



Genuine Progress Index for Atlantic Canada / Indice de progrès véritable - Atlantique

MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

APPLICATION OF THE GENUINE PROGRESS INDEX

FARM AND COMMUNITY VIABILITY
REPORT ON INTERVIEW RESULTS

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November 2003 (Revised September 2005)

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND A GATHERING ABOUT
Farm Viability & Community Resilience

This is an opportunity for us to thank you, the people who contributed to the GPI Atlantic **Farm Viability & Community Resilience** report!
We will present a summary of findings, open the floor for more ideas, revisions or additions.
~~~~~ Feel free to bring an interested friend ~~~~~

The draft GPI Atlantic report will be available to contributors by the first week of November. If you can't make it to a session, you can send any corrections or comments to Jennifer Scott, 178 Red Bank Rd. Centre Burlington NS B0N 1E0 902-757-1640 or [jen@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:jen@ns.sympatico.ca)

You have a choice: one of 7 sessions, 5 in NS and 2 in PEI. Choose one that is most convenient for you.

Tues Nov 4 St. Andrew's United Church, 55 King St. Truro N.S. 2 - 5 pm

**RSVP** Ruth Lapp 902-757-0326, or [rlapp@glinx.com](mailto:rlapp@glinx.com)

Wed Nov 5 Ross Farm Museum, New Ross N.S. 2 - 5 pm

Please note that for the Ross Farm meeting only, a 45-minute cart tour of the museum will happen at 1:00 pm before the meeting starts at 2:00 pm.

**RSVP by Oct 31** to Wendy or Fredr'c at (902) 542-0836, or [homegrownwisdom@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:homegrownwisdom@ns.sympatico.ca)

Thurs Nov 6 St. Ninian's Place, St. FX Campus, Antigonish N.S. 2 - 5 pm

**RSVP** Ruth Lapp 902-757-0326, or [rlapp@glinx.com](mailto:rlapp@glinx.com)

Fri Nov 7 Windsor United Church, 613 King St. Windsor N.S. 2 - 5 pm

**RSVP** Ruth Lapp 902-757-0326, or [rlapp@glinx.com](mailto:rlapp@glinx.com)

Sat Nov 15 Wheelock Lounge, Acadia University, Wolfville N.S. 9:30 - noon

Please note that for the Wolfville meeting only, registration and coffee is at 9:30, and the presentation will begin at 9:45. Lunch will be served at noon (free lunch!).

**RSVP** Lila Hope-Simpson 902-542-2057 [ironwood@glinx.com](mailto:ironwood@glinx.com)  
or Richard Hennigar 902-582-3044 [hennigar@xcountry.tv](mailto:hennigar@xcountry.tv)

Mon Nov 17 Econo Lodge & Convention Ctre, 80 All Weather Hwy, Summerside PEI 7-9 pm **RSVP**  
Shirlee Hogan 902 368 4817, or [smhogan@gov.pe.ca](mailto:smhogan@gov.pe.ca)

Tues Nov 18 Howard Johnsons Dutch Inn, North River PEI 1-4 pm

**RSVP** Shirlee Hogan 902 368 4817, or [smhogan@gov.pe.ca](mailto:smhogan@gov.pe.ca)

***Refreshments will be available at each of the sessions***

*Please contact the appropriate person for each session so we can have enough food on hand! RSVP required if you wish to attend. See you there...*

If there are too few people for a session, we may cancel it – let us know your plans.

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# 1. Introduction

*If economic activity is supposed to be for the well-being of people,  
then let's direct that activity.*

Tom Van Milligan

This report is a summary of interviews with 107 people about farm and farm community viability. The purpose of the interviews was to find out what is important about farming, from the people who are closest to it. This was a special group of people passionate about agriculture who generously agreed to answer questions about farming, farm viability, and the strength of rural communities for an hour or two. Questions included: 'What do you look forward to in your day?', 'How would you describe a viable farm?', or 'What is the glue that holds your community together?' Farmers, processors, retailers, government employees, and even a local food enthusiast patiently and thoughtfully expressed what they think works well and why – during the spring and summer of 2003, throughout Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. The timing was often tricky due to the intense demands of farming during these seasons, and many people we asked said they couldn't do it. This report, therefore, is not a comprehensive or statistically valid assessment, but an initial snapshot of what many people successfully involved in farming are thinking and dreaming and making happen. Over time, we hope to expand the participation in this process and to include additional dimensions that are missing from this report.

Compiling this report was a wonderful and energizing experience for the interviewers and author. It was humbling to see so much expertise, energy, enthusiasm, dedication, and love for farming. The words of those who contributed are filled with hope, understanding, and vision for the future and exhibit remarkable courage in the face of challenging circumstances.

## 1.1 Report contents

This interview report contains two major sections, one on farm viability, and one on agricultural community viability. At the beginning is a list of people who contributed, along with some of their background information. Anonymous contributions were also made.

For farm viability, we start by discussing the value of farms to rural communities, then examine a range of viability indicators, and complete the discussion with more subjective expressions from the interviews on what people really value about farms.

The agricultural community viability indicators are then discussed, followed by examples from the interviews of resilient and not-so-resilient communities. We finish with some profiles of different initiatives that many people identified as contributing significantly to farm viability or community resilience.

## 1.2 Review Process

A draft of this interview report was circulated to all the people who contributed. Comments and feedback were collected by phone and at scheduled feedback sessions in November (see invitation at the beginning of this report) and December 12 in Truro. This final report includes the extra comments and feedback. The contents of this report informed the choice of indicators and compilation of the main report: *Viability of Farms and Farm Communities*.

## 1.3 Audience

There are three audiences for this report. First of all, it is for the general, food-eating public so they can get a sense of who farmers are, what kinds of hidden, uncounted, and un-credited things farmers are contributing to society. We have an agenda here: to improve understanding of farming by non-farmers.

Secondly, it is for farmers who are interested in farm viability and community resilience. Thirdly, this report is for those involved in making policy – from a director on a board, to an insurance adjuster, to senior civil servants and politicians.



## 2. Methods

*In order to deal with some of the things that we are facing as communities we might start by realizing how much we have instead of how little we have.*

Tom Van Milligan

Interviewers developed a list of open-ended questions that would contribute to a meaningful and constructive discussion about viability and resilience. All the interviews were conducted by Wendy Johnston, Ruth Lapp, Laura MacKay, Fredr'c Morgan, Jennifer Scott, and Margaret Weeks.

### 2.1 Selection Process for Interviewees

The selection process for interviewees was not random. People who are trying to make their living from farming, or who have considerable experience on farms were sought out. The interviewers first approached people they knew personally and were referred to other people in a number of ways (through organizations, contacts, articles). After completing some of the interviews, the interviewee list was reviewed to make sure it was a broad enough group, in terms of age or farm type.

**Table 1. Summary of Interviews**

| Characteristic                                     | NS          | PEI         |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number of people interviewed                       | 73          | 34          |
| Number of interviews                               | 60          | 29          |
| Number and percentage of farm interviews           | 36/60 (60%) | 14/29 (50%) |
| - dairy                                            | 8           | 3           |
| - beef                                             | 2           | 1           |
| - hogs                                             | 3           | 1           |
| - sheep                                            | 2           | 0           |
| - mixed                                            | 14          | 7           |
| - potatoes                                         | 0           | 2           |
| - other horticulture (excluding fruit)             | 2           | 0           |
| - fruit                                            | 4           | 0           |
| - on-farm processing                               | 1           | 0           |
| Number and percentage of other interviews          | 24/60 (40%) | 15/29 (50%) |
| - Processing                                       | 6           | 0           |
| - Provincial Department of Agriculture             | 2           | 5           |
| - Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada                 | 0           | 1           |
| - Farm related occupation                          | 12          | 9           |
| - Retail                                           | 2           | 0           |
| - Consumer                                         | 2           | 0           |
| Number of people interviewed with farm backgrounds | 38/73 (52%) | 25/29 (86%) |

People from other businesses related to farming were also asked to participate. The group of people interviewed is also not statistically significant, in that the experience of this group cannot be construed as the experience of most farmers in NS and PEI. The purpose of this process was to get in-depth stories of

how people build viable operations and resilient communities, instead of surveying the farm population as a whole.

It was a challenge to interest farmers in doing an in-depth, 1-2 hour interview at such a busy time (May-August). However, once the interview got going, people were very generous with their ideas and experience.

One hundred and seven people were interviewed during 89 interview sessions. Most of the farm operations were producing a mixture of products, thus were categorized under the heading 'mixed'. These may have produced a mixture of crops and livestock, or the operation combined production and processing and/or some other line of farm business. For more detail on each operation, please see the profiles in Section 3.

## 2.2 Interview Content

Appreciative Inquiry is one way to learn how to pay attention to what has heart and meaning. It was used to frame the interview questions and approach. Appreciative inquiry is a provocative approach to life, inquiring into the 'art of what's possible', beginning with a discussion of what works for some person or group (appreciation), leading to a positive image of the future, and inspiring collective action. The appreciative inquiry model affirms people, identifies what's compelling, and accelerates learning. Appreciative inquiry is a rigorous approach that does not gloss over problems but uses them as learning opportunities (Wendy Johnston, *pers. comm.*). It is hoped that this interview report will not only be a record of the state of farm and community viability in 2003, but will also serve to accelerate the conversation about farms and communities in both rural and urban settings.

To find out *what makes farms viable*, we first made sure we were talking to people with first hand knowledge of a viable operation.

- We asked people to define the specifics of what 'viable' means – how do we know what is and is not viable? This can give us some indicators of viability that will be connected to the literature and statistical review.
- We asked for an example or examples of why this operation is viable; what makes it viable?; what changes over time had to take place in order to make it viable? What changes may have to take place in order to keep it viable?
- We also asked what conditions, infrastructure, or supports need to be in place that allow the items above to function well. What kind of social networks are important? What services are critical? Is there a threshold in terms of number of farms (for example) in order to keep organizations, infrastructure, or services available and alive? What information is needed? Can any of these things be improved?
- We also got some information from the farm or business to make sure there is a good understanding of the dynamics of the business.

Resilience is a key concept and a highly desirable attribute in natural systems. Resilience reflects the ability of a system to 'bounce back' from shocks and to maintain its integrity. This applies both to ecological systems, in which genuine progress is assessed by the capacity of an ecosystem to maintain its 'health' over time, and to human systems in which socioeconomic structures and communities are able to recover from dramatic changes in the natural resource base or in the overall economic system. Both ecological and human communities may change as a result of stress, but as long as the change is healthy in the long term, they are considered to be resilient (modified from Charles et al., 2002).

To find out *what makes agricultural communities resilient and therefore viable in the long run*, we asked the same group of people questions about their community or a community they are very familiar with. This question requires us to pinpoint potentially resilient communities (those that overcome stresses and

continue to flourish) and potentially non-resilient communities (those that are hit hard by stresses such as drought, trade disruptions, price fluctuations etc. and which don't bounce back). Resilience is determined not by the nature of the stresses – which may hit resilient and non-resilient farms and communities equally. Resilience is defined by ability to handle and bounce back from the stressors. The 'hitting hard' is not the criterion. Resilient communities may be hit equally hard by drought, trade disruptions, price fluctuations, etc. but they are more able to survive them. Talking to people in these communities should allow us to highlight differences and focus on what people have learned. Again, to gather as much instructive or constructive material, we took an appreciative approach and focused mostly on 'what works' and 'what people are passionate about'.

- We engaged people to define 'resilience' – how do we know when a community is resilient and viable? What are the characteristics and thresholds that help define a resilient or non-resilient community? This information provides some indicators of resilience that will be connected to the literature and statistical review.
- We ask for concrete examples, with details (in an attempt to avoid theorizing) that demonstrate resilience (or lack thereof). Why is this community resilient? Has it always been? What foundations does it rest on? (proximity to markets? Good soil/climate/water? Infrastructure? Human resources/social capital?) What changes have taken place over time that have affected resiliency? What stresses has this community encountered and how does it overcome them?
- What are/were the key conditions for success? Can we improve on these?

### 3. Profile of People Interviewed

Everyone interviewed is talking for themselves as a person, not as a representative of an organization. We tried as much as possible to include mostly information that is a result of direct experience, rather than someone interpreting another person's experience. The interviewee list starts with participants from PEI, followed by participants from Nova Scotia. For each province, the participants are listed in alphabetical order. There were 34 people in PEI and 73 people in Nova Scotia interviewed. They were asked to introduce themselves, and the descriptions below arise from this introduction – which describes each person's situation at the time of the interviews in 2003.

#### 3.1 Prince Edward Island Participants

**Marilyn Affleck** The Affleck family has a potato and dairy operation. Marilyn also is the Farm Health and Safety Co-ordinator for the PEI Federation of Agriculture. Over the early years on their farm, she probably would have been called a farmer because she worked out in the barn and on the land, taking her five children with her when necessary. She rushed in and got meals ready with little help, but really loved the farm work.

**Anonymous** Currently, she is part owner of a large potato farm she operates with her husband and son. She has also worked with the Department of Agriculture and Forestry in various capacities for many years. She works entirely on her home farm at present. Her job on the farm includes accounting, finances, legal work, human resource contracts, all the cropping spread sheets, planning and coordination.

**Katherine Clough** Katherine is presently the Director of Strategic Planning and Management, PEI Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Forestry.

**Heath Coles** Heath is the Market and Trade Officer with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, based in PEI. He focuses on market and industry service, working with companies and organizations on international/export marketing. Most of his clients in the agriculture sector would be potato dealers (those who ship to the USA) and exporters (those who ship to other countries), and large dairy exporters like ADL for example.

**Blair Corkum** Blair grew up in Nova Scotia in a fishing community. He is a chartered accountant and moved to PEI to continue work with Coopers and Lybrand. In 2002, he formed a two partner firm, Corkum and Crozier with a broad base of clients, including farmers.

**Barry Cudmore** Barry was born and raised on a family farm in Brackley, PEI where he now farms (potatoes and hogs). Although he has a background in fisheries, he came back to PEI in 1976 to form a partnership with his father. He is also the director of PEI FoodTrust.

**Phil Ferraro** Phil is presently a member of the Institute for Bioregional Studies, and has been the PEI ADAPT Council Administrative Director for the past four years. His background consists of being a farmer for 10 years, social ecology, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, land trusts, and solar greenhouses.

**Robert Harding** Robert is the general manager of the PEI Hog Board, based in Charlottetown. He grew up in Nova Scotia, with a non farm background, although everyone had a garden, some chickens for their eggs and maybe a cow. He moved to the Island to work in the accounting department of Canada Packers, and later moved to the Hog Board.

**John Hutchings** John grew up in rural Newfoundland, one of 12 children, so he realized early on the importance of food because there wasn't always an adequate supply. He has worked with the Government, banks, in farm management, as an agrologist, and as a financial advisor in Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, and PEI. Presently he is with the Farm Credit Corporation in Charlottetown as the PEI-NS District Manager.

**Doug LeClair** Doug lives in the community of Springfield, PEI. He was born and raised on a family farm in Tignish and is presently the Executive Director of the PEI Federation of Agriculture.

**David and Edith Ling** David and Edith have a mixed farm in Winsloe North, PEI. They grow grain, hogs, and beef cattle. They sell their meat every Saturday at the Charlottetown Farmers Market.

**Chris MacBeath** Chris is a young farmer and very active 4-H member who lives in Marshfield, about 10 km east of Charlottetown. Chris lives with his family on a 550 acre dairy farm, and plans to stay home to farm when he completes his education. In the summer of 2003 Chris worked as a summer student with the PEI Department of Agriculture and Forestry, but also spends as much time as possible working on his home farm with his father, uncle, and grandfather.

**Elmer and Duane MacDonald** MacDonald Brothers Farms near Crapaud, PEI, is run by Elmer, his brother Earl, and their sons Duane and Corey. They raise beef and potatoes.

**Karen MacInnis** Karen grew up in the city, but she frequented a farm belonging to her family in the country. She developed a great interest in farming by accompanying her father to the farm and gaining work experience there. After high school, she pursued an agriculture degree at NSAC, stemming from her exposure to the farm; participation in 4-H; and activity within the Junior Farmer Organization. Karen is presently hired by the Farm Credit Corporation as 'Team Lead, Customer Service'.

**Ron MacKinley** Ron's father was a farmer with his brother in business as MacKinley Brothers Farm. Ron kept the farm going and expanding, but also got into politics. At 36 he was elected to the Provincial Legislative Assembly and has been there ever since. Today Ron farms 1200 acres, potatoes, grain, and feeder cow/calf operation with 150 head.

**Danny and Christine MacKinnon** Danny and Christine run Sandy Rae Farms, a dairy operation in Brooklyn, PEI. Danny was born and raised on this farm (5<sup>th</sup> generation). Although he did other things with his life, he feels that he was born to be a farmer. Both Danny and Christine have worked as agricultural engineers with the PEI Department of Agriculture and Forestry. Christine presently works in senior management with the Department, but only worked part-time when their two children were small.

**John MacLean** John farms and lives in West Devon, where his great grandfather settled in the 1840s. The family had a mixed farming operation until everything changed so much and he realized that specialization was the way to go ahead. John and his three sons farm together and they specialize in potatoes. John's wife does the bookwork and they are all involved in the daily and the long term decisions. They grow seed, table and processing; approximately 1000 acres of potatoes and 1000 acres of grain. John is called the 'Singing Farmer'. He has made two cassette tapes with songs that he composed himself. He feels that he has a fairly good handle on the business of farming. He started with nothing, no inheritance or assistance to get into farming and has grown his business by two main things: first hard thinking, and then hard work.

**John MacQuarrie** John has worked at the PEI Department of Agriculture and Forestry for past 20 years. He is now the Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

**George and Melanie Matheson** Melanie grew up in a rural area but her parents did not farm. Her aunts and uncles did farm and she loved spending time on their farm. George grew up on a small dairy farm and that is where they live together now – his home farm in Albion Cross. They have a hay and straw business and raise lamb and Christmas trees. Both have part-time jobs off the farm. Melanie is a Minister in the United Church and George is a Director for PEI Mutual Insurance.

**Mitch Murphy** Mitch was the minister of Agriculture and Forestry in PEI at the time the interviews took place in the summer of 2003.

**Brenda Penak** Brenda is the Executive Director for the Bedeque Bay Environmental Management Association (BBEMA). BBEMA is a watershed-based group with 12 board of directors that reflect a broad base of stakeholders. Some of the key issues they look at are soil erosion, water quality, and wildlife habitat. Since December 2002, BBEMA offices have been located in Emerald in the old railroad station that was one of the main junctions during the height of the railroad.

**Nancy Reeves** Nancy presently lives in Winsloe South and works as a Water Quality Technician with the Department of Environment. She says she has the 'heart of a farmer' and is dedicated to the farm on which she grew up and maintains close ties. She grew up on her family farm in Pleasant Valley; a farm that has been in the family for at least 4 generations and now has 600 acres. It was a mixed farm with emphasis on dairy and shipped cream. As her father got older, he moved the farm operations to a base of race horses. Nancy is currently the Chair of the PEI Agriculture Awareness Committee, and is a 4-H leader and parent.

**Justin Rogers** Justin was born and raised on the farm where he lives, the 6<sup>th</sup> generation of farmers in Brae. He runs a mixed farm with livestock, potatoes, grains and forages, growing about 85 - 100 acres of seed potatoes; and running 60 to 80 head of cattle, mixed breeds. Farming has been the only thing he ever wanted to do or thought about doing. This is his third year to farm. Justin is also currently employed with the PEI Soil and Crop Association, coordinating the Conservation Club in the west end of the Island, which started about a year ago as a pilot project.

**Temple and Gail Stewart** Temple and Gail farm on the Loyalist Road in Hampshire, about 8 km west of Charlottetown. They purchased their farm, Hampshire Meadows, approximately 25 years ago. They raise 100 head of cattle (cow/calf), primarily Black Angus. In the past few years they have moved away from purebred stock and now keep both a Limousine and a Charolais bull for breeding purposes. They also own and operate T & G Farm Supplies Ltd., from a small outbuilding on the farm. They have three grown daughters, all married to, or engaged to, farmers.

**Barb Wagner** Barb is a United Church Minister for the Bedeque, Borden, and Cape Traverse area. She has been the minister of this Charge for the past 13 years. A large proportion of the parishioners are farmers or have a connection to farming, so the viability of the church is reflected in the viability of the farming community.

**Steve Watts** Steve has worked with Eric Robinson Inc., a multifaceted potato growing company, since 1990, where he is the manager of the farming and packing part of operations. He grew up on a small farm and developed a strong liking for certain parts of farming.

**Allison Weeks** Allison lives in Charlottetown and has worked with the PEI Department of Agriculture and Forestry for the past 25 years. Agriculture has always been a big interest in his life, both professionally and personally.

**Janice Whalen** Janice was born and raised in Guelph Ontario. She came to PEI planning to go to the Atlantic Veterinary College, and met Jamie Whalen. Jamie and Janice now farm in Vernon River, PEI, about 25 km east of Charlottetown. Jamie and his brother Lennie operate Whalen Farms. Jamie and Janice have a 280 sow operation. They raise weaner pigs to supply Whalen farms, which also has beef cattle and cash crops. Janice does off-farm contract work, such as co-ordinating the National Agricultural Awareness Conference in May of 2003.

**Colleen Younie** Colleen grew up on a dairy farm in the Eastern Townships of Quebec and now lives in Morell. She has worked for the PEI Department of Agriculture and Forestry for the past 31 years and is now a Farm Business Management Specialist.

### 3.2 Nova Scotia participants

**Anna Anderson and George Pickford** Anna and George own and operate Acadiana Soy in Grand Pré. They also have a 40 acre farm and direct market 2 acres of vegetables. The farm has good soil and a great location. Anna and George met while they were both working at another Grand Pré farm. George works off-farm but hopes to work full-time on the farm some day.

**Helen Arenburg** Helen has worked for the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers' Association for the last 11 years and lives in Waterville. She has done various fruit-related inspection jobs, including apple inspection at packing houses, apple maggot inspections in orchards, and tree counting in orchards.

**David Baldwin** David is a research technician at the Kentville Research Station (Agriculture and Agri-food Canada), an apple grower, and an all-around apple enthusiast.

**Kevin Bekkers** Kevin is the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Agriculture Regional Coordinator (ARC), Eastern (Antigonish). He also has a farm with a mix of cattle, blueberries, and honey bees.

**Ed and Kathryn Belzer** Ed and Kathryn have a farm in Chaswick. They raise livestock for direct freezer trade, and farm with horses.

**Brian Boates** Brian runs a fruit orchard that includes fresh, processing, U-Pick, cider, and vinegar.

**Ernie Bolivar** Ernie grew up on a farm and is now the mayor of Bridgewater.

**Jim Burrows** Jim is a dairy farmer near Truro. He has about 50-60 milking cows and about 110-120 head of cattle altogether. He manages about 350 acres of cultivated land for forage, corn, and soybean. Almost the entire feed requirements are produced on the farm.

**James Card** James farmed all his life in Centre Burlington, Hants County. He owned and operated a successful dairy farm and sold most of it to another dairy farmer when he retired in the mid 90s. Now he operates a hobby farm with a large woodlot.

**Keith Casey** Keith has now retired from running a dairy farm with his wife Rae, and family, in Centre Burlington, Hants County. Keith helps his son Brian, who has taken over the farm, with the field work. Keith maintains that his work "doesn't count", because he loves to do it. He also loves working with his draft horses.

**Jan Chute and Alexandra Chute** Jan has a 51 acre certified organic farm and retail store food and feed in Waterville. The farm has livestock (rare breeds), vegetables, and fruit. They also have guest accommodations. Jan's daughter Alexandra also lives and works on the farm and in the store. Alexandra sells at the Wolfville Farmer's Market. Jan's husband David has a business in Kentville and also works on the farm.

**Ruth Colville** Ruth and her husband Paul own and run Coldspring Farm in Mosher's Corner, near Middleton. It borders the Bay of Fundy and is close to 200 acres, including wooded land and about 50 acres cleared. They raise cattle, meat birds, and laying hens, as well as about 10 acres of certified organic vegetables. Ruth and Paul have a number of markets for their products, including the Halifax Farmers' Market. They are part of Seaspray Co-op which organizes joint marketing for a number of different farms in the Maritimes.

**Jamie Cornetta** Jamie raises a variety of livestock, vegetables, and grain on Oakmanor farm in Summerville, Hants County. The farm is certified organic, and is about 300 acres.

**Alex DeNicola** Alex and his family make their entire living from a certified organic market garden in Belmont, Hants County. They use horse and tractor power on their 120 acre mixed farm. They sell most of their products at the Halifax City Farmer's Market.

**Claire Doyle** Claire and her family work in their cranberry/computer business (Crantech), based in Isle Madame, Cape Breton. They have a farm (Duke of York Cranberry Meadow) which had been in the family previously and they were able to buy it back. They produce a variety of cranberry products and they have a vacation home that they rent out on the farm.

**Michelle Fike and Vicky Lantz** Michelle and Vicky own and operate Pumpkin Moon Farm in Chaswick, Kings County. Michelle started farming in 1992 as an apprentice, and started her own market garden in 1995. She and Vicky grow vegetables, herbs, and raise livestock. The herb products are becoming the primary business for the farm. Vicky has a background in animal science and managing dairy farms. They are moving from their present location (75 acres) to a 21 acre farm in Berwick to reduce the time they spend driving, to have better soil, and because they feel they can't afford the larger farm.

**John and Linda Foote** John and Linda are part owners of Foote Family Farm, Woodville, but they no longer do any farming themselves. The farm has apple orchards and honey bees for honey and pollination. At one time the family had 150 acres of fruit and 1000 hives, as well as some Christmas trees.

**Frank Foster** Frank raises cattle on a farm near Amherst.

**Eric Frank** Eric has a small organic vegetable and herb production business in Avonport, and sells at the Wolfville Farmers' Market, 7 kms from his home. He grew up on a 125 acre mixed family farm near Windsor, which included dairy, poultry, apple orchards and vegetables. Eric has worked in the greenhouse industry (Avon Valley and his own), the food processing industry (M.W. Graves & Co.), and as a weed inspector in the Annapolis Valley.

**Jessie Greenough** Jessie grew up on a farm and now grows raspberries and strawberries in East Petpeswick. Berry Hill Farm is 25 acres, with 7 acres clear, and Jessie takes orders ahead for the berries and also makes raspberry jam for sale at Craft fairs and a little store in the Musquodoboit Harbour.

**Elsie Hiltz** Elsie was born and raised on a farm in the New Ross area. She and her husband have a farm. It's subsidized by outside work, but it's a working farm as far as she's concerned. She has worked at the Ross Farm Museum for 20 years or so.

**Joyce Hiltz** Joyce grew up on a farm in Lake Ramsay. She's been working at Ross Farm Museum for more than 30 years. She has a small hobby farm but don't make a living from it.

**Fraser Hunter** Fraser is the owner/operator of a dairy farm operation near Antigonish, NS. The farm is between Arisaig and Lismore. He has about 60 kg of quota, and ships milk to Scotsburn. He is the local president of Federation of Agriculture (Antigonish /Guysborough).

**Mike Isenor** Mike is the manager of Northumberland co-op, a lamb processing and marketing operation near Truro Nova Scotia.

**Gwen Jones** Gwen lives and farms in Noel Shore, Hants County. She keeps a flock 100 breeding ewes (Clunn Forest and North Country Cheviots) for market lambs and breeding stock. She has an academic background in parasitology, and has been involved for many years with 4-H. She grew up on a sheep farm in Wales.

**Shirley Keddy** Shirley has lived in New Ross all her life and has some farming background. She has worked at the Ross Farm Museum since it started in 1971.

**Fred Kilcup** Fred is the manager for the Halifax City Farmers' Market.

**Gail Larder** Gail grew up on a farm in Lake Ramsay, about 5 miles from Ross Farm Museum. She has worked at the Museum for 14 summers.

**Walter Larder** Walter does not have a farming background, but he's been working at the Ross Farm Museum for 19 years.

**Jim Lorraine** Jim is the owner and manager of River Breeze Farm and Farm Market, near Truro. Jim took over the family farm from his father in 1992 when he was 22. The farm had been in beef cattle, and Jim diversified into field crops (vegetables and strawberries), greenhouses, and the store. There are 700 cleared acres on the farm and 100 of woodlot. In the summer there are about 30 employees and 100 in the peak of the summer.

**Charles and Sharon MacDonald, Rick Degregorio** Charles and Sharon, and Sharon's son Rick raise Highland cattle and laying hens, along with other livestock on Charrick Keltic Farm just outside Sydney. The farm is 110 acres, and there are about 80 head of cattle. They feel they are not economically viable yet, because they rely on Charles' pension. Rick and Charles supervise the beef cattle slaughter and preparation for market at a government inspected abattoir. They sell primarily eggs and beef at the farm gate and the Sydney Farmers' Market, a 15 minute drive from their farm. They also sell eggs to the Buddhist monastery in Pleasant Bay.

**Wayne MacDougall** Wayne is the owner and operator of Twinroad Farm, a mile and a half west of Antigonish. It is a poultry (commercial pullet and breeders) and dairy operation on about 140 acres. He and his wife are milking about 30 cows. They hire one helper in the summer.

**Jude Major** Jude has a small farm in a community not considered to be ideal for farming – Clam Harbour, on the Eastern Shore. She raises poultry, vegetables, and herbs, and manufactures pet food/treats, which she sells at a variety of locations including the Halifax Farmers' Market. Jude is also a professional tailor/costume designer, but she says she cares more about being a farmer.

**Duncan McCurdy** Duncan is a dairy farmer, on Bay Bend Farms, outside of Truro. The farm was started by his grandfather, who had a mixed farm. It was still a mixed farm when Duncan's dad took over. They had dairy, laying hens, mixed vegetables and a little grain. In the late 60s, early 70s, they decided to concentrate on dairy. Since Duncan came home to farm in 1990, and now, the quota holdings have doubled, taking the milking herd from 60 to 100. The quota is 100 kg butterfat per day, and he is a member of Farmer's Dairy Co-op. The farm is 300 acres, and he rents about another 200 acres. The farm is self-sufficient in forage, and grows 80% of its energy and 50% of its protein requirements. There are also a few pigs and chickens on the farm because it gives them the opportunity to feed out extra milk at times, it provides some variety, and "it's nice for the kids".

**Durell Murphy** Durell is a teamster at the Ross Farm museum. He was brought up on small mixed farm in Nine Mile River, Hants County. They raised dairy cattle, a few pigs, and a lot of turnips. They used to supply the IPC stores with turnips (IPC were one of the big grocery stores at the time). They logged in the winter time and it was all done with horses.

**Laurence Nason** Laurence is the executive director of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture (NSFA). The NSFA is a 108 year-old interest group for farmers that represents 2,000 farms and businesses.

**Sian Newman-Smith** Sian started and ran Maritime Soyco, a certified organic tofu-making company until September 2002, after 18 years of operation. The decision to sell the business was based on the stress of running a small business. They were grossing about \$100,000 per year, and netting an average of \$20,000. Sian and her family could see people around them "earning much more, for less headache." She lives just outside Antigonish in Harbour Centre.

**Jean Palmeter** Jean lives in North Grand Pré, where she farmed, taught school, and was an active member of the Women's Institute. She met her future husband when she was teaching, and they farmed together on his family land (since 1750). At first they had a mixed farm with apples, vegetables, hens, and dairy cattle. After Jean and her husband bought the farm from his dad, they concentrated on dairy.

**Bev Patterson** Bev is the manager at the Co-op Atlantic Feed Mill in Brooklyn, Hants County. Their main clients are small farms, mostly from the immediate area. Bev had a 21 year career with the military before starting at the Mill in 1992.

**Arthur Pick** Arthur is a senior Agricultural Services Coordinator. He manages the regional services, working under the Agricultural Services branch of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. He and his colleagues act as facilitators, analysts, catalysts, working towards sustainable development in the rural areas of the province.

**Kelly Radcliff** Kelly is the market manager for the Wolfville Farmers' Market.

**Mona Reeves** Mona grew up on a farm in the New Ross area and works at the Ross Farm Museum.

**Pia Skaarer Nielsen** Pia is a Danish immigrant who moved to Canada in 1989. She now raises sheep and uses their wool to make items she sells. She is also very involved in keeping the Wolfville Farmers' Market going.

**Hans Jurgen Schroeder** Hans Jurgen started his farm in 1992 in West Paradise, near Bridgetown. His goal is to grow, process, and sell everything from one location so that people get a connection to the farm and see where it's coming from. He raises a variety of livestock and has a slaughter facility on site. He used to be a pharmacist, a landscape engineer, and a house-builder among other things.

**Karen Sheppard** Karen worked with the Tatamagouche Area Health Education and Nutrition Initiative to put together a guide featuring locally produced food for sale in the Tatamagouche area. It is called Celebrating the Harvest.

**George Smith** George is a beef cattle farmer in Pictou County, raising 200 calves in the 2003 season.

**Richard 'Scott' Sterling** Scott runs the family farm (450 acres) and Sterling's Farm Market in Brooklyn, Hants County. This farm has been in the family since the 1800s. It started off as a dairy farm, then in later years they raised beef. Later they started the market and grew vegetables to sell. Since about 1990 it has been a thriving business, increasing sales every year. He has about 20 acres in squash, pumpkins, beans, tomatoes, 'and the whole nine yards.' There are 100 acres in pasture, and about 330 acres in woodland for his own firewood and lumber. He works with 11 employees, 4 in the market and 5 in the bakery.

**Alan Stewart** Alan grew up on a family farm in Hortonville and he is the 5<sup>th</sup> generation on it. The farm went from dairy and poultry to pork and beef. It is about 100 acres, and Alan raises certified organic beef, apple cider, and



produce for sale at the Wolfville Farmers' Market, a 5 minute drive away from the farm. He also has a secure job off the farm. Alan went away to University to get away from the farm. He got a degree in metallurgical engineering and, came right back to the farm. He decided that's where he wanted to be after all.

**Bill Swetnam and his daughter-in-law Christina** Bill and Christina are both active on the family farm and in the community of Sheffield Mills. They raise poultry and field vegetables.

**Pat and Harold Swineamer** Pat and Harold live on a farm in Centre Burlington, Hants County. They used to ship cream, but now they produce honey and have a small abattoir for poultry processing. They started the abattoir in the early 90s and process about 5 - 6,000 birds for people who raise a few meat birds, turkeys, and ducks mostly for their own use.

**Jerry and Gordon Thomas** Jerry and his father Gordon raise hogs in East Preston. Jerry is fourth generation. He has 50 acres, 300 hogs. The hogs are fed grain, and in the summer they graze too. They ship hogs to Larsens.

**Kim Tilsley** Kim and her partner Glen Covey run Glenryan farm (126 acres) and a provincially inspected slaughter facility in Margaree Harbour, Cape Breton. They focus on Free Range Chicken, but also raise a few sheep, and have a certified organic market garden. They process about 5,000 birds a season from April through October. They hire a crew of 4 for slaughter days (1-3 days/week), and charge \$3/bird to do custom jobs for other people. They have the only inspected slaughter facility in Cape Breton. Sales occur at the farm gate, at the Sydney farmers' market, and through one Co-op Atlantic store. Kim estimates that 70-75% of their income comes from the farm, but she also has a part-time job she loves at the local library.

**Linda Tupper** Linda operates a farrow to finish hog operation on her former husband's farm in Morristown. Initially they had it set up as a grower operation (12,000 growers a year), but Linda wanted to include the whole process from birth to avoid importing sick animals. She took over the operation, calling it Babies Unlimited, and is now producing about 7,700 head per year for Larsen's. The farm has about 250 acres, producing hay and Christmas trees. The hay is for the sows – comfort and supplementary feed.

**Willem van den Hoek** Willem is the owner/operator of That Dutchman's Farm in Economy. 50% of his market is at the Halifax City Farmers' Market, and 50% is farm-gate. At the farm there is a bakery, gift shop, and animals, with spectacular grounds. At Thanksgiving they do a hike and feast.

**John and Angela Vandereit** John and Angela have a dairy farm in Shubenacadie.

**Tom and Sharon Van Milligan** Tom and Sharon have been farming in Lapland for 27 years. They moved to Lunenburg County from Ontario to get more space and find a good place for their children to grow up. They have been raising hogs, but at the time of the interview, had decided to stop farming and begin to shut their operation down.

**Elsbeth and Peter Wile** Elspeth and Peter run a dairy farm and roadside market store in Wileville, near Bridgewater. Their farm was chosen for a profile in this report because it illustrated so many points about farm viability and community resilience.

**Marjorie Willison** Marjorie is best known for her work in gardening as an author and for fielding gardening questions on CBC's Maritime Noon. But her passion is to build a local food system. She has been instrumental in establishing an Urban Farm in the middle of Spryfield, a suburb of Halifax. It is called, appropriately, Spry's Field.

**Jeannine Wilson** Jeannine is not a 'typical' consumer. She regularly buys food at the Wolfville Farmers' Market, a 15-20 minute drive from her home in Hantsport.

**Harlene Wiseman** Harlene lives in Rawdon and is a 4-H leader for the Rawdon 2-way club. She has been involved with 4-H for 31 years, starting at age nine. She specializes in goat, and waterfowl.

## 4. How Farms and Farming Contribute to Society

Farms contribute a great deal to society. The most overtly economic contributions are that farms contribute to the GDP and to consumer spending through food production. They also generate wealth and infrastructure by spending money in nearby communities, by employing people, and by making donations. An estimate of the dollar value of this contribution would be relatively straightforward.

The less obvious contributions have more to do with the kind of people we become if we are associated with a farm. Farms appear to ‘generate’ (or perhaps ‘attract’) people who take initiative or leadership, or are willing to contribute as volunteers. They are training grounds not only for farming, but for life. Farms are places where many people have a deep-seated yearning to be. Perhaps they satisfy our need to connect with animals, plants, soil, or the outdoors. And farms may help communities find their roots or identities.

Finally, there are the more straightforward contributions that fewer people mentioned, like providing food, or certain services having to do with use of farm equipment for off-farm community purposes, such as clearing snow from lanes.

