



# Locally grown produce offers benefits



by *Forrest Scharf*  
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Statistics show that when a typical North American consumer sits down to eat, each ingredient has travelled on average 2,414 kilometres. To make sure the produce arrives in the best condition, it is shipped in controlled environments. However, controlling temperature and oxygen comes with a high energy cost, and transportation and storage are becoming more expensive due to rising fuel costs. Even with a controlled shipping and storage environment, nutrients are slowly depleted. If we eat local fresh harvested foods, fossil fuel energy consumption is minimized and the nutritional quality and flavour of our food is maximized. Fresher foods also keep longer, so there is less spoilage and waste.

By purchasing local produce, a greater portion of the food dollar stays within the community and promotes the regional economy. Commonly cited figures indicate that in conventional food markets, 91 cents from every dollar is directed to transportation, processors, brokers, marketers and retailers, while nine cents goes to the producer. In farmers' markets or direct sales, the producer captures 80 to 90 cents from every dollar. Economic spin-offs from agri-tourism are also increased, because farms or farmers' markets become interesting destinations where other locally produced goods and services can be provided.

Consumer surveys indicate people are becoming more concerned with eating healthy foods and supporting environmentally-friendly production practices. Due to our harsh winter climate and relatively dry summers, we do not have as many insect or disease problems as most

production regions. This means that our producers do not have to use as many pesticides. It also provides them the opportunity to "go organic" and garner premium prices. New fruit and vegetable varieties are well-adapted to our climate and can be produced very competitively here. In addition, some of our locally grown fruit and vegetables contain very high levels of nutrients. Saskatoon berries, for example, have higher antioxidant levels than wild blueberries. So in many ways our Saskatchewan grown produce is superior to imports.

Saskatchewan grown fruits and vegetables can be purchased at local farmers' markets and on-farm u-pick operations.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377; or
- Visit [www.saskfarmersmarket.com](http://www.saskfarmersmarket.com); [www.saskatoonfarmersmarket.com](http://www.saskatoonfarmersmarket.com); or [www.reginafarmersmarket.ca](http://www.reginafarmersmarket.ca) for information regarding local Saskatchewan farmers' markets; or
- Visit [www.saskfruit.com/modules.php?name=FindAGrower](http://www.saskfruit.com/modules.php?name=FindAGrower) for a directory of u-pick fruit operations.

## INTERNATIONAL FIBRE CONFERENCE IN SASKATOON



by *Glenn Payne, AAG*  
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The Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission (SFDC) wants the world to know they're ready to develop a fibre industry in Canada.

The commission is hosting the 2008 International Conference on Flax and Other Bast Plants July 21 to 23, 2008 in Saskatoon. Each year, the European Co-operative Research Network on Flax and Other Bast Plants, a division of the United Nations, arranges events for the global community of natural fibre researchers. It will be the first time this conference has been held in North America. Organizers are expecting scientists, producers and industry representatives from around the world to discuss agronomy, processing and end-uses of flax, hemp and other bast fibres.

"We're excited to bring the world's top fibre experts to Saskatchewan," said Allen Kuhlmann, Chairman of the Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission,

which represents almost 15,000 flax growers in the province. "It offers a chance to showcase Canada while sharing cutting-edge research on



the fibre trade, processing methods, biotechnology, and new applications for fibre products."

The conference will include topics such as consumer usage trends, breeding initiatives in hemp and flax, nanotechnology applications, developments in composite materials, and "green buildings" made with natural fibres. According to Dr. Ryszard Kozlowski, Director of the Institute for Natural Fibres in Poznan, Poland and one of the international co-organizers on the conference, "the current and future potential for natural fibre industries are significant—textiles alone represent the fourth largest sector in the world.

"Declaring 2009 the International Year of Natural Fibres by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization is an excellent example of the growing importance of natural fibres, which are renewable and eco-friendly," said Dr. Kozlowski.

Partnering with SFDC to host the event is the Agricultural Council of Saskatchewan, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the National Research Council of Canada, the Flax Council of Canada, CropFibres Canada, Schweitzer-Mauduit Canada, the Canadian Hemp Trade Alliance, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Research Council, Ag-West Bio Inc. and the governments of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta.

To register, visit <http://www.flaxbast2008.com>.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Linda Braun, Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission, at (306) 664-1901; e-mail [saskflax@saskflax.com](mailto:saskflax@saskflax.com), or
- Contact Penny Eaton, Conference Co-ordinator, at (306) 652-1299; or e-mail [penny@eatonassociates.ca](mailto:penny@eatonassociates.ca).

