

A Soybean first for Atlantic Canada – New Market Opportunities

“We pulled it off,” the pride and relief shows on Neil Campbell’s face. He pulled it off with the partnership of Richardson International and a lot of help from workers and the dock facility in Summerside, PEI, Grain Elevator staff and Maritime soybean growers. As General Manager of the PEI Grain Elevator, all of the weight was on his shoulders.

What did we pull off? The bulk shipment by water of over 22,000 metric tonnes of soybeans grown in Atlantic Canada. Traditionally these beans would be trucked to Halifax to be stored and then exported in shipping containers carrying approximately 20 tonnes each. This represents over 360 truck loads, and 216,000 km of driving.



Mr. Neil Campbell – General Manager of the PEI Grain Elevator Corporation. Backdrop is some of the specialized equipment set up at the Summerside Wharf. (Courtesy of Nancy Russell/CBC)

It turned out that the weather was the biggest challenge. Each of the two ships coming into the port of Summerside had tight time limits for loading. A large warehouse at the port was filled ahead of time to build up inventory. Once the ships arrived, this product was then conveyed onto the ship, while at the same time trucks arriving from fields and other



S'ide Wharf Warehouse being filled to prepare for the ship (Courtesy Nancy Russell / CBC), and loading the ship

facilities were also being loaded directly on the ship. Enter an unusually long period of wind and rain right at loading time – and more grey hairs all around. Many thanks to Richardson International for being able to adjust their schedule to help make it all work. Both ships travelled from Summerside, PEI to Quebec, where the soybeans were transferred to ocean going ships destined for China.

These shipments represent close to 50% of the 2016 soybean crop on Prince Edward Island and close to 30% of all the soybeans grown in Atlantic Canada.

“Being able to ship in large bulk quantities brings us closer to the global customers for soy – this will be important to our industry in the future and will benefit soybean producers in the long term,” reflected Alvin Keenan – Chairman of the PEI Grain Elevator Corporation. Everyone is hopeful that more of this will be in order for the future.

Looking back on our agriculture history in Atlantic Canada, the saying that “we are not big enough to be **bold**, and not **bold** enough to be big” has too often reflected our reality. These shipments, and the accomplishment of everyone who worked on this project proves that this may be a saying of the past. This milestone in our new history strongly shows that Atlantic Canada’s grain and oilseed sector is coming of age.