This section is divided into four sections: **Economic Contributions; Ecological Contributions; Human Capital Contributions; and Social Capital Contributions.**

### 4.1 Economic Contributions

#### **Farms support local business**

*PEI:* Many people interviewed said that farms are the ‘main economic driver’ in their community. Barb Wagner notes that when the farming is good, everything else in the community is thriving. When the farming is in a slump, everything else suffers. For example, when the farmers have a good year, they put more money into the rink or the church or other community activities. They buy new equipment and trucks. Karen MacInnis knows that what primary producers do is very important because everything else stems from what they produce – processing, value-added products, the stock market (futures etc), grocery store stock. Temple and Gail Stewart’s farm supply business brings people to the community to spend money.

John Hutchings notes that the idea of maintaining productive farms has support from people in other businesses that have a connection to the farm. Farms have connections with businesses in small communities where the farmer gets machinery repaired or buys gas, or people with whom farm family interacts like church and local organizations like 4-H etc. Justin Rogers, who farms near Brae looked at his journal and counted nearly 100 businesses that the farm does business with. He has developed some great relationships and friends with people who operate local businesses as well as other farmers in the area.

A large potato farm in Northeast PEI employs people, is a tax base in several communities, purchases a lot of inputs at the local community level, and supports the coffee shops. This farm has meals brought in by restaurants especially in the spring and fall - which are the shoulder seasons and the business is welcomed by local vendors. They also help to support, along with the fisheries businesses, local machinists in a neighbouring community. These machinists are very difficult to find in general, but these men have set up businesses in the area. This farm has a great interest in supporting these people in their businesses. One man also builds mussel boats for Sweden - taking the design and selling it internationally. He is a fantastic resource for the community, but there must be a bunch of people to support him in his business and local people are trying hard to do that, so he stays. Because his business

is growing with the new markets overseas, he is able to hire people who were trained at the shipyards in the nearby town of Georgetown. All this adds to resiliency and community growth.

Mitch Murphy's father is a carpenter who ran his own business and was extremely busy when the farming and fishing industries had good years; the reverse in bad years. Heath Coles knows that farms create wealth to generate economic activities in the community. John MacQuarrie, knows that agriculture is the largest economic wealth creator in PEI. It creates jobs and ways of life.

**NS:** Duncan McCurdy lists off the businesses he deals with for his dairy operation. He uses mainly Co-op Atlantic for feed, but also gets some items from Purina. There are three feed companies in the area. There are two fertilizer plants. He also buys chemicals, seed, limestone, tires, hardware, building supplies; and uses trucking companies. "It's got a big impact locally, all these farms."

Jim Burrows is dairy farmer who works with Co-op Atlantic (where his nutritionist is based) to test, mix, and supplement the dairy ration. The relationship with the nutritionist is important particularly when the grower is producing most of the feed because he's not just buying feed from a bag. They also supply Jim with many of the other supplies for the farm. He also deals with Truro Agro-mart for chemical fertilizer and herbicides. This requires a relationship as well because they do the soil sampling and a lot of the field mapping for the farm. He also supports other local businesses such as machinery dealers, hardware stores, and welding shops. Support works two ways.

Linda Tupper raises hogs and buys feed at the Shur-Gain. When she had a barn fire in 1994, Shur-Gain helped her through a time when she couldn't pay for the feed due to fire losses. She's been with them ever since. Fraser Hunter knows that in Antigonish County, agriculture pumps 26 million dollars into the local economy. He estimates that 70 to 80% of revenue generated on a farm goes back to local community.

### **Farms provide employment opportunities**

**PEI:** Allison Weeks mentions opportunities for youth specifically. Chris MacBeath, himself a young farmer, says his family's farm hires people and this contributes to the economy of the area. Justin Rogers notes that if farms weren't there, several of the children in the community wouldn't have the opportunities for little summer jobs like picking rocks or roguing potatoes or haying. Ron MacKinley's farm provides approximately \$300,000 annually in wages for employees to spend in the community. Steve Watts mentioned that Eric Robinson contributes a substantial payroll into the community and good working conditions.

Gail and Temple Stewart, on both the farm and the farm supply business, hire/employ local people. Their hired man is provided with a home on the property, so his family is part of the community. Barry Cudmore tries to hire his neighbours for electrical work, bulldozing, plumbing, carpentry work etc in an attempt to reward those who provide services in the area. He says that if part of their livelihood comes from your livelihood, they tend to be more understanding and accepting of your practices.

**NS:** Bill Swetnam runs a farm that employs a lot of people. "DykeView Farms and us put on a Fall Supper and Dance for our employees. It was sizable, at least 200 people (including spouses) were there." Christina Swetnam cites another example of the importance of farming to the area: "They had an agriculture day at the school and they asked the kids whose parents had some relationship with agriculture and 80% of the kids put their hands up." Bill sees that "farms employ a lot more people [than in the past] because we're more intensive." Fraser Hunter estimates that for every job on a dairy farm, three are created in a community. And for every 10 kg of milk quota on a dairy farm, one job is created in a processing plant.

### **Farms contribute by making donations in the community**

**PEI:** One of the larger potato farms in PEI gives money to the nearby High School for specific grade 12 awards. They also give money for public speaking awards in the 4-H program. Their donation priorities reflect the family's values and this is what they will support as long as they can and that gives them a lot of satisfaction. There are lots of different sports organizations (hockey and baseball) which Ron MacKinley's farm sponsors. Steve Watts notes that Eric Robinson Inc. owners give a lot of support locally and Island wide - financial, leadership, and volunteer contributions. Temple and Gail Stewart's farm supply business provides donations to organizations - prizes for activities. When the Rotary Club has a fundraising auction, SandyRae Farms (the MacKinnons) always has a donation.

**NS:** Jim Lorraine used to get inundated with requests for donations so he decided to choose a couple of worthwhile causes and support just the Fire Brigade, and the Colchester Community Workshop for mentally-challenged adults. The Workshop provides facilities, and jobs for people. "You can take in things and they fix them for you. All of our strawberry stakes on the farm, we get 500 per year, we get them to make them all. I've always supported them, since I began farming, because they are good people. Last year a Community Workshop group came out to pick strawberries, and there was about 60 of them, 45 years of age on average. All of the people from the Community Workshop were sitting in the field waiting for their bus to come back, I said 'now, who wants to get on the trailer and pat some cows?' They love it, and it's fun, and it's really nice to see."

## **4.2 Ecological Contributions**

### **Farmers are stewards of the land & water**

**PEI:** Blair Corkum makes an important point. Even though farmers own the land, their stewardship (or not) affects all of society. Brenda Penak adds that even though water is a common resource, farmers bear the cost of protecting it. She thinks society must bear some of that cost. Steve Watts and Eric Robinson have a strong commitment to the environment. They practice soil conservation, and also maintain wetlands, forested areas, etc. Katherine Clough notes that farmers are making an environmental contribution; the way the land is maintained contributes to the community.

**NS:** Tom Van Milligan takes the responsibility of owning land very seriously. "Whether we acknowledge it or not, we allow people to own land that is really common land – in other words, the land doesn't just belong to me it belongs to all of us. With that comes responsibility."

### **Maintaining Land In Working Farms**

**PEI:** Brenda Penak says an indicator of farm viability is that the farms are being kept as working farms. Barry Cudmore is determined to keep owning the land and he wants to be able to take his grandchildren to show them where he grew up and where his roots are, not just show them a photograph of where he walked as a boy; where his father before him worked the land. It is a sense of belonging that ties in with viability and longevity. The importance and significance of owning land will be even more vital in the future. Land will become more valuable. Dirt and clay under the nails is a powerful connection to nature.

Karen MacInnis's family is committed to continuing with their farming operation. They are tempted by considerable, generous financial offers for sale of their land (eg. for a golf course), but they are choosing to focus on a future as farmers on this land. Chris MacBeath has noticed that as land and quota prices rise, it makes it tougher for farms to expand, and more tempting for farmers to 'sell out' and stop farming. This is a particular challenge for the MacBeaths because of their water view and proximity to Charlottetown.

*NS:* Eric Frank thinks Kings County has some very progressive zoning that helps to protect farm land for farming, although it is not consistently applied. Any land that has been deemed agricultural land is not permitted to be used for other purposes, except under certain conditions. A farmer is allowed to build a house on his farm for another generation, or for hired help. But agricultural land is not allowed to be re-zoned into building lots. But there seems to be loopholes to that. “I keep seeing houses spring up on farmland all over the place. The Kingston / Greenwood area is especially susceptible to that.”

Bill Swetnam, who farms in Kings County, is very concerned that farm land be kept for farming. “We’re trying to slow development down and I think it’s most unfortunate to use land of this quality and this climate as residential land. For the municipality the revenue from an individual household is far greater than that from farm land. If the viability of farming is not very good, the farmer will sell off his land to pick up a few dollars. That’s why I think we should have land banks.”

Ernie Bolivar is mayor of Bridgewater in Lunenburg County. “I just came from a press announcement today. Walmart bought a viable farm on Exit 12. 210 acres of prime woodland and farmland and they’re going to put a store there. Walmart paid over \$3 million dollars for it. They had chickens, hay and beef cattle and a milk quota – that’s going to be gone. Next fall there will be no hay made over there and no chickens raised, no vegetables. Walmart’s going to be there with the big neon sign. When you take all those incidents and put them together, pretty soon we’ll be importing all our products, that’s what I think.”

Jan Chute has a farm that is threatened by a planned highway exit. The county wants to run “a highway right through my yard, because they promised Michelin that they would give them an exit off the highway when they put the plant in here. ... We fortunately know the Plant Manager at Michelin, Grant Ferguson and he’s very much on our side. He buys a great deal of stuff from us. He’s been an extremely good customer and a very good friend and I hope he doesn’t leave until the County builds their highway somewhere else.”

John Vanderiet is grateful to the local municipality for making a conscious effort to maintain farm land. “There’s a line around the Milford area that the municipality has drawn. On the Elmsdale side, they are encouraging residential development but on the Shubenacadie side, they are preserving the farming sector and not encouraging residential development.”

### **Farms contribute to the scenic interest of the countryside which affects the tourism industry**

*PEI:* It was surprising how often this was mentioned in PEI. Justin Rogers thinks the tourism industry benefits from the visual pleasure of the rural landscape that farms contribute to. Everyone keeps their places very well maintained. There are a million tourists coming to PEI every year and Barry Cudmore, in all seriousness, suggested to the Minister of Tourism that he send a note of thanks to the people who raise cows in Cavendish. They may not be the best cows in PEI (or they might be), but they certainly are the most photographed cows in PEI, and that shouldn’t be taken lightly. If those cows were removed from those fields, the tourists would be missing something. Barry thinks the rural landscape is one of the main reasons why tourists come to PEI. Nancy Reeves knows that visually, a farm helps the community. If a farmer is able to create a very attractive picture of the home and barns etc, she says it makes the whole community look inviting. Duane MacDonald sees that the PEI landscape has a dynamic about it - things are manicured and painted. The land looks alive. It shows that communities and people are alive - cutting grass and cutting hay and they are planting potatoes and flowers. People take pride in the appearance of their property. Gail and Temple Stewart are aware that if the farm is kept neat and tidy and attractive, it contributes to the overall appeal of the Loyalist Rd. In Marshfield, Chris MacBeath says that farmers contribute to the community by keeping everything neat and tidy on the farms

**NS:** Bill Swetnam thinks the farms create pleasant vistas. Christina Swetnam shows visitors the fields in the area and is proud of how the family has kept the farm an attractive place.

### **4.3 Human Capital Contributions**

#### **Farms provide a good way to grow up**

**PEI:** More than anything else, Justin Rogers is discouraged by the small family farms going by the wayside, because that is the way he grew up, with his Grandfather next door. He has lots of friends that missed out in so many things that Justin experienced as a child growing up on a farm. His friends come to visit and they have a genuine interest in and longing for life on the farm. In the general public there is so much interest from children in farm things, like farm toys, farm books, farm kids shows etc. Kids in the city love this stuff - love growth, nature, and space. Temple and Gail Stewart realize that showing cattle was a great education for their girls. The competitions were great teaching tools and a source of friends.

**NS:** Hans Jurgen Schroeder finds raising kids on a farm “is the best way.” Jean Palmetter thought the farm was a “great place to raise a family, because of the space they had, and the things they had to do. They were never bored.”

#### **Farm people provide wisdom and know-how in communities; training opportunities**

**PEI:** Christine and Danny MacKinnon have school tours and bus loads of kids to see their farm. They also house the whole calf club calves (4-H). This takes a huge time commitment, but they are able to use their resources to provide teachable opportunities for youth. The Federation of Agriculture has a health and safety course for young people and they send their young 4-H kids off to these courses to help increase awareness of safe farming practices. It is important to Christine that their nephew wants to be part of the farming operation. She says you can't pay someone to want to farm, and by the same token, they can't pay someone to think. This needs to be developed over time on a farm. They can look at their nephew as a cost or an investment. They consider him to be a very valuable long-term investment. Temple and Gail Stewart's farm is often used for agricultural tours - beef field days, 4-H judging clinics, Junior Farmer home stays. The Atlantic Veterinary College used the Stewarts' farm for tours and their animals are used for herd health demonstrations.

**NS:** Sonia Jones of Peninsula Farms was grateful to the milk cows and the various farm business ventures for the lessons they taught her girls when they were young – to have confidence in themselves; to exercise their authority gently but effectively; to gain experience; and math skills (Jones, 1987:212-213). Kathryn and Ed Belzer host young people on their farm through a number of programs like Katimavik or language exchanges. According to Kathryn, “these young people have benefited from their exposure to farm life, getting away from the stress of their home environments, and learning new practical skills.” One young man was exposed to carpentry while at the Belzers' and he has gone on to become a master carpenter. Kathryn says, “It has to do with the interactions between community and our farm. For many years our farm has provided a place where young people have spent time, learning various things. Those from Quebec came mainly to learn English, but we have reason to believe that they learned many other things of value. The fact that we live and work on this farm was an essential ingredient in the youngsters coming to work, play, and otherwise live with us.”

#### **Farmers contribute free labour**

**PEI:** Barb Wagner points out that farmers who retire don't really retire. One farmer she knows sold his milk quota a year ago, but he still helps the farmer next door to him quite regularly.

*NS:* Keith Casey is a retired dairy farmer, but says he contributes 50 hours a week to the farm his son took over. “But that work doesn’t count because I love it,” he adds.

### **Farms produce food**

*PEI:* Blair Corkum: Food is so vital and farmers are the producers. Colleen Younie knows it is important to farmers to be recognized for their important role as food producer. Food is considered a life link. There is great pride in working the land to produce food. Feeling like their work is providing good food to the market is very satisfying for Janice Whalen. For Ron MacKinley, food is the staff of life. It’s the most important thing there is. Without food you die. Phil Ferraro notes that food can easily be as valuable as oil. People don’t like to be hungry.

## **4.4 Social Capital Contributions**

### **Farmers are willing to be involved in organizations; show leadership**

*PEI:* Barb Wagner notices that successful farmers seem to have a willingness to be involved in industry support organizations like the Potato Board or Milk Marketing Board. They are giving back to the industry. Elmer MacDonald dedicated long hours through the 70s and 80s to the Potato Marketing Board, Canadian Horticultural Council, and the Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions. But now he feels guilty going away because there is so much to be done on the farm and he knows there is not a surplus of cash to hire someone to do the jobs that he can do. Elmer also sees a reduced willingness to contribute over time. With regard to the Crapaud Exhibition, newer, younger directors have no intention of working the amount of time that is required to put this on, that some of the older directors have contributed in the past. The new ones will give time and they are very good at what they do, but there are limits. Chris MacBeath says that his family all work at maintaining the community through work in the local church, 4-H club, etc. Danny and Christine MacKinnon hire a summer student to work on the farm so Danny has time to be a soccer coach and a 4-H leader.

Karen MacInnis explains that many of the farmers and farms that made up the community of Hunter River in the past are still in the community. Many are willing to provide leadership and to serve on committees. What is it about these people that makes them willing to do that? Karen thinks a lot of the older farming residents have been around so long that they know the benefits of keeping their farming community alive, and also understand what they might lose – good, dependable neighbours, a place where everyone knows most everyone else, and a sense of trust of the people in the area. Also deep down, they recognize they can’t influence decisions or affect change if they are not part of it. John Hutchings thinks the older generation of farmers have worked all their lives and deserve a substantial retirement, to be recognized for their contribution to society and the health of the province/country. Barry Cudmore enjoys the opportunity to be involved in organizations, and notes that in PEI, those who are interested in taking leadership roles can more easily take that on because it’s a smaller province. Steve Watts knows that people watch the company he works for (Eric Robinson, a large potato/inputs company) does. “We feel that we show leadership by the size and status of our company.” What energizes Doug LeClair (PEI Federation of Agriculture) is the commitment of farm leaders in PEI and what they do for little or no pay.

Profile: Danny MacKinnon, SandyRae Farms. The biggest headache for Danny is running the support industries that connect with his dairy farm. The Artificial Breeders has to be run; the Atlantic Livestock Improvement Committee has to be run; the dairy industry has their own fieldman now, which they not only have to pay for, but supervise his activities. Danny was very involved in developing this position and project. The dairy industry put hours and hours into getting this position. The Holstein Association and ADLIC (Atlantic Dairy and Livestock Improvement Corp) and the Artificial Breeding people went together to hire a fieldman to do promotional work and to do trouble shooting service work (e.g. problem registering a cow etc). They all went together to create this position – first time in Canada – and called

themselves the Industry Participants Committee (IPC) and Danny now chairs that. He spent 15 years in the Milk Quality Committee; 6 years on the Marketing Council; 6 years on the Agriculture Research Investment Fund. All of these have been wonderful personal development activities. Danny enjoys working with the other people on the committees who have ‘real sharp minds’ that challenged his thinking, and he likes that challenge. He says he wouldn’t trade the time for anything and it helps give him a positive attitude towards the industry and satisfaction, BUT all these jobs have to be done, and there are fewer and fewer farmers to do them.

**NS:** Jim Burrows is a dairy farmer who finds it enjoyable to be involved over the years in a lot of farm-related organizations. For example, he’s been on the executive of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, a director with the Co-op in Truro. He likes it because it provides a ‘window into what’s going on’, it provides an opportunity to make important contacts, it decreases isolation and increases learning opportunities. The local Federation of Agriculture hosts two events a year that bring people together within the community. One is a summer BBQ, open to anyone from the community, and the other is a Christmas party. Usually each of those will attract 150 to 250 people.

### **Farms provide context; stability; a sense of heritage and ‘place’**

**PEI:** Chris MacBeath describes how his family has three generations working together on the family farm, and this contributes to community continuity. They all have a strong attachment to Marshfield – both the old fashioned attitudes of his grandfather, mixed with the more modern views of the next two generations. It is a well-balanced situation. Nancy Reeves describes her family farm where all the fields have names denoting their history. Barry Cudmore thinks that if you removed the farmers, you remove a lot of the interest and personalities that make up the Island. It adds to the richness of society. Marg Weeks has observed that communities with lots of commuters have less ‘identity’. Farmers don’t leave the community to work, therefore they strengthen roots in that community. They give it identity. When farmers host public events (like a 4-H activity or a field day), this also gives communities identity.

Nancy Reeves recognizes the importance of the history of the land. She is a firm believer that successful communities are ones that are proud of their heritage; they remember who and what was done before hand. She points to her father who always walked their land and knew it intimately. They are very connected to the land because it is almost a part of them. Nancy tells about a farm that her father bought 30 years ago. Now it is not a field #. It’s called ‘Somers Farm’. There is a connection to the past. That land belonged to a person.

### **Services provided to the community through use of farm machinery**

**PEI:** Ron MacKinley’s family has done snow removal since 1967 and provides free service to the farms where they rent the land. Farmers like Janice Whalen’s husband Jamie clear snow for people in the area. Another farmer mentioned that whenever people in his community get their vehicle stuck or their driveway cleared, they call him and expect him to help.



## 5. Farm Viability

Most people would think of ‘farm viability’ in terms of the longevity of a farm’s existence, or its ability to generate a living for the people who own and work it. We wanted to know how farmers and others associated with farming in Nova Scotia and PEI would define it. Responses were recorded to questions such as ‘How would you describe or define viability?’; ‘What are the indicators of farm viability?’; ‘In what ways does this farm work well?’; ‘How do you know if your farm is viable?’; or ‘What do we need to pay attention to in our attempts to make farms viable?’

**Table 2. Farm Viability Indicators**

| <b>Economic Viability Indicators</b>                                                                             | <b>Sub-heading</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Economic Efficiency<br><br>Debt and Equity<br>Farm Income Support Programs; Subsidies<br>Fair Farm Product Price | Improve Net Income; Cut Costs<br>Specialize and Expand<br>Grow Slowly<br>Diversify<br><br>Fair Price: Market Stability<br>- Control supply<br>- Stabilize price<br>- Number and diversity of markets<br>- Contracts<br>- Quota<br>Fair Price: Product Differentiation<br>Fair Price: Direct Market |
| <b>Ecological Viability Indicators</b>                                                                           | <b>Sub-heading</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Maintaining Land in Working Farms<br>Livestock Health<br>Soil and Water Quality<br>Ecological Efficiency         | Nutrient Cycling<br>Self-reliance<br>Organic<br>Productivity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Human Capital Viability Indicators</b>                                                                        | <b>Sub-heading</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Renewal                                                                                                          | Age of farmer; years of experience<br>Next generation taking over farms<br>Transfer of knowledge; sharing information<br>Tradition, heritage, commitment to farming<br>Willingness and determination<br>Open to new ideas; flexibility<br>Skills and education                                     |
| Satisfaction                                                                                                     | Expectations/goals<br>Optimism; hope for the future<br>Wellbeing of family<br>Social /emotional satisfaction from living on a farm; love of the work<br>Lack of franticness<br>Safe and healthy working environment<br>Subsidized day care                                                         |
| Employment                                                                                                       | Family employment<br>Pay equity between farmers and other occupations<br>The ‘right people’ for farming<br>Positive relationship with employees<br>Off-farm and non-farm work                                                                                                                      |
| Efficiency                                                                                                       | Hard work and smart work                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

| Social Capital Viability Indicators           | Sub-heading                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Co-operation between producers                | Co-operation between Producers<br>Alliances between Farmers and Consumers<br>Alliances between Farmers and Community |
| Relationships between producers and consumers | See Fair Price – direct market<br>Consumer interest in farming; impression of farming<br>Empathetic to consumer      |
| Relationships between producers and community |                                                                                                                      |

The responses are separated into four sections **Economic; Ecological; Human Capital; and Social Capital**. The mix of viability indicators for each person will be different. It could range from ‘farm income with all the costs accounted for’ (including time, depreciation, and opportunity costs), or farms could be viable even if they are 'losing money' because of the other benefits they provide. The description of ‘other benefits’ or other indicators of viability are enlightening, along with the more common economic viability indicators.

## 5.1 Economic Issues

It is not easy to pin down indicators of farm economic viability. Among the people interviewed, there were differing opinions of what ‘economic viability’ looks like. There was no universal definition of viability, so they are all presented here. The phrase ‘economic efficiency’ is used a lot, but there is disagreement as to how to achieve it. Some would choose to focus on improving net income by cutting costs, others, to expand and specialize the farm. Some think it is important to grow, but slowly, and others think economic efficiency can be achieved by diversification. Different strategies will work for different operations. Other indicators of viability were mentioned, such as debt and equity, income support, and fair farm product prices. The issue of fair prices generated the most discussion and was most universally agreed on.

**PEI:** Most people interviewed started off with a definition of viability that includes some version of ‘make a living’. ‘Make a living’ differed according to expectations. For one person, it meant simply ‘to survive’, and ranged all the way up to ‘giving a return on investment to owners or shareholders’:

- A positive return in most years
- Higher income than expenses, as a general rule
- Make money every third year; profitable business in most years
- Positive bottom line, and a break-even position over the long run
- A reasonable return on investment, which requires a proper price for products, and a control on production levels
- Baseline: pay your bills and make enough money to re-invest in equipment
- Account for your depreciation, acquire new equipment, and make sure everyone is paid
- Make money, show growth, diversify, and maintain the farm
- Meet debt payments and present commitments
- Live life according to income
- Get enough return to pay the bills
- Have the resources, both human and capital, to continue to farm, invest, and grow
- Operate in a profitable manner over a period of time and provide an adequate return on investment
- Making a reasonable profit

Justin Rogers admits that off-farm income tends to pay for the ‘bread and butter’ and entertainment. At one time the farm sustained the whole family. Today it tends to take at least one off farm income to have any kind of standard of living. His friend works with federal government, 8 to 5, has the evenings to himself. The friend makes more money than Justin does from both farm and off-farm jobs. Justin probably works twice as many hours as his friend. But Justin is doing what he wants to do and hopefully some day he will have the lifestyle he would like. He has chosen to farm and it has been his dream to farm and that to him means that the farm has viability. It is supporting his dream for his career.

**NS:** Mike Isenor, who raises and works with sheep, thinks ‘making a living’ is all about trade-offs. He asks, “how hard are you willing to work, for how much money? How much do you want the kinds of things that you get out of life that sheep farming gives you? How much do you want to live on your farm and produce your own produce, and not be going to a nine to five job or trying to get into the rat race? How much is that all worth? And can you live on the amount of money that you’re bringing in?”

Duncan McCurdy wants to see enough revenue coming in to cover expenses and also have some to invest in the operation. Bill Swetnam thinks the farm has to be economically viable first of all, and he hopes that all the other things that make it viable fall into place if the economics are there.

Jan Chute says her farm and store will be viable “the day that it can pay its own expenses. The minute it’s not costing me more money to run this farm than it is earning, I will consider it viable.”

John Vanderiet compares his farming operation’s viability with being able to make a living based on industrial standards. “We’re not wealthy in income terms, but we make a good living. On an hourly basis we probably don’t quite meet the industrial wage but on a monthly basis we make about as much as an industrial worker. It might take more hours to do it, more risk and more investment, but we make a livelihood.”

Rick Degregorio thinks “we should be able to be profitable from sales at the Farmers’ Market.... And ultimately, it would be paying us a decent wage for the time we put in on the farm.”

## **Economic Efficiency**

Some farmers think that to remain economically viable, it is important to cut costs and improve net income. Some thought it is critical to expand and capture ‘economies of scale’. Some think it is important to grow slowly – as they can afford it. Others maintain that the best strategy is to diversify so that there are a number of different income sources to draw on. For a discussion of different kinds of efficiency, see the Glossary.

### ***Improve net income; cut costs***

**PEI:** Ron MacKinley argues that it is easier to save money than to earn it. To stay viable, a farm has to have the ability to negotiate when making purchases. For example when buying fertilizer, prices can be up to \$30/ton different from each other. He must find the best deal, and having money lined up at the bank makes negotiating easier with cash payments. Most dealers will give a better price if they know the money is there. He knows how much (volume) he needs - he carries current amounts needed and prices for fertilizer in his wallet. By finding the best price on 200 tons/year it’s ‘the easiest money you ever make’. Viable farmers know how to read and understand financial statements, and are able to analyze how to do the job at a lower cost. Keeping costs low involves knowing exact acreage (using GPS). Ron doesn’t buy fertilizer he doesn’t need, and minimizes chemical use by using precision farming techniques.

John MacLean’s approach to keeping costs low is to plug every leak of money going out that he can find. George Matheson has a 10 year old truck. He sees newer trucks go by - he is sure they are \$50,000 trucks

and look appealing, but then he remembers that the payments on his truck right now are zero, and he is content. Janice Whalen feels that because margins are so small, she must be extremely careful and make sure there are no extravagances on the farm or in the household.

**NS:** Helen Arenburg sees over the last 11 years that apple growers are doing everything they can to make sure they're not spending money on chemicals they don't need, to keep their cost of production down. Some of the more lethal pesticides that are not good for the environment are being phased out and they don't want to use them, but some of the alternatives are more expensive. She said the NSFGA is looking for other methods, things they can do differently that won't increase their costs, but will still get rid of the fruit pests.

Ed Belzer's farm loses money almost every year. But he recognizes it has other things to offer. The kids used to say, "Dad, every year you lose money, why do you farm? I said, I know people who live in the city, and they spend \$1,500 a year on fuel and we don't spend anything, we use the forest. I said, the horses that work the farm, help us to bring the firewood in. We are paying off our mortgage, we're paying that off in ten years. I said, that's saving us, probably tens of thousands of dollars, a lot of money. So, overall, we're losing money on the farm, but in other ways its saving us money to live here and support ourselves. So that's part of the answer."

Alex DeNicola thinks the key to viability is keeping costs low and keeping your margin high. "There's farms that have huge gross revenue turnovers, but the farmers are on the verge of bankruptcy." Alex judges viability according to what percentage of the gross revenue the farmer keeps. His net percentage is between 30 and 40%. He warns that when people earn more, they start spending more, which he has resisted. It is tempting to spend more to increase the business, with the hopes of increasing earnings. Alex warns "instead of getting bigger, get better. I've actually followed that advice."

### ***Specialize and Expand***

**PEI:** Chris MacBeath observes that on the family dairy farm, their cattle numbers have increased. Even with a supply managed commodity like dairy, the margins are shrinking. They must have bigger numbers milking so that the small margins can be multiplied many times to make a profit. In the last 10 years, they have switched to higher production-type cattle, increased the emphasis on breeding stock, and have carved out a niche with show heifers in the show cattle market. It is very time consuming and expensive to go to the shows, but repeat business has been developing as their reputation gets established and expanded. George and Melanie Matheson said that in order to be viable, they feel that they have to grow, and for them, the relationship between the bottom line and a really good bank balance hasn't been that grand.

One large potato farmer says that the biggest indicator of viability would be that the farm would grow. They need sufficient resources to have about 3-5% growth per year and that's how she measures their farm's viability. They need that growth to stay even. That's how the industry seems to be going; that you must grow to stay even.

Just like the schools and hospitals amalgamated and got bigger, so have farms, according to Ron MacKinley. It takes more efficiency and size to make enough or some profit. John MacLean thinks a farmer can only get so efficient for so long. "You have to have the volume and to have the volume you have to have the space/room to produce - the land base."

An incentive for growth in farm size is the choice of technological inputs. One large potato farmer realizes that as machinery grows in size, this is quite often a determining factor in what is the best size of production. Changes in width, capacity, or horsepower quite often dictate what are net thresholds for growth, change, viability. Larger machinery allows work to be done faster, but it also demands larger

head lands for turning capacity etc. and this farm family would like fewer, larger fields. This all feeds back to efficiency.

John MacLean associates viability with the equipment making the best possible use of the labour. You need as much WIDTH behind one operator as you can get because he has to be doing more with each machine. On his farm they dig 10 rows of potatoes at a time - the best they ever dug in one day was 75 acres - but generally aim for 50 acres per day. Small fields in PEI make it hard to use and move large equipment.

Ron MacKinley says his farm and farming practices are always changing. At the beginning of his farming career, he thought that 200 acres was a good size farm; today it's 1200 acres and growing. He says that farmers must be the most innovative people, *but if a farmer changes too quickly he can go broke*. It is good to have new equipment with technology but it can also be too costly to the operation if the farmer is not careful. He used to have two sets of discs going and going, and if the weather changed, and a big rain came before they got to plant the disked land, it had to be done over again. He got thinking that all he had to do was to keep ahead of the potato planter, so now they do 'just in time disking' and leave the tractor shut off. This means less fuel, and less labour. Janice Whalen thinks that in the big picture, technology continues to improve, but these advances come with high price tags, so these advances must increase profits if they are to contribute to viability.

Justin Rogers questions the specialization approach. Farming was never easy - his grandfather reinforced that with him - but farmers used to be more self-sufficient on their mixed farms. Now, through more specialization, farmers seem to have to rely on so many outside inputs. These input prices are out of a farmer's control, like the price of tractors or fuel or parts for machinery.

Mitch Murphy knows some people argue 'economies of scale' are important for viability. The industry has gotten bigger and more efficient etc. But he thinks that these are words from economists and people at the other end of the food industry that are making a lot of money off of farmers. Things like amalgamation of farms, processing sector, or retail – all those things work against the viability of farms, in his view.

Robert Harding notes that the scale of operations have changed in PEI. They are bigger in size of herds; units to market; efficiencies to get pigs to market sooner. All this is to maintain and if possible, increase margin. He sees operational scales continually change. Farmers are always getting more efficient, but efficiency has a limit; we must also think smarter and take advantage of new technologies, research, and ways of doing more with less.

**NS:** Duncan McCurdy discussed the reasons for expansion of his dairy farm. He aims to maximize the number of livestock per fixed expense. This leads to expansion of the farm. In other words, to make the farm's fixed cost assets pay for themselves, he's got to spread the fixed costs over the maximum number of dairy cattle. Also, once he invests in a certain piece of farm equipment, such as a tractor, the equipment has to be used over the maximum number of acres. In essence, he is trying to get a higher production per fixed cost investment. Fraser Hunter, on the other hand, believes the decline in dairy farm viability over time is because the farmers are "overcapitalized on machinery."

Jim Burrows thinks that from a community point of view, the declining number of farms wouldn't be a good thing because the numbers are needed in order to sustain a good community relationship. But, he maintains, you have to grow to be efficient. "That means one farm is cannibalizing the next farm. The success of the individual farm is determined by your growth and your cannibalization. Your success in your community, on the other hand is determined, I would say more by the diversity in the numbers of farmers.... While there has been the disappearance, there has been the expansion of the units that are here

so that from an economic sustainability point of view, we're likely in a much stronger position because these are better and more efficient operations. So they should be able to stay in for a longer period of time. But that still affects the numbers issue when you look at. It would get lonely because there is a certain amount of support that goes with having the neighbours that are in the same business. The working back and forth." Jim mentions that the other challenge associated with increasing farm size is the farm becomes difficult to transfer to another generation; another owner.

Tom Van Milligan quotes another Nova Scotian farmer who said, would you rather have a neighbour, or your neighbour's land? It is likely Tom would choose the neighbour. John Vanderiet thinks that growth of the farm in general is needed. "But not at any cost. Not at the expense of someone else. I don't mind taking a risk and gaining but I don't want to do it at someone else's loss."

### ***Grow Slowly***

**PEI:** Chritine MacKinnon notes that part of the viability of her and Danny's dairy farm is the fact that they are not 'early adopters' of new ideas or technology. They wait and see what works and talk to a lot of people about their experiences to learn what is the best approach. The farm grew slowly. In the early years she worked off the farm part time and was also the hired help until they could afford to have someone come full-time. That transition happened gradually from Danny being the sole operator, to having enough income and work for a second full-time person.

**NS:** Alan Stewart made a conscious choice to develop the farm slowly. "My wife and I pretty much made a conscious decision not to have [my off-farm job] support the farm. It's important that the farm support itself. ...That's why the evolution of the farm has been comparatively slow... As of last fall I had 26 cows, and of course 20 some feeders and 20 some calves. And that was getting too much. So I'm back to just 10 cows right now... That's what I can comfortably move without being terribly aggressive."

Hans Jurgen Schroeder made money building houses and invested it in his farm. "Since 1997 I have been focused on farming and struggling to make a go of it. But now I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. I have several hundred thousand dollars invested in the slaughterhouse. Every business needs a certain amount of time to get going. Intense farming only started here in 1997-98. In the last two or three years it is really starting to work out."

### ***Diversify***

**PEI:** According to Janice Whalen, viability is dependent on flexibility of resources. If things don't work out in one area, you have to use what you have to do something different. For example, when farm income is depressed, she looks for work off the farm. When farm is operating in a profitable manner, she becomes more involved in the day to day farm operation.

Temple and Gail Stewart run T & G Farm Supplies from a small outbuilding on the farm. It makes the farm viable because income from the business goes back into the farm. Most of their business comes from small to medium size farms which are declining in numbers. Although business has grown in some areas - they have 2 employees. They spend more time/effort on the lines that will make money. There are lots of competitors, but one service provided by T & G is farm fencing. That sets them apart because very few competitors want to do this. Competitors tend to say 'go and see T & G. ' This all helps with viability of the whole operation.

Blair Corkum's experience is that both large and small farms can be viable, and in general, he sees that farms need diversification. George and Melanie Matheson feel diversification is an important aspect of their farm's viability. They are looking into agri-tourism, and have Christmas trees. They are going back to the mixed farm operation, to be small and profitable.

Marilyn Affleck: When farms were smaller, there was more diversification. One thing might be a good crop and price, while another part of the farm might be less successful, but it balanced out most years in a positive way so that there was adequate money. Today there is more specialization. The Afflecks have potatoes and dairy. The dairy is doing well, but the potatoes are struggling, to the point where the dairy income – which is supply managed – is being dragged down.

Barb Wagner knows one farmer in the area who buried all the potatoes that he grew last year. He didn't sell one potato. He is a big farmer and the family was able to survive because they also had dairy cattle. She knows another who was not so fortunate. Half the potato crop was buried and there was nothing else to fall back on.

**NS:** Mike Isenor sees that many farmers have to engage in a number of different things to make a go of the farm. "I think its pretty hard to do it alone on sheep, there must be some other sources that are complimentary maybe. There are people that have sheep farms and a craft store that specializes in woolen crafts. Or someone who sheep farms and shears sheep. Or someone who sheep farms and runs a co-op, or the wife teaches school."

Jan Chute's farm and store are so diverse, they've got the insurance representative scratching his head. They produce poultry, pork, beef, sheep, breeding stock, and young stock. Vegetables and fruit are produced for sale in the store and Farmer's Market. Their store sells a variety of fresh and frozen food, as well as farm supplies, such as livestock feed, seed, and soil amendments. They also have guest accommodations.

Walter Larder thinks it is important to relieve the farm of having to provide 100% of a person's income. "Your farm will give you 60% of your survival, you need 40% from somewhere else – a bit from logging; a bit from barrel-making; a bit from wherever. [In the past] if you had a trade, you hired yourself out as a carpenter or whatever skills you had... Nova Scotia farms are not like farms in Saskatchewan or Alberta. We have a smaller acreage. Most successful farms are diversified. They have a fruit and vegetable stand, they raise a few head of cattle, they have a real diversified income."

Anna Anderson and George Pickford are able to run their tofu business, a 2-acre market garden, and George works off the farm too. Anna has to pay employees to do most of the tofu manufacturing because of her arthritis, so the business does not provide a lot of net income.

Fraser Hunter looks at the province of Nova Scotia as a whole and is thankful for the diversity in the agriculture. "We're a very diverse industry, which gives you strength. It's just like any other industry, if you are a one-industry town, you look at Sydney, when the steel industry went down... trouble... it's risky. So, you've got to be diverse, you've got to spread your risk. We're fairly isolated, we're stuck out on the Eastern shore, we have a market advantage, from the point of view if we wanted to create a NS brand or something. The other thing is that we're situated well, on the main sea-lanes, we have a population of 200 million in the US, closer than Toronto, so there's tremendous potential, and we've got to harness that potential, and at the same time we've got to sustain what we've got, in order to harness that potential. So, I'm certainly happier in NS, than let's say Manitoba or Saskatchewan."

