

Annual Report 2014-2015



QUEBEC
FARMERS'
ASSOCIATION

A word from the President



2015 was a year of change for the QFA. In February, Ivan Hale, our Executive Director of 10 years submitted his resignation in order to take care of his health and with all respect, I accepted.

Ivan was instrumental in a number of initiatives throughout his stay here at the QFA, such as Farm Safety, the health Insurance plan, the farm food forums, changes made to the Advocate, his work with Chris Judd in having English documentation from la Financiere, and many others.

I, on behalf of the QFA board of directors wish to thank Ivan for his years of dedication to the English producers of Quebec and wish him well in his further pursuits. He is now the chair of CEDEC.

In April, the selection committee conducted interviews for the post of Executive Director. Dougal Rattray, QFA Director of Operations, was selected to bring the QFA into the future with his experience, his knowledge, his enthusiasm, and his charm. Who else can walk into the Maison de l'UPA and have everyone speaking English to them. Dougal has set lofty goals for the QFA and with his determination, I expect him to achieve them. Welcome Dougal.

The QFA had numerous activities throughout the year. In January, Roy Copeland and myself, met with a Japanese delegation at the St. Hyacinthe farm show. We discussed many things, mainly how farm succession works in this province. It was a delight to see the similarities between our two cultures. In February, I attended the AGM of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, where I participated in workshops on Agriculture research, and the pipeline committee. There was also a presentation on the US Farm Bill and a speech by legendary broadcaster Don Newman who predicted a Liberal minority government.

In June, Dougal and I attended the AGM of the Quebec Community Groups Network held in Montreal, where numerous workshops were held including employee management and evaluations, an update on social media and how we can use it to our advantage, and fundraising. Also in June was a strategic planning meeting in Longueuil with vice-President, Gib Drury, former President Chris Judd, Dougal, Agricultural PR Specialist, April Stewart, and QFA Director Jennifer Hayes.

In July, Dougal and I were at the Lachute Fair to promote the QFA and with the Outaouais – Laurentides Federation to promote farm safety. Given the numerous accidents and deaths in agriculture I

felt it necessary to try to educate people on the different dangers on the farm. Given the high temperatures and the changing demographics of who visits the fair, the day was not a success. Changes were made, and two weeks later, another display was set up for an event in Mirabel, this too was disappointing. We must not give up. We must find the proper medium to keep people safe, especially children on the farm. QFA was also at fairs in Ayer's Cliff, and Shawville.

In September, Dougal, Ivan Hale and myself attended a reception celebrating one of QFA's latest projects - a 'Seniors Gardening Project'. This is a new collaboration between the QFA, Canadian Organic Growers, the regional CLD and the municipality of Wakefield. It was very well organized and there are plans to expand this initiative to other regions. Also in September, Gib Drury and Chris Judd, invited by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, attended the agricultural debate held at the Château Laurier. At this time, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new Federal Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Laurence MacAuley. Hopefully, as a producer himself, he can breathe new life into an industry that others can so easily dismantle.



With the initial campaign by the UPA, Fortes et Unis, United and strong, producers have helped the country save most of our supply managed production. However some consider the loss of 3.25% a defeat. The importation of non-tariff liquid milk proteins has also hurt farm gate prices.

My neighbours, and you and your neighbours realize the power of unity. The demonstrations in the Beauce, Montreal, Ottawa and at the border crossings prove that a strong voice can achieve results. WE as farmers demand to be treated fairly. We provide a safe product at a reasonable price to consumers.

I would like to thank all the partners and friends of the QFA - our members, the UPA, La terre de chez nous, Macdonald College, CASA, CEDEC, The CFA, the QCGN and Canadian Heritage. Without their support, we would not be the organization that we have grown to become today.

John McCart,
President



Changing with the times

The year of 2014/2015 has been a turbulent and exciting one for the Quebec Farmers' Association. Many changes have been made in the way things have been done and how we explain who we are to the world.

In one way, we hope these changes have been noticed. We hope that people have remarked on how the face of the QFA is changing and the way we are now putting ourselves 'out there'. But in another way, we hope changes haven't been noticed. We want the changes to appear seamless.

