

Saskcan Pulse Trading reaches the world

BY CHRISTOPHER POLLON

When you think of Saskatchewan farming, lentils, peas and chickpeas are probably not the first agricultural products that spring to mind.

But with Saskatchewan farmers harvesting more legumes than any other province – collective production of pulses grew to nearly two million tonnes in 2003 alone – Regina's Saskcan Pulse Trading has tapped the local supply and established itself as a leading world processor and global exporter.

"We're taking a locally grown commodity and turning it into a value-added food product," said Murad Al-Katib, Saskcan president and chief executive officer, whose two Regina facilities process more red lentils than anywhere else in the Americas. "In that sense, we're bringing Saskatchewan producers to the world."

Instead of simply exporting unprocessed red lentils, Saskcan cleans, peels, splits, polishes and packages this product at home. Red lentils now account for 75 per cent of Saskcan's business.

"We're doing the final value-add right here in Regina," he said. "We've taken the commodity nature out of our business, so that demand is more consistent, we're more quality focused, and we can target and develop markets better."

Saskcan currently exports to 33 countries worldwide, with the bulk going to South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East.

"The future looks good for Saskatchewan agri-food processing in general," he said. "Our company has created 50 new jobs over the last 12 months." ■