



CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL
HUMAN RESOURCE COUNCIL

CONSEIL CANADIEN POUR LES
RESSOURCES HUMAINES EN AGRICULTURE

Today's and Tomorrow's Farms: Employment and Skills Development



2010 Regional and National Forum Proceedings



Funded by the Government of
Canada's Sector Council Program

Financé par le Gouvernement du Canada par
l'entremise du Programme des conseils sectoriels

Acknowledgements

The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) acknowledges the volunteer support and guidance of its Board of Directors and Communications Advisory Group in the organization of the regional and national forums held by the Council between February and June 2010.

CAHRC gratefully appreciates the time, expertise and vision of these members. Without their co-operation, this report could not have been completed.

The Council would also like to extend its sincere thanks to the many companies, associations, producers and all others who contributed directly, or indirectly, to this publication.

Special recognition is extended to Farm Credit Canada, who graciously provided sponsorship funds for each of the regional and national forums. Their contribution helped ensure the success of these events.

Photos:

Fields for Your Future Project – BC Ministry of Agriculture, B.C. 4-H, BC Youth in Agriculture Foundation, B.C. Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation

Tom Henry, Stillmeadow Farm, B.C.

The opinions and interpretations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

For copies of this publication or information, please contact:

Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council

202-1283 Algoma Road, Ottawa ON K1B 3W7

Tel: 613-745-7457

Toll free: 1-866-430-7457

Fax: 613-745-0119

www.cahrc-ccrha.ca

info@cahrc-ccrha.ca

This document may be downloaded from www.cahrc-ccrha.ca.

All rights reserved.

© 2011 CAHRC



Table of Contents

1. About the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council	1
2. Context	2
3. Recurring Themes	5
4. Regional Summaries	7
5. Industry Recommendations and Conclusion	15
6. Individual Presentation Summaries	19
1) Robert Bourgeois (Memramcook, NB).....	19
2) The Honourable Claudette Bradshaw (Moncton, NB)	20
3) Ravi Cheema (Abbotsford, BC)	21
4) Don Connick (Regina, SK).....	21
5) Cyr Couturier (St. John's, NL).....	22
6) Jennifer Curtis (Abbotsford, BC)	23
7) David Davidson (Surrey, BC).....	24
8) Ken Forth (Mississauga, ON)	24
9) Estela Garcia (Vancouver, BC)	25
10) Jack and Christine Greydanus (Petrolia, ON).....	26
11) Paul Gumprich (Abbotsford, BC)	27
12) Bill Hardy (Coquitlam, BC)	28
13) Jeremy Janzen (La Broquerie, MB)	28
14) Lance Johnson (Edmonton, AB).....	30
15) Jim Knight (Ottawa, ON).....	30
16) Paul LeBlanc (Dieppe, NB).....	31
17) Pierre Lemieux (Longueuil, QC)	32
18) Marilyn Leonidas (Langley, BC)	33
19) Doug Livingstone (Vermilion, AB)	34
20) Marie Logan (Calgary, AB).....	35
21) Jennifer MacDonald (St. Mary's, NB).....	36



22) Sarah MacDonald and Tracy Kittilsen (Truro, NS)	36
23) Sherree Mahood (London, ON)	37
24) Raelene Mercer (Stony Plain, AB)	38
25) Jerry Mussio (Saanichton, BC)	39
26) Tim Nelson (Guelph, ON).....	40
27) Michael Renaud (Victoria, BC)	41
28) Lauranne Sanderson (Truro, NS).....	42
29) Colleen Smith (Milton, ON).....	43
30) Anita Stewart (Elora, ON).....	44
31) Kate Stiefelmeyer (Ottawa, ON).....	45
32) Richard Strang (Meldon, NB).....	46
33) Rene Van Acker (Guelph, ON)	47
34) Ryan Weeks (Pleasant Valley, PE)	47
35) Alison West (Guelph, ON)	48
Appendix – CAHRC Publications	51

1

About the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council



The **Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council** (CAHRC) has a vision of a qualified and motivated workforce that is sufficient to sustain a profitable Canadian agriculture industry. CAHRC represents Canadian agriculture and agri-business in all its forms, and was created to address the human resource issues facing agriculture businesses across the nation.

In order to achieve this goal, the Council's mission is to research, develop, and communicate solutions to human resource issues identified by Canadian primary agriculture.

CAHRC is one of more than 30 federally-funded Sector Councils in Canada, which are industry-led partnership organizations that address skills development issues and implement solutions in key sectors of the economy. CAHRC is funded through the Sector Council Program of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Although CAHRC is a young organization, established in the fall of 2006, much has been accomplished. The Council has already completed a number of projects, including:

- A labour market information study on farms with receipts of more than \$100,000.
- A Web site: www.agritalent.ca, a searchable online database of educational institutions and associations offering studies in agriculture-related fields across the country.
- An on-the-job training manual to assist the landscape industry to train new employees.
- A new tool that provides an opportunity for networking, partnering and outreach within the industry: www.agriguide.ca, a Web site which contains information on national, provincial and territorial farm related associations.

CAHRC also has a number of additional projects currently underway such as its Communications and Outreach project, Agriculture Going Global, Labour Market Information on Farms with Annual Revenues under \$100,000, Agricultural Career Pathways, Agricultural Leadership, and the video illustrating On-the-Job Training Tools for the Ornamental Sector. All of these initiatives are detailed on our Web site at www.cahrc-ccrha.ca.

2

Context



From smaller niche farms to sprawling grain operations, and dairy farms to expanding greenhouses, Canadian agriculture is diverse in its offerings. Despite regional and sectoral differences, one common challenge unites them all: there is a critical need for skilled workers in the sector.

That's the take-home message from the series of five forums hosted by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC). CAHRC convened stakeholders in five locations across the country – Moncton, Longueuil, Guelph, Langley and Calgary – to address what is being done, and what has been done, to minimize the growing shortage of skilled workers in the agricultural sector within Canada and around the world.

Farm operators across the country have reported a need to look farther afield for farm labour, often outside our borders. Couple that with the move towards increasingly complicated equipment, and farm owners across the country are noting there are big boots to fill with respect to workers and the need for technical training.

Awareness and education – at varying levels of sophistication – go a long way in keeping agriculture as a viable career choice, but the majority of participants agreed more must be done at an early age to profile agriculture and establish primary production roles within the sector.

Leadership will be the key factor in turning the sector around. Participants noted the importance of existing leadership training programs that help to provide participants with a unique national or international perspective, which they can then apply to local and regional issues. Despite current challenges, the outlook is positive – if stakeholders with passion and drive continue to build on the discussions that took place at the forums and organize an effort to build up Canada's agricultural sector – one region at a time.

CAHRC's round of 2010 forums has provided a strong foundation on which to build. The knowledge and leadership pool that was collected at the forums can be put to use in addressing the immediate need for changes to the way Canada's agri-food sector recruits, trains, and uses its human resources.

3

Recurring Themes



Sector Awareness and Promotion

The agriculture and agri-food sector is a great place to work – the industry needs to share its success stories more broadly to promote this fact. There is a tremendous diversity of jobs in Canadian agriculture. The sector needs to communicate the career opportunities available in the sector to attract more high-quality workers to its many available roles.

Support Local Labour (Labour Retention)

Workers must be engaged to make their job a career – a rewarding experience in terms of remuneration, benefits and professional acknowledgement. Communication and respect are essential between both employers and employees. Local employers must recognize that the work of their employees is important and valued and that they should be as well-paid as economic reality allows. A local worker will support long-term operational efficiencies and profitability if properly motivated.

Apprenticeship Works

Apprenticeship programs enable students to be paid to work on the farm, in conjunction with in-class technical training. Attracting and training people is a key challenge for the agriculture industry. An apprenticeship model works in many cases to meet the needs of both students and industry, and it provides the hands-on, practical skills that Canada's agricultural sector requires.

Farm Safety and Food Safety

Farm workers must be educated in the proper use and handling of dangerous farm equipment and substances. This is not only essential to ensure their physical well-being, but it also provides benefits in terms of farm productivity and operational efficiencies. Food safety must always be a priority, and workers need to understand the proper health and safety rules and regulations that apply to primary production.



Employment Needs

In a study released by CAHRC in 2009, the vacancy rate of all jobs in primary agriculture in Canada was estimated at 9%, with a total requirement of more than 50,000 workers needed to fill jobs in agriculture by 2013. This estimate is due in part to the significant number of workers who are projected to retire within this timeframe. Today, a young farmer may want to enter agriculture with their heart and hands, but their head knows it is only possible when there is a secure and healthy future for them. Young people need to see quantifiable stories of sustainable success in farming: real, current, existing case studies must be readily available to prove that agriculture can provide a successful, lucrative career and an enjoyable lifestyle.

Education and Training Needs

The agriculture and agri-food sector must assist K-12 high school streams to provide education in agriculture and issues-awareness related to agriculture and agri-food production. Education and training opportunities should be shared and more readily provided to people of all ages in the agricultural sector. We have to campaign for an education that reflects industry needs.

Diversification

Diversification of farm operations to include product extensions, agri-tourism and numerous other options beyond traditional farm operations, can provide secondary and tertiary revenue streams to support the overall business.

Support Programs

Financial support, training and development and information resources are available through various organizations and multiple levels of government, and are ready to be utilized to support agri-businesses.

4

Regional Summaries



Atlantic Regional Summary

February 4th, 2010 – Moncton, New Brunswick

Operational diversification has proven beneficial to Atlantic Canada's agriculture industry. Robert Bourgeois, owner of Verger Belliveau Orchard in south-eastern New Brunswick successfully diversified his operation to add cider manufacturing, educational youth tours, a you-pick program and a wine making program.

Bourgeois also noted the value in training and education – a common theme throughout the Moncton Forum. "Sometimes the best investment that can be made on the farm is an intangible investment in training," he stated. Lauranne Sanderson, Associate Professor at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC), acknowledged a variety of programs offered at NSAC that meet both student and industry needs. "The NSAC is changing to adapt to industry demands and skill requirements," she acknowledged.

Richard Strang discovered that his farm operation's greatest turning point was when he began to think about his operation as a business, rather than a farm. Decision-making based on

long-term strategic business plans, rather than short-term economic gain provided significant benefits, including his ability to retain skilled workers and build staff loyalty.

Aquaculture development is a unique facet of Atlantic Canada's agriculture sector. Cyr Couturier, Research Scientist and Chair of the MSc Aquaculture Program at The School of Fisheries, Centre for Aquaculture and Seafood Development acknowledge the similarities between aquaculture and agriculture. "All of the issues you face in farming the land, we face in farming the aquatic environment," he asserted.

One key issue that aquaculture shares with land-based agriculture is that the majority of production sites are rural, and it is difficult to secure and retain skilled labour. Rural realities are indeed a common hurdle across Atlantic Canada's agriculture industry. "Fewer young farmers are entering the agricultural sector, in part due to changing social expectations – people don't run from dawn to dusk like they used to," suggested Ryan Weeks, Board Member with the Canadian Young Farmers Forum.



“We must start figuring out how we can hire people to do the work that we need to get done, even if that means utilizing traditionally untapped human resources,” said The Honourable Claudette Bradshaw. “We need to start building our rural communities.”

There are existing, enticing success stories in Atlantic Canada’s agricultural industry, but they must be communicated more broadly. Atlantic Canada’s agriculture industry is indeed vibrant and has significant growth opportunities, but capitalizing and building upon these opportunities is dependent upon the attraction, retention, training, education and availability of skilled workers.

Ontario Regional Summary

March 11th, 2010 – Guelph, Ontario

Key issues discussed at Ontario’s CAHRC Forum included labour, skills development and sector awareness. Many trends impact farm businesses beyond just farm production – agri-tourism, functional and super foods, seasonality, local foods, varietal and regional labeling, and diversification of business models.

“With a shrinking number of Ontario families living in rural areas, it is becoming more challenging to bring agriculture curriculum to Ontario schoolchildren,” stated Colleen Smith, Executive Director of Ontario Agri-Food Education (OAFE). Heightened focus on agricultural curriculum in Ontario schools is a challenge that needs to be addressed: there is a need to change the attitude of parents, teachers and guidance counsellors to offer a non-distorted view of farming.

