

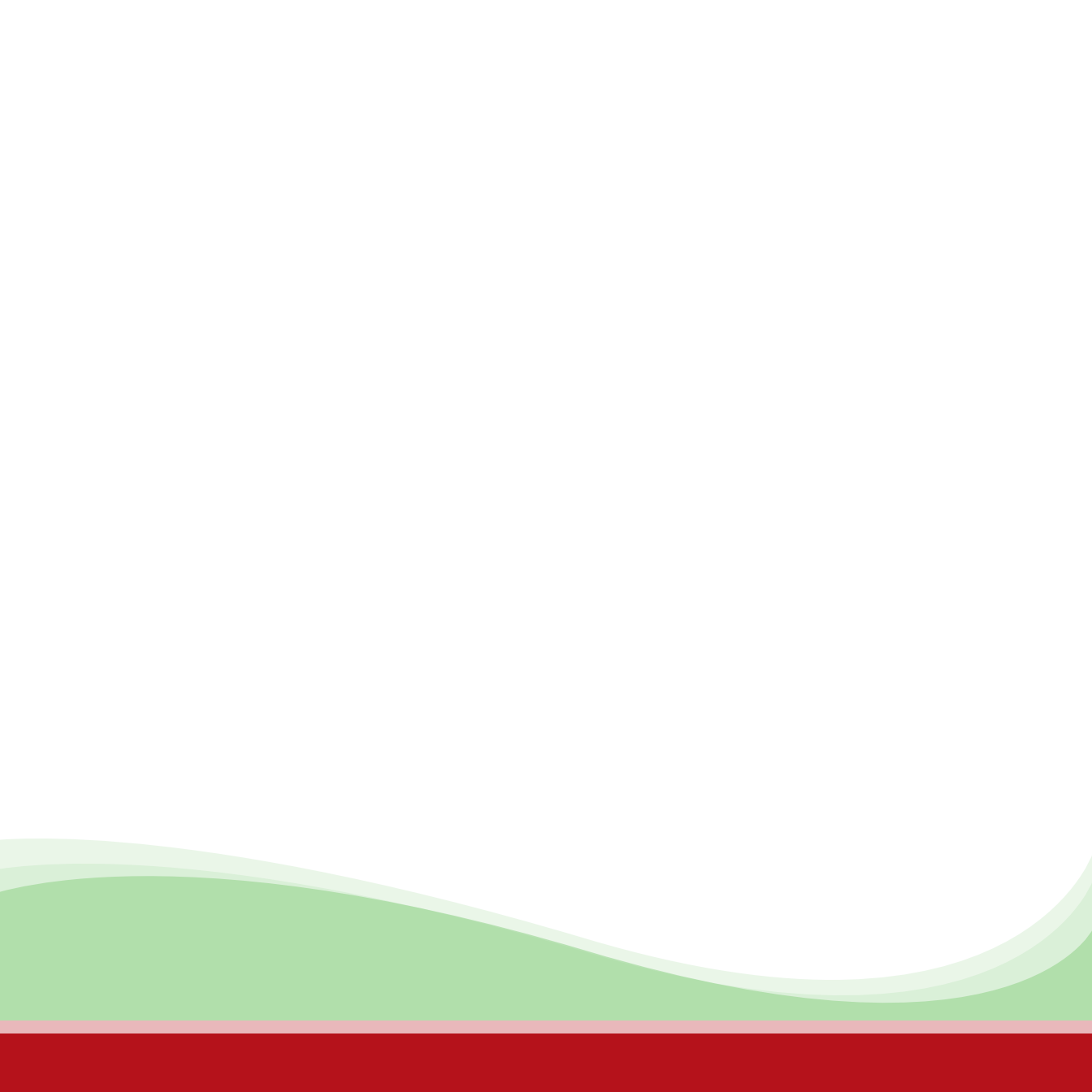


**Premier's Award for
Agri-Food Innovation Excellence**

Celebrating

Ontario's crop of new ideas!
2008

Mildmay



The 55 recipients of the 2008 Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation are announced in 2009.

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Message from the Premier

A Personal Message from the Premier

On behalf of the Government of Ontario, I am delighted to extend warm greetings to the leaders of and stakeholders in the agriculture and food industry as we recognize the invaluable contributions of farmer-innovators to our province's agri-food sector.



