

## **Commission Sees Opportunity for Prosperous Future in Island Agri-Food Industry**

For Immediate Release

October 30, 2008, Charlottetown, PEI- The Commission on the Future of Agriculture and Agri-food on Prince Edward Island today challenged farmers and food processors to be leaders in a bold new vision of growth, economic prosperity, and environmental sustainability for the Province's largest industry. The twelve-member Commission released its Consultation Draft Report today after hearing over 40 presentations and written submissions, and a holding a dozen Commission Meetings over the summer and fall.

The Commission emphasized both the enormity of the challenge, and the absolute necessity of being successful. They said the current path is not sustainable, and the future outcome will depend primarily on leadership from all partners: industry, governments, the research community, and the community as a whole.

“The Commission members believe, first and foremost, that the industry has a promising future, one characterized not just by survival, but as a source of prosperity for our Island community,” said Rory Francis, Commission Co-chair. “But we have to move from a production-driven commodity model of agriculture where we are not competitive, to a market and relationship-driven system of sustainable agriculture,” he said.

Co-Chair Dr. Ed Tyrchniewicz said that fulfilling this vision means making changes that result in a more competitive, sustainable, and integrated industry. He said that relationships must be improved among farmers, along the supply chain, between industry and government, between industry and the research community, and between the industry and the public. “The industry must establish a ‘virtuous circle’ of profitability, progress, and pride. Attitudes and culture can be a major barrier to seizing new opportunity. It’s the young farmers, the innovators, and the entrepreneurs that will show the way”, he stated.

The Commission has made recommendations in three key thematic areas. To become more competitive, the industry must adopt a market-led culture, using modern market intelligence tools and techniques to make marketing decisions. To become more sustainable, agri-food sector partners should establish a Sustainable Agriculture Working Group to focus on specific environmental challenges and rebuild the relationship between agriculture and the community. To become more integrated, partners in the PEI agriculture and agri-food system should incorporate an industry-led, private not-for-profit company, to be known as the Prince Edward Island Agri-Food Collaboration Inc. The new organization would coordinate, facilitate and monitor the implementation of all of the Commission's 14 recommendations for the future of the industry in PEI.

The Commission proposed specific economic and environmental targets to be achieved by 2015, including GDP growth, pesticide reduction, an increase in farmers under 35 years of age, and a doubling of investment in research and development.

The Commission will hold consultations in late November with farmers and other industry members to develop a broad understanding and consensus for the new vision and the action plan. A final report will be released in December.

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