Career awareness, labour retention and sector promotion each affect the agricultural value chain. In terms of agriculture-sector education opportunities, “The skills and training opportunities are as diverse as the sector itself,” noted Rene Van Acker, Professor and Associate Dean of OAC.

On-the-job skills training is a positive trend. “Apprenticeship programs provide the opportunity to bring significant benefit to both employee and employer,” said Sherree Mahood, Director, Western Region, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU).

Husband and wife farmers Jack and Christine Greydanus spoke of the immeasurable value provided by the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) – an example of skills and leadership training that benefits even the most seasoned of producers.

Ken Forth, President and Board member of Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services (FARMS), noted that “Canadian farmers hire 25,000 foreign seasonal agricultural workers every year to help with harvest, thanks to a tried and true system dating back several decades.” Ontario, like the rest of Canada, continues to meet seasonal labour challenges with successful foreign labour programs.

Tim Nelson, Executive Director of the Poultry Industry Council noted that Canada is not alone in its current challenges: Australia, England and the United States also have a shifting farm demographic, where middle-sized farms are becoming very large farms.



A key challenge is in getting human resource knowledge out to producers. “Similar to a business plan, it’s a great idea to have a human resource plan,” said Alison West, Canadian Accounts Manager for AgCareers.com. “Primary producers can take a page from agri-business human resource practices.” In light of new markets and the requirement to do things differently, sound human resource management practices are the key to survival.

British Columbia Regional Summary

April 14th, 2010 – Langley, BC

The British Columbia agriculture industry faces significant challenges, but there are also significant opportunities provided through available education, training and support programs.

Labour provision and skills-training are primary issues in BC. Apprenticeship programs have proven an excellent way to develop skilled labour that meets the needs of both trainees and employers. “The skills that are learned through trial and error are far more valuable than what can be learned in a lecture hall, and that makes apprenticeship a viable option for agriculture,” asserted Bill Hardy, Chair of the Board for HortEducationBC (HEBC).

Industry-focused curriculum at colleges and universities are developing the necessary knowledge and skills to serve agri-business. “Career-focused technical programs can be a successful model to meet the needs of both career seekers and industry,” advised David

Davidson, Associate Dean of the School of Horticulture at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

The primary challenge facing the BC agricultural sector is the fact that labour supply will soon be outstripped by labour demand. “As the economy recovers, the demand for new farm workers will outstrip supply by as soon as 2015,” stated Jerry Mussio, Principal at BC-based Mussio Associates Inc.

Ravi Cheema, a fourth-generation farmer acknowledged the critical need for assistance to the BC farm industry to obtain labour with less difficulty, in order to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

Funding for assistance and training is currently available in BC: farmers can access nearly \$5,000 of funding under the BC Farm Business Advisory Services Program, and small employers in BC (with fewer than 50 employees) can access workplace training funding to train and up-skill their existing employees. The federal Strategic Training and Transition Fund (STTF) also provided BC with a one-time annual stimulus of \$25.6 million per year in the 2009/10 and 2010/11 fiscal years to build employee skills and training.

Service Canada’s Low Skilled Program is a beneficial way to fill labour gaps and to meet requirements for foreign farm labour. Estela Garcia, Vice Consul of the Mexican Consulate General in Vancouver, noted that Canada and Mexico have enjoyed a bilateral employment agreement since 1974, with management of the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) shared between both the Canadian and Mexican governments.



Human resource issues remain an enormous challenge to the BC agriculture sector. While there are numerous measures available to mitigate the impact of these issues, a looming crisis with the availability of both skilled and unskilled labour is apparent.

Quebec Regional Summary

May 18th 2010 – Longueuil, Quebec

On May 18, 2010, CAHRC's Executive Director and Communications Coordinator attended the Board of Directors meeting for *AGRIcarrières*, (AGRIcareers) the provincial sectoral council for agriculture in Quebec. The meeting was attended by the twelve members of the Board, which includes the executive and regional members of the *Union des producteurs agricoles* (Union of agricultural productions), as well as observers and resource personnel from *AGRIcarrières*.

CAHRC provided an overview of recent projects (both completed and currently underway) and a summary of the forums conducted in Atlantic Canada, Ontario and British Columbia.

AGRIcarrières is one of thirty sectoral workforce committees in Quebec that work towards the development of the workforce within their respective industry. *AGRIcarrières* is currently implementing its second strategic plan (2010-2013). Its vision, mission and values are as follows:

Vision: Encourage individuals to find fulfillment in the agricultural sector and to make human resource management a key factor for success in job improvement and the performance of agricultural operations.

Mission: Through co-operation and engagement, analyze, develop and share information, knowledge, solutions and tools with regards to human resource management in order to help increase the overall performance of Quebec's agricultural sector.

Values: Partnerships, transparency, quality, innovation and performance through the achievement of concrete results are the values *AGRIcarrières* has adopted to accomplish its mission.

CAHRC's Executive Director indicated that the purpose for attending the meeting was to determine how the Council should approach a consultation process with agricultural producers in the province of Quebec.

Since Quebec has had a sectoral council in place for several years, (founded in 1995) CAHRC also sought to determine what the national Council could provide *AGRIcarrières* and/or the producers in the province in terms of support and how best to engage them in this type of consultation process.

The Executive Director for *AGRIcarrières*, Hélène Varvaressos, referred to a report from two focus groups conducted in Quebec prior to the creation of CAHRC (2005) and suggested the document would be a useful resource for the Council to review in terms of the history of the sectoral council and the human resource support needs identified by producers in Quebec.

The 2005 report notes that "concerted action on issues related to human resources and their development is not new to the Quebec agricultural sector ... numerous measures regarding these issues have been experimented with and put in place for the past twenty years."



The report also indicates that Quebec shares similar issues to those raised at the recent forums held in other regions of Canada, including the shortage of qualified labour in several agricultural trades, rural youth drain combined with the aging population and decrease in family labour, and the specialization of occupations, which creates a shortage in competencies and labour for those specialized positions.

Key themes raised during the 2005 focus groups also included the need to improve the image of agriculture, of agricultural employment and working conditions; human resources management on farms; foreign workers; and skills development.

There was general agreement at the May 18th meeting that the image of the industry needs to be enhanced and that there are several issues, as indicated above, that can be examined and supported at the national level, through CAHRC. As one Board member indicated, “The debate needs to be raised at the national level to find solutions to problems that affect industry across the country.”

Major benefits that would be sought by Quebec include access to additional resources, both from a networking as well as a financial perspective. As such, CAHRC could complement activities initiated by the Quebec sectoral council. This was not only stated at the May 18 meeting but was also reflected in the in the 2005 report – increased funding at the federal level would enable provinces to develop programs that meet agriculture’s employment and skills development needs, while reflecting regional realities.

One *AGRIcarrières* Board member did assert that Quebec needs to have a stronger presence in national initiatives undertaken by industry. He felt that they are not directly involved in the preliminary aspects of some projects due to the challenges presented by the availability of interpretation and the translation of materials at the initial stages of projects (i.e. first drafts).

Although the general consensus at the meeting seemed to call for a status quo with regards to Quebec’s activities and the need for involvement at the national level, it is clear that there are issues that are shared and that there is room for increased collaboration.

The four pillars listed in *AGRIcarrières’* 2010-2013 strategic plan demonstrate the similarities and shared realities faced by the industry across the country: 1) Co-operation and engagement with stakeholders; 2) Promoting and sharing of information; 3) Training and valuing the workforce and human resource management; 4) Diversification the agricultural workforce.

National Forum Summary

June 15th – 16th, 2010 – Calgary, Alberta

“Agriculture is the only industry that touches every basic need that we have,” said Lance Johnson, President of Drive Solutions Corp. “Food, shelter, clothing, environment, water and fuel: we should be making sure people realize that.”

Canadian agriculture currently has a nine percent vacancy rate in employment positions, with a forecasted need for 50,000 jobs in the next five years. “As baby boomers get set to retire, all Canadian employment sectors can expect a



challenge,” emphasized Jim Knight, CEO of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC). “Canada is going to face a demographic wall, and I don’t think we really understand how profound it is,” he said. “We are a nation of jobs without people and people without jobs.”

“For the right organization, under the right circumstances, foreign worker recruitment can be an excellent way to build a workforce with staying power,” said Jeremy Janzen, Senior Director of Human Resources with HYTEK Ltd. “But first, organizations should consider their corporate culture to decide if foreign workers will be a fit.”

To fill the projected National farm labour gap, education and training opportunities (including college and university education) were discussed at the National CAHRC Forum, as well as apprenticeship programs and foreign labour programs.

Education, enthusiasm, diversification, success stories and effective communication are what the agriculture and agri-food industry needs to build human resources.

Education must start with the young. Competency-based programming can be successfully integrated into secondary-school curriculum: Alberta’s Green Certificate Program teaches practical, technical, hands-on skills to more than 1300 trainees, 85 percent of whom are high school students who earn significant credits toward their high school diplomas.

The 4-H program continues to evolve to serve its current membership of over 26,000 youth across Canada ages five to 12. “4-H in my mind is the best youth development program in existence,”

asserted Marie Logan, Past President of the 4-H Council. “4-H teaches young people to learn to do by doing: it’s a hands-on project-based program that encourages members to be problem solvers and critical thinkers. These are all skills needed for the 21st century.”

“It may be time to revisit how and what agricultural education is being taught to farmers,” suggested Don Connick, a trainer from the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST).

Operational diversification can provide sustainable business opportunities: Doug Livingstone successfully expanded a traditional Alberta farm operation to provide a 160-seat restaurant with a clear culinary experiential advantage.

Partnerships are the key drivers for Quebec’s labour market, said Pierre Lemieux, First Vice-President of the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) and CAHRC board member. Quebec currently has a provincial agency that is overseeing labour and the occupational qualification of its workforce. This Commission is made up of representatives from employer and worker organizations, the educational sector, community-based agencies and government agencies that each has a stake in the performance of Quebec’s labour market.

Quebec also has 30 sectoral workforce committees, which are primarily responsible for facilitating and enhancing how workers enter or re-enter the workforce, as well as labour retention. One of these sectoral committees, *AGRIcarrières*, implements projects in training and occupational



qualification, access to jobs in agriculture, and awareness campaigns for agricultural producers with regards to human resource management.

In her opening address, Teresa Woo-Paw, MLA for Calgary-Mackay and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Immigration noted the National difficulty facing both the agriculture sector, agricultural lifestyles, and human resource issues in general across all industries.

Education, training and industry awareness were determined to be the best opportunities to successfully address these human resource challenges in Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector.

5

Industry Recommendations



Engage Youth: Share Compelling Career- Opportunity Stories

If the agriculture and agri-food sector is to reach and inform a younger target audience, it must present a more attractive, compelling story to Canadian youth. Information about careers in farming needs to be integrated into school curricula of all K to 12 school programs across Canada, with more in-depth initiatives beginning as early as Grades six and seven.

There is a need to change the attitude of parents, teachers and guidance counsellors in order to offer a non-distorted view of farming. Existing farmers can play a role in the promoting and advocating career opportunities within the family farm or the industry in general.

These changes in public perception can build on the relationship of farming and its related industries, with renewable resources – an attraction for youth. Conventional agriculture – as well as alternative and niche sectors – need to tap into the moral purpose many young Canadians increasingly seek in their career choices.

A new image must be developed and communicated to youth about farming and food production as ‘cool’, diverse, interesting and potentially lucrative. Agriculture is a tech-friendly, forward-thinking industry comprised of many different career options, some of which have yet to be created.

There is an impending gap in available farm workers in Canada. Canadian youth must be engaged and made aware of career options in the agriculture and agri-food sector. Demographic realities prove that the agricultural sector is losing significant levels of expertise to retirement. The time is now to recruit new people into the industry to ensure the economic and social sustainability of the sector.

Provide Easily-Accessible Industry-Focused Training and Education

Training and education programs must meet the needs of both industry and students. The need for workers to receive post-secondary training increases as agriculture evolves in its size and complexity. The skills taught by post-secondary



institutions must be relevant to the needs of the employer and the industry.

