Field to Plate

Northern Quinoa brought quinoa to North America.
DON'T LET OLD LIGHTING WASTE YOUR PROFITS.

At their facility in Burnaby, the people of Gourmet Baker are usually too busy thinking about pastries to think much about energy.

But when your business is frozen food in wholesale volumes, you can’t ignore energy costs and stay competitive for long. That’s why they faced an easy choice when they heard about Power Smart’s cash incentives for better industrial lighting.

“It was something we jumped on,” says Chris Helgason, maintenance manager. “I’ve always known there were things we could do, but to have BC Hydro support you and give you funds—it’s great.”

The process was simple. It was all done through their preferred lighting vendor, who did everything from estimating their savings, to applying for the incentives, to taking care of the improvements.

“With our new lighting, the difference is amazing,” says Helgason. “It makes everyone happier. It’s a better work environment, for sure.”

It’s also paying off. Thanks to the lighting upgrade and other straightforward efficiency measures around the facility, they’re now saving over 643,000 kWh annually. That’s tens of thousands in power costs every single year.

“It opens your mind to what’s possible,” says Helgason, adding that the company is already looking for even more ways to save.

“To have BC Hydro support you and give you funds—it’s great.”

— Chris Helgason, Maintenance Manager

Boost your profits with better lighting at bchydro.com/sip.
Now that the B.C. Food Processors Association has officially launched their Buy Local campaign, there are fully functioning programs in each of the western provinces, with the exception of Saskatchewan. Thanks to the support of provincial governments, participating retailers such as Canada Safeway and, of course, the tireless work of the food processing associations themselves, there is now a much better opportunity for western food processors to get their products onto retail shelves and expand their business.

The support of a major retailer such as Canada Safeway is critical to the success of the Buy Local campaign. But processors seeking to pursue this opportunity need to consider that their products must also meet the requirements of the retailer for quality, price, uniqueness and differentiation. Otherwise, no Buy Local campaign is likely to help. Being innovative is very important to fully leveraging the benefits of this program, as well as the first edition of Process This magazine, the official voice of the B.C. Food Processors Association. Beginning with a cover story on the launch of Buy B.C., the magazine will feature the relevant news and developments in the B.C. market and present updates on the activities of the BC BCPA.

Best wishes in the New Year!
EY Recognizes Heritage Frozen Foods President Joe Makowcki

Heritage Frozen Foods President and CEO Joe Makowcki was named Prairie Entrepreneur of the Year in the manufacturing category at EY’s Entrepreneur of the Year gala recently held in Calgary.

The event, which celebrated its 20th year of honouring Canadian entrepreneurs, is a multi-stage program where nominated business people are evaluated by a blue ribbon panel to first see if the nominee has the right skill set to be considered an outstanding entrepreneur.

Once business and industry category finalists have been identified, they are re-evaluated and one individual is then selected as the winner of each category for the Prairies. In evaluating the award finalists, the judging committee bases its decision on the category finalists’ vision, leadership, financial success and social responsibility.

“I am honoured to have been selected as the Prairies Entrepreneur of the Year for the manufacturing sector,” says Makowcki.

“This achievement is truly a team effort by our dedicated employees and industry partners. Each day our employees put their hearts, souls and hard work into manufacturing three million CHEEMO perogies for Canadian families.”

Team’s commitment to quality.

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Waste Not, Want Not: If it all begins at home

With the world’s population ever increasing, there is a lot of pressure on farmers to grow more food on less land, with less available labor than ever before. But Minnedosa St. Jacques, chair of the Toronto Food Policy Council, prefers a different approach to feeding the masses.

“Food waste occurs all along the value chain — from farm to fork — but the single biggest proportion, 95 percent, occurs at the household level,” says St. Jacques, a market research consultant and an expert in solid waste management.

“The bulk of that is fresh fruits and vegetables, but nobody talks about this. That discarded food—about one third of the waste that gets picked up at the curb each week—represents more than just forgotten broccoli in the back of the fridge. Water for crops, soil nutrients, fuel for transport and transport, and energy for storage and refrigeration all go down the drain.

Studies in Canada are still in their infancy, but St. Jacques says the UK has created a “Love Food, Hate Waste” campaign, working with all of the players in the value chain to address these issues. To encourage dialogue on how to tackle the issue in our own backyard, she is pulling together a panel for the upcoming 2014 Guelph Organic Conference for a “Waste Not, Want Not” symposium on Sunday, February 2. It promises to be a lively discussion, with informed players from across the many sectors that play a role in our food and waste management systems.

