

Quebec Farmers' Advocate

Vol. 35, No. 3 – March 2015

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Beef industry weathering BSE case



At a high-end restaurant in Japan, a chef prepares steak for customers who hungrily look on. Asian markets have become important for Canada's beef industry, but several have closed their borders to Canadian beef following the discovery of a single case of BSE on an Alberta farm.

**"Spring is when you
feel like whistling
even with a shoe
full of slush."**

— Doug Larson

QFA's Farm Food Forums

Thursday, April 30

Improved margins through
better livestock nutrition
and health

See page 16 for details.

Andrew McClelland
Advocate Staff Reporter

Over five weeks have passed since food inspection officials found a single case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in a beef cow on an Alberta farm. At the time, producers and representatives in the beef industry were worried about the potential impact the case of "Mad Cow Disease" would have on international markets. But now, it seems that Canada's beef business will be able to brave the bad weather—despite a few drawbacks.

"If the case of BSE has had a negative effect, it's that it's decreased optimism in Canadian beef farmers," said Gib Drury, a cow/calf operator from Alcove, in the Outaouais.

"Despite the high prices, we're not

increasing the size of our breeding herd, whereas in the U.S., they've increased their herd by two per cent in the past year."

"Building the breeding herd is a slow process," says Drury, treasurer for the Quebec Farmers' Association. "But the market signals are saying 'go for it!' when some producers are making \$400 to \$500 profit on a cow. That should be reason enough to build up your herd."

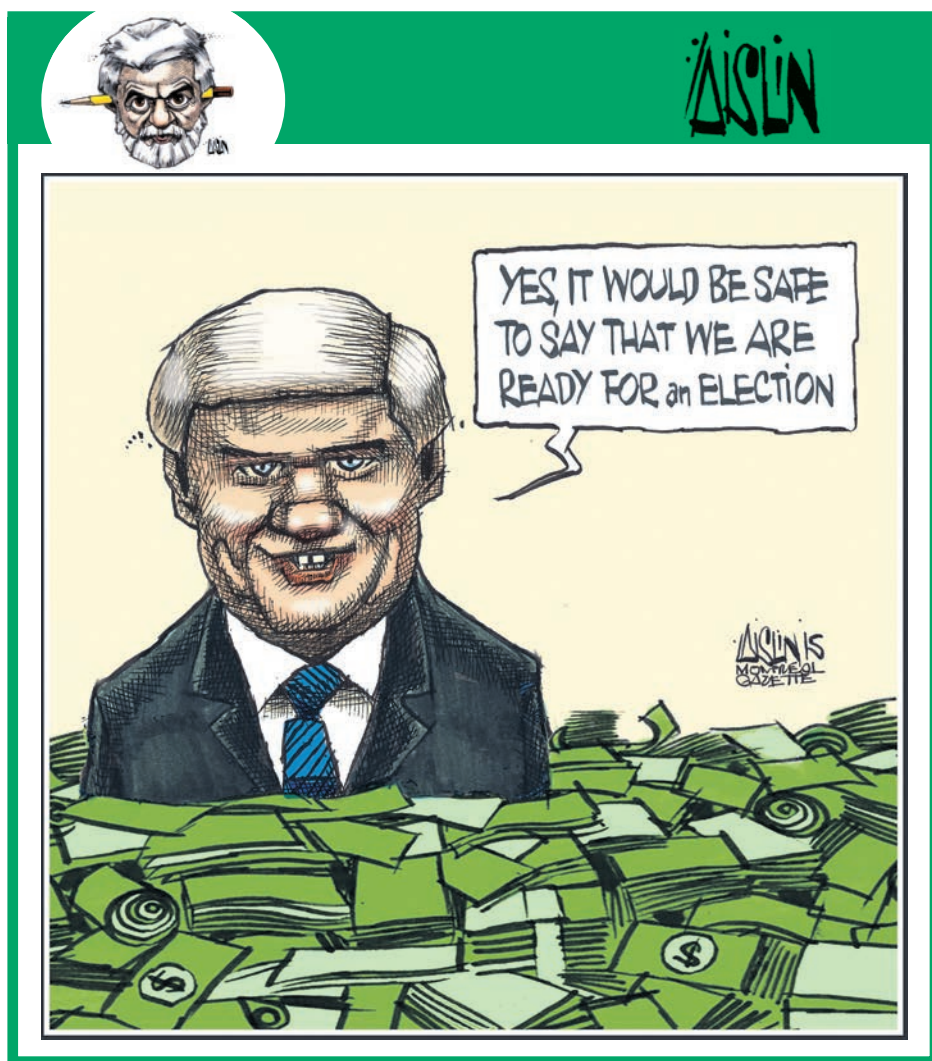
At the national level, politicians and industry representatives are also telling producers to stay the course.

"So far everyone is holding tough," said federal Minister of Agriculture Gerry Ritz. "The world recognizes us as a controlled-risk status country. That's science-based and we expect our trading partners to base their access decisions on that science."

The good news for beef farmers is that the announcement of the discovery of the BSE case hasn't made beef prices plummet. Due in part to the shrinking North American beef herd, the healthy prices that producers welcomed in the fall of 2014 are still robust. Many were concerned that Canada was about to witness a repeat of the BSE crisis of 2003, which caused countries to close their borders to Canadian livestock, prices to drop, and many farmers to leave the business.

"Everyone's pretty calm," said John Masswohl, the director of government relations for the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. "We're not happy, but it could have happened at a worse time."

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Overseas markets lost

But Canadian beef marketing overseas has suffered a big loss. In all, six countries have temporarily suspended beef imports from Canada: Korea, Taiwan, Peru, Belarus and China. Indonesia has banned Canadian beef and non-edible beef by-products as well.

Canada has spent years wooing foreign countries when it comes to beef markets. Asian countries are particularly advantageous for Canada's beef export trade, purchasing parts of the carcass that North American consumers don't want.

"It's always been the second- and third-tier cuts that we've had a problem moving," explained Ritz. "A lot of it was just going as trim to the U.S. to be ground into hamburger. Now a lot of that's being diverted to the Pacific Rim — Korea, Japan, China and so on — for hot pot."

That's why China's decision to ban imports in the wake of the BSE discovering is bad news here. The country is now Canada's second-largest trading partner, after the United States.

Same birth farm

Although it is not yet known how the cow in this case contracted BSE, some interesting facts have come to light.

On February 27, officials confirmed that the cow was born on the same farm as another cow that tested positive for BSE in 2010. This is the first time that Canada has seen a repeat case on the same birth farm. The cow in the 2010 case was only six years old when the disease was discovered. On both occasions, no trace of the animal went into human or animal feed systems.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) officials continue to examine and check cows at the Alberta birth farm for other cases of BSE, but the process is lengthy and rigorous. And discovering if the cow was infected by eating contaminated feed is also a time-consuming investigation.

"It takes such a minuscule amount of product that it's a needle in a haystack... it's a needle in several haystacks actually," Ritz said at a news conference in Calgary.

"It's quite a large operation, the birth farm, as well as the farm she was found on, so there's a number of animals to be searched out," he said.

At press time, the age of the cow had not yet been verified and CFIA officials are not yet identifying the location of the birth farm.



Mission

To defend the rights, provide information and advocate for the English-speaking agricultural community in Quebec.

Vision

The QFA's actions contribute to a sustainable future for both agriculture and the environment while providing a decent quality of life and financial return for the individuals and their families who have made agriculture and food production their chosen professions.

Shared Values

Members of the QFA believe in:

Maintaining family-owned and operated farms / Food sovereignty and self-determination by individuals and nations / Intergenerational involvement / Lifelong learning / Protection of the physical environment / Preserving land for agricultural production / Minimum government interference / Working alone and in partnership with others

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Quebec Farmers' Association

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Young Pontiac producer named to QFA board of directors

Andrew McClelland
Advocate Staff Reporter

The Quebec Farmers' Association has a new face on its board of directors. Twenty-two-year-old Andrew Hickey from Quyon, QC was named the 4-H Representative to the board in January. Hickey takes over from former 4-H rep Annie Grubb.

Hickey comes by farming and a love of agriculture honestly. His uncle, Blake Draper, runs a cow/calf operation off 300 acres of rented and owned land. Hickey's mother made a petition to the Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec (which was approved based on rights under Articles 101 and 103) to parcel off a section of Draper's land big enough to build a house upon. Hickey grew up right on the farm, seeing his uncle work and helping out as much as possible.

The John Abbott College student, currently in his second year of a Business Administration degree, learned about beef farming from watching his uncle tend to his 85-head herd of Angus and Hereford cattle.

"Now I have four Holstein heifers that I keep in Quyon," says Hickey. "I just started it as a way of making a bit of money through my interest in dairy cattle, but also to breed Holstein heifers for other local producers."

Hickey originally got involved with the QFA by lending a hand at the associ-

ation's safety demonstrations. The QFA regularly conducts demonstrations for Ag Safety Week, a nation-wide campaign for farm safety put on annually by the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) during the third week of March. Hickey assisted QFA staff at S.E. McDowell Elementary School in Shawville in the Pontiac region.

"We had a lot of fun, explaining various dangerous chemicals they should be aware of on the farm, showing the kids how quickly you can get sucked into a grain cart and other dangers," recalls Hickey. "Most of the students were from nine to 11 years old. The safety kit has two pairs of eyeglasses—'Tired' glasses and 'Drunk' glasses—showing the difference in how your vision is affected when you're tired or drunk. They liked that!"

Hickey is comfortable working with farm youth, having been involved with Shawville's 4-H Club since he was 16. He currently sits on the Quebec 4-H board of directors as chair of the financial committee for the second consecutive year.

"The 4-H is so important, particularly in an area like Shawville where the majority of members are under 12," says Hickey. "They learn how to be good leaders, and they can learn practical things like how to feed cattle better."

Hickey plans on attending Macdonald Campus after finishing his CEGEP degree, hoping to pursue a specializa-



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ANDREW HICKEY

New QFA Board Member Andrew Hickey has volunteered at many QFA events throughout the years. "The Farm Food Forum videoconferences offer a lot of great things," says the 22-year-old producer. "It's important to meet other farmers from other regions and see how they work."

tion in Agri-Business in the Agricultural Economics program. Hickey sees the QFA as a vital resource for English-speaking farmers in Quebec, noting that producers who are not fluently bilingual remain at a handicap when it comes to running their businesses.

"The QFA's important, even the little

benefits like having a translation service there where we can get documents translated, are a plus," Hickey says. "The Farm Food Forum videoconferences offer a lot of great things. It's important to meet other farmers from other regions and see how they work, what they have to offer."

GET ON-BOARD WITH THE QFA

THERE'S A NEW BENEFIT COMING DOWN THE LINE FOR QFA MEMBERS.
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For details please contact the Quebec Farmers Association or consult our website at: Quebecfarmers.org. Some restrictions apply.

The Quebec Farmers Association's ongoing partnership with CEDEC is expanding to include Small Business Support initiatives. CEDEC is pleased to extend this benefit to QFA members. CEDEC is a volunteer-driven organization committed to building forward-looking, prosperous and confident communities across Quebec through sharing expertise and knowledge. CEDEC is a leading partner and driving force for community economic development and employability.

VIA 
VIA Rail Canada



QFA Editorial



Andrew McClelland
Advocate Managing Editor

Okay, I have a confession to make: although I'm the editor of a farm newspaper, I wasn't actually raised a farm kid.

I grew up around 1.5 kilometres down the highway from our farm. Thanks to Quebec's zoning laws, my father wasn't allowed to build a barn or residence (or even an outhouse, if you read the fine print) on his land.

So a lot of the farm work I remember doing in childhood happened on other people's farms. On neighbours' farms or family members' farms. Helping out with the haying on my uncle's farm in summer; stacking square bales that I could barely lift on the hay wagon; watching the hay elevator bring the bales up to the hayloft; getting itchy under the collar from the dust and taking a bath afterwards; feeling pleasantly tired from the work.

