



## RURAL DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP MEETING GRUPO DE TRABAJO DE DESARROLLO RURAL

### Summary of Outcomes Aguascalientes, Aguascalientes, México May 11-13, 2008

The Rural Development Working Group of the Tri-National Agricultural Accord met in Aguascalientes, Aguascalientes, Mexico to exchange information, explore current issues pertaining to rural development, and decide upon strategic directions that will help the working group progress forward with their goals.

The Working Group was jointly chaired by Ing. Maria Del Carmen Trejo Rodriguez, Secretary of Rural Development of Michoacan; Honourable Terry Peach, Oklahoma State Secretary of Agriculture; and representing Honourable George Groeneveld, Alberta Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development was Annalisa Baer, Senior Manager of International Relations.

Delegates toured a variety of agriculture and rural development related sites, providing insight into the initiatives undertaken by businesses and government in the state of Aguascalientes. A visit to the town of San Jose de Gracia showcased a tourism initiative that benefits the most economically depressed region of the state of Aguascalientes. The delegation also toured a world class frozen food processing facility, owned and operated by La Huerta, a privately held Mexican company. La Huerta has implemented innovative producer-processor relationships, socially responsible employee procedures, and sustainable environmental production practices (eg. biological pest control) that has greatly benefitted the rural area and its citizens. Lastly, the delegation toured the national Charolais cattle exposition at the San Marcos State Fair.

Information exchange and dialogue occurred through a variety of presentations. Delegates learned about Nuevo Leon's PROSUR, a program established for the southern region of Nuevo Leon. By helping to finance, advise, and train producers from the most economically depressed part of Nuevo Leon, PROSUR assists producers achieve self sufficiency. Alberta presented two successful youth agriculture training programs, including 4-H and Green Certificate. They also relayed information about the Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program and the Canada-Mexico Partnership. New Mexico delivered information about innovative fruit production methods for products targeted specifically for the local market.

Several accomplishments since the last meeting in Edmonton, Canada included a successful Biofuel summit held in New Mexico and plans for a follow up conference; a cooperative relationship between Alberta and Jalisco for best practices sharing for the development of a food processing pilot facility in Jalisco; a youth agriculture exchange between Texas and Nuevo Leon; and a Oaxaca mission to New Mexico to further investigate their mobile slaughter unit initiative.

The Working Group will continue efforts towards goals as identified at previous meetings in addition to the amendments to the 2008 goals as shown in italics below.

- Develop and implement strategies to address workforce issues
  - Secure labour for agriculture production
  - Ensure labour education and skills training *through exchange training programs*
  - Address social implications of labour mobility
  - Implement farmer-to-farmer exchanges and forums



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- Promote *alternative* energy development and programs
  - Exchange of information on *alternative energy forms* and technology
  - Implement scientist-to-scientist exchanges
- Participate and promote nutritional programs
  - Identify opportunities to meet with health care industry, and link health, education, and wellness to agriculture
  - Educate consumers about local and regional agricultural products that promote healthy lifestyles
  - Improve the nutritional level and health of consumers through improvements in traditional crops and sustainable agricultural practices

The Working Group identified the need for communication and progress reporting to ensure success of the goals and strategic directions. It was decided that one representative from each country will act as a communication liaison to disseminate information from the meetings and compile reports on outcomes to their respective states and provinces. Additionally, the three liaisons will coordinate a progress report prior to each Working Group and/or Accord meeting as appropriate. **It is imperative that states and provinces provide their liaison with information on actions undertaken under these strategies.**

Communication liaisons are:

- Alberta - Canada liaison
- New Mexico - USA liaison
- Asociación Mexicana de Secretarios de Desarrollo Agropecuario – México Liaison

The Working Group will decide on the date and location of the next meeting at the Tri-National Accord meeting in Idaho in August.

Signed on this date, May 13, 2008, in Aguascalientes, Aguascalientes, Mexico.

Ing. Maria Del Carmen Trejo Rodriguez  
Secretary of Rural Development of Michoacan, Mexico

Honourable Terry Peach  
Oklahoma State Secretary of Agriculture, United States

Annalisa Baer  
Senior Manager of International Relations, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Canada  
FOR Honourable George Groeneveld, Minister of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development