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**"It's been such a beneficial relationship that you hope cooler heads prevail.**

– Dennis Laycraft, executive vice-president of the Canadian Cattle Association, commenting on the U.S. president-elect's threat of imposing a 25-per-cent tariff on all goods from Canada entering the U.S.

## QFA VIDEOCONFERENCES

**Wednesday, January 15**  
at 7:30 p.m.

**Cover crops for better grazing**

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# Quebec unveils its farmland protection bill



The proposed legislation focuses on five areas – strengthening land protections, limiting speculative purchases, supporting regions, simplifying rules, and encouraging agri-tourism and local agriculture.

## Some provisions take effect immediately

**Brenda O'Farrell**  
*The Advocate*

The Quebec government has put an immediate halt to any purchase of agricultural land by an investment fund.

The moratorium was announced Dec. 5 as Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne unveiled his long-awaited legislation to bolster the province's protection of farmland, Bill 86.

"I am very proud to present this morning a very ambitious bill," Lamontagne said at a press conference after tabling the legislation in the National Assembly. "This is the most important revision of the *Agricultural Land Protection Act (Loi sur la protection du territoire agricole)* since its creation in 1978."

The bill proposes a number of amendments to the farmland protection legislation already in place. These changes focus on five areas – strengthening land protections, limiting speculative

purchases of land, supporting regions, simplifying the rules regulating farmland, and encouraging agri-tourism and local agriculture.

The legislation, drafted following a year-long consultation process, now heads to committee where it will be studied. It is expected to be approved by the National Assembly in the spring.

"This important revision of the law is the result of mobilization around an inspiring social movement," Lamontagne said in a statement. "This will result in a major breakthrough for all of Quebec, which will allow us to preserve our capacity to feed ourselves while contributing to the vitality of our communities."

The moratorium on the sale of agricultural land imposed with the tabling of the proposed legislation will be made permanent if the bill is approved.

See **BILL 86, Page 4.**

## La Financière pays out \$1.23 billion in 2023-24

**Andrew McClelland**  
*The Advocate*

La Financière agricole du Québec has unveiled its 2023-2024 balance sheet, showing that the provincial farm insurance agency provided nearly \$1.23 billion in loan guarantees to Quebec farmers in the last fiscal year.

Much of that money was granted to dairy and commercial crop companies (\$734.1 million) and forestry producers (\$9 million). The FADQ cites climate change and inflation as the big reasons why Quebec producers and agri-food companies needed to appeal to their provincial agricultural risk management agency.

See **insurance, page 4.**



# Just the facts

## 5X

Quebecers have increased the amount of yogurt they consume annual fivefold in the last 40 years, with the average individual eating 8.89 litres in 2022, compared with 1.64 litres in 1981. The latest figure is actually down from an all-time high hit in 2015, when Quebecers consumed an average of 10.99 litres of yogurt.

Source: Ministère d'Agriculture, Pêcheries et Alimentation Québec

## 16%

The percentage of Quebec farmers who are under the age of 40 in 2021. That is down from the 18-per-cent level in 2016. The average age of a Quebec farmer in 2021 was 54, up from 52.9 years in 2016.

Source: Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation

## 505 million

The number of kilograms of cucumbers, peppers and tomatoes grown in Ontario annually. About 85 per cent of this produce is exported to the U.S.

Source: Richard Lee, executive director of Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers, which represents 170 producers in the province

## \$29.1 billion

The amount of farm, fishing and intermediate food products Canada exported to the U.S. in 2023. This figure accounts for 47 per cent of Canada's global exports in this sector, which includes live animals, wheat, canola, fruits, nuts, vegetables.

Source: Statistics Canada

## HO, HO, HO



THE ADVOCATE

OK, he's not quite outstanding in his field, but the Jolly Old Gent is definitely standing by, ready to greet all passers-by during the runup to Christmas. At this time of year remember to let your heart be light.



### 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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Signature .....

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- discounts on QFA sponsored events and services
- free advertising in the Advocate's classified ads
- voting privileges at the QFA Annual General Meeting

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Receipts are issued upon request. Memberships are valid for 12 months from month of purchase.



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## Ag workshops to be hosted in 36 elementary schools

**Frederic Serre**  
*The Advocate*

The Quebec government wants more young people to be interested in farming, and it's injecting \$1.5 million to boost a program that will see more than 7,200 kids from 36 elementary schools in seven regions of Quebec benefiting from a new initiative that fosters healthy eating.

Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne made the announcement on Nov. 28, saying the funding, through its AgrÉcoles workshops, will support nine additional schools while offering learning activities in areas like gardening, local agriculture and healthy eating.

"With this program, agriculture takes its place in Quebec's classrooms," said Lamontagne. "This additional support will enable a growing number of students across the province to develop their curiosity about agriculture and its trades, and to learn about the importance of healthy, local food."

According to Education Minister Bernard Drainville, the school environment is ideal for integrating educational notions about food, and the program appeals to the intelligence of young people in a playful setting, to make them aware of the importance of healthy eating.

"By discovering the origins and pathways of the food they eat, students acquire notions that will enable them to make sensible choices throughout their lives," he said, adding that since 2019, AgrÉcoles has received more than \$4.3 million in funding from Quebec.

The nine new schools to be added to the program include: École Villa-de-la-Jeunesse in Saint-Élie-de-Caxton; École La Providence in Saint-Tite; École du Zénith in Shefford; École Saint-Vincent-Ferrier in Bromont; École du Christ-Roi in Saint-Camille; École Rinfret in Sainte-Ursule; École Belle-Vallée in Saint-Justin; École Lévesque in Saint-Donat and École Henri-Bourassa and Soleil-de-l'Aube in Repentigny.



PHOTO COURTESY OF UNION DES PRODUCTEURS AGRICOLES

Twenty-nine members – four generations – of the Allen-Lafond family accepted the honour of being named the Farm Family of 2024 during the UPA's Congrès Général on Dec. 4 in Quebec City.

# Témiscamingue's Allen-Lafond clan named Farm Family of 2024

**Brenda O'Farrell**  
*The Advocate*

The Allen-Lafond family of the little Témiscamingue town of Saint-Bruno-de-Guigues was named the Farm Family of 2024 by La Fondation de la famille agricole during the Union des producteurs agricoles' annual Congrès Général in Quebec City earlier this month.

The family is headed by Diane Allen and Damien Lafond, who married in 1969. They bought a small farm in the community, located almost 500 kilometres northwest of Ottawa, two months before their wedding and two weeks before it was set to be sold at auction. It cost them \$18,000 to purchase 80 acres of land, a house and 13 Ayrshire cows.

And that is how their adventure began. Fifty-five years later, their story

has evolved and expanded.

The couple had five children – Patrick, Édith, Benoit, Luc and Danny. And now have several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. When they accepted the honour at the UPA gala on Dec. 4, 27 members of their family joined them to mark the occasion. It was an impressive crowd.

Four of the couple's children – Patrick, Édith, Benoit and Danny – operate dairy farms today, while Luc works as an electrical mechanic for Lactalis, a processor that manufactures a variety of dairy brands, including Cracker Barrel, Black Diamond, Lactancia, Beatrice and P'tit Québec.

Benoit and his family have taken over his parents' farm, and where Damien Lafond at age 80 still helps out, while Patrick bought a farm in Plessisville, east of Drummondville. Édith runs a

dairy farm in nearby Saint-Eugène de Guigues, while Danny operates his dairy farm in his home town.

