



## WHAT'S INSIDE

Soil should be seen as national asset: Senate Page 3

Farming group slams capital gains changes Page 14

Tornado rips through parts of west Quebec Page 5

7th generation expands Outaouais farm Page 7

Indonesian farmers learn from Quebec Page 13

**"The Government of Canada should designate soil as a strategic national asset."**

— From the Canadian Senate report *Critical Ground: Why Soil is Essential to Canada's Economic, Environmental, Human and Social Health* released June 6

## QFA VIDEOCONFERENCES

**Wednesday, July 24**  
at 7:30 p.m.

**Heated Greenhouses for Market Gardening**

See page 14 for details.

## ALL SMILES AT THE FAIR



THE ADVOCATE

The excitement of showing your best was on full display at the Ormstown Fair earlier this month. It might have been raining most of the weekend of the four-day exhibition, but inside the area it was all smiles. **For more photos, see Page 7.**

## Quebec encouraging farmers to market directly to consumers

**Andrew McClelland**  
*The Advocate*

The provincial government has announced a new envelope of \$4 million to encourage Quebec consumers to buy their food directly from agricultural producers.

But if you're an agri-business owner, act fast! Project submissions for the program are open until Oct. 31, 2024 – or until funds run out. That means the earlier you submit a proposal, the more likely you are to receive funding.

"I'm very happy with this new support, which will promote local marketing and help bring consumers even closer to those who feed us," said Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne during the "Mise en marché de proximité et agrotourisme" announcement on May 31.

"The supported projects will make it possible to offer Quebecers even more fresh, quality products. I invite businesses

and business groups from across the province to submit their projects."

The Mise en marché de proximité et agrotourisme 2024-2026 program is designed to support local marketing and agritourism initiatives, both collective and individual (i.e. both individual producers and collective agri-businesses may apply). Producers, businesses, public institutions, co-ops and non-profit organizations can put forth a plan to shorten the supply chain between producers and consumers and bring farmers and the public closer together.

"Local marketing is an important development lever both for bio-food companies and for (rural) regions," the government claimed in an official statement. "It makes it possible to support joint planning for the marketing of local products or to finance projects aimed at better positioning a company's products on local markets."

See BUY LOCAL, Page 4

## Responding to call for help: Quebec offers farmers \$200 million

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

If Quebec farmers wondered whether the provincial government got the message conveyed by their demonstrations earlier this year – as convoys of tractors paraded along the streets of urban centres drawing the public's attention to the growing list of issues that threaten the financial viability of agricultural producers – provincial Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne earlier this month said "Yes."

Lamontagne's response to the protests also came with an announcement of more than \$200 million in help to mitigate the crisis in the farming sector.

"The economic and weather hazards of recent years have undermined the economic stability of our (farm) businesses," Lamontagne said as he announced the measures at a press conference in Les Cèdres on June 13. "In such situations, it calls on us to show solidarity with our producers."

Quebec will add an additional \$30 million to its so-called emergency fund created last year to help farmers deal with inflationary costs, bringing the total amount of the fund to \$55 million. These funds are expected to help about 3,000 agricultural businesses in the province that are considered to be in financial difficulty.

Another \$37.1 million will help young producers offset the cost of increased interest rates. This measure is expected to help about 2,900 producers who have recently launched operations.

The largest infusion of cash – \$106 million over five years – will come in the form of grants to help producers adapt to changes caused by climate change. The details will be outlined in the coming weeks.

See SUPPORT, Page 4



# Just the facts

## 12%

The amount by which world GDP will drop for every 1-degree-Celsius increase in global temperature, according to a new study released in May by Harvard University's Adrien Bilal and Diego Kanzig of Northwestern University entitled The Macroeconomic Impact of Climate Change: Global vs. Local Temperature, published by the U.S.-based National Bureau of Economic Research.

Source: The U.S.-based National Bureau of Economic Research

## 43%

The percentage of Quebec farmers who predict the financial health of their farm business will deteriorate in 2024.

Source: UPA

## 14%

Percentage of agricultural producers in Quebec who operate farms with annual revenues under \$100,000 that fear going out of business.

Source: UPA poll – Sondage sur la situation financière des fermes – May 23, 2024

## 319

The average number of acres of farmland lost a day – the equivalent of nine family farms taken out of agricultural production per week.

Source: FarmOntario analysis based on Census of Agriculture statistics

## BLUE SKIES AND GREEN GRASS



BRENDA O'FARRELL, THE ADVOCATE

And an old tractor to keep you company. What more could this grazer need? Certainly not a fence, it seems. At least not on this quiet road in the little town of Très St. Rédempteur, near the Ontario boarder. Everyone stays put when there is plenty to eat.



