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"It's just a better way of growing leafy greens."

— Barry Murchie, CEO of Ontario-based GoodLeaf Farms, who grows baby spinach in indoor vertical farms, in half the time compared with growing it in an open field, and requires significantly less water, about five per cent of what an open field farm uses.

QFA VIDEOCONFERENCES

Wednesday, March 22
at 7:30 p.m.

Climate change and its impact on your farm

See page 12 for details.



DANIEL SUCAR, THE ADVOCATE

Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne, with Soulanges MNA Marilyne Picard and Rigaud Mayor Marie-Claude Frigault were on hand with farm owners David Théorêt and Marie-Pierre Gauthier and their children for the official opening of the greenhouse in February. Lamontagne said the project will serve as a model for greenhouse operations across Quebec.

\$6-million Rigaud greenhouse a model for Quebec: minister

Owners to feed 1,300 local families, reduce region's food import needs, be carbon-neutral

Daniel Sucar
The Advocate

An organic farm located directly across from a ski hill in Rigaud has unveiled a sprawling \$6-million new greenhouse operation that aims to feed 1,300 local families, and put the small town near the Ontario border on the map by reducing the region's dependence on imported foods.

"The project is going to serve as a model for greenhouse operations across Quebec," said Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne at a press conference in February to unveil the facility.

"For us, it's a dream come true," added David Théorêt, the co-owner of the farm, Le Petit Brûlé. "We're going to be able to serve our community 12 months a year."

The project was made possible thanks to funding from Mouvement Desjardins and Investissement Québec. The provincial government also contributed \$1.4 million as part of its greenhouse

development program, launched in 2020, which aims to double the size of the province's greenhouse operations by 2025, from 123 hectares to a 246-hectare target.

"In Quebec, we have challenges in securing investments, challenges in adopting sustainable practices, challenges in innovation and challenges in finding labour," Lamontagne explained. "But this project, it checks all the boxes. It has a vision, and that vision has a solution for every challenge."

According to Théorêt, the project started with an ambitious goal he set with his wife, Marie-Pierre Gauthier, back in 2017. They wanted their family to become fully self-sufficient in all aspects of food production. That goal led them to buy a plot of land on De La Montagne Rd. in 2019, learning how to produce everything from honey and maple syrup, to eggs and beef, and eventually signing up to the ministry's greenhouse program.

See GREENHOUSE, Page 4.

Animal agriculture key to feeding growing pop, climate challenges: nutritionist

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

The two major challenges facing the globe today – how do you feed a growing population and simultaneously meet targets to mitigate the impacts of climate change – intersect at a single solution – innovation in animal agriculture.

That is according to a renowned animal nutritionist. But the problem is how do you convince a population that is becoming more and more disconnected from the farm and eager to embrace disinformation disseminated readily on social media?

That was the message delivered by Dr. José Manuel Correia de Simas to more than 700 delegates attending the Future of Food Conference in Ottawa on Feb. 15.

More precisely, Correia de Simas argues, the key to solving the major challenges of providing nutritional food to more people while lowering greenhouse gases is improving the way animal proteins are produced.

But, he admits, convincing the public and policy-makers to embrace this approach will take what he calls education and substantial amplification of that message.

"How do you translate science into a convincing argument?" Correia de Simas said in an interview with *The Advocate* following his presentation in Ottawa.

See PROTEIN, Page 4



Just the facts

\$20.1 billion

The amount of agri-food and seafood Canada exported to the Indo-Pacific in 2021. This figure represents a 21.1-per-cent increase compared to 2016.

Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Only 8%

The percentage of Quebecers who view agriculture as being more innovative than other domestic industries, far behind the 23 per cent of Albertans and the 21 per cent of residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and the 13 per cent of Ontarians.

Source: 2022 Perceptions of Canadian Agriculture Report by Climate FieldView

22,590

Number of farm operators in Quebec age of 55 or over in 2021.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture

98%

The percentage of Canadians who recognize the importance of the country's farmers to domestic food security.

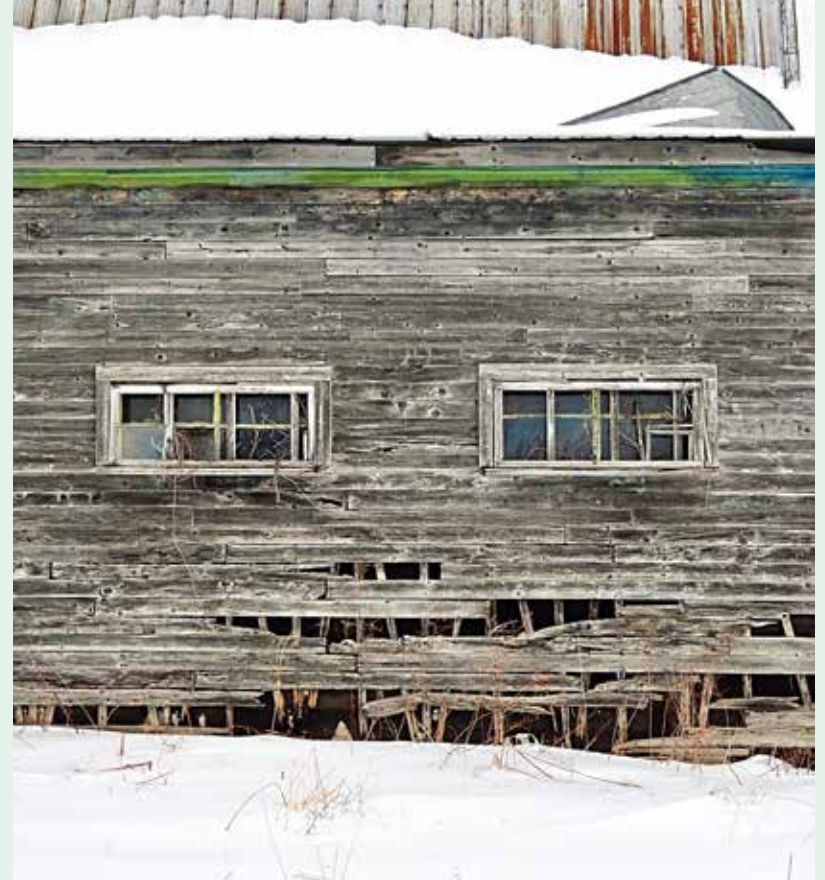
Source: 2022 Perceptions of Canadian Agriculture Report by Climate FieldView

3,645

Number of farm operators in Quebec under the age of 35 in 2021.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture

WHEN I SEE YOUR SMILING FACE



IAN GRANT, THE ADVOCATE

Some barns make you smile, while other barns smile back at you. That seems to be the case with this weathered beauty in Rigaud. It is brimming with personality.



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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PHOTO: WIKIMEDIACOMMONS

The Équipe québécoise de contrôle des maladies avicoles has announced that avian flu has been confirmed on five Quebec poultry farms this year. World authorities are concerned that the highly-contagious virus could cause another pandemic if not properly checked and are asking poultry producers to remain vigilante. niendus eveleniat

Avian flu could reach pandemic status: experts

In Quebec, infectious strain of virus found in migratory birds

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

Veterinarians and disease experts around the globe are warning avian flu is now a year-round problem that could lead to outbreaks that threaten the world's food supply and cause another pandemic.

And if not properly checked, it could be deadlier than COVID-19.

"This is an infection that has epidemic and pandemic potential," said Dr. Isaac Bogoch, an infectious disease specialist at the Toronto General Hospital. "I don't know if people recognize how big a deal this is."

Since 2003, avian flu has resulted in a high mortality rate among poultry in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. While it has been known to infect humans in the past, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention says that its chief concern with the virus has been how it is highly infectious amongst birds, specifically in domestic poultry.

"It's a very nasty infection, so you never want to see bird flu spreading," said Bogoch.

"It's always a red flag, and it always requires surveillance and to be treated with the utmost concern."

That's exactly what Canadian authorities have been doing since thousands of cases were reported among migratory birds in Canada last summer. In June, Quebec's Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs reported that thousands of northern gannets had been found dead on the Magdalen Islands. Tests confirmed that the birds died of the H5N1 strain of the avian flu.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) says it believes migratory birds are responsible for the outbreaks in small and commercial poultry flocks and that it is "currently responding to cases of the highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in farmed birds across the country."

CFIA's latest available data shows there have been 299 infected flocks countrywide, affecting 7,154,000 birds.

So far, British Columbia and Alberta are the most widely-affected provinces. Last year, 15 B.C. poultry operations had outbreaks among their flocks, most in the Fraser Valley, which is home to 80 per cent of the province's poultry farms.

Flu comes to Quebec poultry farms

At its annual meeting Feb. 2, the Équipe québécoise de contrôle des maladies avicoles (EQCMA) – the partner organization to the province's poultry

producers' federation that coordinates disease control and prevention of commercial bird flocks – announced that it had five cases of avian flu confirmed on farms in 2023.

"The EQCMA dedicated most of its energies and resources to (avian flu) between February and October 2022 for the first time in its history," said the organization in its annual report.

It noted that last year 532,000 poultry died from the disease in Quebec, either from the virus directly or from being euthanized. The outbreaks occurred on 23 farms – 16 commercial flocks and seven small farms.

Precautions being taken

With the risk of more outbreaks, Canadian authorities and producers groups are being more cautious than ever. Even a simple step like forgetting to change boots between barns or clean tools after use could result in an infection on poultry operations.

