

The PLOUGH BOY NEWSLETTER



Farmers have a steak in the community

There are over 170 farms in the Yukon.

Sales from agricultural produce total around \$4 million each year.

Daily staples such as bread, eggs, cheese, vegetables, poultry and meat are all produced in the Yukon.

To find out who your Yukon producers are, go to www.yukonrag.ca and download the Yukon Agriculture Products Guide, or come by one of our markets:

Fireweed Community Market, Shipyard Park, Whitehorse, 3 to 8pm Thursdays from May 17 to September 13

Dawson Market on the River, Dawson City, Saturdays from May 12 to September 15

Canada

Yukon Community Aid

Yukon

Yukon Agricultural Association



This is one of the ads from our promotional campaign which appeared in Yukon newspapers in May and June. It plays on the word 'steak', but indeed, agriculture and farmers have a **STAKE** in the community. More than that, in as much as everyone needs food, the community has a stake in agriculture. Here in the Yukon though, agriculture is small, often overlooked and ignored, or worse, seen as an enemy of the environment, wildlife, community planning and other values and priorities which Yukoners often place above agriculture. One could almost think that people don't know most of the food they eat comes from agriculture and the work of farmers, large and small, who produce it. I believe, however, that view is changing.

We know consumer food consciousness and preferences have changed when even fast food companies like McDonalds are reducing fats and offering healthier food choices. People everywhere are thinking more about food values. They have begun to realize that fresh, locally produced food is tastier and healthier. They are realizing that if they truly value the environment, they should try, as much as possible, to eat locally and reduce the truck traffic and fuel that is burned importing food from hundreds, if not thousands, of miles away. People are thinking about food supply and security. They want to know where their food comes from and how it was grown and processed. And, they are no longer so willing to blindly consume unregulated imports from abroad just because those products are often a bit cheaper. (a good article about the recent China food scare is reproduced in this newsletter).

Food consciousness is also changing here in Yukon. The work of individual farmers, the YAA, GoOFY (Growers of Organic Food Yukon), the producer-vendors at the Fireweed and Dawson Markets, and others, in promoting farming and the benefits of eating locally, is helping to change public perception of our products and our industry. Still, there remain many people to convince, many hurdles to overcome and many battles to fight before agriculture is accorded the value it merits and the support it needs to grow until Yukon farmers are producing and supplying most of our food.

Among our challenges is convincing Yukon's First Nations that agriculture is a valid, harmonious, healthy, worthy and desirable use of land, and is not a threat to their lifestyle and values. Indeed, we hope they may turn some of their land to agriculture, take up farming and help to supply Yukon's food needs. However, the Little Salmon Carmacks Band's recent successful Yukon Supreme Court challenge of a 65 hectare agricultural lease application on their 'traditional territory' has created uncertainty over virtually all economic activity in Yukon including the expansion of farming. A letter to the Star & News from our President, Al Falle, stating our view of that court decision is included in this newsletter along with an appeal for support to challenge it.

Let's stop ignoring global food perils and start buying domestic produce

The Province Tues May 29, 2007

Standing at the checkout counter behind two elderly women, I heard one of them describing a visit from her granddaughter.

"She asked me how I got the peas attached inside their own pod," the woman said. "She said her mom's peas came frozen in a bag."

Ah, the sweet innocence of youth!

There's no excuse for the rest of us, though.

Canadians are consuming vast amounts of food about whose origins or contents they haven't a clue.

Next time you're in the supermarket, take the time to check out the labels.

Perhaps the granny above grew snow peas in her own garden. But she could equally well have got them at the mall, marked "Produce of China."

Frozen fish? You'd think that on the West Coast we might be self-sufficient. No way. Where we shop, it's all from



Alan Ferguson

OPINION

China. Globalization of the food industry has proceeded at such a rapid pace that regulatory agencies are barely able to keep up.

So it should be no surprise that we risk poisoning ourselves — or our pets.

A hint of trouble came this spring when dogs and cats started to die across North America.

The cause was traced to pet food laced with melamine — an industrial chemical — imported from China.

The problem with relying on foreigners to provide our food

is that we can never be sure what they're putting in it. That's particularly true of China, which has grabbed a big chunk of the global food trade, but whose government exercises only rudimentary safety measures.