Manitoba Harvest Hemp Foods Accees Food Safety and Quality Recertification

Manitoba Harvest Hemp Foods has announced that their facility aced the British Retail Consortium (BRC) Global Standards Re-certification. The largest hemp food manufacturer in the world to grow, make, and sell their own hemp foods, Manitoba Harvest improved a full ‘grade’ from their first certification last year.

This achievement is truly a team effort by our dedicated employees and industry partners. Each day our employees put their hearts, souls and hard work into manufacturing three million CHEEMO perogies for Canadian families.

“We now look forward to making it happen.”

Ontario Food & Beverage Processing Industry Driving Provincial Economy

Norm Beal, chair, Alliance of Ontario Food Processors has released a five-year action plan for the Ontario food and beverage processing industry.

“Food waste is an important and social economic issue to your organization then become a founding member and get engaged now!”

We Can Help... Create innovative product applications for customers. Adjust product ingredients to make a health claim. Use natural ingredients for higher consumer acceptance. Turn low value by-products into high value foods.

PAC Board Approves the PAC Food Waste Initiative

In response to the recent Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Food Wastage Footprint Summary Report and call for action, the PAC board of directors announced the launch of the PAC Food Waste Initiative.

FAO projects that global food production must increase 60 per cent by 2050 in order to meet the demands of the growing world population. Yet, more than 33 per cent of all food produced globally is lost or wasted. The FAO report provides a global account of the environmental footprint of food waste along the food supply chain, focusing on the impacts on climate, water, land and biodiversity.

Bruce Smith, director of Global Packaging for Molson Coors and chair of PAC, stated, “There are opportunities to reduce food waste through packaging improvements throughout the supply chain. PAC wants to investigate the causes, identify opportunities for innovation, extend product shelf life and inform and educate the public.”

If food waste is an important and social economic issue to your organization then become a founding member and get engaged now!”

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“For too long, the food and beverage processing industry has been Ontario’s best kept secret,” said Beal, Alliance chair and president & CEO of Peninsula Ridge Estates Winery.

“This sector directly employs 125,000 people, generating $35.5 billion in revenue annually and provides high quality, safe food for Ontarians. Unlike other manufacturing sectors which are forecasting declines, we are making a commitment to add another 60,000 jobs by 2020”

The Alliance of Ontario Food Processors worked directly with small to large processors across the province in developing the report, Ontario’s Food and Beverage Processing Industry Strategy - The New Engine of Ontario’s Economy.

This report identifies four major recommendations necessary to supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate:

1. Establish a Food and Beverage Innovation Centre

Connect capacity and infrastructure already available in the province and add new infrastructure needed to provide processors with market development and business resources.

2. Raise the Profile of Ontario Food and Drink

Strengthen Ontario’s “brand” to further expand its market and better leverage opportunities in emerging and developed export markets.

3. Develop Talent and a Future in Food

Raise awareness of the processing sector as an attractive job destination and support the places and people necessary to develop talent. 

4. Simplify and Modernize Regulations

Better align industry and government for regulation development and reform.

The Alliance is calling for a government — industry partnership to refine implementation plans including coating, timing and delivery structures for each of the four recommendations by February 2014.

“This industry has the people, the history and the infrastructure to become Ontario’s leading manufacturing sector,” added Steve Peters, Alliance executive director. “We heard the challenge from this government on growing the sector and have responded with four areas for strategic investment. We now look forward to making it happen.”
Honey Import May Be Illegal

Millions of pounds of illegally-sourced honey may continue to enter the United States, despite continuing federal crackdown efforts. True Source Certification™ helps ensure honey’s safety and quality because it traces the source of that honey from hive to table. The program has been applauded by honey industry leaders, including the American Honey Producers Association and the American Beekeeping Federation.

“The True Source Certified logo tells you that the honey you’re buying was ethically and legally sourced,” says True Source Honey Executive Director Gordon Marks. “If you don’t see the logo, ask your retailer or honey company to join the program. And make sure that your favorite foods with honey — from breakfast cereals to snacks — are made by a manufacturer that purchased honey from a True Source Certified honey company.”

Earlier this year, two of the nation’s largest honey suppliers admitted to buying illegally imported Chinese honey, including some that was adulterated with unauthorized antibiotics. About one-third of honey sold in North America today is now True Source Certified. Many large grocery retailers and chain stores only use certified honey for store brands, including Costco (Kirkland Signature) and Target (Market Pantry and Simply Balanced).