### Mission

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

### Vision

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

### Shared Values

#### Members of the QFA believe in:

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

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## Quebec Farmers' Association Membership Application

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Signature .....

### Membership includes

- a one year subscription to the Quebec Farmers' Advocate
- discounts on QFA sponsored events and services
- free advertising in the Advocate's classified ads
- voting privileges at the QFA Annual General Meeting

### Quebec Farmers' Association

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Longueuil, Quebec J4H 4E7

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



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THE SENATE OF CANADA

Senator Robert Black was born on a farm in Fergus, Ont., and has become a leading soil health advocate in Ottawa. "Climate change, extreme weather events and urbanization are degrading soil conditions in every region of this country," said Black in a press conference for the release of a new Senate Committee on Agriculture earlier this month.

## Make soil a national asset: Senate report

**Andrew McClelland**  
*The Advocate*

Designating soil as a "strategic national asset" is one of 25 recommendations put forward by the Canadian Senate agriculture committee to protect the soil structure on Canadian farmlands in a report issued earlier this month.

"We do not have another 40 years to protect and conserve our soils," said Senator Robert Black, chair of the Senate agriculture committee, as he unveiled the new two-year study entitled "Critical Ground: Why Soil is Essential to Canada's Economic, Environmental, Human and Social Health" on June 6.

The report, which took two years to compile with on-site tours and presentations from farmers, ranchers, research scientists and government officials, recommends that the federal government appoint a national soil advocate.

It is the first substantive study of soil produced by the Senate in four decades, when in 1984, Saskatchewan Senator Herb Sparrow put forth a report entitled "Soil at Risk: Canada's Eroding Future."

That report was key in the Canadian farming industry's adoption of no-till farming. Since then, soil management has improved in Canada and crop yields have increased. But the country's soil faces new challenges.

"Climate change, extreme weather events and urbanization are degrading soil conditions in every region of this country," said Black, who previously worked for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture for 15 years. "We need to look at this strategically because it is an important issue."

The latest study gathered information from more than 150 producers and considered 60 written briefs, along with supporting documents from soil science researchers, agronomists, farmers, ranchers, foresters, environmental organizations, agri-businesses, industry groups and federal, provincial and territorial governments to make its recommendations.

Chief among those recommendations is the proposal that Canada change the public conversation about how vital soil is to the nation's health and economy.

"Soil is a valuable natural resource," states a leading paragraph in the 160-page report. "The Government of Canada should designate soil as a strategic national asset. Other countries, such as Australia, have appointed a national soils advocate; the committee believes that the Government of Canada should do the same."

The report also suggests that Canada's current methods for measuring soil health are not advanced enough. The committee called on the federal government to collaborate with the provinces and territories to support the development of a consensus on how to measure, report and verify soil health.

It also recommends that farmers and ranchers should have access to "viable and valuable carbon markets," be eligible for tax credits for soil preservation action, and that the government fund peer-to-peer knowledge sharing groups.

"To protect and conserve farmland soil throughout Canada, the committee heard that all levels of government ... should work together to plan agriculture into, and not out of, communities,"

the report states.

Witnesses also said that building soil-based incentives (tax credits for farmers, enhanced crop insurance, a viable carbon market), as well as sustained funding for soil research initiatives is imperative for producers' prosperity."

However, the Senate Committee on Agriculture notes that the problem of protecting Canada's soil goes deeper than that: much of what threatens soil in this country is the lack of awareness on the part of the public about how precious soil health and agriculture are.

"We need to be changing the perception of farmers in our children and youth," said Carolyn Wilson of the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum in her address to the committee.

"Some of the initiatives that Agriculture in the Classroom is doing include bringing young farmers into high schools or elementary schools – where the students are able to see that face, and think: "This could be me. It's not just my grandfather, my uncle or what have you."

## From the cover

# BUY LOCAL: 1 in 5 Quebec farms sells directly to consumers

From Page 1

While projects like starting up a community-supported agriculture food basket program or building an on-farm kiosk are eligible, Quebec's Proximité initiative can also fund carrying out planning, diagnostics or studies for an agri-business, designing marketing material, or simply provide money for organizational support.

According to the Agriculture Ministry, one in five agricultural businesses in the province sells directly to consumers, either in a public market, through the sale of CSA baskets or directly from the farm gate.