"We take extra measures when there's a risk like this – much like regular people do when they're close to a virus," said Lauren Kennedy, director of public affairs for Chicken Farmers of Canada (CFC). "Some of the increased biosecurity measures to contain the virus include sanitizing vehicle tires



In other parts of the globe, authorities have established high-risk zones for avian flu, such as this surveillance zone in Suffolk, England. In Canada, the CFIA has said that a single case of the flu detected on a chicken, turkey or duck farm would result in imposing a 10-kilometre quarantine as well as euthanizing all animals in the area.

and wheel wells as they enter and exit (farm) property, changing foot attire when visiting the premises, monitoring bird health and frequent testing."

CFC is also quick to remind customers hearing about the avian flu that the virus is not transmitted through eating chicken, but most often from farm birds coming into contact with other commercial flocks or wild birds.

"Health Canada is definitive that this is not a food safety issue – this is a flock health issue," Kennedy said. "Chicken products are available for Canadians to continue to enjoy as they always have."

News



DANIEL SUCAR, THE ADVOCATE

There are currently 30 employees who work at Le Petit Brûlé farm, and the new greenhouse will create an additional 20 to 30 jobs.

GREENHOUSE: Operation powered by electricity and solar power

From Page 1

But it wasn't enough to be self-sufficient. The couple wanted to be sustainable and eco-responsible, too. The 4,000-square-metre greenhouse is made entirely of glass – as opposed to plastic – and runs on electricity and power generated from solar panels and wind turbines. Théorêt and Gauthier are exploring the possibility of introducing geothermal heating at some point in the future and hope to become carbon-neutral before the end of the year.

"With everything we do on the farm, we try to think of ways to reduce our carbon footprint," Théorêt said. "It's a value that has guided us since the beginning."

Construction of the greenhouse is set to be completed in April, and the

couple expects to begin harvesting organic produce as early as this summer. Produce will be made available through a weekly basket program, with baskets ranging from \$25 a week for a single person to \$65 for a family of four.

The baskets will initially be limited to vegetables, as well as other goods currently being produced on the farm. However, there are plans to add fruits to the program at some point next year.

In addition to expanding the basket offerings, the couple hopes to incorporate agri-tourist activities, as well as launch a training centre for those interested in producing their own vegetables at home.

"This is just the beginning," Théorêt said proudly.

PROTEIN: Recognize disconnect between those who grows food and everyone else

From Page 1

Part of that challenge, he said, is recognizing the growing disconnect between the 98 per cent of the population who need access to nutritional food and the 2 per cent who grow it.

Adding to that, Correia de Simas said, is the fact that global protein consumption is predicted to grow by 90 million metric tonnes in the next 10 years. That is 50-per-cent more growth than in the last 10 years.

And to provide a little perspective: the 90 million metric tonnes, or 90 billion kilograms, of protein Correia de Simas refers to is in addition to what is already being produced today.

Although the growth in demand is huge and the climate crisis critical, Correia de Simas says the challenges they represent are accompanied by a "uniqueness of the moment."

Methane is part of the solution

"There is a convergence of interest," he said, explaining that these challenges can be met.

The key, he explained, is methane – one of the three greenhouse gases.

Correia de Simas, who is the executive vice-president of the U.S.-based Elanco, a global leader in animal health and research, says technological innovation can reduce the amount of methane produced by cows while at the same time increase the efficiency of meat production per animal,

providing one of the most nutritional source of high-density protein.

But the adoption of technology is crucial, he says, adding that this is where policy-makers can help to ensure producers are not left to shoulder the full investment burden and are compensated for their contributions.

"My experience has been producers are very interested," he said.

Correia de Simas said meat producers can reduce the amount of methane produced by their animals in two ways – through what he calls an "absolute reduction," which can be achieved through feed additives and vaccines, and "intensity," by which more protein can be produced per animal.

Reducing methane in this way will lead to the added environmental benefit, he explained, in that this greenhouse gas has the shortest lifecycle in the atmosphere. Methane has a 12-year lifecycle, which is much shorter than carbon, which remains in the atmosphere for up to a 1,000 years.

From the perspective of mitigating climate and environmental impacts, to meeting the growing demand for nutritional food by producing high-density proteins, there is no better solution, Correia de Simas argues. But the public needs to be convinced.

"The consumer wants to feel good about their food," he said.



PHOTO: THE ADVOCATE

Dr. José Manuel Correia de Simas presented his views to the delegates of the Future of Food Conference in Ottawa on Feb. 15.

And convincing them that what they have been led to believe – such as products like almond milk, which actually have a very high carbon footprint and environmental impact, are better for them, have to be convinced.

And that is where "education and amplification" come in, he explained.

The public has to learn how all these factors align. The short-lived effects of methane need to be harnessed in reaching the goal of providing nutritional food for a growing population in addition to the continuing efforts to capture and limit carbon emissions.

Food Freedom Day pushed one day later in 2023

Date marks when Canadians have earned enough to pay for year's grocery bill

Daniel Sucar
The Advocate

Each year, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture calculates the date that represents when the average Canadian household will have earned enough to pay for their entire year's grocery bill. In 2023, that date – known as Food Freedom Day – fell on Feb. 9, one day later than last year.

In short, the new date highlights how food prices are going up, and how it is taking Canadians longer and longer to secure the funds they need to keep themselves fed. According to the CFA, the news comes as no surprise after a year that saw food prices hit highs not seen in decades due to record inflation and global supply-chain disruptions.

"With food prices rising consistently and more quickly than overall inflation, we cannot ignore the challenges that many Canadians are facing when it comes to food affordability," the federation wrote in a statement. "While our food costs are low when compared to global standards, Canadians are seeing their disposable incomes shrink as it is taken up by the increasing costs of essential products."

The federation also emphasized how the Food Freedom Day calculation only takes into account the average income of Canadians, and that lower-income households are facing an even heavier burden.

The CFA also emphasized that, despite the rise in food prices, farmers only receive a small percentage of the price that consumers pay for food, and rising prices are not reflective of what is being paid at the farm gate. In fact, producers themselves are wrestling with skyrocketing production expenses for everything from fuel to fertilizer, it said.

"It is only through investing in resilience throughout our entire food supply chain that we can create a system less vulnerable to disruption that can provide Canadians affordable food even in the face of global supply-chain disruptions," the CFA concluded.

Quebec dairy farmer among CFA's new top executives

Daniel Sucar
The Advocate

Pierre Lampron, a dairy producer in the Mauricie region who currently serves as the head of Dairy Farmers of Canada, is set to take on the role of second vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the country's largest farmers' association.

His nomination will be formalized at the CFA's annual general meeting in Ottawa on March 6, which will see Mary Robinson, CFA's first female leader, step down after four years. Robinson will be succeeded by Keith Currie, a hay farmer who previously served as the head of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Todd Lewis, a representative with the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, who was CFA's second vice-president, will become the organization's first vice-president.

Lampron's new position will add yet another high-profile title to his already-stacked résumé. Since 1987, he has helped run Ferme Y. Lampron et Fils, a 1,200-acre organic

dairy farm in St. Boniface de Shawinigan, a small town just north of Trois Rivières. The family-run operation boasts more than 200 cows and produces milk products that can be found in grocery stores – both independent and affiliated with a major chain – throughout Montreal, Trois Rivières and Quebec City.

Was head of Dairy Farmers of Canada

The dairy producer joined Les Producteurs de lait du Québec in 2000 as a member of its board of directors, before eventually being appointed to the board of Dairy Farmers of Canada in 2007. In 2016, he was elected president of DFC.

Lampron has also sat on the Canadian Animal Health Coalition's executive committee, as well as on the National Farmed Animal Health and Welfare Council. From 2013 to 2016, he ran Lactanet, a Montreal-based farm management service designed specifically for dairy farmers.

At its general meeting, CFA will also name grain farmer Todd Lewis as its new first vice-president.



KEITH CURRIE
New CFA president



PIERRE LAMPRON
New CFA second vice-president



TODD LEWIS
CFA first vice-president



MARY ROBINSON
Outgoing CFA president

New deputy minister of agriculture, head of food inspection agency named

Daniel Sucar
The Advocate

Stefanie Beck, a former diplomat and graduate from Montreal's McGill University, has been tapped to serve as the new deputy minister of agriculture and agri-food. The move is part of a sweeping shuffle in the top ranks of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's public service cabinet that also saw Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar appointed as the new president of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

Beck previously served as the associate deputy minister of national defence, as well as a deputy high commissioner with Global Affairs Canada.

Her résumé also includes management positions in the department of Foreign Affairs and the federal Privy Council Office.

As the new deputy agriculture minister, Beck will work under Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau to represent the interest of producers across the country. She replaces Chris Forbes, who has been shuffled to a new position as the deputy minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Meanwhile, Kochhar is being moved to the top of the CFIA after serving as the president of the Public Health Agency of Canada. The move marks a return of sorts for Kochhar, as he previously held a position as CFIA's

chief veterinary officer from 2014 to 2017. During his initial stint at CFIA, he also oversaw the agency's response to outbreaks of H5N2 avian flu and bovine tuberculosis and is credited with spearheading the response to Canada's largest beef recall.

As president, Kochhar will supervise the entire agency, its staff and its programs, reporting to both the minister of Health and minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food on issues related to plant health, animal health, food safety and international trade. He replaces Dr. Siddika Mithani, who held the position for four years and retired at the end of last month.



