



PRIME CUTS AT CUTTER RANCH OUTSTANDING

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Abbotsford – March 19, 2018 – At 39 and 33, Tyler McNaughton and Sacha Bentall of Cutter Ranch in Fort Steele are far too young to be put out to pasture but their animals thrive on it. Thriving animals equals a thriving business and a thriving business has made McNaughton and Bentall the 2018 BC & Yukon Outstanding Young Farmers.

McNaughton and Bentall received the prestigious award at a gathering of OYF alumni and friends in Abbotsford, March 14th.

Branded as “where food comes from,” Cutter Ranch produces pasture-raised lamb, pork and beef on their 160-acre ranch. The pair began raising lamb at Bentall’s parents’ farm in Clinton before moving to Fort Steele.

“We started with lamb but soon diversified into hogs and poultry,” McNaughton says, noting “our intent is to produce high-quality ethically-raised meat raised in a low-stress environment.”

Rather than use conventional barns, Cutter’s animals are housed in greenhouses when not out on the pasture.

After seeing “what worked and what didn’t,” they made a major change in 2016, eliminating poultry, streamlining their pork production by phasing out farrowing and using purchased weaner pigs as a base and adding beef. The changes had an immediate positive impact. Sales of their pasture-raised pork increased 219% in 2017 and have already increased another 30% this year.

McNaughton and Bentall have established a web-based sales and distribution system and aggressively price their products, noting “our pricing must match our quality.”

They try to involve the local community as much as possible, touring hundreds of kids through the farm during lambing season each spring and regularly conducting sheepdog demonstrations;

“Our core goals were to pursue the endeavor as a couple, dedicate time to raising a family (they now have two young daughters), be environmental stewards of our land, be self-employed and grow high quality/nutritious food. We can say unarguably that our goals have not changed,” they say.

To earn the 2018 award from judges Al Timms (retired TD Bank BC agriculture manager), Mark Sweeney (retired BC Ministry of Agriculture berry and horticulture specialist) and Kurt Bausenhaus (KPMG), McNaughton and Bentall outpointed two other finalists, Roger & Lana

Groot of Hatch Creek Ranch in Topley and Gemma McNeill & Douglas Zaklan of Zaklan Heritage Farm in Surrey.

The Groots joined Roger's parents on the ranch after buying out Roger's uncle in 2007. They now run a 300 cow cow-calf operation and a small purebred Hereford herd on 2,000 deeded acres and another 30,000 acres of Crown grazing lands along the Bulkley River.

The Zaklan farm traces its roots to 1924, when Zaklan's great grandfather won 20 acres in a poker game and started growing strawberries in what is now known as Strawberry Hill in Surrey. After mentorships from the Young Agrarians, McNeill and Zaklan began the current incarnation of the farm in 2011. They now grow 150 varieties of 30 vegetables in high density plantings using raised beds. Although they only farm 1.5 acres, they proudly note it is enough to support both of them without any off-farm income.

The BCOYF program is sponsored by the BC Broiler Hatching Egg Commission, Clearbrook Grain & Milling, Farm Credit Canada and Insure Wealth. To be eligible for the award, applicants must be between 18 and 39 and derive most of their gross revenue from on-farm sources. They are judged on the progress in their agricultural careers, the sustainability of their farming operations and involvement in their industry and community.

Celebrating 38 years, 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. The program is sponsored nationally by CIBC, John Deere, Bayer, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through Growing Forward 2, a federal, provincial, territorial initiative. The national media sponsor is Annex Business Media, and the program is supported nationally by AdFarm, BDO and Farm Management Canada.

McNaughton and Bentall will represent BC at the National Event in Winnipeg, MB, November 29 – December 3, 2018. At that event two national winners will be chosen from the winners in seven regions across Canada.

Reference: David Schmidt
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