Or, in the winter, cutting wood on my aunt's property a few kilometres up the road. Watching my dad prepare to fell a tree, making a notch and securing the ropes, and thinking, "Oh boy, there's no

Helping your neighbours is helping yourself

way he can control where that thing's gonna land! This is gonna be great!" But it landed right where he said it would every time. (Well, barring a few exciting exceptions...)

Many evenings at our house were livened up by producers coming over to ask my dad—an agronome with MAPAQ—for help with complicated government forms. At the time, I figured it was all part of my father's job. But now that I've worked in Quebec farming for over a decade, I know that it's not a MAPAQ employee's responsibility to help a farmer with a CPTAQ application, or a phosphorus report for the ministry of environment, or help with taxes. He was probably just helping his friends and neighbours out.

Because helping each other is what farmers do. Although agricultural producers are indeed businessmen and women, they're not competing with each other in the same way that hardware store owners or real estate agents do. They have to pull together, in the fields with helping hands, in politics with strong unions like the UPA, and in community with organizations like the QFA.

Joining the QFA is just another way of

helping out your neighbours. The UPA listens to the QFA and what it says on behalf of its members. And governments listen to the QFA and what it says on behalf of its members. But they would listen harder and closer if they could see that all Anglophone farmers in Quebec have joined the QFA.

There are 1,500 English-speaking producers who pay their dues to the UPA. All of those paid-up members get the *Advocate* delivered to their mailbox every month.

But don't think that getting the *Advocate* makes you a member of the Quebec Farmers' Association. Your UPA dues don't trickle down to us—the QFA receives no core funding from the UPA. When English-speaking agricultural producers pay annual dues to the UPA, none of the money is transferred to the QFA to cover its operating expenses. So you may be getting the *Advocate*, but you may not be helping out your neighbours and fellow farmers in defending the rights of Anglophone farmers. And you're relying on someone else to pay the cost of producing and sending you the paper. That's why everyone here at the QFA is tremendously thankful for

those producers who have renewed their membership and who continue to give their support to the QFA, year after year.

That's why I invite you all to help out the QFA by filling out the membership application on page two of this issue. Becoming a QFA member helps you out by giving you free admission to our Farm Food Forum videoconferences, where you can meet other producers and learn about ways to improve your operation. Membership gives you the chance to run three classified ads in the *Advocate* free-of-charge every year. It also gives you discounts at retailers like Mark's Work Warehouse and on VIA Rail. You can also purchase comprehensive health coverage for yourself and your family – benefit not available to farmers who are just UPA members. And those are only a few of the benefits.

Helping the QFA is helping yourself out. But it's also helping out people just like yourself—your friends, your neighbours across the way, and your friends and neighbours in farming that you haven't even met. After all, that's what good neighbours do. And that's what being a friend to the farm community is all about.



Farm Food Forums

Improved margins through better livestock nutrition and health

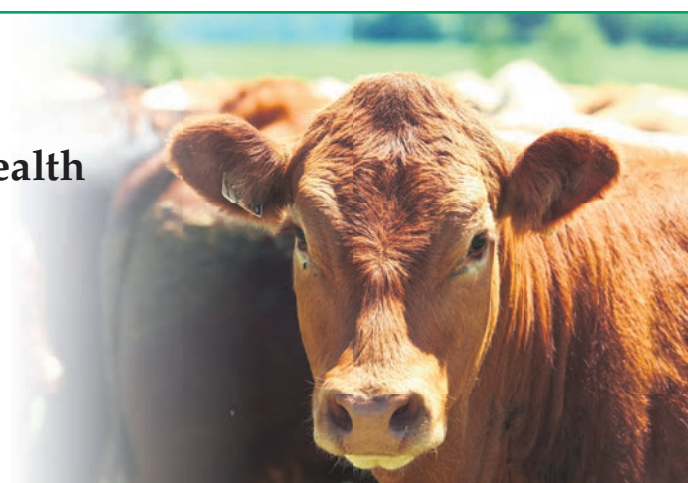
Learn all about it at the next edition of the QFA's "Farm Food Forums"

Thursday, April 30, 2015

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Goals to be unaffected by budget cuts

OUTAOUAIS-LAURENTIDES

The Laurentides and Outaouais CRÉs have already seen the chopping block. For CLDs, 2015 will be a transitional year: While some will remain intact, others will be integrated into their respective MRC. But the region hasn't had its final say.

The Laurentides CRÉ comprises eight MRCs. When faced with government-imposed cuts, it had no choice but to give in. However, the eight prefects continue to hold regular meetings. "The CRÉ as we know it will be abolished, but it will return in another form and under another name," assures its president, Ramez Ayoub. At this point, the goal of the prefects is to

preserve their gains through consultation or dialogue.

The story is the same in Outaouais, where regional mobilization is gaining ground. The Réseau des CRÉ du Québec, of which the Outaouais CRÉ is a member, recently filed a motion requesting that the government rectify the situation, particularly in terms of local and regional development. "The regions want to keep things at a regional level and preserve some form of a regional consensus, insofar as they have the means to do so. The government must take this into account," exclaimed Paulette Lalande, President of the Outaouais CRÉ, at the time the motion was filed.

The UPA's reaction

UPA Laurentides-Outaouais General Director René Ledoux deplores the fact that after a year and a half of planning, seven development plans for the agricultural zone (PDZA) must now be shelved. "We're the region that planned the most developments for the PDZA, starting from year one. We were about to put them into action," he lamented. However, Ledoux believes that the day these programs are re-introduced, "we will proceed with step 2". But for the

moment, Ledoux says that weakening CLDs "compromises our primary local tool for local development".

It is still too early to tell what will happen to the CLDs. We know that some will remain intact to carry out their agenda in 2015, including four of the eight Laurentides CLDs and two of the five Outaouais CLDs. As for the others, the only option remains merging with or integrating into their respective MRC.

Anglophone farmers are well represented

Gilles Lévesque

Regional Correspondent

The Montérégie branch of the Fédération de l'UPA wants to ensure that English-speaking farmers are well-represented across its vast territory. Since the 2012 merger, every effort has been made to break their isolation, to provide them with adequate information in their language, and to get them involved in their local union.

SAINT-CHRYSOSTOME — Did you know that 510 out of the 7,042 farms surveyed by the Montérégie branch of the Fédération de l'UPA are run by English-speaking farmers? That's 808 farmers who feel more comfortable expressing themselves in English, and close to seven per cent of the 11,812 farming businesses in this vast region of Quebec.

The committee of Anglophone producers was trained on how to best represent English farmers within the Fédération de l'UPA de la Montérégie. Presided over by Jérémie Letellier, the committee is made up of five Anglophone farmers: Chantal Agnew, Keith Boomhower, Lila Lee, Neil Mackak and Glenn Switzman. Hélène Boyer is the committee secretary.

"This is something unique to Quebec," pointed out Chantal Agnew, who represents the Anglo community within the federation. "This is a popular initiative. We aim to improve the dissemination of information to English-speaking farmers, and it's working well".

Sectors

The committee is particularly concerned with five regional county municipalities (MRCs): Brome-Missisquoi, Vaudreuil-Soulanges, Jardins-de-Napierville, Beauharnois-Salaberry and Haut-Saint-Laurent. The latter accounts for 40 per cent of English-speaking farmers and is the only UPA syndicate with bilingual status in Quebec. All meetings are held in English and French. There are also 20 English-speaking farmers on the territory covered by the Haut-Richelieu MRC.

Initiatives

"Respectful of values and principles that guide the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA), the committee strives to ensure that Anglophone farmers are provided with access to information in their language. It is important to maintain good communication with them and to encourage their involvement. Some efforts have been made in the last three years, and there are more to come," Agnew explained.



Chantal Agnew represents the committee of Anglophone farmers for the Montérégie branch of the Fédération de l'UPA.

"We even organized a meeting in Saint-Ignace-de-Stanbridge on January 22, so that Anglophone farmers could speak to UPA president Marcel Groleau in their language. We'd like to have such meetings alternately, once a year, in both Montérégie east and west, and we are working on it," explained Agnew, who represented English-speaking farmers at the Congrès de Québec.

Many of the documents are now translated, so administrators can better understand when subjects are discussed in a union where English is used.

Cattle farm

Along with representing English-speaking farmers, Chantal Agnew runs a cattle farm in Saint-Chrysostome with her partner, Frank Boyle. Eleven years ago, Agnew purchased Anglo Acres SENC from her parents, Danielle and John Agnew. The farm specializes in feeder calves.

A diversification plan led to the opening of the Boutique Bon Bœuf last autumn. The boutique currently sells meat produced on this 200-acre farm and will eventually sell other products.

"I've worked in agricultural environments and I missed interacting with the public. Our shop is doing well and we have other ideas for diversification. We also started raising replacement heifers," concluded the young mother of two children, aged three and six.

When pigs go green

LANAUDIÈRE

Audrey Desrochers
Regional Correspondent

TERREBONNE — Standing in front of his counter, master charcutier Pascal Liégeois prepares his sausage strings. Opposite him, an employee wraps pistachio pork-crust pâtés. At Aux trois petits cochons verts, everything is made by hand. The artisanal charcuteries prepared by this family business contain

“very few” preservatives and no nitrates or phosphates. Using only quality meats, the owners have formed partnerships with Lanaudière producers who share their green philosophy.

Pascal Liégeois learned his trade in France. When he came Quebec over 25 years ago, he brought with him his recipes and adapted them to local flavours. Less fat, less salt and – greener. “Our cleaning products are biodegradable. We recycle and compost,” proudly stated his wife, Véronique Liégeois. All meats used

are produced in Quebec, except for bison from western Canada. Porc du Rang 4, located in Saint-Ambroise-de-Kildare, is one of their main suppliers. There, owners Marc-André and Alain Forget raise pigs without using hormones or antibiotics and are Bien-être animal certified.

“We do business with them not only because we like the way they treat their animals, but also for the quality of their products,” explained Véronique Liégeois, co-owner of Trois petits cochons verts. With 35 years of experience as a butcher and charcutier, her husband knows quality meats. “He can tell just by looking at the flesh if an animal was sick,” she says. However, it was the consistency of the meat produced at Porc du Rang 4 that won over the Liégeois.

The story of a sausage

The business relationship between Trois petits cochons verts and the Forget brothers began with a sausage. “Marc-André came to meet us. He needed to sell his pork and prove the meat was of a superior quality,” Véronique recalled. Pascal Liégeois gave Marc-André Forget’s animal a try by making a dry sausage



Pascal Liégeois learned his charcutier trade in France.

out of its butt and flank. And the results were a success. Today, the master charcutier uses the Forget brothers’ pork in many of his products.

For Véronique Liégeois, processors are still the missing link between producers and merchants. “Sometimes breeders come to see us so that we can make new products with their meat,” she pointed out. And each and every time, the main selection criterion remains the same: a quality meat. “Because consumer health is of the utmost importance.”



Inspired by French recipes, the master charcutier adapts them to suit his Québécois clientèle.

Concerns arise over the future of the PDAAM

MAURICIE

Pierre Saint-Yves
Regional Correspondent

The agricultural world, along with the entire agrifoods industry of the Mauricie, is deeply concerned about the future of the Plan de développement de l’agriculture et de l’agroalimentaire (PDAAM).

TROIS-RIVIÈRES — The Plan de développement de l’agriculture et de l’agroalimentaire (PDAAM) is a regional program administered by the Conférence régionale des élus (CRÉ) to support regional initiatives favouring the development of agriculture and agrifoods. The PDAAM’s survival depends on the CRÉs, which are disappearing due to budget cuts by the Quebec government.

