

Student-assisted marketing plans benefit agri-food industry

Saskatoon (August 30, 2006) – Developing an effective and strategic marketing plan is often one of the most challenging tasks facing Saskatchewan agri-food companies. These firms now have an opportunity to have a team of upper-year university students assist them in this daunting task as the phase II of the Agribusiness Student Business Plan Program begins.

The development of the marketing plan will follow the development of a business plan, also produced by University of Saskatchewan Agriculture students. The business plan program is the result of an alliance between the Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Saskatchewan (ACAAFS) Program of the Saskatchewan Council for Community Development and the University of Saskatchewan's College of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Economics. The program brings together agri-food businesses and organizations in need of a business plan and agriculture students who need business ventures to base their class project on. Participating organizations will pay \$250 of the \$500 cost of the program, with \$250 subsidized by ACAAFS. Funding for the ACAAFS program is provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Interested agri-food companies will be matched up with a team of four upper-year students enrolled in an agribusiness marketing management course in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources at the University of Saskatchewan. Students will contact the firm and will work closely with an individual from the firm serving as a "client" for the student consulting team. The students will complete a full marketing plan for the firm. This will include market research, competitor analysis, consumer analysis and the development of marketing strategies.

"Developing strategic marketing plans is the main focus of this course," said Professor Tom Allen of the College of Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan. "The students are assisted by professionals from the Canadian Agri-Marketers Association as they develop strategic marketing plans while enhancing their own skills as marketers.

"The Saskatchewan economy is dependent on our ability to effectively market our products. This course helps develop this necessary skill in these students who will be our industry leaders in the near future."

The number of organizations selected for a business plan will depend on the number of students enrolled in the course. Students will contact the organization in early September or January and will work closely with an individual from that organization, who is expected to commit at least 20 hours to working with the students during the four months of the project.

"This program will provide a significant opportunity for agri-food companies to get a well-done marketing plan that will be tied closely to the business plan they have previously received," said Bryan Kosteroski, ACAAFS Value Chain Specialist. "These organizations will work closely with the students to develop their business plans, plans which will allow organizations to move forward in developing and marketing products while giving students significant real-world experience."

Interested organizations can contact Bryan Kosteroski at 975-6851 or 1-800-641-8256 or kosteroskib@sccd.sk.ca or Tom Allen at 966-4012 or tom.allen@usask.ca.

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