



EASTERN STATES EXPOSITION

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LANCE AND GREG SMITH RECIPIENTS OF BIG E AGRICULTURAL ADVENTURERS AWARD

The New England Fellowship of Agricultural Adventurers presented Lance and Greg Smith, of Presque Isle, Maine, with the 2011 Agricultural Adventurers Award at the Annual Meeting of Eastern States Exposition, May 19, in West Springfield, Mass.

The Smith cousins are the fifth generation to operate Smith's Farm, growing 7,000 acres of broccoli, potatoes, wheat, barley and soybeans in the rolling hills of Aroostook County. Their crops are grown and cared for in the pristine environment of Northern Maine where their land has been maintained for generations with a commitment to promote and preserve Maine's natural resources. They continue to grow and innovate, and through science, they produce the purest, healthiest crops available for their customers.

The Smiths have been agricultural leaders since the 1940s when Greg's father, Herschel, grew his farming operation into one of the largest in Maine, expanding the farm acreage over the years, which was primarily potatoes, until the mid-1980s. He was the first to serve his customers with new techniques by washing and shipping russet potatoes in consumer packages under the STAG brand, the first to ship potatoes by truck to city markets and the first to implement large-scale sizing of round white potatoes. His leadership changed the industry as Maine farmers quickly followed with these practices. Greg and Lance have continued the tradition of leadership and innovation in their farming operation today.

Their drive to meet the needs of their customers has been instrumental in developing the select broccoli cuts that are now industry standards. Some of these new cuts have developed into new value-added packs from broccoli that was previously unsellable in the market.

In 2001, they began producing broccoli in Florida, adapting their growing techniques to meet the needs of a different climate and ground constitution. The additional operation on 700-800 acres has enabled them to provide their customers with multi-season supplies.

The farm has led the industry in food safety and is among the first in the country to implement a written program and participate in independent food safety audits.

The Smiths led the way to develop crop rotation programs with dozens of potato farmers and beef producers in the area. Sharing land improved rotation and developed the market, making the practice successful. Broccoli is an ideal rotation crop for sharing land with potato farms as the two crops do not share common diseases. Putting broccoli into the rotation schedule of potatoes has proven to increase yields, improve quality and reduce land expenses. Working with beef producers, Smith's developed a market for the barley that is grown in rotation with these farms. At the same time, it supplies the beef producers with a consistent, affordable feed supply.

Employing between 200 and 300 full-time and seasonal workers, Smith's Farm is one of the larger employers in the northern Maine region. The salaries they pay and the large expenditures for goods and services have a huge impact on the local agriculture economy.

Lance and Greg Smith have been FFA members, attending The Big E for various contests. Greg was the recipient of the FFA Star Farmer award in 1972, presented at the Fair. The cover of the National FFA magazine featured a photo of renowned entertainer Roy Rogers presenting Greg with a calf during the award ceremony.

Their agricultural community support includes Greg once serving as a director and Lance a director-elect of the Northern Maine Fair. Each year, they support the fair's 4-H Baby Beef auction by purchasing a steer. In addition, they are major contributors to the new Agricultural Heritage Building which serves as an agricultural education and history center.

Greg is the president of the Maine Potato Growers cooperative and Lance is on the Maine Public Service board of directors. They are the recipients of the Red Book Business Character Award (2005), the Safeway Produce Superior Service Award (2003), Conservation Farmer of the Year award (1997) and the Environmental Stewardship Award (1996).

The sixth-generation of Smiths is now at work in the operation with Greg's son, Zach, and Lance's daughter, Emily, as partners in the farm and Lance's daughter, Tara, as the director of Marketing for the organization.

Since 1953, the Fellowship of Agricultural Adventurers has honored outstanding leaders in New England agriculture. A special committee, appointed by the trustees of Eastern States Exposition, selects its annual fellow on the basis of innovation, pioneering and lifetime dedication to the betterment of agriculture.

The Big E takes place September 16 – Oct. 2, 2011 in West Springfield, Mass.