

**October 1, 2012**

### **Consumer Wine Shows**

Attached is information about exhibiting in the Wine Country Ontario booth at the Ottawa Wine and Food Show and the Gourmet Food & Wine Expo in Toronto. Both shows take place in November. Register to participate here <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/consumershows2012> Deadline is Friday, October 5, 2012.

### **VQA Support Payment Cheques**

WCO members were advised a couple of weeks ago that we were informed by MEDI that VQA Support Payment cheques would be arriving by mid to late September. Wineries have NOT received them yet, which has generated many requests for an update.

Obviously, standard government procedure includes a lot of approvals from different areas prior to the release of funds. MEDI has signed off on the payments, and the process is now with the Ministry of Finance for routine approvals and processing. MEDI expects the cheques to be released this week.

### **Ontariofresh.ca Unites Business and Farmers**

Marketplace Attracts over 1,200 Food and Agricultural Businesses

(Toronto, Ontario) - The new version of the popular *Ontariofresh.ca* website was released today bringing more functionality and enhanced features to users. Connecting buyers and sellers of Ontario food, *Ontariofresh.ca* is a vital tool in finding new business partners to meet the growing demand for local food.

The new *Ontariofresh.ca* website allows local food buyers and sellers to search for products, announce the availability of seasonal products, and post contract opportunities by using a sophisticated search function. The website is also a source for industry information and stories from local food champions.

"*Ontariofresh.ca* is a game-changer that enables Ontario to capitalize on the demand for local food," said Burkhard Mausberg, CEO, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation. "Whether it's Niagara's tender fruit, the Holland Marsh's vegetables, or award winning VQA wines, *Ontariofresh.ca* is helping connect the business of local food."

Launched as a beta site in November 2011, *Ontariofresh.ca* has grown to over 1,200 registered industry professionals. The website serves as a valuable economic tool among food service businesses and food producers to help meet the growing demand for Ontario food. In a survey conducted among *Ontariofresh.ca* members in early 2012, 20% of respondents had made connections and half of those reported sales resulting directly from the website.

Members on the site include hospitals and other public institutions serving millions of meals each year. In addition, some of the largest food service operators and distributors in North

America like Dana Hospitality and Gordon Food Services are utilizing the site to make business connections, along with innovative food processors like VG Meats and farms of all sizes and commodities.

“Before this website was in place, it could be very difficult to locate local producers. It allows you to search for specific products and size of operation - it’s like Facebook for food, putting a face to people that are buying and selling local,” said Kelly Hughes, Local Food Procurement Officer, Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

Create a new or update an existing profile by October 15<sup>th</sup> and be entered to win a weekend getaway. For more information visit [Ontariofresh.ca](http://Ontariofresh.ca).

## **PR & Media Relations**