

Agriculture - the foundation of our Kings County economy!

When you bite into locally made pie, sip apple juice, or munch a cob of corn, you are enjoying a taste of Kings County history. And you are supporting local employment, while boosting the great impact of agriculture on our economy.

Since the Acadians first began clearing and cultivating land more than three centuries ago, farming and its related industries have been Kings County's economic foundation.

"Agriculture has been and continues to be the backbone of the Kings County economy," says Robin Marshall, executive director of the Kings Community Economic Development Agency (Kings CED). "The largest private-sector employers, other than Michelin, are all agriculturally related or food processors."

Kings County has the distinction of being home to over one-third of the province's agricultural production and half of its agricultural-processing activity. In 2000, the census of Kings County revealed 644 farms with reported revenues of \$157.1 million.

Agricultural-related manufacturing is a major county employer. Though the larger percentage is involved in processing, the number and range of industries directly or indirectly affected by agriculture are far-reaching.

"Most likely 30 to 40 per cent of our total employment picture could be traced back to the agriculture sector, the related spin-offs, and the services to that sector as they trickle through the economy," says Robin.

Agriculture in Kings County has become the focus of some area organizations over the last few months including the Eastern Kings Chamber of Commerce (EKCC). The EKCC's advocacy committee formed a sub-committee centering on agriculture and its importance to business and the local economy.

"Following the closure of Avon Foods, we wondered if that event wasn't representative of a deeper, underlying problem," says Bill Denyar, EKCC advocacy committee chairman. "The agri sub-committee is taking a closer look at what we can do to support the agricultural industry."

As one of the most concentrated agricultural production and processing areas east of Ontario, Kings County has a greater total of agricultural and related-services employment than any other county in the Atlantic region.

"We want the business community to realize how crucial the agriculture industry is to our economy," says Bill. "The agriculture sector is the largest single employer with more than 10 per cent of the workforce. And it has huge growth potential."

Also, agriculture's importance to the scenic beauty of the Annapolis Valley and its influence on local tourism can not be underestimated. Kings County's farmland beauty is widely acclaimed and draws tourists from far and wide.

"The origin of the strength of our economy truly does rest with the farmers and the food processors of Kings County," concludes Robin.