Communicating better

One area we've greatly expanded our work on is in communicating on-line. Social media like Facebook and Twitter are a part of our world now. No organization can ignore them if it wants to get its message out to the public. And we've embraced social media with much greater vigour over recent months! Our Facebook group is growing, providing a place where the community of English-speaking farmers in Quebec can come to talk about their interests and get informed.

Unlike paid advertising or a traditional newspaper, social media gets our message directly to the people who want to hear it. And we're able to tell whether or not our message is being heard as group members can 'like' what we put up on our page, and they can contribute themselves. It's a great way to get positive feedback and track our results!

Forums like Twitter allow us to build partnerships with other community organizations. Amongst not-for-profits and non-governmental organizations, sharing messages or "tweets" to the community of members and

followers is highly appreciated. So when we help community organizations, like the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association or Farm Management Canada, to get their message across, it's a reciprocal relationship. Tweets—and their popularity—are a lot like currency these days. The stronger your currency is, the more power you have in the public marketplace. We're helping our partners grow and in so doing, our voice is equally amplified.



Ad sales

This is a tough time for advertising revenue in traditional newspapers. With daily and weekly newspapers disappearing all over the world, advertisers are looking elsewhere. But the *Advocate* has weathered this turbulent time rather well. While other publications have seen their ad sales plummet or evaporate in the past 10 to 15 years, our newspaper is holding steady.

Below are the ad sales figures for the *Advocate* for the past six calendar years:

2015: (as of the October issue—we still have two issues' worth of ads to rack up)

\$65,576.63

2014: \$69,234.72

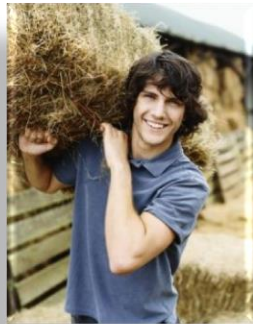
2013: \$77,853.61

2012: \$75,253.54

2011: \$65,730.70

2010: \$64,098.84

As can be seen, the 2014 total is most likely to be surpassed, while not being at the high-water-mark of 2012 and 2013. Much of this is due to government spending on advertising. A single campaign by, say, Agriculture Canada, Farm Credit Canada, or *La Financière agricole du Québec* has the power to turn the *Advocate's* advertising figures into a red-letter year or just an average one.



We realize that relying on government spending isn't an ideal situation to be in. That's why our sales staff at *La Terre de chez nous* is working to create new relationships with agricultural equipment companies and North American advertisers who have previously been reluctant to do business in Quebec. In time, we hope to become less reliant on government budgets and have a wider base of industrial advertisers to help diversify revenue streams.

Re-structured and re-organized

The October issue ushered in a new era for the *Advocate*. We are now working much closer with *La Terre de chez nous* to supply content and put the paper together. A new collaboration with writing and editing company 'Point' to ensure that each issue looks professional and reads smoothly is proving to be a well advised decision. The larger team allows greater gearing and flexibility in workflow and allows time to focus on other pressing matters.

In preparing for this change, the opportunity to re-organize the pages of the *Advocate* was

seized. Several days were spent reviewing stories, ads, and announcements and a new template which better accommodates news stories was created. Formerly, stories translated from *La Terre de chez nous* occupied pages 17 to 20 of each issue in our "UPA News Highlights" section. However, those articles are the *Advocate's* "hard news" stories about the industry and farming developments. These stories now start at page 3: They no longer bear the "UPA News Highlights" banner and logo, and making them tie in more seamlessly with the paper.

Our columns of general interest, such as "Cookin' with the Advocate" and "The Tree Doctor" now appear closer to the back of each issue, in the order that is standard for the magazine and newspaper industry. Every decision has been made to make the *Advocate* look more professional, readable and modern. And we still reserve the central pages for QFA announcements and articles, giving our most important news priority pages.

