livestock production in different parts of the world as a way to raise incomes for small and medium scale farmers,” Nierenberg said. “We’ve seen some pretty interesting research on the ground either done by the International Livestock Research Institute or other smaller organizations that is very compelling. Raising livestock can be a very important way for farmers to contribute to environmental sustainability, but also to increase their incomes and improve nutrition.”

Other plans include one-day events in various cities and universities, and a major summit to be held toward the end of the year in Washington, D.C.

For more information, visit www.foodtank.org. 

- staff

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Fan banks at Quality Meat Packers.



Fan Banks for Cooling Trucks of Hogs

Ontario Pork recently studied the effectiveness of cooling fans during the transport of live hogs.

THE IMPORTANCE OF air temperature and relative humidity on health and growth of pigs is well known to pork producers; hence, these two factors are well monitored and controlled in hog barns. However, during transport of hogs from producers to the finishing plants, both air temperature and relative humidity are strictly dependent on the ambient temperature.

When transport trucks are in a moving mode, air flow, created in the trailer, causes air circulation and consequently temperature and relative humidity are similar to the ambient. When a truck arrives at the finishing plant and is waiting to be unloaded, the air circulation is interrupted and both temperature and relative humidity can rise, which can then lead to increased stress on the animals.

Maintaining the air temperature and relative humidity in the truck at the same level as the ambient would reduce potential harm to the animals.

Fan banks were built at two packing plants – Conestoga Meat Packers and Quality Meat Packers – during the summer of 2012, where trucks loaded with animals could park prior to unloading.

Statistical analysis of the data collected in these experiments showed the following:

- Fans are effective in reducing the temperature

differential across most of the compartments. The exception seems to be compartments 5 and 8, where temperature differential is not reduced to the same extent as in other compartments. This could be due to size of the fans that were cooling those two compartments.

- Fans are most efficient in reducing the temperature differential in the parts of compartments closest to the fans. This effect weakens inside the compartments at the positions further away from the fans.



During transport of hogs from producers to the finishing plants, both air temperature and relative humidity are strictly dependent on the ambient temperature.

- No effect of fans on the relative humidity differential was detected.
- The temperature and humidity index was reduced in fan treatments with some issues in the compartment 8.

In conclusion, the fan treatments were efficient in creating more “comfortable” conditions in terms of temperature and humidex.

This project was funded in part through Growing Forward, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The Agricultural Adaptation Council assists in the delivery of several Growing Forward programs in Ontario. **M**

- Ontario Pork

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ALBERTA

Government invests in genomics technology to support cattle industry

An Alberta company will boost the value and use of genomics in the cattle industry with new trait identification tools, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) announced on Jan. 10. The government will invest more than \$575,000 to help Delta Genomics Centre accelerate the adoption of new genetic profiling tools that are more accurate, less costly and less time-consuming than traditional DNA tools.

Potential future benefits extend to feed lot owners and processors, who will use the technology to efficiently pinpoint animals with the right meat qualities, AAFC said.

Genomics, the study of an animal's genetic composition (DNA) or "profile," can identify valuable traits like disease resistance, carcass quality, or feed efficiency.

Using new technology, the tools identify SNPs (single nucleotide polymorphisms) which are genetic markers that can be tracked between parents and their offspring. Trait selection for markers such as meat quality, animal health and feed efficiency can lead to a more consistent product in the marketplace. Similar technology is being implemented in other countries.

The funding will help Delta Genomics Centre collect and analyze samples from the cattle sector for SNP testing. The samples and profile results will be catalogued for use by Canadian breed associations.

"This project is an essential stepping stone to get

the benefits of genomics into the hands of producers on the ground," stated Colin Coros, the centre's VP of operations. "It will allow our project partners to adopt a new sire identification tool, which is fundamental to using more in depth DNA profiles for genetic improvement of Canadian cattle."

SASKATCHEWAN

\$3.4M invested in livestock research

The federal government and the province of Saskatchewan in January announced \$3.4 million in funding for 23 livestock and forage research projects.

Funding for these projects is provided through the Saskatchewan Agriculture Development Fund (ADF).

"Saskatchewan is a world leader in agricultural research," stated federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz. "The Agriculture Development Fund and work done in the province's research institutions help producers innovate to strengthen our economy here in Saskatchewan and across Canada."

