

JULY / AUGUST 2010

real-life
farm management
stories

AgriSuccess

fec



IN THIS ISSUE: Manitoba's Grant and Colleen Dyck are building a modern farm business



FEATURES

- 11** **SHARE: Getting back to farming's soul**
Subsistence farmers remind tour participants about what makes farming tick.
- 13** **Fresh ideas from an annual bus tour**
Participants look for ideas they can implement.
- 15** **Expand your horizons**
An international farm tour can give you insight into opportunities – and the trip of a lifetime.
- 17** **Learning close to home**
Mix your professional development with a short getaway.

COLUMNS

- 3** **The big picture**
Whatever professional development trip you choose, do your homework in advance and get the most from the experience.
- 4** **Your money**
Looking to travel? Find out what expenses you can deduct.
- 6** **Young farmer profile**
For Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers, the people make the business.
- 8** **Ask an expert**
Rob Napier says leading farmers regard travel as mandatory.
- 18** **Planning to succeed**
Send your staff. A working holiday can help employees develop – professionally and personally.
- 20** **Safety on the farm**
Knowing first aid is especially important on the farm.

JULY / AUGUST 2010

On the cover:

Grant and Colleen Dyck from Niverville, Man.

Editor, Kevin Hursh

Associate editor, Allison Finnamore

Original photography by Greg Huszar

Photography and articles may be reproduced with permission. Please contact us at 306-780-3976.

Cette publication est également offerte en français.

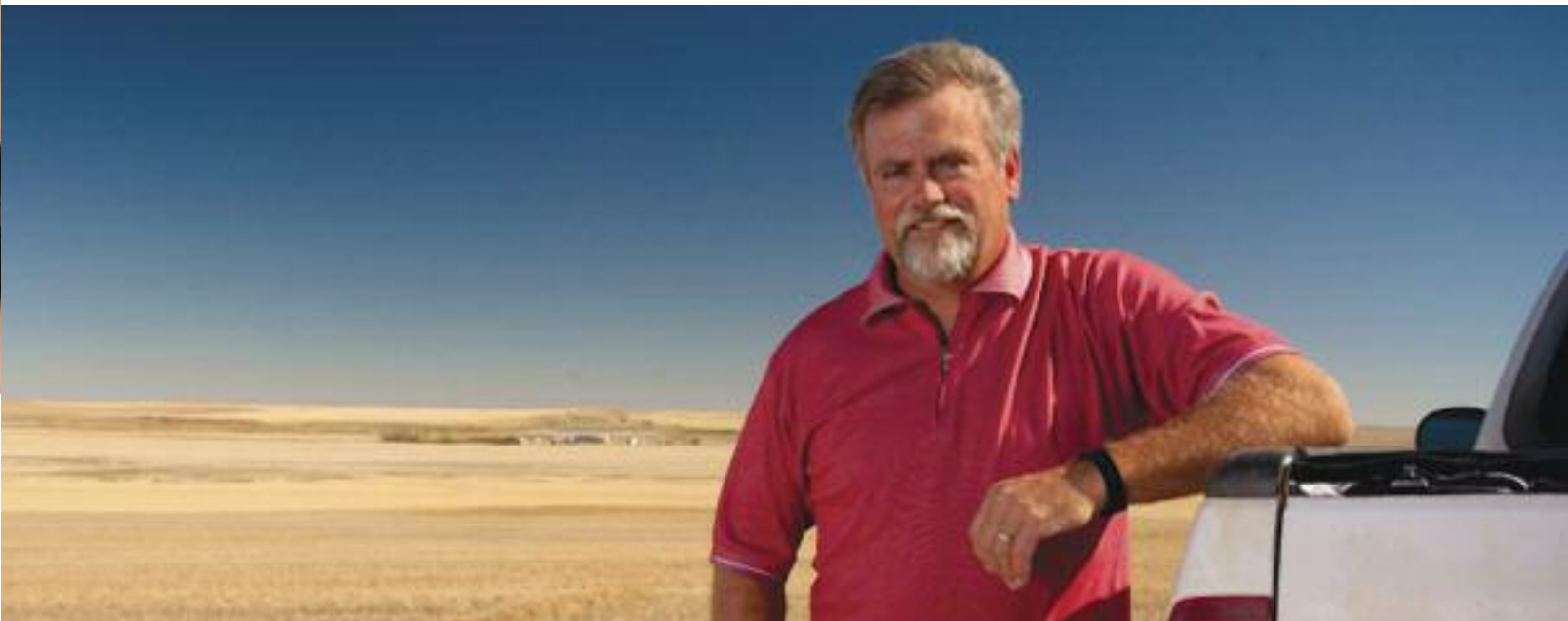
AgriSuccess has been honoured with industry and trade publication awards, including:

- Canadian Farm Writers' Federation award for periodicals; Bronze 2006, 2007, Gold 2008, Bronze 2009
- Canadian Agricultural Marketing Association (CAMA) Awards; Merit 2006, 2007; Excellence 2009

The editors and journalists who contribute to AgriSuccess attempt to provide accurate and useful information and analysis. However, the editors and FCC cannot and do not guarantee the accuracy of the information contained in this journal and the editors and FCC assume no responsibility for any actions or decisions taken by any reader of this journal based on the information provided.



from the editor



Since I'm a consulting agrolgist and agricultural journalist, in addition to being a producer, I've had more opportunity than most to attend conferences and trade shows. My wife and I even hosted a farm tour to Australia and another one to Argentina and Brazil back in the late '90s.