Looking forward

The methods of communicating the message of the QFA are developing. Along with the much heavier reliance on social media, the QFA website will be relaunched in late winter of 2016. Our current website is functional and updated, but the potential is unfulfilled. The website design company contracted by the UPA to re-invent regional federation websites was consulted. For cost measures, QFA will undertake the redesign itself, to streamline and keep essential information.



We've also started using our contacts within the Quebec Community Newspapers Association (QCNA) more widely than we have before. The QCNA represents almost all of Quebec's small-town and community newspapers. Small ads have started to be placed in over a dozen publications to promote our signature forums, and we're also able to send out press releases to our "neighbour publications" on any topic we choose.

The *Quebec Farmers' Advocate* is mailed to all English-speaking members of the UPA regardless of whether they are members of the QFA or not

Getting out there, being heard

The way in which the QFA is communicating with stakeholders and partner is evolving. We're currently considering constructing a regular QFA e-newsletter using *Mail Chimp*. It's our hope that with the exciting new projects and partnerships we've set in motion, more members will be attracted to the QFA. We want our loyal, lifelong members to feel included as we expand, attract young farmers and non-traditional farmers, and come to represent the voice of English-speakers in rural regions in Quebec. We have new energy, new direction and a new will to serve them faithfully and proudly.

Memberships

Recruiting and retaining members remains a challenge and is part of a national trend away from belonging to 'club' like structures. This is compounded by the slow erosion and loss of the numbers of farmers. In 2008, there were 2,507 English-speaking farmers in the Province of Quebec. In 2013, the number had dropped to 1,646. Every issue of the *Advocate* includes a member application form and from time to time, editorials and articles remind UPA members of the value and importance of becoming a QFA member.

MEMBERSHIP REVENUES

2016 (to 6 months)	\$ 10 161
2015	\$ 21 995
2014	\$ 19 161
2013	\$ 23 074
2012	\$ 18 654



QFA Translations Services

Demand for QFA's *specialized agricultural translation service*, providing for members, national and provincial organizations, partners, and community stakeholders, has seen a significant drop in revenue, largely due to State cuts in structures that QFA has traditionally been relying upon for revenue.

2015	\$ 24 833
2014	\$ 71 432
2013	\$ 82 794
2012	\$ 57 603

Internal organizational restructuring has resulted in the recruitment of a new *Director of Translations Services* to challenge this drop in revenues. Initiatives to amplify marketing of the services through the UPA family show early promise.

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

Farm Safety and Farm Fairs

Farm Safety awareness raising efforts continued through visiting Farm Fairs and other events. Learning tools were on hand at each of the shows visited in 2014 – Ormstown, Ayer's Cliff and Shawville. Interviews with farm producers uncovered some very interesting industry perspectives. Coverage appeared in the *Advocate* and survey answers contribute towards on-going strategy development.

The QFA, besides consistently publishing farm safety information in the *Advocate*, continued through staff to represent the membership on an advisory committee of the Prairie Agricultural Management Institute. 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.

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. Donations for 2014-15 have seen a marked rise, largely due to a single significant donation of \$1500 from Grace United Church

Cemetery in Bury. Total donations received allowed \$2250 to be dispersed. Four students applied for the 2015 bursaries. The Fund's trustees reviewed all applications and \$450 awards were given to all four students. Special thanks are extended to the trustees of the fund for their service.

Farm Food Forums

Six farm food forums involving 7 community learning centres were held during the year and attended by at least 275 people. Communities in Low, Shawville, Lachute, Huntingdon, Magog, Richmond and Bury were engaged. Of note, Community learning centres in Shawville and Bury were new and Macdonald Campus of McGill University joined the network for 2 events. Attendance varied across the year. The highest number that was attained was with students for the months of November and February where there were totals of approximately 60 on both occasions. The total number of attendees for the whole amounted to an average of 25 per evening across 6 evenings giving a total of 245 including Macdonald Campus students.

Not yet a member of the **Quebec Farmers' Association?**

Why not join today for the small price of \$60/year plus tax. *It's that simple!*

QFA Staff

Andrew McClelland, Director of Communications

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. He became Director of Communications in 2015.



Dougal Rattray, Executive Director

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. He became Executive Director in April 2015.



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QFA Mission

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