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Rainy River Future
Development
Corporation

RRFDC



OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR UPDATE

Agriculture in the Rainy River District is a substantial economic driver; generating revenues of over 13 million dollars and directly and indirectly supporting hundreds of on and off farm job creation.

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Executive Summary

The changes in approaches to farming throughout the world and the increasing demands of consumers at the other end of the food chain point to a wide range of challenges for agriculture and land-based industries.

Some of the challenges are daunting. As the world's demand for safe and sustainable food increases, so does the demand for water and land. Areas in Southeastern Ontario are reporting the nutrient value of their crop land as decreasing rapidly as the demand for food increases.

The food industry is a vital economic force, but it cannot be taken for granted. Jurisdictional competitiveness, the ever-changing trends in the demand for food of different origins and types, the shrinking availability of land for industrial use, more stringent regulations and the globally-based decisions of multinational corporations continue to challenge the food clusters. Thus the landscape for the food industry will also continue to change in North America.

The food industry is a vital resource for job creation in the Rainy River District. The food processing sector has not typically been seen as a resource for industrial employment due to the challenges presented by the competitiveness and pricing of the big box stores.

With the opening of the new abattoir, opportunities will be more prevalent for beef, pork, elk, bison, sheep and goat products. The challenge will be to develop a local and regional market, and market to the people in Northwestern Ontario, to realize the limitations and to steer clear of competing with the larger box stores. The Rainy River Cattlemen's Association has begun to develop a branding program that will eventually support the opportunities to develop these products for the consumer and retail marketplace within the region.

The Sunset Country Food Box program in Fort Frances and the Clover Valley Farmers' Market Healthy Food Box program currently distributes to many communities both in the District and across the region. This will be another opportunity to expand and begin to open up more markets for local vegetable production and other food products raised within the District and the region.

In terms of availability of District food products, it is clear from both local surveys and through meetings held with different food partners, that there is a need for a local food distribution centre. A one stop shop for all that is local. The success of the Clover Valley Farmers' Market Winter Market store is another example of responding to customer's needs and desires in terms of what they can access locally.

Through discussions with agriculture sector partners, another need that became apparent was the opportunity for food processors to have a central location to process and produce food products. With the ever expanding legislation surrounding food preparation, it is a daunting task to overcome that barrier in a home food preparation environment.

The opportunities in bio energy crops have become more interesting and possibly a viable added value item as the cattle and pork commodity prices continue to plunge. The challenge will be the need for large tracks of tillable agriculture land to grow the crops; the price of fuel and fertilizer as well as the manpower needed to bring the land up to standards and the ever prevailing weather that will continue to challenge the producers in the Rainy River District.

Added Value opportunities for expansion are active on a small number of farm operations in the District. Opportunities for the production of dairy products such as cheese, butter and ice-cream are areas to be researched as well as other meat production on a larger scale such as lamb and goat meat products.

The agri-tourism industry is another of the untapped resources that could spell success to farmers in the District. In 2009, the Rainy River tours event, a partnership between Municipalities and tourism operators saw a positive success rate by the tour participants. Opportunities to have expanded tours to include agriculture, community museums, arts and festivals events as well as the inclusion of other tourism operators are possible.

The concept of Community Supported Agriculture has seen a fair success rate in both the cities of Thunder Bay, ON and Winnipeg, MB. Opportunities are possible for this style of farming.

Discussion surrounding marketing alliances took place over the past two years with different agriculture groups. There remains interest in that opportunity when the food production and food supply industry becomes viable in the District.

Co-operatives, though the history of both success and failure in other areas of the country, are cited by agriculture groups as a good and not so good opportunities to consider. They continue to remain both an opportunity and a seemingly non-entity for area producers and although funding opportunities are available, there has been no interest shown to date.

Introduction

The value of agricultural production in the Rainy River District and the region is substantial. In 2005, farmers in the District reported a total of \$13.1 million in gross farm receipts. Another stakeholder group that plays an important role in supporting agriculture is the agri-related business community. These businesses represent a variety of industry sectors including retail and wholesale trade, manufacturing, construction, transportation and business services. Agri-related businesses provide the support infrastructure for the agriculture sector and through their linkages to farm based activities, generate substantial economic benefits for the region.