PHOTO: JON REHG/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Explaining safety protocols to an employee before starting a job takes less time than attempting to do it on the fly.

Health and safety on the farm: make it a priority



John McCart
QFA President

Early February brings a lot of changes to the farm. The moods of many people begin to improve with the increase in both daylight and temperature. As farmers start to focus on their plans for the upcoming year – whether it be seeding, livestock, buildings and machinery – safety must always be a high priority for any project.

I recently attended a safety seminar in Quebec City where two producers shared their experiences as they managed their farms. When employees are involved, there must be a safety plan to ensure that everyone working is familiar with the activities taking place. If such a plan or protocol is in place, the chances of success that the job gets done properly, on time and with no interruptions due to accident are much higher.

As the seasons change on the farm, the tasks also change, and explaining to an employee what to do after the job has started always takes more time than meeting beforehand. It doesn't matter if there are only three people or 30 working on the farm, clear, precise instructions properly explained will always benefit down the road.

Today, the workforce on a farm is no longer restricted to family members. It often includes people both young and older who wish to work in such an environment. The workforce might also include temporary foreign workers who do not even speak the language. Communication becomes a vital aspect of the safety plan.

Safety features always needed

When a producer plans to upgrade or expand the operation with a new construction, for example, incorporating safety features should be a priority. All silos, both new and old, should have lifelines. Building ventilation must be more than adequate, and proper lighting is a must. Older barns and grain operations are no excuse for an unsafe work environment. Injuries and death are very costly.

When purchasing new equipment,

both the dealer and the farmer must ensure that all the safety features are marked and explained. One problem with home-built equipment and equipment modifications is that the user might have created an unsafe machine that is at risk of causing personal injury or death. There are standards that must be followed during machinery construction to make it safe. Just because someone is an adequate welder and fabricator does not mean that an altered machine is safe to use.

There were also two road inspectors who spoke to the group. Unfortunately, when these people talk, there are more questions than answers. Just to pique your curiosity, though, the limit of a bale spear – either on the front or back of a tractor – is 30 centimetres. Therefore, it is almost impossible to drive on a public road without breaking the law. The reason is the risk of puncturing a vehicle and causing injury.

On the road

One producer asked if driving with a bale on the spear is allowed. The answer is yes, but at some point, probably on the return trip, that spear will be empty.

They also stated the importance of lights, tow chains, driving at a safe speed and driving on the road and not on the shoulder, as the weight-carrying capacity of the road is not the same. Also, the braking of a tractor is different on pavement and gravel, and could cause a loss of control. Therefore, it is better to stay on the road.

There were many other safety aspects about tractors, but none more important than wearing a seatbelt, where the chance of surviving a rollover is 99 per cent. The presenter also discussed what tasks can be performed based on the age of the driver. I know most of us remember learning to drive a tractor before we could reach the pedals. Today, with the value and size of equipment, I don't think that is a very good idea. With cabs there are surely blind spots, and tractors roll at much higher speeds.

As a youngster growing up on the farm, I spent all my time outside. Looking back, I now realize the dangers that were everywhere. Exploring around the farm led to many adventures and a few misadventures. It is fun to look back at all that was done as a kid, but I am thankful that I never got seriously harmed.



Clifford Lincoln
Guest columnist

Why is outcry over federal Official Languages reform not louder?

Liberals should protect minority rights in Quebec, not erode them

Bill C-13 needs your attention. The proposed federal legislation aims to amend Canada's *Official Languages Act*. It should be sounding an alarm, yet it is getting very little attention.

Credible and learned voices are, in fact, attempting to raise a warning about what this legislation will do. Yet, few among the public are reacting.

Bill C-13 includes two precedent-setting points that need to be understood. First, it will abandon the historic equality of our official languages – a fundamental characteristic of Canada. Second, it will – for the first time – make federal law complicit in the application of the notwithstanding clause to its own *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms!* This represents a systematic erosion of our fundamental and minority rights, already severely imperilled by the Quebec government.

Minority groups in Quebec have been joined by leading human rights defenders, legal and constitutional experts, prominent institutions and business groups, and some in the media in Quebec, in the rest of Canada and beyond our borders in highlighting this erosion of fundamental and minority rights. But overall, the legislation has been met with passive acquiescence by the large majority in Quebec as well as the rest of Canada.

Bill C-13 will incorporate parts of Quebec's Bill 96, which expanded the province's *Charter of the French Language*, into the federal Official Languages legislation. And by doing so extend the use of Quebec's use of the notwithstanding clause into this new federal legislation.

Bill C-13, as it stands, includes an option to apply a provincial statute, the *Charter of the French Language*, to businesses under federal jurisdiction in Quebec. This provides a bitter irony, as it would make federal law complicit in the application of the notwithstanding clause to its own *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms!* Yet, C-13 is raising very little public reaction, except in some English-language media and circles.

And, sadly, only a very few members of the federal Liberal caucus are prepared to raise their voices against C-13's overreach.



PHOTO: RADIO-CANADA.CA

Readers who feel strongly – as I do – about the erosion of our fundamental rights, which are about to be breached by the federal government, should write a short note to their MP about Bill C-13.

In a discussion with a federal Liberal insider about the insertion of the Quebec *Charter of the French Language* into a federal statute, the justification given to me was that it changes little in reality: most entities under federal jurisdiction in Quebec comply with Bill 101 provisions anyway, they argued. I pointed out that even if the majority of these entities have chosen to “play the game” for political convenience, it is a far cry from having the practice enshrined in a federal statute.

The lack of concern stands in stunning contrast to the outcry that was heard in 1988, when the provincial Liberal government led by Robert Bourassa introduced Bill 178, which employed the notwithstanding clause to suspend the Supreme Court judgment on certain provisions of the *Charter of the French Language* (Bill 101), which enforced the prominence of French on outdoor signs.

Having been involved in the intense soul-searching and debates within the Quebec Liberal caucus following the judgment, I recall vividly the passionate reactions and public debate during

the period that preceded the introduction of the bill. I also recall the spirited media and public reactions that followed, both in Quebec and in the rest of Canada.

Firmly opposed to Bill 178, I voted against it. But despite my strong difference of opinion, I can at least see Bourassa's justification for his view. He feared serious social unrest if the relevant provisions of Bill 101 dealing with the language of signs were nullified. Nonetheless, I would do exactly the same today.

Looking back, Bill 178 seems quite tame in contrast to what is happening now with Bill 96 and Bill C-13.

Bill 96's pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause makes a complete mockery of the fundamental and minority rights under the Quebec and Canadian charters, as well as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, by shielding the law from the universally recognized right of citizens to seek redress before the courts. Yet, Bill 96 has provoked not even a shrug by the majority, and little reaction in

the French-language media. The need for such a law seems largely to be taken for granted.

I urge readers who feel as strongly as I do about the erosion of our fundamental and minority rights, which are now about to be breached by our federal government, to write a short note in their own words to their MP about Bill C-13.

Our fundamental rights are among our most precious blessings as citizens. We must never accept that they be diminished or taken away from us.

Bill C-13 is now before the parliamentary standing committee for clause-by-clause study.

Clifford Lincoln is a former member of the National Assembly representing the West Island riding of Nelligan and served as Environment minister in Robert Bourassa's government. He resigned in 1989 in protest to the Liberal government's use of the notwithstanding clause over Bill 178. He later served as a federal MP for the West Island riding of Lac Saint Louis. He lives in Baie d'Urfé.

Trends in agriculture



Chris Judd
The Advocate

The beginning of 2023 has been challenging for most people trying to juggle high interest rates; inflation, which now may be starting to “cool off;” high fuel prices; and high food prices, which are very stubborn and showing no signs of coming down.

Many of us are old enough to remember the early 1980s, when inflation hit 10 per cent or higher and interest peaked at 21 per cent. Over a period of a year, interest rates began to slack off, but the rate of inflation dropped. During that year, many homes, business and farms were lost.

For those high-paid individuals who worked in the money market, they said: “It’s only a correction.” For some of us, it was a pretty severe correction.

Food prices versus cost of production: It doesn’t always add up

Fuel prices up

We have witnessed some roller-coaster price swings in fuel prices. But if you watched the profits of the major oil companies, they had some very good margins. When we think of all the products that are made from oil – like synthetic clothing, footwear, plastic bags, tires, electronic devices, a huge percentage of car parts – then add to that the cost of fuel to transport almost everything that we use. This all contributes greatly to the cost of the product.

The minimum wage has just been increased, but it still leaves many hard-working people below the poverty line.

Yet, there were very long lines as passengers waited hours or days to get a flight to come home or go on vacation. You never saw older generations on a plane – unless they were in the air-force during the last wars.

Back to the high price of food.



PHOTO: ANDRIY BLOKHIN/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

It will take several months or even years before the prices of some foods will level off. During that time, the processors, retailers and transport industry will absorb much of any reduction in the cost to produce.

There is a “self-proclaimed” Canadian food price expert who was taking aim at “supply-managed foods,” like eggs, poultry and all dairy products. My son talked to him several times and educated him that he needed to do a lot more research on how those products are price based on a “cost-of-production formula,” which the government economists, dairy food processors, retailers, restaurant associations and consumers associations all go through with a “fine-tooth comb” before the government allows any increase or decrease in the price to the producer or processor.

