

April 15, 2003



## Sound Bites

The newsletter with a vision of regional food sustainability

Volume 2 Issue 8

# Field to Table partnership project with the regional host in the Peace region Of BC and Alberta:

## The Peace Value-Added Food & Ag Association (PVAF&AA)

The **Small Scale Food Processor Association** (SSFPA) sponsored and facilitated four regional **Field to Table Partnership Projects** in January, February and March 2003. The vision of the SSFPA is to create regional food sustainability.

The purposes of the workshops were:

1.To document the agricultural assets in the host regions

- 2.To develop a collaborative workshop to start building support for small-scale growers and processors
- 3.To introduce the concept of flexible marketing and/or manufacturing networks
- 4.To start the development of sustainable plans specific to regional agricultural assets, that can compliment provincial

plans.

The Peace Value Added Food & Ag Association (PVAF&AA), represented by Donna Tookey, Gail Briggs and Fred Burton, hosted the workshop event. The office of the PVAF&AA is in Dawson Creek, BC and the “**Field to Table Partnership Project**” workshop was held in Rycroft Alberta, January 16-17, 2003. (For visitors, the ‘Peace Country’ takes in parts of BC and Alberta—this is an asset and a challenge!)

### Inside this issue:

<i>Regional needs voted on</i>	2
<i>Strengths in the Peace</i>	2
<i>Challenges in the Peace</i>	2
<i>Threats in the Peace</i>	2
<i>Opportunities in the</i>	3
<i>Peace regional marketing</i>	3
<i>Appropriate technology</i>	3
<i>Next steps</i>	3

### Sound Bites:

- ☉ Day one= Issues and problems
- ☉ Day two= Strategies and action planning



The PVAF&AA office



## Regional reports used for background by the SSFPA

The first day of the workshop was focused on the participants experience and existing regional research and reports. The SSFPA reviewed reports to ensure that the workshop would build on decisions already made in the region.

The reports reviewed by the SSFPA were:

1. *Needs Assessment of Peace Country Agriculture Value-Added Entrepreneurs*, 2000.
2. *'Branding the Peace': Business Plan and Marketing Strategy*, 2002.
3. *Alberta Agri-preneur: Partnership for Competitive Advantage*, 2002.
4. *Peace Country Agri-Food Research & Development*

*Laboratory: A Progress Report*, Jan 16, 2003.

5. *Peace Value Added Food & Ag Association Strategy Plan 2003-2005* draft.

The SSFPA process had the participants review the results, and vote on their own priorities. The second day of the workshop was designed around these results.

## Regional concerns:

There were 22 participants representing growers, processors and various Peace Innovation Network organizations. There was consensus to focus on specific parts of the regional plans that are currently being worked on in the community.

One of the workshop issues was around the Peace marketing strategies using a regional distribution network. The 'Peace Country General Store' and the 'Branding the Peace' initiatives are discussed and next steps identified.

*"Regional Branding is essentially product branding applied to a region, rather than to a specific product. The branding of a region is a holistic concept that could include many aspects of commerce and culture. Many regions throughout the world have successfully developed and*

*marketed regional brands. The branding agency typically administers the licensing of the brand, sets quality and other standards necessary for brand use, and charges a fee for the use of the brand."*

(quoted from *Branding the Peace—Executive Summary*)

The second group discussed information about, and access to, appropriate technology in the Peace. The Innovations Network is working on getting a kitchen/lab at Fairview College.

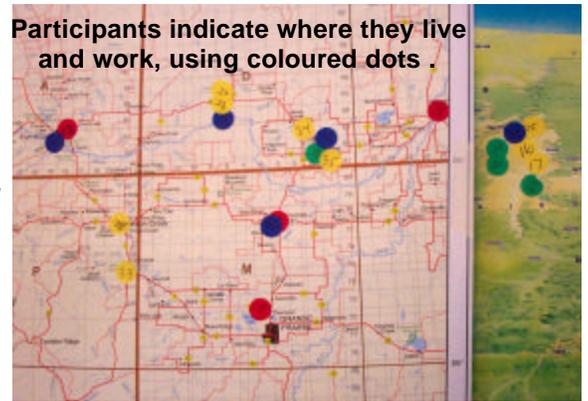
The third issue discussed was information about suppliers for equipment and packaging in the Peace.

A fourth issue discussed was information about access to finance.

A very important workshop issue looked at the goals of the PVAF&AA, so they could complete their 2003-2005 strategic plan.

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Participants indicate where they live and work, using coloured dots .