Agriculture in the Rainy River District continues to have competitive advantages and economic opportunities including a substantial farmland base that supports the growth of a variety of crops, lower land prices relative to land prices in southern Ontario, its isolation from the threat of contaminants from industrial farms, and its access to a large regional market place. (Northwestern Ontario) (*Rainy River Agriculture Economic Impact Study October 2009*).

The District boasts over 200,000 acres of farmland. The soils are medium to high in productivity levels and have been known to support a wide range of crops. The agriculture community is greatly advanced and continues to support research projects and initiative targeted to support success for farm income. Their success can be attributed to the partnerships between the following agriculture commodity groups, corporations and organizations:

- The Rainy River District Federation of Agriculture;
- The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs;
- The Emo Agriculture Research Station;
- The New Liskeard Agriculture Research Station;
- The Rainy River Cattlemen's Association;
- The Christian Farmers' Association;
- The Rainy River Soil and Crop Improvement Association;
- The Clover Valley Farmers' Market Co-Op;
- The Rainy River Future Development Corporation;
- Industry Canada and;
- The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation.

Many of the above mentioned agriculture groups also work with and support various other working committees that are too vast to mention. Also of importance are the individual farm producers that have developed their own innovative farm practices and who have been very influential in setting examples for other producers to learn from. The District is proud to have four Premier Award for Agri-Food and Farm Innovation winners.

The challenges to success in the Agriculture Sector, at times seems enormous, but as reported in the Rainy River District Agriculture Economic Impact Study it remains a driving force in the economy of this District.

Challenges to the Agri-Food Industry

As mentioned in the 2006 document “Opportunities for Growth of the Agriculture Sector in the Rainy River District”, farmers are not getting value for their product on the commodity markets. One solution to the low cattle and pork prices is to set their own prices for their products and sell direct to the consumer. Typically, farmers do not want to market and sell their product; their interest lies solely in the production of that product. Consequently, there are barriers that must be overcome:

- Who will market the food?
- Who will pay for the marketing materials, point of purchase marketing tools, radio and newspaper promotion?
- Who will begin developing the necessary relationships between farmers, food processors, retail businesses, restaurants, hotels and the tourism sector?
- Who will develop and test market the products?
- Who will sell the product?
- Who will supply the market?
- Will there be enough of a demand to substantiate the increase in supply?

Many similar barriers have been overcome by the use of cooperatives (also referred to as a *co-op*), a form of business ownership that consists of a group of people who have joined together to perform a business function more efficiently than each individual could do alone. The purpose of a cooperative is not to make a profit for itself, but to improve each member's situation. However, members of certain types of cooperatives do make a profit by selling their product and/or service to customers who are not co-op members.

Cooperatives have been successful in such fields as the processing and marketing of farm products, the purchasing of other kinds of equipment and raw materials, and in the wholesaling, retailing, electric power, credit and banking, and housing industries.

In some cases, groups and organizations have formed partnership alliances with a food distribution centre. This model can be used successfully with the centre doing the majority of the product development and marketing as well as the training and development for producers. This ensures a high quality product for the consumer. These associated costs are charged back to the producer by the use of a commission dollar or percentage amount.

In many agriculture communities these options do not appeal for everyone. The solution may be to brand your own product.

The Basics of Branding Your Product

Branding is one of the most important aspects of any business, large or small. An effective brand strategy gives you a major edge in increasingly competitive markets. But what exactly does "branding" mean? How does it affect a small business ?

Simply put, your brand is your promise to your customer. It tells them what they can expect from your products and services, and it differentiates your offering from your competitors'. Your brand is derived from who you are, who you want to be, and who people perceive you to be.

The business must be the innovative maverick in the industry, or they could be the experienced, reliable one. Is the product the high-cost, high-quality option, or the low-cost, high-value option? It usually cannot be both, and it can't be all things to all people. Who your business and products are should be based to some extent on which your target customers want and need the business to be.

The foundation of your brand is your logo. Your website, packaging and promotional materials--all of which should integrate your logo--communicate your brand.

Brand Strategy & Equity

The business brand strategy is how, what, where, when and to whom they plan on communicating and delivering the brand messages. Where they advertise is part of the brand strategy. The distribution channels are also part of the brand strategy, and what it communicates visually and verbally are part of the brand strategy, too.

Consistent strategic branding leads to a strong brand equity, which means the added value brought to the company's products or services that allows you to charge more for your brand than what identical, unbranded products command. The most obvious example of this is Coke™ vs. a generic soda. Because Coca-Cola™ has built powerful brand equity, it can charge more for its product--and customers will pay that higher price.