"Research is vital to the future of our industry and ranchers across Saskatchewan will benefit from these projects," added Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister Lyle Stewart. "Our government's continued commitment to innovation will help our producers remain competitive and will continue to ensure Saskatchewan produces safe, reliable agriculture products."

The projects receiving funding in 2013 include:

- new forage barley for beef and dairy producers;
- development of oral and needle-free vaccines for calves;
- analysis of sheep health in the province;
- new nutritional feeds for piglets;
- improving the energy value in high-protein feed;
- DNA testing technologies for cattle;
- improved production management tools for cow-calf operations;
- development of new vaccines for poultry; and
- field-testing a vaccine against chronic wasting disease.

This funding will leverage an additional \$3.1 million in third-party project funding. Earlier in January the federal and provincial governments also announced \$6.5 million for crop-related research projects, making the total 2013 ADF investment nearly \$10 million for crop, livestock and forage research.

In addition, annual operational funding will continue to be provided from ADF to the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (\$300,000), the Prairie Swine Centre (\$330,000) and the Western Beef Development Centre (\$395,000).

This research funding is part of a record \$20.4 million provincial agriculture research budget in 2012-13, which is an increase of more than 50 per cent since 2007. More than \$57 million in research project funding has been provided through ADF since 2007.

MANITOBA

Coordinator to lead bovine TB eradication efforts in Manitoba named

Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz and Manitoba Agriculture Minister Ron Kostyshyn recently announced the appointment of Dr. Allan Preston to help coordinate enhanced bovine tuberculosis (TB) eradication efforts in

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and around Manitoba's Riding Mountain National Park.

Preston will guide a multi-stakeholder working group to enhance ongoing TB eradication efforts in the area. The working group will include senior officials from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Parks Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, Manitoba Conservation, provincial cattle industry associations, conservation groups and First Nations.

Preston is a Manitoba veterinarian, and was formerly the Assistant Deputy Minister of Agri-Industry Development and Innovation Division for Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. He has extensive experience with bovine TB, having represented the Province of Manitoba on previous working groups and task forces.

"We are pleased that governments have taken this important, coordinated step towards the eradication of bovine TB in Manitoba because they recognize the impact the disease is having on both cattle herds and wildlife," Manitoba Beef Producers president Ray Armbruster said in a release.

Progress has been made in managing bovine TB in Riding Mountain in recent years, but the disease continues to be endemic in wild deer and elk, posing significant challenges for livestock producers in the area, the release said. Many producers are required to have their herds tested for TB periodically, in order to protect animal health and maintain market access.

Japanese company invests in HyLife

Japan's Itochu Corporation announced Jan. 8 the acquisition of a 33.4 per cent stake in La Broquerie, Man. pork producer HyLife Ltd. The investment is worth 5 billion yen (\$56.7 million).

HyLife conducts an integrated production, from genetics, live production, and feed mill to pork processing, primarily in Manitoba. The company also supplies value-added specialty pork to the Japanese market. The produces more than 1.4 million pigs per year.

According to a release from Itochu Corporation, the profile of HyLife's pork products will be increased in the Asian market, particularly in China, where consumption continues to grow, as well as in Japan.

QUEBEC

Government invests in export opportunities

The Government of Canada on Dec. 20 announced an investment of up to \$1.5 million for the Agri-Food Export Group Québec-Canada to help producers and agri-food exporters penetrate new markets by increasing the visibility of Canadian premium products internationally.

Founded in 1990, the group is the largest Canadian association of agri-food exporters delivering quality international market development services, according to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). With nearly 400 members, the association will receive up to \$1.5 million for 2012-13 to provide training to members on export expansion in new and existing markets and to undertake buyers' missions, trade meetings, and trade shows. The investment will also serve to develop

promotional material, information kits, and strategic alliances abroad, an AAFC release said.

Exports of processed food and beverage products were worth \$23.3 billion in 2011, an increase of 12 per cent from 2010, and reached some 190 countries.

NEW BRUNSWICK

Nadeau Poultry Farm fined \$35,000

In December, Nadeau Poultry Farm entered guilty pleas in New Brunswick Provincial Court to offences under the Health of Animal Act. According to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), the company was fined \$35,000.

An investigation by the CFIA determined that between 2007 and 2010, Nadeau Poultry Farm had transported chickens in a motor vehicle which caused injury or undue suffering to the animals by reason of undue exposure to the weather and/or inadequate ventilation, the agency said.

