

*For immediate release*

**Manitoba and Prince Edward Island produce Canada’s Outstanding Young Farmers for 2009**

**Ancaster, ON [December 7, 2009]** – Commitment, passion and expertise fuel the MacKenzie and Dyck farming operations – winners of the 2009 Canada’s Outstanding Young Farmers (OYF) program. Greg and Tania MacKenzie own and operate MacKenzie Produce at Stratford, PEI – a 115-acre cole crop vegetable farm that is a testament to their philosophy of answering the call of opportunity. Grant and Colleen Dyck own Artel Farms Ltd. at Niverville, MB – a diversified cropping operation and emerging specialty food business built on the premise that the biggest problems offer the biggest opportunities.

The Manitoba and PEI farm couples were recently named Canada’s Outstanding Young Farmers (OYF) for 2009 at the organization’s annual event in Ottawa, ON on December 4. The two winning couples were chosen from the seven 2009 regional finalists – who along with the winners included – Monia Grenier and Dany Mayrand, dairy (Quebec region); Jason and Christina Pyke, bison (Ontario region); Art and Elaine Pruim, dairy (Saskatchewan region); Geoff Hoar, horse training (Alberta Northwest region); and Ian and Jennifer Woike, poultry (British Columbia, Yukon region).

“We have witnessed the raising of the bar, once again, with the achievements of this year’s OYF winners – and all the farm couples from across Canada,” says Richard Stamp, OYF president. “When you think of ambassadors for Canadian agriculture, the MacKenzies and Dycks are ideal poster families for the inspiring, passionate individuals who we are now honoured to have as part of our OYF family.”

Greg and Tania MacKenzie recognized a great opportunity when they saw it – the beginnings of what is today MacKenzie Produce, a 115-acre cole crop vegetable farm in Stratford, PEI. From the day Greg went to help out on a friend’s vegetable farm, to the same business that now bears their name, Greg and Tania have built a successful, year-round business with their array of vegetable crops. Since taking ownership of the business in 2003, the MacKenzies built a refrigerated warehouse on farm, added direct marketing from their farm gate, and added a delivery service to local stores and restaurants. Cabbage is the mainstay of their vegetable lineup which is stored and marketed year round – and quality is always the first priority. And if you eat cabbage in any of Charlottetown’s Chinese restaurants, any time of year, you’ll be enjoying MacKenzie produce. Other crops grown include broccoli, cauliflower, turnip, peas, beans, pumpkins, gourds and cucumbers.

The success and growth of MacKenzie Produce included developing a five-year business plan, sourcing local labour and working longer work weeks with weekends off. Greg and Tania’s three children, ages 4 to 12, love helping out on the farm. The MacKenzies support the local community by volunteering with sports activities, their church and donating vegetables to local suppers and food hampers.

From an early age, Grant Dyck’s father instilled in him a desire for independence and farming. Those early lessons went on to serve Grant and his wife Colleen well as they built a diversified agricultural operation that is Artel Farms Ltd., at Niverville, Manitoba. After completing a diploma in agriculture from the University of Manitoba, Grant was quickly immersed in the family operation when his father passed away suddenly. At the age of 23, Grant entered a partnership with other family members, eventually buying them out in 2005. Together with Colleen, they doubled the crops grown at Artel to 13, added a reclaimed wood business (Wood Anchor) and branched into the value added energy bar business (The Great Gorp Project) that Colleen is launching in early 2010.

Artel – defined as a group of people working together toward a common goal – is a powerhouse of activity. Since they began nine years ago, the land base has doubled to 12,000 acres of grain and oilseeds, minimum or zero tillage has increased the farm’s efficiency, and drainage maintenance is critical as their land is within the Red River food zone. With their seven full-time and 18 part-time staff, the Dycks hire first on attitude and second on skill. And monthly staff appreciation events keep motivation levels high. With three young children, the Dycks still find time for their community.

Celebrating its 30th year, Canada’s Outstanding Young Farmers’ program is an annual competition to recognize farmers that exemplify excellence in their profession and promote the tremendous contribution of agriculture. Open to participants 18 to 39 years of age, making the majority of income from on-farm sources, participants are selected from seven regions across Canada, with two national winners chosen each year. The program is sponsored nationally by CIBC, John Deere, Bayer CropScience and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and supported nationally by AdFarm and the Canadian Farm Business Management Council.

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**For more information or a photo of the MacKenzies or Dycks, contact**:

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