From modest beginnings producing about five kilos of milk per day, the Allen-Lafond family now operate four farms, collectively producing 388 kilos of milk per day and cultivate 2,500 acres in the Témiscamingue area, with the next generations set to expand operations even more. Seven of the grandchildren are studying or have recently completed their studies in agriculture in St. Hyacinthe.

The couple expressed their gratitude for the honour and invited all who were attending the gala – about 800 members of the UPA from across the province – to visit their corner of Quebec. The coffee is always on, said Diane Allen.

## News

# BILL 86: Wide breadth of changes proposed

From Page 1

Other restriction that went into immediate effect pending Bill 86's approval include:

- In certain circumstances, the purchase of agricultural land within 1,000 metres of an urban perimeter is now subject to approval;
- The construction of greenhouses or other production buildings on what is considered good quality farmland is prohibited;
- Construction of a second residence on a farm regardless of acquired rights.

These restrictions could be made permanent if the bill is adopted into law without amendments.

In addition to updating the province's *Agricultural Land Protection Act*, the 51-page draft bill proposes to amend a number of other existing pieces of legislation, including the *Loi sur l'acquisition de terres agricoles par des non-résidents*, the *Loi sur l'aménagement et l'urbanisme* and the *Loi sur la fiscalité municipale*.

The result will see restrictions on who can purchase farmland and provides for monetary penalties for contraventions.

The bill also seeks to amend the rules related to how requests for rezoning land for uses other than farming can be made by MRCs, and under what conditions new uses of land for residential purposes can be located in agricultural zones.

The bill also seeks to impose mandatory measures on the government if it authorizes a new vocation to existing agricultural land. And it also gives the government the authority to include a lot that is not currently zoned for agricultural use in the agricultural zone if

the owner of the land is in agreement.

The bill also grants new regulatory powers to the government to determine when and under what conditions new uses for agricultural land can be assigned without obtaining authorization from the Commission de protection du territoire agricole.

Also included are provisions to exempt pig farms from the current mandatory process of holding a public consultation to approve the expansion of an existing operation.

It also gives municipalities the power to impose an additional

tax on agricultural land that is not being farmed.

### Erosion of farmland

From 2016 and 2021, just over 9,500 hectares of agricultural land in Quebec have been dezoned to be used for other purposes, according to the CPTAQ.

The agency also confirms that from April 1, 2022, to Feb. 28, 2023, the CPTAQ has received requests to dezone 317 hectares. It refused the majority of those requests, but conceded to rezone 41 hectares in the Centre du Québec region, an area on the south side of the

St. Lawrence River across from Trois Rivières that includes Drummondville, Victoriaville and Bécancour.

In September 2023, Swedish battery manufacturing giant Northvolt announced it would build a factory in St. Basile and McMasterville on 170 hectares of mostly farmland.

In all, from April 1998 to March 2022, 1,780 hectares of farmland have been lost to 10 mining related dezoning requests, according to reports, while another 2,826 hectares of farmland has been lost to infrastructure projects linked to transportation and hydroelectric production.

## UPA, FRAQ welcome proposed farmland protection bill

**Brenda O'Farrell**  
*The Advocate*

The Union des producteurs agricoles has welcomed Quebec's proposed changes to the provincial *Farmland Protection Act*, but cautions it has not yet conducted a detailed analysis of the legislation.

"The bill ... incorporates several elements that have come from the province-wide consultation," said UPA president Martin Caron in a statement after the legislation was presented in the National Assembly earlier this month.

And he pointed to the aim included in the legislation to establish a registry of farmland transactions as a positive step to thwart investors seeking to

capitalize on the increasing value of agricultural land in the province that threatens the long-term protection of land dedicated to growing food.

"The sustainability and development of the territory and agricultural activities remain seriously threatened," Caron added, striking a cautionary tone.

"Non-agricultural uses represent more than 80 per cent of the areas removed over the last 10 years," Caron continued, explaining that banning speculators and investment firms from buying farmland will help protect the province's ability to produce food.

Echoing the overall sentiment expressed by the UPA, the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec, which advocates on behalf of young farmers,

said they are pleased the legislation includes provisions that will help the next generation of agricultural producers to gain access to farmland ownership. These measures include a tax on farmland that is not being used for agricultural production, anti-speculation measures and the banning of farmland being purchased by investment funds.

"Access to land is one of the biggest challenges facing the next generation of farmers," said David Beauvais, president of the FRAQ. "This bill represents a decisive step to combat land speculation and guarantee that agricultural land remains in the hands of those who wish to cultivate it."

## Insurance

From Page 1

"Faced with difficult climatic conditions and the inflationary economic context, La Financière agricole has demonstrated its support for agricultural producers through its agility, support and ability to adapt its programs," said FADQ president and CEO Ernest Desrosiers.

That \$1.23 billion also comprises 2,305 projects under the FADQ's Sustainable Growth Investment Program (Programme Investissement Croissance Durable), an envelope of funding for agricultural entrepreneurs undertaking productive and sustainable investment projects.

"Our organization continues its mission for sustainable agriculture,"

Desrosiers said. "For Quebec ag companies, we're a strategic partner through our unique offer in terms of risk management and financing."

In its efforts to support the next generation of Quebec farmers, the agency awarded 501 grants in 2023-2024, totalling \$11.4 million. In its "Young Entrepreneurs" program, FADQ committed amounts of \$3 million for 189 projects.

FADQ's yearly report also showed it paid \$820 million into insurance and income protection programs. Crop insurance programs (ASREC) paid \$196 million in compensation, including nearly \$66 million to companies producing cereals, grain corn and protein crops. For the Agricultural Income Stabilization Insurance (ASRA), compensations represented \$382 million, with 6,181 people, especially for hog

farms as Quebec's pork industry continues to suffer from plant closures and instability caused from recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The "Agri" programs – Agri-stability, Agri-Québec and Agri-investment – paid out \$243 million to Quebec producers and agribusinesses.

## Business Risk Management pay-outs

- Agri-stability
  - 13,183 participants
  - Payments of \$66 million
- Agri-Québec Plus
  - 10,458 participants
  - Payments of \$6.3 million
- Agri-investment
  - 17,695 participants
  - Government contributions of \$40 million
- Agri-Québec (year of participation 2022)
  - 14,786 participants
  - Government contributions of \$130 million

Note: These figures are from data transmitted to FADQ in 2023 and, therefore, represent the 2022 production year.

# Hollywood takes on drama of Quebec's maple syrup makers

**Brenda O'Farrell**  
*The Advocate*

On some level, it's a story that the Quebec Maple Syrup Federation would rather forget. But a newly released six-part series now on Prime Video is bringing the tale of the *Great Canadian Maple Syrup Heist* to a new and very wide audience.

Days after its Dec. 6 release, *The Sticky* topped the rankings on the streaming service as the most-watched series in Canada. It also attracted wide media coverage – from a feature in *The Globe and Mail* to the topic of conversation on the widely viewed Quebec television talk show *Tout le monde en parle*.

Described as “*The Breaking Bad* for the world of maple syrup,” the series is far from a documentary. In fact, it is only very loosely based on the real events of 2011-12, when thieves made off with more than \$18 million worth of maple syrup from a warehouse in central Quebec, a feat that earned the distinction of being the biggest theft in Canadian history. But as the producers clearly state with a message that runs across the television screen at the beginning of each episode: “This is absolutely not the true story of the great Canadian maple syrup heist.”

But the parallels to the Quebec crime

are apparent – from the setting in the snow-covered maple bushes in central Quebec, to the warehoused strategic syrup reserve and the distinct Québécois accents.