“The agricultural world adamantly seeks to maintain the spirit of regional consensus, which has proven effective and has helped revitalize our activity sector,” maintained the president of the Fédération régionale de l’UPA, Jean-Marie Giguère.

Gérard Bruneau, President of the CRÉ and Mayor of Saint-Mauricie, shares this sentiment: “We want the PDAAM to stay, but in what shape and form? How will it be funded? Who will fund it? All this still needs to be clarified.”

Jean-Marie Giguère says that many other regions would like to have a regional development tool like the PDAAM. Implemented five years ago, the plan has seen the realization of 24 projects, including Cultivez l’entrepreneur en vous, an energy efficiency program for large farming businesses; the Gala des Gens de Terre et Saveurs organization; and, more recently, the deployment of the Réseau d’action en établissement agricole de la

Mauricie (RAEAM), spearheaded by the Syndicat régional de la relève.

“We are definitely concerned,” exclaimed Marie-Christine Brière, President of the Syndicat de la relève (succession syndicate). “We took advantage of favourable economic conditions last summer to launch the Réseau [d’action en établissement agricole], and the PDAAM is one of our major partners in this project. We believe the [agricultural] milieu will continue to support initiatives like this one...but we still cannot say this with certainty.”

Giguère believes the government should consider the revenue generated by the development of these initiatives in the last few years. Such initiatives have created 40 jobs and five groups working on structuring projects, such as the Filière mycologique régionale and RAEAM. “We cannot afford to put on



President of the Fédération de l’UPA de la Mauricie, Jean-Marie Giguère, is calling upon the region’s elected officials to support the PDAAM.

hold promising projects currently being implemented” he stated.

A busy first year at Ferme Natibo

GASPÉSIE

Antoine Rivard-Déziel
Regional Correspondent

February 2014. Ferme Natibo, located in Caplan, Gaspésie, sells its first goat-milk products. One year later, the only cheese factory in the region is ready to meet the ever-increasing demand for its products.

CAPLAN — “The floodgates have been opened. We are producing and need to sell. We are now able to supply part of what we couldn’t when we started,” exclaimed owner Natalie Saint-Onge, while giving a tour of her farm. “Our goal is to meet the local market demand, from Baie des Chaleurs to La Pointe. This morning, we expanded our market into the Gaspé, among other places,” added her husband, Simon Thibodeau, while feeding the goats.

Passionate about the land, the couple delved into this project over four years ago, producing cheese from the milk of Nubian goats. Although these animals generally have a lower cheese yield than Alpine goats, the cheese they produce has a “milder taste,” says Saint-Onge.

Cheeses that pass the test

From the very first taste tests, the cheeses produced by these two farmers proved to be a hit. And before the establishment of Ferme Natibo, there had been no cheese factories operating on the Gaspé Peninsula since 2008. The business is currently working on a cheese curd, a cheddar cheese and a young goat cheese. Other products made with goat milk, including dips and cakes, are also sold at the counter of the cheese factory. The farm is currently testing a gouda, a brie, yoghurt and butter.

“One step at a time”

The steps involved in launching the project, an investment worth \$750,000, moved quickly in the last few years. However, the couple does not want to rush things.

“It’s one step at a time,” says St-Onge, who until recently sold her products exclusively in fine grocery stores. Her decision to sell in smaller stores was about marketing as well as production. “Smaller stores offer a more intimate setting. I felt that it was important for customers to be able to ask questions and get answers, which isn’t always possible in large supermarkets.”

Now that its cheeses are better known and production is increasing, the farm can distribute to larger points of sale. The business counts 151 goats, 54 of which are lactating. And a new spring litter could bring the number of milk-producing animals to just shy of 100.

Simon Thibodeau says that it takes 200 lactating goats to meet local demand. The farm currently processes 2,500 litres of milk each month. If all goes well, this number will reach 6,000 by the end of the this summer.

The demand in Quebec

The cheese factory’s current focus is on the Gaspésian market, but the owners are open to selling outside the region. “There is a demand. People stop by



The last 12 months have flown by for this animal- and earth-loving couple. Nathalie Saint-Onge and Simon Thibodeau finally feel ready to meet local demand, from Nouvelle to Gaspé.

our counter to stock up their coolers before heading back to the city,” explained Saint-Onge, who hopes to see the day when her products are used by renowned restaurant chefs.

Nutrinor introduces organic Nordic milk

SAGUENAY-LAC-SAINT-JEAN

Guillaume Roy
Regional Correspondent

Nutrinor’s focus is on developing original products in order to conquer new markets. The first on its list: AgroBoréal-certified Nordic milk.

“The demand is very high for authentic products connected to the land. We work very hard to make our products stand out. With AgroBoréal, the timing was just right,” said Paul Pomerleau, Lead Director of Agri-foods at Nutrinor.

The Nutrinor natural market cooperative comprises 900 members, 300 of which are dairy farmers, mostly located in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean. However, getting a foothold in new markets proved difficult for the cooperative. In 2008, Nutrinor decided to take a shot at the Quebec market by launching their first milk with added probiotics. However, it took only a few months before they saw imitations from competitors. “We learned a lot from this experience. We decided to stop making products that were too easy to imitate. Our niche is to be inimitable,” Pomerleau exclaimed.

To achieve this goal, the cooperative decided to focus on Nordic agriculture. Boreal climate conditions characteristic of Nordic-type agriculture are suitable for different types of crop and animal husbandry. In Nordic conditions, fields require fewer pesticides and animals require fewer antibiotics. And a less-known fact, according to Pomerleau, is that Nordic lands actually receive 30 more minutes of sunshine in summer, which affects photosynthesis and omega-3 in boreal plants. “Nordic agriculture is also different from a cultural point of view,” says Isabelle Rivard, Director of the AgroBoréal market niche. For example, Nordic dairy cows are fed with forage, unlike elsewhere; the cows on Nutrinor’s 15 organic dairy farms are not fed with soy or corn.

In some cases, Nordic produce can have a remarkably different taste or nutritional properties. In order to distinguish products as Nordic and to authenticate their origin, AgroBoréal was created last November, with Nutrinor organic Nordic milk as their first certified product.

Thanks to their organic Nordic milk, the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean cooperative

hopes to penetrate new markets with distribution in more than 1,000 points of sale in Québec and Ontario. “The demand for organic milk represents 10 per cent of our sales,” noted Pomerleau, who hopes to profit from this rapid growth. The demand from processors is so high that Nutrinor is scrambling to supply them with organic cream.

Three months later, Pomerleau says that the market penetration rate is near excellent and that “the results exceed our expectations.” Nutrinor actually ran out of stock after the first week.

“Certification has a promising future,” he stated. Nutrinor hopes to receive AgroBoréal certification for other dairy or charcuterie products “in the very near future,” he added.

Nordic agriculture in vogue

“Authentic products connected to the land and made using specific agricultural techniques are in fashion right now,” says Isabelle Rivard. “Regional businesses are looking for a way to position their products by offering more than a simple marketing image,” she maintained. To make certification more credible, more than 50 criteria were developed and grouped

under different themes such as boreal place of origin, traceability, product authenticity, food safety and sustainable development.

Developed in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, AgroBoréal certification is available to all businesses located north of the 48th parallel and north of the Saint-Lawrence River. “This boundary was determined after analyzing geographic, climatic and social data,” Rivard explained.

After Nutrinor launched its first AgroBoréal-certified product in November 2014, several farms showed interest in certification. Rivard believes that some five or six requests for certification could be attained in 2015. The certification process can be completed within one month.



Nutrinor’s organic Nordic milk is produced by 15 dairy farms in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean. A 16th farm is in the process of obtaining certification.

Rallying apple industry players

Gilles Lévesque
Regional Correspondent

The situation for the apple industry has improved over the last few years. Disputes have been resolved and have led to better relations between the industry's main players. However, communication and fairness are still far from perfect.

MONT-SAINT-GREGOIRE — Stéphanie Levasseur and Yvan Duchesne have broached the subject during interviews conducted in recent weeks. Levasseur is president of the Fédération des producteurs de pommes du Québec, and Duchesne is vice-president of the Syndicat des producteurs de pommes de la Vallée montréalaise.

"It's a fact that communication needs to be improved within this sector. Everyone needs to pull in same direction to get the best possible price, in the fairest possible manner. At the same time, the parallel market must be prevented from selling apples that do not meet Qualité Québec standards," noted Levasseur, who is also president of the Syndicat Les producteurs de pommes des Frontières.

The two regional syndicates account for just over 300 businesses. Montérégie is the largest apple-producing region in Quebec. There are 552 apple growers in the province.

Other issues

The renewal of the apple-tree planting program is a priority. "Launched in 2006, this program, which has improved over the years, is coming up for renewal," Levasseur pointed out. "It should be renewed by simplifying it and making it more accessible. MAPAQ is very positive about this program, which is important for the future of our industry."

"There are several other issues on the agenda," said Yvan Duchesne. "Specifically, securing revenue and foreign workers. In terms of foreign workers, the federal government makes it complicated to hire workers from Guatemala. It takes weeks to secure the transfer of truck farmers to apple growers for harvest season. Big farmers need them."

Although regulated by an agreement, the sale of declassified apples to packers is another problem. Not only are packers' handling fees exorbitant, but farmers don't know where the apples come from. "Let's just say there's a grey area in the

joint agreement. It's not working as it should," said Duchesne.

Duchesne is also concerned about the effects of the boycott on Russian agrifoods and the production surplus in Washington State. He is worried that other countries, especially Italy and France, will oversaturate the Quebec market with their apples, as is presently the case. "It creates pressure," he said, mentioning that the Fédération is well aware of the situation.

Apple businesses

With that in mind, it must be noted that, along with her parents Steve and Hélène, Stéphanie Levasseur co-owns Au Cœur de la pomme orchard in Frelighsburg. She is currently in the process of having the farm transferred. This seasonal business also produces a cider vinegar.

Levasseur is very well known in her industry and was named Farmer of the Year in Montérégie-Est. During the recent Gala Saturne, held by the Fédération des agricultrices du Québec, she was awarded the title of Farmer-Entrepreneur of the Year.

Yvan Duchesne, along with his wife, Claire Brazeau, co-owns the Verger Yvan Duchesne Inc. in Mont-Saint-Grégoire. Daniel, one of their four children, already works on the farm and will likely take it over one day.



Yvan Duchesne assumes the vice-presidency of the Syndicat des producteurs de pommes de la Vallée montréalaise.

This orchard of around 14,000 apple trees stands out for its different varieties (25) of the fruit. It produces lesser-known varieties including the Rosinette and the Q-370, which are currently awaiting a patent, but are expected to sell very well, much like the Honeycrisp.

Setting up cattle wintering pens at lower cost

CHAUDIÈRE-APPALACHES

Louise Thériault
Regional Correspondent

Agronomist Nathalie Côté of the Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec (FPBQ) presented the Guide des aménagements alternatifs en production bovine (Alternative developments in cattle production) during the Colloque bœuf beef symposium held in Scott on January 28.

SCOTT — Alternative facilities are cattle raising facilities with non-watertight manure management. In practice, this generally means setting up a wintering pen next to a vegetative filter strip. As this model is the most recommended for cow-calf production, it is referred to exclusively in the Guide des aménagements alternatifs en production bovine: conception, gestion et suivi, published in October 2014.

It is customarily less expensive to house beef cattle in wintering pens than in a stable or another shelter next to a bull yard where manure management is watertight. Furthermore, for better herd

health, rearing animals outdoors is preferable to confinement, especially if the buildings are poorly ventilated.

"The Guide addresses producers with 50 cow-calves or more, as recommendations in the guide are especially intended for breeding grounds with annual P2O5 phosphorous production between 1,600 and 3,200 kg," specified agronomist Nathalie Côté. This guide replaces the Guide de bonnes pratiques agroenvironnementales pour la gestion des fumiers des bovins de boucherie published in 1999, as it introduces new standards to reduce the risk of contamination most often linked to pens.