To remain competitive in today's global market and to ensure our continued prosperity, all sectors of the economy – including the agri-food sector – must look to innovation to gain advantage. These awards are testament to the vigorous culture of innovation that characterizes our province's agri-food industry and a fitting tribute to the talented women and men who drive it. Our government remains firmly committed to recognizing and encouraging innovation in Ontario agriculture and to ensuring the ongoing vitality of our agri-food industry.

As Premier, I am proud to recognize the farmers whose innovation has helped them thrive in this competitive sector, and I applaud your dedication, creativity and hard work. My hearty congratulations go out to this year's award recipients on your tremendous success in generating new products, creating jobs and building opportunity.

As we continue to work together to harness innovation to build an even stronger Ontario, please accept my best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dalton McGuinty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dalton McGuinty, Premier

Message from the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

A Message from the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky

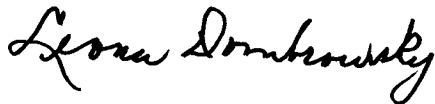
The Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence recognizes that primary producers, agri-food businesses and agri-food related organizations, have always been innovative in the running of their businesses and will foster even greater innovation across the province's agri-food sector.

We received more than 180 applications for this year's award, and I continue to be impressed by the calibre and breadth of ideas being showcased through these submissions.

The ideas that are springing forth as a result of agri-food related innovations will not only ensure the ongoing vitality of our agri-food industry but also leave a legacy for generations to come. Some may even change the face of the agri-food sector.

I am proud to recognize the 2008 recipient of the Minister's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence. On behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I congratulate all 55 winners of the 2008 Premier's, Minister's and regional awards for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence, and I thank all of you who dare to think outside the box and open up a world of opportunity for all to share.

Sincerely,



Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs



Premier's Award Winner

Fifth Town Artisan Cheese Company – Prince Edward County

Fifth Town Artisan Cheese Company is combining tradition with innovation – the fine craft of artisan cheese-making, in a modern, green environment. The dairy is the largest artisan cheese manufacturing facility in Eastern Ontario to process goat and sheep milk. It's also Canada's only certified Platinum LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) dairy.

This state-of-the-art facility's solar, wind and geothermal technologies have helped reduce its energy consumption by 60 per cent. The dairy's sustainability theme is carried throughout the entire enterprise, from environmentally-friendly waste processing to green cleaning agents and biodegradable packaging. Their chevre (goat cheese) packaging, for instance, is a corn-based container that is 100 per cent biodegradable. The dairy has also created subterranean caves crafted out of poured cement to age its cheese. The walls are left unfinished and natural, providing a steady, cool environment with little energy required.

Fifth Town Artisan Cheese Company has received multiple industry 'green building' awards for using environmentally friendly materials, such as sustainable wood and an innovative, green concrete mix. The dairy has also garnered top awards for its products and promotes cheese education by offering regular cheese tasting seminars, courses and summer internships.

When it comes to producing a quality product, 'going green' and sharing knowledge, you could say this dairy is 'the big cheese' in its field.



Hillside Gardens Limited – Simcoe County

Hillside Gardens Ltd. is a family farm that has supplied quality produce to consumers for more than four decades. Their latest innovation is helping to build trust in food safety and traceability by strengthening the 'gate to plate' connection.

Ron Gleason, president, redesigned an existing software program for use as an innovative farm traceability program. The farm has hosted a pilot traceability project and shares its knowledge with other producers through on-farm tours and industry presentations. This innovation can be used by other growers to monitor their physical inventory, manage planting dates, spray records, production planning, staffing needs, and enhance food safety and traceability.

The program is capable of tracing all field activities from harvest to packing, to shipping dates and destinations. At the farm, lot IDs are assigned in each step in the process, and the end product is dated with a bar code sticker. The wireless, computerized system will only allow product that has been assigned to a load to be picked and scanned. This improves many aspects of the business, from rotation and quality issues to recall efficiency and inventory control. The system provides "real time" inventory and work is underway to expand its capabilities.

This innovation is giving the agri-food sector new tools that can help build consumer trust in Ontario food, from field to fork.



Regional Award Winners



**Forager
Foods Inc. –
Huron County**

Forager Foods Inc. offers one-stop shopping with a local flavour. And it's looking to broaden support for Ontario agri-businesses by creating a network of similar stores across southwestern Ontario. With 21 local and regional food partners currently supplying products to a 900 square-foot retail food specialty store, customers can choose from an array of locally-produced foods. These include meats, deli, artisan cheeses, Lake Huron fish, prepared foods, fresh vegetables and pantry items. Most are grown from within 45 minutes or less of the storefront. The applicant's background as a chef helps consumers pair foods for an enjoyable and regional food experience.