Claire Doyle's cranberry business is not yet self-supporting because of the long period of heavy investment and time to full production of the crop. To help pay the bills, they've started a vacation home rental business in a historic house near the cranberry bog, and a computer business on the side. Her son helps his dad with the farm, and services computers on the side. "Together, it works. Separately, it doesn't."

Willem van den Hoek says his last two years (out of 20 in the cheese business) have been good. “We worked and worked, and... had no life. In the last few years we managed to pull things together. We put up the price dramatically.” Before the bakery subsidized the cheese-making, which is not a good idea. Now the farm gift shop subsidizes the food businesses.

### **Debt and Equity**

**PEI:** Blair Corkum feels an important measure of viability is good debt management, the fewer loans the better. Huge debt for equipment, for example, can produce stress throughout the whole operation. Colleen Younie thinks that increasing debt load is a sign of non-viability. Farms need to be in a position to borrow and repay as needed. David and Edith Ling have not purchased a new piece of equipment in 10 years. They pay great attention to maintenance. Buying a new piece of equipment doesn't fit their cash flow. They consider their farm to be viable because it is all paid for. Their equity is high and they have very low debt. Managing debt load is difficult, according to John Hutchings at the Farm Credit Corporation (FCC). Farms need to keep debt/equity at a ratio of 1:1. A ratio of greater than 1:1 indicates that there is trouble to repay, refinance, or to grow. FCC sees this as a big challenge and tries to work with farmers to help debt management. On the equity side, Doug LeClair notes that PEI farms have high equity. Allison Weeks believes that part of farm viability includes building assets/equity.

**NS:** Jan and David Chute invested in their farm with money from previous careers. Although they are generating more than \$30,000 in income from the farm and store every year, it is actually showing a loss because of all the investments they are still making in the farm and business. Jan hopes this will pay off when they sell the farm and business. Gordon Thomas knows that “farming is the same as having money in the bank as long as you take care of it. If you don't take care of it, there's nothing there.”

Jean Palmeter and her husband were experiencing difficulties at the beginning of their farming careers because they didn't have access to the credit they needed to ‘do anything’. “We had a farm up the road but we couldn't borrow money to do anything because the Farm Loan Board wouldn't lend much money. They studied Farm credit and discovered that you better lend farmers more so that they can do something. A little while after that we did borrow enough to buy the farm from his father. But if they hadn't put that level up we couldn't have done it. At that point in our life, the focus was the make that payment before anything else. We always paid them.”

As an indicator of viability, John Vanderiet monitors whether he's draining his equity or not. “Every year we do a financial statement of net worth and owner's equity. That has to improve every year, otherwise it means that the enterprise is draining my equity rather than contributing to it. So if I feel that there's a contribution to my equity based on the time I put in, I feel pretty good about that. But if there's a negative, then I get a sinking feeling. Then I ask myself ‘Is it worth it?’. If I put in 10 or 12 hours a day in an industrial workplace... But then you're working at home, you don't have a boss, it reflects your own personality, your statement of who you are.”

Jim Burrows needs to be able to pay the bills, and to make a reasonable income. He says that although his debt has grown over the years, it has grown less than the growth of the entire business (debt/equity ratio decreasing).

### **Farm Income Support Programs; Subsidies**

**PEI:** Elmer MacDonald has always been upset with the emphasis on safety net programs at the national level. He wants to be able to produce a product and redeem from the marketplace what is necessary to make his operation viable. He sees it as much easier for the government to throw money at a farmer to help him along rather than help him market a product or get training, or do whatever is necessary to



redeem the proper price from the marketplace. Safety nets are a very poor way, according to Elmer, to build agriculture in Canada. Duane MacDonald points out that safety nets don't encourage innovation, or the move towards a profitable crop.

Janice Whalen believes there must be public support for locally-produced food. If the public is against subsidies for farmers, and she believes that most people object to the subsidies (Janice said she probably would also if she didn't understand the agriculture industry), then the public shouldn't have to pay tax dollars to support farmers. Rather, they should pay fair value for food produced nearby to allow farmers to continue to farm. The government needs to rethink its food policy. The average cost of food to a family is now about 10% of their income, when it should be maybe 12 to 15% of their income.

Mitch Murphy finds that the public sometimes objects to the tax dollars spent on farmers. He has had complaints about beef farmers receiving assistance. His response is that he is actually subsidizing the consumer. If consumers want farmers to charge the true cost of production and a fair market price, is the consumer prepared to pay a lot more at the grocery store? The caller usually backs off.

**NS:** Harold Swinamer points to the Self Employment Assistance (SEA) program as a very beneficial way to get into farming. He'd been working off the farm for a number of years and decided to have a home-based business. "The government kept my Unemployment Insurance going for a whole year [while I started the bee business]. That really and truly helped me out."

### **Fair Farm Product Price**

Most people talked about the price of farm products, which inevitably is too low to support the cost of food production. The 'farm product price' is a complex but central issue to farm viability. The main reason for the low prices offered to farmers for their products is that producers have little power over farm product prices. They are 'price takers'.

Justin Rogers, of PEI knows it is challenging to get enough share of the food dollar. He thinks there is no reason why farmers shouldn't have a larger portion of the cost to consumers of the loaf of bread or bag of french fries or a steak. There is so much difference on the farmer end. An extra cent per pound received on his farm from potatoes would probably be \$20,000 or \$30,000 per year. A cent is not a lot to ask for, but it makes a big difference. Who will miss that cent on the other end? Above all, Justin says, it is very difficult to have a say in what the price will be for the products after all the costs are undertaken to produce food.

The experience of obtaining fair farm product prices comes from gaining some kind of control over the market. This is described in terms of market stability (e.g. orderly marketing; supply controls; contracts), or some kind of product differentiation on the market (e.g. organic certification; quality branding; or direct marketing).

### **Fair Price – Market Stability**

Market stability (and presumably better prices) is achieved by various means, including controlling the supply of product; price stabilization programs; contracts, and having a number of different markets for the product. Unfortunately these strategies will not work universally, as buyers can search for a supply of product from other locations, or the marketing institutions may come under threat from free trade agreements.

### ***Control supply***

**PEI:** Temple and Gail Stewart have noticed that consumers will pay if they have to. Two years ago with the drought, the potato crop was half of the regular crop size and the potato farmer saw the best/biggest price ever received and the consumer never said a thing. What greater value is there than a bag of potatoes? Whether the consumer pays \$30.00 or \$5.00 for that bag of potatoes, it feeds you for a lot of meals. They think that people need to understand the food value in the products that farmers produce. There might be more appreciation and willingness to pay for that goodness. In their experience, people will pay more and say little if they *understand*. Barb Wagner suggests that the mandatory rotation of crops regulation may reduce potato crop acreage and therefore have a positive effect on markets [i.e. increase prices].

### ***Price stabilization***

**PEI:** Robert Harding is working with the province to develop a program that will carry producers through down turns in pricing cycle by ‘balancing’ or ‘stabilizing’ price fluctuations or dips in the price cycle. To do this will mean taking money off the top of the selling price to hold in reserve for future low pricing. He predicts such a program would have impacts on financial viability by helping to cover the cost of producing the food. It would have a tremendous positive impact on producer ‘psyche’ and confidence. Finally, Robert predicts price stabilization would have an impact on succession by providing a positive outlook for the next generation of pig farmers.

**NS:** Linda Tupper, a hog producer in the Annapolis Valley, describes the risk management program for hogs that used to be in place in Nova Scotia. It was a three way partnership between the government, producer, and the packers. Every partner paid equal amounts into a fund, which was then used to supplement the price when it was low. This program is no longer in place.

### ***Number and diversity of markets***

**NS:** Gwen Jones discusses the viability of selling market lamb. “The market’s been pretty steady for the past few years. It hasn’t seen the wild swings that beef and pork markets have seen. I think a lot of the production goes to the two main processors: Northumberland and the Antigonish abattoir. They supply Sobeys, and the Super Store, and the big outlets, and the restaurants. I think that’s a fairly small but steady [local] niche market. Most of the stock that goes to the sale barn (referring to the Maritime Cattle market in Truro) on a Thursday goes to the slaughter houses in Quebec. If Quebec ever closed its borders, we’d probably be in trouble. Also individual farmers, as we do on a small scale can supply freezer orders, if you have a clientele. That’s viable and you can charge a reasonable amount.”

### ***Contracts***

**PEI:** John MacLean is positive about processing potato contracts. The farmer’s crop is sold a year ahead and contracted. The farmer has to meet commitments, like on a dairy farm, and in his opinion, these two commodities are the most viable and most secure in the industry. He serves on the Potato Processing Council - an arm of the Potato Marketing Board - and their mandate is to negotiate the yearly price for the processing potatoes. He is dealing with two large conglomerates that are very successful. He considers them to be tough, but fair. These conglomerates are competing in a very tough competitive market, according to John.

### ***Quota***

The quota system developed for dairy and poultry products is a highly regulated attempt to control the supply of product and match it to demand in the marketplace.

**NS:** Duncan McCurdy describes his milk quota. Roughly speaking, he needs about a kg of butterfat quota per cow. And it costs in excess of \$30,000 for a kg of quota (Summer 2003). The quota helps to provide a regular income over the year. This makes planning much easier. The quota system for dairy

and poultry has helped to stabilize incomes for those farms, making those operations more viable. Duncan estimates that probably 50% of agricultural income in Nova Scotia is from dairy and poultry farms. The pricing is set, roughly, on a cost of production formula in the Eastern pool, which is NS, NB, PEI, ON, and Quebec. Data from a bunch of different farms is collected and the boards come up with figures as to what the cost of production is. The producer organizations will make recommendations based on the data. The reason that quota has worked well is that it means the domestic market is getting met, so that we don't have huge surpluses of volume that put downward pressure on the price. In the US, there is a lot more cyclical milk pricing and production than in Canada. The reason that works for Canadian producers is that imports are restricted, beyond set out limits.

The disadvantage of the quota system is that it is difficult to start out in a dairy farm and invest the dollars required. Duncan says he's lucky to be born into a situation where he was able to farm. Otherwise it would be just about impossible to get into it. In 1990 when he started, there were 600 dairy producers in the province. Now there are about 320, although Duncan thinks there would be fewer if there was no quota system. It is disadvantageous to lose producers because of the critical mass needed to have a 'voice' and to make dairy supply businesses viable. Fraser Hunter is a dairy farmer who thinks it is important to have dairy neighbours close to his farm. His nearest dairy farmer neighbour is "25 clicks away."

Jean Palmeter and her husband ran a dairy farm in North Grand Pré. They decided to move the farm from a mixed operation to a more focused dairy operation. "It seemed that the 'milk cheque' was always paying the bills for the spray for the orchard, the fertilizer for the crops, the carrots, and the hens." At the time they began to concentrate on dairy, the quota system was evolving. "My husband used to say: 'You should never put a price on quota' or you should put a ceiling on the price. Because a young fellow would never be able to buy a farm."

Alan Stewart is convinced that without quota systems or some kind of organized marketing, no farms would exist in Nova Scotia. "If it was a totally free market situation, your chicken would be coming from southern US, your eggs might be coming from Northeast US, and the dairy would be coming from Wisconsin. Broiler and poultry is a year round operation and it costs a fortune to heat these barns in the middle of winter. Transportation, up until recently didn't cost anything. Society ... consumers, whether they know it or not, decided in the 60s that the price they were going to pay for their milk and their eggs was going to be set by the industry in conjunction with government, so that farmers could make a living at it. And do I think it's right? I think its necessary. If it wasn't for... the poultry or dairy farms that we do have now, there wouldn't be a spot of agriculture in the province." Alan thinks that most equipment dealerships exist because of the supply managed farming, but if other farmers need to access some equipment they can, because the infrastructure is there. "There is not near the agricultural infrastructure that there was in the past, but if it wasn't for the dairy and the poultry guys there would be none."

Bill and Christina Swetnam explain that on their farm, the supply-managed poultry provides 60-70% of the farm income. Bill says there are farms in the Valley that make a living with just vegetables, but the poultry offers a little more security and it's year-round, not seasonal.

### **Fair Price – Product Differentiation**

Products can be 'differentiated' in the market according to quality, where they are produced, or some other identifier, in order to obtain a premium price for them. One example of this is organic certification. Certified organic products are labeled and are generally sold at higher prices than conventional product. In exchange for following certain production rules, farmers can obtain a higher price for their products.

Some consumers are willing to pay that extra price in exchange for the assurances that certified organic labeling brings.

**PEI:** Phil Ferraro notes that organic agriculture currently offers farmers an alternative to the chronically low prices that are forcing so many farmers out of business. Barry Cudmore believes that satisfaction occurs when the price of products reflect adequately the care and attention given to producing safe, quality products. Janice Whalen feels it really helps a farm when they are paid a good price for what they produce, like with any other business. Getting a premium for top quality products is most satisfying. For her, the price has to be above break-even.

According to Robert Harding, the biggest challenge is the price - what producers in PEI are being paid for their product. He says the price cycle will be there, based on North American market supply and demand, and that can't change in the immediate future. There is a need to find more ways to value-add and differentiate. A method to insure that *producer gets extra* income from product. This is starting with the Summerside Pork Project (PEI FoodTrust). A premium price is charged for PEI pork produced according to a strict protocol.

Barry Cudmore and eight others went on a tour of Europe in 1998. They had great discussions about 'labeling' (not branding), which got him thinking about the uniqueness of PEI, and how that could be capitalized upon. In Europe he saw a stronger relationship between the producer and the consumer. Much more noticeable than in PEI. It was something like the relationship developed in his grandfather's time at the local Farmer's Market. He wondered how the farmer today could get a reward from consumers for being environmental stewards, and started a discussion on how to develop a 'brand' in the early years of the FoodTrust. By the fall of 2003, FoodTrust is looking forward to starting to make a significant dent in getting producers away from the commodity model, towards producing products that consumers want in the marketplace.

When Janice Whalen goes to Garden Province Meats each week to get the pig cheque and sees how the pigs are indexed, it is nice to know that their pigs are at or above the provincial or national averages. This is very encouraging and motivating to continue to do their best to cultivate top quality animals. Islanders, she is sure, want to eat Island beef over Brazilian beef, but they need to know the difference and locally-produced food needs to be clearly labeled and promoted. Canadian farms need to be able to compete in different ways (not on a price basis), and for this reason, branding becomes important.

George and Melanie Matheson feel that finding niche markets is key to viability. By learning what kind of hay their customers want, they can tap into an important market. They would also like to develop a freezer trade with their lamb. John Hutchings makes a similar point. If bottled water can be sold for \$1.50 a bottle, what did food producers miss? There is a need to promote the benefits of buying locally and extol the virtues of our food.

There is also the issue of food safety, which is interpreted in a number of ways. John Hutchings thinks viability is indicated when the farmer has a commitment to understanding and applying the requirements for food safety so that when a crisis arises, they can prove due diligence to avoid the problem. Phil Ferraro: "Trace-back systems do not provide security; they only provide a system of recall and source identification. Local or bioregional food systems are inherently secure because any terrorism or other food safety issues remain localized" (Ferraro, 2003).

**NS:** Sonia Jones, who worked very hard to produce the best quality yoghurt on the market, wrote: "I am almost tempted to go so far as to say that the quality of a product is in inverse proportion to its profit margin..." (Jones, 1987:235).

Hans Jurgen Schroeder thinks that it is important to offer products that are healthy. “Lots of my customers couldn’t eat meat and now they can eat the meat I raise. I gave them part of their life back and that’s very satisfying. I’m also a pharmacist so I try to help people with their symptoms.”

Gordon Thomas explains that the family hog business is built on pride in what they produce. “When you put your meat on the market and got a good write-up about it, you felt good about it. That’s how it went from generation to generation.”

Anna Anderson sells a lot of her tofu and tofu products at the Halifax Farmers’ Market. Her customers trust her to provide a high quality, freshly made tofu and they know she tries to keep the price down. She gets a lot of positive feedback from them, which keeps her going.

Arthur Pick gets excited about focusing on Nova Scotia’s assets. “We have certain unique features here, like we can grow grass-fed [beef] a lot better than the West, and we can grow a lot of our meat off grass, but we’ve got to find a way to promote the local beef and make it unique. We have a Taste of NS group, you’ll maybe see that label around, different producers have joined that, different cooperatives have joined that. The more we can do that sort of thing, it’s a way of branding that product. Nova Scotia beef are “healthy and happy...grown on forage, and we have research that shows that that yellowing of the fat is higher in antioxidants. Its like the blueberries, its better for you.”

George Smith was eating a hamburger from the canteen at the Maritime Cattle Market. He lamented that it was probably not local beef he was eating.

Helen Arenburg discusses apple pricing according to end use and variety. Juice apples get about 5 cents/lb. About 40% of what a grower produces goes for juice. The price for Northern Spy apples is a bit higher because the demand is there from the local pie plant. Maybe 12 cents/lb. The price for fresh fruit is rather disappointing. It’s barely enough. Some growers are losing money. Wholesale it is about 40 cents/lb, but it depends a lot on the variety. The grower pays for storage, and the packing house gets some money for packing them. David Baldwin is an apple grower who gets paid by the bin (18 bushels each) for apples. MacIntosh is fairly common, so it is about \$100/bin. The bin is about 750 lbs so that would be 7.5 cents per lb. Golden Delicious might get \$150/bin (20 cents per lb), and Gravensteins \$125 (17 cents per lb). Some of the newer varieties like Gala or Jona Gold might be \$200 to \$250 per lb (27-33 cents per lb). The new, popular variety Honey Crisp might get as high as \$400 a bin (53 cents per lb).

### **Fair Price – Direct Market**

Another way to differentiate a product is for the producer to sell it directly to the consumer (direct market). That way, the consumer can know more about the product, ask questions, and get to know the producer. The producer can explain directly why their product is different, why they are charging the price they do, and get to know their customers.

**PEI:** Barb Wagner acknowledges that to be a farmer means you have to be able to think creatively about marketing. A pork farmer in the area found that the market price made it difficult for him to make a profit. So he continued to produce pork, but he took a new marketing approach. He sells 50 lb lots of pork to people he knows. The direct consumer contact means he makes a profit. It works for him and it works for Barb. She is very happy with the quality of the pork. “It’s three times better” than what she could get at the grocery store. She does the same thing when she buys chicken from a neighbour farmer.

David and Edith Ling market beef cuts directly to customers at the Charlottetown Farmers’ market. It is important to them to maintain a quality product and to have customers come back and say ‘that steak I got

from you last week was sooo good. I'm back for more.' They don't overfinish their cattle because probably 75% of their customers wouldn't want any more than about a quarter inch of fat on their meet. This is cost-effective. Customers say they buy meat from the Lings because they have developed a relationship and trust level with the producer. A lady called Edith from Quebec City twice this year already to ensure her beef order would be available when she came to PEI in August. The Lings are getting 25% more for their beef on a regular basis and even though the Mad Cow crisis has hit the mainstream farming operations, they have seen no problems maintaining their prices. There may be only a small drop in consumption. The positive feedback from customers contributes to their satisfaction in producing a quality product.

Steve Watts would like the opportunity to see the face of the customer to get feedback. But he asks how he can accomplish this when he's using a broker to sell potatoes? He could set up a small enterprise to deal face to face with customer in 'farmer market' arrangement, but he doesn't know if it would be worth the investment. The resurgence of Farmer's Markets, according to Phil Ferraro, makes farming more viable. Organics has contributed to that reactivation. The regional or local market can compete with more mainstream food retailers by being a service provider, based on the customer, not the bottom line. People are willing to pay more where there is good service and it is a comfortable, fun place to be. Like the Charlottetown Farmer's Market on Saturday morning - face to face for farmers, consumers, and neighbours. There is an interchange that occurs.

**NS:** Scott Sterling runs a busy roadside market and farm that supplies it. The key for him is to have a good variety and make sure it's fresh. "I've had a lot of good compliments from people who say the produce is always fresh. Everything's always there when you want it." The produce is about 45% of the market business, bakery is about 35%, and ice cream about 20%. They produce their own squash, pumpkins, tomatoes, beans, and raspberries. The rest Scott buys directly from other growers. He also has a very good location and the farm is beautiful. He keeps the prices 'reasonable', sometimes lower than what other people are selling for. "We try to go on volume more than marking it up high and only selling a little bit. We'd rather have a small mark up and sell a wide range... Right now the ideal thing is...the more you can grow yourself to put in here [the market] the better it is, as far as making profits. Cutting out the middleman." Jeannine Wilson is a customer who appreciates farmers' creativity in finding ways to connect directly with consumers. She points to Deryk Eagles' market garden connection with a church as a good example. It was part of the church's goal to support stewardship of the earth, so they connected with a market gardener who had similar goals. "To me that's creativity. To find that connection and to nurture it."

Alan Stewart thinks it's possible to be viable "if you can get yourself into a situation where you have a small farm, you grow a little bit of stuff. You bring it and you sell it to a small appreciative audience... And there's some more intangible aspects to having a small appreciative audience, its not just a buying and a selling price. You know, there's an eagerness there, an enthusiasm from the customers." Alan sells almost all of his farm products at the Wolfville Farmer's Market. "This has become my single, largest point of contact with my customers. All of my product doesn't flow through this market, but the stuff that I sell in the fall, like the bulk of my income is freezer orders of beef, you could probably trace it back here. I was selling to places like Great Ocean in the city...but I backed out of that when I [did not have] enough for the people here. I shrunk right back to here, and I've been here at this market for a very, very long time when there were only two or 3 of us selling, knowing that if I stuck with it would grow. It's the faith that you have that the concept is sound...like the concept of organic agriculture is sound...the concept of having a market in Wolfville was really sound, and the two of them have grown together to a point where, I'm not sure whether its going to be enough for me to make a living off of, but ...I like to have all the pieces slowly put together."

Brian Boates describes his U-pick customer experience. “The people you get would be people that bring their young kids for a day at the farm. And quite often they’re families that see that as sort of an intrinsic value to bring kids to the land. And people that just like to know the farmer, they like to come and pick their apples and get to know you a little bit. Its very interesting at our U-pick we have people now where they’ll come and they’ll say ‘we come here twice a fall, and we used to come and bring our kids and these are our grandkids and we bring them now’. They’ll probably keep those apples in their cold room till Christmas.”

Kim Tilsley’s Glenryan farm markets primarily direct to customer. “We’ve been coming to the farmers market here in Sydney for five or six years now. And also the farmer’s market in Antigonish. Then we have a lot of customers that come directly to the farm. I would say exclusively, up until this year, its all been direct marketing to customers. Last year around Thanksgiving we experimented with our local co-op and put a few birds in for the last few weeks of the season. It was really well received. They wanted them back again this year, and we’ve expanded it to other local co-ops. This is the first year that we’re offering fresh chicken throughout the season in Inverness, Margaree and Cheticamp. It’s within a 45 minute radius of our farm.” The direct marketing “has been the corner stone. That’s how we started, very slowly, word of mouth, direct to customers. And our customers brought us customers. The farmers’ market here has been great too.” Kim recounts that in 2002 when they started to sell chicken through the Margaree Co-op, which is only 7 km down the road from the farm, people said “oh I always intended to get up and get some of your chicken.” When they put them in the Co-op for that week they had a whole new group of people that tried them, and had been intending to for years, but never got up the dirt road. “So I think there’s going to be benefits having it in the Co-op too, we’re going to tap into a different market, that wouldn’t come to the farm, or the Farmers’ Market. I wouldn’t want to do it exclusively through the Co-op, I like having the direct marketing.”

Jamie Cornetta sells much of what she produces directly from her farm. “When people come to the farm and want to buy meat, I give them a price. Some say ‘that sounds so expensive’. They want it so cheap.” On the other hand, “it’s always nice if I sell something and people say, oh that was delicious, we loved them, and we were really happy with it.” Willem van den Hoek knows that viability of a business will boil down to issues of price. “I have a price that I can set, that allows me to make a reasonable living, for a reasonable amount of effort.” He sells cheese at the Halifax Farmers’ Market, and at his farm in Economy.

A number of people mentioned ‘word of mouth’ as the best advertising for their business. Pat and Harold Swinnamer never advertised their poultry processing business, but word of it spread. Now they have to turn people away. They make sure to keep the slaughterhouse clean, they make sure to cool the finished birds to 44°F, and they dispose of any diseased birds after showing the customer what the problem is. Hans Jurgen Schroeder markets products from the farm, letting his customers come to him. Promotion is “Mostly by word-of-mouth and some advertising. But you cannot put a lot of money into advertising it’s a waste of money and time. Word-of-mouth seems to work. My customer base is growing slowly.”

## **5.2 Ecological Issues**

This section is about the farmer’s stewardship of the land and livestock. Brenda Penak knows that viability means protecting the environment for long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability. As more Island farms got Environmental Farm Plans (EFP) done, Brenda has found that the farmers are already doing a lot of the things recommended to protect the environment. Justin Rogers thinks it’s great to see farmers making environmental improvements. It proves to him once again that farmers are the truest environmentalists. He is encouraged to see the productivity and organization on a farm. The beauty of the land is one of the key things that gives him energy.

## **Maintaining Land In Working Farms**

**PEI:** Brenda Penak says an indicator of farm viability is that the farms are being kept as working farms. Barry Cudmore is determined to keep owning the land and he wants to be able to take his grandchildren to show them where he grew up and where his roots are, not just show them a photograph of where he walked as a boy; where his father before him worked the land. It is a sense of belonging that ties in with viability and longevity. The importance and significance of owning land will be even more vital in the future. Land will become more valuable. Dirt and clay under the nails is a powerful connection to nature.

Karen MacInnis's family is committed to continuing with their farming operation. They are tempted by considerable, generous financial offers for sale of their land (eg. for a golf course), but they are choosing to focus on a future as farmers on this land. Chris MacBeath has noticed that as land and quota prices rise, it makes it tougher for farms to expand, and more tempting for farmers to 'sell out' and stop farming. This is a particular challenge for the MacBeaths because of their water view and proximity to Charlottetown.

**NS:** Eric Frank thinks Kings County has some very progressive zoning that helps to protect farm land for farming, although it is not consistently applied. Any land that has been deemed agricultural land is not permitted to be used for other purposes, except under certain conditions. A farmer is allowed to build a house on his farm for another generation, or for hired help. But agricultural land is not allowed to be re-zoned into building lots. But there seems to be loopholes to that. "I keep seeing houses spring up on farmland all over the place. The Kingston / Greenwood area is especially susceptible to that."

Bill Swetnam, who farms in Kings County, is very concerned that farm land be kept for farming. "We're trying to slow development down and I think it's most unfortunate to use land of this quality and this climate as residential land. For the municipality the revenue from an individual household is far greater than that from farm land. If the viability of farming is not very good, the farmer will sell off his land to pick up a few dollars. That's why I think we should have land banks."

Ernie Bolivar is mayor of Bridgewater in Lunenburg County. "I just came from a press announcement today. Walmart bought a viable farm on Exit 12. 210 acres of prime woodland and farmland and they're going to put a store there. Walmart paid over \$3 million dollars for it. They had chickens, hay and beef cattle and a milk quota – that's going to be gone. Next fall there will be no hay made over there and no chickens raised, no vegetables. Walmart's going to be there with the big neon sign. When you take all those incidents and put them together, pretty soon we'll be importing all our products, that's what I think."

Jan Chute has a farm that is threatened by a planned highway exit. The county wants to run "a highway right through my yard, because they promised Michelin that they would give them an exit off the highway when they put the plant in here. ... We fortunately know the Plant Manager at Michelin, Grant Ferguson and he's very much on our side. He buys a great deal of stuff from us. He's been an extremely good customer and a very good friend and I hope he doesn't leave until the County builds their highway somewhere else."

John Vanderiet is grateful to the local municipality for making a conscious effort to maintain farm land. "There's a line around the Milford area that the municipality has drawn. On the Elmsdale side, they are encouraging residential development but on the Shubenacadie side, they are preserving the farming sector and not encouraging residential development."



## **Livestock Health**

**PEI:** Robert Harding sees more focus on herd health; reduced days to market; reduced feed consumption; reduced medications and mortalities; and an overall more healthy pig population. This relates to the market push for food safety responsibilities and regulations for traceability, but it also has to do with continuous research and development. It is an advantage to have the Atlantic Vet College in close proximity to PEI swine herds for research and current technological development and trials.

**NS:** Linda Tupper used to raise hogs in a grower operation (importing weaners), but switched to farrow-to-finish. She felt it was more viable to raise her own pigs because of the lower mortality. Linda also makes 6,000 bales of hay per year and they all go to the sows for bedding, comfort, and as a supplementary feed. She says “it makes the bowels work, and it makes them content.”

Hans Jurgen Schroeder built a slaughter facility on his farm so the animals didn't get stressed out. “There's no pushing or kicking and yelling. The idea of putting them in a truck and shipping them somewhere made me sick. I don't treat my animals that way.” He also takes steps to minimize disease. “There is a terrific risk in farming, with diseases. That's why we are not buying animals from the outside.” Hans Jurgen gets satisfaction from seeing the healthy livestock, their increased productivity, and their more natural behaviour. He was able to rid the sheep flock of parasites without using wormers. “They are so used to chemical treatment and when you stop, you lose a lot of sheep. Then you start to build up a basic flock that works. It takes some generations. It took me quite a few years with cattle, but it wasn't so bad as sheep. Sheep are really different. Sheep are very prone to parasites. Now they are great.”

Tom and Sharon Van Milligan converted their hog operation to a Swedish-style system. “Our youngest daughter was not very impressed with the way we were keeping pigs. She never said so, she just showed this empathy for the animals. I would look at her and say: ‘Now, why does she do that? What does she see that I don't see?’ And after a while I began to see it too... I didn't think that I wanted to keep animals that my children felt sorry for... We began to acknowledge that yes, the animals deserved better than what we were giving them. We made some changes. I went to Sweden and I was quite impressed with what those farmers had been able to do. And so we became aware that our responsibility in terms of the animals was to be taken seriously too. That we couldn't just use them as a way to make a living or as things. We struggled with that and eventually we found a way to do that and still participate in the marketplace of the pig industry in Nova Scotia. So I felt good about that.”

When Rick Degregorio is asked about farm viability, he talks about the health of the Highland cattle herd on the farm. These animals are slow to reach market size (30 months as opposed to about 15 months for other beef breeds), but they do well on rough pasture and like to be outside all year. Part of their pasture is in the woods, where the conifers provide good browse, bedding material, and cover in the winter. This system is good for their coats and to reduce parasites. Rick is pleased they can produce “really delicious and healthy beef from just pasture, instead of doing the grain finishing.” Although it takes longer to raise the animals, Charles MacDonald thinks it's not necessarily more expensive, because no grain feed is purchased.

## **Soil and Water Quality**

**PEI:** David and Edith Ling feel that part of the viability picture for them was to convert to ecological farming. They made the conversion ‘cold turkey’ (which they don't recommend), but it took quite a while to get the humus and fertility of the soil built up. It took 7-8 years to achieve the goal of having ‘living soil’ and for the ground to really start working for them. They feel this conversion allows them to farm with fewer input costs. For example, much more horsepower is needed for the tight, hard soil with

the life gone out of it. They also conserve resources by saving seed (they haven't bought seed in years). This seed also has the advantage of being particularly suited to the open soil on their farm. The Lings feel it is important to leave the farm in better condition than they bought it in.

Barry Cudmore has suggested a very simple indicator of farm viability. He looks for earthworms in the soil. Good viable land has lots of earthworms. His goal is to increase the health of the land to support lots of earthworms. Pulling fields forward is part of keeping a farm viable.

Soil and water conservation are important to Chris MacBeath. He maintains that viable farms pay attention to environmental regulations. Janice Whalen thinks that environmental changes, such as the regulation to keep cattle fenced out of streams or three-year potato rotations are aimed at making farms more viable because they help to protect land for future use. If Island communities see farmers try to do things that are environmentally sound, like putting in buffer zones or spreading straw on potato fields after harvest, they will help support the viability of farms in the long run, by being ready to pay higher prices for products.

Temple and Gail Stewart were initially resistant to the regulation that enforced fencing cattle out of water. The family was very upset with that regulation and even considered selling the cattle rather than abiding by the rule. In the end they drilled a well, put in the power and fenced the waterway area off. The cows were at the barn all winter. There was a big surprise for Temple! The cattle came through the winter in better shape; they bred back faster and more efficiently, and he says they wouldn't go back to watering in the streams and he was kicking himself for not doing it sooner. The Stewarts are very happy with the system because they had better livestock in the end.

A large family farm that produces potatoes tries to do a good job in sustaining the land. That means being more and more careful and putting more structures in like berms and waterways, as well as remedial actions in the fields. It's a capital cost upfront, and a yearly maintenance cost has to be taken into account and put into the work schedule. The farm has to have sufficient resources to maintain it. They also make sure that they take care of water erosion and assess the damage that wind and other types of erosion do to the land. The PEI Soil and Crop Association have some recognition factors for being good stewards and those things matter.

Robert Harding maintains that in PEI there are no big pig operations [thereby reducing the risk of nutrient overload in one place from hog manure]. A company operation is broken into 5 working units spread out at several sites to be more socially and environmentally accepted.

John MacLean, on the other hand, feels potato rotation regulations do not take into account his system of plowing in straw and forages to increase soil organic matter. He says there is absolutely no money in hay or grain - it's a job that has to be done to grow potatoes. All is ploughed back into the land, which by the soil test, is increasing in organic matter. The MacLeans also had buffer zones for years before the Round Table [PEI Roundtable Recommendations] ever met. They have 2 miles of river frontage that they have protected with buffer zones for years. They are continually being proactive to address environmental issues.

**NS:** Duncan McCurdy notes that the no-till practices adopted by many farmers in his area are helping to reduce erosion, at the same time as it makes life easier for the farmer because they can cover more ground faster.

## **Ecological Efficiency**

To stay viable, farms have to be ‘productive’. Ecological efficiency is the ability to maintain or increase that productivity in the long run, while minimizing synthetic inputs and pollution, and maximizing system cycling of nutrients and other benefits. Some interviewees talked about how to achieve ecological efficiency, and how ecological and economic efficiency can intersect. The discussion of productivity in general was also included here.

### ***Nutrient Cycling***

**NS:** Eric Frank thinks small mixed farms don’t have the potential nutrient management problems of more specialized farms because the crops and livestock are all on the same land. Bill Swetnam has a large poultry operation, together with field vegetables. “At one time they suggested that you should specialize, that a dairy farmer should do nothing but dairy. But as the economy changed, it became more viable to have a few more options to fall back on.” Christina Swetnam also mentioned that the land base for vegetables takes all the manure from the chickens, so “it all ties together”.

Laurence Nason cites the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture’s Environmental Farm Plans, manure brokerage system, and nutrient management model as examples of improving environmental stewardship.

### ***Self-reliant***

**PEI:** Small farms with diverse farming activities are like ‘hybrid vigor’, according to Justin Rogers. The combination of the parts make the whole unit stronger, more vigorous and able to withstand outside pressures.

John MacQuarrie is a great believer in buying local products. Trucking products around the world is expensive [ecologically and economically]. As consumers we need to think more about where our food comes from and look for local foods because it supports our neighbours and the local economy.

**NS:** Duncan McCurdy’s land expansion has made the dairy farm more self-sufficient in feed. This is considered to contribute to viability. Hans Jurgen Schroeder defines farm viability in terms of having a self-supporting farm with few inputs used from outside the farm. He has his own slaughter facility on the farm, and doesn’t bring livestock into his herd from other places anymore. “To grow a farm as a whole, one big unit, supporting itself without bringing much in from the outside. This is more interesting to me than making a lot of money. [Although] I do need to make a living.” Rick Degregorio is a young farmer excited about Charrick Keltic Farm’s potential for self-reliance (using resources that are already on the farm rather than buying lots of inputs), and for reducing fossil fuel use.

### ***Organic***

**NS:** Eric Frank thinks that organic farming will increase farm viability because it is far less dependent on costly outside inputs and it is more labour intensive. Alan Stewart “I was sold on [the organic] idea as a way of maintaining, or keeping, or restoring viability. It’s just taking longer than I had thought, but that’s typical of most small business plans.” What is it about organic agriculture that leads him to believe that it will be more viable? “Less dependence on outside influences, outside suppliers. I could see the market growing. I could also foresee the annihilation of the farm size that we had...it’s almost gone. Staying where we were was not an option. If I was going to stay at the size we were at then organic agriculture would be my only choice. It was not only the best choice, it was the only choice.”

### ***Productivity***

**PEI:** Danny and Christine MacKinnon are very keen to see good productivity indicators on their farm, for example, the satisfaction of having a team of people working together to bale the hay, increasing forage production by 50% in the last 5 years, or having the productivity of the milking herd move to the

top 20% of Island herds. “Seeing all these positive steps forward is rewarding in the income, keeps the morale high, and this keeps the family together; social events are possible to attend.” The MacKinnons built the barn for 32 cows and had 12-13 kg of quota per day. Now at peak production the herd produced 56 kg of butterfat per day. They worked to increase production per cow through improved feeding and breeding – added a quarter more herd and quadrupled production.

David and Edith Ling maintain that productivity of their crops, using few inputs and recycling of composted manure, is just as good as farmers using a lot of expensive chemical fertilizers. For example, David averages 7 round bales of hay per acre. David feeds a lot of ground up forage (hay) to 12 hogs per summer. To survive in a hog operation, he has to find a cheaper source of feed. He can grow 3 tons of dry alfalfa hay on an acre, where you would only get 1-2 tons/acre of barley. There is a lot more return on hay, plus it is not as hard on the ground and you don’t have to replant it each year. It can be left to produce for 5 years, which is low cost, and low maintenance. The healthy soil they have nurtured produces healthy crops and healthy livestock. This contributes to their farm’s viability. Phil Ferraro equates viability with reducing off-farm inputs; in other words, increasing the level of output per input.