Financial support available until 2018

Between 1999 and 2013, more than 400 Quebec cattle farmers received a Prime-Vert livestock grant from MAPAQ (Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec) to set up wintering pens. The program was not offered in 2014, but was reintroduced this year and is effective until 2018. More than 20 wintering pen and vegetative strip projects are currently underway.

Cattle producers who meet specific eligibility criteria can receive funding to set up new installations or modify existing ones. "The grant covers 90 per cent of admissible costs," Côté mentioned.

"These costs are limited to \$52,000 for a pen and a vegetative filter strip, but can be increased to \$82,000 for an improved installation such as covered feeding areas."

The agronomist and conference speaker says any farmer interested in setting up a wintering pen should first speak with a MAPAQ advisor to determine their eligibility for financial assistance. To ensure that the project meets environmental standards, the farmer should contract an engineer to draft the plans for his pen or filter strip.

Farmers must also complete a course on wintering pen management in order to receive the MAPAQ grant.



In this wintering pen, calf hutches double as windbreakers.

VALACTA – Dairy Production Centre of Expertise

valacta

Milk recording as a way to save the planet?

Daniel Lefebvre
General Manager

and Julie Baillargeon
Research Project and Technology
Transfer Coordinator
Valacta

Your DHI milk sample already provides you with a wealth of information to help you manage your herd: components, somatic cell count, urea nitrogen, BHB (ketosis), gestation, etc. Imagine if we could also measure methane gas emissions in your cows' milk? Farfetched? Not at all.

Why measure GHG emissions?

Dairy farming is constantly subject to scrutiny with regard to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. We know that the digestive process in cows results in enteric emissions of methane, a gas that contributes 21 times more to climate change than CO₂. Of course the dairy sector is not the only sector concerned; far from it. According to the national GHG inventory, the agricultural sector is responsible for eight per cent of Canada's total emissions, with dairy farming contributing nine per cent of all agricultural emissions, equivalent to scarcely 0.7 per cent of total emissions. The bulk of methane emissions results from human activity. Moreover, productivity gains over the years have led to a reduction in methane emissions per litre of milk.

Despite the fact that our industry contributes relatively little to total emissions, there are still many reasons to concern ourselves with this issue. Many countries have established specific targets for emissions reduction. We've also seen the emergence of labelling that quantifies the emissions created by the production of a particular product. The possibility of trading emission credits also exists.

But the greatest incentive for producers today is to improve efficiency. Indeed, GHG emissions by your cows, particularly enteric methane, represent feed energy that is not being used for productive purposes. In fact, methane emissions are equivalent to seven to 12 per cent of the energy consumed by the cow that is lost in the air.

How to measure

One of the challenges with regard to GHGs is that not only are they invisible, they are also hard to quantify. Short of putting the cows in sealed chambers to collect total gas emissions or installing complex measuring instruments on



The latest generation of infrared analyzers now in use in Valacta's laboratories can, with proper calibration, produce a summary milk fatty acid profile very quickly and at much less cost.

them, indirect methods are the only feasible way to estimate emissions. It is in this context that Valacta has been involved in various projects aimed at quantifying GHG emissions.

Mathematical models

Some carbon markets allow unregulated industrial sectors, such as agriculture, to sell offset emission credits, i.e., to sell GHG emission reductions for purchase by regulated sectors to offset their own emissions. To be allowed to sell credits this way, the emission reductions must be confirmed and certified by a third party. Mathematical models, certified for this purpose, can be used to quantify reductions by taking into account measurable factors that influence GHG emissions.

Valacta has been involved in a pilot project aimed at testing a model for evaluating the feasibility of producing such credits in the agricultural sector. The protocol was developed by the Atlantic Dairy and Forage Institute and the project was carried out on 50 farms in New Brunswick and 50 farms in Alberta. The main objective was to collect all the data required to feed the emission calculation model.

For the farms enrolled on milk recording, a good part of the information needed for the calculation model was already available: detailed monthly

herd inventory, milk yield and composition, average animal weight. For most farms, however, the feeding records (quantity of feed consumed, ration composition and feed quality) were insufficient for the model to be able to substantiate GHG emissions. Manure spreading records were another weakness noted.

Similarly, for the past few years, Valacta has been providing Environment Canada with compilations of data on herd inventories, production and feeding for the national GHG inventory submitted to the UN each year.

Milk fatty acid profile

Another approach used to quantify GHG emissions has been in development in Europe over the past few years. This method is based on the premise that the type of microorganisms present in the rumen influences both methane production and the milk fatty acid profile, and that the relationship between these two effects can be used to estimate methane production from the milk fatty acid profile. Indeed, conditions in the rumen that favour methane production also give rise to high levels of saturated fatty acids secreted by the mammary gland. It is thus possible to make mathematical predictions of methane emissions based on an analysis of the milk fatty acid profile.

How to measure fatty acids in milk

A few years ago, the only way to characterize the milk fatty acid profile was by gas chromatography, a costly (about \$150/sample) and tedious method. Fortunately, the latest generation of infrared analyzers now in use in Valacta's laboratories can, with proper calibration, produce a summary milk fatty acid profile very quickly and at much less cost. It is in fact this method that was used to produce the GHG estimates for the Vacco2 project. Hence it is not only conceivable but also technically possible to analyze your cows' fatty acid profiles in their DHI samples.

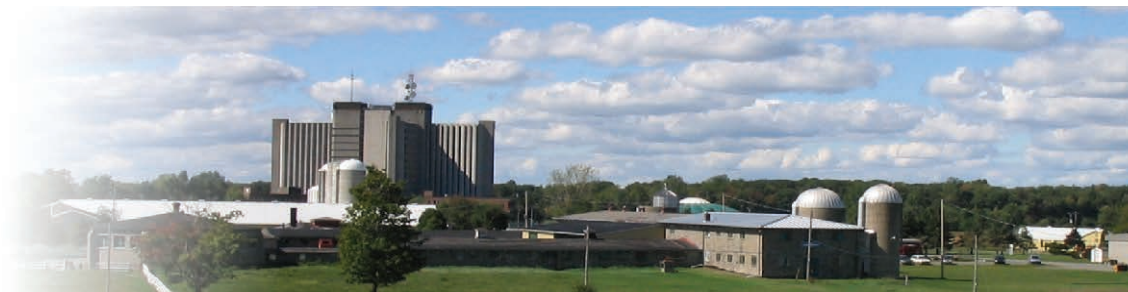
Saving the planet?

That might be pushing it a bit, but we can certainly say that milk recording is a tool that could soon be used to further GHG reduction efforts. There is still some validating to be done, but the day is probably not far when we will be able to provide you with a monthly GHG emission statement for your herd. Hence we can expect that this type of information will soon become another tool that you will be able to use to fine-tune your herd management, increase your feed efficiency, reduce the environmental footprint of dairy farming and continue to offer a product of superior nutritional quality to consumers.

Macdonald



Reports



Can the potato really help to fight obesity?

Three researchers at McGill University think so.

It all began with a chance meeting at the airport between colleagues Danielle Donnelly, a potato expert in the Department of Plant Science, and Stan Kubow, of the School of Dietetics and Human Nutrition an expert on the impact of nutritional interventions on human health.

Donnelly had been using in vitro techniques for the genetic improvement of processing cultivars of potato screening for yield and good frying quality after long-term storage. Kubow suggested that they collaborate and screen for nutritional properties as well, in particular polyphenols, with possible implications to human health. Polyphenols have been tied to a great many health benefits and may contribute to the prevention high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and even tumor growth.

The mighty potato

The potato is the number one vegetable in the world; it is grown in eighty percent of countries worldwide and is eaten more often than all other vegetables combined. It ranks fourth in economic importance after rice, wheat and corn, and delivers two to three times the nutritional value per serving than any of these crops. The potato, known for its carbohydrate content, is also a rich source of polyphenols—third after blueberries and red wine—many of which are powerful antioxidants with known health benefits. Potatoes have the advantage of being cheap to produce, and are already a familiar part of the basic diet in many countries. They account for over 30% of all vegetable farm cash receipts in Canada.

Testing the potato

Much of Donnelly's research has centred on the potato variety Russet Burbank, the preferred potato of most North American French fry processors. She has selected and tested over 800 somaclonal variants—variants produced via tissue culture. Her top 25 lines for yield and processing attributes were reduced to four variants containing

higher levels of polyphenols—from two to four times higher—than in the traditional Russet Burbank.

Donnelly and Kubow wanted to know the extent to which the potato polyphenols affect health, and the quantity of potatoes that would need to be consumed to have an effect. It was at this juncture that Luis Agellon an expert in the area of Nutrigenomics (and also of the School of Dietetics and Human Nutrition) jumped on board to help them delve into this area of research.

In a study that spanned a period of two years, lab mice were fed an obesity/diabetes-inducing diet over a ten-week period. One test group was supplemented with a concentrated mixture of polyphenols extracted from potatoes, equivalent to a human eating thirty potatoes per day, and another group with the equivalent of one or a combination of two commercially-produced polyphenols. The results were unexpected—although all test groups put on weight, those fed the polyphenol-rich potato extract gained significantly less weight (less than half the weight gain), were generally more physically active, and had better blood glucose control.

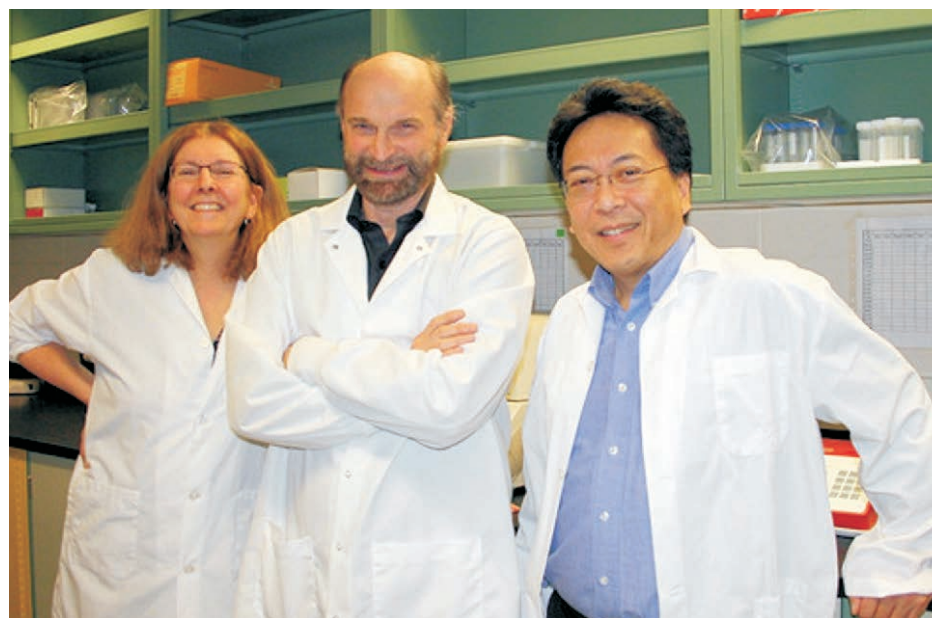
"We were surprised by the results," Agellon said in a statement. "We thought 'this can't be right' - in fact, we ran the experiment again using a different batch of extract prepared from potatoes grown in another season, just to be certain."

The results were the same—mice fed the fatty diet supplemented with potato extract containing a mixture of polyphenols still did significantly better, even over those receiving only one or two types of polyphenols.

"There is something synergistic at play in the potato extract that makes it more effective," said Kubow. "We will need to see if there is anything else in the extract that could explain its effectiveness."