During sentencing, the Crown submitted a history report for Nadeau Poultry Farm Ltd. regarding violations of the Health of Animals Regulations since 2002, the CFIA said. These previous violations were dealt with under the Agriculture and Agri-Food Administrative Monetary Penalties Act, and totalled several thousand dollars in penalties over the last 10 years.

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Photo: BPS
Left to right: Pascal Forest, Serge Labrecque, Mathieu Couture, Dr. Michael Dyck, Joel Wurz and Sylven Blouin.

Awarding Innovation

Annual F.X. Aherne Prize for Innovative Pork Production awarded at Banff Pork Seminar.

ORGANIZERS OF THE Banff Pork Seminar, which took place Jan. 15 to 17, announced the winners of the annual F.X. Aherne Prize for Innovative Pork Production. The three winners were honoured at the event for delivering new creative solutions to benefit the industry.

This year's winners are:

- Sylven Blouin and Mathieu Couture of Agri-Marche Inc. St-Isidore Que.;
- Serge, Robert and Germain Labrecque of Conception Ro-Main Inc., St-Bernard, Que.; and
- Joel and Ron Wurz of Bench Colony, near Shaunavon, Sask.

The F.X. Aherne Prize for Innovative Pork Production is named after the late Dr. Frank Aherne, a professor of swine nutrition and production at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

The Agri-Marche Inc. team was recognized for its development of a temperature controlled semen conservation unit for delivery vehicles. This allows temperature stabilization of the semen en route to the destination breeding operation, saving time and protecting semen quality. This supports greater overall planning and efficiency, to strengthen the performance of artificial insemination.

Semen quality during insemination is an important issue addressed by this innovation, which represents a major improvement over existing options such as Styrofoam box transport or temperature controlled coolers that have issues with fragility, space requirements and inconsistent results. Among a range of benefits, the Agri-Marche unit is reliable,

practical, reusable and inexpensive. It's touted as a game changer for the task of delivering semen from the boar centre to the breeders.

Conception Ro-Main earned its award for the creation of an 'intelligent' heat lamp controller and piglet creep system. The Intelligence Surveillance System (ISS) is a cutting edge concept that monitors and regulates the temperature of each individual creep in a farrowing room. The result is optimized conditions for piglet health that supports the productivity and profitability of sow production operations.

One example of numerous ISS features is an optional birth-alert function so that timely assistance can be brought to the sow and piglets. The technology has made major inroads since its introduction to the market, with some 6,000 units sold to Canadian swine breeders.

Like so many past Aherne award winners, Joel and Ron Wurz developed their innovation as a response to a practical production problem they encountered on their own operation. Bench Colony had problems with some pit plugs popping out. They came up with a simple yet remarkably effective device to hold the pit plugs in place so the water would not drain off.

The Plug Holder device is adjustable, made of all stainless steel and also serves as a plug puller. It prevents a range of issues including water inefficiency and the potential for gasses and solids to back up in the barn.

For more information, visit banffpork.ca. - staff

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Events Calendar promotes upcoming trade shows, conferences, workshops and other events for the meat industry. For up to date listings, visit meatbusiness.ca/events.



Photo: Rosalie Winard

Dr. Temple Grandin will be the animal welfare keynote speaker at the RMC in June.

Temple Grandin announced as keynote speaker at 66th Reciprocal Meat Conference

World renowned livestock handling expert Dr. Temple Grandin will be the animal welfare keynote speaker at the American Meat Science Association (AMSA) 66th Reciprocal Meat Conference (RMC) on June 18, 2013.

The AMSA RMC runs June 16 to 19 at Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama.

Grandin's insights into animal behavior and her innovations in livestock handling have revolutionized food-animal welfare. Along the way, she has also inspired people around the world as a champion for individuals with autism and their families.

Grandin will give an in-depth presentation titled "Communicating with the Public – First Hand Experiences and Effective Communication Strategies."

Grandin obtained her B.A. at Franklin Pierce College in 1970, her M.S. in Animal Science at Arizona State University in 1975 and was awarded her Ph.D in Animal Science from the University of Illinois in 1989.

Half the cattle in the U.S. and Canada are handled in equipment she has designed for meat plants. She is also known for developing animal welfare guidelines for the meat industry and consulting with McDonalds, Wendy's International, Burger King, and other companies on animal welfare.