Open-market saw increases

Meanwhile, other foods are sold on the “open market,” where the price is determined by what the consumer accepts to pay. Most fresh fruits and vegetables are grown many miles south and the increased cost of fuel has greatly increased retail prices of these products. A shortage of labour and increased labour costs have – and will – cause increases in many food products.

Grains, like wheat, corn, oats, rice, soybean and canola, are grown with fertilizer, chemicals and require diesel fuel to sow. All these inputs were as much as three times the price that they

were a year or two ago. And, of course, milk, meat, eggs, poultry were produced by feeding those higher priced grains and forages to animals. But these commodities only came to market several months or even years after the crops that the ate were grown.

It will take several months or even years before the prices of those foods will level off. During that time, the processors, retailers and transport industry will absorb much of any reduction in the cost to produce.

Because farmers who sell direct to consumers at farmers’ markets can adjust prices quickly, consumers may notice that farmers’ market prices will be more appealing this year.

Farmers have always been very close to the soil, water and nature. They will also be leaders in addressing the changes in our climate and by reducing their dependence on chemical fertilizer sprays and fossil fuels. It will take some re-education in sustainable agriculture and a real challenge to maintain the prices consumers have become accustomed to.

As we adjust, it will become ever more apparent that the nutritional value of farm-produced food will beat factory-produced “fast food” every time! Don’t take my word. Check it out.



NEWS RELEASE

NOTICE TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

Regarding dues to the Union des producteurs agricoles

UPA dues for 2023 have been set at \$ 401 for individual producers and \$ 802 for undivided co-owners and multiple-owner farm (company with multiple shareholders, partnership, association, trust or other).

Producers will shortly receive a Notice of dues by mail. They will be able to pay it in full or in installments before June 30, 2023 interest-free. Please note that for milk producers, the contribution to the Union des producteurs agricoles will be deducted in four (4) installments on the final pay in January, February, March and April, with a final deduction on the final pay in May 2023, in the event of a balance due.

The dues are used to finance a portion of the organization’s union activities and are allocated as follows:

Local syndicate:	7.23 %
Regional federation:	37.22 %
Confederation :	55.55 %

For any further information, please contact your regional UPA federation.

Directeur du service des cotisations (assessment)

Éric Cyr

N.B. : GST (5%) and QST (9.975%) will be added to the Notice of dues. Eligible producers may reclaim these taxes from the Ministry of Revenue.

This news release does not replace the official version of the Règlement sur les catégories de producteurs, leur représentation et leur cotisation annuelle à l'Union des producteurs agricoles, which has sole legal value. It can be viewed on the Publications du Québec's website.



Young Townships producer continues family legacy in dairy genetics

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

For some, taking on a family farm legacy could be daunting. But for 18-year-old Kolton Crack, the prospect is exciting. And it's definitely what he wants to do in life.

"My first experiences on the farm were in the barn with my grandfather and dad," the Eastern Townships producer and student recalled. "I was always allowed to ride on my grandfather's lap when he was making the last row of hay for the day. I think my machinery and field crop bug originated from those memories."

Kolton's grandfather's legacy is an inspiring one in the Crack family, who continue to run Crackholm Farm in Richmond, around 40 kilometres northwest of Sherbrooke. Kolton's great grandfather, Gordon Crack, founded the farm in 1967. But it was his grandfather, David "Butch" Crack who shifted the farm's focus to breeding and genetics, going on to win numerous awards over the years.

"(My grandfather) never finished high school, but he was a big reason the farm became what it is today," Kolton said. "He converted the Jersey herd to Holsteins and made a name for the farm by getting involved in cattle shows."

Started young

That family pride got young Kolton into showing cattle with his local 4-H Club, which he continues to this day. The strong 4-H presence in the Townships led to many of his most cherished childhood memories.

"I've been a part of Richmond 4-H since I was around nine years old," he said. "4-H has introduced me to so many new connections and friends on a local and national level. The networking events were by far the best part of my youth in 4-H, on top of trips to the Canadian TD classic in Toronto."

When it was time to think about pursuing higher education after high school, going to Macdonald Campus of McGill University in Ste. Anne de Bellevue was a no-brainer: it would allow Kolton to return to Crackholm to help out on the weekends, and contribute to his goal of one day running the 4th-generation family farm and making it more efficient.

Now in FMT at Mac

While in his second year of the Farm Management and Technology Program, Kolton took a shot at applying for a Warren Grapes Agricultural Education Award, the QFA's scholarship fund aimed at helping students enrolled at agricultural institutions of higher learning in Quebec.

And, to his surprise, his name was one of the seven called out at the award presentations at the QFA's annual meeting last November.

"I was very happy to know that I'd been chosen, along with so many of my friends at Mac," Crack said. "And happy because the award can help me pay for my schooling!"

Back home on the farm, the Crack family continues to raise its herd of superior Holsteins in free-stall barns, breeding top-quality cattle. The farm sources cattle throughout North America for clients looking for high-producing heifers, as well as hosting regular auctions held right on the family farm. Kolton's father, David, also acts as auctioneer and takes pride in the family's achievements: in 2006, one of their herd became the first Holstein in Canada to score 96 out of 100 in a ranking, and Crackholm showed seven cattle at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto last year, coming in second overall in four separate categories.

Plans to improve

Despite all of Crackholm's accolades and awards, Kolton says it's his goal to make the farm more efficient and resourceful, both environmentally and production-wise. Learning all he can in the FMT program is a key step towards that goal, as is his plan to enroll in an agricultural mechanics course after graduating from Mac.

All in all, Crack's ambition and skills have him well-prepared to continue the Crackholm Farm legacy, something his grandfather and whole family can be proud of in this rapidly-changing world.

"With social media, ideas and theories are shared so quickly by the click of a button," he said. "Farming is one of the easiest things to blame and throw dirt on because there are only a select few of the population that actually farm and understand the lifestyle. In an ideal world, the public would all visit and understand a farm."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KOLTON CRACK

Eighteen-year-old Kolton Crack was one of seven students to win a Warren Grapes Award at the QFA's annual meeting last November. The Crack family has a long history for superior cattle genetics in the province.



Kolton (RIGHT) shared the honours with sister Savannah and their father, David, at the 2022 Expo-Printemps in Victoriaville, where one of the family Holsteins was awarded the prize of "Grande Championne."



PHOTO: KONSTANTIN ZAYKOV/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Snowmobilers who venture off marked trails are testing the patience of farmers by damaging farmland and installations, like fences and paddocks, and leaving garbage strewn across fields.



Paul Doyon
First Vice-President, UPA

Snowmobiling: Civility must win the day

The 2022–2023 snowmobiling season got off to a slow start in certain areas of the province. The lack of snow at the beginning of the year raised a few eyebrows, but Mother Nature came through in the end, dumping twice the usual amount of snow by the end of January in a number of regions.

Snowmobiling is an amazing pastime. It creates about 14,000 jobs in Quebec and generates economic spinoffs of more than \$3 billion each year, primarily in rural areas. It gives the tourism sector a boost in an otherwise sluggish season. And a large driver of the success of snowmobiling is generosity: tens of thousands of landowners – including farm and forestry producers – allow their local snowmobile clubs to use their land. This is the case for about for about half of the 33,000 kilometres of

trails in Quebec.

Sadly, however, despite awareness campaigns, signs and warnings, too many snowmobilers continue to flout the rules and drive their vehicles on private land any way they please. This behaviour is a nuisance, and it is pushing the tolerance of landowners who generously serve their communities.

Operating snowmobiles on farmland hurts harvests: when snow gets packed down, it can't insulate the soil as well. The heavier frosts that result harm vegetation and crops. This is something farmers can tolerate if drivers stick to the trails, but in many fields, errant snowmobilers are causing direct losses.

Furthermore, damaged equipment, like poles, fences, machinery and paddocks, and strewn garbage are putting farmers' patience to the test. Aluminum cans have even been known to make their way into animal feed.

Another facet of this issue is safety. The marked trails are there to ensure

snowmobilers stay out of harm's way. Those who choose to venture off trails are vulnerable to various hazards lurking beneath the snow, like rock piles and unfrozen water. Snowmobiles designed specifically for off-trail riding are becoming more popular, which is making this dangerous and unacceptable behaviour more common.

Offensive snowmobiling behaviours could cause relations between producers and snowmobile clubs to break down, making it much harder for people to enjoy the winter pastime. Officials in several regions, including Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Bas-Saint-Laurent, Montérégie and Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, have publicly voiced their exasperation in recent weeks. The Association des producteurs de gazon du Québec, the Association québécoise des producteurs en pépinière and the Association des producteurs d'arbres de Noël du Québec have condemned

the current situation.

If things continue as they have been, the Fédération des clubs de motoneigistes du Québec (a valued partner of the UPA), public authorities and snowmobile manufacturers and sellers will need to intervene quickly. Off-trail riding needs to be curbed, and failure to respect private property needs to be punished seriously enough to deter would-be offenders.

No one wants it to come to this, but for many farmers, patience is running out. And rightly so.

Farmers voluntarily agree to grant access to marked trails on their land. But the lack of etiquette shown by certain snowmobilers could have heavy consequences for the future of snowmobiling in Quebec. It would be a shame to lose an arrangement thousands of producers and volunteers have worked for years to build all because of some irresponsible and disrespectful individuals. Civility must win the day.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TOM VILSACK

Doug McKalip (LEFT), chief agricultural trade negotiator for the U.S., with U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack (RIGHT).