As I write, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is attempting to trace Chinese shipments of mislabelled "frozen monkfish." It's actually pufferfish, and may contain deadly toxins.

The agency is also randomly sampling all imports from China of wheat, rye, soy and corn gluten. One contaminated shipment of wheat gluten was added to fish food in Vancouver and shipped to aquaculture farms in Canada and the U.S.

In Australia, Dominican Republic and Panama, thousands of tubes of Chinese toothpaste were pulled from the shelves because they contained a toxic chemical used in engine coolants.

Japan got a shipment of Chinese spinach laced with pesticides. Other countries have turned back Chinese honey containing antibiotics, pesticide-laced peppers and seafood tainted with veterinary drugs.

To be fair, the Chinese authorities have taken steps to clean up their act. But they've a long way to go.

The extent to which we've become dependent on dubious foreign produce is truly a scandal, given the rich agricultural resources in B.C.

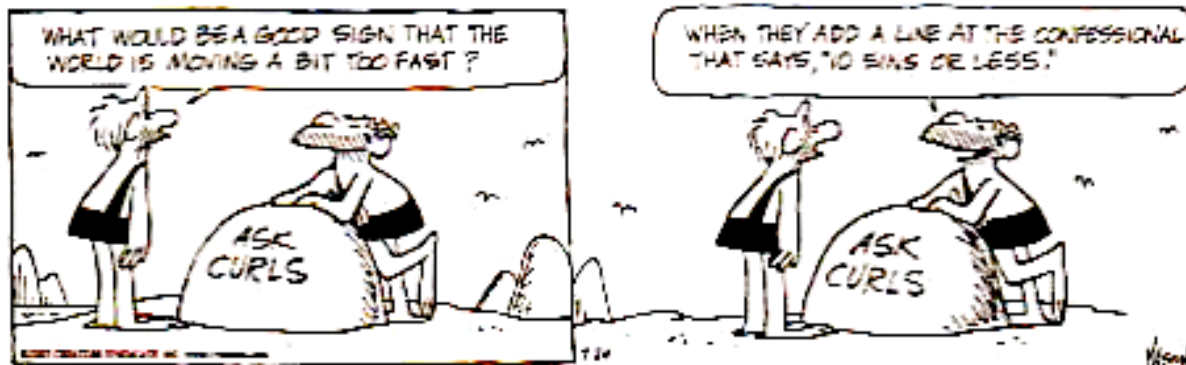
At a weekend food workshop at the University of B.C., participants had been promised a lunch with ingredients from within a 100-mile radius. Can you believe they couldn't find any local lettuce?

The good news is that more and more farmers' markets are sprouting up all over B.C.

You may pay a little extra, but at least you'll know what it is you're eating.

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B.C.



Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food

The Yukon Agricultural Association has grant money provided by Agriculture Canada for basic agricultural research, feasibility studies, food product development, and for seminars and educational events aimed at advancing Yukon's Agriculture and Agri-Food Industry. Let's use it! Send us your idea or proposal. Contact Rick Tone at 668-6864 for more information and for project proposal forms, or, visit the YAA website at www.yukonag.ca.



Agriculture Minister, Chuck Strahl,

visited Yukon August 6 and 7. While here, he met with YAA President Al Falle and representatives from several other agricultural groups. Minister Strahl expressed his view that Ag

Canada's one size fits all policy does not meet the needs of the North, and he promised the program which will replace the current Agriculture Policy Framework (APF) agreement in Spring 2008, would

be more flexible. Minister Strahl also challenged everyone to work together to get things done to build our industry rather than just paying it lip service.

Chuck has since become Minister of Indian Affairs, and Gerry Ritz, a Saskatchewan farmer, and formerly, the Secretary of State for Small Business and Tourism, has taken over as Minister of Agriculture. Gerry visited Yukon in June. In our view, both of these appointments bode well for Yukon and Northern agriculture. We will be following up to be sure our concerns and interests are not forgotten.

Field Day



Yukon Ag Branch held a field day at the Takhini experimental farm on August 2 during which they showed and explained their test plot results to a group of about 15 farmers and other interested parties. They are shown above discussing a volunteer crop of false flax with onlookers. A heavy plot of Canola and cultivated false flax may be seen in the background. The testing of various seed crops, forages, fruits, vegetables and other agricultural crops by Ag Branch helps farmers and gardeners select what may be successfully and most profitably grown. Many publications on recommended varieties and cultivation practices may be had at Ag Branch.