Farm operations are growing increasingly dependent on high-tech systems and machinery, and mistakes with these systems are costly. There is an essential benefit to formal education and training. Ongoing training is also essential, as is the importance of basic human resource tools in performance management, and health and safety.

There is also a need to invest in leadership training and development. Rural communities across Canada generally suffer from a lack of effective leadership in their community. New leaders are needed to fill that gap, and must be identified and trained accordingly.

Careers in the agri-food sector must be viewed as relevant, exciting and reasonably lucrative. Accessible education and training opportunities must also be readily provided and supported to limit barriers to entry for those interested in the sector.

Apprenticeship is a Model that Works

On-the-job training through apprenticeship programming provides highly-skilled labour to Canada's agri-food sector, while simultaneously meeting student needs. Students earn money while they are learning, and employers benefit from knowing that their employees have the education and practical background to do the job effectively.

Because apprenticeship is a standardized program, it means that each apprentice receives the same training. This continuity within the trade designation provides a much greater level of industry confidence in the employee, and better workplace value that justifies the greater wage the employee will command in their career.

Most importantly, employees will be much better versed in many facets of farm operations, with particular focus on farm safety, farm food safety, and required regulations. With hands-on training and a journey person accreditation, skilled labour retention may become a lesser concern to employers over time, and employees may even be able to work between different regional businesses, creating full-time employment out of multiple part-time jobs.

Provide Effective Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Promotion

Participants in Canada's agri-food sector need to get better at self-promotion. They need to be vocal about the joys – and challenges – to the rest of the industry, as well as the general public.

Over the last several years there has been an attitude shift among Canadian consumers – a renewed willingness to seek out and purchase local farm products. Producers, industry organizations, and all levels of government must work together to promote the positive messages of buying local, while underlying the importance of economic sustainability for Canadian farmers.



At the same time, farmers that have found success in diversification, of newly-discovered production efficiencies, and even of new production opportunities, need to share their approach to further reveal the vibrancy of the sector.

There is great pride in farming and the Canadian agriculture industry. When promoting the attractiveness of careers in the sector, the industry must harness and communicate this pride, as well as the non-monetary benefits that are available in a career in agriculture.

Increased Immigration is Essential

Rural communities need human resources to remain sustainable in economic and social terms. If a rural community's labour pool suffers can be enhanced with an influx of new immigrants, then immigration must not only be supported from a regulatory point-of-view, but actively promoted.

Share Best Practices with Other Sectors

The passionate and competent individuals and groups that have already worked to address human resource challenges in Canada's agri-food sector must be encouraged to share that information across organizations and commodities for the benefit of the sector.

Canada's agri-food sector must also be willing to share its experience with groups in other industries, particularly those that are working to address their own human resources challenges. Sharing new approaches, market research, and successes and failures can help grow the pool of information and ideas that will ultimately help all sectors take a new approach to career promotion.

Communicate Within the Sector

Farmers face a changing industry, and must embrace new business management techniques, technologies and procedures. Regions across Canada share more commonalities than differences. All stakeholders in the agriculture and agri-food sector should continue to talk amongst themselves, sharing their successes, challenges and issues.

In light of new markets and the requirement to do many things differently, sound human resource management practices are the key to survival. Farm organizations must continue to call on their memberships for assistance.

Stakeholders should also talk to their CAHRC representatives, the Chair and CAHRC staff with their concerns, comments and suggestions. The information will find its way to the Board of Directors for consideration and further discussion. This will better ensure that effective, practical human resource knowledge and data will get into the hands of producers.



Conclusion

The Regional and National Forums held between February and June 2010 are a key element of the Council's Communications and Outreach initiatives. The goal is to communicate the importance of human resources to the success of primary agricultural organizations. Sound human resources in employment and skills development are essential to assist these organizations to prosper and to grow, especially with the increased competition that exists in today's globalized economy.

The forums sought to expand CAHRC's communications and awareness-raising efforts by building networks and partnerships with organizations, associations, and individuals with an interest in agriculture human resource issues and solutions. Another key goal of these events was to engage industry stakeholders in the Council's activities and to showcase the products and services developed by CAHRC.

The information obtained over the course of these forums will help to guide the continued efforts of the Council to address the human resource needs of primary agriculture in Canada.

6

Individual Presentation Summaries



Robert Bourgeois – Atlantic Forum

Owner, Verger Belliveau Orchard and Graduate of the Atlantic Agricultural Leadership Program

“Agricultural Leadership”

“Sometimes the best investment that can be made on the farm is an intangible investment in training,” advised Robert Bourgeois, the owner of Verger Belliveau Orchard in south-eastern New Brunswick and a graduate of the Atlantic Agricultural Leadership Program.

The program is an 18-month leadership development program for men and women working in Atlantic Canada’s agricultural and associated sectors.

“The Atlantic Agricultural Leadership Program opened my mind to see that we are not the only farmers who need to find new ways of doing things,” said Bourgeois. “We all have the same problems, we have the same issues, and we have the same successes.”

Bourgeois graduated from the Atlantic Agricultural Leadership Program in 2002. “I thought I knew a lot about agriculture, but I was amazed at what I learned,” he admitted. “It’s not just farmers in the program, but government people, bankers, dealers – all people you can learn from.”

Bourgeois said the program helped him make the changes he wanted in his own operation. It helped him understand how to present his ideas to his partners, because he was able to see that the status quo would no longer work for them.

“I know the easiest thing to do on a farm is to buy a tractor or to buy a half-ton,” Bourgeois acknowledged. “You see it, and you can use it. To send somebody to take a course, when you lose them for days, and it’s going to cost you – it’s hard to put money and time there.”

Bourgeois spoke supportively of the networking, teamwork and camaraderie that flowed from the program, and noted that the diversity of ages and backgrounds represented by the people in the course contributed to a valuable experience.



Bourgeois has diversified his operation and has recently added cider manufacturing, educational youth tours, a you-pick program and a wine making program (which recently produced a dry pear wine that won the top Canadian honour in its category).

“The Atlantic Agricultural Leadership Program brought me a lot of new and different ways of looking at things,” Bourgeois stated. “There are always problems to solve.” He found so much value in the course that he has since paid for members of his staff to attend the program.

Curriculum details for the Atlantic Agricultural Leadership Program are available at <http://www.agleaders.ca>.

The Honourable Claudette Bradshaw – Atlantic Forum

Former Federal Minister of Labour and Member of Parliament for Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe

“Perspective on Human Resource / Employment Issues in Atlantic Canada”

“We must start figuring out how we can hire people to do the work that we need to get done, even if that means utilizing traditionally untapped human resources,” said the Honourable Claudette Bradshaw. “We need to start building our rural communities, and you can’t afford to have people leave your communities anymore.”

In addition to her work in Ottawa as Member of Parliament for Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe from 1997 to 2006 where she served as Minister of Labour, Multiculturalism, Status of Women, Literacy,

and Minister responsible for Homelessness Initiatives in Canada, the Honourable Claudette Bradshaw has also worked in the community-based, non-profit sector for 27 years. There, she developed and operated youth services, community social services and programs for at-risk children.

“It is not good enough to build four-lane highways to rural areas, expecting that everyone will come to work in our big cities,” Bradshaw said. “Canada is rural. Canada has so much potential in its rural communities that it is unbelievable. But we all have to work together on this.”

Bradshaw notes the issue is not social, but economic. She was critical of businesses that claim to have limited access to local labour.

Bradshaw spoke of the need for better education and understanding to help farmers employ and engage special-needs and at-risk youth in rural communities. “Community colleges and institutions must revisit their programs and curriculum to embrace a broader set of student needs,” she said.

She gave several anecdotes about mentally-challenged workers she had met who, under the mentorship of the farm owner, were able to be successful farm labourers. The ability of farm owners to adapt to the needs of these workers turned into a win-win situation for both the farmer and his employees.

Bradshaw also provided examples of the inherent economic potential in individuals from marginal groups that have often been overlooked by society, including ex-inmates and at-risk youth.



Ravi Cheema – British Columbia Forum

Chair, BC Young Farmers Association

“Hiring and Keeping Employees”

With reliable local farm labour in short supply, Ravi Cheema had reached a crossroads: look elsewhere for farm labour, or continue to lose processing contracts because the farm couldn't produce crops with consistent quality.

“In the early days, we had an abundance of local labour, primarily Indo-Canadian,” noted Cheema, a fourth-generation farmer from Aldergrove BC and Chair of BC Young Farmers Association. “But as the business grew in the 90s, we lost much of the labour force to retirement and to greenhouses and mills.”

Crop quality went down as issues of timing came into play, and Cheema's processors started looking elsewhere.

“It's a lot cheaper for us to hire local labour, but as soon as they find a job that's 'better' than the farming industry, they move on,” Cheema stated. “I think we're at the bottom of the totem pole, since nobody wants to work seven days a week, or work in the sun, or be crouching down pulling weeds.”

In 2003, the Cheema farm embraced the Mexican labour program, which he acknowledged as a positive experience, although it presented some language barriers.

“I can speak a little bit of Spanish and get by, but trying to tell an employee to pick this leaf off where the sun comes, and pick this percentage of green off a pepper – translating that into Spanish was very difficult,” he said.

Cheema later sourced workers from India through the National Occupational Classification (NOC) program. Language barriers were not an issue, and Cheema felt more support from the local Indo-Canadian community.

“I treat my foreign workers like I would want to be treated. I take them shopping on Saturday, and I take them to the doctor, but it is a lot of added effort,” Cheema asserted.

Cheema noted that global competition is only going to heat up, and more needs to be done to keep labour issues at bay.

“We are losing our production to Mexico, the US, China, and to India and other places in the world,” Cheema advised. “The BC farm industry needs help in finding labour and obtaining it with less difficulty, to remain competitive in a global marketplace.”

Don Connick – National Forum

Vice President, Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan and CAHRC Board Member

“Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology On-Site Training”

“It may be time to revisit how and what agricultural education is being taught to farmers,” suggested Don Connick, a trainer from the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIASST).

Connick is an instructor for the pesticide applicator certification program. He said his particular course is taught in one of two ways: a home-study course, and an in-class course. The



cost for participants to study at home is much lower than the in-class version, but Connick noted that it has a significantly lower completion rate.

“I believe there is real value in interaction between students, and between students and their instructor,” he said. “I believe that students leave my class not only with knowledge of safety, but with an attitude of safety. They leave not only with the knowledge of environmental impact, but with an appreciation for the environment.”

Connick noted that the pesticide certification course has a captive audience, because it is required learning before a farmer can receive a license to commercially apply pesticides. However, the other extension courses that were once offered by SIAST, are no longer offered due to lack of interest.

Connick said that the aging farm population in Saskatchewan is one reason for the difference, and the shrinking rural population provides less of a rural base to draw upon. But he also suggested that almost all of the young people currently farming in Saskatchewan are employed full time off the farm, and their time is at a premium: time and cost are among the greatest barriers to education.

“The challenge for all of us here is to come up with some solutions,” Connick said. “Maybe we have to rethink extension education. Maybe we have to rethink the whole structure of education. We need to develop the hunger to never stop learning.”

More information about the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology is available on the SIAST web site at <http://www.siastr.sk.ca/>.

Cyr Couturier – Atlantic Forum

Research Scientist and Chair of the MSc Aquaculture Program at the School of Fisheries, Centre for Aquaculture and Seafood Development and CAHRC Board Member

“Marine Institute at Memorial University of Newfoundland”

“All of the issues you face in farming the land, we face in farming the aquatic environment,” said Cyr Couturier, Research Scientist and Chair of the MSc Aquaculture Program at the School of Fisheries, Centre for Aquaculture and Seafood Development.

“We have to worry about fish health as you do land-based animal health, feed management, reproductive technology, environmentally sustainable management – they all factor in farming the seas or fresh water.”

Half of the seafood consumed today around the world is from farmed sources. “We will have a 30-million tonne shortfall of food from the aquatic environment if we don’t farm it,” noted Couturier. “That’s the reality. To feed humans, we need to farm on land and in the oceans.”

