

THE CHICKEN FARMER

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International Poultry Council Preaches Calm Amid Bird Flu Fears

The International Poultry Council plans to double its efforts to fight the decline in poultry consumption in several countries around the world caused by fear of bird flu.

Formed in October 2005, the purpose of the IPC is to provide a cooperative forum for poultry associations in the world's major poultry-producing countries. Member countries or regions include Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Central America, Chile, China, Egypt, the European Union, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Thailand, Turkey and the United States.

Meeting in conjunction with the International Poultry Exposition held in January in Atlanta, members of the IPC discussed strategies for overcoming consumer concerns about avian influenza, which has caused a disturbing decline in the consumption of poultry products in many countries.

"In most cases, consumers are being blanketed with news and information about highly pathogenic avian influenza," said James Sumner, president of the IPC, "and, much of the information consumers see, hear or read is incomplete at best and inaccurate at worst."

From a Canadian perspective, media coverage has been relatively balanced and the message that avian influenza is not a foodborne illness is being made. However, most articles on avian influenza usually make at least a brief mention of the potential impact a human pandemic would have on the global (or more local) economy.

Sumner, who is also President of the U.S.A. Poultry & Egg Export Council (USAPEEC), said that the IPC's main strategy would be to send a message to consumers that poultry is safe to eat if properly handled and cooked. Attendees of the poultry expo saw that message in the form of a large billboard that overlooks Centennial Park in downtown



Atlanta, on the main walking route from the city's hotel district to the Georgia World Congress Center, where the expo was held.

The billboard, which pictured a chicken dressed in an apron, said, "Poultry is safe. Just cook it." Underneath was the line "The message is simple — help us take it worldwide," accompanied by the IPC logo.

Sumner said that USAPEEC developed the campaign to share with poultry industry associations around the world. The IPC has endorsed the campaign. "Languages may be different, but the message remains the same," he said.

In Europe, consumption trends are ranging from a dramatic 70 percent decline in Italy in mid-February to 20 percent in France and 10 percent in northern Europe. Only France has found avian influenza in domestic flocks but the rest of Europe seems to feel vulnerable.

In Germany, where a domestic cat seems to have contracted avian influenza from eating a wild bird carcass, cat owners are encouraged to keep their pets indoors. Unfortunately, a German humane society reports that hundreds of owners panicked after the announcement and are now looking to get rid of their pets.



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Tracking the Quick Spread of the Highly Pathogenic H5N1 Virus

Lately, we have seen a rapid, worldwide geographical spread of the avian influenza virus in wild and domestic birds.

India is one of 27 countries that have reported their first cases of H5N1 infection in birds since the beginning of February. The countries, listed in order of reporting, are: Iraq, Nigeria, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Iran, Austria, Germany, Egypt, India, France, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovakia, Switzerland, Georgia, Niger, Sweden, Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia, Pakistan, Albania, Poland, Cameroon and Myanmar.

On February 20th, Malaysia reported a fresh outbreak in poultry after having been considered free of the disease for more than a year. Other Asian nations continue to battle the disease.

Since December 2003, as many as 40 countries on three continents have detected the highly pathogenic form of the virus.

In Nigeria, as in India, the first cases were detected in large commercial farms, where the disease is highly visible and outbreaks are difficult to miss.

With the exception of Iraq, none of the 27 countries that have detected H5N1 in February have reported human cases. The risk of infection for humans increases with the continuous contact between humans and birds.

All available evidence thus far indicates that the virus does not spread easily from poultry to humans. To date, very few cases have been detected in poultry workers, cullers, or veterinarians. Almost all cases have been linked to close contact to diseased household flocks, often during slaughtering, de-feathering, butchering, and preparation of poultry for consumption.

No cases have been linked to the consumption of properly cooked poultry meat or eggs, even in households where disease was known to be present in flocks.

For more up-to-date information on avian influenza, please visit the CFC website and follow the links to the Avian Influenza section. Among the documents in the section is a list of countries that have recently reported highly pathogenic H5N1, and the type of birds or other animals that have been affected.



Seeking Support for Supply Management

A good way to build support for supply management might be at the local feed store, agricultural centre or in the middle of town. By building bridges with other farm organizations and local businesses, we can help to explain what supply management is all about and that what Canada is seeking at the World Trade Organization is a **balanced** trade position.