**NS:** Helen Arenburg feels apple growers associate productivity with quality rates. “He likes to know that his pack-out is 95% ... (really good for fresh fruit). But he also likes to find out if he was the number one, or number two. And if his pack-out slips, then he’s wondering what he could do to fix that to get his pack out higher again. So it’s a matter of pride for him to have really good fruit and keep it that way. And if I’m doing apple maggot inspections and see the farmer at the end of the inspection, they want to know how they did. And they want to feel that they had no apple maggot on their farm. David Baldwin explains that for orchards, production is measured in bushels per acre. The industry average is about 300 bushels per acre (about 16 bins), but the ultimate goal is 1000 bushels per acre (about 55 bins). “Some of those [high production] orchards might be in dwarf trees. But you need canopy to produce fruit. That’s why a lot of older orchards had some very good production in them because they have a lot of tree in the space. I can grow pretty near 1000 bushels per acre. But I can’t grow a 1000 bushels of really good apples because my management isn’t good enough. I need my trees pruned better, I need to be able to be there more.” Helen Arenburg talks about attempts by fruit growers to lower production costs and pesticide use, and still deal effectively with orchard pests. Researchers and farmers are looking at insect predators like ‘typh’s (*Typhlodromus pyri*).

Gwen Jones raises sheep, and thinks you can improve income by getting more overall poundage to the acre by grazing several species subsequently in a pasture. “There are draw-backs of course. You have to have sets of equipment so that you can actually handle more than one...you know you can’t specialize. Specializing is easy, is making the most out of the capital and the labour that you have available. But its not necessarily making the most out of the ecosystem that you have available.”

Jim Burrows’ milking herd does not graze outside anymore, although the dry cows will be put out to pasture in the warm months. He was having trouble maintaining a constant supply of milk during the summer, and it is a nicer environment in the barn than outside. Productivity is based on milking cows getting a good ration, lots of clean water, comfortable surroundings, and a good genetic background.

Tom and Sharon Van Milligan converted their hog operation to the Swedish style. “As hog farmers we had been trained over the years to view bedding as a problem... In the pig industry, the big indicators of success are: How many pigs do you save per litter? And how often can you get that sow bred in a year? We looked at that differently. We said we want healthy pigs. We don’t want to have to intervene with antibiotics and stuff like that. It was important to us not to have to needle pigs or give them antibiotics. It was also important not to have to feed them feed when they were very small that would replace their mother. We left the piglets on the mothers for a lot longer than other people did... Our cost of production at the end was no different than [conventional hog operations]. They had to pay for higher

feed costs, for needling and antibiotics. People would wean piglets at two weeks of age so they would have to feed them such complicated feeds at a high cost.... I think today we are among the top in Nova Scotia in terms of pigs per sow per litter.”

### 5.3 Human Capital

Human capital is described as the skills, health, values, leadership and education of people (Boody et al. 2003). In this record, the discussion is divided into four sections. Renewal, Satisfaction, Employment, and Efficiency.

#### Renewal

‘Renewal’ is the ability for human capital to be renewed in order to have a thriving agriculture in the long term. It is about passing farms on to the next generation; about young people willing to go into farming; more experienced farmers willing to transfer their knowledge; and the ability to be flexible and adopt new ideas.

#### *Age of farmer; years of experience*

The average age of farmers has typically been suggested as a way to measure if young people are taking over farms; and by extension, as one way to measure farm viability. While some people think that a rising average age of farmers indicates that fewer young people are entering the field, it also indicates that the total years of experience in the field may be increasing.

#### *Next generation taking over farms*

**PEI:** Chris MacBeath and his father have worked on developing a closer relationship through farm management together. His father encourages questions as to how the farm operates and why, and also encourages Chris to look for new ideas and bring them back to the farm. Chris has a ‘passion to farm’, but his father let him develop that himself. Chris is 99% sure that he wants to farm, but both he and his dad wanted to test out the remaining 1% temptation by trying off-farm work for a while. It was his dad’s idea for Chris to work at the Department of Agriculture to see what the working world off the farm was like. Chris has found it a great place to work and learn and has great people to work with, but he still wants to farm.

Chris was never ‘forced’ to work on the farm like some of his friends on their farms. They hated the push to work and now have no desire to farm. It was agreeable to Chris to get up at 5:30 am to milk and work 12 hour days. He is prepared to make that commitment. Another important factor for Chris is they have more hired help on the farm than before, so everyone gets some personal time.

Chris also thinks it is important to have good role models. He feels his grandfather is an excellent role model for him and the family. He is hard-working, forward-thinking, non-judgmental, welcomes new ideas, encouraging, and willing to let go of his farm involvement gradually.

Colleen Younie feels optimistic for young people choosing to farm because she says that young people are able to adapt. They have expectations to play hockey, take karate, sing in choirs, travel etc. They are more worldly and understand the feelings of society. Lots more choices are available to them, and *they still choose to farm*. It is not something you do because you can’t do anything else. Farming parents, whether they intend to or not, have instilled the love of the land and farming in their children. That desire to farm is as strong in some of the young people as it is in their parents. The pride in the heritage is still there.

Danny and Christine MacKinnon find it very satisfying to have their children so interested and involved in the farm. In the same vein, the thing that keeps Elmer MacDonald and his brother Earl going (on MacDonald Brothers Farms) is being part of something their boys will ultimately own and control. If the boys were not there, Elmer doubts very much that he and his brother would continue to farm.

George Matheson's connection to the farm where he grew up is a very strong holding force for him to stay on the farm and work hard to make it viable. It probably wouldn't mean as much to George if he just lived in the house and worked out. It means much more to him and his dad who was still living when George moved into the house, that he is actually working the land.

Many people interviewed think that when people from the next generation begin to look at agriculture as a career of choice, this is a very positive indicator of viability. It says that things are in good order if people want to get in. Another way of looking at it is if farmers are encouraging the next generation to get into farming, then that is also an indicator of viability. Allison Weeks adds that leaving children with a positive legacy contributes greatly to farmer satisfaction.

Phil Ferraro finds that young people interested in careers in farming are turning to organic production. They see an opportunity and a future for themselves. Barb Wagner mentions the Future Farmer program is a very positive program from the Department of Agriculture because it helps young people with their decision to farm. Brenda Penak thinks that agriculture courses, under the Agriculture Certificate Programme, given in High School, are very important and may inspire young people to look at farming as an occupation.

*NS:* Scott Sterling took over the family farm at the age of 17 in 2003, embracing the challenge that lay before him to operate a successful farm and market business without any parental help. "Well when my father died, there was two ways to go, there was either not run the business, or run the business. So I decided to run the business... The name has been in the farm for so long that I'd want to do everything I could to keep it that way... It was up to me. I was with my father for quite a while. I had done all his jobs with him, and I knew all that was going on. We were pretty close. I was growing vegetables and other things and selling them to him, prior to this... It meant a lot to me growing up. Some people don't have any interest but I was interested right from day one in the farm... and expanding the business. Ever since I was eight years old I was growing my own crops for the market. I started off with a little tomato patch, ... about 15 plants, and now I grow 1,500. It has come quite a ways... What makes me happy? I guess just running the whole place. The thrill of being in ten different places at once."

Alan Stewart recognizes that his role in the farm's history is to work towards bringing it back from its downhill slide, and get it set up so that his children (if they are interested) will have viable things to work with. He diversified from cattle, got into chickens, planted orchards. "You plant pears for you heirs."

### ***Transfer of knowledge; sharing information***

Exchange of information and knowledge transfer happens in many different ways. Group information sharing is covered in the Social Capital section (5.4).

*NS:* Harold Swinnamer is pleased with the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture because they helped him learn what he needed to about poultry processing. The course they offered on poultry diseases was excellent. When he calls them for information on disease, "we've never had them refuse to tell us anything. They've been supportive in that way. And they encouraged me. When they told me what needed to be done with my slaughterhouse: about the disinfectant and cooling, I did it. If they come every month, or once a year and tell me what needs to be done and give me a chance, I'll do it." Scott Sterling has found the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses helpful when he has a question, particularly questions about employees.

David Baldwin “picks up some tricks” about orchard management from working at the Kentville Research Station, and in turn, he can bring some of his experience from farming to help at work.

Jerry Thomas says his operation is sustainable because of his “experience in the business, trial and error, like anything else. You learn about your markets. It’s passed down from generation to generation.”

John Vanderiet learned about dairy farming from a farmer in a neighbouring province. “I learned a lot from the farmer on a Jersey farm in New Brunswick where I spent some time. I learned a lot of skills, family skills, some dairy skills, public skills. He was a very nice gentleman.” John also shares information with other dairy farmers. “Dairy farmers really share with one another, they are very generous. If someone has made a new innovation, they are pleased to show it to you.”

Willem van den Hoek learned what he needed to know about cheese making from European contacts. In this area he didn’t find any “hands on stuff and that’s much more important. The practical stuff, you see with your own eyes. . . . But, it works out anyway, it just makes you develop your own thing. I know where to go, telephone is cheap. The ones that are in France, or Germany or Holland, they have organizations, like the blueberry growers in NS, and the vegetable growers, they have those organizations in Europe. For cheese. Small scale milk producers.”

#### ***Tradition; heritage; commitment to farming***

**NS:** Bev Patterson notes that probably 70% of the farms in the area of Brooklyn continue farming because of family tradition. “I’m sure after 100 years of farming, it would be hard to turn that farm away. Even if they work off the farm to pay for it. You wonder why, but it has to be something to do with pride.”

Jerry Thomas knows “this country was built on small farms. Diefenbaker brought all foreigners in here and put them into farming.” This is a recognition of the value of farmers.

Helen Arenburg thinks that the heritage keeps people in fruit production. As far as the families that have been in it a long time, there’s really a sense of pride, and accomplishment, to say ‘I’m a third generation apple grower’. Although the majority of the farms are not doing well financially, there is a commitment to continue apple growing and to find a way to do it. Maybe that means taking an off farm job for a while, or trying new things. Many of the growers she knows are definitely progressive and committed to apple growing.

#### ***Willingness; determination***

**PEI:** Temple and Gail Stewart own and operate T & G Farm Supplies Ltd., from a small outbuilding on the farm. T & G sells electric fencing, gates, and other supplies. They are well known for their willingness and skill in putting up electric fences, and pick up business from competitors who don’t want to do fence installation, but recommend the skills found in T & G workers. They are also willing to pick up business on weekends and evenings, when other businesses are closed.

**NS:** Jean Palmeter thinks that to make a livelihood on a farm, one requires a great deal of determination. Jerry Thomas’s aunt Pearl is aware of the obstacles Jerry faced. “But I’m so proud of Jerry. I hadn’t seen him for a few years. When I came home, he was building barns, he was in great shape.” Jerry responds: “You take pride in what you do with your own hands. I built all the barns and broke the land with a horse chain and a rock. No tractor, couldn’t afford a tractor.”

### ***Open to new ideas; flexibility***

**PEI:** Chris MacBeath: It is important to always be open to (and looking for) new approaches and ways of doing things – eg. the most economical and efficient way to do things. David and Edith Ling are always ready for change. They look for new ways to use resources to lessen costs. John Hutchings says a viable full time operation has people that are always seeking information. Mitch Murphy thinks the farm business plan has to be flexible and people have to be willing to adapt. His sense is that some people get their operations established and are slow to make changes and as a result, run into difficulty because the market is no longer requiring what they are producing or there's less consumer demand for that product. Robert Harding admires forward-thinking farmers. This has to do with bringing in the next generation and also efficiencies to increase or maintain profitability.

**NS:** Bill Swetnam mentions that farmers are constantly having to adjust, make changes, and take on new challenges. This not only contributes to farm viability, but to overall community resilience where the farms are located.

### ***Skills and Education***

The first comments in this section are specifically about accounting and record-keeping skills. The next set of comments are about education in general about agriculture.

**PEI:** Karen MacInnis thinks it is important to know how money is moving in and out of the farm. That is, know and understand costs of production. Janice Whalen knows financial management skills are critical to viable farms. This means having very close control of income and expenses and not 'going by the seat of your pants.' John Hutchings thinks good record keeping is a sign of a viable farm. At a minimum, the farmer should be able to know cash in/cash out because it helps so much to know where the money is moving in and out of the business and when. Justin Rogers had to find support for his farm's accounting. He had an aunt who was in the banking business for years, who now takes care of all the record keeping. Chris MacBeath knows the farm has to have excellent financial management practices, and use specialists like veterinarians and accountants to keep on top of issues that affect the bottom line.

**NS:** Scott Sterling knows whether his farm and market business is doing well by referring to the books. He has hired someone to coach him on doing his own books because he finds it is better to know how things are going himself rather than referring to someone else to find out.

**PEI:** Janice Whalen uses the resources that she has to increase family farm cash flow. She feels post secondary education can give farm family members more choices and opportunities for things like entrepreneurial advantages or animal management and health.

Mitch Murphy describes the Future Farmer program, which has a phased-in education structure. You can enter the program from grade 12 and the Department will help. They may pay some tuition for the young farmers to get some farm business management, may sponsor an apprenticeship program for a year, or practical business training, mentoring by an experienced farmer etc. Then young farmers can come in and do a farm business plan and have access to funding within the Future Farmer Program to move forward. There is some web-based content because many farmers will not or do not want to sit in a classroom.

Nancy Reeves explains that the Agriculture Certificate Program had its first graduates this year (2003). It is a three year High School certificate program piloted in Kensington and Kinkora, where each year the students do extra activities like a tour to NSAC or to a potato farm. Also each of their subjects is built around agriculture. For example if they were to write a term paper it would centre on agriculture, or math would be more related to food production than the regular math program.



With the Agriculture Resource Council, Nancy Reeves worked with an Advisory Committee to develop a grouping of courses that they knew farmers, and more particularly their labourers, needed to do a better job on the farm. She is always pleased to have a farmer call and say there is a worker that would benefit from spending a day away from the farm, learning a specific skill, whether it was welding or truck driving, weed identification or soils etc.

## **Satisfaction**

For farming to be viable in the long term, farms need to be places where people are satisfied with the life. Of course, as Nancy Reeves pointed out, satisfaction is a function of one's expectations and goals. But it is also about optimism for the future; wellbeing; love of the work; time allocation; and having a safe and healthy working environment.

### ***Expectations and goals***

**NS:** A few people reasoned that farm viability has everything to do with what a person's expectations are. If a person doesn't expect to make a living from a farm, then the farm can still be viable because it is giving him or her other things they are looking for. So, ultimately, viability is a relative term, depending on who you ask.

Joyce Hiltz lives in an area with generally small, rather 'economically marginal' farms. But, "contentment for some people is different than for others. What I like is not what contents someone else. There are people who seem to want to move and go further when others of us are content to do what we're doing."

Tom Van Milligan expects to make a living, but does not want to lose sight of other goals and expectations. "When you're talking about sustainability and viability, you can't just talk about the bottom line in terms of dollars, you have to consider the other things and you have to acknowledge that as humans we are not only economic machines, there are other parts of our being that need to be satisfied as we work and do different things, as we live. The sustainability in terms of the pig industry in its relationship to land, animals and community has been hard-pressed over the last number of years because there has been so much pressure from [economic] capital – capital is always the first that needs to be satisfied in any economic activity. Because of that we have sometimes been willing or been forced to minimize some of the other needs."

### ***Optimism; hope for the future***

**PEI:** Doug LeClair continues to be amazed at the optimism and resilience that producers have. Successful operations have people with optimism. However, he has seen this general sense of optimism wane in the past 5 years.

George and Melanie Matheson feel strongly that a positive attitude is very important to farm survival in the long run. John Hutchings thinks that viability is indicated when a person recognizes that change is going to happen and spends energy redirecting it rather than reacting to it.

Nancy Reeves feels that having *long-term* goals indicates viability. Nancy and her family made a decision several years ago to manage the woodlots as a future income source, and they have become more careful about who leases their land. They have an environmental farm plan and have been involved in ditching to make some of the less profitable fields, more productive in the long run.

**NS:** Bill Swetnam describes the farmer's optimism. "I think a farmer is very optimistic. He can have a poor year and say: 'I'll put that behind me and look forward to next year.' And the same with the birds. Let's take the challenge of a new flock and see if we can improve." Planting for the long-term. Helen

Arenburg thinks that viability is indicated when farmers plant new fruit trees/varieties. If they see a future in fruit production, they plant new trees.

### ***Wellbeing of family***

**PEI:** Many people mentioned that to be viable, the farm family has to be happy. On Danny and Christine MacKinnon's dairy farm, Danny's mother lives in a 'granny suite' in one end of the house and helps with noon meals. She is also a sounding board for what's happening on the farm. She says it's a good deal for her too because she is never alone and has two of her grandchildren very handy. Christine thinks viability today involves having family time – time to do things together. They consciously make choices about priorities and try not to just work all the time. Danny willingly gives up some financial gain for himself, to hire help that frees up time for the family.

Marilyn Affleck knows there is a need to make enough money to maintain the family and then have children want to take over the farm. And, making time for family activities also encourages long-term success. Stress reduction is important. Colleen Younie thinks a sign of a viable farm is that the family is satisfied and has what it needs. Katherine Clough also adds that family health is important.

**NS:** For Duncan McCurdy, another incentive to expand is that the farm has to be big enough to generate the income to be able to afford employees so the farmer can get some time off. The staff make it easier to arrange regular time off or if someone is sick. The work can still get done. Jan Chute values any free time she can squeeze out of a day. These moments are important for her well being and the farm's success. John Vanderiet measures farm viability in terms of the children. "On one side all of our efforts are to promote their well-being and on the other side the kids are doing well."

### ***Social and emotional satisfaction from living on a farm; love of the work***

**PEI:** According to George and Melanie Matheson, everything is more fun and energizing with the children involved in the farm and other social aspects such as delivering hay to other farmers. In the summer they have a hired man and a student, so there are people involved in their lives all the time and that energizes them both. Melanie goes to the church in the morning and comes home at noon and they have their big family meal together and they really value that time together.

Marilyn Affleck thinks comradeship, laughter and fun during the day is important to keep farm families going. It is important to have adequate nutrition to deal with the labour requirements and stress found in farming; to be able to talk problems out with other farmers; to have hope for the future.

Barry Cudmore explains that viability means that you are totally involved with whatever your product is. You are willing to work at growing a valuable crop; you don't mind very little time off; and you are very committed to the job.

The family members on Chris MacBeath's farm all have the same goals for the farm in the long term. Everyone involved with the farm really want to be there. No-one is questioning why they are there. All of them are happy in their chosen job of farming.

In John MacLean's experience, to be viable, it is important to do what you like doing on the farm. A good stock farmer begrudges the time in the field working the potatoes and a good crop farmer begrudges the time in the barn.

Colleen Younie thinks that decreased isolation of the farm family indicates increased viability (or increased isolation decreases viability). In other words, some people need to have interaction with other people in order to continue on.

Finally, Steve Watts asks how do you measure quality of life?

**NS:** Jerry Thomas says his farm is viable because of the pride he has in his work. “If you don’t love what you do, you’re not going to stay there. So it’s pride.”

Jean Palmeter didn’t encourage her son to farm because she thought there must be easier ways for him to make a living and have an easier life. “But that’s what he wanted to do. It was in his blood, I guess. It was in my husband, Everett’s blood too. He never wanted to do anything else.”

### ***Lack of ‘franticness’***

**PEI:** Colleen Younie thinks viability is indicated when the farm family has the ability to volunteer or participate in events like Open Farm Day or in organizations like Farmers Helping Farmers. People need to be able to satisfy their own needs before giving to others. If people open their farm to others for tours, or get involved in volunteer activities on an on-going basis, this is an indicator of viability. On the other hand, some people may be excellent community leaders, but not great managers of their own business. Katherine Clough: what are the relationships like with neighbours and the community in general - is there time and energy to participate in activities off the farm?

**NS:** Gail Larder remembers her Dad taking time to complete the farm tasks. “He would take time to enjoy the fruits of his labour. He would graft a tree and wait for years for that apple tree to produce fruit, or he would baby a little pig to bring it back to health. So much time and effort went into the way he did things. We had cattle and chickens and we grew a garden, and had sheep. I know how much time it took my mother to make the yarn and produce the mittens which she used to make for everybody in the community. Everything is rushed today. You have to force feed your chickens to get them to market, you have to fertilizer things to get them to grow better. My parents took more time and time didn’t seem to matter.”

Alan Stewart sees “a level of franticness there where you wake up in the morning and you can’t stop and relax.... [In Europe] it’s a matter of course that farmers take a day and spend it with their families. I work off the farm...and I still have that same level of franticness where I rush home from work. I go out and I try and get my farming done between hours. So I wouldn’t consider that a successful situation.”

### ***Safe and healthy working environment***

**PEI:** A safe working environment for staff and family is part of viability, according to John Hutchings. Marilyn Affleck agrees. Keeping people alive is important for viability. It means taking responsibility; being pro-active; and passing on safety issues to children and employees.

### ***Subsidized day care***

**PEI:** Janice Whalen realized that as a farmer, there is no maternity leave or any other ‘benefits’, no EI, no way to provide the family with a safety net. Therefore, subsidized day care is well deserved. “Last year we had severe financial strain. When the boys were in day care at 7 am they would get breakfast, lunch, and a snack before they came home. We had no money in the bank and I knew it would be 2-3 weeks before there would be money for food. Because they were in day care, I just had to give them milk and a small amount of food before bed. We would have made it somehow, but I would have had ...to ask for a loan... Our food bill was cut by 1/3 having them in day care at no cost to us. ...It was much better than having a child ride in the tractor for safety reasons too. It provided an environment with other children.... Yes, subsidized day care continues to be very important to our family.”

## **Employment**

Here interviewees discuss employment on the farm. Farms are unique in terms of employment because there is both paid and non-paid family employment; and often family members have to generate non-farm paid work in order to support the farm. The other more typical discussion points are pay equity, and maintaining healthy relationships between people working on the farm.

### ***Family employment***

**PEI:** According to Blair Corkum, keeping the family members employed can be part of viability. He knows of farms that make no profit, but have several family members employed, which provides the family with a decent income.

**NS:** Anna Anderson and George Pickford's farm gave their three children an opportunity to earn money on their own. "Our kids were able to bring in all their spending money for the year, by helping George in the garden, with the produce, selling it down at the bottom of the driveway. Sometimes they would go somewhere and pick strawberries, and sell them too... Anything they wanted to do, they could do, because we didn't have a lot of money to give them allowance, so it was their way to make money to buy what they wanted... It was a lesson in learning to work, and see the other end. It may not be something you want to do for the rest of your life, but it's nice to see what kind of work you put in, and what kind of output you get... Colin soon learned that it was less than minimum wage."

### ***Pay equity between farmers and other occupations***

**PEI:** Barry Cudmore feels strongly that the amount of knowledge and understanding of the agriculture industry that he possesses, should be rewarded to the same extent as his accountant – those people that he provides a livelihood for like his plumber etc. He should not be taking anything less than those people who are part of the community.

**NS:** Fraser Hunter also voiced the need for farmers to get paid at the same rate as other professional technical people.

### ***The 'right people' for farming***

**PEI:** According to Chris MacBeath, a viable farm "needs to have the right people". People willing to work as a team, sharing a common goal of running an efficient business. Although it seems to be tougher to find good hired help, Chris' family sometimes share help, or 'barter' back and forth for help in return for help or equipment usage.

Danny and Christine MacKinnon say it is challenging to find and keep help that can work on their farm. At present they are 'growing their own', that is, taking in 4-H kids that are 12 and 14 years of age and trying to encourage them to have fun and learn the correct techniques in making hay or milking. The hope is to get them back as summer students in the future.

John Hutchings recommends that farmers know their weak areas and hire people to take care of those. Meanwhile, the farmer should focus energy on what he or she is good at.

**NS:** Jim Burrows mentions that having good employees is one of the biggest challenges for dairy farmers now. However, "the pay scales and benefits from working on farms are probably better than a lot of other industries, or small industries anyway." *Jim finds that people who grew up on a farm or have previous farm experience are most likely to want to work.*

Linda Tupper loves her 3 employees who have stuck with her through thick and thin, but feels she can't pay them enough. She worries about how long they will stay with her. "My men are paid anywhere

between \$7.75 up to \$9.00 [per hour]. I buy medical for them, and have a savings plan. And I buy overalls and a few benefits like that, and I give them some pork. But still...that's welfare income. I eat my heart out over it....To have someone for 10-12 years on a hog farm, that's like a miracle."

### ***Positive relationship with employees***

**PEI:** Chris MacBeath: Good communications are needed when more than one person is involved in decision-making. Allison Weeks suggests that viability is indicated by a positive long-term relationship with employees, and if the farmer has good management skills and treats people well.

One large potato farm's goal is to have their hired help stay for 8 - 10 years. Staff includes three full-time out of the family plus three family. One person came to work for a six-week work program and stayed for 10 years.

Steve Watts relates his approach to that of a hockey team. There are lots of headaches, but if the team is motivated and happy, the results reflect the good working environment. He tries to minimize stress where possible in day to day activities for himself and staff. A really good year happens for him when management, staff, neighbours, and customers are all enjoying some part of the business (profits, product, having business in the community, having dealt with the business).

John MacLean points out that medical insurance benefits and worker's compensation for their hired help (through the Federation of Agriculture) helps to attract people.

Ron MacKinley knows he must be a good employer (communication skills, delegating skills). He hires professionals to look after specific tasks. His main job is management.

**NS:** Helen Arenburg says apple growers deal with harvest labour problems by trying to be very flexible. If they are very fast and good, a labourer can earn about \$90 a day, but many earn less because they get paid by the bin rather than by the hour. Women, who have children in school, come after the kids have gone on the bus, and pick until its time to go home and meet the bus. So the grower accepts that. A lot of retired people work picking apples, some people from the military if they have shift work, growers try and work around their shift work. Helen picked on Saturdays and Sundays because she likes the fall, it's her favourite time of year, and she wanted to be outside. She also 'met some very interesting people'.

Scott Sterling has 11 employees work with him on the farm and roadside market. For him, the 'right people' are those who are 'willing to learn'. "The best way to keep a good employee is not to tell them what to do, but to ask them what to do. It's kind of a way of respecting them."

Jim Lorraine has a very diversified farm and store, with about 30 people working for him – more in peak seasons. He has no trouble finding people to work on the farm. "Not only are we a major employer in the area, we're probably the best employer. We pay more per hour than other businesses do, we give more hours... I'm now at the point that I don't advertise for people to work here. It's a steady stream, because, last year, as an example, we had university students all over the place here. We tell them up front, if you would like these [long] hours, so we get the really keen ones, the ones that want to pay for university, things like that." Jim also is able to keep employees content with parties and celebrations.

John Foote takes time off work to help his brother pick apples. "I don't mind taking two weeks vacation to pick apples, it gives me dollars, it gives me exercise, and I enjoy doing it, and its helping the farmer, because he only really needs me for two weeks in the summer, a short season. Several years I have taken vacation, and even worked with my brother. I would pick for George, on my farm, my apples, our apples. With shift work, I try to get off at 2:30. You can pick apples ...until 6:00 or 6:30. And, so you can earn

\$20-30 a night. And we work, 6 weeks, so 30 days, well you have a few dollars, \$1,000, that's Christmas money or whatever."

Christina Swetnam thinks relationships between people working on the farm is critical. "If you can't work together, it won't be viable."

### ***Off-farm or non-farm work***

On the issue of non-farm work as a supplement to the farm enterprise, there is some disagreement. Some feel non-farm paid work detracts from the farm, and others feel it supports the farm

**PEI:** Colleen Younie thinks that off-farm work is really hard on the family and the farm. Therefore, an indicator of viability is not needing the off-farm work. David and Edith Ling don't think that off-farm work should be required on a viable farming operation.

On the other hand, Barb Wagner mentions that when the price of pork was so poor, in one family the wife, who had never worked outside the home, found a job off the farm to help pay the bills and help support the children in university. "They keep on plugging away and plugging away."

**NS:** John Vanderiet thinks if a spouse has to work off farm, that indicates lack of viability. "You have to be able to sustain a livelihood from it and ...many dairy farms don't have their spouses working off farm, like some other farming enterprises do. For example in Ontario, a fella could have 1,000 acres and he still needs a job off the farm. I think from the way we look at, it has to provide us our livelihood. If one of us has to work off farm that's going to erode our intent of farming. Then I think the house of cards will cave in."

Both Michelle Fike and Vicky Lantz have off-farm jobs, which help to make their farm operation viable. They get 25% of their income from the farm and hope to increase that percentage. They have both had 100% of their income from farming in the past and prefer to have a combination of on-farm and off-farm work. The off-farm income has been important to build up the farm infrastructure. Ruth Colville also thinks off-farm work is necessary to be able to start farming. She points out that it takes time to develop a market, so it was important for her to have a support until the business took over.

### **Efficiency**

As with economic or ecological efficiency, we have to ask how we evaluate human capital efficiency. Do we want more production per person? Or do we want to involve as many people in agriculture as possible? If we are involving people, what is the trade off between human capital and other capital inputs (equipment, mechanized process). And what is the best way to use time, in order to make efficient use of human contributions?

### ***Hard work and smart work***

**PEI:** Colleen Younie: Farmers often think that hard work pays. There is a great deal of value placed on hard work in the country. In farming, even today, the hard work, manual labour, and long hours are still there, and certainly if a farmer doesn't work, the farm won't prosper, but it's very important to work smarter. That means using all the skills, mechanical systems, and technologies to bring efficiencies.

Danny and Christine MacKinnon clearly divide managing from regular farm work. Danny spends time managing – keeping ahead of the game – because he can't have 8 people doing nothing while they wait for a decision from him.

Janice Whalen recognizes that work habits are important. Janice and Jamie work very long hours.

Justin Rogers is convinced that a viable farm is one that is well organized. “You have to get out of bed in the morning and know what you are doing for the day. Long term planning is so important.”

*NS:* Harold Swinamer works hard on his operation, but he is rather cheerful about it. “I was brought up, in my family, to work.... I enjoy it...Actually I call it exercise, moving.

## 5.4 Social Capital

Social Capital is about connections between people to achieve common goals. If there are lots of relationships, and many different *types* of relationships in a community (business, sports, friends), this improves social capital (or some people refer to it as ‘social fabric’). This section is a record of how people co-operate, what is needed to help that co-operation happen, and also how relationships help improve farm viability. It is the most inspiring testament of the determination to make farming work.

### Co-operation Between Producers

#### *Sharing information among producers*

*NS:* Helen Arenburg describes the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers’ Association orchard tours. In the 1920s, orchard tours would be a week long event complete with campfires and singing in the evenings. Now they are one-day group visits to 3-4 orchards in the morning, and another 3-4 orchards in the afternoon with a picnic lunch and evening BBQ. The tour is an opportunity for exchanging lots of technical information and for discussing orchard problem-solving. Helen describes one young grower who is trying a really ‘daring’ orchard, after a trip to look at other orchards. He saw something, and he wanted to try it on his farm. An older man who has two of his own sons and several sons in-law growing, would come out and help him prune, and they’d discuss it and talk about it, and it was a mentoring process definitely. Perhaps those two gentlemen might not have met if not for things like orchard tour.

There is also a NSFGA meeting in the spring called *Woodville Workshop*, where growers get to talk and information is shared. There are pest management workshops, usually through the winter. “I think they just need a place to meet and talk.” If the NSFGA didn’t exist, Helen thinks some of the sense of community would be lost. A lot of the workshops wouldn’t happen. They wouldn’t get the newsletter. The information exchange wouldn’t happen, and the amount of research that’s ongoing would be diminished. If the NSFGA was not compiling research needs, then the industry might be more fragmented and scattered; those ideas might not be funneled in the right direction.

Brian Boates is part of a group of fruit growers working together to make the transition to organic production. “The neat thing about the group is that it’s being chaired by the head of Tree Fruit Production of the local research station, Charlie Embree. And they’ve got most of the scientists that work in the apple field sitting on it. And while a lot of these people don’t have too much connection to organic farming, they have a lot of knowledge of conventional practices and historic practices and access to a lot of data base material through research that’s being done on organic apples in other areas. So it’s a lot of resources and a lot of knowledge and plus when you get, say 6 or 8 growers in the same room, you’ve got a lot of heads working on a problem ...there’s a really good chance that somebody is going to come up with an idea, more so than just yourself.”

The group started in 2002 with 8 growers. A summer student was hired through the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada. She co-ordinated with OCPP [the certification body], and the processor and the growers. Brian: “You know we got a whole team of people working together, and I was really impressed, because it really kind of got everybody stirred up, and thinking about what we were doing and that’s

important.” Now there are more growers, and there is funding to continue the Annapolis Valley group for another year.

Brian: “We have a meeting scheduled for next week, where we’re going to discuss anything new that’s been learned over the winter. If anybody has any questions.” This model for sharing information is not new among apple growers. “In conventional apple farming, quite often in the summer they have what they call *twilight meetings* which is the apple growers would go to a certain guy’s farm after supper and they’d have a meeting. Look at his orchard and discuss problems that would be coming up that time of the year. And the apple growing community has always had a bit of that.”

Duncan McCurdy points to the local Federation of Agriculture as a good group for sharing information. Because of the active agriculture in his area, this group tends to have people who are involved in a lot of different, bigger boards and other federations. Information is brought back to the local federation and provides good fodder for informal discussions. That has been a big benefit to increasing the level of knowledge. Duncan is also involved with the Dairy Farmers of Nova Scotia, Soil and Crop, and the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture. These along with Agra-Point are important for information exchange.

Jim Burrows also mentions the information sharing as farmers struggled to develop no-till techniques. “I don’t think one person on their own would have been as successful as the community has been in sharing ideas and successes and failures. Hopefully when one person has a failure we all learn from it, so we all don’t have to go through the same thing. Although sometimes you have try it yourself before you’re convinced. But there’s been a lot of that kind of activity in the last few years. And I think the success has been in some of the crops we’re able to grow with the newer techniques.”

### ***Co-operation between producers***

Producers have a range of ways to co-operate and support each other. Sometimes trades and sharing are worked out informally, and they may develop over a number of years. Other times, they are more formal, through Clubs, Associations, Federations, or Commodity organizations. Or, they may develop from a commercial enterprise, such as Scotian Gold Co-op. Co-ops themselves were developed by farmers to help reduce costs or market a product together. See also the profile of the Brooklyn Feed Mill, Section 11.

**PEI:** Danny MacKinnon (dairy farmer) and a neighbouring hog farmer are pooling their land and farming it to everyone’s benefit. Pooling of land gives everyone a longer rotation, plus access to hog manure is mutually supportive to both. It’s been 15 years since they started trading land, but now they’ve built up the trust to pool all 150 acres together. Danny grows forage on the neighbour’s land, and on Danny’s land, the neighbour grows soybeans. Last year with the low price of hogs, Danny suspects that if they had not had the pooling, the neighbour would have been in a very tough financial situation. The excessive crop of soybeans pulled him through. Also, getting excessive crops of forages because of the pig manure, and the nitrogen value from the beans makes for a really positive relationship. This builds viability that each farm could not have had on its own. Danny used to have to grow grain to harvest straw for cattle bedding. Now they get straw from their neighbour, as part of the trade, saving them from having to grow grain and buy a combine. Danny is very happy not to have to grow grain.

David and Edith Ling trade resources back and forth with other ecological farmers (e.g. seed, cattle). However, they find it difficult to find other farmers who farm similar to them because there are less and less full-time farmers in PEI now.

Justin Rogers sees that there is a willingness of the farmers to work together. Two of his neighbours and Justin work back and forth together doing hay or potato digging etc. Sharing builds loyalty to each other.



Janice Whalen points to the Atlantic Tender Beef program with Co-op Atlantic as a good example of working together to increase viability. She also mentioned the Feeder Co-op, in which the Farm Credit Corporation lends money to the co-op, the co-op, in turn, lends money to farmers to buy animals and feed them until they go to market. The farmers hope to make Atlantic Tender Beef standards with premium pricing, then they pay the loan back to the co-op. She explains that co-ops fell out of favour for a while because of poor management, but a resurgence is very possible with good planning and directors. John Hutchings thinks alliances between farmers, packers, and a retailer, as with the Atlantic Tender Beef, is an example where every partner can make more money because they are working together.

Justin Rogers mentions that the Conservation Clubs, started by the PEI Soil and Crop Association, are made up and driven by farmers who are members of the Club. John MacLean and a few others started the Crop Science Club in 1991. They are always trying to do better this year than they did last year. This club is Island wide. They host test plots and tours which “lets your hired men and sons see what others are doing.” It is very educational and encourages interest in new cropping techniques. It is made up of farmers and the two main processors (McCains and Cavendish) with no government. He calls it ‘Reality Research’ focusing on crop science and what makes crops grow. There is no sense putting on more of anything than the crop needs. He is very proud of this club because he identified an area where the farmer has some influence over managing the future through hands-on information found by their own initiative.

Allison Weeks mentioned that as a group, farmers are more powerful to deal with situations and find solutions, solve problems. These might include commodity groups, producer clubs, or livestock breed groups as examples. Marilyn Affleck sees the development of Commodity Clubs. Farmers get together from the same commodity (all beef farmers or dairy farmers etc), and they enjoy each other’s company - joke and talk together. If someone is having a problem, they try to encourage and lift the spirits of that person. They include laughter as one important part of their activities. Marilyn asks “What about the wives of that same group? They are still isolated.”

Ron MacKinley thinks that farmers are very independent but need to be more cooperative, especially for new young farmers starting up. A new modern grading room costs nearly 1 million dollars, but maybe 3-4 farmers can join together to have one excellent facility. There needs to be more cooperative purchasing of equipment or perhaps 5 year leasing of equipment between 4-5 farmers. For example a new sprayer will do nearly as much in a day as 4 smaller sprayers would do. No one would have to wait very long for their turn. This could be set up like a small business by itself. Figure out what it costs per acre to do spraying and charge accordingly. Or, divide up the responsibilities. For example have one person do maintenance, one person drive, one providing water etc. It can work to everyone’s advantage and survival. Allison Weeks thinks a community is healthy when people are able to share equipment, like a corn planter or combine; or one of them might be able to do custom work for others in the community.

Robert Harding sees more of a desire by producers to work together for industry related issues that have impact on total industry. For example, disease control or maintenance of disease-free zone status (PRRS). There is much more concern about an issue like disease that influences reputations of all producers. The worry about what could happen to ‘myself’ changed gradually to ‘ourselves’ with eye to overall benefit to industry. There is a team approach on the whole, with all stakeholders - producers, board, government, AVC, PEI FoodTrust; Garden Province Meats; retailers (Co-op Atlantic).

John MacQuarrie sees that one indicator of viability is if farmers are co-operating in new ways. This should be measured. He cites the Quebec example. Farmers in Quebec worked hard and worked together to get the substantial support system that they have. But part of it is cultural. In Quebec, the Caisse Populaire [like Credit Unions] is the most dominant form of banking because people have a culture of working together and sharing.