The U.S. imports more than 60 percent of the honey it needs from other countries. Most is from high-quality, legal sources. But some honey brokers and importers illegally circumvent tariffs and quality controls, selling honey to U.S. companies that is of questionable origin. This threatens the U.S. honey industry by undercutting fair market prices and damaging honey’s reputation for quality and safety.

True Source Honey, LLC is an effort by a number of honey companies and importers to protect consumers and customers from illegally-sourced honey, and to highlight and support legal, transparent and ethical sourcing. The initiative seeks to help maintain the reputation of honey as a high-quality, highly-valued food and further sustain the U.S. honey sector.

Roka Bioscience Atlas System for Food Pathogen Detection Integrated at Department of Defense Food Analysis & Diagnostic Laboratory

Roka Bioscience announced today the adoption of the Atlas System at the Department of Defense Food Analysis and Diagnostic Laboratory (FADL) at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. The FADL has implemented the Atlas System to screen the Atlas Listeria Detection Assay and the Atlas Salmonella Detection Assay, both of which have received AOAC Performance Tested™ certification. The FADL plans to use the Atlas System for high-volume sample testing for Listeria and Salmonella in foods that are provided to all U.S. armed forces around the world.

The Atlas System is an innovative fully automated molecular instrument for the detection of pathogens in food and environmental samples. This instrument utilizes a simple three-step procedure — Enrich, Transfer, Automate — and is capable of processing over 300 samples in eight hours. The automated nature of the system enhances efficiency, flexibility, and dynamic scalability to meet the ever-increasing demands placed on food safety laboratories.

The FADL protects the armed forces, ensuring food safety, fitness for consumption, and contractual compliance through microbiological, chemical, and toxicological testing of food and bottled water. The lab also provides technical consultation to the Department of Defense on integrating laboratory data and food safety into science-based inspection systems.

“We are honored that the Department of Defense has chosen the Atlas System for its food safety testing,” said Paul Thomas, CEO and president of Roka Bioscience. “With its high-throughput capabilities, accurate results, and unique technology, the Atlas System is ready for the important task of ensuring the food safety of our U.S. troops domestically and overseas.”

Canadian Beef Industry Energizes Over Canada/European Trade Agreement

Canada Beef is celebrating the announcement of a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with the European Union (EU), which was finalized and announced October 18th, giving the Canadian beef industry broader trade access in European export markets. The European market holds great opportunity for Canadian beef and veal, with the potential for 64,950 tonnes of duty-free market access for Canadian beef and veal worth over $650 million. Discussions around CETA have been ongoing since 2009, and reported breakthroughs on meat and dairy issues in September have allowed Canada and the EU to move forward and finalize the agreement.

“Canada’s beef and veal marketers value the significant efforts of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, International Trade Minister Edward Fast and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Minister Gerry Ritz and are grateful for the work that’s been done to gain additional trade opportunities for our industry and open doors to optimize the value of the Canadian beef brand globally,” said Rob Meijer, president of Canada Beef.

“We also recognize the efforts of the industry’s trade policy organizations such as the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association, Canadian Meat Council and the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance for their role in promoting the needs of trade-reliant sectors during the trade negotiation process,” adds Meijer.

Since 1997, Canadian beef has been included in the bilateral quota which is limited to high grading beef finished on high energy ration, and has had a duty rate of 20 per cent on 14,950 tonnes of beef shared with the United States. Under CETA, the duty rate for Canada’s bilateral quota will be reduced from 20 per cent to zero. Two new duty free quotas will make up the remaining 50,000 tonnes.

Canada also continues to have access to export an additional 65,000 tonnes of beef to the EU through the Global quota, to which Canada will continue to have shared access with other suppliers.

As fresh tasting as it gets…

Air Liquide’s activities are at the heart of the most important challenges facing our planet today… including freezing and packaging solutions to prevent waste and keep our precious food resources fresh tasting and healthy.

Our freezing tunnel solutions efficiently freeze nearly any food product while providing maximum freezing capacity, up to 33% more freezing zone and 50% more convection compared to other systems with similar footprints. Air Liquide cryogenic bottom injection allows you to lower the temperature of meat, dough, pasta and other products during mixing and kneading while reducing liquid carbon dioxide and nitrogen consumption by 10% to 15%.

