

Edgy exports  
and CETA  
explained

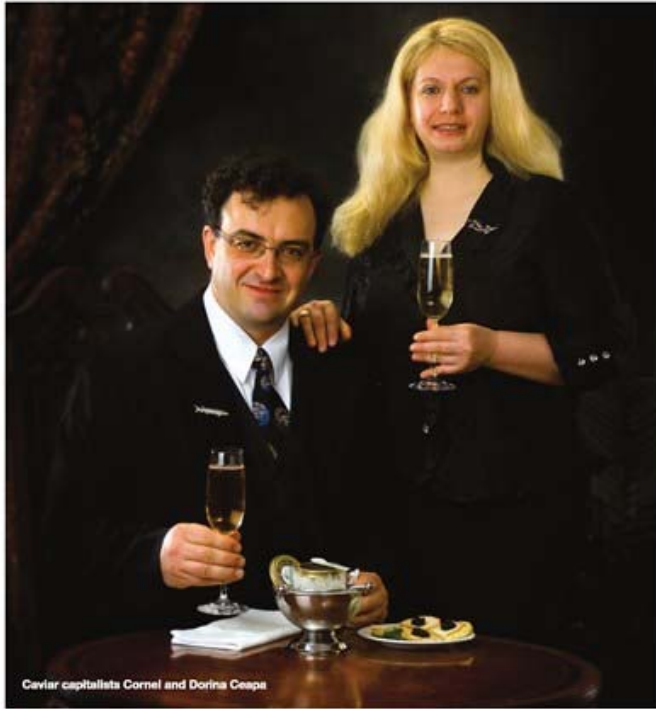
Leadership  
lessons with  
Corey Poirier

Product  
Placement:  
Pixel printer

Green Imaging  
Technologies  
pays it forward

Regional  
intelligence  
from APEC

# for starters >>>



Caviar capitalists Cornel and Dorina Ceapa

[case in point]

## Premium exports

Once an extravagant indulgence of the rich and famous, caviar is slowly coming back into fashion, but this time with food lovers who appreciate tasty delicacies that are relatively affordable.

While the best caviar was once harvested only from the Caspian and Black seas, new sturgeon farms around the world, including in Canada, have created a sustainable industry to help fill the void left by depleted wild stocks. On the shores of New Brunswick's St. John River, where wild sturgeon haven't become extinct, Cornel Ceapa is capitalizing on a piqued interest in caviar. "Caviar doesn't sell like peanuts or anything else," he says. "You have to build a brand reputation."

Since 2005 Ceapa and his wife, Dorina, and son, Michael, have been operating

Acadian Sturgeon and Caviar Inc. in Carters Point, 30 kilometres from Saint John. The company sells live sturgeon to locations throughout Canada, the United States, Europe, and Asia. It sells its caviar and value-add products, such as maple-smoked sturgeon and smoked sturgeon pâté, nationwide. In 2012 a panel of food experts in *The Globe and Mail* called Acadian Sturgeon's premium product, "an intensely flavoured caviar that will please traditionalists" and "not for wimps."

Each spring and summer, Ceapa, a 46-year-old Romanian-born scientist with a PhD in fisheries engineering, harvests wild Atlantic sturgeon in a small sustainable fishery in the St. John River while he waits for the fish in his family's small aquaculture farm to mature (it can take 10 years to grow sturgeon from egg to adult). From his hatchery, Ceapa sells fertilized eggs, larvae, and juveniles (recently hatched fish) to sturgeon farms and researchers around the world, some of whom are restocking the Baltic Sea. Every year they ship between 700,000 and one million fertilized eggs mainly overseas—and the number is growing. "We are also in the process of getting approval to begin to export our caviar to the United States," says Ceapa. "It's a protected product, so there is some paperwork we are working through, but we're excited about its potential for growth."

Selling a variety of sturgeon products, which Ceapa plans to harvest from both wild and farmed fish, is part of his sustainable business plan. Being diverse and slowly building his business and customer base with the market are key to his long-term success. He knows that he has competition, not only in New Brunswick and British Columbia but also around the world, but he's confident about his products: "We've actually had to slow down our exporting because we were being charged a 20% tariff on our products," he says. "Now with the impending CETA, we can focus more on

## for starters

### point of view

#### HOW CETA CAN GIVE YOU THE EDGE YOU NEED TO GROW

According to the Government of Canada, the upcoming Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) will unlock fresh opportunities for Canadian businesses. To date, it's the country's most ambitious trade initiative and broader in scope than the historic North American Free Trade Agreement.

From the outset, provinces and territories have been active participants, and various municipalities and stakeholders have been consulted regularly. As such, CETA is intended to provide companies with preferential market access to the European Union to its more than 500 million consumers and to its annual \$17 trillion in economic activity.

In Atlantic Canada, this will be a winning situation. CETA will eliminate the vast majority of existing EU tariffs on advanced manufactured products, making our products more competitive globally and creating the conditions for increased sales. CETA isn't just about seafood, lumber, and manufacturing; it's about so much more. Think services, access to European procurement, and foreign direct investment. If that isn't enough, Canada is ahead of the United States on a trade agreement with the EU, which will give us a market-share advantage.

My advice, regardless of the sector you're in, is if you want to expand, start preparing now for your EU market entry. Doing so means you will not only be ahead of the curve but also ahead of the competition.

— Pernelle Fischer Boutlier, export consultant and owner of *Kissup International Trade Routes*

the European market and offer a more competitive product" [see "Point of view," above, to learn about CETA].

In 2003 Ceapa immigrated to Canada with his family. They landed in Toronto but were only there two months before


an entry-level position as a research assistant at the University of New Brunswick in Saint John brought them to Atlantic Canada. While there, he did research with a local aquaculture farm looking to diversify from salmon into sturgeon.

When the salmon grower backed out, Ceapa had a decision to make: remain at the university or capitalize on an opportunity to build his own hatchery. A recent immigrant with no credit history, he decided to take a leap. He found a fish buyer in North Carolina and, using his business savvy, persuaded him to give him a \$25,000 advance. The advance, along with a \$75,000 small-business loan, which he has since repaid, launched the business.


Caviar lovers can now buy Ceapa's products online on his website, *acadian-sturgeon.com*, or at *costco.ca*, or they can find them in a growing number of fine restaurants across the country, such as Raymonds in St. John's. He also has the support of some of Canada's top chefs, including Michael Stadtländer, the founder of the Canadian Chefs' Congress. "My dream is to build this business by creating a healthy medium between aquaculture and a wild fishery," says Ceapa. "We will continue to sell the wild fish, and we will grow the business through the aquaculture side."

— ALLISON LAWLOR

Progress Innovation in Practice Program Finalist for  
Our Service Based Budget



This is Our Saint John.



**SAINT JOHN**  
www.saintjohn.ca