

Field Notes

Finding HR solutions for agriculture across Canada

Autumn 2008

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Message from the Chair

We often consider autumn as the busiest time for farmers; and for most, it is indeed a period of high productivity. The same applies for us at the Council as we begin a very active phase since our creation close to two years ago.

Perhaps the biggest news is the approval of three new projects for CAHRC:

- identifying on-farm occupations;
- new markets and future skills in agriculture;
- communications and outreach.

These projects are a key feature in this edition of *Field Notes*: we're highlighting the funding announcement event that took place in September – and detailing the scope of each project, including the steps already underway.

Our first four projects continue to progress as we enter the final months to their completion. As in previous newsletters, we're noting a few milestones that have recently been reached and identifying the activities that we expect to complete over the next few months.

We're also continuing to introduce the readers of *Field Notes* to the industry leaders on our Board of Directors. In this edition, we're featuring three Board Directors who are heavily involved in our Labour Market Information and Learning Programs Database projects. I invite you to check out the entire Board on our website, and the organizations and associations that they represent.

Our successes are a harvest. We are grateful for your continuing support and interest in our activities and this newsletter. And, as always, we welcome your feedback.

Terry Murray

Eastern View Farms Ltd.

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, Alberta



Three New Projects Receive Funding!

On September 3, 2008, the Member of Parliament for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Pierre Lemieux, announced funding of \$1.3 million to CAHRC for three new projects. Mr. Lemieux made the announcement on behalf of the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Canada, the Honourable Monte Solberg, at *La Ferme Gillette* in Embrun, Ontario.

Speaking to a small crowd that included the farm's owners and staff, members of the media, and local residents, Mr. Lemieux explained how the investment would help Canadians learn about career opportunities in agriculture – and how it would help the industry deal with skilled labour shortages.

For instance, these projects will define the standards of on-farm occupational skills today, while identifying the requirements of tomorrow's employees as agriculture industries enter new markets that use cutting-edge technologies. This will provide a clear picture of Canada's present and future agriculture careers and the skills required to work in these careers to youth who are pursuing an agrarian profession.

The Council's Executive Director, Danielle Vinette, and Executive Committee Board member, Mark Wales, attended the event to elaborate on what the projects would accomplish for agriculture operations

across Canada – and to thank the Government of Canada for their support.

The announcement was followed by a brief media scrum with journalists from *Le Droit* (a regional French-language daily newspaper), *La Nouvelle*, and the Eastern Ontario Farmers' Forum. The event concluded with a tour of *La Ferme Gillette's* dairy operation.

We look forward to having more of these high profile activities, especially as the Council's new communications and outreach project is put into action.

New CAHRC Projects

Communications and Outreach

Project Dates:
August 2008 – February 2011

Expanding CAHRC's partnership-building and awareness-raising efforts to ensure that agriculture stakeholders across Canada benefit from the Council's activities.

The Communications and Outreach project will include the development of a three-year communications and outreach strategy that builds on the Council's awareness-raising efforts to date. It will also facilitate networking and partnership opportunities through the co-ordination of one national and four regional human resource forums to engage industry stakeholders, educators and government officials in agricultural HR issues.

Recent Progress

An Advisory Group has been created to guide the project. Members include:

Ron Bonnett, Canadian Federation of Agriculture;
Kathryn Doan, AgCareers.com;
Brad Dowell, Olds College;
Jacquie Gibney, Farm Credit Canada;
Lance Johnson, IgniteAg;
Judith Lavallée, Agricarrières;
Owen Roberts, University of Guelph; and
Wendy Weatherbie, PEI Agriculture Sector Council.

The first meeting of the advisory group will be held in Toronto on October 22, 2008.