And these are just the appetizers. Find out more about how Air Liquide Canada’s fresh approach to food freezing and modified atmosphere packaging is not only good for consumers but good for business too.

Finding solutions is in our nature

Contact one of Air Liquide Canada’s food specialists: Candice John: 450-641-6220 • Daniel Duarte: 905-337-3510 Stephane Mortenson: 580-472-8851 airliquide.ca • food@airliquide.com

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No Melamine Found in 100 Per Cent of Tested Foods

As part of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) routine testing of various food products, a targeted survey recently released found no melamine in any of the samples of meat and seafood alternatives, meal replacements, protein powders and snack products. The CFIA tested a total of 500 samples from grocery and specialty stores between April 2011 and March 2012. These samples included 175 meat alternatives, 21 seafood alternatives, 95 meal replacement powders, 23 protein powders, 127 snack products such as biscuits, cookies, crackers, and snacks. Melamine was not detected in any sample in this survey. Therefore, follow-up actions were not necessary.

Melamine is a synthetic chemical used in commercial and industrial applications. It does not occur naturally in the environment or in food, and it is not permitted for use in food. As a result of its industrial use, it has the potential to be found at low to undetectable levels.

Further information on this survey is available at www.inspection.gc.ca.

Action Already Underway to Address Auditor General Recommendations

The Honourable Rona Ambrose, Minister of Health, has highlighted several action taken by the Harper Government to improve food safety, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) accepted all the recommendations of the Auditor General’s recent report.

“Our government is committed to ensuring that Canadian families have confidence in the food they buy and eat,” said Minister Ambrose. “As confirmed by the Auditor General, our food recall system effectively removes unsafe food from the marketplace and quickly warns consumers. The CFIA accepts all the recommendations in the report and work is well underway to address them.”

The CFIA has already completed one of the Auditor General’s 11 recommendations, better monitoring of, and information reporting on, recall actions. The alignment of the CFIA under the Minister of Health puts a clear focus on consumer safety, focuses and clarifies accountabilities and presents new opportunities for closer collaboration among federal food safety partners.

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When it comes to food safety, this government is always looking for opportunities to improve,” added Minister Ambrose. “We have significantly strengthened the food safety system, and we continue to take action to protect Canadians.”

Since the CFIA joined the health portfolio in October, the government has already taken several actions:

- Announced the intent to introduce stiffer penalties for businesses that fail to respect federal meat safety standards.
- Developed enhanced tools for communicating with the public, including revised food recall warning templates that are clearer and easier to understand.
- Expanded FoodNet Canada to a third surveillance site to improve monitoring of food safety issues.
- Introduced the Healthy and Safe Food for Canadians Framework to inform consumers about healthy and safe food choices, to minimize food safety risks, and to protect Canadians when unsafe foods enter the marketplace.

According to a new report, activity to bring healthy, local and sustainable foods into public agencies is gearing up in almost every province and territory in Canada – and there is a bumper for more.

Local Foods: Schools, campuses, and health-care facilities speak in the first ever Canadian survey of its kind. In all, 239 food and nutrition specialists working within schools, campuses, and health-care facilities answered questions about efforts to bring local food into their institutions. The responses show that a significant number of public agencies in Canada are working along multiple fronts to put more local foods on patient and student plates.

The survey revealed that there is significant variation in the type of activity undertaken by public agencies. The schools and campuses represented in the survey are more likely to provide local food than their health-care counterparts (76 per cent and 62 per cent, respectively, versus 66 per cent for health-care facilities). They are also more likely to provide educational activities regarding local food (90 per cent and 86 per cent, respectively, versus 63 per cent for health-care facilities). Campuses and health-care facilities are more likely to have local procurement policies or contracts with local providers (13 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively, versus 14 per cent for schools).

Why are public agencies embracing the local food movement? According to the survey, a key motivational factor is “improved quality, freshness, taste and nutrition of the food.”

What are the barriers to this activity? Top barriers for larger scale operations are “lack of policies that address local food” and “existing contracts that prevent use of local food.”

The report concludes the time is ripe for Farm to Cafeteria Canada – the national organization devoted to promoting healthy, local and sustainable foods in all Canadian public institutions – to further advance the efforts of local and regional programs. Key strategic directions include conducting food leader research, sharing information and resources, supporting the replication of promising practices, and advocating supportive policies.

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W hile now it is a staple in most kitchen cupboards, the word quinoa was scarcely in the Canadian vocabulary only five years ago. That, however, is not true for Joe Dutcheshen.