Game Fencing



Summer students working for DOE Yukon are shown here installing game fence on the farm of Jim Dillabough. They are fencing a small paddock to help safeguard Jim's animals from predators.

Wild animals can be a serious problem. Last year, several Yukon farmers reported damage from wild elk which included standing and stored crop loss, damage to fences and fields and the threat of disease and parasite transfer to their domestic animals. DOE has recently released an elk management plan to combat the problem. Ag Branch has also suggested some financial help may be provided for general fencing. We will keep you posted on developments.

Building Community



Check out the BC Farm Women's Network fall seminar-Ag: Past, Present & Future, the Hills Health Ranch, 108 Mile House, BC, Oct 12-14. For details, call Lorraine Jerema 250.593.2384 or email: hawthorne@telus.net. This is a good opportunity for farm and country women to learn, have fun and build community.

Speaking of community, lets keep keep building ours. Join YAA or one of Yukon's special interest groups like GoOFY (organic growers), Fireweed, the Horse Assn.,...Call the YAA office at 668-6864 for info on your area of special interest.

YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

SUITE 203-302 STEELE STREET
WHITEHORSE, YUKON, Y1A 2C5
July 17, 2007

Dear editor,

The Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation recently won a court decision to prevent YTG from granting a 65 hectare agricultural lease to farmer Larry Paulson. According to the Yukon News, they believed the lease could have an adverse effect on elder Johnny Sam's trap line as well as on the surrounding environment, wildlife values and the First Nation as a whole because they would no longer be able to hunt on that parcel of land, and because the lease would have overlapped one half of one percent of the trap line. Apparently, they therefore assumed that there would be fewer animals to harvest. This assumption, however, is not correct.

Ask any farmer who has had many years of observation and experience on the land and he will tell you the population of wild birds and animals increases on and near agricultural land. From field mice and game birds, to coyotes, bears and elk, wildlife is attracted to agricultural land and the surrounding area because that is where the best food is to be found. This means the animals available for the First Nation to hunt and trap would likely have increased despite not being able to hunt directly on that 65 ha parcel. Moreover, the locally produced food supply for Yukoners would have also increased, however, that agricultural production is now lost to us because the court ruled in favour of the First Nation.

I am truly puzzled why Little Salmon Carmacks objected to Larry Paulson's agricultural lease, which, in my view, would have been environmentally

harmonious, complementary to the welfare of wildlife including supporting an increased wildlife population, respectful of First Nations needs and rights, a boost to our local food security and supply, an economically sustainable and permanently beneficial activity for our Territory, and a social and economic boost to the rural community, - in short, good for everyone.

Now, according to the June 1 edition of the Yukon News, this court decision has given First Nations the right to block any project they don't like. Aside from the fact that we need more farms, not fewer, if we are to move towards self sufficiency in food instead of trucking in everything from the South, this decision, if allowed to stand, will seriously affect the rights of every Yukoner to make a living and to use crown land, all of which the First nations love to refer to as their traditional territory.

If there had been an intent to give First Nations virtual veto power over all economic activity in Yukon, the settlement agreements would have said so directly. They don't, and I believe the court decision which has now accorded them that additional right is seriously flawed. Yukoners of all interests and political stripes should work together to fight this.

As for the issue of consultation, I have no problem as I believe community input from First Nations and non First Nations alike is a good thing. In the Little Salmon Carmacks case, the Band claimed they were not consulted. If this is true, perhaps there is some merit to their complaint, however, I'm tired of having agriculture used as a kicking board for every thing that the First Nations & environmentalists don't like.

The fact remains that agriculture feeds us and benefits everyone, and, it enhances the food supply for all wild life near any farm, therefore, it also

directly benefits hunting and trapping. There is, however, a regulation that prohibits trapping near a farm. This I can see as a sore point with trappers, and we should work together to have this regulation changed. Most farmers that I talk to would love to have trappers get to work near their farms to help manage the wildlife population.

Farmers are good stewards of the land and are people of good will who are pleased to work cooperatively with anyone. We, in turn, would appreciate it if others would reciprocate and accord us and our industry high value in the overall fabric of our society and economy, and in the use and management of the land in this, our wonderful Territory.

