



Regional
Economic
Development
Boards

Emerald Zone Corporation

"Your ideas are our business"

For Immediate Release

Monday May 31st, 2010

Springdale, NL

DIRECT MARKETING OF LOCAL LAMB DOMINATES SHEEP SYMPOSIUM DISCUSSIONS

Marketing and selling lamb directly to commercial customers and consumers is seen as the most viable strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador sheep producers. At a Symposium in Springdale last week, sheep farmers and representatives of the independent retail, restaurant and culinary trades saw immediate benefits in forging closer relations with one another. One of the key conclusions was that a Network of sellers and buyers of local lamb and lamb based meats could work together to better understand, and meet, one another's needs.

For the first time in Newfoundland and Labrador, sheep farmers from across the province met with several buyers of lamb products to explore opportunities for greater direct marketing and increased sales of local lamb. The Symposium highlighted that the demand for local lamb in this province is rising and volumes are far greater than our sheep producers can currently provide.

At the Emerald Zone Sheep Symposium, 2010 sheep producers heard directly from the buyers about their interest in fresh and fresh-frozen local lamb. The buyers outlined the types of product they want and how they wish to procure lamb meats from local suppliers. In turn, sheep producers described the products they offer for sale, their production methods and the need to establish strong seller-buyer links.

Concepts like "Buying Local" and "Slow Food" are critical elements underlying sheep producers' strategies. Therefore, participants were treated to an "All Newfoundland Dinner" on Thursday evening. It featured fresh lamb from a Springdale farmer with all other foods, beverages and ingredients grown or produced in the Emerald Zone or close by. The "100 Mile Dinner" was prepared by the chef and staff of the Riverwood Inn.

The two-day Symposium was organised by the Emerald Zone Corporation (the Regional Economic Development Board for Zone 11), in association with Connections Research (Bauline) and Jim Winter (Portugal Cove-St. Philip's). It was themed "*Selling What You've Got to Those Who Want It*". Jason Roberts, Chair of the Emerald Zone Corporation opened the Symposium. "I know that even when you have a good product, if you cannot sell it, you won't be in business long. This Symposium brings together the sellers and buyers of local lamb so that each can get to better understand the needs of the other."

Invited guest presenters from western Canada and the US related their experiences in the direct marketing of farm meat products. Tamara Taylor of Ravenwood Ranch and Farm Fresh Meats from Caroline, Alberta, described how the Taylors had built a successful family-based livestock operation using direct marketing and sales techniques.

Meghan Sheridan, Executive Director of the Vermont Fresh Network, outlined how this membership-driven, not-for-profit organisation had, over only 15 years, helped to develop 1,500+ direct partnerships between farm enterprises and restaurants / chefs throughout Vermont.

Presentations were given by local sheep and other livestock farmers, organisations involved with food security, and representatives of independent retailers, restaurants and chefs. The Keynote Address was presented by Brian Goldsworthy of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada who emphasised how global trends indicate that future food production and consumption will inevitably become more localised.

Representatives of the buying community saw the Symposium as the first step to what can be a viable and sustainable sheep industry in this province. Jeff Wells, Food Operations Manager for the Coleman Group of Companies based in Corner Brook said “we are very encouraged by the progress made at this Symposium. The direction fits very well with our strategy to support local farmers and local Newfoundland produced products.”

Emerald Zone Corporation Chair, Jason Roberts, concluded that the event was a tremendous success. “Not only did we hear about the direct marketing of lamb in other places from which we can all learn, but we also heard from several sheep farmers of direct sales success stories in Newfoundland and Labrador. There was a significant spirit of business co-operation generated by Symposium participants.”

Funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s ACAAF (Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food) Program, the Emerald Zone Sheep Symposium, 2010, was held at the Riverwood Inn, Springdale, on May 27th and 28th.

For further information, please contact:

Mel Janes, Executive Director
Emerald Zone Corporation
142 Little Bay Road,
Springdale, NL, A0J 1T0
Tel: (709) 673-3300 or 1-888-673-3344
E-Mail: executive@ezc.ca

Chris Palmer, Principal & Partner
Connections Research
1 Westerpoint Lane
Bauline, NL, A1K 1E9
Tel: (709) 335-8272
E-mail: info@connectionsresearch

EMERALD ZONE SHEEP SYMPOSIUM, 2010

“Selling What You’ve Got to Those Who Want It”

Backgrounder

The Context

The Emerald Zone Corporation (Regional Economic Development Board 11) in north-central Newfoundland, with the assistance of Chris Palmer (Connections Research) and Jim Winter (Community Development Consultant), hosted a Sheep Symposium on May 27th-28th, 2010, which brought together a select group of sheep producers, buyers, hospitality industry representatives and others interested in the marketing and purchasing of meat and other lamb based products in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). The Symposium had been stimulated by interest expressed by farmers in developing a collaborative sheep industry in the Emerald Zone.

