



news release

For Immediate Release
March 8, 2007

MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT FOCUSES ON INNOVATION AT THIRD AGRI-FOOD SUMMIT

On-Farm Innovation Recognized

QUEEN'S PARK - The Ontario government recognizes that innovation will pave the way forward for the province's agri-food sector, and Premier Dalton McGuinty took the opportunity to recognize farmer-innovators today at the Premier's Summit on Agri-Food.

"Ontario's farmers have helped build a world-class agri-food sector in this province," said Premier Dalton McGuinty. "By recognizing their hard work and investing in their innovative ideas, we can help farmers pursue new markets, attract investment and strengthen our rural communities."

The first \$100,000 Premier's Award of Excellence for Agri-Food Innovation will go to David VanderDussen. VanderDussen developed Mite-Away II, an environmentally friendly product to protect honeybees from mite infestations, which is exported around the world. The \$50,000 Minister's Award was presented to Fritz and Paul Klaesi by Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Leona Dombrowsky. The recipients pioneered the use of technology that generates electricity from manure.

"Innovation creates jobs, helps the economy and builds new markets for Ontario's businesses," said Dombrowsky. "By recognizing and encouraging innovation on the farm, we are helping Ontario's agri-food sector get out ahead of the competition."

Farm-level innovation can assist the agri-food industry to meet the challenges facing the sector by, among other things, enhancing profitability in the marketplace, meeting evolving consumer demands and better managing the effects of farming on the environment. Fifty-five regional awards will be presented to innovators across the province in the weeks following the Summit.

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Backgrounder

ONTARIO'S TOP TWO FARMER-INNOVATORS RECOGNIZED AT PREMIER'S SUMMIT ON AGRI-FOOD

The five-year, \$2.5-million Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence, announced as part of the 2006 provincial budget, recognizes that farmers have always been innovative in the running of their businesses and will foster even greater innovation across the province's agri-food sector.

The innovation must have been developed and used on an Ontario farm, must have the potential for use on a broader basis and for having a positive effect on the agriculture industry. The innovation submitted by

the first recipient of the Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence easily met those criteria.

David VanderDussen developed, manufactures and distributes Mite-Away II, which defends honeybees against varroa mite infestations. The Hastings County resident has disarmed a major threat to Ontario's bee industry. That's not only good news for apiarists, but also for all those farmers whose crops depend upon pollination.

The varroa mite has long been a serious problem, threatening bee populations and reducing honey production. VanderDussen worked with the University of Guelph, the Ontario Beekeepers Association and the Canadian Honey Council to develop an effective and environmentally-friendly product to control the mites.

Mite-Away II, with its extremely high efficacy rate, has received approval from the Pest Management Regulatory Agency in Canada and is registered with the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States, and is now widely used across North America.

Fritz and Paul Klaesi are the first recipients of the Minister's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence. The Klaesis are early adopters of anaerobic digester technology, and are turning manure into electricity. Theirs is one of Ontario's first operational systems that is generating electricity to the grid through the net metering program - and that's after they have powered two homesteads and the farm buildings.

The manure-based anaerobic digester generates 750 kilowatt hours of electricity a day, enough to power 30 homes. The Klaesis hydro bill has shrunk from \$2,500 per month to \$30 per month. Other benefits include the reduction of greenhouse gases and of the odour associated with spreading manure.

Strong believers in their innovation, the Klaesis willingly share information and host visitors. They are willing to participate in ongoing research and evaluation of this technology, to support its further development and implementation across Ontario.

The producers' next steps are to secure a contract under the Standard Offer Program through which electrical power generated from renewable energy sources is purchased to augment Ontario's power supply.

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Last Updated: March 8, 2007