The Quebec government wants to increase those numbers, encouraging more non-farmers to purchase products from producers directly, or from artisanal processors existing outside the traditional distribution networks of grocery stores.

To qualify for the Proximité program, an individual or farm business must have an annual gross revenue greater than \$30,000 and less than \$1 million.

In response to criticism from earlier versions of the program, applicants with a current gross annual revenues of less than \$30,000 are now deemed eligible if the marketing plan they submit shows that they plan to generate an annual income of at least \$30,000

within 36 months of submitting their application.

Quebec also says that it has included "an increase in financial aid for projects targeting organic products as well as for those involving an emerging agricultural business."

With local market season having just started, MNAs from across the province are stepping up their vocal support of farmers' markets and farm gate sales.

"Summer is just around the corner, and it's the perfect time to discover the best in agriculture, anywhere and nearby," said Audrey Bogemans, MNA for Iberville. "Let yourself be surprised by the richness of the terroir and the authenticity of the producers. Everyone will benefit, even your taste buds!"

Applicants to the Proximité program should submit their applications as soon as possible, as previous provincial programs of this type have run out of funds well before the official application deadline.

*To make an application or read about project eligibility, visit MAPAQ's page about the initiative here: <https://www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Productions/md/programmesliste/developpementmarches/Pages/ProgrammeProximite.aspx>*



NICOLETAKLAPHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Quebec has announced a \$4-million program designed to encourage the public to buy directly from farmers. Currently, one in five agricultural businesses in the province sells directly to consumers.



THE ADVOCATE

Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne and UPA president Martin Caron announced the latest support measures for the farming sector at a press conference at Le Moulin des Cèdres, an organic grain grower that also manufactures organic flour.

## SUPPORT: Demonstration focused cabinet's attention

From Page 1

Producers in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region will also receive \$1.6 million in compensation for losses suffered in 2023 due to extreme drought conditions.

Additional measures specifically targeted at market gardeners and strawberry and raspberry producers through the Agri-Relance program, which receives funds from the federal government, will also be outlined in the coming weeks.

Lamontagne also pointed to what his ministry calculates as \$36.8 million in savings for farmers that will result from moves to reduce paperwork and reporting for a variety of environmental regulations imposed in the last few years.

In an interview with *The Advocate* after making his announcement, Lamontagne confirmed the demonstrations helped him convince his cabinet colleagues the government had to act.

"The more people raise their voices, the more they will be heard," he added, explaining the announcements he outlined reflect the cooperation of several other ministries.

In April and May, Quebec farmers staged 17 demonstrations in all regions of the province involving an estimated 4,500 participants calling on the government to help producers. From high interest rates, to increasing fuel and

fertilizer costs, severe weather events triggered by climate change to the increasing bureaucratic burden being imposed on agricultural producers by expanding environmental regulations and reporting requirements, farmers told the government they are struggling to make ends meet.

Given the extent of the demonstrations, Union des producteurs agricoles president Martin Caron, who was with Lamontagne for the announcement in Les Cèdres, was asked: Is the government's response enough?

"Yes. It's some big steps being taken," Caron said in response, but then added that the UPA is still pushing for the provincial government to increase its spending for agriculture.

Caron pointed out that the provincial government still only allocates 1 per cent of its budget to the sector.

"There is an opening, and there is optimism," Caron added.

In an interview after the announcement, Caron confirmed the demonstrations made a difference.

"It had an impact," he said, adding that it convinced several ministries to act in consort, a breakthrough that will hopefully continue and allow for what he termed "common sense" to take on a bigger role in how the government treats farmers.



This is all that was left of a chicken coop that housed 75 chickens in Rigaud.



The cement silo was destroyed, damaging the steel silo it stood next to in Rigaud.



The roof of this old farmhouse in Très St. Rédempteur was ripped from the rafters, while trees around it were splintered.



Only one chicken was found as workers sifted through debris after tornado destroyed coop.



PHOTOS: THE ADVOCATE

Debris ripped from barns was strewn around the yard at Ferme Carra in Rigaud.

# Tornado rips path of destruction

Twister damages homes, farms in Rigaud, Très St. Rédempteur, Pointe Fortune

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

The usually quiet town of Très St. Rédempteur near the Ontario border was a beehive of activity at the end of May in the wake of a tornado touching down, cutting a swath of destruction in a matter of just a few moments.

"To have it gone in under 30 seconds – it's emotional to say the very least," said Julia Asselstine, whose old farmhouse suffered the most damage in the sudden swirl as the tornado whipped through her yard.