Over the last two decades, many sheep farms in NL have gone out of business. Production issues, such as predation and shortages of pastureland, have whittled away at this once prolific industry. Sheep producers have also been hit hard by changes in the procurement practices of the major national wholesale and retail chains.

With the large supermarkets closing their doors to locally-raised lamb, producers have to find alternative markets and employ new techniques for selling their meats. The purpose of the *Emerald Zone Sheep Symposium 2010* was to connect producers with the buyers of lamb and lamb based meats so that farmers can lay out what they have to offer and buyers can outline the conditions under which they would be prepared to purchase local product. Thus, sheep producers, and prospective sheep farmers, will be better able to understand market opportunities and what they need to do to capitalise on them.

Invited Symposium participants included several leading sheep farmers, producers interested in raising sheep, farmers in other, but similar commodities, and local buyers of lamb and sheep products, such as independent retailers and representatives of the restaurant and culinary trades. Out-of-province and other special guests were invited to highlight their experiences in linking producers with buyers using direct marketing methods, promoting the economic, quality and environmental benefits of “buying local” and emphasising the importance of Food Security.

The Symposium

The Symposium opened with **Chris Palmer** of Connections Research providing a brief overview of the Newfoundland and Labrador sheep industry and the reason why this event was held – that is, a strong interest on the part of two Emerald Zone sheep producers, Bennett Warren of Westport and Philip Burton of Springdale, to grow their small operations into a collaborative regional sheep industry.

Howard Morry highlighted the successes, as well as the constraints, of his 60 years in sheep farming just outside of St. John’s. Morry easily sells all his lamb directly to retailers, restaurants and consumers. Last year, he sold 300 lambs directly to customers as far away as Corner Brook.

But Morry could expand his farm to three times its size and still have no problems selling the product, if there was more land available.

Jeff Wells, Food Operations Manager with the Coleman Group of Companies in Corner Brook, outlined his company's interest and experience in buying local lamb, as well as the expectations the retailer has of local farmers in terms of product quality, delivery consistency, packaging and pricing. Nevertheless, the company could procure more lamb locally for sale to Coleman's customers across the province if it has a closer working relationship with producers.

Chef **Ivan Kyutukchiev** of Bianca's Restaurant, St. John's, set his address within the context of his role as co-founder of the Newfoundland and Labrador Chapter of the Slow Food Movement – essentially the opposite of “fast food” - where prepared meals use nutritious and fresh ingredients. Bianca's and other high-end restaurants look for locally raised or grown food and ingredients, and there is considerable interest among chefs in not only fresh, but also fresh-frozen lamb from local farm enterprises.

The **Restaurant Association of Newfoundland and Labrador**, unable to participate in the Symposium, submitted a Brief on its position regarding the use of local lamb by its members which was read out and copied for Symposium participants. RANL noted that “most restaurants in our province are happy and even eager to support local food production”. However, member restaurants and chefs need to know where they can procure local lamb, the per-unit price has to be competitive and restaurants want lamb to be available during much of the year.

Tamara Taylor related the history and experience of her family in starting and building up Ravenwood Ranch and Farm Fresh Meats in Caroline, Alberta. The Taylors raise, prepare and sell meat from a diverse range of animals – including sheep, goats, rabbits, elk and bison – which they market and sell as fresh and processed product directly to commercial customers in Calgary, Edmonton and Red Deer, as well as to consumers from the farm market shop and cafe. The Ravenwood family farm's animal husbandry practices adhere strictly to the principles of the humane treatment of livestock, avoidance of chemical fertilisers, antibiotics and steroids, and ensuring the farm's environmental sustainability.

Brian Goldsworthy, Deputy Director, NL, with Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, St. John's, gave the Keynote Address over dinner. Goldsworthy provided the global context to the aims of the Symposium by reviewing international trends regarding food consumption, rising energy costs and the impact of climate change, etc. which suggest in the coming years the world will have difficulty feeding itself and, correspondingly, foods travelling long distances will become prohibitively expensive.

