

Workshop can open new fields for farmers

Posted By KAREN BEST, CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

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Times are changing for agriculture-based enterprises but doors to new opportunities will open at a Haldimand County farm conference.

Pulling on the door handle will be keynote speaker David Sparling who is recognized as an international authority on the current state of farming. Through research, he has identified future opportunities for agri-food policy and supply chains.

An associate dean at the University of Guelph, Sparling will provide practical approaches to address challenges unique to individual farm operations.

Producers, small food processors, direct marketers and lenders will learn from his presentation and from five others scheduled for Feb. 21. At 8:45 a. m., the conference opens at the Haldimand Agricultural Community Centre in Kohler on Kohler Road. The \$20 registration fee includes a hot lunch.

"I'm encouraging any farmer no matter what his or her endeavour to take part in this workshop," says Wayne Nyomtato, president of the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture.

He points out that agriculture is the largest income making sector in Haldimand County but is not supported well by the local political level.

The Growing Your Opportunities Farm and Food Conference is Haldimand County's first agricultural workshop and more are to follow according to economic development and tourism manager James Goodram.

Presentations will centre on the theme of Adapting and Thriving-Not Just Surviving. Conference participants will learn about emerging trends, new marketing ideas and strategies to adapt to changing markets and financial pressures.

Dunnville's Rosa Flora is at the leading edge of marketing strategies and in reduction of fossil fuel requirements. Arjan Vos, the company's controller, will describe how the firm achieved significant energy savings with the latest 'green' technologies.

Sean McGivern, who has a 1000- acre organic farm near Owen Sound, will talk about specialty grains now in demand by health-conscious consumers. Other presenters will offer success stories on corn-fed beef, manufacture of extra virgin oils, and efficient harvesting of quality hay.

Goodram hopes conference participants will take away diversification ideas to boost their success.

People are asked to register by Feb. 13 and can learn more details at www.BusinessHaldimand.com. Rural development officer Lidy Romanuk can be reached at 905-318-5932 ext. 215 or at lromanuk@haldimandcounty.on.ca.

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