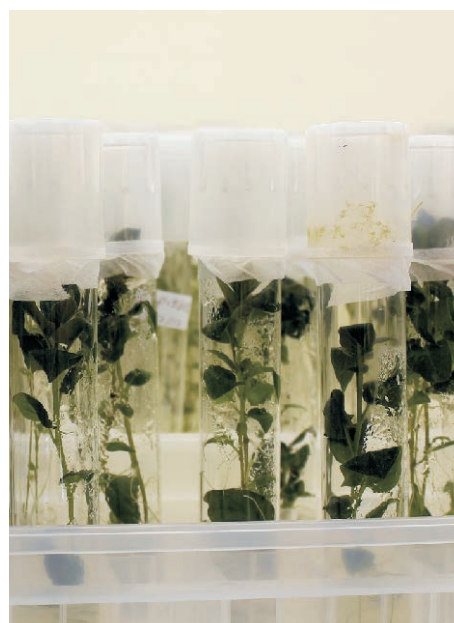
The study suggests that the addition of polyphenol-rich potato extract may be useful in controlling weight gain and improving control of blood sugar levels. Of course, the researchers are not suggesting that we eat thirty potatoes a day! Instead, they are looking to its use as a dietary supplement.

The next step will be to run clinical trials, and to investigate what other health conditions can benefit from polyphenol-rich potato supplements.



Above L-R: Professors Danielle Donnelly, Stan Kubow and Luis Agellon.

Below: From the lab to the field—producing somaclonal potato variants via tissue culture



Strong human resources planning key to business success

Dougal Rattray
QFA Community Reporter

Turnout was healthy once again for the Farm Food Forum held January 29, with the topic of employee recruitment and retention being an obvious draw. It was back in the summer of 2014 that Ontario producer and QFA member Kornel Schneider approached the QFA to have this key management area included in the forthcoming Forum program.

First to speak and provide a 'bigger picture' context was Portia MacDonald-Dewhirst, executive director of the Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council (CAHRC), which is mandated to strengthen human resources in Canadian agriculture. MacDonald-Dewhirst gave a clear and concise picture of the current situation

in Canada and went on to explain data and highlight tools that farmers can use to aid them in hiring and retaining staff—whether it be casual, part-time or full-time. Not surprisingly, it was reported that there is a serious shortage of skilled and semi-skilled labour on Canadian farms. But it was a relief to hear that the situation is recognized and that there are moves afoot to address the issue.

Following MacDonald-Dewhirst's presentation, AGRICarrières HR coordinator and industry veteran Robert Ouellet gave an in-depth and expansive account of the circumstances arising around HR in Quebec. There are a surprising amount of support mechanisms in place to aid farmers in finding and recruiting the right candidate and incentives for training and managing employees.



The QFA's ongoing "Farm Food Forums" series allows participants from across Quebec to see and hear presentations by ag experts through videoconferencing technology.

All in all the evening was a success despite technical glitches. Check our forthcoming issues to read coverage on our farm insurance Forum.

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178347

Maintaining a distinctive cattle industry

Claude Viel
President

We are wrapping up another big year. It's been a good one for producer prices. Markets have never been as strong—we are at the peak of the cycle. Yet we must remain vigilant, and prepare for the leaner years to come. It's up to us to make sure that the fall, when it comes, isn't too painful. And we're working on it, as you will see in the Fédération's annual report, which outlines the Fédération's

2014 accomplishments and sets out development plans for the various sectors: Maintaining a distinctive cattle industry

The word distinction can be read two ways: 'distinction' sets us apart, differentiates one sector from another. Conversely, it can mean the distinction of our products, their quality. At the Fédération, I see both definitions as working in tandem.

Some may interpret it more divisively, but Fédération directors see it as a positive aspect of each production sector, working not against each other, but complementarily. Which is not to say that our day-to-day is easy: the challenge to adapt is constant.



Regional meetings wrap up

The 14 regional capital producers' unions held their Annual General Meeting in February. Three information meetings were also organized for Anglophone cattle producers.

At each meeting, cattle producers heard presentations on animal well-being, markets, and income security.

A member of the Fédération executive committee presented highlights of 2014 to all the producers in attendance. This presentation included a short summary of the Fédération's position on income security and animal welfare, and the summary of the Rendez-vous bovins activities.

These regional meetings set the stage for the Fédération's Annual General Meeting, which will be held in Quebec City on April 1 and 2, 2015. All producers should be receiving notice of the meeting shortly, as well as a 2014 Fédération activity report.

Working together

Our Fédération represents both buyers and sellers, sitting at the same table. We have no choice but to get along, to build consensus. You might say it's part of our bovine DNA! Each of us is responsible for the organization's success, and we all have to be creative in our problem solving. We must remember that each group has access to the same tools. The joint cattle producers' plan is the same across all the production sectors we represent, and it affords us great flexibility.

The Fédération is like a family. There are ups and downs, but one thing stays the same: the various production sectors complete each other. We learn from the successes of some and the failures of others to be better, and to better work together—to improve our marketing, our development projects, and especially to improve the representation of the interests of all Quebec cattle producers—all of them, across all production sectors.

We're also at work across the whole province. In every region of Quebec, we are setting up shop, putting our ani-

mals out to pasture. We are assets to the province. Our thriving farms and plants are engines for regional economies, and producers keep many a local business in operation. Cattle producers spend money in their communities, at the local grocer, the village hardware store, the regional co-op...

A different kind of income security

In celebrating our differences, we must make sure to adapt income security and especially farm income stabilization insurance. Yes, everyone believes they are unique. But other than cattle, no other sector has such a long production cycle. Support programs must be adapted to our situation. The particular needs of cattle production, with a production cycle that can last as long as ten years, make it more challenging to turn on a dime. All we are asking is that the government recognize our challenges.

Our products are processed differently, marketed differently. A beef carcass is a

big piece of meat, with many cuts, and it must be used completely. Globalization means increasing demand, with consumers requiring more high-quality products, and cattle production is well placed to move into the future. Our animals have always been well raised, with the years of experience and knowledge of Quebec producers, and we intend to keep it that way.

Beneath all these celebratory words, one thing remains: Quebec cattle production must be kept in Quebec. We must strengthen the relationships between each of the production sectors under the Fédération's banner. And we are working on that each and every day.

Cattle production could well be the necessary connective tissue for Quebec agriculture as a whole: we are able to make use of otherwise difficult land, and we are among the production sectors that are present across the whole province—with all of what defines us, distinguishes us, and sets us apart.

Happy reading!



ATTENTION: Change to the SCVQ

Beginning with the June 20 to 28, 2013 period of offers, quota transactions will be done through the producer Extranet site or through an IVR system (interactive voice response). Please refer to the letter sent to you in this regard. Instructions on how to place quota transactions may be found on the producer Extranet site or from your region.

Centralized Quota Sales System MARCH 2015			Purchase and Sale offers by Stratum					
Centralized Quota Sales System			SALES			PURCHASES		
Fixed Price	\$25,000.00		Number	Quantity in kg b.f./day	Cumulation	Price offered \$/kg b.f./day	Number	Quantity in kg b.f./day
								Cumulation
Total offers to sell	40	343.3				< 25,000.00		
Offers to sell participating in the distribution	40	343.3	40	343.3	343.3	25,000.00 ceiling price	2,243	12,045.3
Successful offers to sell participating in the distribution	40	343.3						
Net quantity bought by the reserve		12.9						
Total offers to buy	2,243	12,045.3						
Offers to buy participating in the distribution	2,243	330.4						
Successful offers to buy participating in the distribution	2,243	330.4						

The fixed price for March 2015 is the ceiling price for this month. A quota quantity of 343.3 b.f./day was offered for sale at the fixed price. Of this quantity, an amount of 3.1 b.f./day was allotted to producers benefiting from the Start-up Assistance Program and producers holding less than 12 kg, in accordance with the quota regulation.

1st step distribution by iteration = 0.1 kg BF/day • 2nd step distribution by prorata = 1.03% • Portion of quantities satisfied = 2.74%

Are you a QFA member?

Your neighbours are joining QFA...



The QFA receives no core funding from the UPA. When English-speaking agricultural producers pay annual dues to the UPA, none of the money is transferred to the QFA to cover its operating expenses.

Files show that there are around 1,500 English-speaking farmers paying their dues to the UPA. All are potential members of the QFA and ALL receive the *Advocate*. Only one quarter of potential members pay the fee that goes to support production of the *Advocate* and other services.

If you become a member, not only does your money go directly towards production of the newspaper, you are eligible to receive exclusive benefits such as competitively priced health insurance, considerably reduced prices on Farm Credit Canada management software, discount cards for Carhartt work wear, discounted

QFA translation services, a 7½ per cent discount on VIA Rail travel and free classified ads in the *Advocate*. Taking advantage of these benefits more than pays for the membership cost and so essentially, membership is free. **A list of new and recently returning members appears below.** To join, simply complete and return

the membership application found on page 2 of this issue. If you have recently paid for membership but have received another notice, please accept our sincere apologies and disregard the renewal notice. Occasionally, there are delays in processing. A membership package will be delivered in due course.

Kevin and Karen Bates

- Philip Boersen
- Bevin Boyd
- Gerald Brown
- Ullysses Caravias
- Ruth Cleary
- Larry Cooke
- Ryan Currie
- Kelvin Egan

Bill Hamilton

- Vincent Hendrick
- Joshua Johnston
- Michael Joyce
- Brent Mee
- Erwin Mohr
- David and Kelly Sample
- Peter and Michael Steimer
- Gary Taylor

William Van Tassel

- Earl and Deborah Titley
- Andrius Valevicius
- Robert Wallbridge
- John Wilson
- Dave Young
- Robert Younge

Together we sustain Quebec's English-speaking rural community.

Grow your knowledge and your business here

Find hundreds of insightful articles, videos, podcasts and webinars from industry experts at **fcc.ca**.

 Farm Credit Canada

Canada

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Cookin' with the Advocate

The Great Potato Debate

Cynthia Gunn, Advocate Food Writer

We must begin with an understanding of how I feel about boiled potatoes, which quite likely is contrary to how you feel. Unless just dug from the garden—in which case adorned solely by liberal dollops of butter and sprinkled with chopped parsley potatoes are fit for the finest plate—I tend to view them as pale and ever so slightly slimy things, particularly if I have been served them too many times by unsuspecting potato-loving relatives.

Dealing with them politely (the potatoes, I mean) is a challenge I'd rather avoid. This is especially so if I have been served a generous portion rather than deftly being able to serve myself a few pieces that can be strategically spread out to give the impression of plenty, or better yet the impression that they have been covered by meat or sauce or another vegetable when in fact there are blessedly none there. I have been known to use the same strategy, incidentally, with peas. Boiled potato lovers, I have noticed, also tend to be pea lovers.

So at this time of year when there are still many pounds of potatoes left in the basement and only a month or so of eating left in them before they defy all attempts at trickery, knowing in their DNAs that your darkness and cold is a foil to keep them dormant when in fact Spring is upon us, we must do our best to consume them. This calls for experimentation to avoid the aforementioned avoidance of the noble potato.

There must be scores of ways of cooking potatoes aside from boiling and frying. Potatoes Romanoff, baked with cheese and sour cream and green onions, or scalloped potatoes which are similar to potatoes Dauphinoise, are both delicious, and maybe we'll turn to them one day here when we have a potato celebration, but I noticed the onions want to break free to grow, too, so I thought I'd try to incorporate them as well. An obvious place to turn for potato inspiration is the U.K. in general, and Scotland and Ireland in particular. Not necessarily because they

are known for culinary inspiration, but because they actually label the potatoes in the supermarkets according to what variety they are, and by that I don't mean white or red. I mean what actual type, like Charlotte, Maris Peer, or Arran Victory, and helpful hints for the uninitiated are also posted, such as whether they are waxy or floury, good for salads or for mashing and baking. These are people that take potatoes seriously.