There are many stellar producers who seldom travel to a local conference, let alone visit farms in other countries. You don't have to travel to be knowledgeable, especially with all the excellent farm publications available, not to mention the resources online.

However, the producers who travel to learning events tend to be the ones who are the most curious, and the most excited by their farming business. They are often the innovators in their communities – the ones that others end up emulating.

The term working (or learning) holiday has different meanings. Some producers can't think of anything they'd rather do than attend a conference or tour a farm in another jurisdiction. For them, this isn't work at all. It may be how they choose to spend some or all of their away time.

For others, the working and learning part of a business trip is separate from the recreational aspect. Going to a trade show or convention provides an opportunity to also attend

a professional hockey or football game, visit the local attractions, do some personal shopping or visit relatives and friends.

However you define it, we've decided to devote this issue to the theme of working and learning holidays. We haven't catalogued all the trade shows, conferences and international farm tours available. Instead, we have a sampling of opportunities with comments from participating producers.

We also have practical advice on how to maximize the value of any experience. As well, we examine the issue of income tax deductibility.

We like to find farm management themes and provide information that you may not find in other publications. Let us know how we're doing. We welcome your feedback and ideas.

Even if I'm attending a conference or trade show somewhere, you can always reach me by email at kevin@hursh.ca.



Sunny, light winds, long-term savings

See what's possible with the Energy Loan

Bring your operation one step closer towards self-sufficiency. The special interest rate Energy Loan lets you make the switch to renewable energy sources like geo-thermal, wind or solar power. Take charge of your future, enjoy energy savings and feel good doing it.

To find out about the Energy Loan, call your nearest FCC office at 1-800-387-3232.

www.fcc.ca



Farm Credit Canada
Advancing the business of agriculture

Canada



Don't just go along for the ride

Whether you're going to a trade show, a conference, on a bus tour or taking an international trip, doing your homework in advance will help you get the most from the experience.

Attending a trade show in your region may be a decision that's made on the spur of the moment. Maybe someone you know has asked if you'd like to go along or maybe a local farm retailer is taking a bus or a van filled with producers. All you have to do is go along for the ride.

It might turn out to be a valuable getaway, but if you go with a plan, the excursion has a higher probability of meeting your needs.

There are major trade shows every year. You may head to the Agri-Trade Exposition in Red Deer, the Western Canadian Crop Production Show in Saskatoon, or Canada's Outdoor Farm Show in Woodstock.

Those are big trade shows. You can wander around for a couple of days to see everything. But what specifically do you really want to investigate? Which exhibitors are the highest on your list? For a list of several major trade shows held across the country, visit www.fcc-fac.ca/tradeshows.

Maybe you want to compare grain storage options, or maybe you're looking for a seed treater that will work for your operation, or maybe you're after grain market information.

Check out the list of the show exhibitors before you leave. It'll be in the show guide and on the website. Usually, there will be a map so you know where to find specific exhibitors. Once you have identified the exhibitors you're targeting, you can view company websites in advance to get a start on your research.

There will be lots of other exhibitors who catch your interest once you get there, but going with a purpose and

a plan increases the odds of success in the areas you've prioritized.

If you're planning an international trip, keep in mind that advance research is even more important when you consider distance travelled, time spent away and cost. While there's comfort in going with a pre-packaged tour, make sure it meets your needs.

**For the best learning value,
you may want to travel with
like-minded producers and visit
the kinds of enterprises that
relate to your business.**

If you're a beef producer, there may be little business benefit in visiting a vineyard in Australia. Likewise, a producer making a living from a direct marketing operation may find little value in visiting a sprawling cattle ranch in Texas.

Tours are sometimes arranged to cater to a wide range of interests. For the best learning value, you may want to travel with like-minded producers and visit the kinds of enterprises that relate to your business.

Whether it's a regional trade show or an agricultural tour of another country, it's easy to get caught up in the excitement of getting away. Whether the location is local or exotic, advance research will make the experience more useful.

BY **KEVIN HURSH** / *Kevin is a consulting agrologist and journalist based in Saskatoon, Sask. He also operates a grain farm near Cabri, Sask., growing a wide array of crops.*

When is travel tax-deductible?



While you can't deduct the cost of the holiday component of a trip, the business portion is a legitimate, tax-deductible expense. To claim that part of a trip as a tax deduction, you have to be able to prove that it was a reasonable business expense.

"Whenever you're deducting any kind of travel or expenses related to your farm business, you have to be reasonable," says Dean Gallimore, a partner with KPMG in Lethbridge, Alta. "Reasonable is in the eyes of the beholder and every farm tour has a slightly different emphasis. Some people think they can take a two-week trip, spend two days touring farms and think they can write off the whole trip. In my opinion, that wouldn't be reasonable. Only the business portion of the trip would be a legitimate expense."

