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NEWSLETTER

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Introducing Apples to New Consumers: School Program Expands

Small-sized, #1 grade apples fit little hands perfectly. Combined with their nutritional value, apples are the perfect fresh fruit to fuel the efforts of the Canadian Feed the Children's breakfast and snack programs.

According to the Ontario Apple Marketing Commission's marketing director, Kelly Blyth, the program is expanding into 161 schools in the greater Toronto area. For the Apple Commission, this means more packers will be participating and more apples will be used. The increase will triple the pilot level. Now about 27 bins of apples will be purchase by the Canadian Feed the Children each month until school ends.

Everybody wins on the price. The breakfast program buys the apples at a discounted price and arranges the shipping free through the bus lines already serving the schools. The apple growers get a price for the apples which is above what they would receive for juicing them and they have no shipping costs.

An added bonus for apple growers is the opportunity to win over new consumers who, due to their country of birth, food culture or age, may be eating apples for the first time. "It's a very positive introduction," according to Kelly Blyth.

OFPMC April Update:

CFO Plan

Chicken Farmers of Ontario met with the Commission on March 15 to discuss the plan they prepared in response to the Commission's ruling. The Commission wants a workable system for allocating and pricing chicken in Ontario which is logical and acceptable to producers, processors and downstream stakeholders and will work within the national supply system.

Egg Marketing

Ontario's egg producers, graders, hatcheries and processors met with the Commission to discuss issues that may impede these stakeholders in the future. Two areas of common concern were the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency's management of the national marketing system and the increasing reliance on imported eggs in the breaker or industrial egg market.

OSMA Review

The Commission met with the executive of the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency (OSMA) to review their industry and board operations. The Agency reported that production of lambs is up and prices are strong. The industry is benefiting from new shepherds who were formerly in the dairy, beef or pork sectors. OSMA feels that these new entrants bring with them transferable knowledge in animal nutrition, breeding and care, which will benefit their industry.

OSMA reported that their first forward contracting pilot project with Holly Park Meat Packers Inc. is steadily improving.

OSMA has been concentrating on production in recent years in order to respond to growing consumer demand for fresh lamb. They felt that was their first marketing challenge. They spearheaded the Ontario Lamb Improvement Breeding Strategy (OLIBS) in the early 1990's, in an attempt to generate more prolific ewes of high health status. While no ewes are commercially available as of yet, the board predicts benefits down the road.

While OSMA is a partner in OLIBS along with the University of Guelph and OMAFRA, the Commission cautioned the board executive to not treat the board and the breeding program as one in the same. OSMA confirmed that its lead status in the OLIBS program will be reduced by June 2000.

OSMA is working on its annual budgeting process and as of last fall, the Agency also hired a full time collection officer who is working on reducing accounts receivable.

OSMA's recent decision to quickly implement a significant licence fee increase to producers was also discussed. The Commission feels that whenever a board is thinking about increasing fees to members, the communication of the rationale and the implementation timetable must be seen by producers as reasonable notice with the opportunity for discussion.

WTO Dairy Ruling

Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the Ontario Dairy Council continue to work together with federal and provincial governments to develop a flexible export mechanism that is consistent with Canada's WTO commitments. The new system is being developed in response to a 1999 WTO ruling that found certain aspects of the Canadian system to be export subsidies. The Commission lent its support to the parties' joint efforts to develop a system designed to allow exports to continue and to grow, and also to protect domestic supply management.

Negotiated Agreements

The Commission moved to bring into force negotiated agreements for tomato seedlings and seed corn. The agreement for tomato seedlings remains basically unchanged from last year while the price paid for seed corn rose a few cents.

Upcoming Meetings

The Commission's next scheduled meeting is April 12 and 13 in London.

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