Thirty AAFC employees reach for the Gold Harvest Awards

By Marg Rothwell
Communications and Consultations Team, Ottawa

An expert in breeding apples and other fruits. A scientist finding new uses for flax. A group working on ways for farmers to cut greenhouse gases. A group who implemented programs to help farmers devastated by the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) crisis.

All received special praise when they were presented with AAFC's Gold Harvest Awards by **Deputy Minister Len Edwards** and **Associate Deputy Minister Christiane Ouimet** at the Leadership Conference in Ottawa in December. Gold Harvest Awards – a crystal trophy and certificate – recognize exceptional and significant contributions made by AAFC employees through the excellence of the work they perform, the exemplary behaviour they demonstrate and the positive results they achieve. Recipients are nominated by fellow employees.

The most recent recipents were:

Dr. Shahrokh Khanizadeh, of the Horticulture Research and Development Centre in St.-Jean-sur-Richeleu, Quebec, was called "one of the department's star scientists." A plant breeder, Dr. Khanizadeh has "helped revolutionalize the apple and strawberry industry in Canada" through his development of a non-browning apple and his work with such food companies as McDonalds to promote the new variety to consumers. He also studies thousands of cultivars of apples and strawberries and singles out the desirable traits, including disease-resistance, cold hardiness, antioxidant value, and traits that help fruit stay fresh on the trek to the grocery store. Dr. Khanizadeh has created several new varieties of strawberries "bursting" with antioxidents, but, Mr. Edwards said, "he's also looking for sturdy Canadian qualities that will sustain the plant over our bitter winters, summer droughts and nasty pests." The author of "colourful and comprehensive" books on Canadian apples, plums and strawberries, Dr. Khanizadeh's writings are popular with both scientists and garden enthusiasts alike.

Dr. Shahrokh Khanizadeh and Deputy Minister Len Edwards. (Photos by Marg Rothwell)

Dr. Hélène Petit, of the Dairy and Swine Research and Development Centre in Lennoxville, Quebec, has been successfully studying the nutritional value of flax and its omega-3 fatty acids in the reproduction of dairy cattle. Flax is full of omega-3 fatty acids and therefore, has become a modern miracle food because it helps lower cholesterol and heart disease. When researchers, such as Dr. Petit, started adding flax seed to animal feed, the results were substantial. As a result, she was one of the first in the world to publish how flax seed affects reproduction in cattle. Dr. Petit's dairy research looked at improving the pregnancy rate by reducing embryo mortality in the cow. She started the research project with New Brunswick dairy farmers and then convinced plant scientists worldwide to study fatty acids in crops. Her next project is applying her dairy and flax knowledge and finding a way to transfer omega-3 goodies into milk.

Members of the Climate Offset Development System are, from left, Ravinderpal Gill, Robert Flick, Bob MacGregor, Deputy Minister Len Edwards, Bruce Junkins, Afzaal Khan and Stephen Smith.

Dr. Hélène Petit and her daughter Gabrielle.

Members of the **Climate Offset Development System** – **Robert Flick, Ravinderpal Gill, Bruce Junkins, Afzaal Khan, Robert MacGregor** and **Stephen Smith** – have worked on a new way for farmers to participate in Canada's efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. Working with Environment Canada, the team helped create a trading system, called the offset system, which allows farmers who adopt management practices that reduce greenhouse gases to receive carbon credits for each new tonne of greenhouse gases they reduce from the atmosphere. The more carbon reduced or removed, the more money the farmer can make selling those credits on the open carbon market, beginning in 2006. The AAFC team worked to show how the agriculture sector could contribute to a carbon trading system and helped design the rules and infrastructure for it. The sector is expected to be a key player in the carbon credit market. Farmers will benefit from an additional source of income, while contributing to Canada's efforts to meet climate change objectives.

The BSE Repositioning Strategy Team. From left, front: Gavin Connacher, Jane Owen, Lois James, Deputy Minister Len Edwards, Tina Green, Chris Dodson, Jennifer MacKinnon and Michael Ash. Back row, from left: Gord Andrusiak, Ian Rogalski, Mark Gervais, John Ross, Jeff Noseworthy, Lucille Macfadden, Karl Michelazzi, Rob Myer, Gord Fetterly and Sylvie Paquette.

The **BSE Repositioning Strategy Team** consists of **Gordon Andrusiak, Michael Ash, Kirsti Bergmeier, Gavin Conacher, Chris Dodson, Gord Fetterly, Tina Green, Troy Hannigar, Marcel Huot, Lois James, Jennifer MacKinnon, Tony McDougall, Lucille McFadden, Karl Michelazzi, Claire Mullington, Rod Myer, Jeff Noseworthy, Jane Owen, Sylvie Paquette, Ian Rogalski, John Ross** and **Mike Wilson.** When BSE was found in Canadian cattle in May, 2003, beef farmers were devastated, Mr. Edwards said. Although consumers supported the farmers, the border closure created a downward spiral for the entire industry. Assistance for the cattle industry started rolling out from the federal government, but in September, 2004, one set of programs stood out as “a shining example of cooperation and consultation.” A BSE Task Force, a small team that needed to develop and implement the BSE repositioning strategy, was struck. The team had less than a month to implement programs totalling over $700 million for Canadian beef farmers and, after extensive consultations, the federal-provincial team designed and rolled out some “incredibly innovative programs,” the Deputy noted. Those programs included a “reverse auction” to pay farmers to keep their cattle off the market, the use of colour-coded ear tags to monitor the cattle flow at auction and slaughterhouses, and the creation of a separate feeder calf program to help producers retain calves and be sustainable in the long term. “This team developed new policy tools, designed and implemented innovative programs, met critical deadlines and, most importantly, forged cohesive relationships with the provinces and the industry,” Mr. Edwards concluded.

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