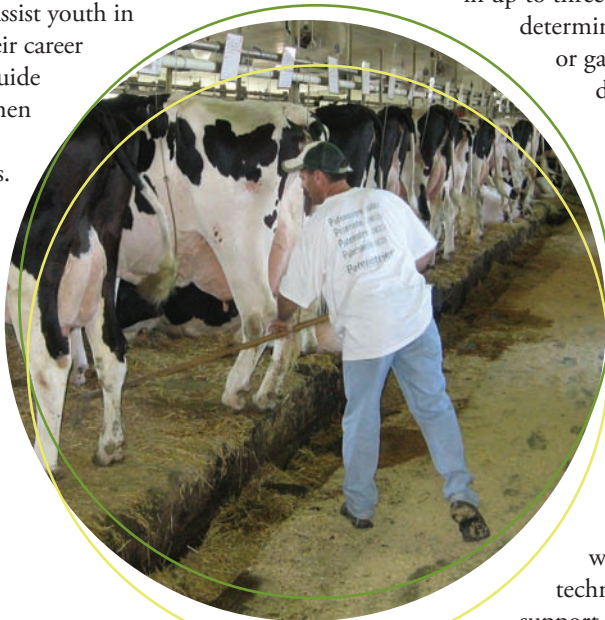
Identifying On-Farm Occupations

Project Dates:
September 2008 – September 2010

Identifying the core skills specific to farm professions across the 10 key agriculture commodity groups, to pave the way for the development of national occupational standards.

This project will build a comprehensive listing of on-farm occupations that are industry-validated and sector-specific by commodity groups. It will include the skill sets and training required for each of these occupations. The results of this project will enable CAHRC to focus on the development of occupational standards that accurately reflect the diverse nature of the industry.

Having a portrayal of all the occupations related to primary agriculture will allow employers to attract skilled employees, assist youth in planning their career paths, and guide educators when they address training gaps.



New Markets and Future Skills in Agriculture

Project Dates:
September 2008 – March 2010

Examining emerging agriculture markets, their related technologies, and the skills and knowledge required of the workforce in these markets.

New and exciting opportunities in agriculture are being developed with the growing popularity of nanotechnology; functional foods; biotechnology; the organic and 'buy local' movements; and more. This project will research in greater detail the nature of these new opportunities in agriculture to provide in-depth analysis of their strategic importance to Canada's agriculture sector. The project will also use this research to identify the occupations or competencies of agriculture employees

in up to three new markets to determine the training needs or gaps in current skills development and learning programs.

This initiative will create greater awareness of the employment opportunities in new agricultural markets across Canada. It will also identify the human resource skills required of workers to use new technologies that support these markets.

Project Progress

Inventory Database for Gap Analysis of Learning Programs

Project Dates:
May 2007 – March 2009

Gathering information on available agriculture training and learning programs across Canada, and the supply and demand for these programs, so we can determine and address the training needs of specific regions.

Recent Progress

Results from more than 865 training user surveys and over 1,000 courses and program entries from the training provider surveys have been entered into the database. A preliminary gap analysis of supply and demand for agriculture training programs by region, commodity, and skill type has since been initiated to determine which regions and agriculture groupings have the most pressing training needs.

NEXT STEPS:

The on-line searchable database of Canada's available training programs will be completed over the next two months. It will then be reviewed and tested by educators and other 'learning' users. The launch of the site will take place early in 2009.



Labour Market Information Research on Recruitment and Retention

Project Dates:
May 2007 – May 2009

Collecting up-to-date labour market information to understand the complexity and scope of labour needs across Canada – by region and by commodity – so we can determine where workers are needed the most, and identify alternative sources of labour and strategies to gain access to these sources.

Recent Progress

The results of more than 50 informant interviews and 482 employer surveys were compiled and analyzed over the summer. This exercise revealed that additional surveys were required from Quebec to ensure accurate comparisons amongst regions across Canada. Ten on-site interviews of selected agricultural operations are underway for completion this autumn. This information will be used to develop case studies on best human resource practices for recruitment and retention.

NEXT STEPS:

An updated draft Labour Market Information report, including additional data from Quebec, will be presented to the project's advisory group in early December. Case studies will be completed by January 2009. A presentation on the final Labour Market Information report and case studies profiling best practices in agriculture HR will be made at a national stakeholder session in Ottawa on February 2, 2009.