The front of the roof of her house, which she and her husband, Daniel Gelinas, had purchased in 2020, was ripped from the rafters, while the two large willow trees that framed the

building on either side were splintered. The gazebo behind their house was destroyed, with sections of it strewn as far as across the street, while its lounge furniture was still visible, wedged high overhead in a nearby tree. The shed the couple had planned to take down, was left half standing, tattered and twisted by the violent winds.

Not far away, on Chemin du Petit Brûlé in Rigaud, members of the Carrière family who run Ferme Carra were picking up the pieces on their farm the day after the twister. The tornado destroyed a cement silo by the barn, damaging the steel silo that stood next to it.

"It passed between my house and the garage," said Carmen Beauclair, who ran the dairy farm with her husband

before their son took over the operation. The winds also ripped a corner of the roof from their barn. No animals were hurt.

Next door, where Beauclair's son lives, a piece of another neighbour's chicken barn was sent through a cedar hedge like a projectile, piecing a side window of the house, damaging part of the living room. No injuries were reported.

Only a concrete slab remained of the chicken coop next door. The building housed 75 laying hens owned by the nearby Petit Brûlé – Ferme Écologique

It was believed that all the chickens were lost, said Marie-Pier Thellen, an animal supervisor for Petit Brûlé, who was at the scene the day after the tornado. But while workers picked up the debris, one chicken was found

unharmful, but with feathers ruffled.

Environment Canada confirmed the tornado touched down at about 5:30 p.m. on May 27, generating wind speeds of about 155 kilometres per hour.

The meteorological agency said the twister cut a path 14 kilometres long, stretching from Très St. Rédempteur to Rigaud and Pointe Fortune. In all five properties, including a barn in Pointe Fortune, are believed to have been damaged.

According to a statement issued by Environment Canada, data collected by the Northern Tornadoes Project at Western University in London, Ont., the tornado was categorized as an EF-1, which falls on the lower end of the Enhanced Fujita Scale that is used to measure the severity of tornadoes.



THE ADVOCATE

This was the scene on a road near my farm recently, when a car hit a tractor pulling a trailer loaded with round bails. Be safe out there.



**John McCart**  
QFA President

Every planting season should begin with planning the safest way to have a profitable crop at the end of the year. Farmers start the previous fall and winter choosing varieties, seeding rates and fertilizers. As the spring comes around, all the machinery is checked and then, the waiting begins for the right weather to start planting.

Safety should be a top priority for everyone at this time of year, the busiest period for farmers. We must make sure that the machine has all the safety shields in place and that if there is a breakdown, the machine is safe to work on. Nobody wants to find themselves unable to do the field work because of an accident. This spring has been especially difficult with all the rain, and farmers putting in long hours to get the seeding done.

One aspect common to all farms is the need to travel with agricultural equipment on public roads. Over the last 40 years, machinery has become quite

large, with some pieces having a travel width of 17 feet or more. Large cultivators and planters can have working widths of 60 feet or more, so squeezing down to travel on the roads between fields can sometimes be a challenge.

### Flashing lights must be used on roads

All farmers should be aware of the rules involving machinery on the roads. The slow-moving vehicle sign has been around for decades, but flashing lights and/or rotary beacons are also a must now, and not just on the tractor. Oversized machinery must have lights on the outside to make sure that all traffic can see the width of the machines. Travel lights – and not field working lights – must be used at night when on the road so as not to blind drivers approaching from either the front or the back. Tires must also be in good shape so there are no breakdowns on the road. Farm vehicle tires are difficult to repair. All producers must do their best to make sure that they are not the cause of the accident.

I live at a very busy crossroads

## Farm vehicle accidents on rise: Be safe out there

in Grenville sur la Rouge, where Highway 50 is just 500 metres to the north, Highway 148 is 500 metres to the south and Route 344 passes in front of my driveway, which links the two. Highway 148 is also the main route across the bridge into Ontario. The volume of traffic is incredible during the week and double on weekends.

In fact, the amount of cars, trucks and recreational vehicles everywhere seems to be out of control since the end of the pandemic and nobody seems to care that the price of gas is \$1.60 a litre.

Unfortunately, with this increased volume of cars, the incidence of serious accidents causing deaths is also rising. Highway 50 has become infamous for the number of deaths. There are too many places where it is a two-lane autoroute that sometimes opens to passing lanes. The problem is when the highway narrows again.

### Drivers seem more impatient lately

But accidents are happening on all types of roads.