As a general rule, if 40 per cent of the days of a trip are devoted to agricultural business, then 40 per cent of its cost would be a legitimate business expense. Let's say a couple with a farm partnership signs up for a 15-day farm tour to Brazil. They spend 10 days, two-thirds of their trip, touring soybean, corn and cotton fields, and they go to Carnival in Rio de Janeiro for the other five days. Their expenses incurred on the 10-day agricultural portion of the trip would be a legitimate expense.

"If two-thirds of your trip was clearly business and one-third was clearly holiday, you would pro-rate costs like airfare," Gallimore says. "It all comes back to what a reasonable person would consider a reasonable expense."

The same general rules apply if you travel to a nearby city or across the country to attend a trade show or a farm conference. If 90 per cent of the trip is business-related, that portion of the expenses associated with the trip is deductible. One exception is meal costs. Meals are considered to be entertainment and the Canada Revenue Agency allows only a 50 per cent deduction for entertainment costs, no matter what the purpose is.

"It is important to retain proof of the business activity that you participated in while travelling for your records," says Kelvin Shultz of Wheatland Accounting in Fillmore, Sask.

"If you are attending a convention, keep the agenda as proof that the material being discussed relates to your business. If you are dealing on equipment, attending an agriculture show, marketing your product or touring farms to learn new agricultural practices, retain receipts and photographs, or document what you have gained or attempted to gain from this trip as support to your claim. Ultimately, the business reason for your trip will need to be sufficient to warrant the costs associated for the trip to be sure that you will have no problem claiming a deduction for it."

BY LORNE McCLINTON / Lorne has worked in the communications field for the last 20 years as a journalist, photographer, scriptwriter and corporate writer. He divides his time between Quebec and his grain farm in Saskatchewan.

Convention travel 101



The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) allows producers to deduct expenses for up to two business-related conventions a year. You can claim transportation costs, hotel accommodations and 50 per cent of your meal expenses as long as the convention is related to your business activities.

“Transportation costs can be claimed from your place of business to the convention or business destination and back, but only by the most direct route available,” says Kelvin Shultz from Wheatland Accounting. “Hotels and meals are only deductible for the business portion of any trip. When a convention or other significant business travel is combined with a vacation, expenses must be allocated in some reasonable manner to eliminate vacation expenses.”

“There are reasonable geographical restrictions to this general rule though,” says KPMG’s Dean Gallimore.

“CRA won’t look very favourably on you going somewhere exotic for an education seminar that would be available locally. That being said, if you are travelling for a seminar somewhere to research a crop that could potentially be grown in Canada, but currently isn’t, CRA would look more favourably at allowing a portion of your business expenses.”

The convention also has to be held within the territorial scope of their organization, Shultz says. A provincial organization could hold its convention anywhere within the province and a national organization could have one anywhere in Canada. Your local drainage board couldn’t hold their convention in Cancun. A producer can attend a convention in another country if it’s sponsored by an organization of that country, as long as there’s a link to the farm’s business activities.

BY LORNE McCLINTON

Taking the family with you

Anyone who spends a lot of time travelling for business knows the experience quickly wears thin. Sooner or later, all hotel rooms and restaurants start to resemble each other. Farm tours, especially to exotic locations, are a lot more fun if you can share the experience with your spouse or children.

As long as the family members that accompany you are active participants in your farming operation, their travel expenses are deductible too. Whether you visit a dairy in Israel, a hog farm in the Netherlands or a soybean operation in Brazil, it can be a justifiable business expense.

The one caveat, says Dean Gallimore of KPMG, is the family members have to directly participate in the business activity on the trip. If they come along on the trip but spend the whole time at the beach or spa instead of the convention or farm tours, it’s a different story.

Non-farming family members can’t claim their travel expenses as a business expense.

BY LORNE McCLINTON

The people make the business



As one of two winners of Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers' Award for 2009, Grant and Colleen Dyck know how important their employees are to the success of their operation. The Niverville, Man., couple own and operate Artel Farms Ltd., named for a Russian word that means a group of people working together for a common goal. "They are loyal," Colleen says of her staff. "They push us to be better and we're in awe of them. They make Artel what it is."

Since they started farming nine years ago, the Dycks have doubled their land base to its current 13,000 acres of grain and oilseeds. And as their farm grew, so did the number of the staff, which now includes seven full-time and 18 part-time employees. But the numbers don't tell

the whole story. "We hire first on attitude and second on skill," Colleen explains, noting that monthly staff appreciation socials help keep that motivation high. "We don't believe in layoffs," she continues, adding that they've never had a labour problem at Artel. "We try to make our staff feel appreciated and when it's time to work hard, they are there 100 per cent for us."

Often, she adds, staff work until the wee hours of the morning during planting or harvest. While safety remains the prime concern, they are committed to getting the work done, no matter the hour.

We try to make our staff feel appreciated and when it's time to work hard, they are there 100 per cent for us.

