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YOUR PROVINCIAL FARM AND RANCH NEWSPAPER

Push for GM wheat resurrected

Farm groups in Canada, Australia and the U.S. say it's the way to go

BY ALLAN DAWSON
staff

Five years to the month after Monsanto shelved its controversial Roundup Ready genetically modified (GM) wheat, farm groups in Canada, Australia and the United States are pushing for the "synchronized introduction" of biotech wheat.

The Grain Growers of Canada, Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association

(WCWGA) and Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission are leading the charge in Canada.

In the U.S. it's the National Association of Wheat Growers and U.S. Wheat Associates, with the backing of the North American Millers' Association.

Australian support comes from the Grains Council of Australia, Grain Growers Association and Pastoralists and

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Mary-Ellen and Andreas Grunenberg stand outside their little red barn on their artisanal farm outside Leduc. — Alexis Kienlen

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Greens, eggs and ham — yes, I eat them

Leduc-area operation provides a unique combination of meat and vegetables

BY ALEXIS KIENLEN
AF staff

If it's odd, unusual or different, Andreas and Mary-Ellen Grunenberg want to grow it. The couple and their two daughters, Ariana and Megan, run an artisanal operation called Greens, Eggs and Ham on 10 acres outside Leduc. They've been on their current site for 11 years, and special-

ize in duck meats and heritage vegetables.

They started out raising hogs in a farrow-to-finish operation, but eventually began raising fertilized duck eggs, which led to a specialization in laying birds. They also began raising edible flowers, which developed into a further specialization in vegetables for restaurants.

Mary-Ellen and Andreas currently work with several restau-

rants in Edmonton, Winfield, Calmar, Jasper, Banff and Calgary, and sell their products at the City Centre Market in downtown Edmonton.

Mary-Ellen comes from a health background and Andreas worked as a professional agrologist before turning to full-time farming. Andreas always attempts to push his growing season and grow vege-

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Aim for a uniform stand

Establishment of a healthy, uniform canola stand results in a crop that is easier to manage. Give your crop the best chance and avoid yield losses from uneven emergence. Aim for high yield by selecting the best genetics for your farm, targeting a plant population of 10 plants/ft² and calibrating and leveling your seeding equipment. Visit www.canolacouncil.org for more Seed Smart Tips.





A group of 24 combines harvested the Cheadle Lions Canadian Foodgrains Bank Project in 2007. After the federal government's four-to-one matching grant, the project raised \$388,000, with another \$500,000 raised last year. This year's project is already underway with 320 acres seeded to barley, and organizers have been approved by the Guinness Book of World Records to attempt to break the record for the most combines participating in a single harvest. — Kevin Link photo

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tables outside of his zone. "We also believe in trying to push people to try new things," says Mary-Ellen. "A lot of the chefs try the things we end up growing."

The Grunenbergs believe in educating their chefs about the wide variety of vegetables they produce. They specialize in odd and unusual vegetables and maintain a greenhouse to allow them to provide local restaurants with greens year-round. "Our customers are ready to try new things. In fact, they expect them from us," says Andreas.

Their carrots range in colour from white to black, and they grow heritage varieties of beets and potatoes. "We pick things we find interesting and appealing in terms of texture, taste and colour," says Andreas.

They also raise spaghetti and red kuri squash, and unusual greens such as sorrel, mustard greens, wild arugula and Japanese greens such as mizuna and shungiku. The greens raised in the greenhouse are blended into custom blends, with an emphasis on colour, flavour and texture.

The Grunenbergs found that different management practices are required to grow things indoors and outdoors. Greens grown in the greenhouse are generally not as colourful as greens that grow outside. They control insects inside the greenhouse with a variety of different kinds of bugs, including parasitic and predatory wasps, and ladybugs to kill aphids.

VARIETY OF DUCK PRODUCTS

Their protein products include free-range hybrid ducks which feature an even fat distribution.

"We're instigators and lobbyists too, and we talk about local food as much as we can."

Processed products include duck prosciutto, smoked breast and duck legs. They also create high-end sausages made of duck leg and breast meat. These products are free of gluten, wheat and contain low levels of nitrates. "Our product line is designed to be as allergen free and as high quality as possible," says Mary-Ellen.

The family found they really liked duck eggs and enjoyed promoting them. "They're easier to digest than chicken eggs because they're alkaline based," says Mary-Ellen.

Their oldest daughter, Ariana, now 19, also has her corner of

the business. She began selling her turkeys to Western Canada's largest catering company when she was 13. She also raises Cornish game hens and guinea fowl and has her own line of processed products.

The Grunenbergs believe in supporting local businesses, and cross-marketing with other producers. They are helping elk, alpaca, venison, rabbit and lamb producers to get their products out into the public. They are strong advocates of local food and are members of Slow Food, Dine Alberta, and many other local food groups.

"Local food has a long way to go," says Mary-Ellen. "We're insti-

gators and lobbyists too, and we talk about local food as much as we can. It comes down to promoting each other and buying from each other and talking about local whenever you can. This doesn't only mean local food; it means supporting local businesses and whatever community you happen to be in."

Another hurdle for small farmers is the lack of funding and financing available for small operations, says Andreas. He believes there is a need for government to work with banks to create financing options for small, niche market operations.

Their playful name, which was created by Mary-Ellen, has allowed them to achieve a lot of name recognition with consumers. "The name makes everyone understand what we do. It's a catchy name that sticks with people and makes them smile."

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