Canadian aquaculture is now a \$2 billion dollar industry, farming in 10 provinces and one territory. It employs more than 18,000 people across the country in well-paying, year round jobs, with an average labourer earning a base salary of approximately \$14 per hour.

Common challenges between aquaculture and agriculture include the fact that both industries are fundamentally rural: 98 percent of Canada’s coasts are considered rural and recruiting and retaining people to work the farms can be difficult.



Student recruitment for aquaculture training programs is also faced by public misconceptions that must be addressed: a common perception is that there is little work in aquaculture, but the Memorial University program boasts 100 percent job placement for its graduates.

Unlike land-based farming, aquaculture is mostly first-generation, with no family history in Canada. Potential workers must often be attracted to the industry with no prior knowledge of, or interest in aquaculture.

Four colleges and universities in Atlantic Canada currently offer aquaculture training programs. Industry professionals are routinely used at the Marine Institute of Memorial University in St. John's to provide additional expertise and leadership.

Canadian aquaculture currently uses only 100 kilometers of Canada's 50,000 kilometres of coastline. "Just doubling the space that is available for aquaculture would increase the value of the industry to \$6 Billion, employing lots of young people," Couturier said.

The web site of the Fisheries and Marine Institute of Memorial University of Newfoundland is <http://www.mi.mun.ca/>.

Jennifer Curtis – British Columbia Forum

Industry Specialist, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

"Farm Business Advisory Services Program"

Farmers can access nearly \$5,000 of funding under the BC Farm Business Advisory Services Program, which can go a long way in helping

them better understand the financial situation on their farm and make more informed business planning decisions.

Modelled on the BC Environmental Farm Plan, the program enables a farmer to do a self-assessment to determine a Farm Action Plan and then apply for Farm Business Advisory Services. From there, farmers will complete a basic farm financial assessment.

"Participants need to complete the self-assessment so they are better prepared to start working with the farm advisor when they get to that step," said Jennifer Curtis, Industry Specialist with the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. "We consider this the first building block to doing further assessments."

Tier two is specialized business planning with nine associated business areas. Program participants can get assistance with planning in those areas.

"The biggest area of concern with BC farms is in succession planning with the aging population of farm operators," noted Curtis. "To address the minimum deliverables in the basic current farm financial assessment, a farm would need to prepare an outline of the people needed to operate the business, along with basic job descriptions and an organizational chart."

This outline would identify existing skills that are available in the operation, as well as emerging risks and human resource issues. It would also include a plan for attracting and retaining labour, and compensation strategies, in order to support the development of an action plan.



“There is currently a list of eligible advisors around the province.” Curtis advised. “They are ready to start working with farmers.”

Further information about the BC Farm Business Advisory Services Program is available at: http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/busmgmt/FB_Advisory_Services.html.

David Davidson – British Columbia Forum

Associate Dean, School of Horticulture, Kwantlen Polytechnic University

“Horticulture Programs at Kwantlen”

“Career-focused technical programs can be a successful model to meet the needs of both career seekers and industry,” said David Davidson, Associate Dean of the School of Horticulture at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

Established in 1993, Kwantlen Polytechnic University is a suburban school geared toward providing career-focused technical programs at its four campuses in BC’s Metro Vancouver region. Among other programs, Kwantlen features an active horticulture managerial program. It is also the primary training program for the Horticulture Apprenticeship Trades Program, teaching about 160 apprentices each year.

“We attract a lot of young men in their early 20s who haven’t thought earlier about what they want to do for the rest of their lives,” he noted. “The single-best recruiting method for horticulture education is an economic downturn: with softening in the economy, enrolment was bumped up 30%.”

Many of these new students are more career-focused than those entering right out of high school.

Kwantlen provides industry-focused programs with a prescriptive curriculum that links business and the science of horticulture in the diploma program. From a recruiting standpoint, Kwantlen is unique in linking programs together: the school of business is partnered with the Horticulture programs to provide joint degrees with joint focus on business, human resource management or marketing. Trades certifications can now follow through to diploma and degree programs as well, without requiring repetition of course work.

Davidson said the power of the Kwantlen curriculum lies with the students and their needs. “Our curriculum must match what the students see for themselves in terms of a career, but this is not a conflict between student needs and industry needs; it is just a different language. Our programs are aimed to meet both student interests and industry interests.”

Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s Web site is www.kwantlen.ca.

Ken Forth – Ontario Forum

President and Board member of F.A.R.M.S., Board member of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Association”

Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services”

“Canadian farmers hire 25,000 foreign seasonal agricultural workers every year to help with harvest, thanks to a tried and true system dating



back several decades,” said Ken Forth, President and Board member of Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services (FARMS). The practice was formalized in the mid 1960s when a group of young apple growers from Georgian Bay hired Jamaicans to harvest their crop because they were short on seasonal labour in Canada.

By 1966, Canada had its first bilateral agreement with Jamaica and brought 264 Jamaican nationals into the Georgian Bay area. What followed were agreements with Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, Mexico and, eventually, the Commonwealth of Eastern Caribbean States.

In 1987, when the federal government was looking to offload administration for the program, Forth said it was an opportunity to improve it even further.

“At that time, the program had a limit of 5,000 people: we wanted it to be need-driven, not by quota. We also wanted to be the sole provider of this program if we were going to take it on,” noted Forth.

Farmers participating in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) must be able to guarantee a minimum of 240 hours of work, provide annually inspected housing at no cost to the worker; and they must meet all provincial agricultural labour standards, including workers compensation and provincial health coverage. Foreign governments are responsible for recruitment: they screen workers to make sure they are a fit, both in health and in attitude.

Jamaica, often seen as a leading contributor to the program, has 6,000 workers in Ontario and seven liaison officers on the road to make sure

there are no issues. FARMS even owns its own travel company, which allows them to negotiate directly with airlines for the 32,000 open-ended tickets the program uses annually.

“This program is without a doubt a model program for the world on migrant workers,” Forth advised.

Further information about the FARMS program is detailed at <http://www.farmsontario.ca/>.

Estela Garcia – British Columbia Forum

Vice Consul, Mexican Consulate General (Vancouver)

“Foreign Worker Program”

“Canada has a proud history of leadership in its commitment to develop quality, civilized labour relationships with Mexico,” stated Estela Garcia, Vice Consul to the Mexican Consulate General. But employers hiring “guest workers” need to be fully versed on what the process entails.

Canada and Mexico have enjoyed a bi-national employment agreement since 1974, with management of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) shared between both the Canadian and Mexican governments.

Garcia noted that the Consulate of Mexico Guidelines for SAWP 2010 and all commitment documents and employer agreements must be carefully read and understood by both employers and workers.

“We suggest that you listen, learn and exchange,” advised Garcia.



Among her suggestions, Garcia emphasized that employers should listen to workers' needs to help them to thrive during their six to eight months in Canada. Employers also need to learn about their employees' labour experience, and exchange ideas about how to adjust experiences to the employer's own operation. Employers and employees are also encouraged to exchange ideas to help make them more comfortable in an unfamiliar climate, language and culture.

Employers must be fully aware of the demands on their time and resources by hiring guest workers. "There are language and cultural challenges, but also be aware of worker expectations: there must be a commitment to recognize contributions," Garcia asserted.

A simple but critical challenge is to ensure that readily-available printed information is provided for the workers to understand the employer's operation and expectations. Information must be accurate and well-translated.

"It is very important to be sure that translations are really meaningful and truthful: without cultural understanding, words are not going to say much," Garcia noted.

She said to be sure to use advice from government agencies, and invite them to provide preventative training. Respect is a key ingredient to maintaining good communication: pulling together business and human resource goals is very feasible with frank dialogue and trusted relationships among stakeholders.

Information, forms, contracts and other documents required by employers to hire foreign workers in Canada (including SAWP) are currently available at: http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/foreign_workers/fwp_forms.shtml.

Jack and Christine Greydanus – Ontario Forum

Graduates of AALP and Producers / Hatching Eggs and Sweet Peppers

"The AALP Experience and Benefits of the Program"

For husband and wife farmers Jack and Christine Greydanus, the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) provided an invaluable opportunity for a number of "ah ha" moments that helped them understand what's going on around the world, and gave context to their own operation.

Now managed by the Rural Ontario Institute (ROI), AALP consists of eight seminars and two study tours, for a cross section of 30 participants that hail from different areas of the province from varying age groups, and walks of life.

Jack and Christine participated in two different classes, doubling their experience and knowledge base of international agricultural issues.

"AALP intentionally takes classes to different areas of the world to grow the knowledge pool of leaders in Ontario agriculture," said Christine. Jack noted that his class' tour to farms in Mexico and California provided an eye-opening experience about commercial agricultural production, which inspired him to expand their home operation.



"I learned I needed to go big or go home," Jack stated. "Production agriculture in areas like Mexico is only going to get better, and whether it's strawberries or heads of lettuce, transportation is cheap. You have to be part of the chain, and Wal-Mart doesn't talk to small farmers."

The couple now runs a 13-acre pepper greenhouse operation and a six-barn poultry operation in Petrolia, Ontario. Christine noted the people and situations AALP students are exposed to provide first-hand experience, which is part of the program's success.

"It's hard to do leadership training," she said. "AALP allowed us to observe and identify what skills and talents others used. It helped us learn when to take action and how to engage others to get the end result you're looking for."

The Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program in Ontario provides detailed information at <http://www.aalp.on.ca/>.

Paul Gumprich – British Columbia Forum

Faculty Member, University of the Fraser Valley

"Agriculture Programs at the Post-Secondary Level"

"Student recruitment is a growing challenge at the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV)," acknowledges Paul Gumprich, a UFV faculty member.

The school's programs include one- and two-year programs in livestock production and horticulture crop production and protection.

Programs continue to evolve thanks to an advisory board that listens to industry and student needs. As of 2008, the University also offers a four-year Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration for Agriculture Management.

"There are only limited numbers to go around, and over the last 10 to 15 years, I have seen the students change," noted Gumprich. "Now many students do not come from farm backgrounds, but they want to learn."

He noted that these students will not be candidates for labour, but rather will be those looking for transitional jobs as they work their way up in their careers.

One of the key recruitment tools for UFV is that many of its instructors are actually working in the industry. He suggested that it provides students with a better sense of industry opportunities, and their rights as workers or as managers.

"We often see students moving from the one-year Certificate to the two-year Diploma," Gumprich asserted, "particularly when they understand the impact that will have on their pay ranges and job opportunities. Some of those even want to continue further with their education and do so quite successfully."

In response to industry needs, the University has also set up a series of Essentials Certificates such as Berry Production Essentials Certificate, Integrated Pest Management, Current Agricultural Practices, Field Vegetable Production, and Milker Technician Certificate.



Students learn practical skills through hands-on training. Students also gain work experience with an annual three-week student practicum that connects students with industry professionals.

“We emphasize practical training as well as classroom theory,” Gumprich stated. “We show them what agriculture is.”

The Web site for the University of the Fraser Valley is at <http://www.ufv.ca/home.htm>.

Bill Hardy – British Columbia Forum

Chair of the Board, HortEducationBC

“Industry Training Authority Apprenticeship Programs”

“The skills that are learned through trial and error are far more valuable than what can be learned in a lecture hall, and that makes apprenticeship a viable option for agriculture,” advised Bill Hardy, Chair of the Board for HortEducationBC (HEBC), and a passionate promoter of apprenticeship programs.

“Apprenticeship, is about on-the-job training,” Hardy stated. “You learn by practising and practising, and becoming proficient. People are coming into colleges with little or no technical training or background. Maybe for some of these trades, an apprenticeship model works.”

HEBC was established as one of three provincial Industry Training Organizations (ITOs) that assisted in redefining apprenticeship programs in the province once the Industry Training Authority (ITA) was established.

After ITA’s inception, BC saw a threefold increase in employers participating in the program. Just fewer than 6,100 credentials were issued last year, up from 2,300 credentials issued in 2003. And, most critically, youth apprenticeship went from 861 individuals in 2003 to over 5,000 in the same period.

“Industry representatives need to determine if apprenticeship will fit their model,” he said. “The beauty of handing apprenticeship over to industry and the ITA is that industry will tell us what it needs.”