U.S., Canada aren't clear what was agreed upon for dairy imports

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

For the second time in a year, the United States has requested a dispute settlement under the United-States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) over how Canada reserves the amount of dairy that can be imported north of the border.

And many in the Canadian dairy industry see the move as an attack on supply management.

"Canada will continue to defend our supply-management system and the market access that Canada and the United States have agreed on," said Federal Minister of International Trade Mary Ng. "We will stand firm against attempts to renegotiate agreements during the dispute settlement panel process."

On Jan. 31 the U.S. Trade Representative's office requested a

USMCA dispute settlement panel, stating Canada's quota allocation rules still don't allow U.S. cheese, ice cream, yogurt, milk powder and other dairy products to have the access to its import quotas that the countries agreed upon.

"Under (the USMCA), Canada agreed to open up its market to U.S. dairy products, and dairy farmers expect to have the market access benefits they were promised," said Doug McKalip, chief agricultural trade negotiator for the U.S.

"(Access to markets) should work the same way that it does for almost any commodity and any type of relationship of this kind," McKalip told the Reuters news agency. "Which is that they truly do provide market access and that dairy farmers and various dairy products here in the U.S. are able to compete and be part of selling to willing buyers."

But that reasoning has Canadian dairy farmers worried that the U.S. is using the issue to attack Canada's supply-management system.

Attack on supply management

Under the USMCA conditions that were ratified in 2020, dairy products are not supposed to be regulated like just any commodity.

Instead, Canadian negotiators claim the agreement preserved the country's supply-management system by granting U.S. dairy producers access to about 3.5 per cent of Canada's \$17-billion annual market. At the time, imports of U.S. skim milk and milk proteins to Canada were allowed to increase.

But the U.S. has argued that the USMCA deal should permit them to have greater market access, and wants Canada to remove its trade restrictions on American dairy producers.

"We're not asking them to do something they didn't already agree to when they agreed to the provisions in USMCA," said McKalip.

But exactly what was agreed upon regarding the amount of access to Canada's domestic dairy market is something both countries seem unsure of.

"Canada is disappointed that the United States has requested a dispute settlement panel," said Ng in an official statement.

"We know how important stability and certainty are to our farmers, workers and businesses. We will always work to protect their livelihoods and ensure their success at home and abroad by ensuring that trade rules are implemented as intended."

The settlement dispute panel is expected to publish its final report and findings in approximately seven to nine months.



Join us for the upcoming QFA videoconference!



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22

Climate change and its impact on your farm - Part 2

With Phil Lavoie

We've heard about how climate change will affect our farms in the next 30 years. But what can we do about it?

Quebec beef consultant Phil Lavoie speaks about how your farm can cope with climate change – and adopt practices that can actually mitigate it.

This is the second part of our videoconference series focusing on how wetter winters and global warming will affect Quebec specifically.

You don't need to have seen the first part to appreciate the sequel! Lavoie's presentation will outline practical on-farm production techniques you can use.

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82840940028?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82840940028?pwd=ZDEzRDNGbmQyaIM0MDFFPcDMxTytFQT09)

[pwd=ZDEzRDNGbmQyaIM0MDFFPcDMxTytFQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82840940028?pwd=ZDEzRDNGbmQyaIM0MDFFPcDMxTytFQT09)

Meeting ID: 828 4094 0028

Passcode: 056014

The best place to find news about, links to and passcodes for the QFA's Videoconferences is at our Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/306871089363565/>

To be added to our email list so you never miss a videoconference, write to qfa@upa.qc.ca





Getting started in maple syrup the easy way

QFA videoconference offers look at one couple's alternative way to tapping

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

Sean Butler had no experience running a maple syrup operation when he followed his dream and purchased an Outaouais farm with 100 acres of bush-lot in 2014.

But growing up in Ottawa gave him an appreciation of the agricultural tradition of the Ottawa Valley and the Gatineau Hills. And he and his partner, Geneviève LeGal-Leblanc, were determined to make their lives together on the farm.

"When we started, we hadn't seen anyone with a set-up similar to our maple operation," Butler said. "It was a risk. But I guess we're risk-takers."

Butler and LeGal-Leblanc envisioned their Ferme et Forêt in Wakefield as the type of niche, direct-marketing business, a sector that has taken off in Quebec in the past 30 years: small, diverse and ecologically-oriented.

But when they took a chance by harvesting their sap in a different way from Quebec's industry standard, they didn't know that maple syrup would become their biggest seller and the backbone of their income.

Opted for different tubing

"Since I wanted to be a maple producer, I subscribed to *Maple News*," Butler said, referring to the U.S. maple industry magazine. "That's where I first read about 3/16-inch tubing.

"From what I was hearing, it seemed perfect for us. Our land has lots of hills, and 3/16 tubing creates a natural vacuum because it's smaller than 5/16 tubing. The sap actually fills up the tube as it heads downhill."

Butler and LeGal-Leblanc were curious. Not only was 3/16 tubing less expensive than the 5/16-inch tubing that has become the standard in Canada, its natural-vacuum properties could be used without a vacuum pump – an ideal arrangement for a start-up maple operation, since the couple's sugar shack had no electricity.

"We didn't have a lot of money to start up our maple business, and 3/16 was cheaper to install," said Butler, speaking to more than 30 participants during a videoconference organized by the Quebec Farmers' Association on Feb. 15.

Easier set up

"You don't use as many main lines with (narrower tubing), he explained. "In a



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FERME ET FORÊT

Butler's Ford Ranger loaded up with the 3/16 tubing he used to harvest the sap from his 2,800 taps on Ferme et Forêt.

traditional system, you'd be running main lines up the slope and then have your 5/16 lateral lines branching out. But with the 3/16, you can simply run your mainline along the bottom of the slope and have your laterals coming down the hill into that mainline. You can set it all up a lot faster."

Although they didn't know it at the time, smaller tubing had been the industry standard in Quebec from the late '60s into the early '70s, when supply companies started marketing the larger 5/16 size. So in essence, Ferme et Forêt was going back to an earlier method of sap harvesting without even knowing it.

"Our supplier was basically our mentor in helping us get set up," Butler said. "And even he didn't know anyone who was using 3/16s. He could get it for us, but he'd never seen it in operation."

Benefits being seen

While Butler and LeGal-Leblanc had tapped 300 trees their first year on the farm with 5/16 tubing, their second year showed the benefits of their new system. On 2,300 taps they were getting an average of 0.7 litres per tap, up from 0.5 litres the year before.

Encouraged by their results, the couple decided that electricity and

vacuum pumps might be a good idea after all. Their maple syrup was selling out at farmers' markets and their on-farm store.

"But we didn't want to go whole-hog into a conventional vacuum pump. We already had a nice, natural vacuum going on with our 3/16 system."

Butler found a Rhode Island-based supplier called The Bosworth Company, who marketed small diaphragm pumps. They purchased two for their 2,800 taps and set them up at the bottom of their hills, gravity and the natural vacuum supplied by the Gatineau Hills taking care of the taps at the top.

Yield increased

The gamble paid off: Ferme et Forêt saw its maple yield increase year after year, averaging 1.4 litres per tap in 2018, 1.5 liters per tap in 2019 and 1.7 litres per tap in 2022 – a record-yield year for maple producers around the province.

"We find it works," Butler said. "The 3/16 tubing is a bit harder to empty all the sap out of at the end of the season, but it's cheaper, easier to install, easy to find leaks in, and it's just more intuitive for a beginner to work with."

Butler and LeGal-Leblanc have now gone from being novice producers to a



Sean Butler and Geneviève LeGal-Leblanc wanted to start a maple syrup operation on their farm in Wakefield without as much investment as a traditional tubing system requires. The couple found a way to use less-expensive 3/16-inch tubing to discover the potential of their taps.

dream of full-fledged maple operators.

These days, Butler estimates that maple production accounts for a third of his time on the farm, but half of his income.

"Maple syrup has been really good to us, and now we're at the point of doing fewer of the specialty products that got us into farming in the first place," he said. "Sometimes I dream of giving the other stuff up and just focusing on being a maple syrup producer!"



The Quebec Farmers' Association is only as strong as its **membership**

It's time to renew your membership. Reminder cards will not be mailed out. So we are asking that you clip out the form below. Fill it out and send your cheque in the amount indicated and mail it in.

We are counting on your support. Show your pride in being part of Quebec's English-speaking community. **It only cost \$68.99.**

As soon as we receive your cheque, we will send you:

- ▶ Your **membership card**
- ▶ A **10% card** to use on all purchases at **L'Equipeur (Mark's Work Warehouse)** throughout the year
- ▶ A letter explaining the benefits of being a member

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Quebec Farmers' Association

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

Signature.....
 Date.....

The Quebec Farmers' Association would like to thank English-speaking farmers who have opted to renew their membership.

By supporting the QFA, you ensure that *The Advocate* arrives in your mailbox every month.

**Here are just a few of members who recently renewed.
Your support makes a difference.**

Sherry Paxton, Standstead

Agnes B. Davis, Lashburn, Saskatchewan

Richard Goodfellow, St. Félix de Kingsey

Malcolm Orr, Howick

Winston Hodge, St. André d'Argenteuil

Marilyn Harland, Lachute

Erwin Studer, Clarenceville

Earl Titley, Lachute

Alvin and Sazelle Barrington, Howick





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Paul J. Hetzler
ISA Certified Arborist

The decline in children's mental health during COVID-19 restrictions is a poignant reminder that we're a social species, hardwired for contact with others. The saying, "It takes a village to raise a child" is spot on. Whether a literal village or a caring community within a city, we all – children especially – need regular interaction with peers and supportive mentors.