In real life the famed theft exposed the Producteurs et productrices acéricoles du Québec's incompetence as it stored its cache of barrels of maple syrup worth more than a \$100 million in a former furniture warehouse with barely any security. But the series frames the tale as more of a David-and-Goliath battle.

The series stars well-known U.S. character actress Margo Martindale, who plays Ruth Landry, an English-speaking maple syrup-maker's wife, who teams up with a Boston-based mobster, played by actor Chris Diamantopoulos. They get in league with the warehouse security guard to steal syrup from what is referred to as “the association,” the maple syrup marketing board that controls who can produce and sell the sweet Quebec staple. The rest of the cast is comprised of well-known Quebec actors who switch from speaking French to English.

The series even has a dash of Hollywood, as producer Jamie Lee Curtis has a small but important role.

*The six-episode series is now on Prime Video.*



LUCE MORIN/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

## Quebec looks to boost maple syrup production on public lands

**Frederic Serre**  
*The Advocate*

The Quebec government has set new production targets to help provincial maple syrup producers on public land to meet a growing global demand for the product, while boosting Quebec's maple syrup industry on the world stage.

Officials with the provincial Natural Resources and Forestry Ministry held a bilateral meeting with a delegation from the Producteurs et productrices acéricoles du Québec on Nov. 15 to present a new preliminary proposal for maple syrup production targets for publicly held land.

According to the ministry, there is a need to promote optimal reconciliation of public land uses in order to meet a global demand for Quebec maple syrup and foster a dynamic, wealth-creating maple syrup industry.

“Maple syrup production is part of Quebec's heritage and represents an important economic sector for certain regions,” said Natural Resources and Forestry Minister Maité Blanchette

Vézina. “The development of maple syrup production in public forests must be consistent across the province, while respecting all uses and maintaining conditions favorable to the exercise of the rights granted to the various users. This is a complex but important exercise, requiring the cooperation and openness of all stakeholders. I hope that we will continue our efforts to find the best possible compromises.”

According to Vézina, about 18 per cent of maple syrup production in Quebec takes place in public forests and nearly 68,000 hectares of public forest have already been allocated to maple syrup production, with more than 43,000 hectares covered by an intervention permit for the cultivation and operation for maple syrup production, and nearly 25,000 hectares having been identified as having the potential for maple syrup production.

Earlier this year, Quebec's National Assembly proclaimed the third Sunday of October “Journée nationale de l'érable,” or National Maple Day. The first edition of this day was marked on Oct. 20.



COURTESY PRIME VIDEO

Chris Diamantopoulos and Margo Martindale star in *The Sticky*, a true-crime-inspired heist thriller based on the Great Canadian Maple Syrup Heist of 2011-12. Producer Jamie Lee Curtis also appears.



**John McCart**  
QFA President

# Making a cross-Canada connection

Trip to B.C. shows the diversity of agriculture

Agriculture is not quite the same in British Columbia.

That was one of the take-aways from my visit to the Agricultural Excellence Conference in Abbotsford in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia in November.

Hosted by Farm Management Canada and the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, the conference attracted more than 160 attendees from all over Canada.

There is an intensity to agriculture in the Fraser Valley, which stretches from Vancouver, in the west, all the way to Hope, in the east. The average size dairy farm has about 300 cows, with the largest having about 2,600 on a land base of just over 2,200 acres, a farm called Chilliwack Cattle Sales.

The dairy farms can milk more cows per acre there because they only grow forages, with five cuttings of grass per year, and corn silage. The price per acre for land is very high, making it prohibitive to growing grain. One dairy farmer we visited was Dicklands Biogas, which has chosen to capitalize on the production of the cattle manure and incorporates food waste from every sector to produce methane that is pumped into the pipeline system grid.

With the price of land well over \$100,000 per acre, every square foot is used. Although dairy and poultry farms are abundant in the Fraser Valley, the balance of the land is used for greenhouses, and fruits and vegetables, with many farms dedicated to blueberry production. One greenhouse we toured was Rainbow Greenhouses in Chilliwack, which has more than 50 acres under cover, with another 60-acre greenhouse in Alberta. These facilities produce all sorts of flowers, like poinsettias that are sold to large retailers like Walmart and Costco at this time of year. With such a large area to cover, the use of bicycles is a must.

The first day of the conference featured three panel discussions. The first – From Field to Finance – showcased tools for farm business growth, like the Agricultural Credit Corporation, which offers many financial resources for young farmers.

The second panel – Waste Not, Want Not – featured speakers who focused on recuperation of agricultural plastics,



Senator Mary Robinson (LEFT) shared her insights at the Agricultural Excellence Conference in Abbotsford, B.C., with delegates, including me and my wife.

which is similar to Agr-Recoup here in Quebec; the development of bio-gas; and how farms must reduce.

The last panel focused on protecting farmland. Representatives from some of the provincial farm unions discussed what is happening with the use of land in their regions. Quebec, Ontario and the Fraser Valley have seen very similar losses of farmland to urban development and non-farmers purchasing farmland. The pressure from both developers and municipalities to expand into the rural areas is having a significant impact.

Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia face more pressure from non-farm investors, including the Ontario Teachers' Pension Fund.

Other discussions looked at how data can be used on the farm. Analysis of results and inputs dealing with everything from crop production to livestock to the weather and markets can be used to make the farm more efficient.

Safety on the farm was another issue highlighted.

One of the most damaging events on the farm is a serious accident. When a farm owner or employee is injured or killed, the impact on the family and the farm is extreme.

Another topic was farmers advocating for agriculture. The farmer's ability to promote agriculture to the consumer has never been easier thanks to social media. And it comes at a time when people want to learn more about how their food is produced and how sustainable the practices are. And they want to understand why food costs as much as it does.

Other items of interest was listening to Senator Mary Robinson. The former president of Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the P.E.I. Federation of Agriculture is one of only two senators who have a genuine interest in the Canadian agricultural sector. Numerous bills are now in the Senate to be approved or amended. Chief among

them is C-282, which would protect supply management from being eroded in future trade negotiations.

Climate change was also discussed. Dr. Andria Jones, a mental health specialist, explained how there has been numerous challenges to farming over thousands of years due to climate disruption. The effect on the farmer to continue to produce food when the weather does not co-operate is more significant now because of the scale of farms today. Every little blip on the screen has unfortunate consequences that put incredible pressures on farmers and their farms.

The last topic raised at the conference was Managing the Political Risks of Farming, which focused on the impact animal rights organizations can have on a farm business.

I was also able to share information about our farm in Quebec and how the English-speaking farmer has its own voice. The QFA was noticed.

THE ADVOCATE

## Quebec announces new money for equipment purchases in beekeeping and plant sectors

Andrew McClelland  
The Advocate

The Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation (MAPAQ) has promised new financial assistance for the purchase of new equipment for producers and companies in beekeeping and plant production.

Quebec estimates that up to 550 projects could be financed with the new funds. The money is being provided in the context of changing conditions for bee and plant producers due to climate change, which brings challenges to both sectors but also opportunities, as the longer growing season allows for greater production.

"Increasing productivity in the agricultural sector is a priority for this government," said Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne. "I'm pleased with this support, which will allow companies specializing in plant and beekeeping production to modernize their equipment and increase their competitiveness."

The province wants producers to fully modernize both sectors of production, and projects approved must involve the purchase of state-of-the-art equipment. Apiculturists will increase their chances of successfully applying by outlining projects that will increase their beekeeping stock, whether by increasing the survival rate of bees or by purchasing additional hives.