Hardy acknowledged that agriculture needs young people to become interested in these trades, but it is earning potential – not always agricultural education – that holds them back.

“It can be a poorly-paid trade to work in unless you own a farm,” Hardy admitted. “When someone goes to school for four years, they expect a lot more money, which becomes an issue when there is so much demand on farmers to keep prices down.”

The HEBC Web site is at <http://www.horteducationbc.com/>.

Jeremy Janzen – National Forum

Senior Director of Human Resources, Hytek Ltd.

“HR Management of Foreign Workers – The Hytek Approach”

For the right organization, under the right circumstances, foreign worker recruitment can be an excellent way to build a workforce with staying power,” advised Jeremy Janzen, Senior Director of



Human Resources with Hytek Ltd. “But first, organizations should consider their corporate culture to decide if foreign workers will be a fit.”

Janzen acknowledged that looking overseas to fill some positions was a commonly used practice for Hytek Ltd., a Manitoba-based hog production company. Hytek had a history of welcoming staff members from other countries, but Janzen shared some of the company’s lessons learned after they looked to other countries to secure the bulk of the additional 200 people it needed to bolster its workforce when the company acquired Springhill Farms in Neepawa Manitoba, population: 3,500.

“Before we started, we knew that when we brought foreign workers in, it wouldn’t be effective unless the Springhill Farms and Hytek cultures were aligned,” admitted Janzen. “Newcomers are already facing so much change that if the employment family they’re coming into isn’t all on the same page, they may not want to stay.”

With existing staff at the Springhill Farms site, Janzen acknowledged that change management was a key element in getting everyone on board. “We had to help people and give them the heads up that a lot of change was coming,” he said.

Although there are firms that will recruit foreign workers on behalf of a business, Janzen noted that as a company, Hytek prefers a more hands-on approach. Hytek representatives visited the countries from which they were recruiting, which he said was helpful in order for the representatives to understand the culture of the people they were recruiting, as well as differences in each country’s immigration process.

During the entire recruitment process, Janzen suggests that managing – and exceeding – expectations can go a long way in earning trust, and encouraging long-term or permanent residency. “If you tell them when you recruit them that they’ll have housing and transportation to the plant arranged, you need to do it,” he said. “It’s not always about recruitment, it’s about settlement too.”

Janzen asserted that one of the reasons for Springhill Farms’ success with the program was the partnerships and key players they involved in the process. Hytek engaged local leaders including union representatives, religious leaders and business people. By involving them in the process, the community took ownership over welcoming and settling the new families.

Other important partnerships included one with the Province, which assisted in establishing a settlement office in Neepawa to accommodate the volume of workers coming into the region.

“So many people have already invented the wheel that it’s almost never necessary to do so. Just partner with those people,” Janzen advised.

Most importantly, Janzen suggests that recruiting foreign workers successfully means planning for permanency.

“Many are fathers and mothers who want a strong future for their families,” he said. “Have a program to help settle their families, and you have a better chance of having them become a member of your community.”



In 2009 the Province of Manitoba awarded Hytek and Springhill Farms the *Capturing Opportunities* award.

Hytek Ltd. was the subject of a Farm Profiles, completed as part of the Labour Market Research of farms with revenues over \$100,000. The Hytek profile can be viewed here: <http://www.cahrc-ccrha.ca/docs/Hytek%20Farm%20Profile.pdf>

Lance Johnson – National Forum

President, Drive Solutions Corp.

“Agricultural Awareness: Farm Labour Shortages and Renewal Issues”

Lance Johnson, President of Drive Solutions Corp, dreams of a day when someone he meets at a cocktail party thinks farming is as cool as rock stardom. He is an enthusiastic agricultural advocate who sees the beginning of a shift in how people think about the sector.

“Agriculture is the only industry that touches every basic need that we have,” he said. “Food, shelter, clothing, environment, water and fuel: we should be making sure people realize that.”

Johnson recently worked with The Canadian Association of Diplomas in Agriculture (CADAP), a Canada-wide association of colleges and universities to create *Ditch the Office*, an agriculture career-awareness campaign. The campaign’s Web site requires visitors to engage in agricultural education activities and answer questions that are posted on the site. Each correct answer earns participants points to be used toward a contest. The Web site also has representation on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Johnson suggested the widespread disconnect in today’s society is a round-the-world phenomenon that’s due for a turnaround. He suggested agriculture could be a solution.

“There’s power in connecting with nature and animals,” Johnson said. He recounts a recent event at a farm near Edmonton where 7,000 people lined up to collect a small bag of potatoes from a farmer’s field. The appeal, many suggested, was that they were able to get their hands dirty while picking food from the earth.

Johnson’s research showed 79 million people playing the popular Facebook game Farmville, in which they farm virtual crops. “People are connecting in different ways,” Johnson said. The concern is that the virtual environment it creates will cause people to have a distorted perception of farming and the challenges that exist in the real world. “This isn’t what we want,” he stated. “but it is an opportunity to talk to and engage people in a dialogue about agriculture: right now they don’t really know what it is.”

Review the information and join the contest at <http://www.ditchtheoffice.ca/>.

Jim Knight – National Forum

President and CEO, Association of Canadian Community Colleges

“Agriculture Programs at the Post-Secondary Level”

“As baby boomers get set to retire, all Canadian employment sectors can expect a challenge,” said Jim Knight, CEO of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC).



Canadian agriculture currently has a nine percent vacancy rate in employment positions, with a forecasted need for 50,000 jobs in the next five years. The construction sector will need 400,000 highly skilled people in that same period. Canada's medical sector is experiencing a similar shortage *right now*.

"Canada is going to face a demographic wall, and I don't think we really understand how profound it is," Knight stated. "We are a nation of jobs without people and people without jobs."

One reason for such shortages, Knight believes, is the all-encompassing use of technology in everyday life. "Technology is a rich, wonderful resource; but it's making our lives more difficult and requiring a higher degree of education and a higher skill level for those who must work with technology," Knight said.

While in recent decades Canadians could begin careers with little or no post-secondary education, it is not the case today. "As we go forward we know that employers will require a much higher level of education," Knight asserted. "We have to ensure that the workforce has the skills that will keep our economy moving ahead."

Despite our technological sophistication, Knight noted that Canada's productivity level has been dropping quickly. Where 50 years ago Canada was the third-most productive country in the world, we now sit at 19th. Knight suggests that immigration will help, but Canada needs to get better at attracting the right immigrants with the right skills.

Another solution, he suggests, is to encourage more Canadians to get the skills they need.

"We need to reach out to every Canadian to find a way to get them into a college or university so they can have the capacity to contribute economically to our future," Knight said. "If we fail in this mission, our country will be much poorer. We have to campaign for education."

Paul LeBlanc – Atlantic Forum

Manager, Apple Growers of NB and Executive Director, NB Pork

"Labour Market Information on Recruitment and Retention"

For the first time, agricultural organizations across Canada have quantitative data that will provide the ammunition they need to better-develop strategic planning and lobbying efforts.

The information is now available thanks to the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC), which received funding to research existing data and conduct new research.

"There has been a large historical gap between the amount of available national labour data, and the lack of existing formats to structure the data in order to make it useful," said Paul LeBlanc, Manager of Apple Growers of New Brunswick and NB Pork.

"Labour is an issue that is different not only from one province to another, not only from one commodity to another, but even within different regions and communities," indicated LeBlanc. "I believe that is where the answers need to come from – the communities and the regional farm organizations. We need to put the resources with the people who are living the issues."



A key learning that CAHRC gained from the research was the fact that nine percent of all jobs in primary agriculture in Canada are currently unfilled. In Atlantic Canada the vacancy rate is highest at 17 percent, Quebec ranking lowest at six percent.

LeBlanc noted the unfilled jobs are non-seasonal, full-time positions. Employment needs are also expected to increase in the next five years, leading to a shortfall of more than 50,000 people in Canada.

“The value of this study is that it provides numbers that we need to quantify facts,” LeBlanc said. “This tells us something we already knew, but we now have the numbers to prove it. This is a starting point: this is the information we can use to prove these facts to the government, in order to define strategies we can use to address these problems.”

For more information about the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council, and for additional information on labour market research undertaken by the Council, please visit <http://www.cahrc-ccrha.ca/LabourMarketInfo.html>.

Pierre Lemieux – National Forum

First Vice-President of the Union des producteurs agricoles (union of agricultural producers), and CAHRC Board Member

“Recruitment and Retention – The Quebec Experience”

“Partnerships are the key drivers for Quebec’s labour market,” stated Pierre Lemieux, First Vice-President of the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) and CAHRC board member.

Data taken from the Profil de la main-d’oeuvre agricole au Québec 2007 (2007 profile of the Quebec agricultural labour force) prepared by the Ministère de l’Agriculture des Pêcheries et de l’Alimentation du Québec (Quebec ministry of agriculture, fisheries and food) suggests there are 125,000 people working on 30,000 farms in Quebec.

The Province of Quebec has a provincial agency overseeing labour and the occupational qualification of its workforce: *Commission des partenaires du marché du travail* (labour market partners commission).

“Created in 1997, this commission is the provincial joint action program made up of representatives from employer and worker associations, the educational sector, community-based agencies and government agencies who all want to improve the performance of Quebec’s labour market,” Lemieux said. Lemieux sits on this commission, an opportunity he said that allows him to voice the needs of the agricultural community.

The Province also has 30 sectoral workforce committees, which are Quebec’s solution to current issues facing the labour market. The committees are primarily responsible for facilitating and enhancing how workers enter or re-enter the workforce, as well as labour retention.

One of the sectoral committees is *AGRIcarrières* (AGRIcareers), with a mission to analyze, develop and share information, knowledge, solutions and tools with regards to human resource management. *AGRIcarrières* implements significant projects especially in training and occupational qualification, access to jobs in



agriculture, and awareness campaigns for agricultural producers with regards to human resource management.

Given the lack of on-the-farm training programs for agricultural workers, Quebec's farmers can access a *Programme d'apprentissage en milieu de travail* (on-the-farm training program). This training takes place entirely on the farm, and allows trainees to acquire skills by matching them with more experienced workers.

AGRlcarrières was given the mandate of developing professional standards and training tools for occupations in operations in which needs have been identified. Three sets of professional standards have been developed for three occupational groups: dairy production, pork production and greenhouse production.

For worker recruitment, farming operations can call upon the services of the *Centres d'emploi agricoles* (agricultural employment centers). These centres were created in the 1970s at the request of the provincial and federal governments and were funded by government until the 1990s.

The 13 centres located throughout Quebec are primarily responsible for recruitment, selection and placement of specialized workers and labourers in temporary, seasonal and permanent jobs. The centres have also developed a specific expertise in the organization of bus transportation of workers thanks to an assistance program from the *Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec*. Human resource management is becoming increasingly significant as a factor impacting the profitability of agricultural operations.

Given the magnitude of current issues concerning the workplace, and the challenges to overcome to deal with these problems (such as a scarcity of available labour and the difficulty in recruiting and maintaining workers), UPA works on an ongoing basis to expand the tools which are essential for improving the overall performance of Quebec's agricultural sector with regards to human resources.

For more information on the Union des producteurs agricoles: <http://www.upa.qc.ca/ScriptorWeb/scripto.asp?resultat=635205>

For more information on *AGRlcarrières*: <http://www.agricarrieres.qc.ca/Index.aspx?lang=FR-CA>

Marilyn Leonidas – British Columbia Forum

Business Expertise Consultant, Service Canada
“An Overview of the Low Skilled Program”

Service Canada's Low Skilled Program is a beneficial way to meet requirements for foreign farm labour, but first employers must have jobs assessed to ensure they don't detract from local community labour opportunities.

Marilyn Leonidas, Business Expertise Consultant with Service Canada, located in Langley, provided a comprehensive overview of the Low Skilled Program process. Current program streams include the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) and the Pilot Project for Occupations Requiring Lower Levels of Education (NOC C/D), which are provided to Canadian



employers who wish to hire temporary foreign agricultural workers.