According to Colleen Younie, farmers band together with other farmers (e.g. potato producers, dairy clubs etc.) for social gatherings, educational opportunities, and sometimes other issues like environmental changes. These gatherings are important to encourage each other – to share problems, solve problems, or just talk. There are deals and trades going on all the time. For example, potato farmers and livestock farmers trading land and manure and equipment.

Mitch Murphy is full of examples of co-operation between farmers. In earlier times if a barn burned, neighbours got together to help rebuild, but that attitude is still around today. It was evident during potato wart. Because of some of the restrictions against growing that were put on some fields, farmers got together amongst themselves and did some trading of land to try to accommodate those farmers that had large acreages in the buffer zones where they couldn't grow potatoes. Support is happening right now in the beef industry. People who have had animals in feed lots that normally would have gone to market, have worked with other farmers and put the animals on their land to pasture. He sees that level of cooperation within the farming community, especially when times are not ordinary. Even to point where someone might get finished planting early and they go over and help the neighbour get finished up. Also there is trading back and forth of land to enable good crop rotation and still maintain the level of crop desired. This all adds resilience within the farming communities.

**NS:** Duncan McCurdy notes that probably 80% of Nova Scotia milk does go through the two co-operative dairies, Farmers and Scotsburn, which is different than other provinces. In Quebec co-operatives are big. In Ontario it is largely private companies. Over the last couple of years, the dairy processing sector in Canada has become more vertically integrated. There are now a lot fewer and a lot bigger players. It is similar to, but not as extreme as what's going on in the grocery store chains. Sobeys and Loblaws control about 70% of retail in the region. Things like that are not exclusive to the grocery stores, they go back the food chain too.

Jim Burrows supplies milk to Scotsburn co-op dairy. Being a shareholder means that he has an investment in the company. At the end of the year, the company will distribute any profit, or some of the profits back to the producers by increasing the person's share equity in the company. "It's been a very successful venture from my point of view over the past few years in that our share equity has grown steadily within Scotsburn. And we know we have some involvement in the processing sector, which we might not have otherwise." Jean Palmeter and her husband had a dairy farm, and "in 1961, the farmers decided to buy Farmers and make it a co-op. Then they had things in their own hands. I think things started to get better then."

Jerry Thomas is the secretary of the Preston Area Farmers Association, an organization started in 1999 to lobby the government for some financial support to upgrade and restock the farms to make them more competitive in the market.

Gail Larder describes an important part of farming when she was growing up. "It was a community effort. I remember making hay when it was threatening to rain. Dad would get his hay in the barn and he wouldn't even unhitch the horses, he would go straight to the neighbours without being asked or expecting pay. You just did it, because the neighbour's hay needed to go in the barn."

Ruth Colville's farm, Coldspring, is part of Seaspray Co-op – an alliance of certified organic producers who organized to provide a large quantity of produce to supermarkets and other international buyers. It is hard for each individual farm to come up with the quantities each buyer wants. "We'd like to know what they want from us, so that we can provide more organic goods, from our area, rather than the Californian stuff. That makes no sense to me, why in August they're bring Californian tomatoes when this is our season. And that goes on all the time. Hopefully that can get straightened out."

Helen Arenburg describes the role of the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers' Association (NSFGA). It was formed in 1863 to assist mostly apple growers. The NSFGA can organize bulk orders of insect traps so growers save a little money. They have a newsletter for sharing information; organize orchard tours and investigative travels to see what fruit growers in other places are doing; source funding for projects; and work together with the Tree Fruit Research Foundation to make sure the research benefits growers. Helen discusses three reasons why the NSFGA is a strong alliance between producers. The first is because of the heritage – the Association has been around for a long time. The second reason is possibly the face to face contact growers have with each other with the orchard tours. They discuss their problems and solutions together. One grower built a tree-planter which was used on many farms in Kings County for several summers in a row. The third reason is apple growers don't see each other as competition. There's certainly a feeling of helping other growers.

Scotian Gold Co-op, a local fruit packer and broker (as well as retailer) has a group of growers that meet weekly, according to Helen. It's sort of a mentoring process. They're there telling them things but also the growers get a chance to talk together, and Scotian Gold is definitely there to serve their growers. I think there is also a group of growers that meet for coffee, quite a few mornings of the week in a small community. They come into the nearest coffee shop and have their meetings, just to talk about what's going on, and I think that's a really good support for them. If one guy has seen a bug in his orchard, then the other guys know they should go look.

David Baldwin describes Scotian Gold Co-op. There are two main buyers for the local market, Sobeys or Atlantic Wholesalers (Superstore). So a co-op is a really great thing because it allows the small guys or the guy that doesn't want to be involved in marketing to sell apples. "You send your fruit there, and they deal with the buyers." Scotian Gold has been in existence since the mid 50s. "If everybody tries to take their fruit into the market place, and they all try to compete against each other, (we had this a few years ago)...next thing you know I'm beating up on you and you're beating up on me [competing to offer the lowest price]. That's not a good situation." David also thinks Scotian Gold pays a fair price for the fruit. He also makes a point about the direct market option. If everyone has a farm stand, then everyone will be competing with each other on price.

Jim Burrows describes the simultaneous competition and co-operation within the dairy farming community. "I would say there is competition but it's not the same as if we were, myself and my neighbour we both had a hardware store. You're not competing directly against each other for customers. It's certainly competitive in that you have to be as efficient as possible, have the best cost of production as possible in order to be successful. You're competing against yourself, but in doing so, rather than the two hardware store scenario, you can work with your neighbour. And hopefully you better each other's operation." The local federation of agriculture owns several pieces of equipment -- things that aren't used a lot on one farm, but over the course of 15 farms in the community, it is necessary to have one around. There are also informal relationships that develop. "I work very closely with one neighbour. We have several pieces of equipment between us, a corn-planter, a grain drill, a combine; two items that you don't use very often but it's really too expensive to own one yourself....In some instances those [arrangements] don't work, but we've been fortunate in our case it has worked. Then there are other odds and ends of equipment that you know who has it in the community and someone will do a little bit of custom work if they have an item that someone else doesn't have. So it helps to fill in the voids."

Bill Swetnam describes a land-sharing arrangement that helps him have a good crop rotation. "For instance, if we want to grow 100 or 200 acres of carrots and we want to have a rotation (we're looking at a three-year rotation), we'd have to have 600 acres and we don't have that land base. We work with a few other farmers growing different crops and share land. We're involved with four farmers and we exchange land so that we can keep a good rotation in our crops and that's vital in our vegetable

production. We just couldn't grow the crops we do without it. We meet in the fall. We're connected with the Brands who grow broccoli and the Vermuelens with lettuce and then grain. We've got a four year rotation right now."

Jan and Alexandra Chute operate a small retail organic food and farm supply store, and have created an informal supportive network with other people around the province who have similar stores. "We've created a strong bond with the Tantallon Village Market. We're [both] trying to encourage people to shop locally. We promote them and they promote us. We provide her with product from the farm. They have pinched hit with us when we have a shortage, like one week when we didn't have enough dairy. She's out here every Friday and brought me milk. We work it out together and we're going to do more. As we get more used to each other's schedule and what our consumers are demanding...because we're both relatively new businesses.... We're trying to establish community. We'll get together with Catherine Williams, with Leslie Longhorn, with people like we are. If we can meet maybe once or twice a year and then keep up contact by e-mail and phone and find out what each other is doing, then we have a bigger voice when we go to Midland [transport company] and say: 'All right you clowns, this business of charging of us \$93 to bring us four containers of milk is out of the question.'"

### ***Social Networks among producers***

**NS:** Jean Palmeter describes the CBC Radio Monday night 'Farm Radio Forum' that was so popular with farmers in the 40s and 50s. It was something that made farming worthwhile for her. "You'd gather in someone's house to listen to the radio program and have a discussion. We took notes about the discussions. Those were sent in to the program. Then the next week they would have a report on our opinions. It went on into the 50s. That's when everybody in this neighbourhood was a farmer – or nearly everybody. Now you just have three or four. I can't see them sitting around a table listening to a program like that. One program in particular was about The Value of a Farm Wife. It was all worked out – like as if you had to pay her to make your meals, do the housework take care of the kids – what it would be per day. It might have been \$69 a day which was a lot then." Jean also talked about 'sense of community' among farmers years ago. "That sense of community and the idea that one person needs another. Barter was a good way to pay for things when cash was in short supply. Labour wasn't in short supply. But now everything's money, money. That was one thing about the Farm Forum – it really brought the community together. You would go to a different person's house every week. They went after their chores were done. And there was the social part. You would have a little lunch and tea."

### ***Speaking with one voice***

**PEI:** Allison Weeks cites the example of the potato wart crisis. At that time, the Potato Marketing Board was the 'voice' for the potato industry, representing the producers. It presented a united message and negotiating body with all the other players like CFIA, USA, Agriculture and Agriculture Canada etc. The Hog Board, Milk Marketing Board, and Cattleman's Association all have consumer promotion programs with emphasis on education and increase usage of product – each producer contributes a check off cost per animals marketed that goes into promotion. On their own, they could not provide the materials or effect that happens when they all contribute a small amount for a large impact. Elmer MacDonald maintains that power is in co-operation and a single voice on issues.

## **Relationships Between Producers and Consumers**

***See also 5.1, Fair Price – Direct Market***

### ***Consumer interest in farming; impression of farming***

**PEI:** Non-farmer interest in farming is important for farm viability, according to Brenda Penak, and is indicated by attendance at events such as Open Farm Day. Nancy Reeves chairs the PEI Agriculture Awareness Committee that organizes the event. She says it is gratifying to see the farmers seem so

pleased to have a grassroots working committee that has the promotion of farm industry as its mandate. The Committee focuses on people who know very little about farming to explain the short-term and long-term benefits associated with farms. 24 farm businesses participated in Open Farm Day last October (2002), organized by the committee. The farmers were all so pleased to have had the event organized for the consuming public.

Chris MacBeath explains that it's a circle: the consumer has an opportunity to see how things are done on a farm and gains confidence in buying products produced locally. Farms are encouraged by consumer support and are more likely to produce high quality products.

Colleen Younie notes that today, as beaten up as farmers feel with regulations and all, there is *real* pride when a farmer hears consumers say that they have faith in our farmers. Farmers value that and would not want to destroy that *trust*. A sense of trust is very much a contributing factor to farmer satisfaction.

*NS:* Kevin Bekkers notices that in Europe, food producers are valued quite highly and get more respect [than in Canada]. The Dutch value their farmers, especially after the war and having to rely on other countries for food. Frank Foster says that many farmers just want recognition of the value of the work they do from the general public. Wayne MacDougall thinks there are some people who really appreciate what a farmer does. "I was out here one morning with the cows, and the mail driver delivers the paper, and he stopped, and I was talking to him for a minute, and he asked me about the farm, and he said, 'you're a tough bunch, I don't think people realize how hard you have to work'. So, that was good to hear."

Helen Arenburg was in the apple museum and overheard a visiting AAFC employee from Ontario tell her daughter that apples were harvested by machine. Helen had to tell her that they are actually all hand picked. She thinks consumers have more respect after they learn about the volume of work involved.

Marjorie Willison is a gardener and consumer who makes a deliberate choice to support local farms. Even though she supports organic farming, "I would probably chose a conventional grown *local* carrot over an organic *imported* carrot."

Ruth Colville thinks the key to viability is "if more people were more aware of local product, and were supporting local produce, local beef, local chicken. If the public could be more aware of what keeps a farm alive." Customers who demand local product in the store are critical. People who cook at home instead of eating 'ready meals' are critical. Anna Anderson also stressed the importance to her business of people who demand local products in their grocery stores.

Is farm work valued by the non-farming public? Jude Major thinks things are changing. "The more times you have instances like this SARS epidemic, or the mad cow instance, people start to subtly think more, or they learn more about how they live, what they eat, how the way they live causes other animals and plants to be grown for them to eat...I think people are starting to figure some of these things out."

**GPI Atlantic did a survey of 1,900 residents of Kings County, Nova Scotia, and found that 90% of respondents thought farming was very important for the county. 82% had a lot of respect for farmers, and 60% thought it was very important that food be locally produced.**

### ***Empathetic to consumer***

*PEI:* Karen MacInnis suggests that it is important to be empathetic to the consumer. Instead of reacting to condemn consumer for being too demanding, look for ways to make consumer satisfied. John Hutchings thinks that looking down the food chain for opportunities to add value to products is part of

farm viability. He says that there needs to be a real connection of the farmer with the consumer. That is, the farmer should not just be selling a commodity. Robert Harding also thinks there should be more focus on market requirements. For example, leaner/different sizes of cuts may be needed to meet needs of smaller families.

*NS:* Helen Arenburg notes that some fruit growers are in transition to organic production. They realized there's going to be a portion of the consuming public who are wanting organic apples, so they are setting aside a portion of their orchard as organic.

Harold and Pat Swinamer's poultry processing business caters to people who want to raise some of their own food. "It's starting now... people are raising their own food (poultry). People tell me they're getting tired of going to the store and not knowing what they're eating. They raise [poultry for meat], and when they give or sell one to their friends, they want more the next year."

### **Relationships Between Producers and Community**

*PEI:* Brenda Penak says that social aspects of people getting along with their neighbours is vital to viability. A number of producers said they call neighbours before spraying or spreading manure. They also avoid spreading manure on weekends. Katherine Clough notes that relationships are very important to viability on the farm. This includes relationships with neighbours, other family members, people whom farmers buy things from in community, other farmers, people who buy things from farmers. When these relationships are positive and fulfilling, it often means that the economic conditions are positive. Barry Cudmore would like to do something for his neighbours. He knows that he causes some discomfort to the neighbours when he spreads liquid manure in the spring. The smell doesn't last long and it is the country and they phone people in advance, but he has this idea of throwing a community BBQ for the neighbours.

For Nancy Reeves, working on the PEI Agriculture Awareness Committee is a pleasure, not a chore. It is a real team effort. For rural communities to survive, it is important to work with the urbanites who are moving in. They need some kind of education or information to help them fit in. Neighbours make such a difference to help with the connection to the land by welcoming new people to communities and helping them become a part of the history in the making.

Allison Weeks mentions that local community businesses give prizes to their 4-H Club public speaking winners; local stores purchase Easter Beef at inflated prices to support their local farmers; people from 25 km around Winsloe United Church buy tickets for their annual roast beef supper; and the Crapaud Exhibition tractor pull attracts more spectators every year.

*NS:* Tom Van Milligan changed his hog manure system to reduce its odour. "At first we had a liquid manure system in our barns and of course, it had an effect on the community, especially under certain weather conditions, other people would have to suffer with us and some suffered more than we did because the wind would be blowing their way. When I was in Sweden I saw that there is a better way to [deal with the manure], so we changed [the manure system], along with the housing system."

John Vanderiet works hard keeping relationships "on an even keel by doing things for our neighbours like snow plowing or helping out in other ways. I figure that I impose on them in many ways, like stinking up the place every once in while, slowing down traffic with my tractor and machinery, so I like to keep relationships good."

When Kim Tilsley's husband had to go away for a few months to do a contract, she described how people in her community rallied around her on the farm. "I've been able to draw on my wonderful neighbours

and family and friends to pick up the slack. We've hired a couple of young students, and they're very enthusiastic and helpful and eager for the work. My family lives nearby and my Mom chips in with the childcare and whatever she can do. And my Dad is the jack-of-all-trades, mechanic –guy to keep things going in that respect. And the neighbours came by and said, you just have to ask...give us a call. They keep checking in on me with little phone calls and visits to make sure I'm coping fine. Offers to take the kids to the beach, since I can't get away as much as I'd like to from the farm. We've certainly got a wonderful support system there, and that's crucial."

Jan Chute finds the barter networks are important for viability. "You find out that so-and-so's brother can do this and another person's sister can do that and you can get barter going. People are always networking and it's critical to all these relationships, it's symbiotic."

## 6. What Is Valued About Farms And Farming

*Farmers in general are not strictly profit-driven. Otherwise the million dollars in quota would be turned into cash and invested.* – Colleen Younie

*Farmers are a unique breed of people; they love what they do.* – Gail and Temple Stewart

*All of these [other reasons to farm] must carry a lot of weight because the remuneration is not always there. These other reasons have got to be quite strong.* – Bill Swetnam

This section is about what farmers value about farming. Given that the economic viability picture is so challenging, what, in particular, do farmers like about farming and what keeps them farming? What gives them the greatest satisfaction? What aspects of farming need to be preserved and protected? If farmers lose the things they value and which give them enjoyment and satisfaction on their farms and in their communities, then they are much less likely to put energy into maintaining their farms and continuing to farm.

Although no-one specifically mentioned money as a major motivation for farming, many people pointed to the satisfaction of producing a good crop or having excellent livestock. Many people also mentioned they like the challenges that farming presents. The discussion is divided here into the same headings as the other sections, except there were no discussion points under the ‘economic issues’ heading.

### 6.1 Ecological

#### Enjoy working with livestock

**PEI:** Marilyn Affleck finds that milking cows is a stress-reliever for her.

Janice Whalen always loved the animals; everything about them including the challenge of doing well with them. For example, having good litters (of piglets), and making sure the farm is doing well with production levels. She is starting to compete with herself for better production levels with the hogs, especially now that they have a new facility since the barn fire. Animals keep her going. How many baby pigs does she see being born? Probably 5,200 per year. Yet every time she is amazed.

Allison Weeks notices that some people continue to farm because of an interest in a breeding line or something that took a lot of time to develop. Or they just enjoy working with livestock. Temple and Gail Stewart explain that showing cattle has given them a lot of satisfaction. To have their animals receive top prizes is very fulfilling and financially rewarding. Chris MacBeath enjoys cattle shows, particularly when he does well, which brings with it a sense of accomplishment. It is also rewarding to have the cattle classifier come to the barn and give some of the animals a rating of ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’. This encourages him to maintain this or drive to the next level of quality in the livestock

**NS:** Alexandra Chute’s father enjoys working with the farm livestock. “He’s got high blood pressure. He gets a lot of pleasure being around the animals. Even when it’s a problem animal...for him to be able to put his mind and body into the care of that animal, it makes a big difference for him.”

Gwen Jones states specifically that she is motivated by her interest in raising really good breeding stock (sheep), much more than simply raising market lambs. Wayne MacDougall doesn’t particularly like



working with the poultry, but it's part of the operation. He does enjoy the dairy operation, working with the animals, and he likes the genetics of breeding. "I was brought up with it, so its sort of in your blood."

### **Enjoy producing a good crop**

**PEI:** Elmer MacDonald gets satisfaction from producing a good crop; improving some of the farming practices with heart set on sustainability; and leaving a legacy of a piece of property in better shape when he finishes than when he started. They purchased land that was not in very good shape and now has been improved and made more productive. It may have been putting in diversions or adding organic matter or adding more manure. The satisfaction is in making the property better. Ron MacKinley explains that just like fishermen want to get on the water, farmers get the urge to be out on the land. The energy comes from seeing crops grow.

**NS:** Jessie Greenough lives to garden. She would get home from work and go straight to the garden. Then she realized that she didn't have to keep her job, and she should not wait to do what she's passionate about. "I thought everybody hated working in an office, I was under the impression that this was torture for everyone. Especially if it was summertime, I wouldn't go outside at lunchtime, because I knew I would get in my car and go home. There was no way you were going to get me back in that building, no friggin way." So she left her work in the office for the fields and the fresh air.

### **Enjoys nature**

**PEI:** Brenda Penak has noticed many farmers are self-professed naturalists. They like preservation of the wild or natural beauty. Many like to go to the back field and see what is there: a pond, birds, fish in the stream etc. That's a special part of the farm for many people.

**NS:** Jamie Cornetta runs her farm pretty much by herself. She grows vegetables, raises beef and pork, and raises all the grain and hay for the livestock. It's a lot of work but "I find that I can't always enjoy this farm, I can't always enjoy...everything. Just to take a walk in the woods, I find I do less and less of that. And to me that's all a part of being viable because I think if you can't enjoy all of this, then what's the point?"

### **Connection with the land**

**PEI:** Mitch Murphy finds that farmers, more than anybody and possibly even more so on PEI than any place else, have a tremendous connection to their land. There's a bond that exists there. Pride in the land, making the land more productive, looking after the land. This is one of the barometers that farmers use to measure their satisfaction. After three years off the Island, he moved home. He remembered when he first moved back, being so aware of the smell of the newly ploughed earth. There was a very strong sense of being 'home'. Farming is a way of life; a bond and connection. Nancy Reeves remains involved in the family farm because 'she is her father's daughter'. She has the same agricultural feelings as her father does. Love of the land, desire to keep it in the family, and care for the land in an environmentally sustainable way.

## **6.2 Human Capital**

### **Freedom to be own decision-makers**

**PEI:** Karen MacInnis: farmers are a different breed - fiercely independent, proud, like to control their own time, land, and resources. Robert Harding thinks farmers love to farm because of the freedom to be

their own boss. It is related to the desire for independence and responsibility for decisions and planning their own destiny. It is interesting that no full-time farmers in PEI who were interviewed cited this freedom as something that gives them satisfaction. Some actually questioned if the freedom is actually there.

*NS:* Jim Burrows mentions that he likes being his own boss, “although sometimes you wonder about that.” Bill Swetnam is a poultry and vegetable producer who likes being his own boss and the freedom associated with living in the country. Helen Arenburg thinks apple producers like ‘being their own boss’ as part of their reason why they farm. They like being able to take their kid with them if that’s the way the day goes.

### **Like the challenge**

*PEI:* Janice Whalen finds that farmers like to solve a challenging situation. “It’s like finding your way out of a maze.” Justin Rogers finds it energizing to solve or at least attempt to solve the challenges that arise every day on the farm. Nancy Reeves notices farmers are always trying to do things better; always competing with themselves.

*NS:* Brian Boates says he is always learning and enjoys the dynamism of farming being challenging in this way. Kevin Bekkers farms because he likes to be challenged a lot physically. He’s up first thing in the morning and he’ll work until 8 or 9 at night. He likes getting out into the outdoors. Referring to the farm, Hans Jurgen Schroeder says he has done a lot of challenging things in his life, “but this is the most challenging thing I have ever done.” Tom Van Milligan appreciates what challenges can introduce into peoples’ lives. “The complexity of living our lives has far more potential than we realize. Having to deal with difficulty allows you to grow in areas that you would otherwise not have grown in.”

### **Likes the variety of work**

*NS:* Jim Burrows is a dairy farmer who likes the variety of different things he engages in during the day. “You’re not pigeon holed into one little segment that you’re working within narrow parameters all the time. One day you might be operating equipment, the next day you’re working with cattle, carpentry, your cropping, and your basic management. It can be any of those things within several hours. I guess that’s what I enjoy the most, the diversity. In the morning, I enjoy the peace and quiet. I’m in the barn by myself for a couple of hours milking. I don’t enjoy milking in the afternoon for some reason, but I do in the morning. So this gives me an opportunity, the way our farm is structured, I do something else in the afternoon. Where in a lot of businesses you don’t have that opportunity.”

### **Eat what you grow**

*PEI:* Duane MacDonald once sat down to a meal with their farm’s beef, potatoes, and vegetables out of the garden and everything on the plate was something they had made. “That is a satisfying moment.”

*NS:* Jerry Thomas experiences the pride of work and feeding his family: “There was no work [jobs] out there. You had to feed your family, so you start at home... A farmer is rich in land, poor in finances, but he always has food for his table.” Jerry’s father Gordon agrees. “A farmer is important because people have to eat. You feel good, you get all your meals in front of you. That’s one good thing about farming.”

Shirley Keddy says “There’s nothing more satisfying than going out to the garden and picking vegetables and preparing them for your family.” Alexandra Chute would like to work towards growing and preserving all her own food, and it feeds the family for a year. Her mother Jan did that when she was younger and that doesn’t interest her as much anymore. Rick Degregorio has a great deal of energy for

farming. His motivation? “I look forward to the food we eat,” including the beef, eggs, pork, garden produce, and even mushrooms growing wild in the woods – as well as “growing really good food for others.”

Michelle Fike explains part of her motivation for all the hard work is “a love of being able to provide for yourself. The fridge is full of our own dairy products, the freezer is full of our own meat products, the coolers, in the winter, are filled with our own produce, and that’s a sense of empowerment, and accomplishment.” Ruth Colville says Coldspring Farm started in order to “feed three growing boys. I had three boys who were very close in age. And the farm was going to feed us all. I can remember times where we would sit at the table and say ‘you know, we grew everything on this table’, maybe except a few odd things. We all took pride in that. I can even say today ‘my kids all have a garden’ you know, even when they’re near a city, they’ll have a spot. And they’re all doing it organically.”

### **Working outside; exercise**

**PEI:** Allison Weeks likes working outside; exercise. Melanie Matheson just likes getting outside and working, which has an interesting twist, because she sees that the farmers who are doing well are getting more into the business side and having to take a business management approach [which involves less working outside]. Good exercise gives the Matheson’s energy.

**NS:** Harold and Pat Swinamer like the fresh air, exercise, and the freedom associated with creating a viable business on the farm. Helen Arenburg re. apple growers – they like being outdoors.

### **Enjoy the concrete accomplishment**

**PEI:** Chris MacBeath said he would find it hard to find a job where he would visually experience the progress of growing things and feel good about what has been accomplished because of everyone’s hard work. Doug LeClair finds that farmers value seeing the benefits of what they do. When they bring in a bountiful harvest or raise prize animals, it shows in the face of farmers. Working with your hands and multiplying resources (e.g. seeds into a great harvest); being part of the renewal process (e.g. birthing, nurturing, breeding, birthing) is satisfying.

The Mathesons get a sense of accomplishment from getting a load of hay on or off; seeing the land planted or the crop harvested. There is an end product and they feel like they’ve achieved something. Marilyn Affleck finds that there is a great deal of pleasure in putting in a crop, seeing it grow, and seeing a good harvest. Each season has its wonders and satisfaction. She says most farmers love growing food, and are proud of the social responsibility of feeding the world.

Ron MacKinley is energized when he sees the harvest come in during the fall. Steve Watts likes it when he drives down the road after severe weather conditions and sees that the fields have weathered better than some. He feels he’s doing some things right. One of the best days of Barry Cudmore’s life was when he was in the combine, the combine was working well, and he was harvesting a bumper crop of barley. It was just rolling in. A sunny day, and everything went right to produce that barley crop. This goes a long way to give him satisfaction - more so that shipping a pig off to market.

**NS:** Scott Sterling has just taken over the family farm at a young age. While the farm and roadside market are operating, he works from 5:30 am to 10 pm or midnight, 7 days a week. What drives him to do it? “Just the fact of how old I am, and applying what I know, and the fact that I know I’m running the whole place is kind of a rush. I just keep going until I can’t go any more.”

## **Creative energy**

**PEI:** Plant production gives Phil Ferraro all winter to make plans and dream about what will be grown. It's similar to being an artist, especially on a small farm. The beauty of a small farm is important. He supported his family on 5 acres for 10 years. He owned no equipment, rented whatever he needed and intended to do that for the rest of his life. Agriculture helps to reinvent the imagination.

Barry Cudmore says that the great thing about agriculture, is you create something bountiful from something small - a seed grows into a plant. There are not too many other aspects of society where you are really creating things. Something substantial comes from the seed. Growing something adds to the community and helps to build resilience.

**NS:** Scott Sterling sees the farm and market as a huge opportunity. "You can be doing ten different little projects, right around here, that involve the farm...that I can use the farm for. There's lots of opportunities to start new things here. And I have a lot of ideas."

For Michelle Fike, the farm provides an outlet for her creativity. "If I had just been slogging away, growing the produce, it wouldn't have been enough for me. I enjoyed doing the CSA, the newsletter, the potlucks, and with the herb business, creatively and beautifully packaging my product. All of that much more creative dynamic work is the balance that I need with that physical hard labour."

## **Values farmers for their commitment and multiple talents**

**PEI:** Duane MacDonald is continually impressed – on a weekly basis – with the commitment and dedication to the industry, of farmers all across the province. Farmers have to be everything from a veterinarian to an accountant to a chemist to a heavy machine operator to a human resource person. Farmers have succeeded in producing higher quality food, more food per acre, production per animal, beyond what people expected 10-15 years ago. He likes the challenge of finding ways to do things better. Farmers need to take more credit for the ingenious things that they do.

Farming is a vocation according to Mitch Murphy. It is a very noble profession. Farmers are tremendous people. For the most part hard working, friendly, and resilient. Barry Cudmore has met tremendously good people over the years. He can't think of anyone in Canada who he has met in agriculture sector that he would have poor things to say about.

**NS:** Jerry Thomas: "Farming touches all industries. So a person needs to know a little about all industries."

## **Interaction with family**

**PEI:** Doug LeClair thinks it is difficult to separate work and non-work life on a farm. On the farm it is great to have your children close. They grow up with you. There is the opportunity to have family meals together etc. George and Melanie Matheson enjoy working together on common goals. They think the farm is a wonderful place to raise a family and they appreciate the opportunity to be at home with their children. Even though they both have part-time jobs off the farm, in general they think they are together far more than a family with two full-time jobs off the farm. Ron MacKinley likes to see family members come back year after year, and to see their families growing up being involved with his farm. That's energizing.

Barry Cudmore remembers the early years in his farming career seemed like good years. Prices were reasonable, there was a strong relationship with parents on both sides. It was the best scenario because

his children had a chance to rub shoulders with not only the grandparents, but great grandparents for a while. They would not have had this special opportunity had Barry moved his family back to Edmonton instead of staying on the farm from 1976 onwards. Having children experience farm life that probably 98% of the rest of the population would not have experienced is special. There are very few opportunities that give young people the knowledge of what it is to really work like working side by side on the farm. Very few people and/or youth, see life and death situations, whereas on farms you do. Especially with pigs you are faced constantly with the possibility of death. You come to appreciate death as part of life and also the beginnings of life with the birth of new little piglets.

Elmer MacDonald of MacDonald Brothers, really enjoys seeing the farm being taken over by their sons. Marilyn Affleck finds that working with the two generations together is satisfying.

**NS:** Christina Swetnam's reasons for being part of the family poultry and vegetable farm are associated with her children. "I can work in the office here and when my kids come home from school I can be with them. So instead of them sitting and watching the TV, we come up to the farm where they can explore and use their imaginations. It's a great way to bring up kids."

### **Childhood farm experiences**

**PEI:** Barb Wagner has fond memories of visiting a family member who lived on a farm 'down east' and really loved being on a farm as a child. She thrived on being out in the country. When she goes to visit her congregation members, she loves getting out of the car and smelling the smells on the farm. The first time she went to visit a local farm, she felt like she had gone back to her childhood. The sights and smells of those early days: the hay, animals, and soil.

## **6.3 Social Capital**

### **Work where you live**

**NS:** Jim Burrows got back from a week in Ontario. "I'm glad I don't have to commute 50 miles to work on those highways. There's very little traffic between here and the barn at 4:15 in the morning, the occasional skunk, but that's about it."

Pat and Harold Swinnamer have experience working both off the farm and on and they prefer on-farm work because the personal economics work better. "Now...people have to work away, and they worry about the car payments, and the pollution driving back and forth to the city. I've got more money in my pocket now, than when I was making \$17/hr in the city. I used to leave 5:30 quarter to 6 for Halifax, now at 5:30 I'm out [processing poultry]. I'm healthier. And it's cheaper for me."

Alan Stewart farms because of "the independence [and] the ability to live here. Which is something I wouldn't have if I wanted to pursue the engineering career. The engineering path that I had chosen, meant leaving the province, leaving the country even. So I decided I wanted to stay. And I guess I was foolish enough to think that I could make it as a farmer."

Alex DeNicola supports the idea of working where you live, to reduce costs, improve participation in the community, and reduce your ecological footprint.

## **Down to earth farm people**

**PEI:** Barb Wagner likes the people in her area because they are ‘down to earth’, forthright and honest. She is energized by farmers who are passionate about their land and their farms and just being farmers. Barb works in a ‘stimulating community’ that is small ‘c’ conservative but also quite open-minded about her as the first woman minister in the area 13 years ago and that successful relationship continues today.

**NS:** Sonia Jones notes that Peninsula Farms was fortunate to have been conceived and nurtured in a rural community where business practices reflect the traditional values of generations of hardworking individuals accustomed to dealing shrewdly but honestly with each other, and where the bottom line is not always the primary consideration. The neighbours kept a close eye on them, which she considered to be a mixed blessing. On the whole, the cordiality and helpfulness of the rural people more than made up for the lack of privacy (Jones, 1987).

## **Enjoy having an opinion that counts; positive feedback**

**PEI:** Danny and Christine MacKinnon find it is satisfying to have other farmers ask Danny’s opinion on farming issues. It means a great deal to David and Edith Ling to have people stop in and tell them that they must have something right going on, because so many other farms had terrible run-off and erosion. Their farm didn’t even have a wheel-barrow load of soil move during a heavy downpour of summer rain. This is reinforcement for their decision to move to ecological farming.

For Ron MacKinley, there is nothing better than someone coming to your farm and talking about the potatoes they bought from the farm and saying how good they were to eat. It is very satisfying to know you produced a product that people like and want to get again. Steve Watts receives acknowledgment with repeat customers. Temple and Gail Stewart find it satisfying to give good customer service and to have repeat customers. Barry Cudmore thinks that what your neighbours say about your operation is an indicator of viability. Opinions are sought from Barry on issues and this is a compliment to his ability to operate his farm well.

**NS:** Peninsula Farms sold home-made ice-cream from their farm. Sonia wrote: “Although there were times when I thought I would collapse at the feet of the ice cream churn in the summer heat, the torture proved to be worthwhile, for we all enjoyed the contact we had with our ... customers...there was a keen satisfaction in knowing that our efforts were appreciated.” She also mentions that her husband Gordon got a charge from doing in-store demos and meeting all the Peninsula Farms ‘fans’ face-to-face (Jones, 1987).

Eric Frank enjoys the interaction with his customers at the farmers’ market. “The personal interaction with the people that are going to eat the vegetables that I grow is important to me.” Ed Belzer is losing money on his freezer orders because he delivers the meat to his customers in Halifax. However, he gets satisfaction “when I hear from my customers that they really like the meat they got from me. And it’s not uncommon for me to hear that, ‘when I run out, I just do without, until I can get another side from you, because I don’t eat the other meat’.

## **Tradition**

**PEI:** Doug LeClair notices that people keep farming because of tradition. He also mentions that the down side of tradition is that there is a tremendous amount of emotional burden that goes along with owning a farm. Brenda Penak is amazed by farmers’ attachment to their land, which she attributes partly to their history with that land. George Matheson is totally satisfied to be living back on the farm where he grew up. Melanie says that he would buy every inch of Albion Cross (home community) if it was

available. There is something about the land to him that she doesn't understand but is part of who he is. It's not a power thing, she explains, it's a connectedness to place. Maybe it's some kind of protectiveness to keep things as they were.

*NS:* Elsie Hiltz thinks that the connection with the land and with nature helps with the spiritual viability of farming.

### **Social networks**

*PEI:* One potato producer describes an extremely close knit society of productive kinds of people - the potato bunch. They are nice people and interesting people; all in business; always facing some type of challenge in the industry; part of the horticulture scene from across North America.

Temple and Gail Stewart notice that farming has brought them a lot of friends through farm organizations like the Cattlemen's Association, 4-H, Junior Farmers, and events like angus field days held at their farm and when they attended events at other farms. There is a social side of farming that brings a lot of satisfaction, especially when they were traveling to show cattle around the Maritimes and to the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto.

Karen MacInnis explains that there are many social networks that are important to farmers. These include schools, 4-H, work experience, and Junior Farmer Organization. They are important because the people have similar interests and values. The networks are made up of people who all understand the struggles and successes of farming. The CALL program (Canadian Agricultural Lifetime Leadership) is important to her because all the participants give so much to all the others.

## **7. Farm profile – Elspeth and Peter Wile – Dairy farm and Farm Market Store in Wileville, just outside Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.**

This farm was chosen to profile, not because it is better or worse than other farms, but because the interview with Peter and Elspeth illustrates so many of the points that were raised about farm viability.

### **Farm size and succession**

Elspeth: One issue for us is our farm's size. We don't have any children so for us in the next number of years, the issue of succession of the farm has to be planned for. From a land base point of view, it's questionable if it is viable for the future.

Peter: Unless we moved to the Valley or somewhere else. In this area there are 400 drumlins and agricultural land is only found on the drumlins. So in this area, we got a drumlin in the town of Bridgewater, right here...so we're traveling a 7-mile radius and today it was 12 miles. The biggest fields we have would be 80 acres, with 60 that's decent land and the rest is rocks and rough pasture. We're milking 55 to 60 cows and we don't have the heifers at home – we've farmed them out on another drumlin. We really don't have the land base or the quality of land to expand and be profitable into the future. We're profitable right now at the size we're at but margins are squeezed every year and costs go up, electricity goes up, milk prices are pretty stable.

Elspeth: We can't really get much bigger than we are now. A few cows more, but not a lot bigger. Our barns are too small. The next step for us, which we're not going to take because of our ages, would be to retooling, a new barn...

Peter: We would need a \$2.5 to \$3 million dollar investment...

Elspeth: We couldn't do that in our current location.

Peter: With that land base. And we're not even close enough that we could buy forage.

Elspeth: If we were in the Valley, it would be different. If we could source forage, we wouldn't even buy equipment, we would source it all in.

Peter: And now with the environmental thing, the more you source in, the bigger problem you have with the effluent. So you don't have the land base to balance it.

Elspeth: And we're on a lake so there's a limit...

### **Quota**

Peter: I bought some [quota] from my uncle and I bought out my Dad. And we've bought a lot since then. We've tripled the size of our operation in the last 15 years.

Elspeth: More than \$450,000 worth of quota.

Peter: We've gone with the dairy because of the stable price. It's an expensive way to go but it's been viable.

### **Rationalization of retail**

Peter: The rationalization of the food industry, where you're down to two players and the systems they've put in place has affected a lot of the vegetable and horticultural people – it doesn't allow a market for the small vegetable and produce grower. That's what we got caught in with the apples. We just have a small orchard – 15 to 20 acres – and we used to sell to local stores. But the stores moved to central buying and that left us in a lurch with no market. If you're going to supply the big two [Sobeys and Superstore], you've got the truck it to Moncton and you're competing with someone who is close to Moncton. Transportation costs. And the sheer volume you need. You're



competing with Ontario and Quebec. If you could drop them off at the local store, you could supply a product and not do too badly.