The added value intrinsic to brand equity frequently comes in the form of perceived quality or emotional attachment. For example, Nike™ associates its products with star athletes hoping customers will transfer their emotional attachment from the athlete to the product. For Nike™, it's not just the shoe's features that sell the shoe.

Defining the Brand

Defining the brand is like a journey of business self-discovery. It can be difficult, time-consuming and uncomfortable. It requires, at the very least, that the business answers the questions below:

- What is the company's mission?
- What are the benefits and features of the products or services?
- What do the customers and prospects already think of your company?
- What qualities does the business want them to associate with your company?

Do the research. Learn the needs, habits and desires of the current and prospective customers, and don't rely on what the business owner thinks they think. *Know* what they think.

Because defining your brand and developing a brand strategy can be complex – consider leveraging the expertise of a non-profit small-business advisory group or a Small Business Development Center.

Once the business has defined the brand, how does the word get out? Here are a few simple time-tested tips:

- **Get a great logo.** Place it everywhere.
- **Write a brand message.** What are the key messages that need to be communicated about the brand? Every employee should be aware of your brand attributes.
- **Integrate the brand.** Branding extends to every aspect of the business – how the phone is answered, what salespeople wear on sales calls, e-mail signature, everything.
- **Create a "voice" for the company that reflects your brand.** This voice should be applied to all written communication and incorporated in the visual imagery of all materials, online and off. Is the brand friendly? Be conversational. Is it ritzy? Be more formal.
- **Develop a tagline.** Write a memorable, meaningful, and concise statement that captures the essence of the brand.
- **Design templates and create brand standards for the marketing materials.** Use the same color scheme, logo placement, look and feel throughout. It does not need to be fancy, just consistent.
- **Be true to the brand.** Customers won't return – or refer your product to someone else, if the product does not deliver on the brand promise.
- **Be consistent.** If the branded product cannot do this, your attempts at establishing a brand will fail.

Naming and Branding

To effectively promote a product, there must be a concise, yet meaningful description of the product. This can be much more complicated than merely picking a name. There are consultancies built around helping organizations to name or brand their products and services. The business has to be sure that you're not using a name that is already trademarked or service marked. The business brand should not have a name that closely resembles an already established name in the area, or customers will confuse the services with those referred to by the other name or the organization with the other name may choose to sue you. The brand needs a name that makes sense locally, but if you grow, the name will still be understood elsewhere. The brand names you choose for your product will be around for a long time and can have substantial impact on how the products are perceived. Therefore, seriously consider some basic forms of market research to glean impressions of different names. For example, convene several

focus groups to glean their reactions to various names. Have survey cards that clients can complete to suggest names.

Five Golden Rules of Naming

- Don't lean under someone else's umbrella, you'll still get wet.
- Don't be a copycat. It is very bad to copy or borrow from an established identity.
- A look-alike, sound-alike name, resembling the personality of a powerful, established, legendary name will be fruitless in the long run. Stay clear of legendary names.
- Creativity is a spark of genius. Over-creativity can cause fire and damage.
- Don't get too creative. Do not twist, bend, stretch, exaggerate, corrupt or modify alpha-structures to their extremes in naming. It may result in difficult, confusing, unpronounceable and only silly names. Avoid overly creative solutions.

Work locally, think globally & name universally.

Do not short-change. No matter how small or local the project or product, think of the future and think of this small planet. A name is only good when it is free and clear to travel around the globe, without encountering translation problems or trademark conflicts.

Opportunities with the Rainy River Raised Brand and Logo

The Rainy River Cattlemen's Association's (RRCA) Rainy River Raised brand and logo originally was developed for use on the RRCA Rainy River Raised cattle ear tags. The RRCA are currently in the process of developing a branded beef protocol for use with the Rainy River Raised brand and logo. This is both an opportunity and a challenge to the development of such a program.

Develop a Branded Beef Program Protocol

To begin to develop a branded beef program, there must be controls in place for consistency of the beef product through a specified method of raising the animal. This is also necessary for traceability of the product. Following is one example of a potential program protocol.