Too often we read in newspapers or hear on the radio that supply management is contrary to the interests of Canadians. Worse yet, we'll even hear that it's detrimental to the interests of other farmers!

But who are those "other" farmers? Presumably they are farmers who are producing non-supply-managed commodities like grains and oilseeds, pork and beef. But we all know that many, many dairy, egg and poultry producers are farmers of these other products as well. If you fall into this category, become an active member of the local associations representing producers of these other products. Let others know that supply management's trade position has never been about "us and them". We want all of Canada's agricultural sectors to win in the WTO negotiations.

Also, as business entrepreneurs, we can appeal to other entrepreneurs. Local chambers of commerce represent the interests of business so that's your interest! Check out the membership requirements of your local chamber of commerce and see if you can join. By attending their meetings you'll be sending a very strong message that not only is farming a business, it's a business that supports other businesses in town.

Our Domestic Market is Important

Canada sells \$91 billion worth of food. Canadians buy 70% of primary agriculture and agri-food goods that are produced in Canada.

Both the Canadian and the international markets are important for Canadian agriculture and food.

It is critical to consider the importance of both the domestic and export markets when negotiating international trade deals.

Screen shot of www.farmsandfood.ca



NEWS FROM THE HILL

CFC-elected officials and staff attended the Canadian Federation of Agriculture's (CFA) Annual Conference from March 1st to 3rd, 2006.

The meetings included informative sessions on a variety of topics. One of these included a panel discussion with two past Agriculture Ministers, The Hon. Charlie Mayer and The Hon. Eugene Whelan, and current Senator and advisor to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, The Hon. Hugh Segal. It was a lively discussion on issues agriculture has faced in the past and what we can learn from them today.

The Hon. Chuck Strahl (the current Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food), addressed the conference and reiterated his support for supply management in Canada. He also called on the CFA and its members to come up with an industry position that he can take to the WTO to represent all of Canadian agriculture. Minister Strahl also gave a brief overview of upcoming consultative activities leading up to the House of Commons reopening on April 3, 2006.

Federal-Provincial Ministerial Events

CFC is one of 50 key agricultural organizations that participated in a Ministerial Roundtable on March 14th, 2006, in Ottawa. The new federal Agriculture Minister called the roundtable to discuss a common negotiating position to take to the WTO negotiations in Geneva in April.

The Minister is also planning a Federal-Provincial Agriculture Ministers meeting on March 20th, 2006 in his home riding of Chilliwack-Fraser Canyon. The meeting will give the Federal Minister the opportunity to incorporate the position of his provincial counterparts into his overall agriculture platform prior to the House of Commons opening session.

For supply management industries (SM-5), this means that time is of the essence and we cannot waste a day putting forth our concerns and positions to the new government. For this reason, the SM-5 have stepped up government relations activities until the end of April and possibly into July.

It Starts at the Grassroots Level

The SM-5 has named March as Lobby Month and will hold grassroots lobby activities in the ridings in lieu of a March Lobby Day on the Hill. The SM-5 is working closely with their provincial boards and securing meetings with

Members of Parliament in their constituency offices throughout the month of March. These meetings are crucial because our industry needs to gather information, and hopefully provide some input for a revised cabinet mandate that would safeguard Canada's system of supply management at the WTO.

CFC's Chair, David Fuller, and Chairs from the other SM-5 commodities met with the new Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food in Ottawa on March 6th, 2006. The SM-5 reiterated their position that Canada must stand firm on supply management at the WTO.

The SM-5 is working with CFA, and will present a short statement to government on the importance of agriculture that we hope will be included in the Speech from the Throne.

SM-5 partners are also planning political staff briefings for mid-April. The purpose of the briefings is to educate the new political staffers on the issues of concern to CFC and the SM-5.

One of the outreach methods to members of Parliament and their staff is the Joint Annual Reception held on March 21st at the Château Laurier in Ottawa. The Joint Annual Reception is an annual event put on by the four feather commodities, CFC, CEMA, CTMA, and CBHEMA with the goal of bringing industry together to celebrate our industry successes and highlight some concerns.

With the House of Commons due to reopen on April 3rd, 2006, there are many new faces in Ottawa and a significant amount of information to share over a short period.