So here it is: potato and onion pie, a dish I remember being mentioned in a book I once read that I know came from Scotland. Two vegetables that should never be stored together cook beautifully together. Now I know the kids won't like the onion part, but who can avoid a crispy bubbling dish of potatoes? Not even me.

Potato and Onion Pie



Ingredients

2 lbs. potatoes, peeled and sliced thinly and evenly
1 lb. onions, sliced thinly
3 TBSP. butter
2 cups whole milk
½ c. cup whipping cream
½ cup sour cream or crème fraîche
1 tsp. salt
Dash nutmeg
Few grinds of pepper

In a large saucepan bring the milk and potatoes to a simmer. Cook for 15 minutes. Drain any milk not absorbed and reserve. Mix salt, nutmeg, pepper, cream and sour cream together.

Meanwhile, cook onions in 2 TBSP. butter over med-low heat 8-10 minutes until soft and translucent. Try not to brown.

Generously butter a heavy casserole or deep pie dish. Layer half of the hot potatoes in the prepared casserole dish. Layer the onions on top of the potatoes and then layer the rest of the potatoes over the onions. Pour over all the cream mixture and enough of the milk to just barely cover the potatoes. Bake in a 350 degree oven uncovered for 30-35 minutes or until golden brown and bubbling.



Eric Jones



Hoof Trimmer

Trained by: Hans Flueller



450 776-8475

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AgriWeek improves your bottom line

April Stewart

*Social Media Marketing Agent
CEDEC*

The second edition of AgriWeek, hosted by CEDEC Small Business Support, was held throughout Quebec February 17 to 20, during Le Mois de la gestion agricole (Agriculture Management Month).

AgriWeek's mission is to offer Quebec farmers tools and skills development to impact their bottom line through a mix of live and online events covering a variety of topics related to farm management—from human resources to risk management, technology and innovation to marketing, and more.

Martine Deschamps, president of SynerAction Management (a succession management and HR consulting firm), kicked off AgriWeek at the Farm Credit Canada presentation "Boost Your Farm Management Skills". Deschamps coached attendees on how to identify and build on people's strengths for manage-

ment efficiency and how to communicate better with employees, business partners or salespeople.

The webinar "From Idea to Marketplace: A Blueprint for Value-Added Farm Products" with Gary Morton, emerging authority in the field of value-added agricultural products and services, went through the various steps required to bring a value-added farm product to market.

"Oscar Wilde famously said 'People know the price of everything and the value of nothing' so it's important to make the value you offer very clear," says Morton. "If there is no value—real or perceived—they will revert back to the product with the lowest price." Morton also noted that it's important to develop a prototype to test and validate your product and that farmers' markets are excellent places to try them out on a sampling of your target market.

Michel Theroux, CEDEC's Mentoring Program coordinator, hosted the

"Farming & Mentoring: Grow an Agripreneur" webinar.

"It doesn't matter what industry, whether you've just started a business or you've been in business for a long time: you can always benefit from having a mentor," says Theroux pointing to the famous case of Bombardier's past-president Laurent Beaudoin who consulted on a regular basis with his predecessor Paul Desmarais. "You are never too old or too experienced not to gain some insight and expertise from others."

Jennifer Hayes, a dairy/beef farmer and rural developer, presented the "Small Scale Farming: Simple, Successful, Sustainable" webinar where she suggested several resources, like AgPal.ca, that farmers can use to find funding or help with business planning and marketing. Another 'must-see' website for financial support opportunities is MAPAQ's very own website at www.mapaq.qc.ca.

As Hayes succinctly summed up: "Be in the know—not the last to know."



Martine Deschamps, president of SynerAction Management, presents her "Boost Your Farm Management Skills" workshop at AgriWeek.

To learn more about AgriWeek, CEDEC's mentoring services, or CEDEC Small Business Support visit www.cedec.ca.

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Climate of change



Mitchell Beer
President, Smarter Shift

I've never quite fully understood how farms hold onto a steady, skilled work force, or how farm workers eke out a subsistence living.

The answer, judging by recent coverage in the online daily *iPolitics.ca*, is that they often don't. For anyone who depends on food supply chains as a producer, processor, or consumer, that should be a far bigger worry than any of the manufactured crises that seem to be preoccupying the House of Commons these days.

In a feature article last month, *iPolitics* agriculture reporter Kelsey Johnson recaps the laundry list of labour force challenges facing the entire farming supply chain. Chronic, severe labour shortages, for processing plants as well as farms. Higher on-the-job stress, leading to faster turnover among workers who've stayed. Competition from high-paying tar sands/oil sands jobs in Alberta (though that party may be coming to an end). Even new hires who quit on the spot rather than showering in.

Running on Fumes

The story also points to the mismatch between the work force available on the farm and the skills required to operate the state-of-the-art equipment that goes with a larger operation. "I have a

Searching for solutions to the farm labour shortage

\$400,000 combine with a screen in it. I can't expect my retired farmer neighbour to run it anymore," said grain producer and Canadian Federation of Agriculture VP Humphrey Banack, during a Q&A with Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz in February.

"How do we get people trained?"

The net result? "Plants are running on fumes, farmers are shorthanded, crops are going unpicked, and the livelihood of rural communities is increasingly at risk as fewer and fewer people take up jobs in Canadian agriculture," Johnson writes.

"Larger farms and ever-changing new technologies mean Canadian farmers now need skilled hired hands, people who can drive highly computerized, and extremely expensive, equipment."

Political decisions run on storytelling and statistics, and for statistics, *iPolitics* has the wider story. "Canada's agriculture industry is a major employer. One in eight jobs is tied to the sector, employing some 2.1 million people," Johnson writes. "One job in agriculture generates four to seven more Canadian jobs," and "in 2013, Canada's farmers and processors contributed \$106 billion to the national economy, or 6.7 per cent of Canada's gross domestic product."

By comparison, the oil industry only accounts for about five per cent of Canada's GDP—a fact clean energy groups have been circulating for a couple of years, but that senior federal Cabinet

minister Jason Kenney only seemed to discover after oil prices cratered.

So never mind agriculture's economic impact, or its far more fundamental importance to everyone's daily well-being. On farm employment, it looks an awful lot like the industry's advocates have been winning most of the arguments and losing most of the decisions. Rather than building an economically sustainable jobs strategy for the sector, the feds have tied our farms to a broken temporary foreign workers program, an arrangement that seems to produce lots of meetings, a steady stream of headlines, but only incremental if any progress.

There may be a more hands-on approach to building and retaining a farm labour force.

About a decade ago, the U.S. National Center for Appropriate Technology and the California Institute for Rural Studies published a guide to positive practices in farm labour management, complete with a list of strategies for creating a "triple-win" for farmers, employees, and farm communities.

"One farmer, with a retention rate of approximately 90 per cent, estimates annual savings of approximately \$20,000 to \$30,000 as a result of reduced training costs," NCAT and CIRS state. Moreover, "motivated and committed employees require less supervision. Farms with fewer foremen or managers can save thousands of dollars while increasing worker satisfaction."

Most of the items in the guide are a mix of common sense and common decency, the kind of solutions that can help keep any company healthy, whole, and profitable. I'd be curious to learn how realistic they are for someone who runs a farming operation in 2015. Some of my favourites include:

- Respectful treatment
- Fair compensation
- A safe and healthy workplace
- Flexible work schedules
- Diversity of tasks
- Clear grievance procedures
- Free food from the farm.

All but one of those items were standard practice for our small business over the 16 or so years that we operated from a full-scale commercial office. (Anyone who opened the door to our office fridge would have quickly drawn the line at free food from our in-house supply.)

Mitchell Beer is President of Ottawa-based Smarter Shift (<http://smartershift.com>) and curator of The Energy Mix (<http://smartershift.com/energymix>), a thrice-weekly e-digest and online archive on energy, climate change, and the transition to a low-carbon future.

Beer traces his work as a renewable energy/energy efficiency communicator to October 1977, when he began a 3½-year assignment as a reporter, Parliamentary correspondent, and eventually assistant editor at Canadian Renewable Energy News.



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Income security report made public



The working group on agricultural income security has proposed numerous ideas, such as modulating financial aid based on production sectors and by region. It worked on updating the current programs, but also to reinvest in agriculture, based on the available FADQ budgets.

Julie Mercier

After almost a year and a half since the creation of the Working Group on Agricultural Income Security, the fruit of its labours has now been made public.

In December 2014, the group submitted some 30 recommendations to the government. The Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec (MAPAQ) finally made the 116-page report public on February 5.

The working group, created in the fall of 2013 by former Agriculture Minister François Gendron, was composed of Bernard Verret, MAPAQ's assistant deputy minister for agrifood policies, Jean-François Bruard (vice-president for insurance and income protection) and Yvan Lajoie (senior director) of the Financière agricole du Québec (FADQ), Marcel Groleau, the UPA president and his assistant director-general, Charles-Félix Ross, along with Maurice Doyon, a Université Laval full-professor, and Claire Bolduc, president of Solidarité rural du Québec.

"It was a unanimous report among its participating members. That gives you an idea of the work that was accomplished," declared Marcel Groleau at the outset. The working group made some 30 recommendations that aimed at updating, developing and simplifying the risk management tools in agriculture.

Updating

With regard to the Farm Income Stabilization Insurance Program (known in French as ASRA), the report proposes adjustments to the remuneration of the farm operator (management time) and to make admissible in the ASRA calculation of stabilized income, the levies deducted for research and promotional purposes. These have been long-standing demands by farmers.

The subject of production integration was also dealt with. The working group recommends a careful analysis of the situation of businesses that exercise a greater control over the marketplace, to document the situation of those who farm under contract, to ensure the representativeness of the farm models used in the ASRA calculations regarding production costs and to put ceilings on support payments according to the size of the businesses. The working group also recommends to take into consideration in the support programs, criteria associated with best farming practices, animal welfare and the production of environmentally friendly goods and services.

Furthermore, the possibility of introducing crop insurance for productions not already covered, such as organic farming, strawberries, raspberries, cranberries, high-bush blueberries, etc. should also be considered. Finally, the working group suggests that the government should provide a reserve budget so that the FADQ will have the

necessary liquidity in the event of an exceptional risk event.

Development

The group also advanced the idea of a general program to support the development of farm businesses, divided into two parts; the first to support farmers in regions of limited agricultural potential in terms of distance to markets, climatic restrictions or soil production potential; the second for the transition, development or improvement of sectorial issues; for example, the transition to organic production, the improvement of animal welfare and the start-up of agricultural businesses.

Program adjustments

Concerning the issue of program overlap, the working group believes that ASRA should take into consideration payments received from other risk management tools in order to avoid double compensation. This would mean that money paid out through the Agri-Québec program would be subtracted from future ASRA payments. Cumulative compensations to be recuperated pose a particular problem; the group therefore endorses a proposition put forward by the FADQ Board of Directors to limit the cumulative period to the previous three years.

The report also recommends to make permanent the decision to limit Agri-Québec program eligibility to only sectors without ASRA or supply management. In return, it suggests that the

Agri-Québec and Agri-Québec Plus be enhanced for sectors without ASRA or supply management. In this regard, an increase in the government contribution from 3 to 3.2 per cent, as well as increased coverage of the reference margin from 80 to 85 per cent is proposed. There is also a proposal to increase the contribution level to take into account regional and sectorial characteristics, as well as small-sized businesses.

The working group prepared its report based on the presumption that the FADQ will continue to have the same annual budget of some \$600 million per year.

What next?

Although it is difficult to please everyone, the UPA president hopes "that overall, the report will be well received." In his opinion, his organization has attempted to obtain the widest possible consensus. "It was based on this consensus that I was able to do my job on the committee," Groleau explained.

It is now up to the Agriculture Minister, Pierre Paradis, to consider the numerous recommendations. "I believe that, on the whole, the report will meet the expectations of the Minister. He will have some choices to make," noted the UPA president. A meeting with Minister Paradis is scheduled for this week.