Growing the operation has also meant finding ways to diversify. In 2005, the couple started Wood Anchor, a reclaimed-wood floor, finishing and furniture business under contract with the City of Winnipeg to remove and reclaim wood from diseased elm trees and other sources. It's a way to vertically integrate and provide value-add processing on the farm, they explain.

The pair also purchased a grain elevator, and Colleen, who participates in triathlons, has developed and just launched the Gorp Bar, a line of energy bars that incorporates many of the functional foods grown on their farm.

Today, their operation continues to grow and adapt to new situations. In spring 2009, when Grant noticed they were using more and more concrete around the farm, he saw it as an opportunity. They purchased their own concrete trucks and incorporated a new business, supplying farm, energy and environmental customers.

“Sometimes the biggest problems are the biggest opportunities,” Grant points out. The newest business is yet another way to keep their operation growing and their staff fully employed. And that means opportunity for everyone.

BY ALLISON FINNAMORE / *Allison specializes in cultivating words. Based in New Brunswick, she is an agriculture and business communicator with nearly two decades of experience. She contributes to publications nationwide and works to help industry promote farming and rural living.*



Getting value from your travel

Australia's Rob Napier has travelled the agricultural world and specializes in strategic planning for agriculture.



What do you find more informative: attending agricultural conferences or visiting with producers on their farms?

Both have their place. Conferences are useful primarily for networking but also for fresh information from experts and presentations from

farmers. Conferences are also good places to learn about the best sources of information. Farm visits are useful for practical information and “on the ground” analysis of a business – you can “feel” and “smell” the business in a way that is not possible at a conference. Farmers find farm visits an easy way to learn.

As you visit with progressive, innovative producers around the world, do you generally find that these are also producers who travel for conferences and to see agriculture in other regions and countries?

In a word, yes. Leading farmers regard travel as mandatory and have a wide network of farmer and agribusiness contacts. Often a key piece of information or perspective gained from travel has had a revolutionary impact on their business. I am reminded of an Australian beef cattle producer who visited cattle ranches in Arizona and recognized that there was much cheaper land in Northern Australia with better cattle production potential. He returned to Australia, went into partnership with an investor and purchased several large cattle ranches at low prices. Since then, the production potential of the area has been recognized and land values

have increased significantly. So, travel can help you see what others don't see, and can also be a good crystal ball on change.

Leading farmers are very selective with the conferences they attend. They recognize that much of the information from conferences can be obtained from media reports, published papers or websites. Many leaders prefer to undertake intensive learning programs such as CTEAM (Canadian Total Excellence in Agricultural Management from the George Morris Centre), TEPAP (from Texas A&M University) or the Harvard Agribusiness Seminar where they will meet with fellow progressive farmers and also be able to focus on developing skills such as marketing, strategic planning and communication.

With all the choices and limited time and money, how do producers choose the working/learning holidays that provide the most value?

I prefer the word "experiences" over "holidays." To my mind, holidays are for switching off and relaxing. Too many farmers spend serious money on farm tours that are neither holidays nor good learning experiences. Organized tours can be disappointing since often a lot of participants are more intent on having a good time. One experienced tour operator recently said to me that he uses a detailed schedule of agricultural visits to sell tours. But a lot of participants just want a holiday with opportunities for shopping and sightseeing, etc. This makes it difficult for serious learners to achieve good value. In my experience, those who take the trouble to plan a tailor-made personal learning program that fits with their goals are much more focused and likely to achieve good value.

When agricultural events combine trade shows with sit-down information sessions, a majority of producers often gravitate to the trade show, where they can kick tires and look at iron. Does this indicate a lack of commitment to learning?

I have seen farmers behave this way at events all over the world. It takes discipline and clear learning goals to avoid switching off and taking the easy line, especially when visiting with peers. My strong suggestion to organizers is not to try to combine the two. Leading farmers want concentrated information targeted to their needs.

Most farmers are still focused on production and being operators rather than managers. Management learning requires a strong focus and ability to go outside of comfort zones. Trade shows are not often a good environment to do this.

As you talk to producers in different countries and agriculture sectors, do you find differences in the willingness to travel and learn?

Yes. The top farmers in any country are thirsty for knowledge about all levels of their business. They are self-confident, yet humble about what they don't know. They are energetic, passionate and focused on achieving their goals. Travel is mandatory and they are quite comfortable with different industries and cultures.

ROB NAPIER *studies global changes in agriculture with an emphasis on the future of family farms. He works with groups of leading farmers in Australia and other nations.*

The CTEAM advantage

It's intensive. It's focused. It's innovative.

The Canadian Total Excellence in Agricultural Management program brings together some of Canada's top farmers. They learn from each other and leading agriculture experts. Sponsored by FCC and hosted by the George Morris Centre in Guelph, Ont., CTEAM training takes participants to locations across Canada.

It's a significant investment of time and resources (\$5,500 for one business owner, \$9,350 for two partners). For producers who are serious about improving how they do business, the results are worth it. Topics include Strategic Visioning, Management Accounting, Risk Management, Succession Planning and Human Resource Management.

Learn more at www.georgemorris.org.