Agriculture equipment prices have soared post-pandemic, with supply issues raising prices beyond already-high inflation. Beekeepers also suffered heavy losses in bee populations last winter. La Financière agricole du Québec has reported record-high claims in the province of more than \$3 million.

### Special bonus for "outlying" regions

"With this announcement, we are also giving an additional boost to companies located in remote regions," said Lamontagne in an official announcement on November 24. "The economy of all regions of Quebec will benefit."

Quebec will make \$20 million available, with a 15-per-cent bonus for producers in "outlying regions," which MAPAQ defines in this case as Abitibi-Témiscamingue-Northern Quebec, Bas-Saint-Laurent, Côte-Nord, Gaspésie-

Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Outaouais, and Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean. Funding will come over the span of three years: an initial amount of \$14 million will be paid in 2024-2025 and another \$6 million in 2025-2026.

So what can the new envelope of \$20 million be used for?

The funding will chiefly benefit agribusinesses in Quebec that have ambitious innovation plans that involve the purchase of new equipment and can back up their project with a solid business plan.

MAPAQ says that the first part of the "Productivité végétale" initiative gave out \$96 million to over 4,300 projects from 2018 until 2023.

In those cases, funds were allocated to everything from nearly a quarter of a million dollars to Université Laval for conducting research on storage and overwintering for queen honeybees to \$40,000 for creating a guidebook on the commercial harvesting of wild plants. Another Quebec company received over \$80,000 to make improvements to its soilless strawberry cultivation system.

This time around, Quebec's funding initiative is much more pointed, hoping to provide an economic stimulus in the purchase of new equipment and to put plant producers and beekeepers in a position to weather climate change and a shifting economy in the future.

### First come, first served

Like many of Quebec's agriculture funding programs in recent years, money is offered on a "first come, first served" basis. Applications will be assessed by a jury, but the initiative lasts until the deadline or until the money runs out.

That means Quebec agribusinesses will benefit by getting a strong application in early.

There are two sets of deadlines for the Productivité végétale initiative: producers from outlying regions will be able to submit their projects from December 10, 2024 to February 7, 2025 – or until the funds are exhausted.

Producers from a "central region" will be able to submit their application from January 7 to February 7, 2025 (or until the available funds are exhausted.) Quebec considers these regions central: Capitale-Nationale, Centre-du-Québec, Chaudière-Appalaches, Estrie, Montréal-Laval-Lanaudière, Laurentides, Mauricie, and Montérégie.

For more information or to apply, Google "initiative ministérielle productivité végétale" or visit: <https://www.quebec.ca/agriculture-environnement-et-ressources-naturelles/agriculture/aide-financiere/initiative-ministerielle-productivite-vegetale>

## Quebec's largest egg processing plant gets financial help from provincial government

Frederic Serre  
The Advocate

Les Fermes Burnbrae, Quebec's largest egg processing plant, has just received a major boost from the Quebec government to the tune of \$2.8 million that will allow Burnbrae to modernize its facility in the village of Upton in Montérégie.

Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne made the announcement Nov. 22, saying the loan will allow Burnbrae, which employs 160 workers, to increase its competitiveness, as it will be able to make better use of its production capacity.

Quebec's Ministère de l'Économie, de l'Innovation et de l'Énergie, through Investissement Québec, is providing a loan of just over \$1.8 million, while the provincial Agriculture Ministry is contributing \$1 million.

Renovations to the Burnbrae plant will include new technological units designed to recirculate water in a closed circuit at the Upton plant. Thanks to these units, effluent will gradually be freed of all pollutants to reach potable quality, thus promoting the reuse of water in the industrial process. As a result, consumption of potable water from outside the plant will be significantly reduced.

"This announcement kills two birds with one stone," said Lamontagne. "It strengthens the plant's competitiveness, while preserving the municipality of Upton's drinking water supply. I'm very pleased with this financial support for Burnbrae Farms, which will enable it to improve its facilities."

The Upton plant processes 702 million eggs a year into various pasteurized liquid products, making it the largest egg processing plant in Quebec. These egg products are sold to the retail trade, the hotel, restaurant and institutional foodservice network, and food processing companies. Thirty per cent of its products are sold in Quebec, 68 per cent elsewhere in Canada and 2 per cent are shipped to the United States.

## Grains

### StatsCan's final crop estimates for 2024 see rise in corn, soybean, wheat in Quebec

Ramzy Yelda  
Senior Market Analyst  
Producteurs de grains du Québec

Statistics Canada issued its final crop estimates earlier this month.

For Quebec, corn harvests hit 3,606,811 tonnes, which represents a 7.9-per-cent increase over 2023, with a yield of 10.2 t/ha. Soybeans hit 1,387,054 tonnes, a 9.3-per-cent increase, and a yield rate of 3.3 t/ha. Wheat comes in at 304,183 tonnes, a 9.7-per-cent hike over 2023, with a yield rate of 3.4 t/ha. Oats hit 144,611 tonnes, which is a 3-per-cent increase over the previous year, with a yield of 2.6 t/ha. Barley comes in at 107,610 tonnes, a 37-per-cent jump, with a yield of 3.3 t/ha. And finally, canola hit 35,894 tonnes, a 5.9-per-cent jump

over 2023, with a 2.3 t/ha yield.

For Ontario, the corn crop is down 3.5 per cent, hitting 9.63 million tonnes (MT) due to a lower area sowed, while the soybean crop is up by 7.9 per cent at a record 4.35 MT due to higher acreage and an excellent yield. Wheat production is down by 15.7 per cent due to both lower yield and area.

The Canadian wheat crop is up by 6.1 per cent at 35 MT due to higher yield. On the other hand, canola production drops by 7 per cent to hit 17.8 MT because of a lower yield. The oat crop rebounds by 27 per cent at 3.4 MT due to both higher acreage and yield. And finally, barley production nationally is down by 8.6 per cent at 8.1 MT because of a sharp drop in area.

## Trends in agriculture



**Chris Judd**  
*The Advocate*

# As 2024 ends: Let's look back at a few memorable farms moments of the past

When the train tracks came to Pontiac County, they passed through the back of our farm. However, grandpa's uncle Ermine Brownlee had already led the first purebred Holstein to Shawville from the Aylmer Fair a few years before that. She had won "grand champion" at the fair, and it took Ermine two days to walk her to Shawville, with a "sleepover" at Quyon on the way.

The Pontiac Pacific Junction of the CPR had carried animals to market in Montreal and fresh picked raspberries from our farm to the Ottawa market, as well as relatives up from the city to visit us. The train also brought cream from farms west of town to the creamery, where it was made into butter.

Grandpa Brownlee told me many times that the "hay-loader" was the best invention to ever come to the farm. Before the hay-loader, all hay had to be thrown onto horse-drawn wagons using pitch forks.

Dairy farmers who wanted high-protein hay would plant both clover and alfalfa, which were both very hard to dry. So to help dry it they would pile that heavy and wet hay on "tripods" that looked like a "teepee" made of small poles about six feet long. This was hard, tedious work that all men hated. When that high-protein hay was dry, it was forked onto the wagon and stored in a special place in the barn loft and saved for the best milk cows.

Once the hay-loader came to the farm, horse-drawn dump rakes were used to move the hay that had been cut with a horse-drawn mower into windrows that the hay-loader could pick up and load onto the wagon.

