



# ALBERTA VOLUNTEER PROGRAM PROMOTES FARMER EXCHANGES

Since 1991 more than 120 Ukrainian farmers from Ukraine have been hosted by Canadian farmers to receive education, training and the opportunity to practice newly-learned Farm Management Principles, skills and techniques. In turn Canadian farmers have travelled to Ukraine to visit former trainees, observing changes introduced and practices implemented.

Such exchanges continue today as the result of the efforts of the Alberta-Ukraine Agricultural Exchange Society (AUAES), a volunteer, non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO), which also provides educational, informational and humanitarian aid to complement its agricultural training programs.



## An Idea that Succeeded

When the Government of Ukraine passed a Land Act in March 1990, this allowed the long-term leasing of land to private farmers. The leases provided farmers the right to transfer the land to their children and grandchildren, resulting in what is today virtually private ownership of the land.

On the heels of these changes and Ukraine's independence, the Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre at Grant MacEwan Community College (GMCC), Edmonton, and The Ministry of Agriculture of Ukraine agreed on a program to foster exchanges of farmers and other agricultural personnel between Alberta and Ukraine - to the mutual benefit of both parties. Both sides felt they would benefit: Ukrainian farmers, from the expertise of Canadian counterparts and by learning the principles of standard farm management practiced throughout the world; Canadian farmers, by enhancing their skills by providing training, support and follow-up. The success of such an exchange program was to impact on the future of independent Ukrainian farmers and on Ukraine's ability to produce a stable supply of quality agricultural products.

The program became a reality when the Carl Popper Foundation of Switzerland provided funding for 3 years. Interested

Canadian farmers and agricultural personnel came forward volunteering to participate in the program. Young farmers from Ukraine were selected and the program became a reality. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), Saskatchewan, managed the third and last year. However, many farmers felt that a farmer-to-farmer program should not be terminated and, in October 1993, the AUAES was formed with the aim of continuing with the training of persons from Ukraine, through private farmers or Canadian Host farmer operators. Many Society members are of Ukrainian ancestry, seeking to foster the exchange and training of farmers and other agricultural personnel between Canada and Ukraine -- just as they themselves settled the Prairies a century ago as the first Canadian western farmers.

## Achievements and benefits

In 1991, 20 host Canadian farm families volunteered to participate. They were in the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Twenty trainees from Ukraine were assigned to their Canadian host farmers and obtained training in Canadian farm management principles, applying their learning in a hands-on setting. In 1992, 46 trainees came to train on host Canadian farms in the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario. With the change of focus, to processing, in 1993, the Saskatchewan Branch of the UCC arranged for trainees to be hosted. In 1994, 10 persons received training in farming and agricultural products. In 1994 and 1995 the AUAES accepted 16 trainees, 8 in each of those years, and in 1996, 12 trainees. This year, 1997, 16 trainees will be coming to farms in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Many people have benefitted from the program and continue to do so. The 120 persons from Ukraine that were trained in Canada have taken this training back to their country and are applying the new learned skills setting examples for others around them. In turn, 5 host farmers have traveled to Ukraine as a follow-up to provide guidance, advice and evaluate the program. As well, some farmer members volunteered and participated in the "Partners in Agrifood" component of the Canada-Ukraine Partners Program and its predecessor, Partners in Progress.

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