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“Grow West, young man, Grow West.”

The North American Farmers’ Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) convention comes to Calgary February 12 - 17, 2006.

Grow West is the biggest and most exciting farm direct marketing convention in North America and this winter it will be in Calgary. It’s the first time in its vibrant 23-year history this international convention has been held in Alberta. This is a unique opportunity for farm direct marketers from across Alberta to discover new ideas, learn from and about each other and grow their business.

What’s In It For You?

Farm income increases by over \$ 5000 because of attendance at the NAFDMA convention for 75% of attendees. More than 40% said their income increased by over \$20,000. Now Alberta farm direct marketers have the chance to experience it themselves. So, Grow West! Explore Alberta, strengthen your industry networks, learn to diversify your operation, discover new ways to increase your profits and glean business strategies that work.

Customize Your Learning

Grow West Alberta 2007 offers three main opportunities for farm direct marketers to learn: the bus tour (February 12, 13, and 14), the workshop day (February 15) and the conference (February 16 and 17). You can take part in either one or better yet, all three learning events.

NAFDMA bus tour

The bus tour is a direct marketing journey of innovation and inspiration through southern Alberta's historic Cowboy Trail. Three tours exemplifying best management practices are available this year: Grow the Experience, Grow the Sale and Grow the Value. The choice is yours!

Concurrent workshops

Grow West boasts seven full day workshops. Choose from three advanced or four intermediate workshops. Two customized, off-site learning experiences are a new feature this year.

The conference

The NAFDMA Grow West convention concludes with a two-day conference offering more than 30 educational sessions grouped into five different tracks. Pick and choose between tracks to find the sessions that will best meet your needs and help your business grow. The tracks are Advanced Learning, Professional Development, Agritourism, On-farm and Ranch Retail, and Farmers' Markets.

"Services turn into engaging experiences when layered with sensory phenomena," says NAFDMA convention keynote Joseph Pine and co-author of **The Experience Economy**. From packaging an experience to employing country charm to realizing your value-added potential, Grow West will engage you in an experience.

Go as a Group

Don't want to face Alberta's winter highways alone? We're inviting farm direct marketers from the Peace to "van-pool" with us to the convention. Depending on demand we'll have a van leaving from Grande Prairie and Fairview. Cut your transportation costs, visit with other operators, sit back and enjoy the trip. Call Karen at 538-5629 or email karen.goad@gov.ab.ca to reserve your seat today! For toll free calling, dial 310-0000 first.

The "Go as a Group to Grow West" movement is catching on across the country. Plans for group transportation is in the works for farm direct marketers coming from Manitoba and B.C. B.C. already has 37 folks on board for the bus coming out of Victoria. So, hop in a van or jump on the bus and take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime Grow West opportunity. You and your farm direct business will reap the rewards for years to come.

Register NOW!

Convention details are available at www.nafdma.com/Alberta or by calling the NAFDMA office toll free at (888) 884-9270. On line registration is available now. Call Kerry Engel, Director Canada West NAFDMA at (780) 644-2927 to receive a copy of the registration package in the mail.

This year's convention is being presented in partnership with the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association, Alberta Farmers' Market Association, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development and Renewal Chapter of Ag Policy Framework.

Web Links

Check out the websites for some of the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association www.nafdma.com tour stops:

Grow the Experience

Spruce Meadows www.sprucemeadows.com; Boundary Ranch www.boundaryranch.com

Grow the Sale

The Saskatoon Farm www.saskatoonfarm.com; Sunterra Quality Food Markets Inc www.sunterramarket.com

Grow the Value

Bloomin' Inn Guest Ranch www.bloomin-inn.com; Patsy Clark Farms www.patsyclarkfarms.ca

Is your Net-Working?

Our farm direct marketing industry is a big winner at the 2006 Alberta Tourism Awards. The **Alberta Farmers' Market Association** received the Friends of Tourism Alto award while the **Get A Taste of the Grande Prairie Region** project picked up the Marketing Excellence (budget under \$25,000) award. To learn more about the Alberta Tourism (Alto) awards and the 2006 winners visit www.industry.travelalberta.com.

Members of the Branding the Peace Country Association can have their products included in **Peace Country gift baskets**. For information on joining the association or accessing this market opportunity contact Joni Aylward, Brand Manager at brandmanager@canadapeacecountry.com.

If you're planning on applying for an **Agri-Preneur Scholarship** to attend Grow West, remember the

deadline for application is December 8, 2006. Details are available from Marian Williams at (780) 679-5168 or email marian.williams@gov.ab.ca.

Explore Direct presents ...

Country Roads 2006. The Country Roads Network will meet December 12, 2006 from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm in Camrose. Call Lisa Sharp at (780) 679-5169 or email lisa.sharp@gov.ab.ca for details.