### When tractors replaced horses

I can remember when dad bought a new tractor-pulled side rake. He had set it up himself to replace the horse-pulled dump rake. Dad said that once you baled a field of hay that you had raked yourself, you became a much better rake driver.

For a couple years after, grandpa used to go over the hayfield again with the dump rake anyway to rake up any little bits that had been missed by that "new rake."

Our farm's first experience with a hay baler was when we hired a neighbour



HUTCH PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Back in 1950, taking off five acres of hay with horses was a big day.

with a NH 77 baler to bale a field at a rented farm. This eliminated the need to draw loose hay four miles to get it home. But after we handled those 80-pound bales all day, dad decided that when we bought a baler, it would make lighter bales.

After using several small balers and piling the bales by hand on wagons, we decided to get a baler with a bale-thruster to throw the bales directly onto a basket hay rack. We always loaded hay wagons in the dry part of the day, when it was hot. But dad got the wagons unloaded and put up the elevator into the loft in the morning before it got hot. Everyone who ever moved hay in a hot loft would appreciate that.

Back in 1950, taking off five acres of hay with horses was a big day, and that was after two or three days of drying in the field. Today, farmers can easily cut and take off 100 acres of haylage and store it in a bunk silo in a day. Yes, it costs thousands of dollars more to cut with a large diskbine, merge 50 feet of hay into a wind-row, harvest it with a large chopper, truck it to the silo, spread it with a payloader, and pack it with a huge tractor to squeeze the air out and avoid spoilage because of too much air, but it also allows the farmer

to make 20-per-cent protein feed, which grandpa very seldom could.

Dad made his first tractor out of a 1928 Chev car cut off behind the front seat. He added an "auto-trac" conversion kit from Cliff Cone to fit three-foot-tall steel wheels on the back. He converted a two-furrow horse-drawn "sulky plow" into a pull-type plow to pull behind the "auto-trac."

We bought our first real tractor after the First World War. Dad had ordered a Cockshut 70, but after the war, lots of farmers wanted a tractor, and the waiting list was long. So when a little 2N Fordson came in, dad decided to take it rather than wait. Dad died in 1967 and never got to sit on a tractor with a cab.

### Indoor plumbing a big advancement

Indoor plumbing was a luxury compared with a "thunder-mug" for night emergencies and an "out-house" for the big jobs. Dad installed indoor plumbing before marrying mom in 1946. That included building a cement water cistern in the basement and installing eavestroughs on the house to supply water for the cistern. A tank was also installed on the second floor, where water was pumped up by hand from

the basement cistern. That supplied water for the toilet.

Electricity came in 1949. Electric power was installed in the house and the old barn. A priority was to install a water pump in that barn. An electric milker was also a priority.

For 30 years, grandpa and grandma had milked 20 cows by hand and bottled the milk. Grandpa would deliver the milk in town with a horse-drawn milk-wagon, or a milk-sleigh in winter. We had three dug wells, but only the well in the cow-barn had an electric pump.

Grampa built the "new" loose-housing barn with the first milking parlour in Quebec in 1950. We dug another well 36 feet deep between the new barn and the house. A new water pump was installed in the basement of the house and water was also piped to the new barn for watering cows, supplying the new milk cooler and washing the milking parlour. Grandma was sure happy to get running water in the house, eliminating the need to bring it in from a "hand-pump" at the well that was 50 feet from the house.

Also in 1950, both a new refrigerator, electric stove and an electric hot water heater arrived.





# Alberta rancher offers look at benefits of swath grazing

**Andrew McClelland**  
*The Advocate*

For Logan Thevenaz, raising beef cattle in Alberta's Blindman Valley brings its own benefits and challenges.

On one hand, the undulating loam and clay loam soil found in his land in Bentley, about 30 kilometres northwest of Red Deer, is ideal for pasture growth and enduring drought. On the other hand, the harsh winters mean extending the grazing season is tricky.

"In the past, if we were lucky enough to have some fall pasture, we'd finish that and then bring the herd in for a straight feeding, either hay, green feeder silage and daily feeding," Thevenaz said. "And they'd be on that until they went back out to pasture in June."

It was a system that worked for Thevenaz and his father, raising their 95 cow-calf pairs of Angus cattle. But 15 years ago they decided to experiment with swath grazing – cutting crops and leaving them in wind-rows for cattle to feed on throughout the winter.

"My dad had heard of this idea of swath grazing from the Grey Wooded Forage Association, and the idea of 'let's move the cows to the feed!'" Thevenaz said.

## Economics are attractive

It appealed to Thevenaz and his father. At the time, they were seeing the expenses rise from ensiling the crop, putting it in a pit and pulling it back out and feeding it back to the herd. Swath grazing would eliminate many of those costs – not to mention the manpower required to do the work.

"We started out pretty basic," Thevenaz said. "We swapped down a silage crop and set the cows on it instead of putting it through the chopper. And the numbers ... weren't as good then as they are now."

Thevenaz related his trial-and-error adventures in swath grazing during a videoconference organized by the Quebec Farmers' Association and the Central Alberta Forage and Livestock Association in November. He explained that he initially didn't like the amount of feed waste resulting from the practice. That's when fellow producers explained the necessity of dividing up fields where cattle are feeding with



COURTESY LOGAN THEVENAZ

Logan Thevenaz raises beef in central Alberta and switched to swath grazing for the winter months 15 years ago. He says the labour and dollar savings far outweigh the protein drop swath grazing producers experience with their herd.

single-strand electric fence to get better land usage.

## Learning best practices

"Your biggest expense in this farming game is ground," Thevenaz said. "But through fencing we slowly progressed to the point where we were getting two months of swath grazing instead of just one, and 100 days per acre instead of 90."

Thevenaz now estimates that waste levels on his swath grazed feed are down to 5 per cent. From that point on, refining his swath grazing methods focused on getting more days, and more tonnage, out of each acre.

Thevenaz admits there are drawbacks to switching to swath grazing

that he didn't foresee. He still doesn't like calving during the swath grazing period and will bring his heifers in when calving season approaches. And he's detected a protein drop in many of his Angus herd.

## Exceptions for calving

"Calving while swath grazing is just a little rough," Thevenaz explained. "It's not ideal conditions, and we've had as high a death loss as 15 per cent. When I saw that was higher than the average for our part of Alberta, I started bringing them in to calve."

For protein, Thevenaz has switched to protein supplement lick tubs instead of using pellets. The results are better than adding pulses to the mix to

improve protein uptake, he said.

"But honestly, every year protein is a little low. It's part of what you deal with. It's a trade-off for savings you're making on manure handling, reducing feed costs and your own workload."

But for Thevenaz, that trade-off is worth it. Not only from a money-saving perspective, but from a time-saving perspective. And it keeps a central Alberta beef producer out of the -20C weather.

"The difference is astronomical," Thevenaz said with a laugh. "Sometimes I feel lazy farming this way, but it's super beneficial. And when it only takes you half an hour to move a fence and then go back in and hide? It's pretty nice not having to be out there working in that cold."



**Martin Caron**  
UPA President

# Celebrating a commitment to feeding the world and making a living

The UPA's annual General Congress, which was held at the beginning of December in Quebec City, was an opportunity to take stock of the past year and to look ahead to what the next year will bring.

The mobilization of farmers is definitely what attracted the most attention in 2024. Many people were surprised by the level of frustration expressed during the 17 regional demonstrations held last spring. The outpourings of emotion didn't come out of thin air, however. On the contrary, it all grew from a long-standing and extensive accumulation of unfulfilled expectations.