### **Direct market**

Elsbeth: The Market [store] started when we had the orchard going and we were growing quite a few vegetables. The evolution here has been quite dramatic since we started in 1985. At that time we had our own apples, which was the basis for building the market – to get the direct retail return, rather than go through a wholesaler. Then over time, we realized that the farm couldn't subsidize the Market. We could buy a bigger selection of apples at as good or a better price than we could grow them ourselves. Plus we just thought we were getting spread too thinly. It was Peter and I as partners with a lot of hired labour. You were managing hired labour here and at the farm. And the question was that what we really wanted to do? In order to do anything intensive on the horticulture side, you needed labour and we just felt stretched too much. When we started the Market, we had fruit and we were growing quite a few vegetables.

### **Infrastructure:**

[The Wiles stopped producing for their Market store, started buying from other producers, then the delivery infrastructure fell apart.]

Elsbeth: We went through a period of time when the infrastructure was really good for delivery once or twice a week from farms in the Valley, but in the last three years, all of that has changed.

Peter: Because of the rationalization of the food industry.

Elsbeth: ..to two big grocery stores. Now you don't have the wholesalers, and you don't have the truckers delivering to small places like this. This morning, for example, Peter had to go to the Valley to pick up a bunch of stuff. We're using a small local wholesaler here right now, but I believe that in another year, he won't be here. So then where are we going to source some of our stuff so that we don't have to have someone on the road all the time? The transportation is okay in the Valley because the producers are close to the Farm Markets. But when you start moving out of the Valley, it gets expensive and time consuming to truck the stuff.

Peter: I can remember when we sold to the local IGA and the Dominion before it. They merged in with Loblaws. You'd go to the store and you'd see an A.P.Franey truck and another one from a buddy up on the North Mountain. There would be apple trucks, trucks bringing other produce, making deliveries.

Elsbeth: And they would pick up small accounts like us to fill in their order, fill out their load and we were in a great spot. Now none of that happens. Scotian Gold used to do it...

Peter: ...but they signed an exclusive contract with Loblaws, dropping all their other routes.

Elsbeth: We're into our third year of juggling and this month, once you're into August with the corn and potatoes and then the fruits and all that and then into apples. We try to keep it to two times a week – someone from here has to go to the Valley.

### **Critical mass of local farms**

Peter: There are very few local farms.

Elsbeth: I consider the Valley local because it's only 60 kilometres away. But within a five-mile radius we only have one farm – Glen Hebb supplies us with strawberries, broccoli and the cole crops and some apples in the fall. We buy our blueberries from Van Dyke's in Caledonia, the closest blueberry producer. The highbush blueberries come from Cornwall near Mahone Bay. We have a guy who grows beans and peas for us. But really there aren't other farms...

## **Organic potential**

Peter: I think we have a market here that would be a great market for organic produce. But how do you access that? Nobody has been here knocking on our door selling organic produce. I think we would have a market here for certain things.

## **Farm Market store**

Elsbeth: We started selling apples from the farm. Then we put in an in-store bakery and bought produce from other people that were growing stuff. Over the years it has evolved into something quite different. The first year we opened in August of 1985 and then the next year we started selling bedding plants we bought from a local greenhouse and after a couple of years of doing that we realized that we needed much bigger volume and in 1989 we started growing plants to give a better selection. It started because we didn't feel we were getting what we wanted, when we wanted it at the quality we wanted. ...It was a learning curve because we didn't know anything about running a greenhouse. These are things you can learn. That part has really expanded. Over that period of time the margins on the produce have gotten smaller and smaller because the grocery stores are doing a much better job than when we started in 1985. There has been a quantum leap in what the stores are offering – the selection, the quality and the price – obviously *very* competitively priced. Over the years we can see that our margin on produce has slipped and slipped so that we have to look at other things that will add margin – so we added plants and shrubs, we now have a gift line that relates to gardening. The business is different every year – it's really dynamic. The customers love our bread – it's made from scratch – you can't buy it anywhere else, so that's a stable force in everything. That's what people will remember.

## **Consumer preference, local produce, and lack of understanding**

Elsbeth: What people want changes from year to year. Not in the produce area – everyone is going to want hodge-podge vegetables, for example. They will buy lots of strawberries and blueberries. People have no concept of when things are ready, so in April they'll be asking for corn...

Peter: Because they see it in the stores...

Elsbeth: Our dilemma has been over the years...we have tried to carry things only when they are available locally, but I've kind of thrown that out a bit – it's kind of hard when our competition has beans and we don't have beans. So you have to carry some imported ones. People know that they're not local but they are so hungry to make a hodge-podge that they'll buy the imported ones. In some ways we contribute to that idea that food is available at any time, anywhere – but I also realize that if you want to stay in business, you have to offer it to people. It's a very tough road. We've got corn today. We had a good supply the last couple of years. That's important. But corn selling is very different than when we started. Because it wasn't available all year round, people bought corn right into October after Thanksgiving. Now, come Labour Day, it's done, you're done with corn.

Peter: And some of the best corn is only available in September!

Elsbeth: We try to source as much as we can locally and we'll talk about who's behind the product – like Hector Bolivar's beans – he's a old man in his 70s who grow the best beans you'll find anywhere. The stores do too – they feature the farmers right in their flyers. Last year they did. Maritime-wide. Pictures of their suppliers. You almost feel like you can't win. Just watch people in the grocery stores. Strawberries in February. And people don't cook! We started making baked beans and offering them. We were going to do it on weekends but now we do it every day. Peter and I tend to eat in season – this time of year we eat whatever you can pick.

## **Food security**

Peter: Even when they had the drought in the Valley, people would go to the grocery stores and the shelves were full. So people don't see it.

Elsbeth: We've never been short of food...it's hard for people to connect to it.

Peter: Even this mad cow thing – they talk about the low prices and you go to the grocery store and it's still \$16.00 a kilo. How can you buy a steak for \$16 a kilo and these guys are talking about selling beef for 50 cents a pound? I called to book some cows the other day and the guy said he was paying 70 cents per pound dressed weight Number 1 dairy cows. Most dairy cows go for less than Number 1. Two years ago they were up to \$1.30/lb dressed weight.

Elsbeth: In the organizations we are part of we talk about food security, but we don't spend much time thinking about it.

Peter: As far as the quality of food, a lot of organizations are working on that. HACCP programs on the farms they're looking at traceability. The main grocery chains are going to drive that right down through *all* suppliers. I think it's the stores that are pushing it, even more than the CFIA. We heard a story on the weekend about Saputo, one of the main dairy companies is telling its suppliers that they have two years to become 'bio-secure'.

Elsbeth: The stores are requiring that. Kings Produce is working on an extensive traceability program with all their suppliers.

Peter: Then what happens to imported produce? How can they impose these programs overseas?

### **What factors and conditions have allowed you to adapt so well?**

Peter: Our lust for money (laughter...). Actually I think that if you want to have a standard of living that is similar to your neighbour, you have to be adaptable, you have to change in order to do that, be flexible and find out where the most profitable part of your operation is.

Elsbeth: The other factor is, we have a different perspective on the world because we face the consumers every day. Many farmers never do that, they (and I'm thinking about men) don't even go to the grocery stores – they have this love of the land and crops and animals but have no connection with the market side. We tend to be the reverse – we're thinking about the market or marketing all the time, because the production side isn't easy...

### **Relationships**

Elsbeth: We both really like meeting people and talking to people. When you're on a farm you can be very isolated – your work is right there, that's your job, so unless you have to go pick up something... you can be very isolated.

### **Like the challenge**

Elsbeth: Work is really important to me...

Peter: I would say that too...I like put systems together and see them work.

Elsbeth: We both like people. Most days. I love to work and probably the challenge is more important. I get a lot of reward from the challenge of the job. The money is there – you have to survive – but the challenge is the reward. And when you work for yourself, everything you do contributes to the success or lack of it in the operation. We make decisions - we've made some good ones and some bad ones.

Peter: It's how you can work through the bad ones... and turn it around.

### **Other measures of sustainability and viability?**

Elsbeth: You need good health, lots of energy.

Elsbeth: We are on a lake and we've been addressing some of these [environmental concerns]. We've had to invest in all kinds of things to prevent run off from going into the lake. We've spent money that other people haven't spent and we don't get more money for our milk because we've been environmentally responsible.

Peter: We've changed our line of equipment, we've gone to bigger and faster tractors to move it away, to haul it further more economically. But it's a humungous cost. We spread 1,000,000 pounds in one day.

### **Critical mass of farms needed to make farm programs work**

Peter: That [NSFA's Manure brokerage program] is not going to help us. It's like the Dead Livestock program they run in Kings County and Truro area. It doesn't run in Lunenburg County or in Queens. The government subsidizes it too. There's not enough livestock here. So it will be the same with the manure program. They have to broker some out in the Valley. There's enough phosphorous around Kentville that they won't have to put any in the soil for the next 300 years. There's quite a few chicken guys here who sell their manure. We heard a speaker from the States who was talking about how all the inputs and outputs have to be balanced down there. So these guys are going to have a big headache.

## 8. Agricultural Community Viability

*To see farmers go on despite all the challenges. It's amazing.*

Doug LeClair, PEI Federation of Agriculture

*After PvyN [a potato virus], people continued to have hope and use the resources they had. After potato wart, people continued to work through the issues.*

Barb Wagner, United Church Minister

*Diversity of interest and people brings strength to communities. We need to be able to learn in the community; to do economic transactions in the community; to be able to socialize. Community is not just about where I sleep and mow my grass.*

John MacQuarrie, Deputy Minister of Agriculture

*Local neighbourhood stores had a group of chairs around the stove where people socialized as well as bought groceries.*

Phil Ferraro

*Everybody in a community has reliance on each other.*

Barry Cudmore

Agricultural community viability means that these communities can survive shocks and stresses, and thrive in the long term. This means that the communities must be 'resilient'. Resilience reflects the ability of any system to 'bounce back' from shocks and to maintain its integrity. This applies both to ecological systems, in which genuine progress is assessed by the capacity of an ecosystem to maintain its 'health' over time, and to human systems in which socioeconomic structures and communities are able to recover from dramatic changes in the natural resource base or in the overall economic system. Both ecological and human communities may change as a result of stress, but as long as the change is healthy in the long term, they are considered to be resilient (modified from Charles et al., 2002).

A community with strong social capital has good potential to be viable and by extension resilient. Allison Weeks in PEI explains that 'stress' includes poor weather, disasters, or poor prices. "When you see people pulling together to help each other like after a fire, this is resilience. It includes help with cleaning up, materials and/or labour donated to help rebuild. Another example is people volunteer to provide meals and offer general support."

We asked a number of different questions to get a sense of what characterizes a viable agricultural community. What makes agricultural communities resilient? What do we value about them? What do we look forward to? What makes them special? We also discussed examples of particularly viable communities, as well as examples of those that are not so viable. This helps to focus attention on what conditions and qualities lead to a more viable community; one that people *want* to be part of.

In this section, the discussion is divided into **Basics, Sense of Place, Interdependence, Business and Infrastructure, and Participation.**

### 8.1 Basics

#### Friendly & Welcoming

**NS:** When he was growing up, Durell Murphy said that the community he lived in was friendly. “Everyone was friendly. When we were teenagers, you might have a disagreement or a fight with someone but the next day you were buddies again. There were no grudges being held.”

Bill Swetnam points to the welcoming nature of a community as a sign of resilience. “I came here 45 years ago as a complete greenhorn and I still remember how well I was welcomed by people here. There is that close feeling in the community still.”

Jan Chute describes her community as welcoming. “It’s got enough characters in it to keep everybody talking and smiling. It’s got enough heart to make you feel like you’re part of it. We’ve lived in quite a few communities and I quite like this one.”

Sharon Van Milligan describes Lapland. “This really isn’t a farming community anymore. When we moved here you couldn’t have wanted a better community. [People] were very welcoming. I find that it has changed through the years tremendously. Unless you make an effort through the Fire Department and the suppers we put on. People work in Bridgewater and that takes away from community.”

Arthur Pick feels a community is welcoming if people take time to listen and learn from new people. “Understanding develops, and that’s what it’s all about.”

Marjorie Willison agrees. “Whenever I walk around in Spryfield, I always say hello to everyone I meet on the sidewalk, it doesn’t matter if they’re rough looking punks in leather jackets. I say hello. You don’t walk by people and not say hello, it’s just not done.... I have a role in this community of being a ‘hello-er’. The more roles you have, to more resilient you are. Because if one role fails, you have all these other roles. So if I get really old and it’s all I can do to totter down to the village, I’ll still have my ‘hello’ role.” Marjorie also suggested that “when you have really dysfunctional families, you can still have a kid come out of that who is whole and healthy and resilient. It all seemed to boil down to there was at least one adult in that child’s life – a neighbour across the street, a granny – who cared passionately about that child.”

### **Community organizations**

**PEI:** Mitch Murphy knows PEI is blessed with, and takes for granted, the support that is given through organizations like churches, service clubs, Women’s Institutes etc. Temple and Gail Stewart mention that their Women’s Institute is quite active. It [Women’s Institute] looks after the ‘housekeeping’ for the community -- that is, the Roadside Cleanup, community showers, social functions, and maintaining the community hall.

Many Islanders confirmed that it is not unusual for volunteer fire departments have a waiting list of people interested in taking part.

**NS:** Jean Palmeter is a long-time member of the North Grand Pré Women’s Institute and has seen a drop in participation among women younger than her. “We can’t get the young people because they are too involved in the activities of their children. When my children were growing up, I would be talking them to 4-H and maybe to soccer and music, but not so frequently as it is now. They used to have a late bus to bring kids home after after-school activities.”

Volunteer Fire Departments are also taken for granted – until there is a fire, of course. A caller to CBC Radio on November 6, 2003 said he observed that volunteer fire-departments are crucial to the viability of a community. He talked about some areas where the farm folks have moved away, and the land bought

up and big mansions built on it, but now no one is willing to run the volunteer fire departments, which is not a good thing.

## 8.2 Sense of Place

### Community pride

**PEI:** According to Doug LeClair, there is a real sense of pride in being a little individual community. His hometown of Tignish has a determination to sustain itself. There is an ability to fundraise and keep its hospital and rinks going. Allison Weeks mentions the community of York, east of Charlottetown, where everyone takes great care of their properties, making it a beautiful place. It's an example of everyone working together on a common goal. They all care about York. According to Brenda Penak, in a vibrant and alive community, people are proud of where they live, and they have good signage to designate it. She notes that in Emerald, residents are proud of their community and want to share it with others through such events as the Irish Festival.

### A sense of heritage and continuity

**PEI:** Chris MacBeath feels it is important to get youth involved in community activities to understand why the community is the way it is; to have the history explained so the younger ones gain understanding of the values held by the older generation. It also helps to avoid mistakes that might have been made in the past. Older people in his community uphold a strong vision of agriculture as the foundation of the community.

Colleen Younie also thinks that the sense of heritage and a knowledge of the community's past is critically important. She thinks that apathy (lack of desire to work together on a cause) may stem from lack of understanding of community history, or interest in seeing the community continue.

Karen MacInnis commented that in Hunter River, older residents connected with farms understand the heritage of the place. They have been around so long that they know the benefits of keeping their farming community alive, and also *understand what they might lose* – good, dependable neighbours, a place where everyone knows most everyone else, and a sense of trust of the people in the area.

In Justin Rogers' community [Brae], the same farming families have been there since the mid 1800s. There is a long history of community support; a long history and attachment to the community. The most recent family to arrive was in 1900. There could be just one farm on the road, but there are 5 or 6 small ones in a matter of 1-2 miles. There is a pride in staying as they were and are. Justin calls it being "old fashioned".

Marilyn Affleck would really like to get to know the little children in the community. She knew their parents and she sees the children and thinks she should know them too. As her children grew up, they related well to the older people in the community and now that she is a grandmother, she feels that she is missing something by not knowing the little ones well. They miss the everyday events of the older generation. They have no memories of the older neighbours, things like the tricks played at Halloween. The farmers were all together playing tricks on the community while the children were out trick or treating at the homes. People had more creativity in their social activities.

Barry Cudmore's wife wrote a book about the history of the Women's Institute in Brackley Beach from its inception to the present time. It was a way of pulling the community together. She worked on it for four years. It helped to re-establish the Brackley Beach community identity.

Doug LeClair and Katherine Clough both observe that people like to get back to the events in their hometown to stay connected and to take part in special events that might have been part of the growing up years. People still maintain a connection with a community even when they move away. Katherine Clough values the sense of belonging - a sense that you have a relationship not just with the community but with the place - something to live for, something to overcome an obstacle for.

**NS:** Jerry Thomas lives in a close-knit community where church and community were “built from our fathers and forefathers who have been here a long time. There's lots of ties. Everybody automatically knows each other's families.” The community works because “it has a lot of history of farming. You can see by the landmass the homesteads have. Farming was one of the major industries here at one time. But now they're getting pushed out by government because they want urban development of these land masses. But it's a lovely place to live because you have quiet, community involvement, it's a good place to raise kids, there are places for them to play.” Jerry describes why he's proud to be part of his community. “Born and raised here, period... We were put out here on barren land to die... One of our traditions is going to the river to be baptized. But the government put a stop to that. They said that people were contaminating the river. They had to fight for that to come back. You could come out here on the second of July every year and the whole community would be at the water.”

Elsie Hiltz does not choose her role models from among the well-known. She thinks that “in rural communities if you ask us that question, we will say someone in our family. I grew up in a home where there was myself, my parents, my grandparents and my great grandmother, all in that one home until I was 4. My grandmother was in her nineties and I followed her wherever she went – picking blueberries together, visiting – and I can remember her telling me: ‘You can't live your future until you know your past.’ Her family role models affect “what route you take, how you treat people, how you live in your community.” She worries that some of the young people in her community are “losing some of that connection.”

### **Healthy environment**

**PEI:** Brenda Penak is aware that a healthy environment is an important part of a healthy and vibrant community. It is surprising that none of the other people interviewed in PEI or NS mentioned this as an indicator of community viability.

## **8.3 Interdependence**

In response to the question, ‘what is the glue that holds the community together’, many people talked about people relying on each other. In one case, Elspeth Wile said that in a ‘more rural’ community (one that is farther from an urban centre), people relied on each other more.

### **Bonds; working together; sense of belonging**

**PEI:** According to Robert Harding, a resilient community is characterized by a team approach. Everyone is working together and getting everyone involved in some way. Barry Cudmore knows that any time you work with people, there is the chance to offend or cause hard feelings, but the smart people are those that are able to overlook being miffed or snubbed a bit and pull for the common good. He advises that any time you can raise people's level of discussion to talking about issues rather than



personalities, then you are on the right track. It is the same with all relationships, especially when working with volunteers. Mitch Murphy notes that Islanders have a tendency, especially at the farm level, where extended family has played a more predominant role than perhaps elsewhere, to move less quickly to the nuclear family. That reliance on each other has helped with resiliency.

Allison Weeks really enjoys working together with other people who have a similar passion to see agriculture thrive. At the community level, Doug LeClair maintains that there are ‘bonds’ holding people together, but he doesn’t see that communities are resilient in terms of maintaining their farm production. Karen MacInnis points out that communities provide a sense of belonging, a sense of being useful, and doing something worthwhile, like keeping the church yard mowed or the garbage picked up. Janice Whalen and her husband have hired a fellow down the road and they hope that this will help to build a better bond with others in the community. There is a neighbour down the road who is helping her with computer problems and her husband snow blows his lane.

Barry Cudmore and others gave the example of fighting mosquitoes together. A few people contact everyone in community yearly, and there is quite a willingness to work together on a common goal to control the mosquito. Many got to know some new people who actually were neighbours. The building of their community centre was another example of community pulling together to solve a concern for a community hall. They cut the lumber, worked together to build it, and fund raise to pay for it. John MacQuarrie: What makes resilience possible is turning on our social skills and learning how to work together.

**NS:** Elsie Hiltz appreciates the casual sense of belonging that people in her community have. “Even today in our family, we never know on Sunday how many we’re going to have for supper. They just drop in.” Shirley Keddy describes the way people work together even if they’re from different groups. “Everybody basically works together, regardless of whether it’s a Church Supper...They had one up there on Sunday for Mrs. Elliott. She played the organ 67 years in the Church. Everybody came out in full force. They brought food...They all worked together. It wasn’t just Anglicans, it was Baptists, Catholics, everyone.”

Durell Murphy said you would never refuse to help a neighbour, when he was growing up. “In the spring of the year, we would all have eight-foot lengths of wood to saw up. So everybody would get together and go from place to place. You would go to one neighbour’s place, cut up his wood and have a meal there. We spent about three weeks doing that until everybody in the neighbourhood was sawed. Of course you still had your chores to do after you were finished. We did the same thing with grain. So we shared the machines – we would trade back and forth, thrashing grain.”

Marjorie Willison lives in an old agricultural community that is now a suburb of Halifax. She believes a resilient community, among other things, is full of people who feel needed, who have roles to fulfill. “So if you have lots of people feeling needed, that they belong, that this is *their* place, I’m sure that the community as a whole is more resilient because you know other people. When tragedy strikes one of the most important things is to know that you’re not alone.”

### **Reliance on each other**

No person is able to do everything, or be good at everything. Therefore, it is important to ask others to help, and return the favour.

**NS:** Alan Stewart fundamentally believes that “we’re all dependent on each other more than we’d like to think. I think we’ve had a little experiment where we have become less community minded, and I think our collective psyche is... bothered by that now.” Jan Chute describes the group of organic farmers in

the region as a very interdependent group, “and it’s that very dependence that makes it strong. With the organic community, we’re all doing our own thing and we’re working together.”

Jerry Thomas, his father Gordon, and his aunt Pearl were all discussing how pride is important for a community to survive. However, it’s important not to have so much pride that you don’t ask for help when you need it. “That’s when you’re off to yourself and that hurts the whole community because no one wants to deal with you any more... If you got pride and you’re working with everybody, that’s beautiful.”

Arthur Pick gives an example from government. Because there is less money to run agricultural services, it increases the amount of working together that occurs. “Government has less money all the time, we have fewer staff to do what we need to do. The good thing about all of that, all these other agencies have less money and staff too. It forces us all to work together to get joint initiatives. That’s where I get my incentive to come to work every day. There’s great opportunities here.”

Marjorie Willison thinks reliance on each other – even for little things, helps knit community fabric together. Marjorie realized this when her neighbours Manny and Doris moved away. “We knew them, as neighbours. For instance, Manny came over and wanted to borrow a wheel barrow. I apologized for the dreadful state the wheelbarrow was in and he returned it, soldered and straightened and repaired. Doris and I put in a garden together on land that was part of her property, but I looked after it and we worked that out.” When they prepared to move away, Marjorie went over to say goodbye. “I sat in their living room and cried. I was amazed. I think they were a little amazed too. But I was really really sorry to see them move away even though we weren’t close friends, but we relied on each other, we counted on each other for little things. If I had been in a desperate situation, his door would have been the first door I knocked on.”

### **Sharing knowledge**

**PEI:** David and Edith Ling see resilience as the ability of people in the community to share knowledge, get and give advice, compare ideas, and share resources. There is a strength in this knowledge developed as a group. It requires trust and openness. It makes people feel there is always someone there when help is needed; it makes them want to live and stay in the community. Karen MacInnis feels the schools, community schools, and other opportunities for education or transfer of knowledge are all important for community resilience.

### **Reaching out to those in need**

**PEI:** Doug LeClair sees in small communities the reaching out to those who are sick or have lost a loved one. His own family saw that when they had a death. It was very humbling and he wondered, in hindsight, how they would have gotten through the ordeal if it had not been for the community support that was generously provided. He has relatives in urban centres where you go to a funeral home and there are a handful of people attending. In PEI, people are lined up for three blocks. That makes PEI what it is and a great place to live.

David and Edith Ling mentioned that it is important to bring food for people home from the hospital or for someone having a problem. Marg Weeks mentioned two fires in recent years, where people brought food, clothes, furniture, and offered to milk the cows in their barn.

People from other provinces are constantly amazed, according to Mitch Murphy. When he has ministers visiting here especially from large centres, they read in the paper on any given night that there might be three or four benefits for people in need. People who are sick or have a hard time come upon them.

People in a community get together of offer support and help. There is very impressive support for each other.

**NS:** Jan and Alexandra Chute have a lot of respect for the Mennonite community living around them. “They really take care of people in the community. If something happens, they’re there, they help... We had an emergency and we needed 18 cords of wood moved and they were right here, no questions asked. We had a house fire. And when the contractor came to do the renovations, we had to move 18 cords of wood out of the basement. It was just beyond anything that David and I could do in the time that we had to do it. They came down. I built huge pots of beef stew and massive amounts of biscuits... They were all here when the house was burning down. People bringing us tea and coffee, quilts just to get us through.”

Jean Palmeter thinks there are remnants today of the former community spirit she once knew. “People do come together around tragedies though, like when my husband died...the food...I don’t know where it all came from.” Jude Major feels Clam Harbour is a resilient community because of the unspoken rules of comradeship. “When things happen, people support each other. In terms of negative events, like fires and terrible accidents, there’s a basic unspoken understanding, that whatever happens here, your neighbors will be there for you.”

Shirley Keddy describes an accident that happened to one of the people who works at the Ross Farm Museum in New Ross. “Stacy, who used to work here got into an accident on his way to work and everyone was right here to help him. Regardless of who it is the help is always there. If there’s a death in your family, everybody’s there.” Mona Reeves had a similar experience. “Uncle Mort’s house burned down on Christmas Day and it was only a few weeks and they had a house up. That was like that right from the beginning because they couldn’t have survived as settlers if everyone did things on their own. The couldn’t put up a building alone.”

Durell Murphy describes the critical help sometimes needed. “There was other farms but they were at least a mile apart. There was one thing beautiful about it – if anyone had a hardship, everyone else was there to help them. I know just before I was born our house burned down in February. Everyone was there to help. They had lost everything and had six children.”

Tom Van Milligan presents a vision of the ‘economy of care’, which all of these examples are part of. “One of the writers I read a while ago used the term that instead of an ‘economy of growth’, which is the one we function under, perhaps we are going to be forced to go to an ‘economy of care’, where we consider other things so that economic activity takes on a different perspective in terms of its role in our community, in our nation and even in our world. It starts with people, so when people become more informed and begin to understand some of the dynamics at play, then change becomes possible.” When Tom was ill, “I had been slow making hay because I just didn’t have the energy. One Sunday morning they had just had a community BBQ, three guys came down around 10:30 and said: ‘Tom, we’ve heard you’re not doing good. We’re going to help you.’ You wouldn’t hear that in the City. Rural communities are special places.” Sharon also remembers “the time you [Tom] were in the hospital and they arranged a bake sale for us. They brought all the stuff here. That was really nice. They supported us financially.”

Keith Casey recalls when the dairy barn burned down on Christmas Eve, 2002. The next morning, other dairy farmers from all over the province showed up to pick up the milking cows. They took them home to their own farms, milked them and cared for them until we were ready to take them back when the new barn was built. Without a word or any expectation, they just showed up to help out.

**Give and take; neighbours; getting to know each other**

**PEI:** Brenda Penak thinks that the worst thing for a community is not to get along with the neighbours. It is important for people to have the opportunity to get to know, understand, and respect each other for who they are and what they do.

When it's 4-H Cheese sale time, Danny MacKinnon plans on only 2 calls per night because that is his neighbourhood fall visiting time. He generally spends 2 hours at each place. Last year, Danny missed one of the neighbours. This man was very disturbed. Danny didn't miss him intentionally – his wife had told Danny that she had bought the cheese from someone else. So Danny didn't go, and the neighbour was wild. Danny invested in that friendship by going to the ADL plant and buying 10 lbs of cheese and charging him 4-H prices (3 times as much cheese for the price) to keep a good 4-H customer and good will. Danny and Christine's children are the only ones on the road in 4-H, so people look forward to the fall sale to get a visit from the MacKinnon family. This process adds to resiliency and a method for communication and relationship-building. They also feel that by housing all the 4-H dairy calves at their farm, this brings children into the community and adds to the value placed on Brooklyn as a centre for learning and growing.

Justin Rogers describes his community [Brae] as a very traditional PEI farming scene with smaller farms that are run by people who are all good neighbours. The main reason that they are still small is that they don't want to hurt each other's feelings by buying property. Land might have become available and one person may have backed away from buying it because they knew that someone else was interested. This sense of trust and support for each other encourages resilience.

Colleen Younie describes their 'Meet Your Neighbour Night' in Bangor, near Morell (an opportunity for people to get together and meet their neighbours). A summer resident couple from New York got all the community people together for the first one a few years ago. She thinks it's funny that a couple not rooted in the community would be the instigator of community spirit.

**NS:** Tom Van Milligan thinks there is a certain skill associated with the art of visiting. "Before we know it we've lost skills. When we were young our parents would go visiting people. This was a skill you developed. If you lose that skill, you don't do that anymore, it becomes difficult. You don't know how to approach your neighbours anymore, how to be allowed into their little world and allow them into your little world."

### **Honesty; trust**

**PEI:** Where there are difficulties in the agriculture industry, Brenda Penak thinks that being honest and up front about the problem, shows that people are ready and do not fear change. That is positive.

**NS:** Fraser Hunter, when asked what he likes about his community near Antigonish, says he likes the fact that he can leave his tool shed unlocked. "People come and borrow my tools all the time and I don't have to worry about it because I know they will be returned."

## **8.4 Business and Infrastructure**

People mentioned a number of important attributes for business and other infrastructure. It should be located in the community, locally-owned, diversified, and the people who run them need to feel appreciated (just like farmers do). Businesses can be supporting each other (sharing trucking or buying from each other), and it is important to keep money circulating in the community. At its root, an agricultural community needs to also have a minimum number of farmers.

## **Threshold number of farmers relative to rest of population**

*PEI:* George and Melanie Matheson think that the farmers are the workers in the community. They are foundation people in the churches and fire departments and exhibitions. As you lose the farmer, other community activities are lost too. Mitch Murphy: At one time the percentage of the population that was directly or indirectly involved in the agriculture industry was very high. That percentage is in decline. Allison Weeks has noticed that in terms of social fabric, the connections are not as much through families as they once were. People coming into rural areas now are more 'global', and not connected to farming.

*NS:* Duncan McCurdy is thankful that in his community near Truro, there are quite a few viable farms. There are fewer and bigger farms, but the community has lost fewer than in other communities. He estimates a decline from 25 to 20 farms. Jim Burrows lives down the road from Duncan, and sees the disappearance of farms (he estimates a loss from 27 to 17 farms in the last 20 years). "I don't think that there's been a great deal of effect yet, but at some point it's going to reach a threshold where it will not likely be effective to have a local federation of agriculture, because you get so few people. But as of yet, the number hasn't decreased to a point that's hit that threshold, and I don't know what that threshold will be."

Arthur Pick has observed that there needs to be lots of farmers around to interact with the population in order to create understanding. "If you are not a farmer, you at least had a grandfather or somebody who was farmer, or sometime in your early life you would have been on the farm on vacation at least, and had some appreciation for farming and what it was. Now Canadians are at least three generations removed from the farm. They don't have any direct relatives who are farming in a lot of cases, and nationally, less than 2% of the population farms or lives on farms. In Nova Scotia, it is 4% and it's getting closer to the national average. In some places like PEI and Alberta, the proportion's still a little bit higher. When we don't understand something, there's fear there and mistrust."

## **Community infrastructure/business**

*PEI:* Allison Weeks mentioned that grocery stores are now in bigger centres, and schools have been consolidated. He says we need to pay attention to these things because it makes farmers easily isolated. Businesses and public schools that provide for the community are very important because they keep people in the area, and bring people to the area.

Karen MacInnis and Brenda Penak both suggest that places where people meet are important to healthy communities. Community halls, clubs, centres where people meet and care for each other encourage alliances and loyalties through friendship and trust. Karen also mentions the importance of local businesses. The feed mill, gas station, post office etc. are still in her village and provide important services to the people. These people [who run the businesses] feel needed and valued. This must continue or people get tired, give up, and move away.

The community hall is used an amazing amount, according to Temple and Gail Stewart. It is rented out for many functions. It is a centre for activities like anniversary parties, showers and BBQs. It is located across from the church, so it is used for church social functions also (the church doesn't have a kitchen). The church families help maintain the community hall and the grounds around it by helping with fundraising.

One woman near Souris mentioned the Strider's Ski Club, which started off as small community effort and now there is a six mile, groomed, fully lit trail all winter long - community owned. People come from a long distance to ski. The founding members built a community hall. The bottom level is a ski area and the top level is a big community hall for year round events. It is a great gathering place for

community events and socials. From a simple idea, this whole project grew and has made a wonderful resource available to a large geographic area.

Janice Whalen has seen that hockey rinks and sports facilities do a lot to help people work together on a mutual cause. The 'community' gets larger, more by interest in meeting children's needs. Doug LeClair finds arenas are tremendous sources or maintainers of vibrancy in communities. Looking at the vibrant communities in PEI, most of them would have an arena according to Doug. Hockey is so important. It is a place to gather together, to hold other events during the year. Similarly, communities that have a hospital really value that resource. It seems to go right to their core and fibre. It's like trying to extract their firstborn children to try to take away the hospital.

Ron MacKinley sees a chain reaction when community infrastructure is provided. The people move in and then the churches are built. Then more infrastructure and road connections are created. This all builds resilience, giving people what they want and need in services.

Katherine Clough asks how far do you have to drive to go to work from that community? Is there a school in that community? What are the medical services? Do you have to drive into town to get your groceries? Where do you go for things you do and need everyday? Are they available in or close to that community?

Phil Ferraro relates community resilience to the diversity of industries, practices, and cultures within a community. It is built on a web of interconnecting resources and strengths.

*NS:* Bill Swetnam thinks a variety of small businesses helps a community build resilience. "They used to say that when the economy was in rough shape, you needed to get some big industry to come in... but I always took my hat off to small businesses. I think that's what is still needed in Nova Scotia. I think grassroots businesses are really important. For example, we used to have a farm machinery dealer that we used to go to get our machines fixed. But right in this community within 6 miles we had two mechanics who opened up their own shops to service the machinery. I think that makes a difference." He is also glad Kings County has a diverse agricultural mix. "That's one thing that has made this community viable is the diversification of farming in this area. Ours is stronger because of the diversity...not like in PEI."

Jamie Cornetta makes a conscious choice to support local business. "I really try to support local things. But I find people just jump in their car here and drive to wherever. I'm not used to that. I grew up; my family owned a little butcher shop, a little retail store. We'd go to the bakery, we'd go to the butcher shop, and we'd go to the place where you buy vegetables. That's what I like. Now everybody wants to go to Wal-Mart.... I'd rather go to the little shop. And my father tells me on Long Island that they're going back to that. That it's becoming popular again. That people like to be going to a community, and do their shopping, where you have some sort of a conversation with somebody about what you're buying."

Ernie Bolivar thinks small business increases a community's health and resilience. In Bridgewater there is a 'Smart Bridgewater Association' made up of 15 business people. They attract businesses to the area. They have attracted several businesses that employ 25-50 people. "It's small business that is the backbone of any community."

Alexandra Chute is impressed with the social nature of the Wolfville Farmer's Market. Jan Chute thinks what this is telling us is "in today's society in order to keep a sense of community, people are going back and looking at structures that were an integral part of life 50 years ago. We've drifted away from them with the television and the computer and whatever. But people will go back to them."

Claire Doyle lives in an area of high unemployment on Isle Madame, and feels that small businesses like hers are more resilient and ‘fit into the heritage of the community’ better than ‘retraining’ people for jobs that may never exist. Everyone does more than one thing, and all the small businesses try to support each other. Clam Harbour is considered to be resilient because of the variety of activities and infrastructure. There is the sand castle contest, the amazing beach, the community dinners, the genealogy centre, the annual ‘loop sale’, and the new Memory Lane Heritage Village. It “started out as a dream and has become a huge reality, and that has brought together huge numbers of people in the community who would not normally volunteer for things and they’ve really hung together, and a lot of people have gotten to know other people who would not normally come in contact with each other. And that’s been pretty good.”

John and Linda Foote live in Woodville, which they describe as “quite an active little community... We have a community centre, we built a hundred thousand dollar addition on it, we have a double paved tennis court and a ball field, and its all done with volunteer work. We have our own Brownies and Sparks, and Cubs and Beavers and Scouts, and the churches. We used to have a princess for the Apple Blossom parade. And the kids all go to school here, so the kids all know each other.” At the BBQs, new people in the community are asked to contribute, or just gently told to show up to help out.

Jan Chute mentioned that in Waterville, everyone contributing to the volunteer fire department helped build ownership in community infrastructure.

### **Locally controlled business**

**PEI:** Mitch Murphy: Until recently we were more resilient because we were masters of our own destiny and it was Island companies who were the (agricultural) exporters, the marketers. We have lost some of that because the control has gone to companies outside the Island and to the large conglomerates.

**NS:** Eric Frank has worked in the Annapolis Valley agriculture sector for over 35 years. He noted the loss of locally-owned processing capacity to out-of-province companies during that time.

### **Agriculture-specific infrastructure**

**PEI:** John Hutchings notes that statistics from PEI Business Development Inc indicate that PEI is woefully behind the national levels for further processed food. “We send too much raw product out of the province that eventually comes back in, in a processed form.” John MacQuarrie equates viability with moving up the value chain – particularly in PEI. It is not satisfactory for farmers just to produce commodities. He sees that the world does not need PEI’s commodities.

David and Edith Ling depend on the local abattoir where they get their animals processed, for the success of their farm. David personally inspects and watches as his animal goes through the killing and dressing process. If his animal had to go to a large killing plant he would lose control of the animal. In a large plant, once the hide is taken off, he loses control. There is no assurance to guarantee the consumer that the meat is really from the animal he raised - no way to identify it as attached to the farm. There are concerns over the changes in regulations and facilities required for small abattoirs, eg. the need for an inspector for killing. If there are small numbers, the cost of an inspector becomes prohibitive.

Christine and Danny MacKinnon explain that in their community (Brooklyn, near Montague), there is no community centre, store, or focus. It is 6 miles to Montague, which provides very little in agricultural services. When Danny was a boy at Kilmuir, MacGowan’s store nearby had nuts, bolts, fence wire, hay mower, tractor, and even cars. One family ran this store, which was 2 minutes from Danny’s farm. When the business moved 15 km away, Danny had to change their whole attitude to stocking their machinery.