In a different sense, but true nonetheless, it takes a village to raise a forest. In this case, the "village people" include mice, birds and squirrels. When we think of forests, we naturally picture trees – probably large, mature ones. But even big, old trees rely on some pretty humble villagers. Forests are complex, elegant systems that could not exist without a little help from their friends.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, oaks and hickories play a keystone role in hardwood forests throughout southeastern Canada and the eastern United States. But nuts and acorns aren't so good at wafting on the breeze to disperse. They need a hand, or more likely, a paw or beak, to spread far from the trees that produced them. Everyone fares better outside the shadow of their parents.

Squirrels play important role

It's no surprise that grey squirrels, including their black melanistic subgroup, are critical to the survival of nut-bearing trees. As humorist Will Cuppy wrote in his 1949 book *How to Attract a Wombat*: "Squirrels have been criticized for hiding nuts in various places for future use and then forgetting the places. Well, squirrels do not bother with minor details like that. They have other things on their mind, such as hiding more nuts where they can't find them."

Before learning stuff like "facts" about squirrels, I assumed they forgot most of their buried nuts. However, in controlled trials done at Princeton University in 1990, it turns out grey squirrels recover about 90 per cent of them after 12 days.

A side-effect of large wooded tracts getting fragmented is that red squirrels, which are better suited to patchwork forests, are driving their grey cousins

It takes a village to raise a forest

Woodlands could not exist without small animals and birds spreading seeds



PHOTO: MCCARRAHER'S PHOTO OP/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Nuts and acorns do not wait on the breeze to disperse. They need a hand, or more likely, a paw or beak, to spread far from the trees that produced them.

out of the woods. I assume this explains why grey squirrels have taken to chewing the faces off Halloween pumpkins instead of reforesting the landscape. But red squirrels, native to pine, fir and spruce habitats, cache most acorns and nuts in above-ground "larders," and plant very few hardwoods.

Mice contribute, too

Mice also collect tree seeds, and inter some for later use, thus, helping to regenerate maples, American beech, pine and other species. Apparently, the impact of each mouse on forest health depends on its temperament. When I see a mouse indoors, I just want it out. I don't wonder if it has a nice disposition.

Pioneering studies at the University of Maine have documented a range of personality types among mice and their cousins the meadow voles and pine voles (not to be confused with moles, which are carnivores). In a nutshell – so to speak – timid mice and voles don't travel far to bury seeds, and they tend to pick sites conducive to seed germination. Brash rodents go farther afield, but often hide their seeds in spots that are less tree-friendly. Each strategy aids the forest in different ways.

Blue jays contribute

While acorns and nuts can't float on the wind, they sure do fly. According to a CBC news report last November, drones will soon be planting trees in western Canada. But that's cheating. Blue jays have been doing this for thousands of years. In his 2005 book, *Oak: The Frame of Civilization*, arborist and nature writer William Bryant Logan says blue jays forget more of the acorns they stick in the ground than squirrels do. That is what happens when you have a bird brain, I guess.

Without good regeneration, a forest is doomed. But there are other key elements to a robust and resilient forest, such as natural pest control. In a diverse and vibrant forest "village," insects that harm trees are usually kept in check through an array of natural controls. Birds, predatory insects, viruses and fungi are just some of the agents that help keep pest populations in balance.

Even bats join the mix

Quite recently it was shown that bats may be the most crucial pest-control player of all. Bat caves are for hibernating bats, and perhaps a crime-fighting superhero with a bat fetish. But during the summer, bats are happy campers

in the woods, hanging out under loose tree bark in the daytime.

An article in the Oct. 30 edition of the journal *Ecology* summarized the first-ever U.S. field study on the specific role bats play in forest health.

Elizabeth Beilke, a researcher at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Joy O'Keefe, a wildlife extension specialist with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, conducted the three-year study "in the central hardwood region of the United States," as they cryptically say in their article. The 20 large, mesh-covered enclosures they made were opened at dawn and closed at dusk so bats could not enter. Each year from 2018 to 2020, insect damage to tree seedlings in the covered plots was compared with damage in 20 same-size control plots open to bats.

Their findings are clear: "Insect density was three times greater on seedlings in bat-excluded versus control plots. Additionally, seedling defoliation was five times greater with bats excluded."

Beilke and O'Keefe believe bats are imperative to North American forest ecosystems, possibly more so than any other animal.

It was bound to happen: every village has its overachiever.

News

Ontario agronomist launches farm wear clothing line for women

Daniel Sucar
The Advocate

Ontario-based agronomist Michelle Durnin is on a quest to bring a bit of glamour to the often-harsh realities of rural life for women. Her clothing line, Durnin Farm and Ranch Wear, aims to fill a cavernous void in farm workwear, as well as highlight women working within the male-dominated agriculture industry.

"There's so many of us women who literally don't get off the farm very often and don't wear the nice clothes in our closet," Durnin told *The Advocate*. "And so, it's nice to be able to put something on every day that makes us feel good."

According to Durnin, standard wear brands don't provide the proper fit or essential features to meet the needs of women who spend most of their time working as part of a farm operation. Forced to settle for products designed for men in mind, these women must grapple with ill-fitting shirts and frumpy-looking overalls that easily slide off the shoulders and are limited to drab and uninspired colour schemes.

But Durnin is hoping to change that.

The agronomist is eager to flip the script by offering a full range of women's farm wear. Her overalls, for example, feature stretchy elastic straps, buckles that do not come undone at inopportune moments, cell phone pockets and added seams to reduce bagginess in the leg. They are also available in colours that are as far away from the standard earth shades as possible, like two-tone navy and bright rose.

Since launching in November 2021, she has also added a roster of vibrant T-shirts emblazoned with quirky mantras

like "Coffee, cows and sunrise" and "Warm nights, dry ground and a good farm dog."

Next up, Durnin is gearing up to unveil her new summer collection, which includes a pair of overalls made of a lighter material. She is also working to get her products available in more farm stores.

"We're just going to keep growing and growing, as much as we can," she promised.

Durnin's farm wear is available on her website, dfrwear.ca. Her clothing line can be delivered from her farm in Huron County to anywhere in Quebec.



PHOTO: DFRWEAR.CA

Agonomist Michelle Durnin has launched a line of clothes designed specifically for women who work on the farm, with the aim of catering to a growing clientele.



PHOTO: MUSTAFA SENGI/SIPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Farmers in France protested pesticide ban earlier this month.

Farmers in France pesticide ban at Napoleon's tomb

The Advocate

Hundreds of French agricultural producers drove their tractors through Paris earlier this month to protest a coming ban on neonicotinoid pesticides.

France's national farmers union, the Fédération nationale des syndicats d'exploitants agricoles (FNSEA), said that at least 500 producers arrived in the city by tractor on Feb. 8, creating traffic jams that spanned approximately 420 kilometres.

The protest was sparked by the French government's Jan. 23 decision to close a loophole in the law banning neonicotinoid pesticides that had allowed sugar beet farmers to continue using them.

Insecticides containing neonicotinoids – such as products like Confidor, Actara and Admire – have been otherwise banned in the E.U. since 2018.

Neonicotinoids have been shown to be harmful to bee populations, as they are absorbed by plants and remain present in nectar and pollen. A 2015 study by the U.S. Geological Survey found neonic pollution in more than half of the streams it sampled nationwide.

"At this rate, French agriculture is going to disappear," said Damien Greffin, president of the FNSEA who is also a cash crop and sugar beet producer. "As a user of neonicotinoids, I don't feel like I'm poisoning the world."

French producers say that the loophole is needed to protect France's food sovereignty. The convoy halted at the iconic Esplanades des Invalides, where the tomb and remains of Napoleon are housed.

Greffin said that the site was chosen since it was Napoleon who had first imported sugar beets from Poland so that France could have sugar independence without needing to import from its colonies during the Napoleonic wars.

Grains

Ukraine: markets not to be overlooked

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, sent waves of panic through the world's grain markets, especially wheat markets. Both countries involved in the conflict are major wheat exporters, with Ukraine also exporting large amounts of corn. Amid fears of a global shortage, wheat prices skyrocketed in the initial weeks of the hostilities, affecting other grain prices to some degree as well.

Subsequently, wheat prices began falling again as a result of three factors. First, in spite of international financial sanctions, Russian wheat exports continued. Second, Ukraine managed to resume selling its grain by land, rail and river, and later by ship following the agreement on the grain shipping corridor that was reached in late July. Third, and finally, after Canadian harvests had been decimated by drought in 2021, Canadian wheat production returned to normal in 2022.

Grain Growers aim to be carbon neutral by 2050

The Grain Growers of Canada has kicked off its Road to 2050 initiative, which is designed to help Canada's grain sector go carbon neutral by mid-century. Activities have begun with an exploratory phase, in which the available data and methodologies will be used to comprehensively calculate

the carbon footprint of grain production. This phase will culminate with a summary of the different emissions sources in Canada, broken down by crop and by region. Actions and strategies for achieving carbon neutrality will be proposed. The GCC is seeking involvement from the federal government in implementing solutions to reach this goal.

