



Oat industry to benefit from check-off

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Saskatchewan oat producers can look forward to new market opportunities, technologies and products from the newly established, producer-directed Saskatchewan Oat Development Commission (SODC).

The Commission was established by the Government of Saskatchewan at the industry's request to support research and development activities, including market development. The establishment of the SODC followed an extensive producer consultation process that was led by the Prairie Oat Growers Association Inc. producer group. Oat producers were consulted through public meetings and the distribution of a producer survey inserted in the Western Producer. It was determined at the conclusion of these consultations that there was sufficient producer support to establish a development commission.

"We are pleased that the Government of Saskatchewan has approved our request for a producer-operated development commission. I would like to thank the oat producers and buyers in advance for their support in the establishment of the commission," Saskatchewan Oat Development Commission Interim Chair Dwayne Anderson said.

SODC will be financed through a mandatory refundable check-off. The check-off is set at \$0.50 per tonne of oats and is expected to generate approximately \$350,000 per year for research, market development and extension activities. While the check-off will be applied to all Saskatchewan-grown oats, excluding those grown for personal consumption, producers may request a refund twice per year. The check-off is set to begin on August 1, 2006.

An interim board of directors was appointed upon the inception of the SODC, and will



remain in place until an election is held. The first election of directors will be held no later than October 2007.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact the Saskatchewan Oat Development Commission at 1-306-744-2775;
- E-mail the Prairie Oat Growers Association at poga@imagewireless.ca; or
- Visit www.poga.ca.

LOCALLY PRODUCED FOOD – A WAY TO HEALTHIER EATING



Have you ever tasted a Saskatchewan-produced cantaloupe? What about a locally grown tomato? The flavour is exceptional. There are a number of ways in

which consumers can experience the taste of Saskatchewan, even if they don't have a garden.

"Many communities have farmers' markets," Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Provincial Vegetable Crops Specialist Connie Achtymichuk said. "But another initiative that has just been started is a web-based local food directory."

While the food directory project is still in its early stages, the idea is to connect local producers with local consumers. By buying locally, everybody wins. The producer has a market that commands a fair price, and the consumer gets to enjoy vegetables at their peak freshness.

There are a number of groups involved with the food directory initiative, but the lead is University of Regina computer science professor Dr. Daryl Hepting. Dr. Hepting has already started a discussion group to find out who is interested, and to collect ideas.

"This directory will help link producers and consumers, and develop local markets for local food products," Hepting said. "It will also help develop value-added industries in the province, provide consumers with the tools needed to compare local products with national brands, and provide information about economic, environmental, health, and social impacts of their choices."

The project, along with other forms of direct marketing, will enable the Saskatchewan vegetable industry to expand.

"The industry is small, and the growing season is short. This makes it difficult for Saskatchewan's vegetable producers to break into traditional markets," Achtymichuk said. "But the quality and flavour of the vegetables being grown is exceptional."

Because of Saskatchewan's climate, there are very few pests that damage vegetable crops. Most vegetables, therefore, are grown with little or no pesticides. Organically grown produce is also available.

"The Canada Food Guide encourages eating five to 10 servings of fruit and vegetables a day, so why not try produce from a local garden?" Achtymichuk said. "Not only are there health benefits in doing so, but consider picking up vegetables from a local garden: what a good way to expose children to where their food comes from."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Call Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Provincial Vegetable Crops Specialist Connie Achtymichuk at (306) 787-2755;
- Visit <http://lofo.uregina.ca>; or
- E-mail local.food@uregina.ca; or
- Call Dr. Daryl Hepting at 306-585-5210.