History

A pharmacist and farmer from Kamsack, Saskatchewan, Dutcheshen wanted to diversify his crops to host some non-traditional yields. Traditionally grown in South America, quinoa has great nutritional value and a frost tolerant nature. It was these traits that drew Dutcheshen to quinoa in 1992.

“When Joe was doing this, I was 12 years old and trying to help him out,” explains Michael Dutcheshen, his son. “In the early ‘90s, there was a few farmers in the area and they were trying quinoa. They were interested because it was a frost tolerant crop and there were some pretty poor years with frost.”

“There were a few farmers playing around at the time, and my dad was probably the most interested of all of them. He’s the one who decided to develop his idea into a business, and they formed together and made a corporation,” says Dutcheshen. That business, Northern Quinoa, or NorQuin, has recently relocated their office from Kamsack to Saskatoon. Now, Northern Quinoa takes an active role in the whole progression — growing, processing, retailing and marketing. “They stuck it out all this time when there wasn’t much of a market. Basically we survived on other grains,” says Dutcheshen of the time from the early ‘90s until about 2010, when quinoa finally took off in North America.

“I just started by helping him in the fields,” remembers Dutcheshen. “We just started with very small plots. It was something that wasn’t [apt] to grow in these kind of conditions.” While other farmers questioned the Dutcheshens tactics — quinoa looked like a weed and was virtually unheard of — Joe could not be deterred.

You may know it as Canada’s breadbasket, but the face of agriculture on the Prairies is constantly in flux. From wheat, barley and oats to canola, flax and mustard, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta grow it all. There’s more variety now than ever, and a Saskatchewan company has worked for over 20 years to bring another crop into popularity.

While now it is a staple in most kitchen cupboards, the word quinoa was scarcely in the Canadian vocabulary only five years ago. That, however, is not true for Joe Dutcheshen.
Nutrition

“It’s something that everybody can use on a daily basis. On every plate that you have you can incorporate quinoa into. It’s probably the most local version of rice that we’re ever going to have on the Prairies,” laughs Dutcheshen. While quinoa easily acts as a replacement for rice, it boasts a much higher nutritional value.

Once it is processed, quinoa is easy to prepare as well as being nutrient rich. While low in fat and calories, quinoa is high in protein, fibre, folate, magnesium and phosphorus. The exceptionally healthy grain also contains all nine essential amino acids — a rarity for vegetarian foods. With iron, copper, phosphorus, antioxidants and B2, this grain is a great substitute for those with gluten or nut allergies, or anyone trying to maintain a healthy diet. Some health physicians mention quinoa in treating migraines, controlling diabetes, losing weight and decreasing the risk of heart disease. This super food is so promoted that the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, FAO, has declared 2013 be recognized as The International Year of the Quinoa.

Processing

Quinoa does not come out of the ground ready for human consumption. People who cook with quinoa in South America often have to spend over two hours preparing it, primarily washing. “When it comes in off the field you can’t just sell it as is,” says Dutcheshen. NorQuin works with growers to further add value to the seed, preparing it for households. Northern Quinoa is a pioneer in the industry — the only other companies preparing quinoa for human consumption are in South America. “We’re the only company that’s doing this processing; we’re the only company that really has some seed stock right now in North America to satisfy the commercial market, and we’re the only company that has the processing equipment to do it.”

The process involves a washing to remove the bitterness. The seed needs to be washed and heat-dried, then stabilized again using industrial washing and drying equipment. NorQuin has developed their own processing equipment, refining the process over many years.

Varieties

There are hundreds of varieties of quinoa. “The one that seems to work best for us is the golden quinoa,” states Dutcheshen. NorQuin works with growers to further add value to the seed, preparing it for households.

Dutcheshen. This variety has an increased flavour, more nutty. Golden quinoa has recently taken off, and because of its more sticky texture, is good for many applications, including pasta and sushi. Northern Quinoa sells several strains, including some South American grown varieties — white, golden, black and red, puffs, flour and flakes.

To The Future

As you might expect, Northern Quinoa’s growth over the last few years has been explosive, and Dutcheshen expects that trend to continue. “We want to raise awareness of the company. We want people to drive down the highway and be able to recognize a quinoa crop,” remarks Dutcheshen. Right now they have about 80 staff, but are looking to expand.