The second day's morning session was introduced by **Kristie Jamieson**, Executive Director of the Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador, who highlighted the aims and objectives of the Network and the importance of promoting food security for the province. Jamieson related the Network's activities to local agriculture, and by extension to the sheep industry, in that food security can only be achieved if more of the food Newfoundlanders and Labradorians consume is grown or raised locally rather than travelling over hundreds or even thousands of miles.

Rooseveldt Thompson of Leamington Farms, Point Leamington, described how he had developed his successful hog farm and pork processing facility at a time when other commercial hog farmers were leaving the industry. One of Thompson's important messages to all red meat producers in the province is that farmers have to get to know and understand the specific needs of commercial buyers and consumers. On the other hand, buyers of local meats also have to get to know the farmers they buy from and the constraints under which animals are raised.

Wade Alley, sheep farmer from St. David's and operator of the Loch Leven Slaughterhouse summarised his work in developing processed meats from lamb – sausages, hamburger patties, etc. Since sheep farmers have to "utilise the entire animal" adding value to lamb through secondary processing is an important component of his business.

Meghan Sheridan, Executive Director of the Vermont Fresh Network, based in Richmond, Vermont, described how the not-for-profit Network had helped to forge over 1,500 partnership arrangements between Vermont farmers and restaurant chefs in the state. The VFN's role is to connect farmers and chefs through a variety of activities, and thereafter facilitate commercial procurement linkages between the two groups – all with the aim of promoting Vermont's tasty and nutritious foods to the restaurant and culinary trades. Many of the several hundred member farms raise sheep and directly sell lamb to commercial buyers, primarily restaurants.

Following these presentations, participants broke into three discussion groups. These sessions were facilitated by Mel Janes (Emerald Zone Corporation), Brian Goldsworthy (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada) and Colleen O'Toole (Connections Research). The three discussion groups were presented with the following task:

"Consumer demand in Newfoundland & Labrador for fresh / frozen lamb and lamb-based meats has risen sharply over the last decade. But, the demand for fresh lamb from independent groceries and the culinary, restaurant and hospitality industries cannot be met by local sheep farmers.

Considering this, what do Newfoundland's sheep producers have to do to:

1. Promote and sell local lamb through direct marketing outlets?
2. Supply the product buyers' need, how they need it, when they need it?

Conversely, what do those who want to buy local lamb have to do to:

1. Understand the constraints on producers so they can better respond to farmers' needs?
2. Help create an environment that allows new and existing sheep producers to invest in growth and expansion?

Finally, what do these groups *together* have to do to make direct sales work for everyone?"

Jim Winter, Community Development Consultant, Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, facilitated the discussion groups' reports back to the plenary. While each Group had different takes on resolving the questions discussed, clearly there were areas of agreement. All groups (comprised equitably of producers and buyers) agreed there is tremendous potential for more sales of local lamb to commercial buyers that can be sustainable over time. However buyers and sellers have to know more about each other's activities. Buyers have to become aware of where to buy lamb locally whereas the sellers of local lamb must understand better the specific needs of the buyers.

Jim Winter led the Symposium Wrap-Up session during which participants identified the next steps to be taken to facilitate future sheep producer-lamb buyer linkages and partnerships. The Wrap-Up session arrived at a number of recommendations which also identified who would take responsibility for certain actions.

Bennett Warren, White Bay sheep producer, offered some concluding comments on the Symposium claiming he was sufficiently enthused at what he had heard. His parting message was that he hoped governments and other decision-makers would pay more attention to the benefits of local food production. After all, Warren charged, “governments go out of their way to protect Newfoundland and Labrador’s fisheries from overfishing and through regulations that require processing be done in the province; they insist that Voisey’s Bay nickel will eventually be processed in this province; and in many places the protection and preservation of the forests is paramount. But our governments do not impose these same values on, or provide active support for, local food production”.

ALL-NEWFOUNDLAND LAMB DINNER

In providing a forum for producers of local lamb and related meats to talk directly with retail and other commercial buyers in order to examine various direct marketing techniques, the Symposium acknowledged the importance of such concepts as:

- Buy Local,
- 100 Mile Diet
- Slow Food,
- Food Security, and
- Minimising the Carbon Footprint of Food Production.

Recognising these principles, the organisers of the Emerald Zone Sheep Symposium 2010, in co-operation with the Chef and staff at the Riverwood Inn, presented an Evening Dinner on Thursday May 27th featuring fresh, local lamb from a producer in the Springdale area. The meal was also an all-Newfoundland Dinner. In the spirit of the 100-Mile Diet, the meat, vegetables, desserts, fruit, dairy products and beverages were all grown, raised or produced within the Emerald Zone. Food or ingredients not available in the Green Bay-White Bay region came from suppliers elsewhere on the island.