Field to Table workshop in Rycroft, AB

## Strengths in the Peace region

- The 'Northern Advantage' of more sunlight in summer growing periods and excellent soil with much less use of fertilizer and pesticides.
- Peace Honey is proven to be very pure.
- Saskatoon berry orchards representing approximately 100 acres.
- Many organizations are in place to move the added value agenda forward
- 'Branding the Peace' initiative under way
- Tourists from all over the world pass through here

## Threats in the Peace region

- Dependence on commodities
- Building a kitchen that may be underused
- Limited technical support
- Bad weather
- Urban philosophy towards rural products
- General Canadian awareness, or lack of awareness of the source and security of food

## Challenges in the Peace region

- The distance from major commercial markets is a challenge.
- The market demand has to come from long distances
- The primary value-added strategy is to dehydrate, so other strategies need to develop out of this one



'Branding the Peace' promotional banner

## Opportunities in the Peace region

- To label 'no pesticide' and 'northern vigour' reflecting the nutrition levels of Peace food.
- To organize the 'back-haul' opportunity.
- Marketing agri-tourism
- Root seller natural food buying club wants more local produce to sell

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- 'Branding the Peace' initiative invites the PVAF&AA to be the first sector to go through the branding process

## Peace marketing strategies, using a regional distribution network in the Peace

- The Peace honey is ready for regional labelling and marketing because of its high quality on the global market
- Develop a strategy so when large orders are placed, groups of processors can cooperate to fill the order
- Develop a strategy to develop point-of-purchase regional brand support for products
- Develop a strategy to share in the development of the 'Peace Country Store' for product promotion
- Develop a strategy to share in the development of a cost effective follow-up sales system to the 'Peace Country Store' promotion
- Develop a strategy to share in the development of demonstrating market demand through taste sample tables (Supplier Driven Marketing SDM)
- Look first at products that are imported that local producers can market and start 'buy local' co-operative advertising
- Develop a strategy to share in the development of cross marketing of complimentary products
- Develop a strategy to share in the development of a regional marketing organization to buy plan-a-gram shelf space for regional processors at independent grocers

## Information and access to appropriate technology in the Peace

- There is a vision to bring a cluster of processors together involved with adding value to the same commodity to assess technology needs and provide shared services
- An inventory is needed, and post inventory the feasibility for design of purpose built equipment is required
- Processors asked for specialized business planning and management software for small-scale food processors
- Canadian Technology Network/ IRAP could provide resources for documented need



*Group voting on workshop issues*

- To put together information about sources for appropriate technology in relation to needs, to facilitate group buying, renting, or purpose designed technology

commodities interested in adding value together to consider development scenarios

## Next Steps

### For the SSFPA

- To build and provide, on a service-for-fee, goods and services which support regional marketing organizations
- Make a simple 'generic' presentation about the economic, social and environmental benefits of regional food systems, for directors and members to use to explain about the values of the SSFPA
- To seek resources for an outreach program to list more providers of goods and services, for the benefit of growers and processors, on the Living Inventory

### For the PVAF&AA

- To develop the 'Peace Country Store' as a promotional strategy that will need sales follow-up support
- To be a product distributor/broker with a sales arm with a champion strategy
- To develop strategies to add value to commodities such as: seed potatoes; medicinal plants; small berries; honey; organics; and red meat
- To mobilize processors to document the demand for specialized equipment
- Bring together producers of same

### For all small-scale food processors

- To work together to pool money for what is needed to operate as a regional group
- The regional group plan will need to be supported with a business plan that covers the growth management plans of the group
- To participate in the 'Innovation strategy' to determine the feasibility of building a commercial kitchen at Fairview College.

### For 'Branding the Peace'

- Help facilitate and network the food value adding chain in the Peace

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Thanks to everyone who came and expressed themselves at the Field to Table workshop. Our purpose has been to address your hopes. Did we do this for you? Please provide feedback to us at [ssfpa@pacificcoast.net](mailto:ssfpa@pacificcoast.net)



## Members' corner



*'Briggswood Country Preserves' federally inspected and registered kitchen*

# Sound Bites

The Field to Table Partnership Project was funded in part by:



Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada



## Participatory Workshop sessions

(Separate Sound Bites issues summarize the SSFPA sessions and can be found at

<https://www.ssfpa.net/DocsForms/DocsForms.htm>)

- The SSFPA presented the Living Inventory (LI). The intent of the LI is to provide a non-centralized way for small-scale growers and processors to find information, possible regional suppliers of goods and services, and opportunities to organize distribution methods. People that were interested were encouraged to activate an account to test the system. The SSFPA has planned outreach in the summer of 2003 to activate accounts for the suppliers of the goods and services which small-scale food growers and processors are asking for.
- The SSFPA presented a graphical model for shared services that small-scale food processors could organize at regional levels. The opportunity is to design a flexible manufacturing/marketing network according to regional assets and to be maintained by regional human resources.
- The SSFPA introduced the AFIF Margins Software designed for costing ingredients and documenting recipes' costs and margins on sales. The ingredient tracking function supports food safety recall strategies. The SSFPA plans to host this business tool for small-scale food processors on its website.
- The SSFPA described work being done to create access to finance, which is specific to small-scale food growers and processors. Look for this to be reported on during the summer of 2003.