In the early days when they were working on something and were short a bolt, they went to MacGowan's and got any piece needed. Now he has to keep an inventory of items because he can't afford to drive over and get a few things. This affects business management when the services are not handy to the farm. There are parts Danny has in the machine house that the last generation wouldn't ever think of keeping on hand, like having a spare tire for a wagon.

Justin Rogers describes the general store near his farm that just closed down in May of 2003. Everyone was sad to see the store closed. Now people have to go to O'Leary for a loaf of bread etc. Justin bought all the baler twine, feed supplies, bolts, nails, rubber boots, and snacks at this store. Baler twine etc is now bought in O'Leary and the money goes there, instead of staying right in the community. A community with strong resilience has services there for the residents. The store was part of the community for over 100 years. The couple who ran the store were over 80. Had it not been that the store-keepers were so stubborn and determined to stay open, it would have been closed 15 years ago. The store was there for the farmers and it was the farmers who bought their supplies from the store that kept it going. The store was an important part of resilience for the community and everyone felt the loss.

**NS:** Bill Swetnam is very thankful for the veterinary service in Kings County. "As soon as you have a problem, you just make a call." Jan Chute notes that to be viable in organic, the infrastructure has to be developed: the processors, the packers, the mills; the abattoirs; the number of farmers and customers to make delivery channels work.

Laurence Nason recognizes the importance of delivery infrastructure. "West Colchester was once a booming agricultural area. The market flow changed and the infrastructure followed the flow (to Moncton). This centralized infrastructure increased costs for farmers, especially those far from the centre."

George Smith raises cattle in Pictou County and thinks a major stumbling block in beef production is that he and other beef farmers have had to send their cattle to be slaughtered in Quebec and Ontario since Hub Meat Packers in Moncton stopped taking cattle in August 2002.

Kim Tilsley runs a small government inspected abattoir in Margaree, Cape Breton. They have never advertised their custom poultry processing service, but the business has grown over the years just by word of mouth. "People are really glad it's here," she notes. "It's the only one on the [Cape Breton] Island."

### **Having money stay in the community**

**PEI:** A woman who lives near Souris describes a hospital fundraising effort from her community – the first one in 15 years, and the goal is \$375,000 with about 1/3 of it raised already. "This evening the campaign committee is going to go house to house throughout all of Eastern Kings and somehow that kind of activity pulls people together." A joint cause that is very personal in potential usage. The community had some problems in keeping doctors here etc, so this is a way of saying that there is community support: 'we're going to bounce back and be proactive'. The important thing is that the money stays in the community and provides assistance directly to the community. Another example of the need for money to stay in the community is the recent closure of the gym. One of the things that will be clearly demonstrated in a survey of Eastern Kings is concern that the gym recently closed and there is sufficient interest and support to see the gym reopen. A number of people are now going to Montague (25 minute drive) to a gym there three times a week. But they are also going to take the \$150 - 200 for groceries and spend that in Montague at the same time because it is more expedient than driving backwards to Souris. There is an understanding that grocery money needs to flow back into the immediate community by having the gym open again in Souris.



## 8.5 Participation

### Community activities

In the community profiles (Section 9), many people in PEI mentioned that 4-H and church activities bring people together. Also, events such as a ploughing match, festival, exhibition, or Ceilidhs are unifying events that groups of people work together on all year. A number of people also mentioned that activities for youth or activities for mixed ages are very important.

**PEI:** Brenda Penak's example of community resilience is centred in Emerald, where the Irish Festival helped to get people back on their feet after a difficult time (e.g. the potato wart crisis). The hair dressers in the area were saying that there weren't people in the salons because there just wasn't the money. The economic disaster of the potato wart crisis affected everybody. It was a real down time, so people needed a little fun in the community, provided by the Irish Festival. This kind of support between farm and non-farm people was evident.

Allison Weeks thinks community activities help build resilience. Community socials, variety shows, concerts, etc all help people get to know each other and improve their ability to work together. Curling, or card parties are important to get away from the farm. 4-H clubs provide an important opportunity for youth and adults to work together. For example, a 4-H Achievement Day, like with the North River 4-H Club, the whole community comes together for the event to see the livestock show and showmanship competition, have a BBQ, and basically spend the day together. Another example is the Annual Corn Boil in Springvale organized by the local Women's Institute. A local market garden farmer donates corn and people come together for an evening of fresh corn on the cob and lots of fellowship. It is often the only time some neighbours see each other. Communities where success is seen and celebrated give him a lot of energy. Brenda Penak agrees. A community that has pride holds fairs and events that bring people together. Justin Rogers sees that the church is an activity centre for his community. For example, church picnics and crokinole, ball games, snowmobiling.

David and Edith Ling recently held a 'small' 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party for David's mother, and to their surprise, they wound up with 70 people dropping in. Word got around to neighbours and friends and everyone came to celebrate the occasion. There wasn't even an announcement in the paper.

Gail and Temple Stewart talk about activities specifically for youth. Things for the young people to do together makes resiliency possible. Their community is quite close to Charlottetown, but there were always activities for the youth especially with 4-H and church.

Phil Ferraro's community has neighbourhood block parties where people get together; topic dinners which usually revolve around social and environmental issues; and work parties, where neighbours get together for a work bee at rotating homes and have pot luck for food - often with a family oriented soft ball game where there are no rules. Whether it's a walking group or craft group, Barb Wagner thinks these activities develop friendships and bonds than knit the community together. In a farming community, there's always food and people. They go together and Barb enjoys both.

Another woman described being involved in a community play that proved to be a real 'hoot'. They belong to a diners' club - a diverse group - which she instigated. They meet once a month and do international cooking, rotating homes, focusing on the winter to spring months. In the immediate future is a potato event, which is the annual McCain dinner - this is the business community.

**NS:** Alan Stewart sees the weekly Farmers' Market as an event that connects people in his community. "I think its important that if people can come here, not see each other all week, and just reconnect with them again, like clock-work, all summer long, I think we are serving a wonderful purpose."

In the Sheffield Mills area where the Swetnams farm, the Eagle Watch has become a major activity. "The farmers feed the eagles and that attracts a lot of people from all over. There is also a Harvest Fair. In the old days there were more community events, like bridal showers. They usually send a gift now. In our community there is a core group that have been supporting the community for over 40 or 50 years. They are still there, or their children." Jean Palmeter remembers when North Grand Pre was an active farm community, where food and people go together. "When we were fixing this Church up, we were all involved. There was a great community spirit. I fed the men here one day a good old-fashioned farmers dinner."

Ed Belzer: "The rural high school just put on a play this year called, 'The Music Man comes to Musquodoboit', adapted so that the names of the characters had family names that were around the Valley here. My wife is a professional costume-maker. And so she volunteered her time. And they had a grant so that everybody had a budget, so they had gangbusters costumes, the kids rose to the occasion, it was wonderful. Everybody saw it. Somebody said to my wife, you're working hard on those costumes, she said, I'm not making costumes, I'm making community."

### **Meaningful opportunities to increase understanding**

**PEI:** Allison Weeks lists several opportunities to increase understanding or appreciation of farming. Farm vacations where families have the opportunity to stay on a working farm and see what goes on. Other opportunities for both sales and awareness are Open Farm Day in October; Strathgartney Maple Syrup Festival in March; Pumpkin days; U-Pick Christmas Tree operations (e.g. Silver Bells Christmas Tree Farm). Families flock to the country to buy pumpkins and trees, have a great time, and learn about farms.

Marilyn Affleck's minister in the United Church is encouraging people to get to know each other through social activities in the community. It strengthens the commitment to each other and the community. Three churches (denominations) in her area work together on several events. This brings people from neighbouring communities together to plan and complete projects. According to Marilyn, it provides an opportunity for communication and understanding. Nancy Reeves is very involved in her Church. She is a Sunday School teacher and her examples for Sunday School are often based on agriculture.

### **Versatile and adaptable**

**NS:** Kim Tilsley farms in Margaree, Cape Breton, where she has seen a decline over time in numbers of farms. However, "there are still a lot of families that to survive, you do a little of everything. You still see that very strongly there. So you have a lobster license, but you also have several head of cattle, and you also do a little of this, a little of that. Everybody's really good at doing a variety of things, because that's basically what you have to do to survive in rural Cape Breton, well, rural anywhere. People are very versatile."

### **Decentralized decision making**

**PEI:** Barb Wagner thinks it is important that people who are affected by any issue, must be involved in the decisions. It's the same in every 'field'. Brenda Penak shared an example. One community had a 'visioning session'. A large number of people in an auditorium organized into groups and they all brainstormed about the vision for the area and how it could look. All the people who chose to be

involved had a say in how the area could be revitalized. They did work to invigorate the community and implement the plans that they got directly from interested people in the community. Brenda also mentioned the Minister of Agriculture's Panel for the Future of Agriculture as a positive opportunity for people to be involved in the discussion to test possibilities and new solutions to challenges.

### **Taking initiative**

**PEI:** Robert Harding says resilience requires leadership that can effectively address a problem. If a barn burns down, the community gathers together to do a fund-raiser. But someone has to take initiative to begin the effort. Resilient communities have those leaders.

**NS:** If Angela Vanderiet could make a dream come true, "the school grounds would look lush and beautiful because local people were taking care of them. People would take more initiatives, would feel more motivated to participate. I find these days that people wait to receive something, they want to get something instead of giving something."

### **Lack of hierarchy**

**NS:** Fraser Hunter feels that an important thing about his community, there is very little hierarchy. It is helpful when everyone is treated with the same respect, no matter what their occupation is.

### **Communication channels**

**PEI:** Robert Harding points to good communication as an indicator of resilience. This can be by word of mouth, newsletters, telephone committee etc.

**NS:** Bev Patterson, Kim Tilsley, Pat and Harold Swineamer, and others have also mentioned word of mouth as the best advertising for their farm related businesses.

### **High volunteer rate, with committed people**

Some lessons on why people volunteer from the community profiles (Section 9) are highlighted here.

The Emerald, PEI, example shows that it is important to engage people in all activities – everyone is asked to contribute.

In Emerald, PEI, *fun* is part of the mix of things that gets people participating. People are *asked* to participate. In Woodville and Scotsburn, NS, it was mentioned that people are gently asked or *told* to show up and help, with good response.

In Hunter River, older people are more likely to volunteer and show leadership because they understand what they might lose if they don't (good neighbours, trust, everyone knows everyone else).

In Crapaud, PEI, people enjoy accomplishing something together.

## 9. Examples of Thriving Rural Communities

In the discussion of viable agricultural communities, examples of thriving communities arose and are presented here. These community profiles help to explain what conditions and qualities about a community (highlighted in text boxes) help to make it resilient, particularly when they are compared with communities that are not thriving (see Section 10).

### **Emerald, PEI**

*Brenda Penak* describes Emerald (where BBEMA is located) as a ‘happening place’. The Irish Festival attracts hundreds of people to a community of 60. People donate hours and hours of time to make the event happen. BBEMA plans to have an Environmental Scavenger Hunt along the Confederation Trail for the Irish Festival this year. They were asked to participate, and this is a sign of a community that wants to engage people in all activities. People have fun together! When BBEMA moved into their headquarters in December, there was a sign up that welcomed BBEMA to Emerald. People brought in baked goods. Brenda can run across the road and borrow jumper cables if her car doesn’t want to start – that kind of happy, helpful community. A lot of the old-timers are really attached to the Emerald railroad station. It was a real people place because Emerald was a junction. The community recently renovated the Recreation Centre. It is quite a gathering spot for the area for anniversary parties, special dinners and auctions. Long time residents of Emerald are proud of their community, proud of their station, proud of what they can do and they want to share it all with other people. The Confederation Trail, which runs right beside the railway station where BBEMA is located, tends to unite people as they walk, bicycle etc. So many people just drop in to see what’s going on. Over 40 people show up at the BBEMA Open Houses. When times are tough, like during the potato wart crisis, it’s great to have an outlet within the community, like a park or a boardwalk or the Recreation Centre where there will be Irish dancing classes and other events.

#### **Emerald**

- An interest in the history and heritage of the place
- The Irish Festival
- High volunteer rate
- People are asked to participate in all activities
- People are welcoming and helpful
- There are public places to gather and hold events— railroad station, Confederation Trail, recreation centre
- Residents are proud of their community and want to share it with others.

### **Marshfield, PEI**

*Chris MacBeath* describes his community of Marshfield, East of Charlottetown. It is extremely laid-back and old-fashioned -- made up mostly of farm families. Marshfield is well respected because its farmers are looked upon as leaders in different organizations. 4-H Achievement Day is one of the important activities that brings everyone together. All the project work is on display and the calves are shown. It is a full day with families coming together. The Church in the community is a centre for activities for families looking after each other and events like BBQs etc. Everybody knows each other and gets along, which makes it resilient if there is a problem. There is community support of the farmer in tough times. There are not a lot of young children in the community. Older people don’t like to see the land going out of agricultural production and want to keep agriculture as a base for community activity.

#### **Marshfield**

- 4-H and church activities bring people together
- There is community support for farmers in tough times
- Older people maintain a vision of agriculture as the foundation of community

### **Albion Cross, PEI**

The provincial ploughing match, held in Albion Cross, is a unifying event, according to *George and Melanie Matheson*. George is treasurer of the event. A lot of the Directors are farmers. It is an event that is very much run by the people in the area. People come to see it year after year. They were in financial difficulties about 6 years ago, but with new projects, things have been coming around with a few good years. There are new buildings and a dining hall. Ceilidhs run every week which is really helping the finances, and it's a wonderful community event. A Central Kings Community Improvement Committee (CIC) study was completed recently and next thing to 'keeping the seniors in their homes', 'the Ploughing Match continuing' was second on the list of what the community is doing positively. It has a wide appeal to people in the area and to visitors. The Mathesons' four year old and even their baby sitter who is 15, plan to spend three days at the Ploughing Match. The event is keeping the area alive and people work on it together all year round. What has changed this event into a success? George thinks just having people showing strong leadership and staying with it, has built the event up. Plus they have had good weather for the last three or four Fairs and that has made a big difference in attendance, which has meant a positive bank balance, which is really nice when you are the treasurer!

#### **Albion Cross**

- Ploughing match and Ceilidhs, unifying events
- People work on these events all year together

### **Summerside, PEI**

*Colleen Younie* highlights Summerside as a resilient community because it was able to rebuild after the loss of the military base. The town has more strength after the loss, because they now don't have the threat of being a one industry town. They looked for new ideas to build business and have diversified with theaters, College of Piping, a boardwalk with unique shops etc. Resilience doesn't mean just to rebuild what is lost, but bring everyone together to look at what is possible now that a situation has developed. *Katherine Clough* describes the revival of Summerside after the gloom and doom when the base closed. Summerside has thrived since then. There was lots of vision and determination to work with what they had, not be depressed over what they didn't have any more.

#### **Summerside**

- Avoid one-industry towns
- Diversified business base
- Everyone brought together to look at what was possible
- Worked with what they had rather than what they didn't have anymore

### **Crapaud, PEI**

*Colleen Younie* thinks that resilience is very evident in the rebuilding of the Crapaud rink after it collapsed under the weight of ice and snow three years ago. They didn't just replace the old building. The community took time and looked into the needs of the total community and built a community centre with facilities for meetings, an ice surface, a fitness centre etc. They relied on people committed to the cause and willing to donate a tremendous amount of time to fundraise for, and supervise the project.

*Elmer MacDonald* said it would have been easy for the community to wring its hands and say it was too much money and time to rebuild. A priest told him people have a big responsibility to maintain the community that they live in because too many people have allowed their communities to become dormitories – people only sleep there, they don't really *live* there. Resilience is working on a goal like the Crapaud Exhibition and rebuilding of the complex and ultimately the community.

Elmer, who is chairman of the Crapaud Exhibition, enjoys the challenge of having a group of people to work with and accomplish something together. The Crapaud Exhibition celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. It's only small, but it is very important to the whole community by strengthening organizations. It puts money in the hands of the Women's Institute, the Minor Hockey Association, the firemen, 4-H, and the Exhibition Association. Everyone gets a piece of the pie. Do they, as volunteers, get much at the end of the event? They get one free dinner, but more importantly, there is a sense of involvement and appreciation having the community thrive and keep going. These volunteers pull all the parts together and had 2,500-3,000 people hopefully walk out after the event having had a good experience and feeling value for their time.

- Crapaud**
- Adversity caused community to assess new possibilities offered by rebuilding the rink
  - People were committed to seeing a large project through
  - A vision of a community where people *live*, not just *sleep*
  - People enjoy accomplishing something together
  - Exhibition used as an opportunity to strengthen organizations

**Hunter River, PEI**

*Karen MacInnis* describes why she thinks Hunter River is a thriving community. First of all, there is leadership. These people implement programs and projects that the community needs and wants. For example, the Old Library is bustling with activity; the CAP site provides access to the internet (and the world) and there is a place for people to go to be together. It is meeting the needs for education, training, socializing. This library is instilling the desire for more learning. People don't have to leave the community to be in touch with the world. The town has a doctor, a dentist, gas station, post office, school, bakery, senior's home, nursing home, feed mill, other businesses, bed and breakfast, etc. The town meets a wide assortment of needs and has lots of services readily available. Activities for young people through the local church groups provide the opportunity to ask the tough questions in life, and reinforce values like trust, working hard, kindness, generosity, and respect. Because of the diversity of activity, youth are able to find employment in the immediate area without going away. There is lots of home development in the area, but this is a two edged sword as the long-time residents don't always want the change that new people bring.

Neighbours in Hunter River and surrounding communities can be called upon when you need help, and who respond immediately if there is a need. Everybody tends to look out for each other. The school enhances interest in education and provides a location for Community School in the winter time. A wide variety of courses are offered over 10 weeks (crafts, gardening, mechanics etc). People take leadership roles and provide direction through community councils, watershed group, church, healthy community alliance etc. How do people feel like they are part of the community? This is indicated by their willingness to contribute to the activities. People here volunteer to help with activities that increase excitement in the community, like soccer games at the Elmer MacDonald playing field and school events.

- Hunter River**
- A public place for people to go to be together
  - People take leadership roles
  - Diversity of businesses – lots of services
  - Activities for youth
  - Older residents who understand benefits of keeping community alive
  - Youth find employment in the immediate area
  - Community school
  - Many groups to be part of

Profile on community schools: Learning does not only take place in institutions. We proudly boast of the activities of the PEI Community Schools Association. The Department of Education provides the Association with core funding annually. Over 3000 Islanders attend community schools programming each winter across the province. Courses such as guitar, arts, crafts, introductory computer, and many

more are offered to all Islanders. PEI Community Schools have been in existence for over 30 years and depend on volunteers to plan, organize and deliver programs of interest to all age groups. For further information call the PEI Community Schools Association at 892-3445 or check out their web site at [www.peiacs.9cy.com](http://www.peiacs.9cy.com).

**Cornwall/North River, PEI**

*John Hutchings* highlights Cornwall/North River as resilient. In Cornwall/NorthRiver farms are right on top of town, yet there is no strife. There is good communication and respect between farm and non-farm people. Farmers notify residents when spraying etc. This same area has a number of people who are one generation removed from the farm and have set up businesses that support and are supported by farmers, like gas stations, vet clinic, mechanics, and welding shops. The Dutch Inn, a motel, convention centre, and restaurant has hundreds of meetings each year directly related to agriculture and the community uses the facility for family weddings, anniversaries, club brunches etc. A lot of these people are farmers from the surrounding areas. With the ATM Arena Complex, thirteen communities came together to fund raise one third of the cost, and build the Sportsplex. It binds people together in community spirit. Because the farm and non farm population are so closely connected by location, there is always interaction between people. The community is definitely supportive of the farmer. Often there are letters to the editor of the main newspaper The Guardian, from Cornwall people speaking in defense of local farmers when hardships hit the agriculture sector. Whenever there is a farm edition of the local newspaper, area business people are very generous with sponsorship. Farmers, in turn, willingly sponsor hockey teams etc. to support community youth and promote community spirit.

- Cornwall/North River**
- Good communication and respect between farm and non-farm residents - lots of interaction because of proximity of the two
  - Lots of farm-related businesses
  - Community spirit from achieving Sportsplex together

**Wheatley River, PEI**

*Marg Weeks* considers Wheatley River, between New Glasgow and Milton, to be a viable community. It is very rural with farms all around. A variety of businesses have taken root, including an art gallery, animal nutrition store, New Glasgow lobster suppers, the Island Preserve Company, and a community theatre production. There is a very strong 4-H chapter and WI. Lots of summer job opportunities keep youth in the area, and everything seems very well established. To Marg, the next generation have grown up to be the 4-H leaders, the people in the plays etc. Although some people leave, most stay. New people are welcomed.

- Wheatley River**
- Lots of farms
  - Variety of business, including arts
  - Strong community organizations such as 4-H and WI
  - Jobs for youth
  - Most people stay and carry on to mentor new generation of youth
  - Welcoming to new people

**Victoria, PEI**

*John MacQuarrie* describes Victoria because they took the initiative to create their own village plan. It was done without the government. They recognized upfront in their plan, the value and importance of agriculture. As a village it has fisheries and tourism, but it recognized the importance of the agriculture businesses as being supportive of the community. But the village also recognized that there were some issues that had to be dealt with and they set some standards for the

- Victoria**
- Community recognized the importance of agriculture
  - Agricultural businesses were supportive of the community
  - Set standards for farms in the area
  - Everyone’s voice was heard
  - The community decided to make their own plan
  - Understanding of the importance of relationships

agricultural properties that are in the area. The standards are actually above any of the present regulations - standards around crop rotation, use of fields, and nutrient management. It is a fascinating example of what happens when a community sits down together. They made some big decisions in spite of government. Everyone's voice was heard. They understood that it's all about relationships. 'These are the issues and how are we going to take care of them to survive together?' Give a little and gain a lot.

### **Old Barns/Brookfield, NS**

*Duncan McCurdy* describes the area where he farms near Truro as a strong community. "They talk about the average age of farmers going up. ...If you look at our average, its younger people that have taken over the farms. It's continued on through families. There hasn't been a lot of people move into this area, its just people who have been here and most of the younger generation are continuing on."

"On this road, for example, ... Andrew would be about my age (34), Tim's probably 2 or 3 years younger. The next farm down the road, Trevor has just taken over from his father and he is probably a year younger than I am. Our average age through here is far less than the industry average."

"Our community has changed, but not nearly as much as other places. There haven't been many building lots sold. It's not hugely different from when I was going to school, 25 or 30 years ago. There's not a lot more houses or subdivisions comparatively. The houses that have gone in don't tend to go in on farmland so much."

*Jim Burrows*, who also farms in the area, recognizes the risk of encroachment by urbanization. In most cases the farms that have been sold have been sold for agricultural use. Why? "A lot of that goes back to the strength of the dairy industry in that you can afford to pay a reasonable price for the land, where the [other] commodities cannot afford to compete with urbanization. That has helped to keep the urban pressure out of this community. We have purchased land in the past, mainly with that thought in mind, in that, its worth so much as agricultural land, but its also worth something that you don't have urban encroachment."

#### **Old Barns/ Brookfield**

- Younger people taking over farms
- Control on subdivisions and house lots – farms remain
- Dominance of supply-managed agriculture (dairy) where producers have the resources to compete for land with urbanization

### **Scotsburn, NS**

*Elspeth Wile* describes two communities, Scotsburn and Wileville.

"The last place I lived in Pictou County before I moved to Wileville was Scotsburn. It had a real sense of community. They had two huge businesses – the dairy and a lumber mill. That community knew how to work together, there were lots of activities where everyone was included. They made a new person welcome. You were asked to join the group that built the tennis court and the baseball diamond. It was great. But you were asked to join those things. It was a bit more rural, further out, and people relied on each other more. There were a lot of roots there.

In Wileville, next door to Bridgewater, it is a bit transient. "It doesn't really have a community identity. This is average to low income here and very blue collar. So you don't have the diversity. If you're not part of a family here, you're on the outside, more than I felt in Scotsburn. There's nothing to build a community around. There's the Fire Department but we've never been active in that. There's no church in Wileville. There's no school. There's no glue. We calculated once that there are 48 businesses here. It's everything from the plumber to a lumber mill, three farms, everything in between – a restaurant and a hardware store and a funeral home, all because there's a tax advantage to being in the municipality instead of in town. It has infrastructure, but no glue. It's like a suburb.



Resilience is about attitudes. There are a lot of communities here in Lunenburg County where a lot of people have moved in...Petite Riviere, Riverport, Bayport. They have preserved that community identity. There's a school in Riverport that is a real focal point in that community. A lot of things have spun out from the school."

**Scotsburn**

- Community with two large businesses
- Activities where everyone was included
- New people welcomed
- Any initiative, people were asked to pitch in
- More 'rural', therefore people relied on each other more
- A community can have business infrastructure, but no glue

**Waterville, NS**

*Jan and Alexandra Chute* describe their community as a resilient one. The people "have already created strong bonds and are willing to reach out and create more bonds with other people," according to Alexandra. "New people are welcomed, old people are given parties when they go away. It's a very loving community, very humanistic. Even if they don't really care about you because they don't like you, they do care about you as a community member." Jan explains that "the diversity as well as the things people have in common, is what holds community together." She thinks the community "has a lot of activities going on. The daycare, several churches, a big school, the Christian school, the fire hall. They just got a new fire engine and they did the whole tour through the neighbourhood...you could hear them. There were two miles long of fire engines. It was awesome! Everybody was at the end of their driveway, waving." Jan: "everybody's got a brick down there in the Fire Hall with their name on it." Alexandra:

"We contributed to an auction every year." Jan: "it's that whole process [of contributing] that makes everybody feel that it's part of their blood, sweat and tears."

Jan knows the community feels the effects of problems like drought or mad cow disease. "When it affects the whole community like a drought, misery shared is misery halved." Alexandra thinks the glue that holds the community together is people relying on each other. "You just don't know what an individual's strengths are until they are put to the test. So when something bad happens, a flood, a fire, somebody always pops up." When the Chutes had their house fire, they were surprised at the people who stepped forward and did things. "We were shocked. There is a mechanic we had taken our car to maybe once. When our house burnt down, they offered us their house!"

**Waterville**

- Strong bonds between people, but willing to reach out to new people
- Caring for others because of being a community member
- People: diversity as well as 'things in common'
- Lots of activities and community infrastructure
- Everyone contributed to the fire hall; this process of contributing builds ownership in the community infrastructure
- Glue that holds community together is reliance on each other

## 10. Examples of Less Vibrant Communities

During discussions of viable communities, an example of one that is not doing as well would sometimes emerge. They are discussed below without naming them or the people who described them. It is not the intent here to be critical of a community. Rather, the purpose is to inform the discussion of community viability so that we can learn what are some common factors that hinder communities. Each community is described from direct experience by a person who lives/lived there.

### Community A

It is described as being not very resilient or lively. A very large farm business came into the community in the mid-1970s and there are still repercussions from that event. The community is still bearing the scars. The large farm was made up of 10,000 acres and based on beef farming. It was established before the Land Protection Act came into effect. The estate of the original owners in Montreal still own a lot of the land. “Instead of saying ‘management has left, now what can we do to buy our farms back and start our farms again?’ it was ‘woe is me, they have left and what are we going to do?’ People did not take up the challenge of growing on our own again. The community is still reeling from an event that happened 30 years ago. That is not considered to be very resilient. To be resilient, an agricultural community needs to work together – such as sharing equipment or helping each other with hay. That doesn’t happen in this community. Maybe this community lost activities sooner than other places because the large farm business bought up a great number of the smaller farms to make one big one - and they lost all the business that small farms do in the community.”

- Difficulty stems from loss of a significant number of independent farms
- Business generated from those farms was lost
- Loss of community activities
- Working together to share equipment or do hay doesn’t happen

### Community B

This community is described as ‘not very vivacious’. The community does not work together to foster any kind of satisfaction or harmony. There is no Women’s Institute, no community activities, no bridal/baby showers. There is a golf course in the area, but it has not added to the resilience or vibrancy of the community. It has had so many financial troubles that it hasn’t been a positive experience. When a pig barn burned down, only one person came with offers of help or food. There is not much that can be done about the in-fighting between the families. Generations have been practicing it. One family’s great, great grandfather sold another family’s great, great grandfather a side of beef and didn’t get fully paid for it. The grudge is still being held. Things like this stop even the most miniscule amount of budding spirit.

A few kilometers away, there is a very vibrant community where people get together for BBQs and always have a good time together. They are not trying to find fault, rather trying to find ways to make things better. People share baby clothes, there is a lot of visiting, and the organizations (church, rink, school) all support each other. There may be troubles, but everyone tries to see the positives. What pulls them together? Openness and warmth, and all ages socializing together.

- It is important for people in communities to try to make things better rather than hold grudges, which stifles any community spirit
- This community is not vibrant because there is no WI, no community activities, no bridal/baby showers
- The golf course has not added to the community
- People did not rally to help when a barn burned

### **Community C**

“In the community in which our farm is located there is really no place to spend money. There is no bank, no school, no store, no church. People travel to get food and services. Some also live in several communities some distance away from the community in which they work. In the immediate area there are about 3 major employers, whereas 25 years ago there may have been 20, so without these major employers the community would not have a base to keep people here. Also, there is very little diversity in the immediate area. The potato industry would involve probably 95% of people in this area.”

- It is difficult to circulate money in this community because many of the businesses and services that used to be there are gone
- Decline from 20 to 3 employers
- Very little diversity of activity (potatoes 95%)

### **Community D**

There are very few activities in the community. There are hardly any children in the community. “So what is the future of the community?”  
There are only 3 - 4 farmers in the area as farms get larger.

- An identified problem is that there are fewer farms as farms get larger.
- There is little age diversity – hardly any children

## 11. Profiles Of Initiatives That Worked Well To Increase Viability

Here are profiles of initiatives, new and not-so-new, that offered some wisdom about what might help a farm or community to increase viability. These profiles help to explain what conditions and qualities about an initiative (highlighted in text boxes) that help to make it thrive. These initiatives bring to life many of the indicators discussed in previous sections.

### 11.1 Co-operatives

#### **Brooklyn Co-op Feed Mill, Hants County Nova Scotia – employs 3 full-time.**

*The feed mill is described by Bev Patterson, with a few comments from James Card.*

The mill is located in Brooklyn because it used to be the centre of the farming district (Hants West) many years ago. The mill used to be by the river, along with a co-op grocery store and hardware store. In the late 50s and early 60s, the Co-op was supplying about 90% of the feeds to farmers in the area. James Card, a farmer in nearby Centre Burlington, says the feed mill was flanked by the rail station, loading yard, egg-grading station, and other processing infrastructure. There used to be 1-2 carloads of farm products per week shipped out from Brooklyn station. All of this is now gone, except the feed mill, which moved closer to the main road.

#### **Brooklyn Co-op Feed Mill**

- Diversify according to the changing nature of farming.
- Replace imported products by manufacturing them on-site.
- The Mill shows loyalty to farmers, remembering the heritage of the Co-op and the farmers' contributions to it over the years.
- Large conglomerates have made it difficult for the co-op grocery and hardware stores to survive.
- When you take competition away, everyone suffers. When you don't support locally-grown food, it will disappear, leaving fewer choices.
- Information exchange and learning are constantly happening at the Mill, which helps business and keeps the job interesting.
- Satisfaction on the job from the constant challenge.
- Word of mouth advertising works, and saves money.
- Co-operation is helping farmers pool resources and save money.

The co-op principle came into effect, because the farmers needed feed grains. They pooled their resources, set themselves up a mill, and bought their grains as a cooperative. Now Co-op Atlantic out of Moncton services all of the co-op retail outlets, including Brooklyn, throughout the Maritimes. It's still controlled by a Board of Directors – the farmers themselves.

Until the early 90s, the Mill manufactured bulk livestock feed. Bev Patterson, who manages the Mill, saw the potential for retailing bagged feed, and other farm supplies. They had to change with the times because there were fewer farmers growing their own grains needing custom milling services. To succeed, the Mill had to diversify. They also saw an opportunity to manufacture wild bird seed mixes to replace a product the Co-op system was buying elsewhere. They now supply about 75% of the bird seed needs for the Co-op stores in the Maritimes.

Why didn't the Mill shut down? The mill is still needed by the remaining farmers. According to Bev, Co-op has a commitment to the local farmers, and the local people who obviously sank money into the Co-op system for years. And there is loyalty there. While they're operating in the black, and providing a service, they'll stay.

What is the role of the Co-op? Probably not so much today as it would have 10 or 15 years ago, a lot of communities were centred around a Co-op store, like a feed mill or a grocery/hardware type outlet. 25 or

30 years ago, between Brooklyn and Truro, there were 4 different co-ops that were retailing feed, groceries, hardware and such. But the larger conglomerates have forced them out. Now, Co-op Atlantic does offer the services of a livestock nutritionist, a feed sales rep, and credit services to its clients. Co-op Atlantic also took the initiative to differentiate and sell good quality local beef in its grocery stores under the Atlantic Tender Beef label.

What is the economic impact? According to Bev, the most important thing is that when you take the competition away, everyone suffers. He uses the example of buying groceries. “I expect that the percentage would be very high for those who do not know [where their food comes from], and have not been taught that unless you’re buying local products, such as beef, apples, pears, whatever; one day it will be gone. And of course as things like that disappear, we all pay the price one way or another.”

The Mill is considered to be a place for information exchange. Bev knows “if I want your business back, I’ve got to be able to provide that service, hopefully in a professional manner, so that you will come back. ...I had questions asked of me that I had no idea what the farmer was talking about. But I went right back to the farmer, and said ‘You tell me, then we’ll both learn’, and that’s been my attitude throughout my career with co-op is to learn. There’s not a day that goes by that I don’t learn something.”

For Bev, the job is satisfying because it’s challenging. “When I leave my job, I don’t really leave it. When I’m on my way home, I’m thinking, what could I have done better today? That’s what makes me tick.” Bev is very positive about the Mill, and is willing to anticipate and respond to change.

Most advertising is by word of mouth. “I think if you do a good job, it’s just as effective as if you go out with the thousand dollar flyer...I know good news takes a lot longer to travel, but when it reaches people it sticks there.”

How do farms and co-ops support each other? “We hope to be providing the goods at the lowest cost, on a timely basis.” For example, the Mill takes orders for seeds from all the farmers and compiles them into one big order. When buying in mass, the price is better. All the costs are reduced – administrative, transport, and handling charges. This is the co-op system. Pooling our requirements and resources, and reducing costs. Bev also helps farmers in the area where he lives reduce costs: “When I leave at night, I put feed in the back of my truck. They pick it up in my door yard. I’ve been doing that for years. I have customers in the Kennetcook area. I bring their grains in (to the Mill). When I come by in the morning, his truck is loaded with grain, I drop my truck off, jump in his truck and bring his truck to work. We mill his grain and take it back. Without that service, he wouldn’t be using our operation.”

### **Northumberland Co-op**

*Mike Isenor describes the birth and day to day operation of Northumberland.* In the late 70s there was a fairly active community of sheep producers. They came from all over the province to attend the sheep fair (a breeding stock sale). Of course, after a lot of people got into sheep, suddenly the price dropped and it was difficult to get a consistently good price for lambs at the auctions. Some weeks the price could be good, and the next week it could be devastating. Producers got together to organize something where they could control their own market and prices. One of the main driving forces behind it was Brewster Kneen. He was a great organizer and could get people enthusiastic about doing things that they thought they couldn’t do. It was about 1980 when we initiated the Farmer’s Market Project to see if there was a market for lamb meat in Halifax. We would get 30-35 lambs butchered and cut up and take them into the farmers market on Saturday at 5 am. There were line-ups of people in the morning waiting to buy our lamb and we were always sold out. On the basis of that experiment, it was established that there was a demand for lamb and we should be able to organize a market for it.

Around the same time, Frank Sobey and the whole Sobey family were great lovers of lamb. Frank had just hired a new supervisor for all his meats departments from England, Ron Young. Frank took Ron in his big car and drove him around the farms in Pictou County. He used to say to Ron “why don’t we have any fresh NS lamb in our stores? I want those lambs in my stores.” The timing was superb. Ron was very supportive of us. He wanted us to succeed.

- Northumberland**
- Attempt by co-op to generate better prices for producers
  - Farmer’s market is an incubator for new business, and test market
  - Example of retailer support needed to get an initiative off the ground; retailer *wanted* the initiative to work (in the beginning)
  - Purpose: to get as much money as possible and a steady, predictable price to the farmers for their lambs, not the lowest price to farmers
  - Retailers later cut out direct sales to individual stores, preferring deliveries to a warehouse that supplies the region. This is problematic for meat coming from provincially inspected abattoirs which can only supply meat to stores within the province (regulations).
  - Importance of having abattoir – bought it and formed another co-op.
  - Customer loyalty – they wanted fresh lamb, locally produced.
  - Diversity of markets and control over marketing is important.
  - Have to increase the market just to remain the same size.
  - Farms: small income; or do a combination of different things.
  - Working together through Northumberland brings market stability.
  - Co-op: a profit allocation goes back to farmers.

In the beginning the problem was having a year’s supply. Traditionally people had their lambs in the late spring, and would go to market in late fall. No lambs were available from December until July. We had to work with the sheep producers to get a consistent year-round supply. This was the biggest challenge. As soon as we got started Ron Young gave us four of their biggest stores in Halifax. In the following weeks we’d get a few more lambs and we’d add a store until we were doing pretty well all their stores in the Halifax Metro area then Truro and New Glasgow. As soon as we had lambs available Ron would tell us where to send them.

In 1982 we officially incorporated as a co-op, so we had our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary last fall. All the farmers own the co-op. I’m the manager, but there’s no owner. Members have equal say as to how the co-op is run. Directors are selected from the membership at our annual meetings, and they make the decisions with the manager. The idea, right from the beginning was to return as much money as possible to the farmers. Our objective was to maintain a steady price that producers could count on; that they could work toward. They knew what they were going to get paid if they had lambs ready in May, for example. That only worked when you took the profit motive away. It was also a big advantage that Sobey’s was so supportive in the beginning because they wanted it to work too. There wasn’t a hassle with them about prices.

