



Horticulture for health

News release

Healthy diet, active lifestyle can address healthcare challenges

Greater collaboration, partnerships needed to effect change

For immediate release

Guelph ON, March 22, 2012 – A healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables, combined with an active lifestyle, will help address Canada's healthcare challenges. However, greater co-ordination and partnerships between government and industry sectors are needed to change consumer behaviours.

That was the key message of a networking reception hosted in Ottawa last week by members of Hort4Health, a working group of the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Horticulture Value Chain Round Table. Members include edible and ornamental horticulture farmers, retailers, food processors and input suppliers.



"An active lifestyle and a diversified diet rich in fruits and vegetables are so important in keeping Canadians healthy, so we're advocating for more industry and government co-ordination and collaboration on this issue," says Alison Robertson, Chair of Hort4Health. "We are so lucky here in Canada that we can grow a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, but it's critical that all Canadians have access to the great produce we're growing."

Hort4Health is urging provincial and federal ministries to work more collaboratively with each other and with farmers and non-governmental organizations active in the food and nutrition field. The goal is to increase awareness of the need for consuming fruits and vegetables and to make these products more accessible to Canadians across the country. A healthy diet combined with an active lifestyle may reduce the risk of some types of chronic diseases, promote healthier body weights and help improve the well-being of Canadians.

The networking event in Ottawa drew over 100 attendees, including Members of Parliament, Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Gerry Ritz, government staff and agriculture and food industry representatives.

"Health is an issue that affects all Canadians, whether in rural, urban or remote communities," says Robertson. "By working together, we can be more proactive in ensuring accessibility to fresh produce and encouraging Canadians to pursue healthier lifestyles through active living and boosting their consumption of fruits and vegetables."

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