1. Naturally Raised
 - a. Prohibited use of antibiotics; whether that be sub-therapeutic (low levels mixed in feed on a continual basis) or therapeutic (high levels injected for a short duration)
 - b. Prohibited use of ionophores
 - c. Prohibited use of any growth hormones
 - d. All medicinal treatments and receipts must be documented for each animal and these records must be available for inspection
 - e. Animals which are treated with antibiotics are allowed to be contained with animals still under the protocol
 - f. Pastures are to be produced without the use of herbicides or pesticides
2. Handling
 - a. Humane handling procedures will be used throughout the life of the animal
 - b. Handling procedures for loading, trucking and restraint for slaughter are required to be humane
 - c. Recommended producers familiarize themselves with handling methods of Bud Williams, Steve Coty, Temple Grandin or others
3. Vaccination Protocol
 - a. Spring
 - Cows, Breeding Heifers & Bulls – 3 weeks pre breeding
 - i. Bovishield GOLD FP 5 VL5
 - ii. Ultrachoice 8
 - Calves
 - iii. Option 1 – Ultrachoice 8 **and** Somubac
 - iv. Option 2 - Vision 8 Somnus
 - v. Option 3 – Covexin Plus **and** Somubac (For bull calves castrated in the fall)
 - Yearlings
 - i. Option 1 – Ultrachoice 8 **and** Somubac
 - ii. Option 2 - Vision 8 Somnus

- b. Fall
Calves
 - i. Resvac 4 Somubac ; and one of the following 2:
 - ii. Option 1 - Ultrachoice 8
 - iii. Option 2 – Covexin Plus (For bull calves castrated in the fall)
- 4. Traceability
 - a. All animals must be age verified with the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency herein referred to as CCIA
 - b. Animals must be tagged with a Rainy River Raised tag and a Radio Frequency Identification Tag, herein referred to as an RFID tag
- 5. Processing Requirements
 - a. Bull calves must be castrated prior to 6 months of age
 - b. All calves must be dehorned prior to 6 months of age
- 6. Animal Requirements
 - a. Calves are not to be weaned prior to 120 days of age
 - b. Animal must be less than 30 months of age at slaughter
 - c. Carcasses will not exceed 800 lbs.
 - d. Fat must be white as opposed to yellow
 - e. Must possess a minimum of Canadian A Grade
 - f. All animals will be subjected to visual inspection for finish
 - i. Ribs not showing
 - ii. Tail head fat
 - iii. Cod fat (steers), Udder fat (heifers)
 - iv. Distended heavy brisket
 - v. Minimum of 0.2 inches of back fat
- 7. Confinement
 - a. Prior to the finishing stage, cattle must not be put in confinement other than in extreme conditions, which endanger the health or well-being of the animals.
- 8. Vitamins & Minerals
 - a. Vitamins and minerals may be provided free choice to adjust the animal's nutrient intake and correct deficiencies in its total diet energy source. Minerals and vitamins used must be recorded and available for review.

9. Feed Requirements

a. Feed is limited to the following:

Alfalfa Hay	Corn Silage	Legume Hays	P. freudenreichii
Alfalfa Meal	Corn Stalks	Legume Silage	Sorghum Grain
Anise	Cotton Seed	Linseed Meal	Sorghum Grain Silage
Barley Grain	Cotton Seed Meal	Molasses	Soybean Meal
Beet Pulp	Cotton Seed Oil	Oat Straw	Soybeans
Brewers Grains	Distillers Grains	Oats	Sunflower Meal
Buckwheat Grains	Enzymes	Oats Grain	Tasco-14
Cane Molasses	Grain	Oil Seed	Vegetable Oils
Canola Meal	Grain By Products	Oil Seed Meal	Wheat Grain
Citrus Pulp	Grain Oils	Pasture Grasses	Wheat Straw
Corn Gluten	Grass Hays	Pasture Legumes	Wheatlage
Corn Gluten Feed	Grass Silage	Peanut Hulls	Yeast
Corn Grain	Ground Ear Corn	Peanut Meal	
Corn Grain Meal	L. acidophilus	Probiotics	

Branding a Local Food Product

When one considers branding a beef or any other agriculture food product there are many variables to consider along with what the consumer wants:

- Consistency of product taste;
- Uniformity in appearance;
- Packaged attractively;
- Maintain a consistent supply.

Although the intent may not be to compete with the larger scale retail grocery store, one still needs to consider why consumers are choosing them over buying local meat and food products. The consumer's loyalty in general terms is directly linked to their cash flow.

