



Challenges? Yes – but we can take them on.

The industry has no shortage of challenges – this year’s KPMG Executive Roundtable certainly tackled some of the big ones: the Canadian dollar, energy costs, trade issues.

Then there are other challenges that may not receive as much attention. Arne Axen, for instance, is facing some resilient pests in his operation. Axen is a beekeeper in the Fraser Valley in B.C. And mites are proving to be a big challenge for him and many like him. The mites have become resistant to government-approved miticides, which don’t kill the mites completely; they just knock them back a bit. If beekeepers don’t stay on top of it, their bees will die.

What many people may not realize is that other farmers, such as blueberry, raspberry, cranberry, and some fruit and nut growers, depend on beekeepers. As Axen explains, these farmers will often rent bee colonies to help pollinate their plants, thereby increasing their yields. Without colonies, these farmers depend on wild bees. But the yield, says Axen, is much lower. “If you bring in bee colonies, your yield in the blueberry field, for instance, can triple or quadruple.”

In the U.S., these same mites caused substantial damage to bee stocks last winter. In fact, earlier this year the *Western Farm Press* reported huge price increases for beehives in California and beehive theft (California almond farmers use more than one million beehives each season). Axen fears if the feds don’t act, there could be losses here.

AVIAN FLU

Another challenge is avian flu. Russia is now the latest country to be affected and European countries are taking steps to avoid further outbreaks. We’re also hearing reports of a potential pandemic. Are we prepared? Right now, likely not. But we could be. BMO Nesbitt Burns released a report in August called *An Investor’s Guide to Avian Flu*. The report calls on business and government, globally, to “get engaged”

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just as it did with Y2K. “If we are fortunate,” the report says, “[a pandemic] won’t come before we have put the resources and systems in place to confront and control it.”

OBESITY

And then there’s obesity, still a timely topic. Statistics Canada released its report, *Canadian Community Health Survey: Obesity among children and adults*, this summer (www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/050706/d050706a.htm). The last time it undertook a similar survey was more than 25 years ago. And the results will surprise no one: Rates of obesity have climbed.

The upside is that consumers are much more well informed when it comes to trans fats and calories. And processors are taking action: eliminating trans fats, offering low-fat, light versions or even smaller sizes, and increasing whole grains (there’s now white whole grain bread and ACNielsen says whole grain cookie sales in the U.S. have skyrocketed). Marketing campaigns are delivering the health message, too (think Ronald McDonald’s new sporty image). Even our labelling – says Gary Gnriss in this issue’s “Regulatory Affairs” column – can be used to help in our battle against the bulge.

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NEW ERA

Food in Canada welcomes new editor Carolyn Cooper, starting with the October issue. Carolyn has been working as a freelance writer and editor for the past five years. Before that she was managing editor at Kostuch Publications’ *Foodservice and Hospitality* and *Hotelier* magazines.

On behalf of everyone at *Food in Canada*, welcome!