After three years of advocacy, meetings, outcries and surveys on a variety of economic, territorial, administrative, regulatory, climate and environmental issues, we can well understand the anger of both established and next-generation farmers. The government's tendency to underestimate needs and trivialize the demands of the community must change.

Although the assistance announced so far is a good first step, it does not ensure the medium- and long-term sustainability of farm businesses.

## Net revenue takes a dive

For example, net farm income in Quebec is 92-per-cent lower than it was 10 years ago, despite a 59-per-cent increase in receipts. However, government departments and agencies constantly repeating that we have the "best programs in Canada" does nothing to help the sustainability of businesses, their competitiveness in the face of foreign competition or their ability to succeed in all markets.

On the Quebec side, the solutions have been clearly identified. For starters, we need a considerable increase in budgets, support, assistance, measures and programs for producers, including research and development; a major update of succession-planning assistance programs and tax rules to accommodate intergenerational transfers; and a large-scale review of all business risk management programs.

Other solutions include special attention to the specific challenges and needs of outlying regions, including priority MRCs, and various production sectors,



ADVOCATE FILE PHOTO

The demonstrations held by farmers across the province earlier this year attracted the attention of Quebecers and focused attention on the difficult economic reality producers face.

like non-timber forest products and maple syrup production in public forests; reasonable environmental regulations that promote a competitive business environment; substantial cuts in red tape; greater protection of the land and agricultural activities; and a vision for the development of the agri-food sector that looks resolutely toward its current and future needs, expectations and opportunities.

## Government needs to be proactive

The Canadian government must also be more proactive. Canadian farmers receive a third of the support that American farmers do in the fight against climate change. The imminent arrival of U.S. president-elect Donald

Trump portends turbulent years ahead for our agri-food exports in the form of threatened tariffs and our domestic markets, with potential threats to supply management.

Our forestry producers, for their part, have been paying the price for too long in a softwood lumber dispute that has nothing to do with them.

All these issues affect not just producers, but consumers, who continue to be able to count on a very efficient agri-food sector, even taking inflation into account. Just look at the proportion of food expenditure in the disposable income of Quebec households. It was 10.4 per cent in 2023, the same as before the pandemic in 2019. There has even been a downward trend over the years.

The figure was 10.9 per cent in 2010. This reality would benefit from being better known. It must also be backed by significant investments and be commensurate with the growth potential of each production sector.

Represented by the UPA, which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, Quebec's farm and forestry producers are at the heart of the province's rural fabric and have always woven the future of the regions and communities, both geographically and economically. It is with great pride that we spearheaded more initiatives this past year to underline our unwavering commitment to both feeding the world and making a living.



**Paul J. Hetzler**  
ISA Certified Arborist

According to legend, a small group of individuals have kept the Tower of London from falling since the mid-1600s. That's pretty good for a bunch of bird-brains. And I'm not talking about politicians – these are ravens.

Native to most of the northern hemisphere, common ravens are anything but ordinary. They have an intellect on par with that of chimps and apes, and are able to plan for the future better than four-year-old humans. They're known to use tools.

And yes, a flock of at least six ravens have been kept since the reign of King Charles II in the Tower of London to keep the thing upright. Apparently, a sage advised Charles II to do this – maybe engineers were in short supply back then. The tradition was bolstered in the Second World War, when the tower remained unscathed despite heavy German bombardment leading some to feel that ravens were, in fact, protecting the structure.

In North America, ravens can be distinguished from crows by their size. On average, ravens are 63 centimetres long, and weigh about 1.2 kilograms. Wingspans are in the neighbourhood of 152 cm.

### Different from crows

In contrast, their close cousins, the American crows, measure about 46 cm long, and weigh around 500 grams, with an average wingspan is 94 cm.

Ravens also have rough feathers on their throats, and on the upper surface of the base of their bills, features lacking in crows. And unlike crows, ravens do not migrate for the winter.

Their call is more guttural than that of other corvids. I imagine it's like a crow would sound if it smoked two or three packs a day. Ravens also make a range of clucks and resounding tocks that carry a good distance. Some people have reported them making a very low growl.

Ravens also prefer more elbow room than crows, favouring rural, often remote, environments. They like to nest on cliffs and rock ledges or in tall trees, although human-made structures, like bridges and utility poles, are sometimes used. Ravens mate for life, and both males and

# Consider the raven: It's not your ordinary bird



MATT KROFCHECK/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Studies have shown that ravens are more adept than chimpanzees at problem-solving tasks.

females help build nests and care for the young together.

### Skilled flyers

Known for their aerial acrobatics, ravens have many times treated me to these performances when I was out hiking, or even just working in the yard. They would swoop down silently into my line of sight, where they'd barrel-roll and tumble in the air before disappearing again. Ravens are one of the few bird species known to play games with mammalian species like otters and wolves. In addition, they are the only documented bird that chooses and fashions objects whose sole purpose is to use as toys.

There are at present six recognized subspecies of *Corvus corax*. These birds have been under the figurative microscope of late for reasons other than to find if they really do keep the Tower of London in a vertical position. Biologists set about to quantify how smart ravens really are – which is very.

In studies conducted between 2015 and 2017 at Sweden's Lund University, researchers found that ravens were more adept than chimpanzees at problem-solving tasks. And they were better

than human four-year-olds in planning ahead to obtain a tool necessary to open a box containing treats. In the words of Mathias Osvath, a raven-cognition expert at Lund University, "I'm a little bit surprised they were that good. Monkeys have not been able to solve tasks like this."

### Adept at trading

The same research team also tested ravens' ability to barter, and found they were quite disciplined at trading tokens for a high-value treat at a later time rather than for a common treat in the moment. They were considerably better at delaying gratification than any great-ape hominid previously tested.

An international study in 2016 proved that ravens could think in the abstract. Ravens inside a closed room would hide food if a small peephole was open, but not when it was shut, indicating they could imagine being spied upon.

Perhaps the most significant finding is that ravens showed evidence of displacement, the ability to relate information on events removed in space and time. While young ravens roost communally but disperse each morning to forage, if a lone juvenile reports

the presence of a food cache guarded by adults it saw that day, the following day, young ravens may organize to drive off the adults from the food source. I suppose this could be a sign of juvenile delinquency as well as the ability to plan for future events. Ravens are now the only vertebrate known to share this trait with humans.

Along with their corvid cousins the magpies, rooks and crows, ravens pilfer and cache shiny objects, often coins. No one is sure if this is curiosity, or whether it is to gain status. My son, whose name is Raven (true story), happens to be a teaching assistant in the Economics Department at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He offered this alternate explanation:

"Ravens and other corvids hoard coins because they are gold-standard holdouts who don't believe in fiat currency. These birds historically opposed the printing of dollars not backed by gold reserves, and today refuse to use paper money on ideological grounds. They prefer precious metals, but have a hard time telling precious and common metals apart – hence they take any shiny coins they can get."

Of course, this theory is for the birds.



# Freedom of movement for cows in tie-stalls: Practical solutions

**François Labelle**

*Expert in Organic Dairy Production  
Lactanet*

According to the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle*, cows in tie-stall barns must be offered freedom of movement:

Effective April 1, 2027, cows must not be tethered continuously throughout their entire production cycle (calving to calving) – they must be provided sufficient regular opportunity for freedom of movement to promote good welfare.

In a webinar last November, Producteurs de Lait du Québec clarified the minimum expectations for lactating and dry cows:

“Cows must have the opportunity to move around for at least 15 per cent of the year (55 days), weather and other conditions permitting.”