Following her Ph.D. research on the effect of environmental enrichment on the behavior of pigs, she has published several hundred industry publications, book chapters and technical papers on animal handling plus 63 refereed journal articles in addition to ten books. She currently is a professor of animal sciences at Colorado State University where she continues her research while teaching courses on livestock handling and facility design. Her book,

Animals in Translation was a New York Times best seller and her book *Livestock Handling and Transport*, now has a third edition which was published in 2007.

In 2010, she was the subject of an HBO film that went on to win several Emmy and Golden Globe awards. That year she was also honoured in Time Magazine's "100 Most Influential People in the World."

In 2012, she was inducted into the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame. Dr. Grandin now resides in Fort Collins, Colorado.

For more information regarding the AMSA 66th RMC, visit www.meatscience.org/rmc.

New GFTC workshop looks at food labelling in Canada

Among the many courses scheduled by the Guelph Food Technology Centre for 2013, is a new Canadian Food Labelling Workshop to be held March 25 and again on July 9.

The eight hour workshop is designed to provide an overview of Canadian food labelling considerations. The program covers food labelling under federal jurisdiction for a wide range of foods from manufactured foods to meat and poultry products. It covers basic labelling considerations (common name, net contents, ingredient list, nutrition facts and dealer name address), as well as additional labelling considerations that may apply, such as storage information, durable life dates, artificial sweetener statements, vignettes, artificial flavours, and country of origin.

Labelling requirements under the Food and Drug Regulations, Consumer Packaging and Labelling Regulations, Processed Products Regulations, Meat Inspection Regulations 1990, Organic Products Regulations 2009, Fish Inspection Regulations, Dairy Product Regulations will be discussed.

At the end of the program, attendees will be able to:

- develop a food label under various federal legislation;
- identify foods requiring a label and what exemptions may be applicable;
- understand packaging and labelling definitions and how they relate to the presentation of information, type heights, etc.;
- better appreciate how layout options can address your design objectives;
- differentiate between retail (consumer) and non-retail (foodservice/further manufacture) labelling considerations;
- understand common names, standard names and descriptive names; and
- describe how country of origin labelling may be applicable to their food.

For pricing and other details, visit www.gftc.ca.

Upcoming Events

March 2013

3 – 5
CRFA Show
Direct Energy Centre,
Exhibition Place
Toronto, Ont.
crfa.ca

25
Canadian Food Labelling
Workshop
Guelph Food Technology
Centre
Guelph, Ont.
gftc.ca

April 2013

15 – 18
2013 NIAA Annual
Conference
The Galt House,
Louisville, Kentucky
animalagriculture.org

30 – May 2
SIAL Canada 2013
Direct Energy Centre,
Toronto, Ont.
sialcanada.com

May 2013

4 – 9
IFFA
Frankfurt, Germany
iffa.com

14 – 16
PackEx Toronto
Toronto Congress Centre
Toronto, Ont.
canontradeshows.com



Thefoodnewz is an on line events calendar created by Debra Bradshaw of Zep Food & Beverage Division. To find out more about the events listed in this magazine visit thefoodnewz.com. If you know of events not listed please email Debra directly at zeprep@rogers.com.



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COOL's cost to Canada's pork industry nearly \$2 billion

In a new report, the Canadian Pork Council said mandatory country of origin labelling (COOL) in the United States has cost Canadian pork producers US\$ 1.9 billion in direct damages, up to October 2012.

Since COOL was implemented by the U.S. government, swine exports from Canada to the U.S. were massively reduced, contributing to a sharp decline in Canada's swine herd, the report says.

The report notes that direct impacts of COOL on the pork sector could reach \$2 billion once trade data for all of 2012 is calculated.

An additional \$357 million in damages is estimated for lost pork trade, and a further \$85 million in price suppression for feeder pig trade.

The World Trade Organization recently ruled that COOL contravenes trade laws, and has given the U.S. until May 23, 2013 to comply with its ruling.

Read the full report at www.cpc-ccp.com.

Export opportunities expand to China, Nicaragua

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) on Jan. 2 announced that Canadian producers can now export beef to Nicaragua, with full access now restored after the closure of this market in 2003 due to BSE. Also, market access conditions have been established for Canadian pork to Nicaragua for the first time ever.

In 2011, Nicaragua imports of beef and pork were \$1.6 million and more than \$17 million respectively.

AAFC followed that announcement days later with news that China has approved four additional Canadian beef facilities that will now be able to export beef to China, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada announced today.