“While employers are afforded flexibility by being able to access both program streams, there is often confusion when it comes to respecting specific program conditions and requirements,” Leonidas said. “The future will be a harmonized program stream to bring the two programs together, so that we do away with things like wage disparity.”

Leonidas detailed the criteria that Service Canada officers must consider when assessing a job offer. These include the occupation in which the foreign worker will be employed, the wages and working conditions, advertisement and recruitment efforts of the employer, the benefits to the labour market, and any conflict or consultations that involve unions or labour disputes.

An employer must apply for a Labour Market Opinion (LMO) before he or she can hire a foreign worker or get pre-approval to hire a large number of workers. There are five steps to the Service Canada process in assessing an application to develop an LMO that is determined to be positive, neutral or negative to the local labour market. A positive LMO will show that there is a need for the foreign worker to fill the job offered by the employer, and that there is no Canadian worker available to do the job. Once approved, foreign workers have six months from the LMO confirmation to make an application for a labour post abroad.

Detailed information on the program and the application process is available at www.labour.gov.bc/esb.

Doug Livingstone – National Forum

Val Terra Ranch / Red Feather Ridge

“Leadership – Expanding a Traditional Farm into Agri-Tourism”

Caught up in the devastation of BSE, Doug Livingstone’s family ranch went from having discretionary cash to a \$100,000 loss in one year. Livingstone said he was reluctant to let the heritage and way of life go, so the family operation began cutting overhead costs and looking for alternatives.

They took advantage of a funding program offered by Ducks Unlimited and realized they had a natural advantage at their ranch. The topography, native grasses, bird species and other wildlife, and the quiet of the farm, were qualities many people find desirable. The family had some personnel advantages too: among them, Livingstone’s wife had been a caterer for 25 years, and his son was a chef before returning to the family farm. They began exploring their options for agri-tourism.

“When you do new ventures you build bridges,” Livingstone said. “You deal with your neighbours, because they are always impacted by what you do. We were interested in starting a new venture that would bring people into our area.”

Next, Livingstone earned the co-operation of the county. County employees provided Livingstone with the option of applying for a less complicated permit classification to approve the new venture.

Now, the Livingstone Ranch boasts a 6,000 square foot building with two levels that seats 160 people, and includes a state-of-the-art commercial kitchen.



“We started out serving people with good food and providing them with an experience,” Livingstone said. “We have pictures around the walls in the building, and they start some interesting conversations with people. They really enjoy the scenery we take for granted on the farm.” Livingstone has a five-year business plan that includes building some cabins for organizational retreats. “We’re trying to leave a heritage,” he noted, “and it’s the diversification we’re really enjoying.”

Marie Logan – National Forum

Past President, 4-H Council

“The Role of 4-H in Training Canada’s Future Farmers”

With a long history of youth and leadership development, the 4-H program is the oldest and most recognized youth development program in Canada. Since its inception in Canada in 1913, two million youth have taken part in the program. Today the program serves more than 26,000 members across Canada ages five to 12.

“Our farming operation is a living and working example of the benefits and training that come from 4-H,” said Marie Logan, Past President of the 4-H Council. Logan’s own experience with 4-H began as a participant who was attracted by the opportunity to raise a calf. But, she was quickly exposed to the skills development in other areas, including public speaking, leadership, running meetings, record keeping, and critical thinking.

Logan stated that a recent 4-H alumni study showed that 40 percent worked in jobs related to agriculture, 82 percent grow or produce

agricultural products, and 31 percent have a bachelor’s degree. “4-H in my mind is the best youth development program in existence,” she said.

The program continues to evolve. Among new initiatives, Logan advised that an Aboriginal 4-H program has been developed. As well, new initiatives such as an on-farm mentorship program, a partnership with Canadian Young Farmers, will give 4-H participants the opportunity to live and work on a farm for two weeks.

“To address the growing gap in need for younger farmers, the 4-H program can play a role,” she stated. “It teaches young people to learn to do by doing. It’s a hands-on, project-based program that encourages members to try things, be problem solvers and critical thinkers. These are all skills needed for the 21st century.”

However, Logan warns that the enthusiasm for agriculture can only take the sector so far. “Today’s young farmer is a business person,” she said. The 4 Hs are head, health, heart and hands. Today, a young farmer may want to enter agriculture with their heart and hands, but in their head they know it is only possible when there is a secure and healthy future for them.” The Web site for the Canadian 4-H Council is at <http://www.4-h-canada.ca/>.



Jennifer MacDonald – Atlantic Forum

2nd Vice President, NB Agricultural Alliance

“Transforming Agriculture Together – Update on NB Agriculture Summit”

“Our nation was built on agriculture, and we need to get those roots back,” advised Jennifer MacDonald, 2nd Vice President of the New Brunswick Agricultural Alliance.

MacDonald was one of 52 leaders from a pool of producers, growers, retailers, processors, farm organizations, industry associations and academics who participated in the New Brunswick Agriculture Summit, held in April 2008.

“We have to re-educate our public. That is one of the reasons why the Agriculture Summit in New Brunswick was so important: it was an opportunity to bring together all aspects of the sector.”

Following the summit, six task groups were established in the areas of infrastructure, innovation (research and development), land and environment, marketing, profitability, and people. A government-appointed 27-person round table on agriculture was also established.

“We need to change the perceptions and misconceptions that surround what people believe when they look at a farmer,” MacDonald asserted. “Agriculture provides one in every seven jobs in this province, and it is the economic backbone of our rural economy – the anchor in the rural community.”

Identified labour issues included succession planning, foreign workers, training and

development opportunities, and the need to raise agriculture’s profile in society.

“We need to promote the benefits of an agricultural lifestyle to families and workers,” MacDonald stated. Enhancing awareness of the diversity of jobs in agriculture to young people, opportunities that are available for small-farm development, worker mobility between regions with differences in labour demands, and medical coverage for seasonal workers were also acknowledged priorities.

“Farming is an honourable career – it’s not just a job. Agriculture is a good industry to be in,” MacDonald acknowledged. “It is our goal to help everyone understand this better. We need to change policies and mindsets. CAHRC is providing us the numbers – we need to keep presenting them, and we need to re-establish our relevance to everybody’s daily lives.”

Sarah MacDonald – Atlantic Forum

Manager, Continuing Education – Nova Scotia Agricultural College

Tracy Kittilsen

Program Manager, Continuing Education – Nova Scotia Agricultural College

“PEI Farm Technician Apprenticeship Program”

Human Resource challenges for agriculture in Atlantic Canada are being addressed in part thanks to a new apprenticeship opportunity, The PEI Farm Technician Apprenticeship Program.



"It's certainly not the entire solution, but it's a slice of the solution," acknowledged Sarah MacDonald, Manager of Continuing Education at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC), which has a mandate for 'Agriculture in Atlantic Canada'. Together with her colleague Tracy Kittilsen, MacDonald outlined the evolution of the Program, and its fit within NSAC.

The PEI Farm Technician Apprenticeship Program began with a study commissioned in 2004 by the Department of Agriculture in Prince Edward Island. The study noted a changing environment for farm labour, particularly around farm safety issues, environmental regulations, and the need for farm workers to be able to communicate with the public. 'Farm Worker' was later designated as a trade in PEI, so that a Blue Seal Training Program could be developed, and NSAC was designated as the program's training provider.

"The training component identified over 130 skills that farm technicians in PEI need to possess in order to be a well-rounded farm technician," Kittilsen stated. "In this new apprenticeship model, the students are on the farm 85% of the time, and in class 15% of the time, for about 2,000 hours per year."

The main skill blocks cover equipment operation and maintenance, property and facilities, protocols, care and feeding of animals, crop and pesticide management, and farm safety, among many others in the list of 130 identified skills. The program also offers modules on developing personal skills and communication skills, work ethic and conflict management.

"In developing the curriculum, we also developed a common thread throughout all of the modules, because farm safety and farm food safety is such an issue," Kittilsen asserted. "Apprentices get a really good look at bio-security and everything associated with that."

"In addition, the main skills blocks were identified and designated into mandatory elements and electives," Kittilsen said. "The mandatory elements in particular came from common needs across all operations. When the skills list was developed, the whole process involved industry, producers, and farm labour on PEI. This is really coming from the ground up. This is what the industry asked for."

For further information about the PEI Farm Technician Apprenticeship Program, visit <http://nsac.ca/cde/programs/PEI/apprentice.asp>.

Sherree Mahood – Ontario Forum

Director, Western Region, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

"Apprenticeship Programs in Ontario"

"Apprenticeship is an opportunity to bring significant benefit to both employee and employer," said Sherree Mahood, Director, Western Region, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU).

Apprenticeship training is a form of hands-on training that is typically between 80-90% on the job, and 10-20% in a training institution.



“Today’s farmers need workers with the knowledge of modern food production systems and employees who not only understand the work and the business, but are also aware of the provincial industry standards,” Mahood stated.

She suggested that the appeal for apprentices often lies in earning money while they are learning. For employers, they not only have employees who they know have the education and practical background, but the employers also have the opportunity to shape the workers into their own particular work modes.

“Farm operations are growing increasingly dependent on high-tech systems and machinery,” she acknowledged. “Mistakes in this industry are costly. These all lend themselves to a formalized training environment that is learning based.”

Mahood indicated a variety of apprenticeship programs that might apply to agriculture. Some are agriculture specific (such as Dairy Herdsperson), and others are less focused, such as welding, but they still have practical applications in a modern farm operation.

“I’ve been hearing today that in agriculture there’s a specific need for a focus on health and safety,” she noted. “That’s something that often gets lost in ad-hoc training systems.”

Mahood advised that interested parties in Ontario should contact their local MTCU branch to discuss their options for training or hiring an apprentice with their regional manager. “It is very practical training designed to meet the specific needs of your business,” she advised.

The Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities feature a “Pathways to Apprenticeship” information page on their Web site at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/apprenticeship/appren.html>.

Raelene Mercer – National Forum

Green Certificate Program Co-ordinator

“Alberta Green Certificate Agriculture Training Program”

Described as a beacon for agricultural training in Alberta and across Canada, Green Certificate is an apprenticeship-style agricultural training program. With more than 1,300 trainees in the program, nearly 85% of them are high school students who are able to earn significant credits toward their high school diplomas. The remaining 15% of the trainees are adult learners.

“We are an all-competency-based program, and there is no class time structure,” said Raelene Mercer, Green Certificate Program Coordinator. “All training happens on the farm. We really emphasize quality in our training.”

Mercer acknowledged that program completion is dependent on how long it takes to learn the skills set out in the program, but completion time takes an average of 18 months. There are nine areas of specialty in the Green Certificate program - beekeeping, cow-calf, dairy, equine, feedlot, field crop, irrigated crop, sheep and swine.

“When you take the Green Certificate Program you’re learning practical, technical, hands-on skills,” Mercer stated. “Participants gain work



experience as they go, so that they don't only understand how things work on their operation, but how that part of primary production works in other farms in Alberta."

Mercer noted that another important skill participants pick up is networking. Parents, relatives, neighbours, specialists or employers can act as trainers, and participants must approach more than one of them to complete all the training that has been assigned as part of the program.

Green Certificate is offered in one of two ways: student trainees may take the training through their school, or adult trainees may take the program through an employer. The program delivery and content is the same for both groups. Learning is done on the farm, and participants must have a farming operation to work on. Steps toward certification include an on-farm assessment, development of a training plan, and off-farm training days and testing that test a participant's knowledge of many of the program areas.

Mercer stressed partnership as a key component of the program's success. She credited Alberta Education, post-secondary institutions, and hundreds of local schools with helping to expand the program's outreach beyond the capabilities of a single staff member.

"There is so much more we can do. Working with organizations like yourselves is the only way we're going to get it done," Mercer said.

Visit [www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/grc10749](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/grc10749) for further details.

Jerry Mussio – British Columbia Forum

Principal, Mussio Associates Inc.

"BC Agri-Food Human Resources Action Plan"

"As the economy recovers, the demand for new farm workers will outstrip supply by as soon as 2015," said Jerry Mussio, Principal at BC-based Mussio Associates Inc.

A 2007 study from The Ministry of Advanced Education projected 1,760 new farm worker jobs would become available between 2005 and 2015, over a period of time when almost a third of the workforce will be retiring.

