

A strategic plan to move forward together – the case study of the seed potato sector in Saguenay- Lac St-Jean

HOW TO FACE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES AND WHERE TO START?

Faced with important challenges in a changing market environment, the seed potato industry in Saguenay-Lac St-Jean turned to Groupe AGÉCO and AGRI-NOVA, a regional partner, to guide them through a strategic planning process.

For years, the Saguenay-Lac St-Jean potato sector held a favorable market position in the seed potato culture, namely because of the isolated geographical situation and cool climate. However, here as elsewhere, the past few years have brought changes in the potato industry: decrease of potato consumption, market segmentation, intensification of international trade, tightening of regulation, etc. Moreover, in 2006, the industry was plagued with the presence of a pest (nematode) that reinforced the importance of the state of health of the potato seeds.



WHERE DO WE START, AS OF NOW?

To know where to start and what efforts to put forth, a good diagnosis is required. A comprehensive portrait of the situation of the seed potato industry was therefore produced by Groupe AGÉCO. The evolution of the industry was described as well as its business environment and the relationships between the major players. **The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the seed potato industry of Saguenay-Lac St-Jean were identified.** And more essentially the process highlighted strategic questions to be discussed.

LET'S TALK ABOUT NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

A wide consultation process took place with the seed potato producers of Saguenay-Lac St-Jean. Other major actors of the sector were consulted on issues for future development. The seed potato producers are the first link of a very complex and structured chain: they produce potatoes to be eaten, transformed or sent to pre-peeling. It is very important to coordinate the sector upstream towards the producers and downstream towards the research and development actors.

Groupe AGÉCO's consultation process permitted to identify the perceptions and the needs of various players and to bring them to agree on the common issues to work on for the livelihood of their industry. Five issues stood out and helped structured the work to be done. The strategic planning work also allowed to identify the key actions and to give priorities to each. Forty actions were listed. The main objectives were to improve the

state of health of the potato seeds and increase the variety of potatoes produced. Furthermore, the actions aimed at strengthening the business relations along the value chain.

WORKING TOGETHER TO DEVELOP THE SECTOR

With the help of an external expert, the seed potato producers created the tools and the process for on-going discussion. With a clear diagnosis of their starting point and specific targets to achieve in a set timeframe, the work to be done is understood by all involved, making it easier to attain the goals. A real match plan!

“The strategic planning itself was a good context for potatoe producers and actors involved to express and share their point of view in an organized setting. The project helped us to evolve and see how to work together as a group with common views on how to develop the industry and put our efforts towards the same goals.”

Isabelle T. Rivard, Director Créneau Accord Agriculture Nordique.

For nearly 15 years, Groupe AGÉCO is active in the agriculture and agri-food sectors, sustainable development and social responsibility. The recommendations of the consulting firm facilitate the implementation of concrete improvements in your organization.



Head office - Quebec City

2014, Cyrille-Duquet Street, Suite 307
Quebec (Quebec) G1N 4N6
T. 418 527-4681

Montreal office

395, West Laurier Avenue
Montreal (Quebec) H2V 2K3
T. 514 903-4681

ageco@groupeageco.ca
www.groupeageco.ca