Al Falle
President, Yukon Agricultural Association

PHONE: (867) 668-6864 • **FAX:**

(867) 393-3566 • **EMAIL:**

admin@yukonag.ca

On August 13, the YAA Board voted to actively oppose the Little Salmon Carmacks court decision and to solicit the support of other organizations. An open letter to all Yukoners has just been sent to the Yukon News and the Whitehorse Star. A copy follows for your immediate information. In taking this action, YAA wishes to make clear that we respect our First Nations peoples and want to work cooperatively with them. We believe, however, the court erred, and that its decision is contrary to the best interests of all Yukoners as we believe it will impede or damage our economy. That can not be good for anyone, including First Nations.

YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

**SUITE 203-302 STEELE STREET
WHITEHORSE, YUKON, Y1A 2C5**

August 23, 2007

The Editor, Yukon News

Open letter to all Yukoners

Dear Editor,

The Board of the Yukon Agricultural Association is hereby requesting the support of all Yukoners to protest and challenge the Yukon Supreme Court's decision in favour of the Little Salmon Carmacks Band suit against YTG's proposed grant of an agricultural lease on crown land.

That court decision granted virtual veto power and control over all the Yukon to First Nations. If it stands, it will affect the rights and ability of all Yukoners to pursue any economic or other activity on crown land.

Although YTG has already given notice of its decision to appeal the judgement, we believe the case is of such critical importance that all Yukoners need to join together to oppose Justice Veale's decision and support YTG's challenge on appeal.

The Yukon Agricultural Association is considering applying to the court for intervenor status. In order to pursue this option, however, we need the financial support of other organizations and individuals, as we have been advised that the cost of intervening may be as much as \$20,000 to \$30,000.

That sum will be a small price to pay vs the cost of losing the appeal and the impact on our rights if such loss were to occur due, in part, to sitting back and doing nothing. We are therefore asking for the help of everyone who shares our deep concern over this issue.

Anyone who wishes to make a donation may bring or send it to our office in the TC Richards Building, 203-302 Steele Street. Moreover, we encourage everyone to make this case their business and to do what they can to inform and mobilize people to oppose this court decision including personal appeals to friends and neighbors, starting telephone and letter writing campaigns and participating in other forms of legitimate public protest.

Justice Veale's decision impacts us all. It is, therefore, a community issue. It requires a community response.

Rick Tone, Executive Director, Yukon Agricultural Association

PHONE: (867) 668-6864 • FAX: (867) 393-3566 • EMAIL: info@yukonag.ca

One of Life's Great Equalizers

As an astute German nobleman once noted, "No matter how rich you are, you can still only drink 16 or 17 litres of beer a day." ---Anon

YESAB

The Yukon Environmental & Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) is pleased to announce the appointments of a new Chair, Mr. Ken McKinnon, and a new Executive Committee Member, Mr. Simon Mason-Wood. Board members who will be serving another term, or continuing their term, are Stephen Mills, Tara Christie, Dave Keenan, and Ross Leef. For more information about any of our Board members, check our website at www.yesab.ca.



HEY, Here's something else worth checking out - A company in Ireland called Samco which builds machines for large scale corn farming using bio-degradable plastics. It is being used successfully North of 60 in Norway to grow crops usually limited to more southern climes. Farmers in Newfoundland are using it to grow corn and have increased their yields to 30 tons of dry matter per acre from their previous 3 or 4 tons. Look at the difference in the photo between corn grown using plastic and corn grown without plastic. Perhaps it could be used in Yukon? Here's the link. www.samco.ie. Samco also manufactures a mulch layer, the Samco "V", which can be used to lay the bio-degradable plastic cover on other crops besides corn.

Dinner time!

Mark your calendars - Sept 8 for the annual YAA away meeting and pot luck dinner. This year its at the farm of Jerry and Kathy Kruse. Whip something up and come, but call and let them know. (537 3458) Kathy's directions follow:...Hi Rick, Don't know if Jerry gave you directions to the farm so here they are... We are 42 miles north of Carmacks. You'll come down a hill and see some clearing and a fenced area to the left, our drive way is after the fence just before you cross McCabe Creek... If you cross the creek you have gone too far. The Driveway is about 1 mile long ... See you then...Kathy