Manitoba Fiber trials in Europe set to grow local industry

By Mark Myrowich
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Riverton, MB – Locally owned Erosion Control Blanket (ECB) announced today that it will send 15 tons of Manitoba grown flax fiber to Europe for decortication trials with its European partner EcoTechnilin and La Chanvrière de l’Aube (LCDA) in France. This trial will be the first step in setting up a decortication facility in Manitoba to supply the natural fiber composite industry in North America. The trials take place July 14 to 18th in France.

A group of flax farmers and Ag leaders will join ECB’s Mark Myrowich to witness the trials and tour the flax fiber operations in France. “Before large investments are made in Manitoba, we want to see first hand how MB Flax runs through European processing equipment” said Mark Myrowich owner of ECB. The plan is to decorticate the flax then run the finished product through Ecotechnilin’s non woven processing lines to make a mat that can be used in composite manufacturing. The Composite Innovation Center (CIC) is working with ECB and EcoTechnilin to test the final product and determine the quality we can achieve. “This trial is a key component of our strategy to keep Manitoba at the leading edge of developing bio-composites - which incorporate natural fibres from locally grown crops such as flax and hemp - to create a potentially alternative structural materials resource for industrial sectors such as agricultural machinery and automotive. It directly supports the development of a complete supply chain for these renewable, advanced materials ensuring economic gains in the rural economy, especially back to the producer, and placing Manitoba and Canada on the map for innovation and excellence in commercialization of agricultural fibre based products” said Simon Potter VP of CIC. This project received $26,905 from Growing Forward 2, a five-year federal-provincial territorial initiative to help the agriculture and agrifood sectors become more profitable, competitive and innovative.

Eric Fridfinnson, Chair of the Manitoba Flax Growers association provided the flax straw that will be used for the trials. “It is a logical step to try our fiber in Europe equipment for proof of concept and feasibility in Manitoba” said Fridfinnson.

Brian Johnson, Chair of the Flax Council of Canada, supports the efforts of this trial as the health benefits of flax seed have been growing recently and the utilization of the flax straw for added value purposes will only add to the value of growing flax in general. Producers are interested in increased returns to the crops they produce.

Myrowich is looking for interested Canadian flax growers who want to join him on this trial trip to France in July to witness the results and determine if this is a viable industry to build in Manitoba. He will be holding a meeting Friday June 12th location to be determined to outline the trip and business model.
More information is expected to be released following the trials in France the week of July 13 to 18th.

About the companies.

Erosion Control Blanket opened in 2001 in Riverton Manitoba and manufactures erosion and sediment control products out of natural fibers. In 2012 they opened a hydraulic mulch plant near Steinbach Manitoba to make hydroseeding products and soil amendments. They sell in the construction industry to distributors across Canada and into the US.

EcoTechnilin is a leading provider of natural fiber solutions in Europe, with production in the UK and France they are capable of producing 6500 tonnes of non-woven mat per year. Ecotechnilin and ECB signed a joint venture agreement in France in June of 2014. This joint venture created Ecotechnilin Canada which goal is to open a Non woven production line in Manitoba within 3 years.

LCDA is a decortication company specializing in flax and hemp decortication in France. LCDA is interested in expanding it’s operations to North America and looking for partners to achieve this goal.

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