

## Plastic-wrap dispenser firm among fastest growing

By Dan Zakreski  
of The StarPhoenix

Mock the TV ads as corny, dismiss the product as too obvious — Jim Scharf has heard it all before.

Now he's getting the last laugh.

The Perdue-area farmer invented the E-Zeewrap 1000 plastic-wrap dispenser in 1986. This month, his homegrown firm made the number 46 slot on the list of Canada's 100 fastest growing companies.

Jim Scharf Holdings Inc. made the list by posting a 1,425 per cent jump in revenues between 1989 and 1994.

The list is compiled by Profit: The Magazine for Canadian Entrepreneurs. Scharf is one of two Saskatchewan firms in the top 100. Ghost Transportation Services of Saskatoon ranked 90th.

Scharf, who still operates a full-time grain farm with his wife Bruna, says the idea for the dispenser came from his everyday life.

"Plastic wrap — everybody uses it, everybody fights with it," he said Tuesday.

"I thought it was a great idea back in 1986, but no one believed me."

They believe now.

The company went from a \$14,000 loss in 1989 to a \$157,289 profit in 1994. In that same period, revenues went from \$163,994 to \$2.5 million. The dispenser is sold in Mexico, South Africa, Spain and Sweden. It's sold in Canada by Kmart and

Wal-Mart stores, among others.

Changing the E-Zeewrap from metal to plastic in 1991 is one reason the company has done well, he said. The raw components are made with an injection mold system at a factory in Swift Current and then assembled in a plant in downtown Perdue.

In the company's first five years, he sold 5,000 of the metal models. Since changing to plastic, with the help of Saskatchewan Research Council scientist Orville Olm, the company has sold 250,000.

The second breakthrough came with a series of TV ads designed by Scharf. Their success helped the company through its low point in 1993.

"We'd spent a pile of money to get the new model going, the bank had cut us off, we had a bad crop and the government had changed GRIP," he said.

"I made deals with some TV stations and they ran the ads until it took off."

Scharf is negotiating to mass market the dispenser in the U.S. and looking at an expansion to the Perdue plant. Despite the growth, he says the firm will remain in Perdue where its assembly plant employs 20 during the peak season.

"We'll never be too big for Perdue, I don't see it as a problem. The town has everything going for it," he said.