"The major issue – and it is confronting all occupational groups – is that the population is getting older," noted Mussio. "When you have an average farm owner age of 56, retirement can only be delayed so long."

The 40,000 farm workers currently working in BC represent only two percent of the province's entire workforce, but overall they are an older demographic with less education and earning half the money of their non-agricultural counterparts.

"Everybody loves agriculture, but few people wish to work in the industry," indicated Mussio. New jobs in agriculture will require some form of post-secondary training, and many new workers will not have the skills required to fill these new jobs. In BC's current K-12 education system, only 80 percent of students are graduating.



Also at issue, BC's agricultural land – which occupies five percent of the land in the province – is also under intense pressure for development. At the same time, there are serious concerns about the security of the BC food supply. While agricultural exports have increased, they are matched by imports that have increased at a faster rate.

The British Columbia Agri-Food Human Resources Action Plan maps out five key elements to address these shortfalls:

1. Improve the industry's image: work closely with the BC K-12 school system in career planning, integrating agriculture into the curriculum
2. Expand training and skills: provide training for new farm owners and operators
3. Reach out to new workers in Canada, and address current labour shortages
4. Seek new immigrants and continue to utilize seasonal foreign workers
5. Provide industry leadership in BC to support individual farmers "beyond the next season"

"If we expect to replace retirees with a new generation of high-skilled farmers, an aggressive HR strategy will be critical to the survival of the BC agriculture industry," Mussio said.

The full BC Agri-Food Human Resource Action Plan is available at: www.mussioassociates.com/PDF%20files/Agri-Food%20HR%20plan-09.pdf.

Tim Nelson – Ontario Forum and National Forum

Executive Director, Poultry Industry Council" Management and Labour Issues – An International Perspective"

"We're no orphans," stated Tim Nelson, Executive Director of the Poultry Industry Council, noting Canada is not alone in its current challenging agricultural production environment.

Nelson noted that Australia, England and the United States also have a shifting farm demographic, where middle-sized farms are becoming very large farms requiring full time management.

"We all have increased productivity, we have embraced technology, we have increased demand for new skills on farm, and each of us is having trouble filling this demand," Nelson asserted.

Nelson indicated there is a marked decline in the number of students studying agriculture production courses such as agronomy, agriculture business, animal science and horticulture. Even the names of schools formerly known as "schools of agriculture" are changing, Nelson acknowledged. For example, the University of Melbourne now calls its agricultural school "Land and Food Resources." Students instead are studying programs such as environmental science, pre-veterinary medicine and food science. Nelson admitted that those programs sound more appealing than traditional programs, but they are not where job shortages lie.



For agricultural courses at the University of Melbourne and elsewhere in Australia there was a 30 percent drop between 2001 and 2008. But Nelson said that industry demand for agricultural science graduates in that country is a different story, with more than 2,000 vacancies per year. The 600 to 800 people who graduate from Australian agricultural science programs each year have a 95 percent employment rate within six months of graduation, and earn an average of \$5,000 more than their classmates.

Nelson noted that those graduates quickly have the opportunity to progress to farm management positions – jobs that are very lucrative and in demand. Although the number of farms has gone down, the number of farm managers has increased, because production is becoming increasingly sophisticated.

“Robot milking machines have negated the need to have a lot of people milking on farm. But what happens if that machine breaks down?” Nelson asks. “You have to bring somebody in, so it is still a farm job. You cannot replace those people instantly. But instantly you need a new set of skills.”

Nelson had some advice for production agriculture in Ontario. “Educators: get back to basics in course offerings,” he emphasized. “And Industry, be clear on what you want – not for now, but in ten years’ time. Industry will need to be prepared to compete to keep good people.”

Michael Renaud – British Columbia Forum

Senior Program Advisor, Ministry of Advanced Education

“Workplace Training for Innovation Program”

Small employers in BC (with fewer than 50 employees) can access workplace training funding to train and up-skill their employees.

In January 2009, the federal government announced \$500 million for the Strategic Training and Transition Fund (STTF), as part of the federal government’s Economic Action Plan. Through the STTF, BC is receiving a one-time annual stimulus of \$25.6 million per year in the 2009/10 and 2010/11 fiscal years. The target of this funding is to support skills training and the province’s economic recovery: the targeted clients of this funding are those affected by the economic downturn.

The Workplace Training for Innovation Pilot Program (WTIP) was launched in November 2009 by The Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development. The WTIP is a \$14.4 million initiative to “help boost employee productivity and give them the skills they need to lead to our economic recovery – to train our way out of the economic downturn,” said Michael Renaud, Senior Program Advisor at the BC Ministry of Advanced Education.

“Funding can be used to purchase training, to improve productivity, to provide workers with training in new technology and work processes, to enhance international competitiveness, or to introduce competitive strategies that are going to



increase the success of the organization,” he advised. The program is built upon employer choice, allowing an employer to decide among criteria such as these where they can leverage assistance the most.

Funding of up to \$1,500 per employee is available to a maximum of \$5,000 per employer, allowing the employer to best-meet his or her own training needs. Training activities may be up to six months in duration, and may be provided either off-site or in-house. Eligible costs include training purchase costs, books and study materials. “The application process is very simple. “It is only a one-page application so that we can be as inclusive as possible, and processing times are quick: application forms average a two-week turnaround time,” Renaud stated.

Program information (including application forms) is available at the WTIP Web page at www.aved.gov.bc.ca/workplace_training_program, or by calling the Program Administrator at 1-877-365-5757. Applications are being accepted until December 31st, 2010, but are subject to funding availability as the funds are disbursed. Training must be completed by March 31st, 2011.

Lauranne Sanderson – Atlantic Forum

Associate Professor, Nova Scotia Agricultural College

“Nova Scotia Agricultural College”

“The Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC) is changing to adapt to industry demands and skill requirements,” said Lauranne Sanderson, Associate Professor at the NSAC.

Sanderson provided an overview of the programs offered at NSAC, as well as non-credit certificate training and current trends. Along with a number of technology diploma streams and a diploma in engineering, the college also offers Bachelor’s degrees in Engineering, Science in Agriculture, Applied Technology, and Technology in Environmental Horticulture. The College also provides a Master of Science degree, and hopes to offer a PhD program in the future.

“A lot of the specialized courses are taught not by typical academics but by industry people,” indicated Sanderson. “For example, we have one of the most prominent veterinarians in Nova Scotia teaching our Dairy Herd Health and Nutrition. He brings that kind of credibility into the classroom.”

The college also invites farmers to audit classes, so that students gain the benefit of experience from someone who is actively working in agriculture. NSAC continually interviews farmers and industry professionals to determine what students need to prepare them for the workplace.

“We asked business owners what kinds of skills are needed to manage and operate their business,” Sanderson said. “Then we determine what kind of skills NSAC students will need when they leave – what kind of knowledge and practical workplace skills will they have?”

This led to a strong focus on safety, among other things: all students are trained in first aid, WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System) and occupational health and safety. Students are also trained in career skills, public speaking and leadership, and internship and volunteer training is strongly supported.



A key trend that the NSAC has identified is the difficulty in recruiting new students to its programming – particularly when the number of students exiting Canadian high schools is expected to continually decline in the coming decade.

Sanderson presented a new initiative of the Canadian Association of Diplomas in Agriculture Programs (CADAP), which is a Canada-wide association of agriculture colleges and universities. Sanderson is currently the Association's President. CADAP recently launched *Ditch the Office*, an initiative designed to promote careers in agriculture to urban high school students across Canada. The initiative has its own Web site at www.ditchtheoffice.ca, and has representation on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

"NSAC has a very young, dynamic team that tries to look at as many different ways of promoting agriculture as possible," Sanderson advised. "It is sometimes a really hard sell, but we try to be fun; and we give the message of sustainability, lifestyle, land stewardship and career opportunities. We hope and believe very strongly in our mandate to serve the agricultural industry in Atlantic Canada."

More information about the Nova Scotia Agricultural College is available at <http://nsac.ca/>.

Colleen Smith – Ontario Forum

Executive Director, Ontario Agri-Food Education

"Education and Attracting Youth to Agriculture"

"With a shrinking number of Ontario families living in rural areas, it is becoming more challenging to bring agriculture curriculum to Ontario schoolchildren," stated Colleen Smith, Executive Director of Ontario Agri-Food Education (OAFE).

OAFE provides agricultural learning resources to Ontario teachers. With 72 school boards in the province, nearly 5,000 schools, and 2.4 million students, it's a big task.

"We consider ourselves at a crossroads to get all of your information into the hands of kids so they'll be interested in careers in your industry," Smith explained. "We filter information through the education system. Nobody else is doing this as their mandate."

"Teachers in Ontario are not required to use any resources in their classroom," she said. "How a teacher covers curriculum is his or her own prerogative." OAFE's resources are developed with Ontario's curriculum in mind to make it as easy as possible for teachers to use the resources.

"It's very competitive out there," Smith acknowledged. "What gives us the edge is that we 'curriculum link' our resources to Ontario – which, if you're an Ontario educator, is a big plus."

OAFE resources are free, and many are bilingual. Despite the availability of resources, Smith noted that OAFE is currently only reaching approximately 4,000 of the 120,000 teachers in the province.



She suggested two ways for industry representatives to become involved: first, to help promote the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) – a program designed to give students a leg up if they’re entering designated sectors after completing the program. Of the 4,000 Ontario high schools that currently have SHSM programs, only 13 have one in agriculture.

“Agriculture is one of many, and it’s not easy for a school to embrace the SHSM in agriculture,” Smith stated.

Her second suggestion is that agricultural promoters put OAFE’s teacher resource catalogue directly into the hands of a teacher. “Within the agri-food sector, I think we all need to advocate together to ensure agri-food knowledge is part of the official Ministry of Education curriculum demands and mandate.”

Please visit <http://www.oafe.org/> for more information.

Anita Stewart – Ontario Forum **Author, Communicator and Culinary Activist** **“Flavours of Canada – The Canada Brand”**

“Communication will be key to developing skill sets to serve Canadian agriculture in the coming decades,” suggested Anita Stewart, author, communicator and culinary activist invited to address the participants of the Guelph Regional Forum as a keynote speaker.

Stewart’s work has been published on a regular basis internationally in multiple languages. She writes for Canadian Geographic Travel, Food &

Drink, The Advocate (a Quebec monthly) and has written commissioned articles in magazines and newspapers from Gourmet to the Los Angeles Times; from the Toronto Star to the Globe and Mail. She is the author of fourteen books. Two of her most recent published works are: CANADA ~ The Food, The Recipes, The Stories and The Flavours of Canada: A Celebration of the Finest Regional Foods.

“Your theme to today’s conference is *Today’s and Tomorrow’s Farms*, and I see that theme through a marketing lens,” Stewart said. She identified trends impacting business – functional and super foods, seasonality, local foods, and varietal and regional labeling, such as those coming out of the Holland Marsh.

“From food miles to BSE, consumers are immersed in the issues of the day. They are reading, listening, twittering and becoming empowered,” Stewart advised.

Consumers are also on a mission for authenticity, Stewart indicated. They have a laundry list of desirable qualities in their food, and are ranking characteristics such as green, safe, healthy, guilt-free and delicious higher than ever.

“You do not grow commodities, you grow ingredients,” Stewart suggested. “Canadian researchers and growers have been setting the stage for creating an array of healthy plant foods with fabulous flavour, and they’ve been doing it since the 1800s.”

Citing Canadian success stories such as OAC 21 barley, Yukon Gold potatoes and canola, Stewart suggested Ontario’s agricultural sector embrace the ‘Canada Brand’. She suggested Canadian



consumers are increasingly seeking connections with locally-produced foods, as well as regionally-produced foods such as those in Ontario's Holland Marsh region.

Furthermore, Stewart suggested that farmers should take more ownership and a great deal of pride in their role as stewards of the land, and in their role as providers of the Nation's food. "Pride is not a four letter word," she emphasized. "Farmers are the front-line players of protecting the environment and maintaining the ecological health of this entire planet."

Further information about Anita Stewart's culinary activism is available at www.anitastewart.ca.