In the beginning when we had too many lambs in the fall, Sobey’s advertised them in their flyers, and they sold them for the price basically that we charged them. They were very supportive, and that got us on our feet. Once it was seen that we could actually supply the lambs and co-ordinate and deliver, we were up and running. Within a year or so we were delivering to all the Sobey’s stores in Nova Scotia. Then we started to add other stores like Dominion and IGA, and independent stores and restaurants. For a long time, though, Sobey’s was the major customer.

After Ron Young left the scene, Sobey’s became a large corporation, and the idea of supporting Northumberland was lost. David Sobey basically stuck to us, even when some of the big supervisors were thinking of doing some things differently that were counter to our best interest. But eventually they wanted everything to come through their warehouses in Debert instead of direct sales to individual stores.

And they wanted more processing – pre-cut lamb instead of whole carcasses, which we did, and then they wanted it put on trays for individual portions and delivered through the warehouse. Delivering directly to the warehouse is problematic for us because stores from all over the region would pull stock out of the warehouse, and because we are provincially inspected, we are only permitted to sell within the province.

After operating for about 4 years, Northumberland purchased the abattoir that we were getting our lambs killed in. So we formed a new co-op. The same members formed the Brookside Abattoir Co-op. At that time we felt we had really good quality, and reputation. When Sobey's started to go to other suppliers of lamb, customers left Sobey's for the lamb and went over to the stores that were still buying directly from us. We still sold the same number of lambs. But Sobey's share of our business was down to about 25% and Super Stores was up to about 50 or 60% and the independents were somewhere in between. But now Super Store is demanding central warehousing, so we are in the same challenge.

A customer goes to a grocery store and looks at the lamb from New Zealand or Ontario and it's cut up and sealed in a tube package, it doesn't look appealing. They want fresh lamb from Nova Scotia that's been delivered the day before. The local lamb is far superior to imported lamb. In other parts of the world, New Zealand lamb is thought to be the best lamb, but not here. It's the flavour and the tenderness and the freshness.

Restaurants and a couple of little independent stores make up about 40% of our sales at this time. Sobey's would make up about 35% right now, and Super Store makes up 25%. Over the last few years we've been building on restaurants. We had to be in charge of marketing our own lambs, because if you leave it to someone else they're not looking after your interest. They could switch to another supplier at any time. If that happens we're back to where we started and the sheep industry wouldn't stand a chance in the province. It wouldn't exist. By being our own marketers, and by diversifying, we become more insulated from a store deciding that they're not going to buy from us. We've been vulnerable to that and we're lucky that we have not been wiped out. If they change supervisors and then say 'lets try this' then - - bingo -- we could be wiped out. If you're selling 90% of your product to one place and all of a sudden you're cut off and you're supply is ready to go, what are you going to do? You're always having to try to increase the market in order to stay the same, it shifts around so much.

### ***Growers***

We have about 100 shippers (producers of lamb) on our list, people that have sold to us in the last few years. We're usually able to accommodate most people who have lambs, or raise the kind of lambs we're looking for. As a co-op, market standards are set based on what we need. We try to let our producers know what our customers are asking for. We pay according to production that most closely fits the majority of our market demand. We try to hit the premium price for the lambs in highest demand, or lambs with the best return.

Some of our biggest producers would have 4 or 5 hundred ewes, producing 6 to 7 hundred lambs a year, down to people with 10-15 sheep selling you 20 lambs a year. The average would be people selling you about 60 – 70 lambs a year. These would be people where sheep farming is not their main income. Sheep farming is not something you'll get rich at. I don't really believe that the way things are now that you can be viable strictly on sheep farming. Even with 500 ewes. There are paper scenarios that show it can be done, and theoretically it can. But everything has to go right. I see it more as something people can do to enable them to stay where they are, and make a living along with something else. It has to be something they really like to do. There are a few people with large numbers doing it. But its pretty darn hard, and you'd have to live on a pretty small income I would think.

### ***Centralization and amalgamation vs. a distinct product***

Most of the farming here is in competition with world prices. If you can't produce enough to put tractor-trailer loads of this product in the warehouses to distribute to all the stores, you can't sell any. Unless you go to a farmers market or an independent store. The only way to be viable in the food industry is to be centralized with a huge market and all the raw materials at the most economical advantage. You have to have the cheapest inputs. Our inputs aren't the cheapest (in Nova Scotia). We don't have enough market. There's not enough demand for the products to ever get big enough. Northumberland survives because NS lamb is perceived as a distinct product by our customers. You can't replace it with Ontario lamb or NZ lamb. New Zealand prices are very low. If we were trying to sell at those prices, then all the farmers would quit raising lambs. For instance New Zealand legs of lamb often sell for \$2.99/lb and ours sell for \$4.99/lb in the stores.

Since Northumberland has operated, people have received on average, a way better price than they would have without Northumberland. For a number of sheep producers operating independently, it's really tricky to balance your supply with the demand. Working together through Northumberland brings stability. At this point, there are the same number, or perhaps fewer farms raising sheep, but in the past lambs were raised up as feeders and shipped out of the province to be finished in other places, like Ontario. Now a lot more of the lambs are finished in the province.

People who buy lamb are willing to pay more money for their meat because it's something they like. Probably the majority of lamb is bought by people from other areas of the world who ate lamb prior to coming to Canada. People who are used to eating lamb can't get used to eating watery chicken

In 2002, 5,000 lambs went through Northumberland. Although the price varies a bit, if we get \$3.65/lb from the store, the farmer gets about \$2.95. We need 65 to 70 cents a pound to operate Northumberland. One of the reasons why lamb has not really competed very well with other meats is that it's not very economical to process because of the small size. It's a lot more expensive to process one lamb than it is to process a cow, per pound.

The current challenge is, in the last few months, reduced sales compared to last year. Super Store decided to switch to lamb pre-cut, store it in a warehouse, and bring it in from a Federal plant. They were 50-60% of our market before doing that, and now they're down to about 30%. We still sell to some of the stores because they put up a fuss that they needed our lamb for certain customers. The other supplier is out there to make a profit; their reason for being is not for the welfare of the sheep farmer, and the price to the sheep farmer will fall. That's the difference. If Northumberland makes a profit it's returned to the farmers. If we do make extra money we have a profit allocation that is paid back to all the farmers in accordance with how many lambs they produce. So there's no incentive for Northumberland to make a profit for themselves, and that's what makes us unique.

If, in the future, all meat has to be federally inspected we'd be in big trouble because there is only one federal plant in the Maritimes that will kill lambs. To be a Federal plant you have to be a pretty big size, a lot bigger than we are. You have to have a lot more than lamb, and generally a Federal plant finds they are not doing enough lamb to justify the cost of keeping a line open for it so, they don't want to bother with lamb.

### **11.2 4-H PEI and NS**

***PEI:*** Chris MacBeath describes his experience with 4-H. He has learned a tremendous amount from 4-H projects on production and showing of cattle, which makes him feel more skilled with cattle and able to contribute to decision-making on the farm. 4-H has given him confidence to be involved in community activities and has encouraged development of leadership skills through holding different executive positions in the Club. Chris was involved in conference planning with the Provincial 4-H Office and saw



how things need to be organized to run smoothly. He appreciates details of a well-run event, which transfers back to the management of things on the farm and in the community. He had exposure to all the different commodities, which allowed him to make friends and contacts, as well as develop a respect for all areas of agriculture. He sold a heifer to a buddy from a discussion at a 4-H event. Chris works and learns with other people who have a passion for agriculture. He can see how others operate and what works that could be used on the home farm. As a result of 4-H award trips, Chris has met other farmers in Canada and the US, and has developed a greater appreciation for agriculture in Canada as a whole and the US. All farmers have similar problems, challenges, and dreams. Chris thinks one of the important things about 4-H is it 'mixes the generations'. People of all ages look forward to being together for Achievement Day.

#### 4-H

- Leadership and organizational skills development
- Contacts and networking lead to sales
- Sharing information
- Encourages communication between generations
- Young people excited about farming
- Develop communication skills and community pride
- Create alliances among groups in order to accomplish something big. Reliance on each other.
- 4-H creates things for young people in rural areas to do. Activities for youth.
- Education – developing communication skills – speaking in public.
- A chance to learn where food comes from. Meaningful opportunities to increase understanding.
- It is common for the older kids to help the younger kids in 4-H.
- Fosters co-operation among the kids, and a balance between competition and co-operation.
- The descriptions of 4-H indicate that this organization is able to do many things that the public school system struggles to achieve, such as produce kids that are confident, co-operative, have common sense, who are good at communicating, have self-discipline, and practical skills.
- The public speaking and confidence is nurtured by the judging component of 4-H, where the kids are asked to give the reasons for their judging choices.
- The values 4-H fosters in young people are important for farm and community viability. These include consistency, attention to detail, and community participation. Also, leadership; willingness; enthusiasm

*Colleen Younie* is a 4-H leader and parent. Her 6 children have all been 4-H members in many projects, travel programs and activities. She thinks 4-H is a great developer of communication skills and community pride.

*Danny MacKinnon* is a dairy farmer and 4-H leader. He takes the time to go to 4-H shows with his son who loves them. The kids his son chums with as a result of 4-H are very impressive in Danny's mind. His children are getting to know other farm children through 4-H and this is very supportive of the farming community in general and encouraging for future friendships in farming.

*Nancy Reeves* had a great opportunity in 2002 to work with Morell Consolidated School. She was invited to talk to the Morell 4-H Club leader who was spearheading a new idea on agriculture awareness. An agriculture school fair - based on the concept that even though communities in PEI are rural, they are not necessarily agriculturally based or the residents are not necessarily well informed on agriculture. Nancy was amazed that the small 4-H Club took on such a big project. They started to create alliances. They pulled in the school principal, senior high geography class, 4-H leaders, 4-H summer students, Dept of Agriculture and Forestry Staff, and Agriculture-Agrifood Canada. They had a gymnasium full of displays of agricultural businesses and opportunities; outside were beef and dairy calves, horses, poultry, goats. Success was based on commitment and partnerships; not trying to do it all yourself. It was such a

positive story for agriculture that the PEI Agriculture Awareness Committee gave that school their Agriculture Education Award for 2002, and Nancy just found out that they will have a second agriculture day on Sept 19, 2003, which also strongly demonstrates resilience, because since the event last year, the man who spearheaded the whole thing has passed away and now the event is going to happen again - the cause taken up by the community probably in his memory.

*Gail and Temple Stewart's* community always had things for the young people to do and keep busy. Especially 4-H. What 4-H has done for their girls was 'unbelievable' in Gail and Temple's eyes. For example, the spin-off from 4-H training. When their oldest daughter had finished university, she applied for a job with Farm Credit Corp. She studied plant science. The job she applied for and got, had nothing really to do with what she studied, so she asked why she was even chosen for an interview; the answer was 'her 4-H background'. The family really felt that the communication skills were greatly developed through 4-H. Gail feels that she has a handicap because she lacks the confidence to speak in a meeting or to a group. She was very eager that her children gain the skills to speak in public and they accomplished this through 4-H. It is no problem for them now. Parents really need to support their children in encouraging them to participate and do the public speaking. Even at their daughter's wedding, she had her beef 4-H leader propose the toast to the bride. She thought that there was no one like him (Alex Dixon). He took such interest in the accomplishments of the members. He would visit the homes and the project animals of the 4-H participants on an ongoing basis. He was very interested in building success into each member's 4-H year. He is a great role model. He picked up where his mother left off. She was a successful 4-H leader for many, many years.

*NS: Ruth Lapp describes her visit to a 4-H event.* At the invitation of Lois Brown, of Scotch Village, I attended a 4-H Goat and Sheep Judging clinic at her farm. A group of people around a lamb were learning about what needed to be attended to in a 4-H judging competition. Lois Brown was the instructor. She explained the 'ideal type' of a lamb. General appearance, and form were explained in great detail. For example, the importance of a wide and full breast, ribs 'well sprung and smoothly and uniformly covered with a minimum amount of firm flesh'. Each child and their accompanying adult held a sheet of paper entitled 'Scoring Sheep' which had a diagram of a sheep, and points to consider. The object of the clinic was to highlight the various aspects that the children would be judging in competition, where they would be independently examining lambs for their potential breeding qualities and market value.

At the same time the sheep/lamb scoring was being explained, another group of children and adults were gathered around a goat. Harlene Wiseman of Rawdon 4-H was the instructor. She encouraged the children to *think*, and make judgments based on 'common sense', and consideration of the 'purpose' of the animal. The children were also instructed on the formalities of format required in making their presentation to the judges... "I place this class of Dorset ewes..." Showing confidence in presenting information and maintaining good posture were highly stressed.

The clinic lasted about one hour, with a lot of information, as well as opportunity for hands-on learning. I was amazed. The 4-H kids at the clinic ranged in age from 6 to 18. (Age 8 is the youngest in 4-H; younger children are referred to as 'clover buds'). One small six-year-old boy, who appeared quite confident around the sheep, has apparently been showing and judging sheep since he was four.

*Harlene Wiseman* finds that most children (even in rural based schools) have no idea where their food comes from. "When I was growing up, I knew where food came from." The kids don't know how to make decisions about their food, or even that pork comes from a pig.

Harlene explained that there has been a loss of government funding and support in recent years and that many projects, and programming has had to be cut. 4-H is still under the auspices of Dept. of

Agriculture. Now it is left mostly to the individual clubs to run projects and programming with little financial support. She gave the example of 4-H Night in Nova Scotia, a social event, that she said, “I wouldn’t have missed when I was a kid”, but now it is not that well attended. When she was a kid, “4-H was the thing to do”, but now there are so many competing activities for kids that 4-H is not as well attended as it used to be.

She believes that 4-H can serve a role in fostering greater understanding and appreciation of the fact that rural areas are places where our food is produced, and that these are working landscapes. Harlene also discussed how 4-H is becoming more attuned to the concerns of environmentalists, and is incorporating this knowledge into its programming and projects. Projects are chosen based on what the kids are interested in learning, and also who is available in the community to teach or provide leadership. 4-H depends heavily on volunteer work.

Harlene is very concerned about the loss of working farms, and farmer’s knowledge. Because of the decline in roadside farm stands, there has been a significant loss of communication between farmer and the general public.

*Gwen Jones* has been a 4-H leader for years. She knew nothing about it coming to Canada, because it didn’t exist in Britain. Her son went to school in the city where his parents worked, and wasn’t involved in sports, so 4-H seemed like a good option for meeting other kids. He started when he was 10, even though he was a bit timid about it and really didn’t want to go. He started with a sheep project because they raised sheep at home. They didn’t have any leaders for sheep. Gwen and her husband stepped in as leaders. “We were standing there with the leader’s manual saying, ‘um, look, it says you walk around in a circle, why don’t you try that’ (laughing). We figured out roughly what he was to do. When it came to achievement day, the lamb got away from him, and leapt over the picnic tables and galloped off through the crowd. Everybody thought it was a riot. Everybody had a good time, and he loved it.

Then he decided that he could show it at the Hants county exhibition. There were a couple of other kids in 4-H there. The Oultons in Windsor. Well, Wayne Oulton was in 4-H at that time, and they were big guys, 17 or 18, and they had sheep, and they were expert. They knew exactly what to do. They helped him, which was common in 4-H. They made him feel welcome. There’s just been no looking back since then.” Gwen says it is common for people to become involved in 4-H because of their kids. Everyone who came into it from the outside had experiences like the one she described. “The kids welcome your kid in, and help them along as opposed to being sort of rabid, in your face competitive. The kids really respond to it. Gwen stayed in 4-H because “we’ve got a really nice bunch of kids here... We’ve got 3 or 4 farm families – dairy farms. They like working with animals. They freely offer their animals for any of the other kids to use. So even if the kids don’t come from a farm, they can use a high-quality dairy cow. ...They do things together as a group. They’re just a joy to work with.”

### **Benefits of 4-H**

Gwen thinks “you get far less out of organized sports than you do out of 4-H.” Why? “For one thing it has a balance of competitive and non-competitive. Its essentially non-competitive. You do your best throughout the year while your working on your projects, and then you can move into competition at the County Exhibition. The winners move on to the provincial show and yes you get competition there all right! But, its not all just win, win, win... Our motto is ‘learn to do by doing’, so just *do* these things! Learn a new skill...raise an animal, don’t just show it. Raise it! ...It gives them an enormous amount of self-confidence and self-discipline in ways they don’t realize they’re disciplining themselves. But if they have to go out there and feed their animal every day, then, yes they are. Or if they ‘have to’ finish a project in a given time period, or they have to attend meetings. They have a public speaking requirement and a judging requirement where they judge four items in whatever project they’re in, and give the reasons to a judge, so its another form of public speaking...It’s really challenging. And of course less is

expected of the younger ones than the older ones. But they get to know year by year. They get better and better at doing the same tasks... At the AC (Nova Scotia Agricultural College)... they can always pick [the 4-H kids] out by their class presentations. Certainly our son's entire career choice (veterinarian) evolved from working with animals and 4-H."

### **Raising market animals**

Gwen describes the market animal project in which the kids become fully aware that the animals they raise eventually become food. In the beef, sheep and poultry projects, after the kids have been in a project for a couple of years and they have learned about the animals, they can take a market animal project, where they raise the animal to market size and weight to be auctioned off at the provincial show. The kids get to keep the money and of course people are more willing to bid on a 4-H animal.

### **Benefits to the community**

Gwen notices quite often there will be parents who will hang around while project work is going on, hoping to be invited in. Hoping to do some hands on stuff. That feeds back into the communities. The fact that families know what's going on as opposed to communities where parents seem to inhabit another world. "This community has always been interested in 4-H and what the kids are doing...A number of clubs have made a big effort to have a community Achievement Day, or to do things for the community. I think that's something that's really excellent, and should be encouraged more."

### **4-H values**

4-H fosters many values including consistency, attention to detail, and community participation. The notion of consistency, that animals rely on you is something that Gwen thinks is only ever imparted by having to get up early in the morning and doing it day after day. 4-H also helps the kids develop attention to detail through the judging projects. They are learning to judge the animals for a number of different important qualities. 4-H also, according to Gwen, is valuing young people for what they can actually do and accomplish. 4-H produces well rounded kids. The longer they stay in a program, the more it fosters a leadership ability, although the kids don't realize it themselves. 4-H "fosters the kind of person that makes a good member of the community."

### **Shining moments**

"Every year we do two things that I think are really important. One is taking animals to the Museum (Halifax) on the March break, where maybe 20 or 30 thousand people may come through in the course of that period. Probably 90% of them don't know a sheep from a goat. The kids look after the animals, and talk to the public. The second is, we do the same thing at the Kermesse [IWK Children's Hospital fundraising fair]." Gwen lights up at the enthusiasm of the kids for these two projects. Initially the 4-H group was taking the animals to the Kermesse for a petting zoo. Entertainment. But then they decided to help raise money for the hospital. "Last year we made little cardboard sheep, and we wrapped [roaving] around them to make wooly sheep bodies, and we're selling them for a dollar a piece... All the kids were sitting there making these things, and leading the lambs around, and talking to the kids at the fair. I think that's what stands out for me, because all you have to do is suggest something and the kids just take right off. Its enthusiasm. It's a willingness to do it. Its not 'we have to go down there, what a drag, but 'Yeah, yeah, yeah!'

## **11.3 Atlantic Tender Beef Classic**

*PEI: Duane MacDonald:* An example of community resilience would be the Atlantic Tender Beef Programme. Seven years ago a consultant came in and told the beef producers that the beef industry was going to disappear if they didn't find a new way to market their beef. The development of a branded beef program called Atlantic Tender Beef and also the plan for a beef processing plant for the Maritime

provinces was born. Farmers were asked to invest in the plant both in terms of money (shares) and in terms of committing cattle to be slaughtered. The concept had enough sales of ‘hooks’ (commitment to provide cattle to the plant), and came into being in July 2003. Duane bought 160 shares (hooks) in the new beef plant to be built in the next year. Even though there was despair in the beef industry for a while, notwithstanding the current BSE crisis, resiliency was shown in the fact that they found another way to market their product according to strict protocols through Coop Atlantic. In PEI, farmers are producing a quality product - last year at the Calgary Stampede, Atlantic Tender Beef was served - because it won the Grand Prix prize - which is the equivalent of the Stanley Cup in the new product showcase. Ten years ago, if someone had said that there would be PEI beef served at the Calgary Stampede, nobody would have believed them - but that was accomplished, even though there isn’t the economy of scale found in Alberta, there are other positive attributes to Island beef including excellent depth of animal breeding and husbandry and Island farmers who have found other ways to produce and feed the cattle - that is resilience and that is a success story.

*John MacQuarrie:*  
The new beef plant is a good example of

farmers co-operating in new ways. This is a co-op where farmers own a piece of the processing. They may not pay themselves more for the cattle, they are going to be paid at a similar level to what was going on before BSE, but they will generate wealth from the processing system itself.

- Atlantic Tender Beef Classic**
- Use both quality and locally-grown to differentiate the beef product.
  - Example, like Northumberland, of farmer-owned processing plant.
  - Replace imported products with locally-produced ones.

*Mitch Murphy:* Hypothetically, if the beef plant were up and running right now (Summer 2003), the BSE situation would have little or no impact on the PEI beef industry right now. We would not be distributing product outside of our own Maritime region. Even with the beef plant up and going we will meet only 20% of the region’s need. Why would we bother to send beef to Ontario or seek other markets when we will still need to have 80% of the local / regional market serviced from somewhere else. We need to develop an industry with a regional focus.

*Doug LeClair:* The new beef plant has great potential. If it works well, it can become a model for the hog industry. The beef plant is one of the biggest opportunities to change the viability of farming and improve it.

### 11.4 Open Farm Day

**PEI:** *Brenda Penak* sees the high attendance at Open Farm day as an indicator of farmers’ success in getting more in touch with the non-farming public. It’s an opportunity for direct feedback between the two groups. There are not many opportunities for consumers to actually talk to producers. Four thousand people came out to see farms in 2002. This is a good sign. *Chris MacBeath* thinks communities need even more events like Open Farm Day, so people can see producers of food. If people see and get to know farmers, this will help to instill confidence and consumers may, as a result, seek out locally grown items. *Nancy Reeves* looks forward very much to Open Farm Day. Her neighbour, an organic potato farmer, participated last year and that was a great source of pride for her

- Open Farm Day**
- An indication of non-farmer interest in farming.
  - Meaningful opportunities for increased understanding.

### 11.5 PEI FoodTrust

**PEI:** *Colleen Younie:* The PEI FoodTrust is trying to address the issue of farmers’ burden to shoulder the costs of stewardship. This group is attempting to obtain premiums on food produced according to a

certain standard. She mentions that it will only benefit a few at first, and the payback is way down the road.

*Mitch Murphy:* In North America we have the luxury of good food, but also of being able to make the decision to purchase food based on how it is produced. Consumers are demanding a lot and rightfully so in the area of food safety, environmental sustainability etc. FoodTrust has asked consumers what they want to eat/buy, how they want their food produced, and what they want it to look like. Then FoodTrust implemented those wants.

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>PEI FoodTrust</b></p> <p>An example of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• product differentiation</li><li>• empathy for consumer</li><li>• satisfaction from accomplishing the Summerside pork program</li><li>• improving farm product price</li></ul> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

*Robert Harding:* Producers are more satisfied when they are involved in decision-making and feel/know that they are being listened to in developing their industry. The Summerside Pork Program is a highly regulated, strict feeding regime, PEI-branded pork that is selling for a premium price through Co-op Atlantic. The marketing was developed in cooperation with PEI FoodTrust and the PEI Hog Marketing Board. The premium prices and very satisfied consumers who begin to look for PEI pork and generated repeat sales raised awareness and a desire to take leadership in such ventures. The understanding was, we have to do this ourselves as producers in cooperation with the FoodTrust.

*Barry Cudmore:* A lot is hanging on the FoodTrust as the last best opportunity to bring a new approach to marketing products through branding. To be successful in the market place, FoodTrust has to enhance a food product so that consumers will buy it on one level because they are contributing to sustainability in their own way by paying a little more for the product and at the same time they are getting the highest quality product. A unique product produced under a strict regime. In PEI, farms will never produce a huge quantity of food, but we can produce quality food. A million people come here every year because PEI is the way it is. Lots of people want to eat our good food. We don't have to stand second behind anyone.

## 11.6 Farmers' Markets

### Halifax City Farmers' Market

*Fred Kilcup,* who manages the Market, provides many examples of benefits. The face to face contact between producers and consumers; the opportunities to 'market test' new products; the access to the web site; and the opportunity for farmers to network and co-operate with each other. There is a wide diversity of customers who come every week to do their shopping. "Thousands of people come to this market, which gives the vendors a large enough economic base to be viable. They all go back to their communities and spend the money they've earned. So they take the economic power of the centre and disperse it." In the summer there are 120 vendors each week. In 1986 there were 25 vendors through the winter, and now there are 110, which makes it a viable year-round retail venture. The market is very long-lived – a couple of families have passed their stalls down through the generations. "250 years and they're still here."

Fred is very dedicated to the network of Farmers' Markets throughout Nova Scotia. He feels the network makes all the Markets stronger as they learn from each other. It could also potentially lead to efficiencies in terms of moving product around to where it is needed, in a way that doesn't duplicate effort and travel time. In time the network of markets could experience the same kind of close-knitted-ness of the Halifax Market itself. He feels the network makes all the Markets stronger as they learn from each other. Fred has observed an amazing loyalty and closeness among the vendors themselves – even though they are a very

diverse group. One vendor, a long time farm family, had been hit hard by the hurricane, and the rest of the market vendors rallied together and supported that family.

*Claire Doyle* is one of the newer vendors at the Market, but Fred got her a table right away when she asked. Her product fit the criteria for new vendors: her Duke of York cranberry juices and other products were not duplicating anything else that was already at the market, and it was made on the farm. She started with 30-40 bottles of juice and a few jars of jelly. “They were gone in an hour!” Customers liked the fact that it was a local product and they came back for more. This was very encouraging to Claire, and she

found her customers very supportive. They wanted to help her develop contacts, marketing ideas, recipes, and they started going to stores and asking for the Duke of York juice. One woman bought the juice at the market and then went to her boss and asked him to stock it in his health food store. Now demand has exceeded yields, and it is a full-time business with distribution in many stores in the province. They have a full line of cranberry products, including fruit leather, dried cranberries, granola, muffins, and a selection of unsweetened and sweetened juices.

#### **Farmers Markets**

- The Markets are places where farmers attempt to get a fair price through product differentiation (often based on quality and/or locally produced) and direct marketing
- Co-operation among producers occurs, and between producers and consumers
- Markets circulate wealth back to rural areas from urban areas
- Network of farmers markets – rely on each other. Interdependence. Food miles reduced, therefore promoting efficiencies.
- Customers can help a vendor
- Vendors take time to explain things – meaningful opportunity to increase understanding
- Recognition that the market circulates wealth in the town of Wolfville
- New people are welcomed at the Sydney Farmers Market
- The Market needs a diverse group of vendors – mostly of farm products – to attract customers

#### **Wolfville Farmers’ Market**

*Jeannine Wilson* is a regular customer at the Wolfville Farmers’ Market who likes the ready made products that save her time when she has to make meals. She wants to eat healthy food, she learns a lot from the vendors, it’s part of her routine, and it’s a social event because she gets to see a lot of people. She is impressed that the vendors take time to explain things to her. “It brings you back to the market every week, and makes you feel special that someone will give you the time... Even though there are more options within the grocery stores now, I still don’t know if it’s grown locally, and whether it was picked before its maturity, so am I getting all the nutritional value I could? Here I know those things, I know the growing practices, and I can really talk to the producers... I can get up feeling tired and bagged out, come to the market, and feel a resurgence of energy... I know if I come up with a gardening question during the week, I know I can ask someone at the market.” Jeannine also thinks it is important that the market has lots of parking, it is near the library – which makes it seem safe for kids to be roaming around. The grassed area and the fact that it is outside gives it a picnic feeling. People can stop for a while and sit around.

*Pia Skaarer Nielsen* has a regular spot at the Market. It provided her with the contacts and an opportunity to get direct feedback as she developed her woolens business – now 60% of her business goes through the Market. Her 13 year old son also has a stand selling coffee. “It’s a learning experience, and it’s been really good for him.” Pia is pleased to see the Market grow from 6 booths to 40 because “it’s an opportunity for more producers in the area to bring their goods here. And for people to know that they don’t only have to go to Sobey’s and Super Store... The Market brings them back to earth.” Pia is also pleased the Market location is outside. She’s been a vendor in arenas and other big rooms, but this outside Market is better. “People cannot avoid seeing us!”

*Alan Stewart* characterizes the Wolfville Market customers in three different groups. Those that have retired here, have been able to slow down and do a little research on their food; those who are strongly committed to alternative ways of doing things; and those native sons and daughters, like Alan, who know enough about what it's like to farm to support the Market vendors.

*Kelly Radcliff* is the Market manager. She describes it as a place of vitality, where community meets; where vendors make their dreams come true. Each vendor has at least two sources of income, but the Market source helps them live their life the way they want to live it. "You have that feeling of people saying 'yes' to something, and it's shared with the customers." Kelly describes the 500 or so customers who visit the Market as people who believe in local economies; believe that they should shop locally; and want to know who they're buying their food from. In terms of the business of the Market, the vendors are organized into an Association with an executive and committees that take care of the various tasks. Kelly says she 'cultivates' their responsibility and gets input from them. "These are incredible people!" Kelly also takes care of promotions through an electronic bulletin every month to 200 customers who signed up for it. The bulletin features Market events, new vendors, and the music schedule. Kelly figures the 200 who get the bulletin tell their friends about it, and it builds by word of mouth from there. The town of Wolfville is very supportive of the market because they recognize that it draws people to their downtown businesses as well.

The vendors are a diverse group. There are some that depend on the market for a major part of their livelihood, and others because it supplements their income. In 2001, there were 25 vendors, in 2002 the number jumped to 35, and in 2003, there are 40. When there was a big leap in the number of vendors, there was a big leap in the number of customers. "People could just feel the success." The products include organic produce, ready-made snacks, coffee, bread, meats, herbs, and a range of gifts, although there is a policy that the farmer comes first, and a minimum of 60% of the market should be farm products. The Market provides small, especially organic farms, an opportunity to start marketing their products, test ideas, and develop relationships. But it's more than just economics. According to Kelly, the vendors are saying 'yes' to people, to organics, to the music, to each other. It's a positive, creative initiative, in a homogenous and cynical world. The Market makes people aware of the seasons as the abundance of each week's harvest changes through the year. "It's a celebration of abundance. You get to witness it and be part of it."

### **Sydney Farmers' Market**

The Sydney Farmers' Market is located in a parking lot with shelters where vendors can pull up their vehicles and even plug in their freezers. There is something unique about this market. They have a 'welcomer', Charles MacDonald. He's not an official welcomer, it's just in his nature to say hi to everyone, and make new people feel welcome. *Charles and Sharon MacDonald* primarily sell beef and eggs, and have worked hard to make the Farmers' Market a year-round venture. In 2003 they obtained an indoor location for the winter market. They have found this to be beneficial because they don't have to rebuild their customer base in the summer. They have a regular group of customers that buy beef and eggs, and Sharon also provides cooking instructions for the Highland beef they sell, because it is leaner than the commercial beef in the grocery store.

*Kim Tilsley* has a stand next to the MacDonalds where she sells frozen poultry products. People pick up their pre-ordered meat or choose items from her list on the table. She describes the benefits of the market: "It's a great way for the producers to be in direct contact with their customers. No middleman. You're getting the full price. We've got a really neat group of vendors. After we had the opportunity to be indoors for this winter, I find that the group has really come together. Outside we don't get as much chance to socialize together as we did indoors. It's a diverse group, and great people to chip in and help. There's a real sense of community developing here in the Farmer's Market too. I think we're still



growing. The Farmers' Market has been going on for a number of years, and it's gone through peaks and valleys and I'm hoping that it's on the upswing right now. We're attracting more vendors. People are getting excited about it. We're seeing more customers every week. We're seeing regulars come back, and new people. So it's exciting that way. This year moving it indoors for the winter is really positive. We can build on that this year, and get people used to it. We had a really faithful core group of customers that came every week all winter, if they could get out their door."

One of the vendors said the frozen chicken and beef products were very important to attracting customers to the market. Kim agrees. "I would say that is probably accurate. I had someone express that to me about the market in Antigonish as well. The fact that I was there was a draw, and brought people in. You've got to have a strong group of core vendors, whether it's the chicken or the beef. But you also need diverse vegetable producers too. We've got a nice mix now with the baked goods, and the produce. And a couple of people doing the meat. I certainly get a lot of people that come specifically here for me and I get a lot of pre-orders now. And that's good, because they continue the rest of the way around the market and become loyal customers for some of the other vendors."

From her experience at the Antigonish and Sydney farmers' markets, Kim has observed that it is important to have a good mix of vendors. In Antigonish she found that the percentage of food producers and growers to crafters was getting skewed too heavily on the crafts. She had a couple of customers ask her where the rest of the farmers were last year. The Sydney Farmers' Market restricts the percentage of vendors who are not primary producers. The Halifax and Wolfville Markets have done the same thing.

### **11.7 Celebrating the Harvest – A Local Food Guide**

TAHANI (Tatamagouche Area Health, Education and Nutrition Initiative) has undertaken a number of projects. They did a "Nutrition Action Day" in a local elementary school, organizing many hands-on workshops on things like water, exercise, food. One workshop had the kids make smoothies with local blueberries.

*Karen Sheppard and Av Singh*, who now live in Tatamagouche, spent 18 months in Minnesota, where they learned about the Land Stewardship Project, which does things like local food guides. Karen was inspired to produce a Guide in her new community.

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Local Food Guide</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• improve ability of farmers to direct market</li><li>• fosters network between producers</li></ul> |
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Under the auspices of TAHANI, Karen and friends distributed a placemat with quotes that listed all the political, social, economic and cultural reasons to buy local. They met 14 farmers at the local market and started from there, with the farmers referring them to others. In the spring, they got someone to do the maps and the layout and the printing. All 3,000 copies have disappeared. Karen is concerned about whether they all got used well, so they are considering putting a price on them next time. The printed Guide (3,000 copies) was distributed locally at the farm market, through the North Shore Economic Development Association, as well as through local shops and B & Bs. CORDA, the Colchester Regional Development Agency agreed to host the list on their web site and to update it as required.

There is overwhelming enthusiasm for the Local Food Guide. People's reactions are to feel great that so many foods are available in their area. Farms listed in the Guide are also making connections among themselves. CORDA has been inspired to do a larger guide of aqua and agri-culture businesses for the whole County.

### **11.8 Farm Museums**

## Ross Farm Museum

The initial farm was established in 1816 at a time when farms were small and most activities were done by hand. The purpose at that time for establishing a farm was for families to be able to feed themselves. They raised a mixture of livestock, vegetables, grains, herbs, and collected maple sap to make syrup. Most of the farms in the area were built on drumlins, which had the best soil, deposited by melting glaciers. Today the area has a few farms that raise mostly beef, and some families like to grow other food like vegetables, chicken, or someone might have a dairy animal for the family.

Ross Farm Museum, established on the Ross Farm by people in the community, now employs 25-30 people almost year-round. It creates a great deal of economic value for the community. The budget is about \$750,000 per year, and they have to raise a good portion of that from entrance fees, selling items in the store, doing renovation contracts for other museums, and selling excess livestock and horses.

### Farm Museums

- heritage and skills; education – keep it alive for farming
- sharing knowledge
- community effort; community benefits
- keep farms as working farms
- celebrating heritage; volunteer commitment

Many of the people who work in the museum have worked there a long time. They are mostly from the immediate community and can tell their own stories of growing up on a farm. They feel the museum is important because it keeps the heritage and the skills of this farming community alive. Gail and Walter Larder describe why the Museum is a source of pride for them. For Gail, it's "everything from the people to the information to how well it is looked at by everybody who comes here. The good comments." For Walter, "the fact that it's a working museum is important. That's a source of pride. And the skills of the people that work here. In other museums, you just don't have that. That is my biggest source of pride... That's the whole difference between looking at a plow and using a plow. There is a whole base of knowledge there – you may look at a plow and know its dimensions and how it's supposed to work, but there's another base of knowledge as deep as the soil when you get hold of those handles and try to make it work the way it's supposed to. How do I get it to do what it's supposed to? That's where that base of knowledge comes from that you can get from the older people – all the tricks and tips that will make it work the way it's supposed to. Keeping that part alive is our biggest challenge."

## Spry's Field: An Urban Farm Museum

Marjorie Willison was instrumental in establishing an urban farm museum in her own community of Spryfield, a suburb of Halifax. People from the community got together to establish this urban farm because Spryfield used to produce a lot of food. Marjorie is also aware of food security issues. "One of my biggest concerns about food security in the future is that it not become an individual issue. It has to stay grounded at the community and society level." She wants to avoid a situation where people are thinking 'I can afford to do this and I'm not going to worry about my neighbours as long as I'm all right.' To Marjorie, this is a "complete negation of community, which is why I'm so passionate about the Urban Farm here because it's for the community."

"We started it in part to celebrate Spryfield's agricultural heritage and to preserve this old farm field that is still in existence because so much of the farm land here has been built on. One of the things we need to do as our cities develop is to identify land that is arable and zone it 'agricultural' so that it doesn't get built on. ... The urban farm is not only about reviving an old farm field and returning it to food production but also being an education centre. We produce brochures about 'planting times for vegetables' and 'How to Grow Soft Fruits' so that farming starts to happen in an urban farm like we're doing, but also in community allotments and community gardens, in back yards, on balconies, patios and rooftops – wherever we can. The seed is there and it's germinating."

Marjorie finds it interesting that Spryfield got two awards lately: one for being a sustainable community, and another for being a model volunteer community. Why? She thinks it is because Spryfield has a long history of being a community before it was annexed in 1969. There are family names that go back ages, so there is a sense of continuity. No wonder they are celebrating their heritage.

## 12. Acronyms

AVC Atlantic Veterinary College, PEI  
BBEMA Bedeque Bay Environmental Management Association, PEI  
CALL program (Canadian Agricultural Lifetime Leadership)  
CBC Canadian Broadcasting Corporation  
CFIA Canadian Food Inspection Agency  
CSA Community Supported Agriculture  
FCC Farm Credit Corporation  
GPI Genuine Progress Index; GPI Atlantic  
HACCP Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points  
NSAC Nova Scotia Agriculture College, Truro Nova Scotia  
NSFGA Nova Scotia Fruit Growers' Association, Nova Scotia  
PEIDAFF Prince Edward Island Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Forestry  
PRRS – hog disease?  
SEA – Self Employment Assistance  
WI Women's Institute

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