

Driving Innovation Focus of PEI Agriculture & Agri-food Conference

Charlottetown, PEI, February 19, 2013 — Prince Edward Island's agriculture and agri-food industry must drive innovation through every supply chain to improve productivity and increase profit. This was the overriding message stemming from discussions at the Agri-Insight Prince Edward Island Conference held in Charlottetown today. This is also one of the major recommendations outlined in the Innovation Road Map – a new five-year strategy developed by the PEI AgriAlliance in collaboration with industry groups and food processors that was presented at the Conference.

Over 125 participants from industry and government attended the event at Rodd's Charlottetown Hotel to hear key industry speakers from across Canada including 2011 Canadian Agri-Marketer of the Year Kim McConnell, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture Pierre Lemieux, David McInnes, President and CEO of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, Dr. Jim Brandle, CEO of Vineland Innovation and Research Centre, Canadian Agriculture economist and farmer, Philip Shaw, branding expert, Stuart Baker, and former Loblaw's Executive Peter Chapman.

Topics ranged from how Canada should position itself for success, the importance and necessity of fostering innovation within the sector, and building successful businesses in the agriculture and agri-food sector. A panel consisting of John Rowe of Island Abbey Foods, Scott Dingwall of Hometown Pork, and Brian Otto, Chair of the Barley Council of Canada discussed how they are using collaboration and innovation along supply chains to create new opportunities within the sector.

"This conference provided an excellent opportunity for industry to come together and think about how PEI can compete more effectively through a stronger focus on continuous improvement, meeting emerging market demands, and focusing on improving the bottom line for farmers and food processors," said Tyson MacInnis, Chief Operating Officer for the AgriAlliance. Following a presentation by MacInnis on the Innovation Road Map, participants had the opportunity to share their thoughts on the new strategy, PEI's innovation system, actions for improving profitability, and means of communicating a new commitment to the future growth of the sector.

Kim McConnell said that Prince Edward Island can use its small size to its advantage if farmers, processors, researchers, and government agencies can use the AgriAlliance partnership to implement the Roadmap's strategy. "Too often in Canada we waste valuable time, energy, and resources with internal bickering and then wonder why we're losing ground to our competitors. Prince Edward Island has a great opportunity to refine its innovation system so that the pieces all fit together and everyone profits," said McConnell.

"We are looking forward to moving the Road Map from development to action," said Andrew Robinson, Vice Chair of the PEI AgriAlliance. "Today was a great first step in that direction. We will need broad industry ownership to make this plan a reality and create a positive impact for the future of the agriculture and agri-food industry in this province."

The PEI AgriAlliance is a not-for-profit, industry led organization that was formed as a recommendation of the 2009 Commission on the Future of Agriculture and Agri-Food In PEI. It serves to facilitate the development and implementation of multi-partner strategies and initiatives to build the agriculture and agri-food economy of Prince Edward Island.

For more information

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