**Grey Bruce
Agriculture
and Culinary
Association –
Grey and Bruce
Counties**

The whole really is stronger than the sum of its parts when producers, processors, restaurants and tour operators band together to promote the benefits of local foods. This association now has 157 paid members who are enjoying the increased consumer traffic and profits that come from cross-promotion. Locals and tourists like the convenience of the Buy Local Buy Fresh map, and it helps restaurants coordinate their use of local food.

Regional Award Winners



**The Healing Arc
Inc. & Everspring
Farms Ltd. –
Bruce County**

Have you tasted the ‘orange of the north’? Sea Buckthorn is a multipurpose, citrus-type berry used in functional foods and for a variety of medicinal, agronomic and environmental purposes. The fruit is a source of omega 3, 6 and 9 oils and just eight berries provide the daily requirement of vitamin C and beta carotene. Sea Buckthorn can be grown in a wide range of soils, in greenhouses and is drought resistant. After six years of research and development, the growers are now selling cuttings to private and commercial sectors in Ontario and Quebec. These innovators have helped introduce the crop to Ontario and are continually working to educate consumers on its ‘berry-good’ merits.



**Hillside Gardens
Limited –
Simcoe County**

Ron Gleason is helping to strengthen the gate-to-plate connection. He redesigned an existing software program for use as a farm traceability program. It’s capable of tracing all field activities from harvest, to packing, to shipping dates and destinations. Lot IDs are assigned in each step in the process, and the end product is dated with a bar code sticker. The wireless, computerized system will only allow product that has been assigned to a load to be picked and scanned. This improves many aspects of the business, from rotation and quality issues to recall efficiency and inventory control. The system provides “real time” inventory and work is underway to expand its capabilities.

Regional Award Winners



Saugeen Country Dairy – Grey County

If you have a yearning for yogurt, this farm's for you. At Saugeen Country Dairy, the owners operate both a certified organic dairy farm and an on-farm dairy. It is the first on-farm dairy in Ontario to make and sell organic yogurt, which it has been doing since 1994. This yogurt has a short list of ingredients with all the milk produced on the farm. And it has been profitable. After 14 years of steady sales growth they process more than 300,000 litres and employ three full-time and five part-time staff.



Sunrise Produce – Simcoe County

The chips are never down at Sunrise Produce. The farm's experienced potato breeders and growers, Peter and Carla VanderZaag, have developed three new potato varieties that can be made into the popular snack all year-round. Most other chipping varieties maintain their quality for only two to three months. The three innovative potato lines can be processed any time, from the moment they are placed in storage until the following summer. The new varieties were officially registered in 2007 and have been adopted by other producers. Last year, 300 acres of the new varieties were grown in Ontario. There is significant market growth potential for these potatoes, including in the United States.

Regional Award Winners



WoolDrift Farm – Grey County

WoolDrift Farm, the first commercial sheep milking operation in the province, has shepherded the growth of Ontario's sheep milk industry. Owners Chris Buschbeck and Axel Meister were the first to import East Friesian dairy sheep embryos into Canada and continuously improved the genetics of the flock, resulting in sales across North America. These innovators have been instrumental in founding the Ontario Dairy Sheep Association and have attracted farmers to the sheep milk market through various educational symposiums and workshops. Today, more than 50 Ontario farmers are milking sheep commercially, producing 1.5 million litres of milk which is poured into artisan cheeses, yogurt, ricotta and feta cheese.

Past Award Highlights

Premier's Award Winners:

2007 – Bill and Caroline Nightingale, B&C Nightingale Farms (Norfolk County), for their work in improving Ontario's fresh vegetable yields by adapting the use of high tunnels over vegetable field crops.

2006 – David VanderDussen, NOD Apiary Products Ltd. (Hastings County), for developing Mite-Away II, an environmentally friendly product to protect honeybees from mite infestations, which is exported around the world.

Minister's Award Winners:

2007 – David Freeman, Freeman Farms (Grey County), for his innovation in developing freeze-dry technology and building a state-of-the-art processing plant equipped to process botanicals for use in nutraceuticals and whole foods.

2006 – Fritz and Paul Klaesi, (Renfrew County), for adapting the use of technology that generates electricity from manure in Ontario.

Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence

For more information
www.ontario.ca/omafra
1 877 424-1300