

Manitoba Companies Reach the World

by Ed White, MFWBA Executive Member

How can you reach the world market from rural Manitoba?

Just try, two successful exporters told a Manitoba Farm Writers and Broadcasters Association luncheon.

“You can just go down there, meet people, become friends with them and then they’ll buy stuff off of you,” said Mark Myrowich, the president of Riverton’s Erosion Control Blanket, with humorous overstatement.

“Business is all about relationships. It’s doing business with people you like.”

It also became clear from his presentation that offering a quality product and having a dedicated workforce are also essential, but there is no reason that can’t be done in the dusty corners of Manitoba, such as Riverton, where there are few other competitive advantages.

Myrowich and John Ritz of Prairie Lane Saskatoons explained how they saw opportunities for new products – Myrowich’s 16 foot wide erosion control materials and Ritz’s Saskatoon berry products – and then pursued those opportunities.

Neither one found their path to success to be trouble free. Ritz got caught in a months-long imbroglio with European Union regulations that shut down imports of his product,

right after he had established a network of interested buyers.

And Myrowich had to abandon his plans to use hemp fibre for his erosion control products because of tough U.S. laws on importing anything containing hemp seeds.

But both focused on producing high quality, consistent products to supply to buyers who would pay for quality.

Myrowich said Riverton may be far from his customers in places like California, where erosion prevention is a big business, but being located in Riverton allows him to have a skilled and dedicated workforce that appreciates good industrial jobs.

If his plant was located in a location with a big population and many other job opportunities, he doubts he would be able to hang on to workers the way he can in Riverton.

And without a permanent workforce, it’s hard to guarantee consistency.

“I don’t think you can,” Myrowich said.



John Ritz shares his Saskatoon berry export experiences

The U.S. border may seem like an imposing obstacle to many would-be exporters, but it seems like nothing at all to most U.S. buyers, Myrowich said.

In places like California, buyers don’t see much difference between buying something from a supplier in North Dakota or Manitoba.

Ritz has found appreciative customers in places like Northern Ireland, England and Germany, and has even attracted the attention of Japanese buyers. The biggest challenge, he says, is making sure there’s enough supply to keep them satisfied.

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MFWBA will host CFWF 2006



It's official! The CFWF 2006 National Conference will be held in Winnipeg on September 14-16 at the Hotel Fort Garry, hosted by the Manitoba Farm Writers and Broadcasters Association.

Planning committee members are busy finalizing the program which will be available soon at the conference website, www.cfwf2006.ca. Registration details will also be posted.

This year's theme is Evolution! THE Conference to Explore 21st Century Trends in Agriculture.

The conference will begin with a walking tour of downtown Winnipeg on Thursday, September 14. Two regional tours on Friday, September 15 will take participants to a mix of agricultural enterprises, including the St. Leon wind farm, a biodiesel production facility and a Lake Winnipeg research project. The day will end with dinner at Johnson Hall in Gimli, MB.

Holding with tradition, the CFWF annual general meeting will be held Saturday, September 16. The day will also feature guest speakers and professional development sessions at the Hotel Fort Garry, and conclude with the annual awards banquet.

Those who register by the early-bird August 14 deadline could win a spa package from the Hotel Fort Garry!

WE NEED YOU!

We need volunteers to help with a variety of activities, such as conference signage and tour coordination.

We also would love to hear your suggestions: Do you know of a potential sponsor? Or perhaps a made-in-Manitoba product perfect for the conference goodie bag?

A "Meeting" of the Minds: MFWBA Professional Development Seminar

Tuesday, May 30

Registration at 11:45 am
Session & Lunch at 12:00 pm
King's Head Pub, 120 King Street

Are you planning a conference or meeting? Get some special events tips from Canola Council of Canada's Diane Wreford and Jennifer Dyck, and from meeting planner extraordinaire, Dallas Ballance.

\$20 for MFWBA members
\$25 for non-members

RSVP by May 24 to Bonnie Baltessen
at bonnieb@fbcpublishing.com

Let us know by contacting Conference Co-Chairs Val Ominski (vominski@gov.mb.ca) or John Morriss (jmorriss@fiwonline.com).

In other MFWBA news...

MFWBA member **John Morriss**, publisher and editor of Farmers' Independent Weekly, was named 2005 recipient of Agri-Marketer of the Year award presented by the Canadian Agri-Marketing Association. The award recognizes "outstanding accomplishments in the field of Canadian agricultural marketing. It honours innovative leadership and exceptional performance in facing the challenges presented by marketing in today's constantly changing agricultural world." John is the Manitoba representative on the CFWF national committee.

The MFWBA Annual General Meeting was held in early February at Luxsolé Restaurant where we were fed wonderfully by the owners, the Warwaruk brothers, and treated to a presentation by Peak of the Market's **Larry MacIntosh** who detailed their new line of soups. **Val Ominski** was named MFWBA President and new executive members **Helena Marak** and **Bonnie Baltessen** were welcomed. Helena and Bonnie have joined **Ed White** in coordination of MFWBA's special events for the year.

The MFWBA Membership Drive Contest closed at the end of March and **Bonnie Baltessen** was the winner of the Manitoba Pork Council gift basket, which consisted of a cookbook, an apron with accessories (meat thermometer, jar gripper, fridge magnet, etc.), a fleece jacket, a piggy bank, a stress pig and a \$50 certificate for a fresh pork pack. Thanks to Manitoba Pork Council for their generous donation. *(Names of potential MFWBA members are still welcome! Just let Crystal Jorgenson know at c_jorgenson@umanitoba.ca)*

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MFWBA wire

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