“My goal is being able to satisfy anybody that wants quinoa and being able to offer a local product.” Northern Quinoa will be launching their new retail line in 2014, and some of it is already available online. Their push to local foods and traceability is in sync with the demands of a population that wants to know where their food comes from. “When it comes to quinoa, if we can’t satisfy the need, no one can,” says Dutcheshen.
number, manufacturers will be able to give you relevant information that could be helpful in your selection process or during negotiations with vendors.

Refrigerated or Re-manufactured
Refrigerated or re-manufactured equipment is often a good alternative, particularly for businesses that are just getting started or are looking to expand. This equipment is usually fully disassembled, repaired, upgraded and reassembled. Not only is the cost lower than with new equipment, but warranty and customer-service support may be included.

“Another advantage of fully refurbished or re-manufactured equipment is its increased reliability compared to used equipment,” says Macnab. “This type of purchase allows you to keep pace with technological change without investing top dollars but you need to know how much risk you’re willing to take. While a lower price may be attractive, downtime isn’t.”

In some cases, selecting refurbished equipment could allow you to ask the rebuilder for additional features or functionalities before delivery. These small changes will allow you to achieve required efficiency or flexibility and increase your return on investment.

Remember to look at the bigger picture to ensure you make the most of your equipment purchase. “Where does this purchase fit into your operational or production-line strategy? Will it really help increase your productivity, reduce costs, eliminate waste or meet increased demand?”

Safety Considerations
Whether you buy new, used or refurbished, it’s crucial that your equipment or technology meet safety standards, and that you conduct due diligence. In the food industry, for example, you would look at CFIA to ensure that they meet the safety requirements of your industry. Even in an office environment, your computer and office equipment should be designed ergonomically to prevent personal injury to those using it.

Financing & Consulting
Once you’ve chosen the right equipment acquisition option for your business, be sure you look for the appropriate financing. Many financial institutions can help you buy new, used or refurbished equipment to increase your productivity, remain competitive and improve and automate your production line. “Lenders such as BDC can offer additional financing for up to 25 per cent of the cost of the purchase to cover installation and training costs,” says Macnab. “You may also be able to defer principal payment for several months after the equipment is installed and performing optimally.”

Last but not least, remember to look at the bigger picture to ensure you make the most of your equipment purchase. “Where does this purchase fit into your operational or production-line strategy? Will it really help increase your productivity, reduce costs, eliminate waste or meet increased demand? These are the right questions to ask,” concludes Macnab.
If there’s a superstar category in the processing sector, one that defies economic downturns and attracts more and more consumers yearly, it’s the organic category. And as 2014 unfolds, it’s more robust than ever. According to Census of Agriculture data, while total number of farms in Canada declined by 17 per cent between 2001 and 2011, certified organic farms grew by 66.5 per cent. The Canadian organic market has also grown exponentially over a very short period, to the point where it’s now the fourth largest in the world, valued at over $3.5-billion in sales annually (triple the amount of sales since 2006). All told there are approximately 5,000 certified organic farms, handlers and manufacturers in the country, and the organic option for consumers has transcended specialty and mainstream groceries to being readily available in everything from convenience stores to corner coffee shops.

But for all of organic’s meteoric rise, little was known about the category other than sales. That is, until now. A report released in November by The Canadian Organic Trade Association, The National Organic Market, Growth, Trends & Opportunities 2013, provides comprehensive insights into the new regulated market and its consumer base. The report, authored by Shauna MacKinnon, shows that in the mainstream retail sector, organic whole foods tend to outperform packaged, prepared and snack food categories. Fruit and vegetables are the clear leaders in organic sales, capturing over 40 per cent of total sales (40 per cent of all salad mixes bought by Canadians are now organic). The beverage category narrowly beats out dairy and eggs due

Pro-Cert Organic Systems Ltd. (Pro-Cert) is one of North America’s foremost national certifier’s of organic products. With a client base including producers, processors and traders from across Canada and the United States of America, Pro-Cert is fast becoming one of the most prominent players in the certification field. Pro-Cert’s certification program is recognized globally providing international access to the products and brands we certify.

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to strong sales of organic coffee, bread and ready-to-eat cereals lead sales in the bread and grains category.

The strongest consumer market for organics is in British Columbia, which represents only 13 per cent of the country’s population but accounts for 23 per cent of all organics sales, Ontario has the largest consumer market by volume, valued at $1-billion annually. But the biggest revelation of the report is Canada’s power as a source of organic products: our exports are worth $458-million annually; moreover, of the 3,000 organic grocery items cited in the report, 44 per cent by volume are grown, processed or packaged in Canada.