Pull out all the stops

Finance day-to-day expenses with AdvancerPlus

Need funds to buy inputs and supplies? Want to take advantage of last-minute deals? AdvancerPlus is a short-term loan that's always there to cover your day-to-day operating expenses. Pull out all the stops and get financing that keeps up with you.

To find out more about AdvancerPlus, call your nearest FCC office at 1-800-387-3232.

www.fcc.ca



Farm Credit Canada
Advancing the business of agriculture

Canada





FEATURE

SHARE: Getting back to farming's soul

Imagine farming with no crop or livestock advisors, insurance, safety nets, credit, supply management or export potential. How's that possible?

Canadian producers get an answer when they travel abroad and visit subsistence farmers, people who scratch out a living with minimal resources but manage to keep their families and communities fed.

Encounters with subsistence farmers might not yield agronomic tips, but they remind participants about the very soul of what makes farming tick.

Les Frayne, a semi-retired farmer and project manager from Fergus, Ont., has become well acquainted with subsistence farmers in his role as Central America project manager with SHARE



Agriculture Foundation (Sending Help And Resources Everywhere). It's a non-government, non-denominational organization engaged in rural development work in Central and South America.

SHARE was started 30 years ago by a handful of charitable and development-conscious farmers near Brampton, Ont., with a mandate to give a hand up, rather than handout. SHARE gets involved when subsistence farmers need advice and inputs to establish productive enterprises and become self-sufficient.

Today, SHARE's 3,300 supporters are still predominantly rural, but also include donors from a cross-section of Canadians, such as garden expert and SHARE honorary patron Mark Cullen.

Each year, donors accompany Frayne and his associate Bob Thomas, a retired farmer from St. Thomas and manager for South America, on what SHARE calls monitoring trips. They're designed to give supporters a first-hand look at how their donations are being used.

In Central America, a typical trip comprises up to a dozen supporters spending a week or so travelling by van to visit development projects such as the farm of Belize refugee farmer Francisco Herrera. Nearly 20 years ago, Herrera, his family of four and 10 other families fled the civil war in their native El Salvador and headed north to Belize, a safe country with a receptive attitude towards refugees.

The local member of parliament near Herrera's chosen locale of Santa Teresita, about two hours west of Belize City, helped the families secure 50-acre tracts of dense, undeveloped land. (Belize's scant population of 300,000 means land is available.)

Herrera and his group found a friend in the local department of agriculture representative who helped connect them with SHARE after they became organized and wanted to establish a co-op. Such plans are small by Canadian standards, but they're huge for refugee farmers. Herrera and his group came up with a

plan to raise dairy cows and sell milk. They worked out the details with the representative and made a proposal to SHARE, who agreed to purchase three Holstein-Brahma-cross cows for each of the 10 members, to get started.

That was 16 years ago. During a recent SHARE monitoring trip, participants saw how Herrera's three cows had blossomed into a herd of 29. He'd long fulfilled another of SHARE's requirements: to pass one of the offspring of the donated cows to another farmer. He'd also moved onto other endeavours, such as grinding maize for the community's tortillas, a food staple there (SHARE also helped purchase the grinder). In fact, nine of the 10 original members were still farming at Santa Teresita, and each had at least 20 cattle.

Frayne says he's learned that success in agriculture is more than a question of agronomics, a lesson that applies to food production everywhere. "Health, education, infrastructure and the potential to add income or value are necessary for a project to succeed," he says. "You have to help the community, not just the farmers, and be there for the long haul."

Through monitoring tours, Frayne and other farmers are reminded of the basics of a farm business enterprise. Canadian agriculture is built around the adoption and use of capital-intensive technology. But low-technology, high-labour subsistence farming is the norm in many parts of the world. It's also the source of most of the world's food supply, Frayne says. "There seems to be a place for both types of systems, maybe even in conjunction with one another," he explains. "It's all about location, resources and choices."

PHOTOS:

WWW.SHAREAGFOUNDATION.ORG

BY OWEN ROBERTS / Owen, a native of Mitchell's Bay, Ont., teaches agricultural communications at the Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph and is director of research communications for the university. He is also a freelance journalist and broadcaster.



Fresh ideas

from an annual bus tour

Every year as the production season winds down and the leaves on the trees start to change colour, producers' thoughts are already turning to next year. They're on the look-out for ideas to improve their farm operations.

For the members of the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association (OFFMA), that means a road trip, hopping on a bus every November to travel to places as varied as Quebec or Virginia.

OFFMA has been hosting these best-practices tours annually since 1987, to let members reward their hard work during the season and harvest ideas without re-inventing the wheel. They visit pick-your-own operations, entertainment farms and other related businesses with unique marketing strategies.

Members visit different regions across North America, where they see what other on-farm markets have to offer. For the first time, OFFMA is planning a best-practices tour to the United Kingdom in April 2011.

"The members are looking for new ideas they can implement on their own farms," says Cathy Bartolic, executive director of OFFMA.