A more likely success would be to develop a District and regional niche marketplace for local food. To begin to develop a niche marketplace, it makes sense to conduct a system of surveys as a tool to test the market before you begin producing the product.

How else will you know what they want; or what they don't like and through the surveys; begin to develop a relationship with the consumer. Following is an example of a survey that could be used.

PRODUCT QUALITY SURVEY

Name:	Age:	Gender:
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For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits your judgment of its quality. Use the scale above to select the quality number.

Description/Identification of Survey Item	Scale				
	P o o r	G o o d			E x c e l l e n t
ROAST	1	2	3	4	5
1. Flavour	1	2	3	4	5
2. Cut and wrap quality	1	2	3	4	5
3. Customer visual quality appreciation	1	2	3	4	5
STEAKS	1	2	3	4	5
1. Flavour	1	2	3	4	5
2. Cut and wrap quality	1	2	3	4	5
3. Customer visual quality appreciation	1	2	3	4	5
GROUND BEEF	1	2	3	4	5
1. Flavour	1	2	3	4	5
2. Cut and wrap quality	1	2	3	4	5
3. Customer visual quality appreciation	1	2	3	4	5
OTHER	1	2	3	4	5
1. Flavour	1	2	3	4	5
2. Cut and wrap quality	1	2	3	4	5
3. Customer visual quality appreciation	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					

The idea of surveying the market is not a new concept; however, many do not choose to use this avenue at the outset of developing their product. It can show results that the business does not want to know. The usual business practice is to gauge their success through unit sales. However, by listening to your food purchaser and changing such things as food packaging or the size of portion, may be exactly what will turn out to be a success for the business. The biggest mistake that many business owners make is not considering what the consumer wants, but determining what they as business owners think is best.

A Local Food Box Program

A local food box is an alternative food distribution system that provides a variety of top-quality, fresh, nutritious foods at an affordable price. Individual families pay for and order food boxes ahead of time. The organization or co-op purchases the food in bulk from local producers and from wholesalers while volunteers or staff pack the boxes, which are then delivered to the neighbourhood depots. This program enables families to access nutritious fresh food that looks, smells, and tastes delicious. The box contains recipes and information about food and the food system. This agri-food opportunity is a great opportunity not only for local vegetable producers, but also for local food distribution businesses such as Co-ops or Farmers' Markets.

Community Supported Agriculture

Over the last 20 years, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) has become a popular way for consumers to buy local seasonal food directly from a farmer. Here are the basics: a farmer offers a certain number of "shares" to the public. Typically, the share consists of a box of vegetables, but other farm products may be included. Interested consumers purchase a share (a.k.a. a membership or a subscription) and in return receive a box (bag, basket) of seasonal produce each week throughout the farming season.

This arrangement creates several rewards for both the farmers and the consumer:

Advantages for farmers:

- Get to spend time marketing the food early in the year, before their 16 hour days in the field begin;
- Received payment early in the season, which helps the farm's cash flow;
- Have an opportunity to get to know the people who eat the food they grow.

Advantages for consumers:

- Get to eat ultra-fresh food, with all the flavour and vitamin benefits;
- Get exposed to new vegetables and new ways of cooking;
- Usually get to visit the farm at least once a season;
- Find that kids typically favour food from "their" farm – even veggies;
- Develop a relationship with the farmer who grows their food;
- Learn more about how food is grown

It seems simple enough, but the idea and its impact have been profound in the United States. Tens of thousands of families have joined CSAs, and in some areas of the country there is more demand than there are CSA farms to fill it.

As you might expect with such a successful model, farmers have begun to introduce variations. An increasingly common one is the “mix and match,” or “market-style” CSA. Here, rather than making up a standard box of vegetables for every member each week, the members load their own boxes with some degree of personal choice. The farmer lays out baskets of the week’s vegetables, some farmers encourage members to take a prescribed amount of what’s available, leaving behind just what their families do not care for. Some CSA farmers then donate this extra produce to a food bank. In other CSAs, the members have wider choice to fill their box with whatever appeals to them, within certain limitations. (e.g. “just one basket of strawberries per family”.) Some CSAs are not confined to produce. Some farmers include the option for shareholders to buy shares of eggs, homemade bread, meat, cheese, fruit, flowers or other farm products along with their veggies.