Who's Who in the House

The Prime Minister and his Cabinet have wasted no time in getting down to work. Our new Agriculture and Agri-food Minister, the Honourable Chuck Strahl has been criss-crossing the country and meeting with provincial Agriculture Ministers, industry groups and many farmer organizations.

Opposition Parties have also been busy preparing for the House reopening. All parties have announced their shadow cabinets and critics are busy learning their new responsibilities. As far as Agriculture and Agri-Food is concerned, the opposition critics are:

For the Liberals – Wayne Easter and Paul Steckle
For the NDP – Alex Atamanenko
For the Bloc – André Bellavance

Agriculture will undoubtedly be a key issue for our government, as there is a large rural base behind the Conservative minority government. CFC and the remainder of the SM-5 will work diligently on behalf of farmers and our industry stakeholders to ensure that the positions, messages and voices of farmers are heard.



Researchers investigate new use for poultry litter

Poultry litter can be an important source of nutrients when used as a fertilizer for soybeans, according to research by several different studies in the United States.

Poultry litter is characterized by high levels of phosphorus and potassium while being a less than optimal source of nitrogen. Nitrogen is present but it is organically bound and therefore is not as accessible as the nitrogen in commercial fertilizers.

Soybeans, through a unique symbiotic relationship with bacteria in the soil, fix their own nitrogen from the air. While added nitrogen was thought to be detrimental, several of the studies were able to show that the slow, long duration release of the nitrogen had less impact than previously suspected and did not impact the plant's symbiotic relationship.

The slow release of nitrogen is also a factor in other litter uses, like on forage pastures or winter pastures. The studies tested levels of nitrogen, as well as phosphorus and potassium, before, during and after the research.

Long-term impact on the soil was also studied, and researchers determined that land with a history of poultry litter fertilization versus inorganic fertilizer retained more minerals and nutrients. Percentages varied depending on soil type, amount applied, precipitation etc. Long-term ranged from 15-28 years of application.

In most cases, poultry litter performed the same as commercial fertilizer and was not significantly different in performance, growth or runoff. Where litter was applied in higher concentrations (8 tons per acre), the runoff was significantly higher than the commercial fertilizer. But when that was lowered to 4 tons per acre, the runoff dropped below the commercial fertilizer levels.

The findings also indicated that the most effective time to apply the poultry litter would be in cooler times of the day or year (i.e., spring) under damp soil conditions to reduce nitrogen losses.

The research was conducted in several states by a variety of different facilities, governments and university groups.

The 2006 Census of Agriculture

When farm operators complete their 2006 Census of Agriculture questionnaire on May 16, 2006, they will be updating Canada's definitive national agricultural profile.

The cooperation of those in the poultry sector in completing their census forms is now more important than ever. Poultry farmers not only face increasing challenges, but such recent crises as the 2004 outbreak of avian influenza add another dose of uncertainty. The census will provide farmers, their organizations and everyone interested in the future of Canadian farming with solid information to quantify the agricultural situation.

Some tidbits:

- The number of hens and chickens on Census Day grew by 40% between 1981 and 2001.
- Per capita consumption in that same time nearly doubled (16.7 kg per person in 1981 compared to 30.3 kg in 2001).
- Census Day 2001 noted 26 million laying hens, over 87 million broilers, roasters and Cornish hens, and 8 million turkeys on Canadian farms.
- The average number of layers on egg operations nearly tripled to 10,400, while producers of chickens for meat grew their flocks at a slightly higher rate, reaching 33,500 birds in 2001.

The ability to understand where we are now — and indeed where we have come from — offers us better informed approaches to face tomorrow's challenges. Participation by producers in the 2006 Census of Agriculture will also allow them to give a local, as well as national, voice to their present situation, informing Canadians of the crucial role the diverse agricultural sector plays in shaping our national identity.

The Census of Agriculture identifies trends and reflects issues, opportunities and challenges within the agricultural community. Questions cover topics such as land use, crops, livestock, agricultural labour, machinery and equipment, farm finances and land management practices. The depth of census coverage allows it to be the definitive source of information on the agricultural sector, giving a voice to farmers' situations.



On May 16, 2006, add your voice to those of Canada's poultry and egg producers by counting yourself in on the Census of Agriculture.

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