

2011-2012

Quebec Farmers' Association Annual Report



Quebec Farmers' Association

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President's Message

A busy year!

As years go by we encounter more government bodies, agencies, and officials that govern and

control the way we farm, protect the environment, market our crops and animals. It seems we are becoming more and more reliant on subsidies and “cost-sharing” projects – all of which come with “strings” attached. Helping our English-speaking Quebec agricultural producers to get information about these changes so they can plan accordingly is a real challenge to the QFA and to the UPA. A similar challenge we face all the time is delivering our members’ suggestions and comments to the key decision makers within UPA federations, and related organizations and government agencies in Montreal, Quebec City and Ottawa.

When Quebec’s parliamentary committee on the future of agriculture invited the QFA to appear in Quebec City, we quickly accepted. We made our presentation in English (they provided translation) to emphasize the difficulty working in a language other than your mother tongue. Elected officials from all parties were pleased to hear our perspective and the Minister told us that English-speaking farmers would always be welcome in parliament.

The QFA has been more visible inside and outside Quebec by exhibiting at the Ottawa valley farm show and the International Plowing Match. QFA also addressed the annual meeting of the Franco-Ontarian Farmers. Their members realised that QFA has as much difficulty representing its members in Quebec as they do representing the French farmers in Ontario. A valuable friendship was gained with the Franco-Ontarian farmers.

Ivan Hale and I have attended meetings of the Quebec Community Groups Network and have gained countless friends there. They were surprised to learn that training of our volunteer fire fighters, communication with the CSST, and training and examination of pesticide application are not readily available in English in parts of rural Quebec.

Our close association with the *Union des producteurs agricoles* (UPA) as a specialised syndicate has given us a creditable voice and a seat with the UPA leaders at general council. QFA also is proud to attend the UPA *congrès général* each winter and their fall *journée de la rentrée* outlook conference; and as many more UPA meetings as we can. Marcel Groleau, and all the UPA staff, make us warmly welcome at all their meetings.

Each year QFA proudly represents Quebec as part of the UPA delegation to the Canadian Federation of Agriculture annual meeting.

An event that QFA has participated in for 10 years is “farmers lobby day” on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. It is spearheaded by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the QFA, with active involvement and support provided by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. All Members of Parliament and Senators were invited to an early breakfast in the parliamentary restaurant. Throughout the day the volunteers and staff of the farm groups met with the politicians one-on-one. For many of the elected officials this is the only time during the year when they get to speak with real farmers. This event is much appreciated by our decision makers on parliament hill, and has helped open doors when needed!

The QFA became deeply involved in addressing the severe drought conditions that affected much of the Ottawa Valley in 2012. Representatives of the Mennonite Disaster Service provided the early leadership. So far we have 12 tractor-trailer loads either delivered, loaded, or sourced for eastern farms in need. There are more than 200 requests for hay assistance; a need for 50-70,000 bales. Young farmers and those who will run out of feed first are given priority. Many farmers have sold off animals or even whole herds. Some farmers have made arrangements to have cattle shipped west and fed for the winter. Transportation of hay is expensive and some money has been donated to offset trucking cost. Alberta’s trucking association has sent an appeal to their members to help

move hay on “backhauls”. The Lanark cattlemen organized a concert-dance-barbeque-pie auction with everything donated and collected \$15,000. The Ontario and federal governments matched the contribution. Some corporations are donating money; individuals can donate to the “Hayeast 2012” account at any Scotia-bank.

QFA places a high value on our special relationship with the UPA, and with **you**, the members. A special thanks to all our directors for working so hard for all of us.

The QFA’s Farm Food Forums has been a leader in providing first class information to our members using videoconferencing technology. It saves farmers time and money, and is fun besides!

Farm safety education is desperately needed and we are now getting requests to deliver it to more schools.

Now in its 32nd year being published, the *Quebec Farmers’ Advocate* is a journal we are all very proud of, being the recipient of provincial awards.