For example, last year when members toured Eastern Ontario and Quebec, they stopped at La ferme Quinn Farm in Île-Perrot, a direct-to-consumer operation that has a distinctive way of cutting their Christmas trees, called "Christmas tree stump culture." When it comes time to cut the trees, they leave a few branches at the bottom so one of the lower branches can be turned

upwards to become a new trunk and grow back into a tree faster than planting a whole new seedling. The tour participants had never heard of this before and thought it was an excellent concept.

The ideas members receive vary from small changes to large landscape projects.

Bartolic says one year they visited a farm where the owners were putting stickers on the pumpkins that were sold, like grocery stores do with large packages, so they knew which pumpkins had been purchased.

“A lot of our members thought, ‘hey, that’s a good idea,’ because when you have a busy on-farm market, you’re not always sure who’s paid for what.”

Innovative ideas are not only exchanged at the site visits, but also on the bus ride.

Philippe Quinn, co-owner of La ferme Quinn, has both hosted and participated in the OFFMA bus tours.

Quinn says you don’t just get ideas about farm production, but also managing staff and finances. Everything about running a farm is open to discussion.

“We always take a book with us to write down all the ideas and we discuss it on the way home. There are so many ideas and so we always say to ourselves that we need to pick two or three every year because you can’t possibly do everything,” he says.

Innovative ideas are not only exchanged at the site visits, but also on the bus ride. Last year, a couple was trying to decide whether to change their farm name, and they used the bus ride as an opportunity to ask their colleagues for their opinions.

The tours also give farmers the opportunity to make friends outside their own communities, and for those who attend almost every year, strong bonds have been established.

The tours are advantageous for the hosts as well.

“You either hear things that you missed or you pick up different ideas. Once you talk to someone about your

place, they’re keen to give you feedback. That’s most important, to get feedback from real experts in what you do,” Quinn says.

Suggestions and ideas are bounced around through questions, comments and informal discussion.

“We get way more out of bus tours than any conference or workshop we go to because we get to see first-hand how people do the things we do,” Quinn says.

BY HUGH MAYNARD AND CHRISTINA FRANCO

Hugh is an agricultural communicator from Ormstown, Que. who recently spent time in China at an international conference and travelling around the Beijing region. Christina is a communications co-ordinator for Qu’anglo Communications and Consulting. She is also studying journalism at Carleton University.

Some provincial governments offer grants to help subsidize the cost of bus tours:

Alberta – The Leadership Development Grant is offered to those who want to improve their education in the industry while also studying leadership techniques. Primary producers and new members of the agriculture industry in Alberta are encouraged to apply. For more information, go to www.growingforward.alberta.ca.

Ontario – The Business Development program, under the national Growing Forward program, is offered to producers in Ontario who want to develop their business skills. If deemed eligible, the producer gains access to cost-shared funding managed by the Agriculture Management Institute. For more information, call 1-888-479-3931 or email growingforward@ontario.ca.

Quebec – The Programme d’appui au développement des entreprises agricoles (PADEA) is offered in Quebec for agricultural producers who want to develop integrated management and build a sustainable farm in a competitive market. For more information, contact the Ministère de l’Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l’Alimentation’s Direction de l’agroenvironnement et du développement durable at 1-888-222-MAPA.



FEATURE

Expand your horizons

Canadian farmers are competing with producers from around the world. Since many producers believe it's important to know what their competition is up to, they sign up for international farm tours. They've discovered that touring is not only interesting, but can

also play an important role in their lifelong continuing education process.

"You've got to see what the competition is doing," says Robert Sutherland, a cash crop producer in Beeton, Ont. "I like to see where the opportunities are so I



wanted to go to Brazil. The trip was fabulous. That country has massive production capability but it has big infrastructure problems. If the price of soybeans ever stayed high enough for them to develop their infrastructure, they would give the rest of the competing countries a whipping.”

There are different tours for different tastes according to Richard Buck, president of AgriTours Canada, based in Guelph. Some producers go on intensive agricultural tours, while others are more interested in ones that include traditional tourism activities.

Most agri-tourists who go to Australia and New Zealand are going for the vacation of a lifetime, Buck says. The ones who go to South American and European destinations often just want to see what others are doing. Sometimes they come back with ideas that can improve their operations at home.

Alma, Ont., farmer Elizabeth Samis says travelling helps you become more aware of the bigger picture. Samis and her husband have been on many farm tours over the years, including Brazil and Argentina in 2008, and Israel and Jordan in 2010.

“Everyone comes on these tours to learn,” Samis says. “The thing that struck me on this Israel-Jordan tour is the technology that Israel is investing in, especially around water. I think water is going to be a big issue in this country and we could learn a lot from what Israel is doing.”

While some tours are specific to one industry, others mix everything under the sun, Buck says. “Some of the ag marketing and management tours are 70 per cent agriculture so are very intense. Others have a higher tourism component. I had a group down in Chile and Argentina in mid-March on a tour that’s about 60 per cent tourism and 40 per cent agriculture. They see the culture, agriculture, geography and the natural beauty of these countries.”

Even the most serious tours aren’t all work. When foreign farmers tour Canada, they want to see farms

and famous sites such as Niagara Falls, the CN Tower and the Rocky Mountains. Likewise, when Canadian producers travel to Brazil, they want to visit the beaches of Rio de Janeiro and Iguacu Falls.

