

Two plants lost as premier calls for agri-growth

On whose website would you find these messages?

Our Vision: To enrich and delight the world through foods and brands that matter. Our Purpose: Nourishing families so they can flourish and thrive. We are a company of promise and possibilities. Each day represents a fresh opportunity to share Our Vision, live Our Purpose.

By being mindful and committed to these ideals, we uphold our founder's dedication to people and their well-being. And we promote an environment where we can push beyond boundaries and across borders to create foods and brands that help to fuel the best in everyone everywhere. It is this belief that brings us together and sets us apart.

That's Kellogg's. On the same website, you'll find that the company is closing plants at London, Ont., and at Charmhaven, Australia, and expanding operations at Rayong, Thailand.

The London closure by the end of 2014, announced in early December, came just two months after the Ontario government announced that Premier Kathleen Wynne recognized excellence in agri-food innovation today and challenged the sector to double its growth rate and create 120,000 new jobs in Ontario by 2020.

It virtually coincided with a Heinz Canada announcement that it would be shuttering its 140-year-old Leamington ketchup plant throwing 740 people out of work by June, 2014, and ending its contractual purchases from about 50 tomato growers who farm about 5,500 acres in the region.

Is farming important to the Ontario economy?

Also at mid-December, an MNP LLP (Myers Norris Penny) study found that Ontario's agri-business sector generates almost half a billion dollars in tax revenue to federal, provincial and municipal coffers annually. The report also shows that the province's grain elevators, feed manufacturers and crop input suppliers contribute \$2.3 billion to the provincial economy and support more than 22,000 jobs throughout rural Ontario, says the Ontario Agri Business Association, which commissioned the study.

MNP is a national accounting and business consultancy. The study is based on data and statistics from government agencies and departments, as well as interviews with municipal politicians and industry and government officials, it says.

CEO Dave Bутtenham of the agri association is quoted in a news release as saying that, Feed manufacturers, crop input suppliers and grain elevators are a key part of Ontario's rural fabric, providing jobs for thousands of Ontarians, supporting the provincial economy and contributing millions in tax revenue.

Grain elevators provide grain handling, drying, storage and marketing services. Feed manufacturers produce livestock and poultry feed, supplements and pre-mix products as well as providing technical and nutritional support to farmers. Crop input supply businesses retail agricultural seeds, plant nutrition and crop protection products, as well as provide associated services and consulting, the news release says.

These results really help underline agriculture's role as the leading driver of our provincial economy, adds Bутtenham. Our members are often over-looked when people think about agriculture, but they're a vital link in Ontario's food production system.

The Ontario Agri Business Association is a voluntary, non-profit organization representing over 350 firms engaged in the crop input supply, grain elevator and animal feed sector across Ontario. For more information visit www.oaba.on.ca.

The study doesn't include sales of farm equipment, fuel, repairs and maintenance, and many other things.

By Wes keller