Shared Risk

There is an important concept woven into the CSA model that takes the arrangement beyond the usual commercial transaction. That is, the notion of shared risk. When originally conceived, the CSA was set up differently than it is now. A group of people pooled their money, bought a farm, hired a farmer, and each took a share of whatever the farm produced for the year. If the farm had a tomato bonanza, everyone put some up for the winter. If a plague of locusts ate all the greens, people ate cheese sandwiches. Very few such CSAs exist today, and for most farmers, the CSA is just one way their product is marketed. Still, the idea that “we’re in this together” remains. On some farms, it is stronger than others and CSA members may be asked to sign a policy form indicating that they agree to accept without complaint whatever the farm can produce.

Local Food Distribution Centre

A common problem for smaller food producers is efficient distribution, especially where the producer is trying to diversify their marketplace and shorten food supply chains. The problem is particularly evident in remote rural areas where customers may be distant or dispersed, and third party distribution services are limited.

One of the potential solutions is working through a 'food hub'. Hubs are part of the physical infrastructure for distribution, where orders from multiple producers can be consolidated to offer customers a single delivery and invoice. This can be combined with marketing services, or simply act as the delivery mechanism.

Hubs have taken several forms, in a number of projects across the UK. They range from large operations focused on supply to multiple retailers, to modest sub-regional enterprises focused on direct deliveries to households. Whilst some of these are working well, others have failed. Models vary from private enterprise to collaborative systems and producer-owned businesses.

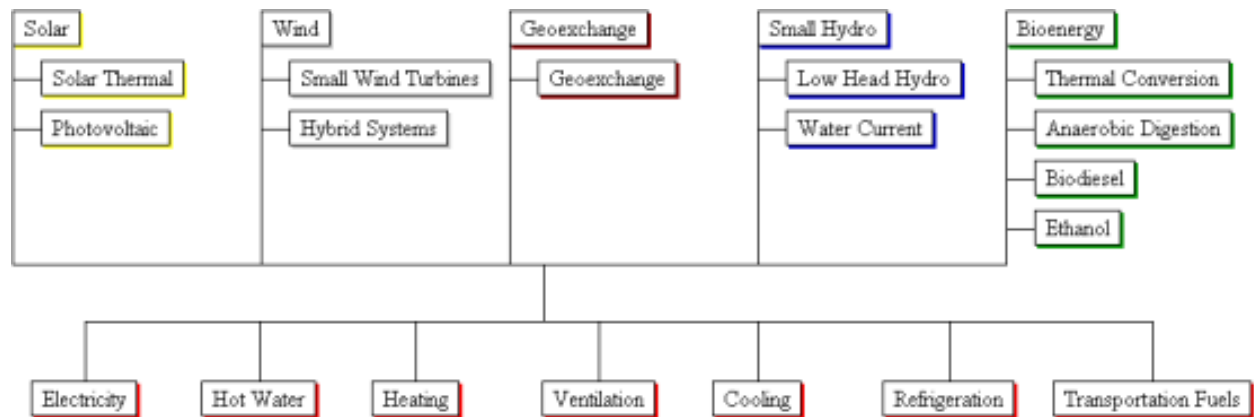
FoodRoots is another good example of potential with local food distribution

- FoodRoots is a not for profit co-op distributor of local naturally grown produce and foods processed in our region.
- FoodRoots is **the** link between growers, processors and you.
- FoodRoots is re-creating this important link in our food distribution system - a local food storage and distribution facility bringing local food closer to you
- Founding members of FoodRoots include a food security activist, a farmer and a retailer!
- Join us in forging this link! Become a [member!](#)

It is good to keep in mind that although a local food distribution centre sounds well and good, there are many barriers to making a success of any business, especially one that is currently so regulated. The following considerations would play a large role in food distribution.

- arranging timing and scheduling of delivery;
- assigning transportation and delivery costs;
- setting delivery location; and
- securing prices.

Bio Energy Opportunities



There are many opportunities across the globe to reduce carbon footprints and for the use of renewable energy products, rather than fossil fuel as an example. How does this spell opportunity for the agriculture industry?

Bio energy crop or closed loop biomass development is an opportunity to be looked at in terms of adding value to existing farm operations. If farmers have excess tillable land that they are not currently using for forage they may want to consider planting energy crops.

The following are some examples of crops and methods currently used or under study as potentials in the bio energy production.