The duration of the exercise period itself was defined as a period that can vary between one and 24 hours.

To meet these requirements, producers have three main options:

1. Offer dry cows free-stall housing, so long as the dry period is longer than 55 days.
2. Provide an exercise yard.
3. Offer pasture.

All three options have their advantages and disadvantages.

Free-stall housing for dry cows is very attractive when the dry period is long enough, but the investment costs are high as renovation will likely be required.

Exercise yards can be less costly, but several climate-related challenges can make this option difficult to apply.

Finally, grazing is a big challenge for many farms that are unfamiliar with this practice, requiring a reorganization of crops and feeding.

A lot of information is available on how to set up the first option: loose housing for dry cows.

But what about the other two options? Exercise yards and pasture:

The aim is to minimize changes to existing herd management as far as possible, and to keep costs to a minimum.

## The exercise yard

An exercise yard is generally an enclosed, uncovered space on the ground with access to the dairy barn. These exercise yards offer cows access to the outdoors and plenty of opportunity for movement.

**The recommended area is 70 square feet per cow.** It's important that the

paddock is well drained and that the floor contains a material that improves load-bearing capacity, like sand, fine gravel, coarse lime, etc. This material must also be fine enough to prevent injury to the cows' hooves.

As the exercise area should slope slightly, run-off water is directed towards a planted filter strip, which is an effective means of protecting surface and ground water from manure contamination (Figure 1). The vegetative filter strip is a permanent plant cover located downstream of the overwintering pen or exercise yard, and is designed to capture the vast majority of fertilizers contained in runoff water from the pen. This strip must have a maximum slope of 5 per cent and a surface area of at least 215 square feet per cow (20 m<sup>2</sup>). This vegetation strip must not be mowed or grazed after Aug. 15 in order to maintain dense plant cover over the winter.

Important note: the layout of an exercise yard must comply at all times with the Quebec Environment Ministry's regulations on exercise yards.

## The simplified approach to using an exercise yard

The simplest way to use an exercise yard to meet the new requirements is to take all the cows in the herd (lactating and dry) out for one hour a day in appropriate weather. Once the ground is firm and the temperature mild, this system works very well. Since the duration of the outing is short, there's no need to feed the cows outside. Even offering water is not strictly necessary if the cows go out early in the morning to avoid heat stress, as they'll be back in the barn after only an hour. This has the added advantage of considerably reducing manure accumulation.

What's more, when the cows come out of the barn it makes heat observation easier and speeds up stall maintenance in the barn. Depending on herd management, it may be useful to separate cows into groups for their exit.

It's easy to see why avoiding autumn, winter and spring greatly simplifies exercise yard maintenance and ensures safe access to the animals.

## Grazing and pasture

As shown in Figure 2, there are three main grazing methods for dairy cows: continuous, rotational and strip grazing.

Here's a brief description of each approach:

**Continuous:** With continuous grazing,

the herd has unlimited access to a large grazing area over a given period (grazing season). The herd grazes freely without being moved to other sections of the pasture. Although this is a simple, less labour-intensive and more economical method of ensuring access to pasture, it is possible for cows to be selective in certain preferred areas, which can lead to uneven and inefficient pasture use.

**Rotational grazing:** Rotational grazing involves dividing the pasture into smaller sections or paddocks. The herd is systematically moved from one section to the next as part of a planned rotation, allowing each section to benefit from a period of rest and regrowth. With proper management, this method promotes regular grazing, optimal pasture use and improved forage quality.

**Strip grazing:** Strip grazing involves dividing a pasture into narrow strips, allowing access to one strip at a time according to growth and forage spread. In general, the lactating cows have access to one or two strips per day. As the herd grazes each section down, they will then be systematically moved to the next strip. This method offers clear advantages over both continuous and rotational grazing, but can be slightly more labour-intensive.

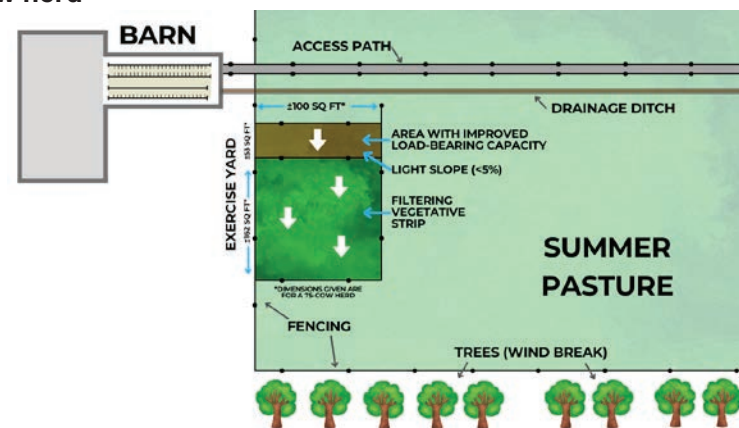
**The simplified approach to pasture** Dairy cows can be offered pasture in a very simple way, starting with continuous grazing. Since the currently suggested minimum duration of grazing/exercise per day is one hour, the areas dedicated to grazing would be minimal, and consequently so would the facilities.

If the farm decides to improve its grazing system, it could add a few plots or subdivide the paddock to move towards a rotational system. Another step could be to take the cows out at night. This way, they can enjoy the grass and exercise, without suffering from the heat of the day. In the early morning, they can return to the barn and enjoy the shade and ventilation offered by the building.

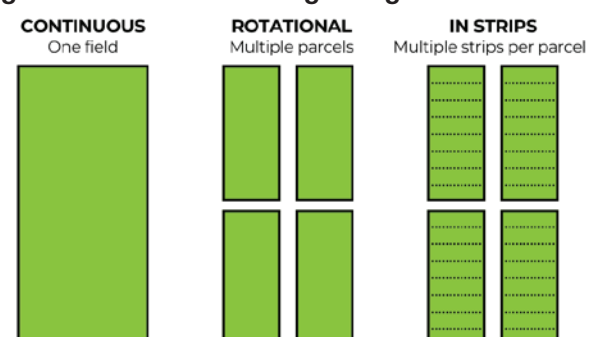
Other technical information is required to set up a pasture, but this is minimal if the cows only spend an hour a day on it.

For example, consider taking the cows out in the morning to avoid heat stress during the warmer months. If pasture's bearing capacity is inadequate due to excessive rainfall, cows should remain in the barn until bearing capacity is restored. Of course, you'll need to install fencing and a minimum of watering for the cows in more intensive applications of this system, which will have to be adapted to the type of grazing chosen.

**Figure 1: Diagram of an exercise yard and its vegetative strip for a 75-cow herd**



**Figure 2: Diagram of the three main grazing methods**



Source: Adapted from Jean-Louis Peyraud



ANNE RICHARD/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Analysts say Canada's leaders need to present a united front before the agriculture sector becomes collateral damage.

# Will Canadian farmers fall victim to Trump's tariff threats?

**Christopher Bonasia**  
*The Advocate*

Canada's farmers would be greatly affected if U.S. president-elect Donald Trump follows through on imposing 25-per-cent tariffs on all imports from Canada and Mexico.

But analysts say the tariffs are likely a negotiating tactic straight out of *The Art of the Deal*, and warn Canada's leaders need to present a united front before the agriculture sector becomes collateral damage.

"I think we should expect this kind of aggressive posturing to continue, because it serves president-elect Trump's interest to do so," said Meredith Lilly, a professor at Carleton University working on North American trade relations, in a recent webinar hosted by the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute.

