

EXPORTS | GRAIN AND BEEF

Food processors explore emerging Asian markets

Deals in progress | Western Canadian group returns from latest trip

BY DAN YATES
SASKATOON NEWSROOM

Officials leading a series of trade missions to Southeast Asia say the trips are slowly but surely securing new investment and markets that will benefit Western Canada.

Delegates from provincial food processing associations in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia returned to Canada at the end of March from a two-week trade mission.

They met with officials in the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam interested in procuring beef and grain products from Western Canada or gaining entry into the country for their own goods.

It's the fifth trip the Saskatchewan Food Processors Association (SFFPA) has led since 2010 under an interprovincial partnership dubbed the Export Enhancement and Investment Project.

The initiative was projected to bring \$13.5 million in sales and investment when it was launched, but project manager Ken Ziegler of GPC Capital Corp. offered an unoffi-

cial tally of \$25 million.

Ziegler, a lawyer with a background in international trade and immigration, said the biannual missions are a proactive approach to brokering partnerships.

"There's lots of people that produce wheat. Why the hell would you buy wheat from us rather than Australia or the United States or Brazil or some place else?" said Ziegler.

"Part of the answer to that is because people tend to do business with people that they know and that they trust and with whom they have relationships."

In the Philippines, where the initiative has made repeat visits, Ziegler said the group followed up on discussions that could see an investor interested in Canadian beef imports set up shop in Canada to deal directly with producers.

"Is this good for producers in Western Canada? I hope so," said Ziegler.

"It gives them a market that they haven't had before and a market of 100 million people within the country of the Philippines and hundreds of millions within the region."

Other discussions he outlined

involve cereal grain exports and the possibility of supplying a manufacturer that produces leather products for automobiles.

"It's an opportunity basically to create new markets for existing products," said Ziegler.

The most recent mission, funded by Western Economic Diversification Canada, saw delegates meet with Vietnamese food processors and make a first-time visit to Indonesia, which has already been targeted for the group's next mission in November.

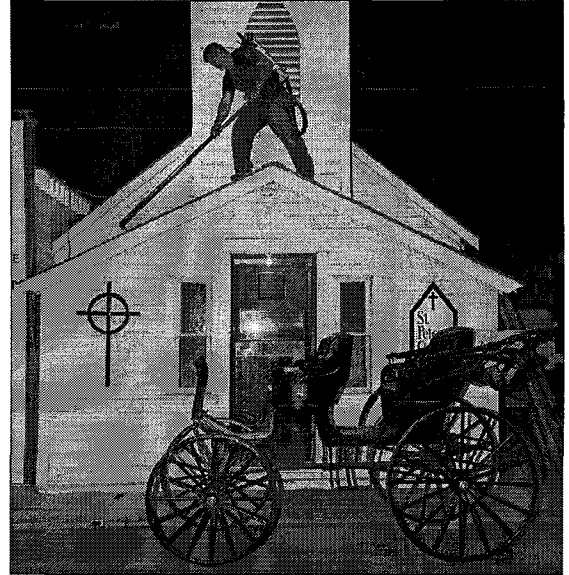
"It did give us a real insight into the market. We managed to make some incredible contacts," said Darrel Schneider, the SFFPA's chief operating officer.

Key to the project, too, is succession planning. They're looking for the future owners for Canadian food companies," he said.

"The fact that they're moving here, they're going to facilitate two-way trade a lot quicker than you or I could."

Ziegler said the project will bring a group of delegates into Western Canada in May.

STANDING TALL



Gene Barlow vacuums the roof of St. Peter's Church at the Western Development Museum in Saskatoon. All four of the museum's locations will be closed on Mondays after its annual operating grant from the province wasn't increased. The WDM entered the new fiscal year on April 1 with a projected operating deficit of more than \$400,000.

WILLIAM DEKAY PHOTO

CROP INSURANCE | WARM TEMPERATURES

U.S. farmers resist urge to rush corn planting

CHICAGO, Ill. (Reuters) — Many U.S. farmers are waiting for crop insurance coverage to kick in before getting too aggressive in planting corn early, resisting the temptation presented by record warm temperatures this spring, a top agronomist said last week.

"The short-term weather forecast is favourable in terms of no expected heavy rains, but a cool off in temps may dampen some spirits," said Robert Nielsen, a state extension corn special-

ist with Purdue University in Indiana.

"Most have been impatiently waiting for the April 6 insurance date before getting too serious about planting corn," he added.

While Indiana farmers had seeded one percent of their corn as of April 1, nationwide farmers had planted three percent, matching the earliest start on record since 1999.

Some farmers took advantage of summer-like temperatures in March, brushing off crop insurance dates,

which do not kick in until the first or second week of April.

Farmers aim to get their corn planted by mid-May, because yields tend to drop after then. But heavy spring rains and flooding have put them behind in recent years.

"Risks to early planting include uneven stand establishment if soil moisture and temperature are not favourable, damage from a severe frost, or freeze event once the plants have elevated above the soil surface."

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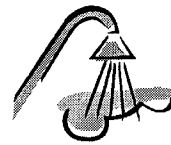
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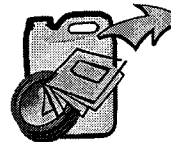
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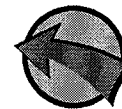
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