Pilot Project: Occupational Standards and Learning Tools for the Ornamental Sector

Project Dates:
September 2007 – October 2009

Increasing and standardizing the professional status of workers in the ornamental sector through the review and validation of the essential skills profile and national occupational standard for the Landscape Horticulturist.

Recent Progress

The National Occupational Standard and Essential Skills Profile for Landscape Horticulturists report was posted on CAHRC's website in French and English this summer. The next phase of the project entails the development, testing, reproduction and distribution of on-the-job learning tools in order to improve the ornamental sector's ability to deliver appropriate training directly in the workplace.

NEXT STEPS:

A consulting company has been selected to develop and test on-the-job learning tools, and to recommend the best format for these tools (e.g., video, CD, manual, etc.). A new round of consultations with industry stakeholders to validate where the tasks and subtasks of the National Occupational Standard are best learned is also scheduled to begin shortly. This new round of validation will help CAHRC establish performance criteria for each task and subtask.

Meet the CAHRC Board of Directors

Project Advisory Groups

Paul LeBlanc chairs the Labour Market Information project, and Christine Koch serves as vice-chair. Connie Kehler is the chair of the Inventory of Learning Programs project.



Paul LeBlanc has worked in New Brunswick's apple industry for close to twenty years. He also serves as the Executive Director of Porc New Brunswick Pork.

Paul represents both apple growers and hog producers to ensure that their issues are addressed at provincial, national, and international forums.

Paul is also an active member of the Canadian Horticulture Council (CHC). He is a long-time member of the Canadian Apple Working Group, and he chairs the CHC's world-class on-farm food safety program which involves more than 20,000 growers in eight horticulture groupings across Canada.



Christine Koch chose a career in agriculture after earning a Diploma in Agricultural Management from the British Columbia Institute of Technology and a Bachelor of Science majoring in Agricultural Economics from the University of British Columbia.

She served as the Quality Control Manager at the United Flower Growers' Cooperative Association for five years, followed by nine years as the Provincial Floriculture Industry Specialist at the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and a subsequent four years as Senior Manager of Horticultural Industries at the Ministry. During her work for the Province, Christine led major labour projects including redrafting the Employment Standards Act for agriculture, creating an Agriculture Labour Partnership Committee, providing BC producers with access to the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, and working on a labour funding initiative.

Today, Christine is the Manager of Policy and Member Relations for the British Columbia Agriculture Council, which represents 12,000 farmers and ranchers.



Connie Kehler is a master gardener and the owner/operator of the first commercial organic greenhouse in Saskatchewan.

As the Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Herb and Spice Coalition and the Canadian Herb, Spice and Natural Health Products Coalition, and Program Manager for the Canadian On-Farm Food Safety program, Connie is also an active member of numerous agriculture, health and special crops organizations and committees.

Connie is educated in Business Administration and Communications, and has completed training in ISO quality management systems, on-farm auditor, project management, master garden program and taxonomy. She is regularly consulted at the regional, national and international levels as an industry expert.

Outreach and Partnership

The Council is responsible for generating greater awareness and understanding of agriculture's most pressing human resource issues – and the projects that CAHRC is undertaking to address these challenges. We take this responsibility seriously; every opportunity is taken to share information about our organization and projects with related national and provincial governments and groups. This includes participating in the following agriculture HR-related events:

- At the National Agricultural Awareness Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador in August, *Ag in the Classroom* shared with CAHRC and other conference participants best practices for raising awareness for career paths in agriculture.
- Council staff networked with agriculture HR specialists in Niagara-on-the-Lake at the 2008 Canadian Ag and Food HR Round Table.
- CAHRC's Project Manager made a presentation to the York South Simcoe Training and Adjustment Board regarding career opportunities in agriculture.
- The Council's Executive Director informed the General Managers of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture about CAHRC's progress to date on current initiatives, and its three newly funded programs in Longueuil on September 26.