Special thanks for the following:

- Fresh lamb from Future Farms, Springdale and Westport,
- Vegetables from Rowsell’s Farm, Rattling Brook, and Riverbrook Farms, Corner Brook,
- Beets and pickles from Joyce Cakes, King’s Point,
- Berries, desserts and muffins from Dallas Young, Springdale,
- Butter from Spyglass Creamery, Ship Cove,
- Birch wine from Sap World, Fleur de Lys,
- Berry wines from Auk Winery, Twillingate,
- Roasted coffee from Brewed Awakenings, Corner Brook,
- Commissariat House and Harbour Breton loose tea blends from Britannia Teas, St. John’s,
- Meal preparation by Chef Dallas Young and staff of the Riverwood Inn, Springdale,
- Dinner music provided by local guitarist, Clint Curtis, and
- Evening entertainment provided by local band, JAG.

Friday lunch-time pork and moose sausage snacks provided by Roosevelt Thompson.

AGENDA

Thursday May 27th

Time	Event	Lead
11:00-1:00	Registration	Emerald Zone Corporation
11:30-12:00	Lunch – Soup & Wraps	Emerald Zone Corporation
12:00-12:15	Opening Remarks & Introduction of Special Guests	Jason Roberts, Chair, Emerald Zone Corporation, Springdale
12:15-12:30	Background to the Symposium	Chris Palmer, Principal & Partner, Connections Research, Bauline
12:30-1:00	“Marketing Issues in the NL Sheep Industry”	Howard Morry, President of SPANL and Sheep Producer, Morry’s Sheep Farm, Kilbride
1:00-1:30	“Demand for Lamb & Lamb Based Meat Products in NL”	Jeff Wells, Food Operations Manager, Coleman Group of Companies, Corner Brook
NETWORKING BREAK		
1:30-2:00		
2:00-2:30	“Lamb and the Culinary / Restaurant Industry”	Executive Chef Ivan Kyutukchiev, Bianca’s Restaurant, St. John’s
2:30-3:00	“Direct Marketing of Local Lamb and Lamb Based Meat Products”	Tamara Taylor, Co-owner, Ravenwood Ranch, Caroline, Alberta
3:00-4:30	Panel Discussion	Featuring the above four speakers
6:00-8:00	Lamb Dinner with Keynote Speaker “Global Trends Towards Local Foods”	Brian Goldsworthy, Deputy Director-NL, Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada
9:00+	Local Entertainment	JAG

Friday May 28th

Time	Event	Lead
8:30-10:00	<u>Working Breakfast</u>	
8:50-9:10	“Food Security in NL”	Kristy Jamieson, Executive Director, NL Food Security Network
9:10-9:30	”Understanding Customers”	Rooseveltd Thompson, Hog Producer, Leamington Farms, Point Leamington,
9:30-9:50	“Lamb Processing in St. David’s”	Wade Alley, Sheep Producer & Owner, Loch Leven Slaughterhouse, St. David’s
10:00-10:30	“Linking Producers and Chefs”	Meghan Sheridan, Executive Director, Vermont Fresh Network, Richmond, Vermont
10:30-11:30	Group Discussions	Producers, buyers-retailers, chefs and others.
11:30-12:00	Discussion Groups report back to the Plenary session	All participants
12:00-1:00	Plenary discussion	All participants
1:00-1:15	Symposium Wrap-up	Jim Winter, Community Development Consultant, Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s
1:15+	Buffet Lunch & Farewell Remarks, Acknowledgements and Thanks	Bennett Warren, White Bay Sheep Producer and Mel Janes, Executive Director, EZC

SYMPOSIUM SOIREE

Written and read by Max Osmond, St. Patrick`s sheep producer, 27th May, 2010

Officials and sheep farmers,
Gathered for a meal,
After stating all matters,
Just exactly how they feel.

The eve was informal,
No-one dressed in suit and tie,
A drink or two beforehand,
To make the time pass by.

The tables were prepared,
Everything is done in style,
Each place is looking perfect,
Of that, there`s no denial.

Everything was to perfection,
All should have known,
`Cos everything there eaten,
Was local Newfoundland grown.

The main course was lamb,
To perfection was done,
Disappointed in the meal,
There`s not a single one.