If it’s something that interests you, Buck suggests taking a tour while you are still healthy enough to easily travel. Some trips require a lot of climbing and walking so people with mobility problems face challenges.

“There’s quite a range in age on tours,” Samis says. “Often, they are farmers who are bringing a new generation into the farm and have a little bit more time for travel. Everyone who takes these trips is very passionate about farming. They all love learning.”

Getting to know tour participants from across Canada is another bonus, Sutherland says. Tours seem to attract dynamic producers. You learn from each other and have fun too.

Canadian farmers are competing with producers from around the world.

Most people who go on international farm tours come back changed, Buck says. Many feel lucky to live and farm in Canada. International travel makes them more appreciative of Canada’s infrastructure, credit access, stable governments and good workforce.

Although you can set up your own international farm tour, the process can be difficult. Group tours are popular because everything is organized for you. Tour operators set the itinerary and look after all the bookings.

Finding the right farm tour can take a bit of research. Companies like Buck’s routinely advertise their upcoming tours in farm publications. The Internet is also a key research tool.

BY LORNE McCLINTON

Learning close to home

Want the insight without the 17-hour plane ride? Combine professional development with a North American vacation.

Whenever Rhonda Thornley travels to Western Canada, she visits her daughter in Calgary. The central Newfoundland berry producer is a board member of the Canadian Farm Business Management Council and attends meetings, conferences and farm shows across the country a few times a year. Thornley is glad to weave in that family time whenever possible.

She's visited everything from potash mines to Hutterite Colonies on her trips. When the farm business is similar to hers, she often leaves with new knowledge that she can apply at home.

A key to making the most of learning opportunities at conferences is to remain open to possibilities.

"Depending on the business and where they're taking it, if that's where your business is going, then there's something you can come away with," she says.

Meanwhile, Thomas Wynker, a dairy producer in Chilliwack, B.C., takes another approach to his off-farm treks, hopping in his car and venturing down the Pacific Coast to the World Ag Expo in California. He makes the February trip, about a 12-hour drive, every few years and adds on vacation days at either end.

During the show, Wynker finds that locally organized farm tours are one of the best ways to immerse himself in the area's culture. "You get into places that you normally wouldn't see," he explains.

A key to making the most of learning opportunities at conferences is to remain open to possibilities. Whether Wynker is walking the show floor or touring farms, he usually comes back from a working vacation with at least

a couple of ideas. They've ranged from new electronic gadgets to farm expansions and diversifications.

Once he's home, he does his own research and, if he follows through on the idea, creates a plan to take action.

Wynker says he's noticed the ideas that come to him from fellow producers are improvements he can implement without a major expenditure. "Quite often, on a farm you'll see efficiencies that can be inspiring."

At seminars and conferences, Wynker finds speakers tend to plant ideas that foster ingenuity.

Whatever the business-related reason for travel, Wynker believes it's important to get off the farm. "It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day," he says, adding that the best way to see the latest technology or hear current research is in person.

For Stan Jeeves of Wolseley, Sask., the socializing is as important as the information. One of the canola producer's favourite learning environments is Crop Production Week, held in Saskatoon each January.

"You could get all of the information online, but it's nice to network, to see everyone," Jeeves says. "It's nicer to see people face-to-face."

Thornley agrees. She says networking with fellow producers is essential to her personal and business well-being.

According to Statistics Canada, there are about 500 farms in Newfoundland and Labrador's 405,720 square kilometers, so neighbours can be a long distance away. But no matter where she lived, Thornley says she'd feel the same.

"If we don't get out there and see what others are doing, it's hard to grow," she says. "It's one thing to read about technology, but it's another thing to see it."

BY ALLISON FINNAMORE

Send your staff

You may not receive this well, but I'm going to suggest that you send your farm's employees on a holiday. I know you're thinking, "What about me?" Well yes, you should take a holiday too, but don't forget about those who work for you. And just to make it a bit more palatable, we're talking working holiday, a good way to combine a bit of fun with some learning opportunities.

Everyone wins, especially your farm through improvement in employee skills and knowledge in the farm business.

The Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council (CAHRC) estimates that there's a rapidly emerging need for 50,000 workers in the agriculture sector in the coming years, so it's crucial to invest in long-term employees. A working holiday, as contradictory as it sounds, will help retain employees with a reward factor and contribute to their professional and personal development.

Everyone wins, especially your farm through improvement in employee skills and knowledge in the farm business. Like owners, employees put in long hours at certain times of the work cycle, so finding

time off can be challenging. But bringing your employees along to a workshop or conference is a worthwhile investment.

Even the drive home offers the opportunity for a good discussion about the information presented during the day. Sending managers to a conference is a great way to expand horizons and have them come back energized with the new ideas they have picked up.

So, where's the fun in all this? The one-day workshop can include a stop for a nice meal on the way home. A conference can include a hotel stay for a few days, and maybe a little getaway at the same time.