Our appreciation must also be extended to our dedicated staff, all of whom work part-time for the Association.

The QFA could not operate without funding from the federal government through its department of Canadian Heritage. We are most grateful for this contribution.

Read on to find out more about our exciting year full of programs and activities.

Chris Judd

The Quebec Farmers' Advocate ... no one does it better!

The Advocate remains the best source for English-language farm news in Quebec

2012 has been a great year for the *Quebec Farmers' Advocate*. For the first time in the paper's history, the **Advocate was awarded first, second, and third place** in the "Best Agricultural Story" category at the Quebec Community Newspapers Awards. These awards receive submissions from every English-language community newspaper in Quebec. Excellence in farm writing is our specialty. These awards show that we are achieving our goal of reflecting Quebec's Anglophone farm scene and reporting on the events that are important to rural Quebecers.

Our content is getting better than ever. We've recently added Cynthia Gunn as the *Advocate's* **new food writer**. Cynthia writes in a witty, conversational style and her recipes are fantastic.

There's expanded emphasis on organic agriculture, along with trends like urban agriculture and urban gardening. A good number of our readers are students enrolled in agriculture studies in university and their interests and opinions should be expressed in the *Advocate*. We maintain our strong ties with **Quebec 4-H**, featuring at least one article a month on Quebec's rural youth who are courageously finding new ways

to make a career in farming.

One of the most successful projects the QFA has undertaken in recent years is our **Farm Food Forums**, which allows members and the public a chance to get together and talk about important topics in agriculture through video-conferencing. The forums have been a big boost for the QFA and for the *Advocate* as well, as we regularly write up the goings-on of each forum.

The *Advocate* is looking better, too. We are publishing **more full-colour issues** than ever before. Not only do full-colour issues look better than our usual arrangement of having eight of our 24 pages printed in colour, they also make us more money through advertising. We plan to go full-colour for each issue starting in 2013.

Year	Advertising Revenue
2007	\$64,364
2008	\$56,938
2009	\$64,537
2010	\$66,232
2011	\$65,730
2012 (<i>half year only</i>)	\$58,723

Advertising sales remain healthy and may surpass levels reached in 2011. This is no small feat for a newspaper in this day and age. Traditional print publications everywhere are struggling to stay afloat, as more and more companies prefer to advertise on the internet. The fact that the *Advocate* has

QFA Mission

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

been able to maintain a consistent level of advertising revenue shows that we're a niche market that exists somewhat outside the trends of newspapers folding or deciding to continue publishing only on the internet.

Classified ads are doing much better as well. QFA made a concerted effort to get more classified ads, mostly by reminding members that they are able to run classified ads free-of-charge three times a year. Now classifieds are filling up the page, and readers are beginning to run wedding announcements, obituaries and birth notices in the *Quebec Farmers' Advocate*.

QFA is pleased to maintain a relationship with the UPA whereby key stories that appear in their French language newspaper, *La Terre de chez nous*, are translated and reproduced in English in the *Advocate*. As well, our readers have expressed great pleasure at receiving the newsletter of Farm Management Canada, called *Canadian Farm Manager*, with their *Advocate*.

Operations and Activities Report

This year has been an active one for our Association.

Memberships

Reminder letters continue to be sent out to members. Winter months are the busiest time for staff dealing with memberships. However, despite sending up to three reminder letters, some members fail to respond. This adds time and cost for the organization. **The *Quebec Farmers' Advocate* is mailed to all English members of the UPA, regardless of whether they are**

members of the QFA or not. 972 non-members who receive the *Advocate* are not QFA members. This represents a loss of potential revenues totalling \$58,320 (972 x \$60 membership fee). The number of English-speaking farmers in Quebec who are members of the UPA is 1,259. There are 1,395 'Anglophone' farms representing 4.6% of the total 27,327 UPA members. This is a decrease in total Anglophone farmers of 0.4% since 2005.