Two of the announced establishments are based in Toronto – Ryding Regency Meat Packers Ltd. and St. Helen's Meat Packers Ltd. The others are Les Viandes Laroche Inc. of Asbestos, Que., and Canadian Premium Meats Inc. of Lacombe, Alta.

In June 2011, agreement was reached with China to allow imports of Canadian deboned beef from animals under 30 months of age (UTM), making Canada the first BSE-affected country to resume trade of beef with China.

According to Canada Beef Inc., the Chinese market for Canadian UTM deboned beef is estimated at about \$20 million annually. Once full market access is achieved the Chinese market for Canadian beef and cattle is expected to be worth \$110 million.

China is Canada's third-largest trading partner, with a two-way trade of over \$64.5 billion dollars in 2011, including \$3.4 billion in agriculture and agri-food products.

CFIA to open 16 specialty centres across Canada

Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz recently announced the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) will be creating 16 targeted "centres of expertise" across Canada

to provide industry and CFIA inspectors with better, more consistent access to information and advice.

"These Centres of Expertise will pool expertise and make it available through a single window, making the CFIA more efficient and giving industry, CFIA inspectors and Canadians better, more consistent service," Ritz said in a release. "In addition, locations will be near both academic and provincial experts in a particular field to leverage expertise and collaboration among organizations."

A firm timeline wasn't given, but according to the release, the centres are expected to be implemented over the next few years.

The centres will consolidate and co-locate expertise for specific programs, creating a more efficient system for providing guidance and advice, and providing a stronger link between the people in the agency who design policy and programs and the staff who deliver them.

This builds on the CFIA's efforts to improve how it interacts with stakeholders and ultimately improve industry's understanding and compliance with federal regulations, the release said.

The centres will be located across Canada. Several factors were considered when selecting these, including:

- current concentration of related industries;
- proximity to industry organizations;
- proximity to provincial experts in that field;
- proximity to academic experts in that field; and
- current concentration of staff involved in the related activity.

Among the centres:

- Red Meat Slaughter – Calgary, Alta.;
- Foreign Animal Disease and Emergency Management – Calgary, Alta.;
- Agri-foods and Non-federally Registered Products – Guelph, Ont.;
- Import/Export of Animals – Guelph, Ont.;
- Poultry Slaughter – St-Hyacinthe, Que.;
- Processed Meat and Poultry – St-Hyacinthe, Que.; and
- Domestic Animal Disease and Animal Welfare – St-Hyacinthe, Que.

For more information, visit www.inspection.gc.ca.

Ross Industries appoints new president

Ross Industries, Inc. recently announced the appointment of Jamie Usrey as the company's new president, assuming all management and leadership responsibilities. In his new position, Usrey will establish the company's strategic direction and product offerings.

Usrey has 16 years of experience working within the Marel Stork poultry processing organization in Gainesville, Georgia. Stork is a leading producer of high-speed equipment for the poultry processing industry. In his most recent position at Stork, Usrey was vice-president of engineering and product development. He was directly responsible for the strategic direction of the company with respect to development of products for both the domestic and international markets. As a member of the global management team, Usrey was

responsible for establishing and implementing the company's vision and operating goals. He also served on Stork's marketing committee that was responsible for developing global strategy for new technologies and the evaluation of potential technologies for new markets. Usrey holds a master's degree in engineering as well as an EMBA.

Ross Industries supplies processing, packaging and tenderizing solutions to the food industry. It provides sales, service and support for Ross tenderizers, slicers and dicers, BLC chillers and freezers, macerators, meat formers, antimicrobial intervention systems, and tray sealing equipment.

Former ag minister Wise dies at 77

On Jan. 9, former federal Agriculture Minister John Wise died suddenly at the age of 77 in a London, Ont. hospital.

A dairy farmer from Ontario's Elgin County, Wise served as agriculture minister in two conservative governments, from 1979 to 1980 and 1984 to 1988.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a statement extending his condolences to the Wise family.

"As Canada's agriculture minister, John was highly respected in the farm community and by Canadians for his integrity and dedication to the job of serving and growing Canadian agriculture," Harper stated. "John was a capable and realistic minister with a knowledge of agriculture from the ground up."

"Under his watch, he helped guide several critical pieces of legislation," he added. "He was also instrumental in the development of the Canada-U.S. Trade Agreement from an agricultural perspective. This included delivering transition assistance for grape growers, which laid the foundation for today's world-class Canadian wine industry. He was also successful in developing stronger federal-provincial-territorial relations to move the industry forward."