Better still, these products are capturing more value in the domestic market than imported products: 48 per cent of the total market value. By contrast, only 30 per cent of organic products were identified as United States imports (the largest by far of any importing country).

The report goes on to state, “The entry of Canadian products into the RTE cereals, baby food, and juice & drink categories demonstrate the ability of Canadian-based manufacturing and companies sourcing Canadian ingredients to compete in the prepared organic foods categories.”

Matthew Holmes, the COTA’s executive director, believes another finding is complementary to Canada’s strength as an organics producer. “Canadian consumers show a strong bias toward the new Canada Organic logo and are consistently seeking out local or made-in-Canada options,” he says.

This is especially good news for people such as Nico Human, CEO of the BC Food Processors Association. “People vote with their mouths, and the focus on organic and on local is therefore a great opportunity for us,” he says.

Linda Edwards, president of the Pacific Agriculture Certification Society, is convinced the impressive growth in organics over the past few years is the outcome of Canada adopting a single certification standard in 2006. “When the U.S. government did that American sales went through the roof, because it took away consumers’ confusion about what’s really organic and what’s not,” she says.

Ruth Fraser, certification committee member for the Kootenay Organic Growers Society, hopes the report will encourage other growers and processors to expand their organic offerings. But she has some advice. “Many industry players want to delve into organics but they have little understanding of how to achieve the standards, and too many people don’t bother going through the certification process. But there’s a weight and accountability that goes along with being certified that is vital to the industry’s future growth.”

Edwards agrees. “I would say to processors and growers, read the standards if you want to jump on the organic bandwagon. In some cases your operation may not be suitable. But more likely it will be, and it’ll be easier than you think to meet the requirements.”

Meanwhile, Holmes and his colleagues intend to use their report to draw attention to on-going industry needs. “For example, there’s a need for support in scaling up, of further developing our organic meat and poultry sector, of reinforcing the message that buying local has great value,” he says.

Not only do the findings of The National Organic Market verify long-held claims that the organics category is resilient to market fluctuations, they demonstrate that the best business opportunities are right here in our own backyard.
We have everyone from small garden operators to traditional grain farmers to processors. We cover organic certification for all aspects of food, natural health-care products, body-care products and we have most recently started to work with textiles.”

Another advantage inherent in Pro-Cert is its fee-based system, as opposed to the membership-based system favoured by some other organizations. “The costs are scalable to the size and complexity of the operation,” states Hamm. “For example, if it is agriculture production, then it is based, in part, on the number of acres.”

According to Hamm, annual certification costs can vary anywhere from $500 at the bottom of the scale to upwards of $20,000 at the top end. There is an annual renewal requirement to cover any changes in operations that occur from year to year.

The certification fee, however, includes everything from introducing the client to the standards and regulations to preliminary evaluation of an applicant’s compliance. It also includes an on-site inspection and final evaluation of the client’s proposed organic production plan.

“We have an all-inclusive pricing structure,” continues Hamm. “From start to finish, there is one price. There are no hidden fees. And we ensure that our clients are provided with trained professionals who have the experience and knowledge to understand the complexities inherent in their operations.”

Hamm is quick to add that the certification process can take, on average, about eight weeks. “There are always exceptions to that,” he notes. “But as a rule, the majority of certifications can be completed in a couple of months.”

A Growing Market

A study undertaken in 2012 by the Canada Organic Trade Association (COTA) quotes Canada’s organic market at $3.7 billion, with national sales of certified organic food and non-alcoholic beverages accounting for $3 billion of that total. The report further states that 58 per cent of all Canadians buy some organic groceries on a weekly basis.

“The organic market in Canada has tripled since 2006,” notes Hamm. “And it is continuing to grow rapidly.”

In fact, the COTA study suggests that as many as 98 per cent of Canadians expect to increase or maintain their spending on organic fruit and vegetables over the next year. It goes on to state that spending increases are most frequently expected in the organic fruit and vegetable, meat, poultry, dairy and bread/grains categories.

Although it would appear that the organic market is slated to grow full-speed ahead in Canada in the years to come, Hamm cautions against a couple of significant challenges that may impede this growth. “The largest challenge is GMO or genetically modified organisms,” he states. “These products are becoming embedded in all aspects of the industry. They are already pervasive in the food and health-care products industries. And their presence is removing the more natural options from both producers and consumers.”

