

## Farmon.com launches on-line community for young farmers

((Calgary, Alberta)) A \$25,000 investment by AVAC Ltd. enabled Farmon.com to launch a website that's creating an innovative on-line community to help young Alberta farmers use Internet connections to grow their businesses via point-and-click access to everything from educational courses and videos, to blogs, forums and even direct sales to consumers, says Jackie Northey, Farmon.com coordinator.



An Alberta-based company that invests in promising early-stage value-add commercial businesses in Alberta, AVAC invested in Farmon.com through its Idea Builder program, says investment manager Craig Urton. "The money let the people behind the Farmon.com concept set up a beta site in the fall of 2008. Instead of just talking about what the site might do, AVAC's investment gave them a chance to start testing ideas and grow applications."

Early results are promising, says Northey, a former farmer whose work with youth and young adults in the east-central Alberta community of Bashaw, brought her in contact with a group of young farmers "who wanted to use the Internet to get more information about how to make their farms successful."

Launched in September 2008, the site has attracted 40,000 page views, without any advertising. Site users are from every Canadian province and include hits from all but two U.S. states. "We're really excited because the beta version of the site has attracted a lot of attention and has given us the incentive to add new applications," says Northey.

Site visitors can already use it to create their own profile pages, share information on what does and doesn't work on their farms, explore what's new in agriculture and connect with other producers. "We will add a marketplace for direct farmer-to-consumer sales, and delivery could even occur through the existing farmers' market system. We also plan to add an e-learning application where users can take, or learn more about, on-line courses or workshops," explains Northey.

Farmon.com targets agricultural producers aged 18 to 30. "But we envision that any farm producer who uses the Internet for information will appreciate what the site offers," she adds.

A not-for-profit company that helps Albertans transform ideas into successful business ventures, AVAC invests in early-stage commercial businesses that expand Alberta's value-added industry. "AVAC has invested in over 110 companies across Alberta's agri-business (agrivalue), renewable resources, ICT, life sciences and other industrial technology sectors," says Ross Bricker, AVAC president and CEO.

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