Smithfield Foods "on track" to eliminating gestation stalls

U.S. pork giant Smithfield Foods announced that, as of December 2012, it successfully transitioned 38 per cent of pregnant sows on company-owned farms in the United States from individual gestation stalls to group housing systems.

The company said it remains on track to finish converting to group housing on all company-owned farms in the U.S. by 2017. All of the company's international hog production operations will complete their conversions to group housing by 2022.

"We're proud of the commitments made by our international operations, and here in the U.S. we are continuing to make good progress toward our goal of phasing out gestation stalls for pregnant sows at all of our company-owned farms, as our 2012 conversion number reflects," president and chief executive officer C. Larry Pope said in a release.

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Farmers Hit Harder by Red Tape

Productivity and stress among concerns.



By Marilyn Braun-Pollon

HAVE YOU SPENT hours filling out government forms that are onerous and unclear or waited forever on the phone only to get the runaround from a government official who can't answer your question? Dealt with unhelpful inspectors and auditors? Gone out of your way to comply with time consuming processes that don't make sense? If you are nodding your head in agreement, then you've been impacted by red tape and you are not alone.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) recently put a spotlight on the negative impact red tape has on Canada's farmers during its 4th annual Red Tape Awareness Week. Most businesses cite red tape as their second highest concern behind the total tax burden but recent CFIB data puts red tape at the top of the list of farmers' concerns (79 per cent). Farmers are also the most likely to say the burden of red tape has grown: 72 per cent report the burden has increased over the past three years, compared to 55 per cent among all other sectors.

Over-regulation, confusing paperwork, and bad customer service are crippling agriculture businesses and stifling innovation. This should be a concern to all Canadians, as agriculture is a critical sector, employing two million Canadians and generating over \$44 billion worth of our trade. Red tape is the \$31 billion "hidden tax" to the Canadian economy that leads to lost jobs, stress in the workplace and higher prices for goods and services.

CFIB's 2012 Regulation and Paper Burden Survey finds 69 per cent of agri-business owners say red tape significantly reduces productivity in their businesses. Eighty-seven per cent of farmers say that excessive regulations add significant stress to their lives, compared to 80 per cent among other small business owners. Sixty-eight per cent of farmers say red tape discourages them from growing their businesses, compared to 62 per cent of other business owners.

Farmers have no issue with the legitimate rules, but red tape is something else. For farmers, red tape takes many forms; it can be contradictory information from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), a dumb rule from Fisheries and Oceans or a Statistics Canada survey filled with questions that don't apply to their business. It all adds up to a lot of wasted time and money.

CFIB survey comments reveal farmers' frustration with regulators who often don't understand the challenges of running a farm. For example, a number of respondents complained that Statistics Canada sends surveys during spring seeding – one of the busiest times of the year for farmers. Farmers are twice as likely to cite Statistics Canada surveys as burdensome compared to other businesses (50 per cent vs. 25 per cent, respectively).

One agri-business owner said it best: "The Stats Can surveys are ridiculous and always come at our busiest time of year. They put a due date on them that is next to impossible for us to complete in time, then they phone and harass us on a daily basis to complete it. It is so frustrating to try to complete an agriculture survey when we are at our busiest time."

It really comes down to farmers feeling disrespected by government agencies that don't understand there are two really busy times of year – seeding and harvesting. Asking business owners to meet compliance deadlines during these two peak seasons is the equivalent of CRA trying to do a retail audit on Boxing Day.

How has the burden of regulations on your business changed during the past three years? (% response)



Twenty-eight per cent of farmers say that if they had known about the burden of regulations, they may not have gone into business. With succession such a huge issue – CFIB is concerned red tape will stop the next generation of farmers from wanting to get into the business.

We must admit there have been some recent government actions that give us hope, including some initiatives by the CFIA, but more work is required to reduce red tape so farmers feel some relief and can continue providing safe, high-quality food for Canadians. If you're tired of red tape, join CFIB's Red Tape Revolution by signing an online petition at www.cfib.ca/redtape. It is time to push back against the paper pushers in government. [M](#)



Marilyn Braun-Pollon is vice-president, prairie and agri-business with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), Canada's largest association of small- and medium-sized businesses. She can be reached at mssask@cfib.ca



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