- Biogas for Manufacturing use (heat for product drying).
- Ethanol production (e.g., sweet sorghum, sugarcane).
- Biodiesel production (e.g., soybeans).
- Oil (Pyrolysis liquids from biogasification waste stream).
- Hydrogen production (e.g., transportation fuel sector).
- Biorefineries (steam, power, value added bio-products).

Biomass is any plant material which can be used as a fuel, such as energy crops, wood, agricultural waste and vegetable oils. Biomass can be burned directly to generate power, or processed to create gas or liquids to be used as fuel for production of power, transport fuels and chemicals.

Agri-Tourism

“Farming further afield”

Open your gates to TOURISM, the alternative crop of the future

Agri-tourism describes the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation to enjoy, be educated or be involved in activities.

Examples of Agri-Tourism are:

- farm tours for families and school children;
- day camps;
- hands-on chores;
- self-harvesting of produce;
- hay or sleigh rides; and
- overnight stays in a bed and breakfast;
- Specialty farm tours such as bison, elk and boar farming.

Agri-tourism is growing in Canada with activities ranging from U-picks to corn mazes, farm bed and breakfasts to guest ranches, and from fruit stands to wineries. The activities offered are as diverse as the products grown on farms. Visit a farm to enjoy a unique and delicious tourism experience. There is no shortage of opportunities to sample and celebrate the rural side of life. Get lost in a maze, sample local delicacies, take a tour in a horse-drawn wagon, and harvest your own fruit. Combining scenic rural settings with fresh, home-grown farm products it offers a unique tourism experience.

Harvest Canada, is just one of a collection of farm-friendly agri-tourism attractions across the country. For the past 9 years, they have been building the Harvest Ontario Brand. They are offering farm-gate attractions from local foods, local stays or local maple syrup to create that farm fresh experience.

Trends that will affect us in 2010;

1. Value, tourists will continue to use the Internet to find the best value for their tourist dollars.
2. The Internet is still tops for tourists looking for options.
3. The recession is still fresh in tourist's minds. They'll be looking for low cost opportunities, often closer to home. This is a prime chance to market your business and products to local residents and the urban market.
4. Environmentally Friendly tourism is coming. We've seen worldwide summits on climate and greenhouse gases. Tourists are starting to look for environmentally friendly venues to visit. Be careful though because most tourist surveys still say that visitors aren't willing to pay a premium for being green, they just expect operators to already be doing it.

Country Holidays

To get a taste of life in rural Alberta, spend a few days on a working farm or ranch. Take part in as many activities as you like. Learn to milk a cow, feed the chickens, shear a sheep or help with the haying. Or just take a fishing pole down to the nearest stream to catch a trout for supper—all this with meadows, foothills, mountain views, lakes and forests as your backdrop.

Kamloops, BC

Farm Visits and Ranch Stays

Time to get up early, have a hearty breakfast, and get hands-on with the morning chores. Or relax in the warmth of the morning and sip coffee or tea by a lovely herb garden before heading off to a sheep ranch where there will be a sheep shearing demonstration and newborn lambs to watch as they tumble and play with each other.

After a leisurely drive further into the country, stop for a refreshing lunch at a farm with an on-site bakery and kitchen. It is here you can buy delicious sandwiches and other delights, and where a serving of homemade pie and ice cream is truly exquisite! Or just up the highway visit a delightful little winery offering outstanding fruit wines along with a diverse selection of tasty meals. Your choice!

The next stop of the afternoon will be at a dairy farm in the hills where the vista is beyond belief and the farm has a touch of nostalgia. A refreshing ice-cream cone provides a delightful finishing touch to this enlightening tour. A quiet and soothing excursion through stunning mountainous countryside, then an enchanting trip along the river, ending at a charming inn and guest ranch. A satisfying steak dinner, a glass of full-bodied red wine from BC's well known Okanagan Valley, topped off with a scrumptious dessert and a warm western smile will polish off your memorable day.

These are just a few of the different themes surrounding opportunities in agri-tourism in Canada.

The goal of this update to opportunities in the agriculture sector in the Rainy River District is to identify potential opportunities that could be feasible in our area. This computation surrounds only a few of various opportunities available to add value to existing or new farm businesses.

The necessary ingredient to making any of these opportunities viable lay with those who are attempting to make their living off the land. Many of these individuals are in the industry through their passion for farming. It is up to them to take these examples and want to further develop their farm businesses and to develop a passion for on farm value added products or events.