These activities are also good team-building exercises, another recognized plus for work motivation and productivity. Make sure you capitalize on all the buzz that comes from these learning activities. New ideas can quickly evaporate if not put to work, so be ready to build on the energy that they create and make staff getaways truly worthwhile.

A good part of these activities can be counted as a business expense, so there's payback as well as deductibility. If doctors can fly to Cancun to catch up on the latest medicines, producers can at least enjoy a wine-tasting at Niagara-on-the-Lake or a nature hike at Kananaskis after an engaging session on the latest no-till practices.

BY HUGH MAYNARD



Take the FCC Farm Safety Quiz

Learn the true cost of farm accidents with this quiz, and find out how planning for safety can help in your operation.

Visit www.fccfarmsafety.ca today.

“Planning for safety”





FIRST AID

SAFETY ON THE FARM

First aid on the farm

Being equipped to administer first aid is one of the most basic and inexpensive forms of insurance you can have to protect yourself, your family and your employees. When a person is injured, knowing what to do and having the right tools at hand can significantly reduce the severity of the injury. In some cases, the urgent care provided to accident victims before the arrival of trained medical professionals makes the difference between life and death.

“An ambulance can only go where it’s called and can only work with what it has once it gets there,” explains Kolby Walters, manager of training and client services for St. John Ambulance in Alberta. “First aiders are key in that role of finding somebody who is hurt, identifying the seriousness of the injury initially and then contacting emergency services.”

First aid is especially important on farms, where help can often be a long time coming. Walters notes the average response time for an ambulance in most urban settings is about 10 minutes; for farms in remote areas, it’s 30 minutes or more.

Beyond being just good risk management, there are legal requirements for farm employers related to both first aid kits and first aid training. The legislation varies by province, so be sure to find out the specific requirements in your area.

The most basic thing you can do is ensure you have a first aid kit available in all work areas. This means not

only storing a kit at your house or farm site, but also in any farm vehicles or machinery. Of course, first aid kits aren’t much use if you don’t know how to use them. That’s why training is important. Again, each province has its own legislation stating what level of training is required, but typically you need either Emergency First Aid or Standard First Aid. This training usually needs to be updated every three years.

Depending on your number of employees, you may be required to have multiple people trained. “You never know who is going to be the casualty,” Walters cautions, “so the more people you have trained, the better.”

St. John Ambulance offers a training course called First Aid on the Farm, and the Canadian Red Cross also offers first aid training tailored to producers. Check for a course near you at www.sja.ca or www.redcross.ca.

Ironically, first aid training does more than just help you react to an emergency. Because it also focuses on injury prevention, first aid training actually helps you become more aware of potential dangers and avoid the risks altogether. Prevention is always the best policy, but it never hurts to be prepared.

BY **PETER VAN DONGEN** / *Peter is an agricultural journalist and communications consultant based on Vancouver Island. Born and raised on a dairy farm, Peter has work experience with many different types of farm operations.*

FCC honours agriculture's top women

If you're a young woman interested in an ag career, where can you find a role model? Check out the winners of the annual FCC Rosemary Davis Award – a program that recognizes women who shine as community and industry leaders. Many are groundbreakers in their sectors. They all have successful careers and are active on boards and committees. They're proud of our industry, yet humble about their accomplishments. And they're all passionate about agriculture.

Nominating is easy

In November, we'll call for nominations from every province and territory. Eligible nominees are at least 21 years old and actively involved in agriculture. Judging criteria includes leadership, community and industry contributions, and vision for the future of agriculture. This year, nominate a friend or colleague. Better yet, nominate yourself – you're worth it. www.fccrosemarydavisaward.ca

About Rosemary

Rosemary Davis was FCC's first female board chair. She's a successful agribusiness owner and operator in Ontario, a role model and a mentor for other women in the industry. Want to know more? Email prixrosemaryaward@fcc-fac.ca or call 1-888-332-3301.

Meet the winners



Bette Jean Crews, Trenton, Ont.
Crops and horticulture producer,
industry leader, teacher and
volunteer.



Marie Gosselin, Portneuf, Que.
Greenhouse operator, agrologist,
businesswoman and industry
leader.



Gay Hahn, Burnaby, B.C.
Dairy producer, industry leader,
educator and volunteer.



Margaret Rempel, Ste. Anne, Man.
Hog and crops producer, volunteer,
and industry and community leader.



Jeannie van Dyk, Noel Shore, N.S.
Dairy and crops producer, volunteer,
mentor and teacher.



What's your favourite colour?

FCC equipment leasing has your brand covered

When it comes to financing equipment for your operation, it's good to have options. With FCC leasing, you get your choice of brands, including new and used equipment, and pay less money up front than a standard loan. So go ahead and pick your favourite colour. If you're looking to lease, FCC has your brand of equipment covered.

Ask your equipment dealer for FCC leasing.

www.fcc.ca



Farm Credit Canada
Advancing the business of agriculture

Canada



For subscription changes, email info@AgriSuccess.ca or call 1-888-332-3301

Return undeliverable copies to:

Farm Credit Canada
1800 Hamilton Street
Regina, SK S4P 4L3

**Publications Mail Agreement
No.40069177**