

CO-OPERATION IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

Canada has some of the highest food industry standards in the world. When you buy a quart of 2% milk, you know you are getting exactly that. When you buy jam, you can read the ingredients on the label. When you buy meat, you can be confident it has been kept refrigerated.

In many developing countries, however, things are not as sophisticated. Countries that want to export food products to Europe or North America have to learn how to improve production methods and meet tougher regulations.

The Food Research and Development Centre (FRDC) of Agriculture Canada, based in

Saint-Hyacinthe, Québec, has a special program to help developing countries learn from our expertise. Established in 1990 in collaboration with ACCT, the program allows the FRDC to work with similar research centres in several developing countries. They share information on conservation methods, sterilization, bottling, packaging, etc. For example, it is now working on natural food colouring additives with a university research centre in Viet Nam.

The program also encourages partnerships among small and medium-sized food processing companies in Canada and in developing countries. A Canadian company may help a juice

producer in Africa improve its product. In return, it may be guaranteed supplies of juice concentrate. Current projects include Senegalese hibiscus juice and Moroccan red wine.

In 1993, the FRDC helped the Québec Food Processors Association (AMPAQ) hold a conference on technology and food quality. Marco Lagimonière, director of international co-operation for AMPAQ, also travelled to Ivory Coast to give a week-long seminar to 30 participants from eight countries on product quality. He says the key is to work together. "If you go there saying you know everything, it won't work. You have to adapt your ideas to the reality there." ∞

QUÉBEC PROMOTES ECONOMIC TIES

"Our participation in La Francophonie is vital for the development of Québec," says Rene Leduc, director of the Québec government's La Francophonie office.

Besides the cultural and political benefits of membership, Québec wants to promote economic ties through La Francophonie. For example, Québec encourages co-operation among small and medium-sized companies in Québec and similar businesses in developing countries.

Québec publishers have en-

tered into joint ventures with publishers in Mali, Senegal and Ivory Coast. The African companies mainly publish school textbooks. "If you want to develop competitive national publishing houses in Africa, you have to do it by means of partnerships with publishers who have a lot of experience," says Mr. Leduc.

Access to loans is fundamental to the growth of small businesses. In Québec, credit unions have an important place in the economy. Members of credit unions have control over the

credit union's funds, and can borrow from them. Québec recently announced a program to help credit unions in francophone Africa. It offers training to managers of existing credit unions, and helps develop computerized systems for co-operative banks.

Another field in which Québec shares its expertise is energy. The Energy Institute of La Francophonie, based in Québec City, sponsors seminars both here and in developing countries, and puts out technical publications. ∞