



PULSES CONCLAVE AND GULFOOD SHOW PRESENT LESSONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR MARKETING CANADIAN PULSES

An APG Director's trip to the Pulses Conclave and Gulfood Show demonstrated the world's growing appetite for plant-based protein and prepared meals while also confirming that growing the domestic market for Canadian pulses is a key opportunity.

Alberta Pulse Growers (APG) Director Greg Stamp saw firsthand how quickly news travels about any market hiccups when he attended the Pulses Conclave in Aamby Valley, India in February.

"When the rail protests went on, that was on the slide the day after it happened and all the pulse traders from around the world are sitting in the conference seeing this is Canada's projection for acres for next year but keep in mind, the notes at the bottom said, that there's a rail protest and the railways are shut down," Stamp recalled. "It is devastating how fast news will travel when we export 90% of what we grow. It's so important to look at diversifying our markets within North America to lower our risk of something like that happening. It made me realize how important that domestic market is for a crop or product end use."

The Pulses Conclave, hosted every two years by the India Pulses and Grains Association, includes presentations from different countries about turnaround times and other details.



The increasing popularity of convenience food was evident in Indian markets.



APG Zone 1 Director Greg Stamp toured the Gulfood Show with Rania Hassan, Trade Commissioner in Dubai (centre) and Wafa Herzallah, Trade Commissioner from Jordan (right).



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—Greg Stamp



“For example, Myanmar is not a massive exporter but they produce some of the same crops as we might and their turnaround time from order to getting into an Indian port is as short as three days,” Stamp noted. “While for Canada, the challenge is that we look like we’re risky to get the product to the end user in time. We’ve got a little bit of work to do in Canada, whether it’s rail or predictable suppliers.”

Cindy Brown, President of the Global Pulses Confederation, told the Conclave audience that China now buys more peas from Canada than India ever did.

India still imports some pulses from Canada and other countries despite continuing to give its own pulse

farmers an advantage by imposing import restrictions. Economist and policy commentator Mr. G. Chandreshekhar told the Conclave that India is nowhere close to self-sufficient in pulse production yet and it is one bad monsoon from a farm disaster.

This trade is significant given the size of India’s population and opportunities for increasing their consumption of pulses, Stamp said.

“As India moves more and more people into the middle class, everything there is magnified,” he recalled. “What was crazy was the 18% growth in fast food. It might be a more plant-based fast food than we’re eating, but 18% growth in one year times by a billion people is huge

numbers. To me it made pulses in food as a protein source and food additive that much more important, especially for a country that doesn’t eat a lot of meat.”

India’s fast food growth is primarily in prepared meals eaten at home, not the served restaurant meals that North Americans think of as fast food, Stamp explained.

“It’s like their traditional cuisine, just fast,” he said. “I think you’ll be able to supply more products into a market that’s not just people in their homes preparing food, but companies preparing prepared foods to working individuals that are 25 years old working in industry or middle managers wanting an easier way to get food on the table.



That’s the trend that seemed to jump out when I talked to people there is that they had similar things happen as we do here when it comes to prepared meals but it’s not so much order in.”

Attending the annual Gulfood Show in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) during the same trip showed Stamp similar trends toward including plant-based protein in prepared meals from around the world. Dubai serves as a trading hub for the region and the show focused on connecting suppliers with restaurants, store brands and others that could use their products in these countries. There were several booths selling pulse flours.

Stamp also observed that the Beyond Meat and booths for similar products made with plant-based protein were very popular as were quick meals to make at home.

“There were lots of countries that had a product like a Hamburger Helper type food but that had a lot of traditional spices in it and was a plant-based product or had a plant-based protein added to it,” Stamp recalled. “It was like a Kraft dinner type box that had spices added to it that you cook and prepare for a quick meal. Some of them were winning the awards at the show for innovative new products. I don’t see the trend of pulse protein slowing down yet and it seems like it’s still on the upwards climb.”

Stamp expects to draw on his experience with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry officials in India and UAE when APG Directors are making decisions regarding policy or project funding.

“I think it will be handy when making Board decisions to trigger that I saw this in India or this trend is happening elsewhere in the world,” Stamp said. “It will help to realize that because of my experience abroad, as a Board we really need to do this.”



Products containing pulse protein and other plant protein were a hot commodity at the Gulfood Show.



The Beyond Meat booth was very popular at the Gulfood Show.