

PEI Bioscience company plans to add 100 jobs over the next five years

by Heidi Riley

In August, PEI's **Somru BioScience** announced it was teaming up with Radiant Pharmaceuticals, a company from Bangladesh. The partnership will establish a laboratory that will use test kits developed and manufactured on PEI to help diagnose diabetic and cancer patients in Bangladesh.

Hiring needs

Over the next five years, Somru expects to create \$50 million in export sales and add 100 new employees to its PEI operation. Somru will be looking to hire people with bioscience backgrounds.

"Through this partnership, Somru will develop and manufacture the laboratory-developed tests in our facility in Charlottetown and export them to Bangladesh to be executed in a jointly-established lab," says **Mohammed Moin**, Vice President of Somru BioScience. "We will also provide the necessary training and logistics support."

Somru expansion

Somru is building a 5,000 square foot expansion at the PEI BioCommons.

Developing personalized medicine

"This joint venture is a huge opportunity for Somru to make a difference in millions of people's lives," says **Rafiq Islam**, Chief Scientific Officer and co-founder of Somru.

"Through this collaboration, we are delivering personalized medicine to a population of 180 million people in Bangladesh.

"We are also collecting data that will help us to understand why some drugs work for some people and do not work for others. It will help us understand the safety and effectiveness of drugs, and how it relates to gender, physiology, and genetics. Our long-term vision is to use this valuable data to develop better targeted treatment strategies."

"We at Somru BioScience want to make a better world through our dedication to research and innovation, and by engaging like-minded organizations like Radiant Pharmaceuticals," says Mohammed Moin.

About the staff

At present, Somru has 15 employees on PEI, including Scientists, Quality Control Technicians, and administrative positions. Some of the Research Technicians are Holland College graduates.

PEI's Bioscience cluster

"Somru is an early-stage company, just five years old," says **Rory Francis**, Executive Director, PEI BioAlliance. "They have a great vision and some very smart people with a drive to succeed. The great news is that we have more of those companies in our business incubation pipeline."



From left back row: Rafiq Islam, Chief Scientific Officer, Somru BioScience, Dr. Sohrab Alom, Lab Technical Director at Radiant Pharmaceuticals (Bangladesh), Honourable Heath MacDonald, PEI Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, and MP Sean Casey, join Abu Shahriar Zahedee, Executive Director of Radiant Pharmaceuticals, and Mohammed Moin, Vice President of Somru BioScience.

For more information, visit www.somrubioscience.com
For the full interview, visit www.employmentjourney.com and search Somru.
For more about PEI Bioscience companies, visit www.peibioalliance.com



Agriculture on PEI needs workers with expertise as well as for entry-level jobs

by Heidi Riley

"For me, finding people with the right skill sets is a challenge," says **David Mol**, President, **PEI Federation of Agriculture**. "It's harder to attract people to agriculture as a career."

David, who has been farming for 48 years, owns Meadowbrook Farms in Winsloe, where he focuses on seed grain production.

"Because farming has become more mechanized and labour is harder to attract, my staff numbers have changed over the years," says David. "When growing cauliflower and broccoli, we needed 15 to 20 seasonal workers. When I changed to cereal and seed production, I used to have a staff of four people. Currently, I have one full-time staff member besides myself."

"The agriculture industry has become more sophisticated, with computers and GPS on tractors, and the level of training and expertise needed has gone up as well. We are competing in a job market that has higher salary expectations than what farming has traditionally been used to."

"In western Canada, the agriculture industry faces competition with salaries paid in the oil patch, and farmers there have to match those salaries."

"I know a farmer out west who is paying his employee more than he makes, and I am also paying my employee more than I make. If you need a high level of expertise, you have to compete or get out of the business."

"A number of PEI farmers are hiring off-shore employees, and they are proving to be excellent workers. I have had first-hand experience with some of them."

"Being part of a roguing crew is a great entry-level way to learn more about working in agriculture. This job involves walking through fields identifying and removing undesirable plant species. Roguing is a job that cannot be done by machine. This year, I hired one 65 year old, and also four young brothers ages 11 to 17."

Agriculture education

"Only eight or nine PEI students graduate from the Dalhousie agricultural program in Truro every year. It used to be many more."

"I think the education system should strengthen the agricultural course content at high school level. They need to paint a positive picture that there is more to farming than any misconceptions they may have."



David Mol, President of the PEI Federation of Agriculture.

For more information about the **PEI Federation of Agriculture**, visit www.peifa.ca
To explore the many jobs options in Agriculture on PEI visit, www.peiagsc.ca



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