Membership Period	Number of Members
December 2011 – November 2012	446
December 2010 – November 2011	350
December 2009 – November 2010	421
November 2008 - October 2009	410

Table 1.1 *Membership Numbers 2008 – 2012* (numbers include 'spousal' members)

Farm Food Forums Videoconference Series

The QFA's *Farm Food Forum* resumed in October and runs on the last Thursday of every month until April 2013. Successfully run during the winter of 2011-2012, this exciting new initiative draws upon modern videoconferencing technology to join together the Quebec Anglophone farming community, in the spirit of life-long learning. (Of note, the UPA has recently invested in similar technology and has equipped all of its regional offices with videoconferencing capacity.) Participation across the winter last year averaged fifty-seven attendees, for the six conferences held. Topics included: Farm Succession Planning; Smart Phones and the

Internet; Food Safety; Pasture Management; and a debate entitled The Food We Eat.

Sponsorships were sought for the 2011 season, in an 'informal' manner, and \$1000 was received from two donors. Sponsorship packages have been created for the 2012 season. To date, four sponsors have committed \$3000 for the season

Translations Services

Demand for our *specialized agricultural translation service*, providing for members, national and provincial organizations, partners, and community stakeholders, continues to grow. For example, QFA is currently translating a large project which focuses on game animal husbandry for the CRAAQ. This will provide comprehensive information for the industry in Quebec and beyond. We are also translating for a new client - Farm Start, based in Ontario - two sizable projects targeted at new and existing farmers. Amongst other new clients, we have the Strawberry and Raspberry Producers of Quebec, the Egg Producers Association and the Pork Producers Federation. These new clients came to us as a consequence of our strong reputation in delivering quality and timely service, with good value. *La Terre des Chez Nous* has increased its demand for translations.

Rates remain the same as last year at \$0.28 per word with discounts of up to 12% depending on UPA affiliation and word count.

Net income for the services rose to approximately \$9,000 for the year.

Group Health Insurance Benefits

Uptake of our competitively priced *Group Health Insurance Benefits Package* is developing slowly. Changes were made earlier in the year and the QFA's file is now being administered by Montreal-based firm Beneflex Quebec.

Marks Work Warehouse

Members continue to be eligible for discounts on purchases at Marks Work Warehouse.

Farm Safety and Farm Fairs

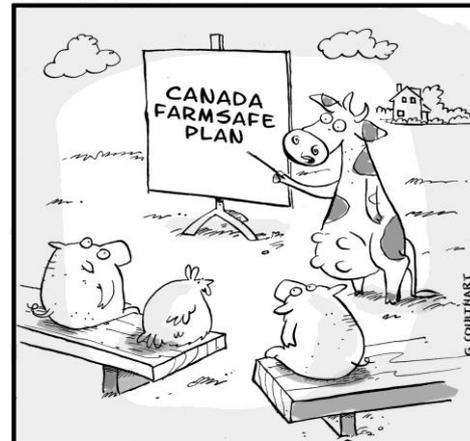
Farm Safety awareness raising efforts continue through school-based workshops, Farm Fairs and other events. We conducted one such workshop in a school in west Quebec in March and had learning tools on hand at the Ottawa Valley Farm Show, as part of the QFA's promotion of National Farm Safety Week. We will again feature farm safety tools in a forthcoming event in Huntingdon and will have the tools on hand at this year's Quebec 4-H annual general meeting.

The QFA, besides consistently publishing farm safety information in the *Advocate*, also played an integral part in the creation of a *Safe Implement Hitching Guide* for farmers, through sitting on an advisory committee of the Prairie Agricultural Management Institute. This guide can be viewed on the QFA website under the heading 'Issues'. QFA representation was once again present at the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) annual conference and the UPA's conference on farm safety. Both events bring together key stakeholders in the farm safety world which allows the QFA to keep connected and

informed on current issues. In addition, a QFA representative participated in CASA meetings that developed a national strategy to address farm safety. Like CASA, QFA believes that **every farm should have its own farm safety plan**. The UPA agrees but is producing very few resources in English. To ensure English-speaking farmers have the tools to develop farm safety plans QFA applied for funding to translate the UPA's documents. Unfortunately our request was not approved. Other approaches are now being explored.