Kate Stiefelmeyer – Ontario Forum

Research Associate, George Morris Centre
"Agri-Food for Thought – a Value Chain Perspective"

Career awareness, labour retention and sector promotion are revealed as the top three issues affecting the Canadian agricultural value chain. Stiefelmeyer focused her remarks on the basis of the study: *Labour Issues Facing the Horticultural Sector*, which was compiled by the George Morris Centre.

"Career awareness was identified as the most critical issue because of its effect on other issues such as recruitment and labour availability," said Stiefelmeyer. "Promotion is also difficult when people don't know specifically what skills are

required, as in ornamental production and landscape – we're not just grass cutters."

She noted that the sector could benefit from the promotion of attributes that engage the younger workforce, such as the sustainability of the industry, the fact that it is local and the opportunity to work outside. "Better HR Management skills are also required to promote the industry," she added.

The second challenge identified was in employee retention – especially in food production and ornamental production, where harvest periods are short and intense and products are perishable. "Turnover can affect harvest and cause managers to work production instead of managing," Stiefelmeyer said. "Training staff is expensive: turnover is costly."

The third challenge identified in the report is the recruitment of low skilled or seasonal workers – a critical group for harvest. Stiefelmeyer indicated that lower skilled or seasonal workers aren't necessarily attached to the industry, or the seasonality of the work. Competition with other sectors is fierce; and the wages, seasonality of the job and location often shrinks the labour pool.

Not listed in the top three, but identified during interviews in the research process, was a need for executive development-type skills or "soft skills" such as leading teams, mentorship, IT and health and safety awareness. "We need to look for opportunities to develop employees beyond developing manuals," she said. "We have lots of manuals already – we need more hands-on training and hands-on experience."



"We must address the underlying causes that are leading to the critical labour shortages," Stiefelmeyer said. "We need to develop approaches to engage our employees full-year, full-time, to make employees more valuable, and more productive."

More information about the George Morris Centre is at www.georgemorris.org.

Richard Strang – Atlantic Forum

Potato Producer – Enterprise Network Board Member

"Hiring and Keeping Employees"

Richard Strang found that the greatest turning point in his operation was when he stopped thinking about his operation as a farm, and learned to approach it as a business. Strang and his father have been working together since 1987 as potato producers who work a 300-acre potato farm, and they also contract land.

Strang has dealt with many employees over the years, with up to 15 local workers at peak season. "You quickly learn to keep the best employees you have," he said. His greatest challenge is in attracting and retaining farm workers.

Strang noted that the fishing community culture puts further stress on hiring farm labour, because many people are accustomed to spending large periods of time collecting unemployment when they are no longer fishing.

Strang tries to pay his staff more than minimum wage. He has consistently found that a small increase in cost attracts better workers with better skill-levels, which increases efficiencies and productivity. While bridging that financial gap is often a significant challenge, "you pay for what you get – you just get better employees," advised Strang. He also makes an effort to shift his employees to various duties, not only to keep them engaged with changing tasks, but also to ensure that each employee has functional skills in different areas of the operation.

"I also try to reward leadership with the people who are working for me," he said. "When somebody does something good, always be sure to acknowledge them in one way or another." He emphasized that when a farm operation is run as a business, it will not only be more successful, but it will also aid in creating year-round work for employees, translating into better staff retention.

"If your staff members are happy, they will probably come and work for you next year. We have been able to retain thirteen out of the fifteen who have worked for us for the last five years," Strang acknowledged. "When I don't have to retrain staff each spring, it frees up my time to focus on the business."

The changes that Strang has implemented, such as the addition of a warehouse at the suggestion of a large retail chain, have sometimes been a source of tension between Strang and his father. However, he noted that "my father realizes if we hadn't made some of the changes we've made in the past five years, we wouldn't be doing what we're doing, especially at the level we're doing it. We have to do things differently."



Strang also said, “My children now see the rewards and benefits that this profession has provided, and the new opportunities in our operation that have come from treating our farm as a business. After education, they want to come back to the farm.”

Rene Van Acker – Ontario Forum

Professor and Associate Dean, External Relations, Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph

“Degree Programs and Kemptville / Alfred / Ridgeway Colleges”

“The skills and training opportunities offered by the Ontario Agricultural College (OAC) are as diverse as the sector itself,” said Rene Van Acker, Professor and Associate Dean of OAC. The College now boasts four campuses and a number of departments and schools, including Environmental Science, Food Science, Food, Agriculture and Resource Economics, Plant Agriculture, School of Environmental Design, Rural Development and Poultry Science.

“OAC is a different place today than it was 10 years ago and 135 years ago, but there is one thing that remains: it’s a place for training in agriculture and issues related to agriculture,” stated Van Acker. The programs offered by OAC are available in diploma, undergraduate and graduate levels, many with course-based or research-based options.

Many of the professors themselves are often seen as a resource for Ontario’s agricultural sector.

“Academics have a relatively large amount of freedom in what they do and what they want to do, and they can be engaged in ad hoc and informal training opportunities,” Van Acker said. “In addition to the formal programs, there’s a tremendous amount of opportunity for activity internally. We have a lot of expertise and staff who are very interested in training.”

He noted that the College is also willing to work with industry to identify existing knowledge gaps and work toward solving those problems.

Most recently, the College has been exploring a new opportunity for teaching and training as a crossover field for graduate students. He advised that “a graduate diploma or certificate in business management, sales and marketing, and human resources management may also be on the table to respond to industry needs.”

Ryan Weeks – Atlantic Forum

PEI Federation of Agriculture and PEI/NB Representative – Canadian Young Farmers Forum

“Attracting Youth to Agriculture”

“Fewer young farmers are entering the agricultural sector, in part due to changing social expectations, and significant barriers to entry,” suggested Ryan Weeks, Board Member with the Canadian Young Farmers Forum.

In 1991, there were 78,000 Canadian young farmers, defined by Statistics Canada as those between the ages of 15 and 35. In 2006, there were 30,000 young farmers. Canada has 63,000 fewer farmers than it did 15 years ago. As older



farmers retire, there are not enough young farmers to fill the gaps.

Weeks indicated that young farmers are the successors of small and medium-sized enterprises: they are the new entrepreneurs, skilled employees, professional and technical staff, and service providers. “We are trained professionals and agri-business people, and I think that is something that the industry doesn’t flaunt enough,” he suggested.

“Agriculture doesn’t just consist of primary producers,” Weeks emphasized. “There is a chain of people that support the industry. They may not be in the field, but there are a lot of jobs that are just as important to the success of operations. We need to recognize and share that.”

The capital intensity of agriculture is a major hurdle to new young farmers, along with volatile marketplaces.

“Succession is a big help to young farmers if there is equity in the family operation to leverage for expansion, creating a place for more people on the farm,” said Weeks. “Starting on your own though is an uphill battle.”

An expectation regarding personal life and life balance is an emerging barrier. “People don’t run from dusk to dawn like they used to,” Weeks noted. “A lot of people under the age of 30 have peers that tend to run from nine-to-five, including wives, husbands, boyfriends or girlfriends. This group also tends to be people who are starting families. This can add a lot of extra stress in people’s lives and a lot of new challenges.”

“The key to attracting young people to agriculture is to develop leadership capabilities through training, mentorship and community involvement,” Weeks advised.

“We need to show people the pride, the passion and the social contribution that comes with a life in agriculture,” he said. “Farmers should be right up there next to doctors – they keep people healthy, and they keep us moving.”

Alison West – Ontario Forum **Canadian Accounts Manager, AgCareers.com** **“An Ontario and Cross-Canada Perspective”**

“Primary producers can take a page from agri-business HR practices,” said Alison West, Canadian Accounts Manager for AgCareers.com, an online job board for careers in agriculture, food, biotechnology and natural resources.

Gleaned from conversations she has had with agri-business employers as well as her own research of what works best in organizations, West provided some thoughts on how farmers could apply similar principles to human resource practices on the farm.

“Similar to a business plan, it’s a great idea to have a human resources plan,” she said. “If you have current long-time employees, consider scheduling two meetings per year where you can discuss their performance and career goals.”

Another common business practice that would be easy to adopt is “employee onboarding,” a structured two-week orientation process that



helps new employees feel comfortable with their role and the work environment.

West also suggested producers may want to forecast staffing needs and allow for planned vacation times in less busy seasons – a practice that can help increase productivity and decrease employee burnout. And, if an operation experiences high turnover, having a third party conduct an “exit interview” with the departing employee can help employers to flag behaviours they’d like to change for the future.

West noted monetary bonuses aren’t always necessary for staff to feel valued. “Primary producers can set production targets for weight-gain in a swine facility, or targets for somatic cell count in a dairy operation, or reward an employee for initiating and implementing a new process that is more efficient,” she said. Rewards come in many forms - from a gift card to a day off, to recognition in front of peers. Communicating and showing appreciation is key.

She urged primary producers to strive to become an “employer of choice” in their community.

“Implement tactics and practices that communicate a positive image to the community and spread the word about the positive work environment at your operation. Do research on employee benefits that you can offer or insurance and bonuses,” she advised.

Hosting an Open House (if it is compliant with biosecurity regulations) or sponsoring community sports teams, and offering internship experiences to local students, are all excellent ways to demonstrate commitment to positive relationship-building and help to motivate and engage employees.

Visit www.agcareers.com for more information.

Appendix – CAHRC Publications



Free Downloads

Labour Market Information on Farms with Annual Revenues of more than \$100,000 Project

- Labour Market Information on Recruitment and Retention in Agriculture (Full Report)
- Labour Market Information on Recruitment and Retention in Agriculture (Fact Sheet)
- Labour Market Information on Recruitment and Retention in Agriculture Report (Executive Summary)
- Farm Profiles: Practices in Recruitment and Retention in Primary Agriculture
- Summative Farm Profile Report – Recruitment and Retention Practices used in Primary Agriculture

Occupational Standards and Learning Tools for the Ornamental Sector Project

- National Occupational Analysis – Landscape Horticulturist (April 2008)
- Developing a National Occupational Standard (NOS) and Learning Tools

- Development of a National Occupational Standard (NOS) and Learning Tools – Critical Path

Identifying On-Farm Occupations Project

- Occupational Matrix for the On-Farm Sector
- Identifying On-Farm Occupations – Occupational Descriptions
- Identifying On-Farm Occupations – Environmental Scan and Gap Analysis

New Markets and Future Skills in Agriculture

- Identifying New or Emerging Markets and Opportunities in Agriculture – Literature Review and Industry Findings (Executive Summary)

Corporate Publications

- Strengthening Human Resources in Agriculture – Annual Report 2007-2008
- Strengthening Human Resources in Agriculture – Annual Report 2008-2009
- Strengthening Human Resources in Agriculture – Annual Report 2009-2010



- Growing Forward: Meeting the Human Resource Challenges Facing Agriculture Today and Tomorrow (CAHRC Corporate Brochure)
- Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council – Created to find HR solutions for a prosperous and competitive agriculture sector (CAHRC Pamphlet)
- Steering Committee for the Agriculture Sector Council Program – Report on Employers-Producers – Survey on Human Resources in Agriculture – 2004 (Produced for the Canadian Federation of Agriculture by GPC Public Affairs)

Pre-Council Research and Consultation

- Human Resource Issues and Needs in the Agriculture Sector – Focus Groups – Final Report June 2005 (prepared by Malatest & Associates Ltd.)
- Environmental Scan and Literature Search of Agricultural Human Resource Issues – February 2005 (prepared by the George Morris Centre)
- Directory of Canadian Agriculture Associations (spiral-bound format: \$55, downloaded PDF format: \$40)
- Landscape Horticulturist On-the-Job Training Reference Guide – *Install and Maintain Hardscape and Install and Maintain Softscape* (hard-bound binder format: \$100, unbound colour-copy format: \$30, CD format: \$20)

Products for Sale



CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL HUMAN RESOURCE COUNCIL CONSEIL CANADIEN POUR LES RESSOURCES HUMAINES EN AGRICULTURE

1-866-430-7457 | Info@cahrc-ccrha.ca | www.cahrc.ccrha.ca