Responsible Grain: Code 2.0

The Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Crops continues to hold consultations and gather comments from different players in the grain sector (both producers and end users). Responsible Grain (also known as Code 2.0) is a compilation of sustainable production practices adopted by producers. Producers follow and apply the principles set out in the code on a voluntary basis. The code is used to illustrate to grain users and the general public how producers are adopting standards that uphold sustainability principles. This in turn helps promote the profession and strengthen the position of Canadian grains in various markets. It is not intended to replace the existing certification systems that entitle producers to market premiums; rather, it is intended to serve as a common denominator for these certification systems, to help uncertified producers promote their products, and communicate farmers' efforts to the general public.



Mitchell Beer

Ontario's new housing bill: Developers gain, farm sector loses



PHOTO: SHIPFACTORY/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

A sad and smarmy land-use scandal is playing out in Ontario, complete with a flagrant broken promise, a power grab by a newly-empowered provincial government and allegations of insider dealing that have led to two investigations.

At issue is Bill 23, Doug Ford's government's *More Homes Built Faster Act*, which aims to open up 7,400 acres (about 3,000 hectares) of farmland and protected natural areas so that 50,000 new homes can be built in Ontario's Greenbelt, a beloved and ecologically essential protected area in the southern part of the province. Proponents say the bill will tackle a massive affordable-housing crisis, while swapping the targeted land for 9,400 acres in other parts of the province. Opponents say the new homes will be no more affordable than the massively expensive ones on the market now, and most of the land offered up in the swap is already protected.

The bill was introduced, debated and passed in record time, from a late Friday announcement last Nov. 4 to a final vote Dec. 15, despite dozens of mostly small protests and thousands of comments from concerned citizens. So never let anyone tell you that governments can't get things done in a hurry when they want to. In this case, it was done within a timeframe that prevented communities having the time to read in and fully respond after provincewide municipal elections in late October.

All of this was after Ford had sworn he would keep hands off.

"I listened to the people, and we are not touching the Greenbelt," he declared in a now-deleted tweet.

Bargain-basement land buys

The legislation harms rural and urban communities alike, attacking wetland protection and undercutting the work of regional conservation authorities set up decades ago to safeguard natural heritage and help protect rural communities from flooding. The only beneficiaries seem to be the developers who had bought land in the areas that were later released, no doubt paying bargain-basement prices because there was no public indication that Ford would break his promise.

Doug Ford's *More Homes Built Faster Act* will allow 50,000 new homes built on 7,400 acres of farmland and protected natural areas in Ontario's Greenbelt.

While the premier took umbrage at the suggestion that this was anything but a coincidence, the sequence of events has triggered investigations by Ontario's integrity commissioner and its often-fearsome auditor general.

At least 13 municipalities did pass motions opposing the bill, warning the move would cut into city revenue, resulting in higher property taxes or service cuts, transfer \$1 billion in annual costs from developers to property taxpayers and weaken conservation authorities' mandate for flood prevention and land protection – all without making homes more available or affordable. Critics also pointed out that developers already had lots of room to build, with more than 88,000 acres already approved for new development and lots of available infill space with access to the transit and other services the city dwellers need.

Rural areas lose out

In a set of talking points for its supporters, the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance laid out a "whole new set of problems" that Bill 23 would create, without solving the province's housing crisis. The list included:

- Harming food security (at a time

when global supply chains for food and farm inputs are in crisis) by reducing the ability to grow fresh local food.

- Destroying irreplaceable land that provides "key ecological services," like flood protection and carbon sequestration.
- Setting a "destructive precedent that Greenbelt protected lands will be sacrificed when land speculators want to develop them, therefore, creating an ecologically damaged 'Swiss cheese' Greenbelt."

The 38,000-member Ontario Federation of Agriculture took a more technical, granular approach in its Nov. 17 submission to the provincial committee studying the bill. But the picture it painted for rural communities was in some ways more dire, with a series of consequences for rural communities that included:

- Abandoning the principle that "growth must pay for growth" by shifting the cost of new subdivisions from developers to property taxpayers, at a time when farmland is already taxed at a disproportionate rate.
- Exposing farmers to increased risks "related to water quality or quantity, for both surface and/or groundwater" by undercutting conservation

authorities' oversight role and eliminating their standing to appeal development decisions.

- Making it harder for farmers or other citizens to appeal development decisions by introducing a poorly-defined "loser pays" model for the Ontario Land Tribunal.
- Pushing planning responsibilities onto rural municipalities that lack the staff, budget or expertise to keep pace.

The fight to reverse the Ontario legislation continues, and there was some indication in late January that the federal Impact Assessment Agency might review specific projects for their impact on species at risk. But it's a frustrating, unforced error when a measure like Bill 23 forces hundreds of people to pour many thousands of hours into an all-out effort to stand still – where the win is if we can stop things from getting worse. That's not the momentum we need if we're going to stabilize communities, build local self-sufficiency and drive down emissions in a crucial decade for action.

Mitchell Beer is publisher of The Energy Mix, a non-profit community news site and e-digest on climate change, energy and the shift off carbon.



Are Lactanet's workshops for me?

Catherine Larivée Bazinet
Lactanet

Do you like to compare your results with other producers, exchange ideas with advisers, and learn from our experts?

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Do you control your costs?

Let's be honest. The dairy industry is competitive. There are many external factors you can't do anything about, but you can reduce and control your costs. That is often easier said than done.

Here is the first question to ask yourself: Do I really know what my costs are on the farm? It's essential to be able to compare your costs with those of previous years, but also with those of other dairy operations. This is called benchmarking. This step helps you determine the expenses to reduce as a priority and, ultimately, implement an action plan adapted to your environment.

Did you know that applying best management practices could lead to savings between \$50,000 and \$80,000 per year on production costs?

How are your farm's costs broken down?

Your cost of production is broken down into several expenses. And these expenses do not have the same financial weight for your business. Feed remains the most important item, followed by mid- to long-term assets, rearing costs and, finally, labour. Also, don't forget quota management, which is an important part of your profitability and can maximize your revenue.

The choice is yours

Our "The Secrets to Profitable Milk" workshop is a group discussion. You will choose from a list of topics and you will decide the direction of the discussions. Each session will be unique and tailored to the needs of participants. Join the discussion and let us help you find the management strategies that are right for you.



"A vision without action is an illusion." – Vern Osborne, PhD, Professor, University of Guelph, 2022 Dairy Cattle Symposium

What is your story?

Before you continue, ask yourself this question: Does each of the heifers I have kept have a story? Do you make sure that every heifer you raise generates revenue for the farm? Let us help you write your story, because no two stories are alike.

Why write my story?

As mentioned, rearing is one of the biggest expenses for a dairy operation. In 2021, the average rearing cost was \$4,258 per heifer. It goes without saying that knowing your replacement needs should be the first chapter of your story.

This information will allow you to determine if savings could be made (e.g., forage, milk powder, bedding) or if strategic decisions could be taken to improve your farm's return on investment.

During this workshop, we will talk about key elements to help you raise quality heifers, but also produce an adequate number of heifers with the least amount of resources.

The second chapter of your story should be entitled "How can I improve management and genetics to optimize my rearing program?" We will highlight several tools to help you reflect on the subject: genetic inventory, Compass, Herd Summary Report, Growth Monitoring application, etc.

Remember that, for an animal to reach its full genetic potential, it must be raised in a healthy and comfortable environment.

Finally, your third chapter is about your breeding program. How do you know which heifers should be bred and what strategy to use? Does your farm have a selection plan? Our workshop entitled "The Story Behind Your Heifer Inventory" will help you answer all these questions.

Sexed, conventional or beef semen? Knowing the different breeding strategies will help you optimize your rearing program.

How do I register for a workshop?

You can register now online at sites.lactanet.ca/login/. Simply click on Register to a workshop in the upper right corner of your home page and select the date and time that suits you from the table.

You can also talk to a Lactanet adviser or technician at 1-800-266-5248 or 514-459-3020.



PHOTO: KRAIWUT_K/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

It has been observed that corn often looks better early on in the conventional till plots, but in no-till plots it does exceptionally well in the latter half of the growing season.

Is tillage economical with the current price of diesel?

Allen Wilder

William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute

Nobody likes inflation. Whether you're buying fertilizer or topping off your tank, it's hard not to panic when you see the bill. Those of us who are frugally-minded are particularly annoyed by price hikes, and we make every effort to get by with less if we can. To this end, the question has been raised as to whether or not we can still afford tillage with the elevated cost of diesel fuel.

As with every good economic question, the answer, of course, is "it depends." To get a little bit more specific, I turned to the Energy Estimator tool available online from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). This tool uses farm location, the cost of diesel and the number of acres to predict the annual fuel cost for different tillage programs. For the sake of argument, I entered in 500 acres of corn in northern New York with a price of diesel of \$5 per gallon (approximately \$1.32 per litre). Here are the diesel fuel cost results by tillage program:

- Conventional till: \$16,925
- Mulch till: \$10,925
- Ridge till: \$9,825
- Strip till: \$6,750
- No till: \$6,550.

As you can see, depending on the amount of tillage a farm typically uses, there could be considerable fuel savings by switching some acres to no till. But at what cost? That is the question that really drives the economics of no-till farming.

The yield capability of properly managed no-till corn has been well demonstrated in both university and on-farm trials. In fact, the current world record corn yield was harvested from no-till ground.

That being said, several years of no-till research by Heather Darby at the University of Vermont has found that there is often a yield drag when a field/farm is initially transitioned into no-till. This probably reflects the need for both the management and the soil to adapt to the different system.