QFA continues to sit on the Farm Machinery Technical Committee of the Canadian Standards Association. Meeting twice each year, the committee focuses on design standards, labeling and other matters that can reduce or prevent accidents and injuries. The committee is made up of representatives of equipment manufacturers, government regulators, and farm organizations. The *Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CSST)* is the only other representative from Quebec.

the barnders by gord.coulthart



I think we all understand this. So who wants to teach our owner?

Advocacy and Representation

Throughout the year QFA represented rural and agricultural minority-language community issues to national and provincial organizations and governmental partners. Meetings were attended by staff and volunteers contributing to consultations with Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN), the *Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA)*, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, Statistics Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). The annual 'Breakfast on the Hill' event, organized by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) was once again attended by QFA representatives where they met with politicians in an effort to shed light on agricultural issues. The annual conference of the newly-branded organization, Farm Management Canada, was attended, bringing together key partners and stakeholders.

the barnders by gord.coulthart



Before we get hitched, I want you to read this!

Green Paper

QFA prepared a *detailed memorandum* containing over 30 recommendations to help plan for a sustainable future of agriculture in Quebec. The QFA was invited to appear before the parliamentary committee in the spring to make a presentation and to respond to questions. News was reported in the *Advocate* alongside a translated abbreviated synopsis of the Green Paper.

Website

Website development is a growing priority and after consideration of service quality and costs, a decision was taken to change the web support person. Expect to see changes and new additions to the website in the coming months. QFA joined Facebook in February and currently has 98 'friends'.

High Speed Internet

The QFA brokered a group package, launched in January 2012, for rural high-speed internet connection through a high profile internet provider - Xplornet. Uptake was low, but nevertheless, we are pleased to announce that some farmers did take up the offer and are consequently 'connected' where they otherwise had no internet available to them.

Warren Grapes Agricultural Education Fund

QFA has a registered charity called the Warren Grapes Agricultural Education Fund. Its objectives are to promote agricultural and silvicultural education and learning among the English-speaking farm and rural community of Quebec through the provision of bursaries to students enrolled in college and university programs. Unfortunately

the number of donations has been declining in recent years. In 2011 we received only 3 donations totaling \$290. Eleven students applied for the 2012 bursaries. The Fund's trustees reviewed all applications and \$350 awards were given to 2 students. Plans are being made to solicit more donations in the future so as to be better able to meet the demand for financial assistance made by the students.

Special thanks are extended to the trustees of the fund for their service: John McCart (chair), Douglas Brooks, Bill Fairbairn and Wendy Jones.

5-Year Strategic Plan

Work continues on implementing QFA's 5-year strategic plan covering 2011-2016. Significant progress is recorded in addressing the following priorities:

- Advocating for policies, programs and services that support vibrant and active English-speaking, agricultural communities throughout Quebec
- Representing their rights to the *Union des producteurs agricoles* (UPA), government, media, educational institutions and other relevant agencies and organizations
- Providing pertinent and timely information
- Delivering programs and services; and,
- Supporting people entering and retiring from careers in agriculture.

QFA Staff



Andrew McClelland, Managing Editor of *Quebec Farmers' Advocate*

Andrew McClelland was raised in Cantley, Quebec and wrote his first article for the *Quebec Farmers' Advocate* at age 19. He graduated from McGill University with a degree in English and Humanistic Studies, and became managing editor of the *Advocate* in January 2005.



Dougal Rattray, Director of Operations

Dougal Rattray, a native of Scotland, brings with him over 20 years of farming experience in the production of milk, beef, sheep, cereals and vegetables, from smaller, family owned operations, to the value-added, super-market supply chain. Settling in West Quebec in 2006, with his wife and family of two, he has been a part of the QFA team since the June of 2010.



Ivan Hale, Executive Director

Ivan Hale and his family own and operate a farm in western Quebec.

QFA 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.