Another challenge, according to Hamm, is unregulated claims. “Take the word ‘natural’ for instance,” says Hamm. “Consumers see the term as being synonymous with organic. In some cases, it is a legitimate claim but in some cases, it is not. I think it is the job of the organic industry to educate consumers on the difference and to look at how we can protect consumers from these claims.”

Manufacturers can expect relative stability in raw ingredient costs as they enter into 2014, in contrast to the volatility experienced over the last several years. The one exception may be meat prices, which are currently under a great deal of upward pressure. Capacity utilization rates in Canada’s food manufacturing sector — a measure of how much production can be increased without incurring the costs of building an additional plant or facility — have been in decline over the past two years. According to Statistics Canada, the capacity utilization rate from 2000-2012 has been 80 per cent. For 2013, the rate was 75 per cent. This excess capacity may mean there are some plant closures going ahead.

The directory that follows lists some of the key companies providing either products or services to Western Canadian food processors. While we have made every endeavour to be inclusive there may be companies not listed. To be included in next year’s directory please contact jmartin@mercurypublications.ca.
Western Food Processors Buyers’ Guide 2014

MD Packaging Inc.
250 Hudson Court, Woodbridge, ON L4L 7X7
Contact: Chris Heming
Tel: (905) 831-2629
chrismd@mdpackaging.com
www.mdpackaging.com
MD Packaging is Canada’s foremost distribution of packaging automation equipment for the manufacturing sectors in the food, pharmaceutical, consumer goods and industrial products industries.

Products: Matteri Sealed-End Spout Checkweigher; Matteri Tedders Slicer & Bag V-Flap Insertion & Monitoring System; IT Systems; Vacuum Suction; Blotters; Blotters through 83 Automation & Flexicell; Cutting & Case Packaging/Catse Fstance; Sealing & Forming/Conveyor; Labelling Machinery; Stretch Wrap Equipment

Markham, ON L3R 9W7
Products: Checkweighers; Mettler Toledo Safeline

Mettler Toledo Hi-Speed
92 Stroulger Road
Krumbleez (choc-ginger / cran-apple);
Prinova Nutra Corp.
601 Alton Road, Unit 100,
Saskatoon, SK S7K 3J6
Contact: Afke Zonderland
Tel: (708) 479-3500
info@prinovanutra.com
www.prinovanutra.com

Products: Flavors; Dairy Flavors; Wine & Spirits
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Health Canada Takes on Federal Food Inspection

Canada is unique in North America because it has a single food safety agency, the CFIA, but like its neighbours it does not have a single food safety agency. Experience in Europe suggests that such an arrangement invariably creates unnecessary duplication. Much fanfare accompanied the announcement a year ago of the passage of the Safe Foods for Canadians Act (SFCA) which will consolidate federal food inspection from four to a single piece of legislation, but leave 30 per cent of foods which are sold in the province/territory of their origin under regional, heterogeneous inspection or the honour system. It is uncertain what will be safer.

Following a surprise move in October, which went almost unnoticed, it was announced that the food safety program of the CFIA would report to the Minister of Health. This brings together the risk management activities of both the CFIA (inspection/enforcement) and the Food and Health Products Branch of Health Canada (standard setting) under one department and separates the inspection responsibility of the CFIA from its agriculture trade promotion mandate. However, the food safety program of the CFIA and the Public Health Agency (headed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health who is responsible for leading foodborne illness investigations) will remain separate, and since activities will be reported directly to the Minister of Health, information will still be susceptible to interagency protectionism, which restricts its flow and complicates decision making.

The president of the CFIA will continue to operate animal health and zoonotics (agents in animals that cause human illness) and plant resources (quarantine) programs as well as retain its regulatory interest in domestic and international trade promotion activities. This will create new administrative problems (duplication, omission) regarding inspection of food for safety, animals for zoonotic disease agents and plants for pests, zoonotic agents and agro-chemical residues, particularly at importation, but also domestically. This initiative will undo benefit anticipated from modernizing and streamlining food inspection under the SFCA.

While this move will be lauded by some in the nutrition and medical communities for giving the CFIA independence by separating its agri-food trade promotion mandate from food safety, it creates another equally important conflict-of-interest. As part of the Canadian Food Inspection Act, Health Canada is charged with auditing the operation of the food safety inspection program by the CFIA. Can Health Canada be expected to objectively perform this responsibility now that this is a Health Canada program?

It is clear that without a well-articulated, defined national strategy, safe food in Canada is more by accident than by design.
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