All of the report's recommendations can be viewed on the website: www.laterre.ca/politique
LTCN 2015-02-11



Marcel Groleau
UPA President

Perhaps you have recently seen on television, as well as on the web, a publicity campaign produced by the UPA where Quebec farms are put in the spotlight. A campaign that shows who we are, through our actions and accomplishments, while doing our daily chores. Men and women who give their all to their work, in order to produce food to feed Quebecers, but also people elsewhere, and to help Quebec's society to prosper and grow. Indeed, these men and women are committed to sharing their values and their know-how. These are your families, your neighbours and your friends who are at their posts every day, taking care of their livestock, their fields and their forests.

This promotional campaign of our profession will enable Quebec consumers and citizens to become more familiar with the diversity and resources of our agriculture. For example, this week it

Proud to feed the population; proud to help the province grow

was explained that four million people now live in the Montreal region. This represents half the population of Quebec. Four million people in Montreal, compared to 40,000 farmers for the entire province, spread over 28,000 agricultural businesses. Nevertheless, we are the largest business network in Quebec. Most people are no longer aware of what happens in our rural communities and on our farms. We must bridge this divide between rural and urban, between farmers and consumers.

Often, while attending meetings, farmers tell me of the disinterest of the general public towards agriculture and the lack of recognition regarding the huge amount of work farmers do every day. In this regard, this publicity will help to put the profession of farming, along with its men and women, into the spotlight.

Successive images show them as proud, competent and hard-working. Farmers of various generations, both men and women, in contact with living organisms and using new technologies,

conscious and concerned about the environment and the quality of the foods they bring to market. The earth can produce and nourish a population only if someone cultivates it; and this someone means us. We must demonstrate that the agriculture and forestry that forged Quebec is still very alive and modern.

This televised campaign is part of the modernization of our organization, the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA). Our new motto, POUVOIR NOURRIR POUVOIR GRANDIR [able to nourish – able to grow] summarizes the pledge of who we are. And it will be used this year in particular to promote and publicize our profession, as well as our organization. The campaign will run for a period of five weeks, from February 23 to March 30. Our message will be televised during prime-time TV shows, such as *Le Téléjournal*, *L'Épicerie*, *30 Vies*, *Tout le monde en parle* and many others. It will also be shown on ICI RDI, ICI Explora and ICI ARTV. The televised publicity will serve as the cornerstone for a strategy that will include an increased pres-

ence on the web and on social media. In fact, I invite you to contact me on Twitter @GroleauM, to discuss farming issues or simply to be a part of the growing community of farmers actively using this network.

As farmers, we play an important role in the progress of our communities and of society in general. I hope that you will be among the some five million people who will have seen this publicity between now and the end of March on Radio-Canada channels. Indeed, it is estimated that 75 per cent of Quebecers will view them.

Furthermore, you can personally contribute to promoting our profession and our organization by sharing these 30-second ads on your social media. They are available online at our new website www.upa.qc.ca. Finally, I hope that when you have had a chance to see these commercials, you will feel proud, as I did, to be part of a community of dynamic farmers, grouped within a vibrant Union organization.

LTCN 2015-03-04

Supply management: "once burned..."

Jean-Charles Gagné

Dairy farmers clearly showed their disappointment towards federal negotiator Frederic Seppey regarding the Canadian government's refusal to readily admit that the importation of 17,700 additional tons of European cheese will have a negative impact on Canadian dairy production. Nor did they hide their apprehension, following the European precedent, of seeing further imports of dairy products into Canada resulting from the ongoing Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations.

That was the tone set at the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa, following Seppey's speech at the Annual Dairy Policy Conference organized by Dairy Farmers of Canada on February 5. The negotiator reiterated Prime Minister Stephen Harper's commitment to make compensation payments, if the new allowances for European cheese have a negative impact.

"I do not understand why you use the word 'if', since it is a fact that Canada has conceded to Europe the equivalent of 180 million litres of milk that dairy



Frederic Seppey, Canada's chief negotiator for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, faced an angry and disappointed crowd at the recent Annual Dairy Policy Conference in Ottawa.

farmers here would be able to produce," declared the president of Producteurs laitiers du Québec, Bruno Letendre. "It is no use trying to make us believe that there will be no losses," he asserted.

"The importation of 17,700 tons of cheese corresponds to a loss of 500 farms, or twice the number of dairy farms in

my region," added Gilbert Perreault, a dairy farmer from Lanaudière.

Trans-Pacific Partnership

The negotiator also reaffirmed the Canadian government's commitment to refuse to sign any agreement that would have the effect of undermin-

ing the three pillars of supply management during ongoing negotiations regarding the Trans-Pacific Partnership. However, this did not reassure the delegates. "You're taking the same position you announced for Europe," declared a Nova Scotia delegate. "However, supply management's three pillars were still in place then, but that did not stop you from making concessions regarding dairy production."

Seppey stated that there is a distinct difference between these two negotiations. "For the TPP, Canada does not have to give additional access to its dairy market because it already gives greater access than most of the 12 concerned countries," he declared. "Furthermore, the other countries also have sensitive products to protect. In other words, Canada will be in an offensive position when it comes to subsidies that other countries wish to preserve. We will not put on the table any more than what was concluded at the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Therefore, we can preserve the integrity of supply management."

LTCN 2015-02-11

USDA Outlook: forecasting a good year

Julie Mercier

Following the record-breaking year of 2014, the American agricultural sector should slow down a bit in 2015. Nevertheless, the forecasts for the upcoming production year remain positive.

On February 19, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) held its annual Outlook Forum in Arlington, Virginia – an agricultural conference that presents a picture of what the 2015 North American market should look like. After record production levels in 2014, the USDA predicts a decrease in soybean acreage (-0.2 per cent) and in corn (-1.8 per cent). In 2015, American farmers should plant 89 million acres of corn, 83.5 million acres of soybeans and 55.5 million acres of wheat.

With regard to prices, the USDA's chief economist, Rob Johansson, predicts a drop in grain prices. For 2015-2016, the price of corn will probably continue to slide to about \$3.50 per bushel. This reconfirms the current down-trend seen since 2012-2013, when corn hit a peak of \$6.89 per bushel. Soybeans should follow the same trend, with a forecast price of nine dollars per bushel in 2015-2016, compared to \$10.20 per bushel in 2014-2015. "The price of field crops has decreased significantly compared to

the records set over the past few years, but will remain well above the values recorded in the early 2000s," Johansson predicted in his presentation.

As for exports, 2015 should go down in history as the second best year, just behind 2014, with a total value of over \$141 billion. China should remain the number one destination for American crops. Washington is also counting on future free-trade deals with the European Union and the Trans-Pacific Partnership to increase its sales on world markets.

Livestock

The decrease in feed costs should allow American meat production to reach new heights. The pork (+5.5 per cent) and poultry (+3.6 per cent) sectors will largely account for the increase. Beef production should remain stable. After reaching its lowest level in 60 years, the American beef herd population should slowly regain some ground. Last January, it showed a slight increase of 1.4 per cent compared to the previous year.

For 2015, the prices of pork and milk should lose over a quarter of their values compared to 2014. On the other hand, the price of steers should break records (\$162/lb carcass weight), a rise of almost five per cent. Meat exports should remain the same as in 2014, while dairy exports should decline.



Attending the 91st edition of the Agricultural Outlook Forum, USDA's chief economist, Rob Johansson, predicted a favourable picture for the 2015 production year.

Farm income

In 2015, the total net farm income is predicted to fall to \$73.6 billion, its lowest level since 2007. This decrease in farm income should be somewhat counterbalanced by the security measures provided by the new support programs included in the Farm Bill. Moreover, the average equity of American farmers is at its all-time high since profitability calculations were introduced in 1960.

"Generally speaking, the financial health of the agricultural sector remains strong as we head into a period of lower

grain prices," concluded the USDA chief economist. The historic income levels recorded between 2012 and 2014 have been invested in goods, machinery and farmland. Furthermore, the value of farmland should not decrease by more than one per cent in 2015.

In the short term, several factors will influence the agricultural economy, notably the price of crude oil and natural gas, a decrease in transportation costs and the recent strength of the American dollar.

LTCN 2015-02-25

The Coop fédérée tools up for further growth

Yvon Laprade

Farmers who usually make most of their purchases at Unimat outlets, in order to encourage their Coop fédérée, will now be able to do the same at BMR stores.

In fact, the Coop fédérée, with total sales reaching \$5.2 billion, has just taken a major leap in the retail market, by purchasing the giant BMR construction/renovation chain – number two in Quebec's hardware sector.

"This is one of Quebec's flagship companies that has now become a wholly-owned subsidiary, joining the ranks of our other affiliates – Olymel, Agrico, Sonic and Agronomy," declared the Coop fédérée president, Denis Richard, during a press conference on February 5. "It is also good news for farmers, who are big consumers of construction and renovation materials, since they own

many large buildings," he added, while responding to a question from the French farm weekly, *La Terre de chez nous*.

Indeed, agricultural producers form a sizable group of consumers, who alone generate close to 25 per cent of sales in this market sector. "Nevertheless, we need to reach all consumers," admitted the Coop fédérée president. "If we were only drawing on farmers for the sale of our products, we would not be able to maintain an efficient distribution network."

Increased production line

This is what the agricultural and agri-food co-op hopes to achieve with the acquisition of BMR, which has its headquarters in Boucherville. "We will now be able to improve the line of products on our store shelves, by joining the two banners together," the co-op president

declared. "We will have a greater purchasing capacity, which will enable us to lower our production costs."

Richard did not hide the fact that BMR currently has three times the volume of sales compared to Unimat, which was launched by the Coop fédérée in 1997. "With Unimat, we were not big enough," he explained. "We had to do something – either sell it, join with another company or buy a competitor." The decision became self-evident, because in the fall of 2013, the Coop fédérée became a minority shareholder in the assets of Groupe BMR. Thus, it was only a question of exercising a share option included in the original agreement in order to buy the remaining shares.

Yves Gagnon, the honorary president of Groupe BMR, who was present at the press conference, estimates that this transaction, the amount of which has

not been revealed, will "reaffirm BMR's position as the second-largest player" in Quebec's renovation market. "It is the beginning of a beautiful partnership that will permit us to go farther," he concluded.

For his part, Gaétan Desroches, the CEO of Coop fédérée, declared that the renovation/construction retail market is going through some major upheavals. "There have been a lot of closures," he observed. "We wish to remain as a leader in our field." Will the purchase of BMR, which includes some 5,000 employees in its stores, lead to the closing of some less efficient Unimat branches? "We will be keeping the two banners for several years and we do not foresee any major changes," declared Denis Richard. "We will let time determine some things."

LTCN 2015-02-11

News Highlights

Increase in organic egg production

Martin Ménard

At the beginning of 2013, there were 58,774 laying hens in the province under organic certification. According to the Fédération des producteurs d'œufs du Québec (FPOQ), this figure will reach 86,900 in a few months. That is a 48 per cent increase in only two years. "Some producers who buy new quota switch to organic rather than conventional," declared Marco Nadeau, a liaison officer with Burnbrae Farms.

One such example is Annie Bérard, a 35-year-old egg producer in Saint-Césaire, who inaugurated a brand-new egg-laying building on February 25 to house 6,000 layers in organic production. "My father and I love innovation; it is not enough to stick with what you already have. We need a challenge! Plus, I believe in organic production. It is a growing market, with a good bonus price," she explained during her open-house event.

More work

However, this young producer does admit that, in organic production, you really have to roll up your sleeves. "Hens in cages are relatively easy – less worry.

With organic, it means a lot more work. I estimate that it will take the same time to take care of 6,000 organic hens as it does for my 30,000 caged hens! But I do not mind working harder if it allows me to earn more money," she declared.