No-till yields rebound

Fortunately, it appears that no-till yields do rebound and often yield quite well as long as compaction doesn't become a problem.

Cornell University has had plots with continuous no-till and conventional till corn at Miner Institute since 1973. It's certainly not an ideal rotation, but even after all those years, the plots are still growing pretty decent corn. My observation is that the corn often looks better

early on in the conventional till plots, but then the no-till plots do exceptionally well in the latter half of the growing season.

Differences in soil colour and structure are easily observed in these long-term plots, with the no-till soil being considerably darker and better aggregated.

Weeds can be a problem

No-till certainly isn't a silver bullet, though. Certain weeds, like marehail or even dandelions, can become a big problem if not treated at the right time with the proper herbicide program. Such a program often comes at a higher cost than what most farms are used to. The NRCS calculator accounted for a full extra sprayer pass of fuel use in the no-till program, but doesn't factor in the additional chemical cost. Other no-till challenges include fertility management and few manure incorporation options.

One important thing to acknowledge is that many farms are already using some form of reduced tillage. The "conventional till" system, as defined in the NRCS calculator, was really quite aggressive, including moldboard plowing as primary tillage along with several passes of secondary tillage. The tillage we do at Miner Institute is much closer

to what the calculator calls "mulch till." This includes a chisel plow pass along with two light secondary tillage passes prior to planting.

According to the calculator, switching from this system to no-till only yields a direct fuel cost savings of \$8.75/acre – which isn't really a whole lot to write home about. On the other hand, reducing tillage also reduces labour and machinery costs, which have certainly become high as well.

At Miner Institute we've adopted no-till as the preferred option when rotating a field into corn. One of the biggest savings that we have found has been that we don't have to pick stones after working the field up. The problem is, however, not every field is a good candidate for no-till corn. If there is a compaction problem or lots of uneven spots, no-till may actually be counterproductive.

Tillage has its place in crop production and, if used properly, will remain an economical practice despite the high cost of diesel.

The Miner Institute, based in Chazy, N.Y., conducts practical research on the dairy-crop interface, equine reproduction and management, and environmental conservation. Its research activities combine a global perspective with a regional application.



Buttermilk Dressing



PHOTO: CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

You will need one of the great kitchen inventions – the food processor – to make this dressing/dip.

INGREDIENTS

2/3 cup buttermilk (or milk with 2 tsp of lemon juice to curdle)
 2/3 cup sour cream
 2/3 cup mayonnaise
 2 tsp lemon juice (in addition to above)
 1/3 cup finely chopped parsley
 1 small clove crushed garlic
 1 tsp dried dill
 1 tsp salt
 1/2 tsp pepper

PREPARATION

This is a great opportunity to make your crushed garlic for the week in the food processor. So first, chop three to eight cloves of garlic in the processor. Remove all but the equivalent of one small clove and put it in a covered glass dish in the fridge for use through the week.

Put all other ingredients in the processor and whirl until combined. Pour into a 2-cup mason jar. Refrigerate for up to two weeks. Toss a liberal amount with your salad greens.

This also makes a great dip for potato wedges!



A homegrown idea: How does it become a commercial success?

Cynthia Gunn
 QFA's Food Writer

For a profession that is largely considered the oldest in the world, it should not be surprising that innovation is a constant requirement of successful farming. From daily challenges to longer term weather and climate vagaries and ever-changing technological improvement, farmers need to be an adaptive sort, as you well know. Which leads one to ponder, what are the factors that transform a home-grown idea into a successfully marketed product?

I have no answer for that. Though, I'm sure there are many who say they do. But let's look at a few ideas that did make it there.

Necessity may be one of the "mothers" of invention, but so too is a desire to do things faster, more simply or just better than before. Inventions can have humble beginnings, arising almost naturally from a simple daily desire to make something work better for yourself. Remember Liquid Paper?

Bette Nesmith Graham, a secretary at a Texas bank, found that the electric typewriters made typing easier and faster, but the ribbon made correcting errors difficult. It was 1951 and Graham came up with the idea to create a liquid that would allow her to paint over her mistakes. In her kitchen blender, she concocted a mixture of water-based tempera paint and made it match the colour of the bank's stationery. She brought the mixture into work with a thin paintbrush, and began covering up her mistakes.

One thing led to another, as word spread to other secretaries and beyond. While it took 17 years from its first application until a dedicated factory was built in 1968, it eventually became an ubiquitous item on every desk and in every pencil case and, hence, a business worth almost \$50 million (U.S.) by 1979.

Almost a century earlier, another woman came up with an idea that took a bit more upfront money, brazenness and connections to make her idea come to market. Josephine Cochran, a young woman from a well-to-do family of engineers, was fed up with broken crockery. She could find no one interested in inventing a machine that would mechanically wash dishes, so she decided to do it herself, despite the hurdles facing women at the time. She measured all her dishes and made compartments for each that sat atop a motor-powered wheel above a boiler, which aimed jets of soapy water at the compartment of more than 200 dishes so they would get cleaned. Cochran obtained the patent – under the name J.G. Cochran – for the modern dishwasher in 1886. Together with a young mechanic named George Butters, she then built a prototype in a woodshed. Cochran presented her dishwasher at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago to great reviews and received an award for design and durability. She established a company to make and sell the dishwasher, which evolved into KitchenAid after her death in 1913.

Most households in the late 19th century did not have the required funds nor technology to support such a machine: sufficient running hot water and electricity. For decades, therefore, her machine was confined to restaurants and institutions, which enthusiastically purchased the dishwashers. Most of the populous had to wait until the 1950s and beyond to enjoy home dishwashers.

One last invention that no household should be without: the food processor. Carl Sontheimer, a graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and French food enthusiast, founded Cuisinart in 1971. It introduced the food processor, its main product, in 1973 at a trade show in Chicago. Its success, like the dishwasher and Liquid Paper, was limited at first, but took off by the late 1970s. They are now so numerous that if you don't have one at home, run to your local second-hand shop and you are sure to pick one up.

Perhaps there is an invention in your garage or barn that may some day be shared beyond the farm gate.

Cynthia Gunn is a researcher and writer, covering issues related to environment, heritage, tourism and food. She runs a small catering business and lives in Western Quebec with her two daughters and husband. She holds a MA in Geography.

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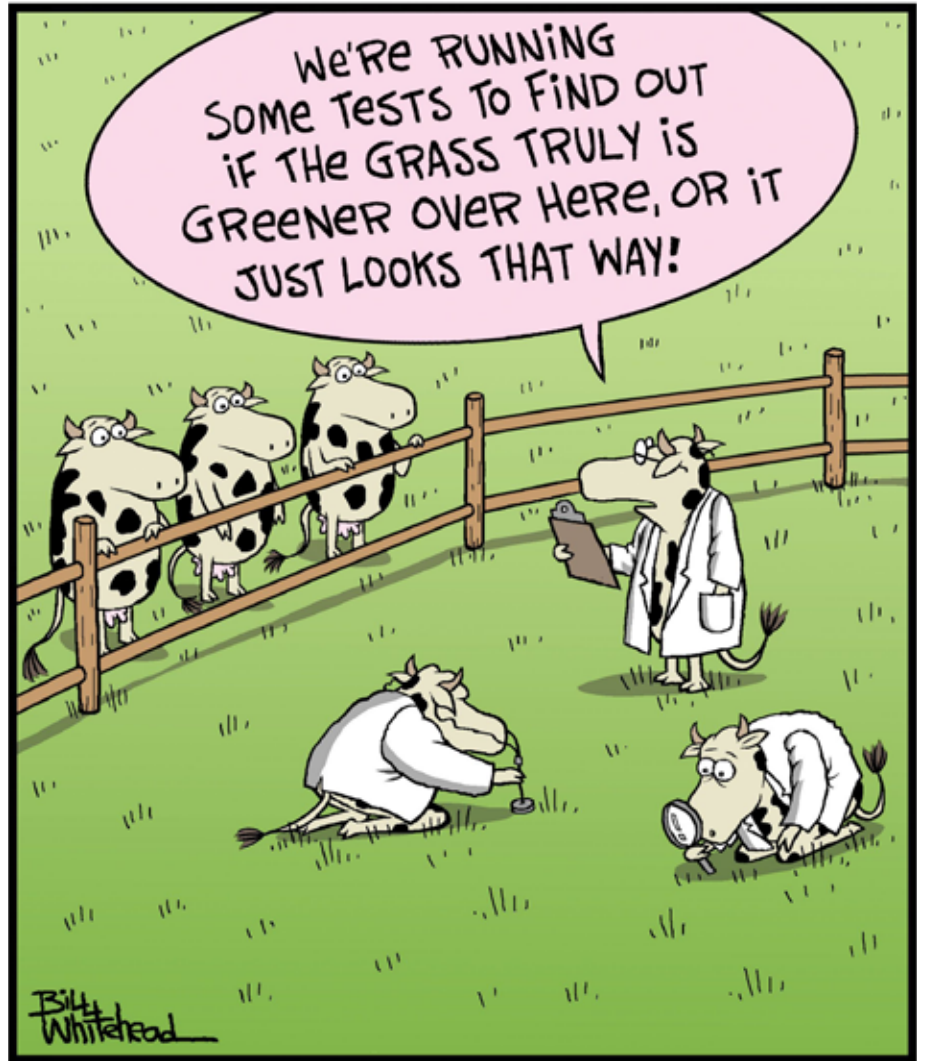
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