Lilly added that the Canadian government should prepare for the event that Trump follows through, but also thinks Trump's aim is to negotiate for stronger border enforcement to clamp down on immigration and fentanyl smuggling. Threatening high tariffs puts the U.S. in a good position to divide the interests

of Canada and Mexico before cutting individual deals.

## Threats worked in the past

This tactic worked for Trump during the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) negotiations in 2018, during which Canada and Mexico focused on issues facing their own individual countries. Canadians were ultimately caught off guard by an announced U.S.-Mexico agreement, after which Trump said 'we will see' if Canada can join.

"We got burned going that route last time," said Carlo Dade, director of the Trade & Investment Centre at the Canada West Foundation.

Canadian lawmakers have been taking the matter seriously – Prime Minister Justin Trudeau flew to meet with Trump almost immediately following the announcement – but the aftermath is already sowing new divisions between Canada and Mexico. Canada seemed to have thrown Mexico "under the bus" by saying drug smuggling and unlawful crossings along the U.S.'s southern border are a more significant problem.

## Mexico issued warning

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum responded by telling the Associated Press that Canada also has social problems linked to fentanyl use and that "Mexico must be respected, especially by its trading partners."

But while the main goal for the tariffs may be focused on border policy, it could still very much affect farmers. Canada is the U.S.'s top trading partner for goods and services and it was initially assumed that Canada would be exempt from the steep tariffs Trump had been hinting at for other countries. Last year, 78 per cent of Canada's goods were exported to the U.S., where it also sourced almost half of its imports.

## Billion in farm trade in play

Many Canadian farmers have business with the U.S., which imported US\$40.5 billion of agriculture and agri-food trade goods and services from Canada in 2023. A 25-per-cent tariff on all imports would raise prices in the U.S. and likely stifle that exchange.

But other panelists indicated that divisions within Canada are also

threatening the country's best interests. For one thing, the shifting landscape of the next U.S. presidency will be a central point in Canada's upcoming federal election, said Meagan Murdoch of Hill + Knowlton Strategies. Candidates might be inclined to take performative tough stances on issues with the U.S., rather than relying on other tactics that may be more effective.

Dade added that Canada has been failing to deliver a unified message to Americans about why the country's relationship to the U.S. is important. His biggest concern is that there is not going to be a "strong person for everyone to rally around in Canada" as the political parties jockey for power in the coming months. And divisions among provincial premiers isn't helping.

"We're making Donald Trump's job easier for him," Dade said. "His favourite negotiating tactic is 'divide and conquer.' That's what he's trying to do with us and Mexico, and that's what he's trying to do internally, and we're falling into it."



## Tortellini Boscaiola (Woodsmen)



CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

How can you go wrong with tortellini, mushrooms, cream, bacon and Parmesan all in one dish?

### INGREDIENTS

**About 450 grams of tortellini (100-140g per serving)**  
**6 strips of good bacon, cut a little thick**  
**1 tablespoon butter**  
**250 grams mushrooms, sliced thick**  
**1 pint 35% cream**  
**2 green onions, chopped**  
**¼ tsp salt**  
**Chopped parsley for garnish**  
**Grated Parmesan cheese**

### PREPARATION

- Set a pot to boil for the tortellini and cook until al dente, drain. Reserve a little of the water if you want to thin the sauce.
- Meanwhile, cut bacon into strips and cook in a decent size pan until almost crisp. Drain off most of the bacon fat (reserve for making soup).
- Add the butter to the pan and, when melted, add the mushrooms. Cook until almost done and slightly brown.
- Add the green onions and stir.
- Add the cream and bring to a simmer, let cook for 2 minutes.
- Add the tortellini and salt, stir, and bring back to a simmer.
- Stir in bacon, and a handful of cheese, and then divide among warmed dishes.
- Sprinkle with chopped parsley and Parmesan cheese.

## Sometimes unexpected discoveries are best, and comfortingly tasty

**Cynthia Gunn**  
*QFA's Food Writer*

Between hours is my new favourite time to eat out. As with many discoveries, this was unintended.

Each Wednesday for the last couple of years, my daughter and I find ourselves stranded in the city between 4 and 6 p.m., too far to go home from her school before a class in the evening. When the weather turns chilly, we seek shelter and an early dinner during those hours. We have, therefore, become sleuths for restaurants that are open.

At first, it seemed pickings were slim: breakfast and lunch places close by 2 or 3 p.m., while dinner places open at 5 p.m. Price being an additional criteria for our repertoire, many of these dinner-only establishments would have been ruled out anyway.

Our first find was a very small, very local place that had probably been there unchanged for decades. What a find.

I still can't work out whether it's a diner or a pub. I'm guessing the long-term patrons don't give a fig what anyone calls it. At 4 p.m. it's almost full, likely partly because you can still get a good home-made burger with fries or salad for \$10. The downside to a \$10 burger is that it's always busy and noisy, so not a place you can pull out the homework for an hour.

Some times, we decide to wander to a large Thai restaurant, with big booths occupied by the odd early movie-goer – and us. Good food, quiet and, in these between hours, the owner and I have connected over our Grade 10 children's homework needs. There are no quibbles when the books come out for an hour.

Rounding out our current favourites is another family-run restaurant in Little Italy. Again, booths and the quiet of in-between hours, before the waitress gets too busy and an hour of books on the large table is still welcomed. It was here last week that the fall special caught my eye: tortellini with mixed wild mushrooms, cream, bacon, tomato and Parmesan. Everything that is tasty all in one dish, and a dish that I can quite simply make myself.

When I looked the dish up at home there were scant references and recipes. One writer explained that the sauce was traditionally made by Italian boscaiola (woodsmen) who would gather wild mushrooms and combine them with available ingredients, like pancetta, tomatoes and herbs, to create a hearty meal after a long day of labour. "Mushrooms are the heart and soul of Boscaiola sauce."

I decided to make a sauce that adhered to the traditional Italian relationship with garlic, meaning little to no garlic, as opposed to American Italian cooking, which leans heavily on garlic. I also simply added chopped green onion near the end rather than sauté onion first.

And being a mushroom lover, I treated myself – I was going solo – by using expensive King Fungi mushrooms in place of true wild mushrooms, which I didn't have. If cooking for a larger group, sticking to very fresh button mushrooms would be just fine. Chopped tomatoes or tomato puree could also be added to the sauce; I chose not to. Along with warmed dishes for serving, a sprinkle of parsley is always lovely.

*A former caterer, Cynthia Gunn now runs a window-restoration business. She restores pre-1950s wood windows, preserving their beauty and inherently durable old-growth wood, and creating superior energy-efficiency with high-end weather-stripping. She still cooks and bakes for her family in West Quebec.*





COURTESY OF THE UPA

This photo was taken on Dec. 3, as the UPA held its Congrès Général in Quebec City that marked the association's 100th anniversary.

# Marking UPA's 100th anniversary

About 600 delegates participated in the Union des producteurs agricoles' Congrès Général in Quebec City in early December. The annual gathering marked the 100th anniversary of the association, which got its start in 1924 as the Union catholique des cultivateurs. The founding brought together about 2,500 farmers from across Quebec. The goal of joining forces in a union was to speak to government with one voice. And what they had to say charted a course that changed the rural landscape. In 1972, the UCC rebranded itself, becoming the UPA.



COURTESY OF THE UPA

This photo was taken in October 1924 at the founding of the Union catholique des cultivateurs, which later became the UPA.

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