In fact, the new hens must be "educated" to go to their nests. Otherwise, the eggs will be scattered all over the pen. Also, all cases of disease are carefully examined. "When we find a dead hen, we dissect it to find the cause. It is not fun, but it must be done, because treatments with essential oils are not miraculous cures," she affirmed.

A desire to succeed

In order to start up her organic egg production, Bérard had to switch over some of her current quota to this venture. In fact, she owns quota for 22,000 hens and leases quota for another 8000 from the FPOQ. Thus, she had to subtract 6,000 hens from her cage housing in order to transfer the same to her organic building. In the medium term, she hopes to buy additional quota to fill both buildings.

A stable or henhouse?

The building design is original. The cathedral ceiling keeps the high concentrations



At her open-house event, Annie Bérard inaugurated her new egg-laying building, operating under organic production.

of ammonia gas up in the air, while at ground level, the laying hens have access to a portion of the floor that is not slatted, but rather covered with hay or sawdust. The balance of the floor is slatted on the surface, but under it there is a chain manure cleaner, like those used in dairy barns. Also, the heated concrete floor serves to dry the hen droppings, which facilitates the cleaning. "I did not want

any flies, odours or accumulated manure. It is also important to have a system that makes life easier for everyone. If this system functions as we think it will, it will be wonderful. It will eliminate a week of hard work, compared to buildings where you have to remove the slatted floor panels to clean out the manure, then put them all back," she explained.

LTCN 2015-03-04

Landscape vs. cell-phone tower?

Jean-Charles Gagné

Many farmers, as well as numerous agritourism businesses, are opposed to the construction of a 36-metre communications tower in a beautiful landscape near Frelighsburg in the Montérégie region. Indeed, the organic and medicinal plants farm Oneka, the vineyard Clos Saragnat, the Domaine Pinnacle apple orchard and sugar bush, as well as most of the other agricultural producers in the area believe that this structure will permanently disfigure the unique character of the landscape. This is also the opinion of some 1,300 other citizens who have signed a petition in this regard. This battle has been going on for over a year.

"People come to our farm for the quality of our products, but also to live an agritourism experience. No agritourism business would establish itself near a communications tower," declared Philippe Choinière, a co-owner of Oneka, backed by the support of 12 other agritourism businesses from across

the province. His father, who has operated a neighbouring apple orchard for 37 years, refused to accept the construction of the tower on his land, in spite of a compensation offer of \$20,000 per year for 20 years. However, another owner, "a Montreal city-dweller who lives part-time in Frelighsburg," accepted the offer, he deplored.

"We have invested an enormous amount of money on our site, which receives 15,000 visitors per year," declared the owner of Domaine Pinnacle, Charles Crawford. According to him, the tower will obstruct the magnificent view of the mountain. Furthermore, the project needed the approval of a minor variance with regard to the municipality's zoning regulations, since it did not respect the minimum distance of 500 metres from about a dozen residences.

The opponents of the project maintain that an existing tower, also constructed in the green zone, meets the needs of about 90 per cent of the local population of about 1,200 people. Not that they wish to deprive the remaining citizens

of these services. However, they believe that alternative solutions could serve the same purpose "without installing that tall thing." "Bell presented other options during its public consultations, but it finally chose the cheapest option," Crawford declared.

Time is running out

The Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec (CPTAQ) issued a preliminary notice in favour of the promoter on October 29, 2014. Furthermore, it generally authorizes this type of project about 90 per cent of the time. The CPTAQ did acknowledge that the tower will use 0.25 hectares of farmland, but it considers the site to be the one of least impact when taking into account the technical, regulatory and physical constraints presented. The Commission's directors concluded that the tower and its access road do not impose any restrictions on the nearby agricultural activities. They added that they are not able consider the visual impact on the landscape since this ele-

ment does not figure among the criteria stipulated in the Act respecting the protection of farmland and farming activities.

The municipality of Frelighsburg and the MRC Brome-Missisquoi are both favourable to the project. The Fédération de l'UPA de la Montérégie has submitted numerous questions, both on the necessity of the project and on the chosen site. The Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) has also demanded that the access road not cross a cultivated field.

Bell has confirmed that it must increase the coverage and strength of its HSPA+ and LTE networks in the Frelighsburg area and that it has been working closely with the municipality to determine the best site to achieve its objectives. The chosen site has the support of the municipality and the company is now waiting for final approval from the CPTAQ. Bell hopes to begin the construction of the tower this spring and have it in service by the fall.

LTCN 2015-02-25

Farm Safety

What you need to know about carbon monoxide

Canadian Agricultural Safety Association

Along with winter comes the increased risk of Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning. The danger not only exists in homes with natural-gas powered furnaces, water heaters or stoves, but also in sheds, garages barns or shops where work is being performed with internal combustion engines or being heated with fuel-powered heating systems. Many people using equipment like compressors, generators, welders and even pumps in buildings or semi-enclosed spaces have been poisoned by CO.

Bill Hunter, Fire Chief for the Township of Perth East and Municipality of West Perth has first-hand experience in responding to a case of CO poisoning. He explains: "A man, working on a cistern with a gas-powered concrete saw in an unventilated location was exposed to CO. Fortunately, his wife checked on him, recognized he was in distress and called 911. When we arrived, he was just about unconscious."

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas—a by-product of incomplete

combustion. There is always some produced whenever any carbon-based fuel is burned such as natural gas, heating oil, wood, reconstituted wood logs, gasoline, charcoal, or any similar product. CO is a colourless, tasteless and odorless highly toxic gas that is undetectable to the human senses – making it the perfect killer.

CO enters the body through the lungs during the normal breathing process. It replaces oxygen in the blood and prevents the flow of oxygen to the heart, brain and other vital organs. When you inhale carbon monoxide, it reduces your body's ability to carry oxygen in your blood. The health effects can be very serious, even resulting in death. It's important to note that carbon monoxide is dangerous at any level. Even low exposure can result in damage to your health. Symptoms of CO poisoning are the same as a case of influenza. "CO poisoning presents very much like the flu, but with no fever," Hunter says. "You become nauseous, may experience a headache

and become lethargic; you just want to crawl into bed." CO poisoning can also cause chest pain, dizziness, shortness of breath, confusion and drowsiness.

Of course, on the farm, just because it's cold outside, doesn't mean work stops. Often repairs on machinery like tractors take place during these cold months when work in the field has stopped. Sometimes this means using a generator or compressor or even idling a piece of equipment, all of these activities produce CO. Carbon monoxide can rapidly accumulate and build up to dangerous or fatal concentrations within minutes.

So what's the best bet to prevent CO poisoning?

"Unless your building is designed with a proper mechanical ventilation system avoid running gas-powered equipment inside," Hunter says. "If you do have to run a machine or tool inside a building that isn't designed with a mechanical ventilation system, ensure there is adequate air ventilation. For example, make sure there is a man-door open at open end of the building and the shed door

open at the other end for example, but your best bet is to avoid running these gas-powered equipment, like generators inside the building at all."

It's also essential to run this equipment and machines away from windows, doors and vent openings so that fumes can't enter the building through these areas. Avoid idling tractors, trucks and other vehicles inside garages and sheds. Even with the overhead door open, CO can quickly build if the area isn't properly ventilated.

If you suspect you or someone else has been exposed to carbon monoxide, evacuate the area and call emergency services. If you suspect that your home has a CO leak somewhere, don't open the windows or try to ventilate the area. Emergency responders will be able to more quickly and accurately locate the source, like a blocked chimney or faulty water heater.

If your home, garage, shop or barn is heated with natural-gas, propane or other fuels, ensure that you have working carbon monoxide alarms. All heating appliances should also have regular maintenance and ventilation should be checked, ensuring it isn't blocked by snow or other debris like leaves.

Carbon monoxide isn't always at the top of our minds when it comes to safety, but CO poisoning is a leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in Canada. Prevention is the key to stopping these deaths. By installing and maintaining carbon monoxide alarms, running machinery and equipment outside in an unobstructed, well-ventilated area and maintaining distance from windows, doors and vent openings will prevent unintentional exposure to this deadly poison.

For more information about carbon monoxide, please visit cosafety.ca. For more information about farm safety, please visit casa-acsa.ca.



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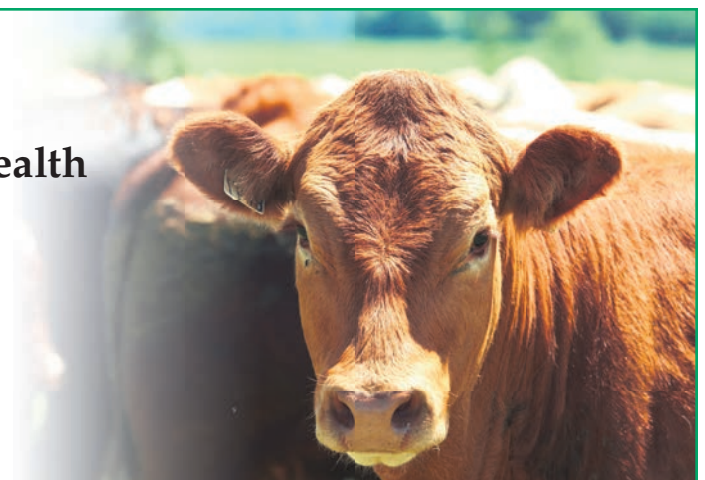
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Canada

QFA Crack-ups

Good Samaritan

A man was driving and saw a truck stalled on the side of the highway that had ten penguins standing next to it. The man pulled over and asked the truck driver if he needed any help. The truck driver replied, "If you can take these penguins to the zoo while I wait for CAA that will be great!" The man agreed and the penguins hopped

into the back of his car. Two hours later, the trucker was back on the road again and decided to check on the penguins. He showed up at the zoo and they weren't there! He headed back into his truck and started driving around the town, looking for any sign of the penguins, the man, or

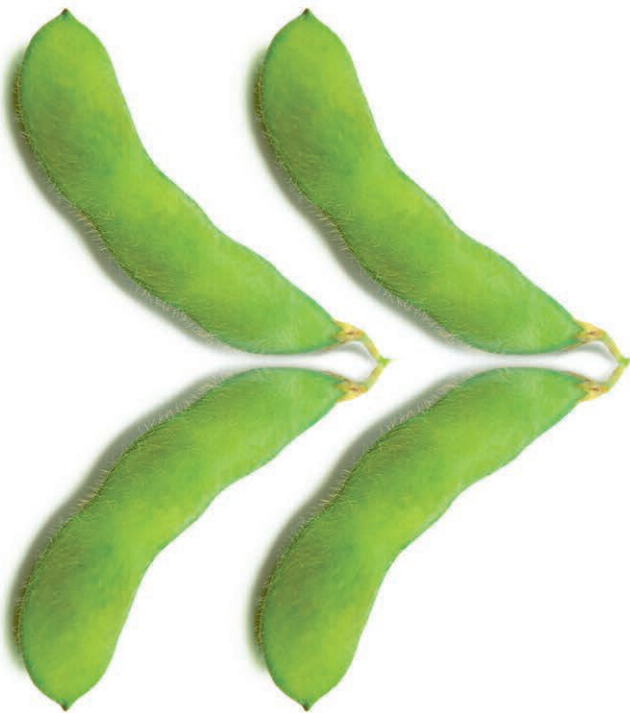


his car. While driving past a movie theater, the truck driver spotted the guy walking out with the ten penguins. The truck driver yelled, "What are you doing? You were supposed to take them to the zoo!" The man replied, "I did and then I had some extra money so

I took them to go see a movie."

He has His eye on the apple...

In a Catholic school cafeteria, a nun places a note in front of a pile of apples, "Only take one. God is watching." Further down the line is a pile of cookies. A little boy makes his own note, "Take all you want. God is watching the apples.»



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