I don't know if it is only me, but it

seems that there are too many impatient drivers who can't wait to pass. And then there are all the dangerous drivers who do not follow the rules of the road. Even those who drive slow in a passing lane are a danger to others.

Personally, I have seen so much dangerous driving in just the last couple of weeks, I expect there to be more fatalities. I know that there are too many distractions – everything from cell phones, eating or drinking, pets. As a farmer, I even get distracted trying to see how the neighbours' crops are doing.

So as producers take to the roads, we must be very aware of not only our machinery, but of all the other vehicles on the road, and try to have a sense of what they are doing.

A car crashing into a tractor is usually going to suffer more damage and expose the driver of the passenger vehicle to possibly more injury, but no farmer wants to get hurt because of a careless driver. Farm machines are big, wide and slow, and I wish the public would slow down and realize what must be done to produce food. Please be safe on the roads this year.

# Fair season has begun

The Expo Ormstown in early June marked the annual kickoff to fair season. Between torrential downpours and bursts of sunny periods, the crowds turned out and enjoyed all the attractions. Here are a few highlights.



## Trends in agriculture



Chris Judd  
The Advocate

# Politicians, consumers need to know about a farmer's cost of production

We often hear: "If the government would just keep its nose out of it!"

But what we must realize is that different levels of government need to be more informed.

I was privileged to represent all manner of farmers and farm organizations at various levels, and I soon found that a farmer's largest challenge was to keep consumers, neighbours and all levels of politicians informed about every aspect of farming.

Every product a farmer produces has a cost of production. Whether a farmer rents, leases or owns land, buildings, machinery or animals, it all cost money. Fuel, repairs, labour, fertilizer and taxes are all straightforward expenses. But now, with all the environment laws, food safety and quality controls, accounting for all the costs has become a larger challenge.

### Debt is part of the financial picture

Adding to that is the fact that many farms today carry a debt load. This includes short-, medium- and long-term debt that can total a \$1 million or more. A one-per-cent increase in interest rates on such a debt is a \$10,000 jump in interest costs alone.

Some of my friends spend our cold Canadian winters vacationing south of the border. When they return, they tell me that most foods are much cheaper in the U.S. Most people – politicians, too – don't realize that the current U.S. farm bill provides \$1.5 trillion in support for U.S. agriculture. That is why some food items are cheaper.

### Subsidies in other countries

About 20 years ago while I was on the Quebec milk board, I calculated that if our dairy farm, which back then milked about 90 cows, was in the U.S., we would receive \$1 million yearly in subsidies and tax breaks. That same year in Canada our dairy farms received zero in milk subsidies. That makes a big difference when calculating the cost of production.

In many European countries, farmers receive monetary incentives for keeping the countryside clean and fresh. Some of Canada's farm products (milk, eggs, and chicken) are marketed under



NAME/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Everything produced on the farm costs money, and not all those elements – like environmental protection restrictions – can easily be calculated.

a quota system that places the cost of surplus product in the hands of the farmers who produce it.

A cost-of-production formula is applied to control prices, and only the most efficient farm shows a profit. This gives all farmers a strong incentive to produce as economical as possible, but also plan for tomorrow.

When farmers implemented this quota system, the government promised to no longer allow other countries to "dump" their surplus dairy, egg and chicken products into the Canadian market. Canadian farmers have kept up their side of the bargain!

### Protecting land part of equation

One of our biggest challenges to keep food costs reasonable is to keep good farmland for farming. Even though

only 1 per cent of Canada's land is suitable for farming, there is constant pressure from cities, towns and developers to use nice flat well-drained "stoneless," farmland to build houses, roads and parking lots on.

Some of the most frustrating challenges to informing politicians is:

- Just when we get the majority of a group informed about the important challenges to keep our food safe and affordable, the political party gets defeated, politicians retire or staff retire and we have to start to get a new group of politicians and staff informed.
- Too many "wanna-be" politicians care more about getting elected than they do about doing the right thing.
- Most large companies have very large lobbying budgets and lawyers.

It is difficult for a group of farmers to compete against that.

Many of those who farmers are trying to lobby and inform are quite "well off" and are not as affected by increased food prices, housing prices, or fuel prices as most of our consumers are.

Passing on our history about who pioneered and built this country and the hardships of our ancestors is also our responsibility to not only inform our next generation about, but also remind our politicians how it came to be.

Remember that our politicians want and need to know that decisions to maintain soil, water and air quality are necessary for the future of our world's population. Keeping them informed is everybody's responsibility.





# 7th generation expands family farm in Outaouais region

**Andrew McClelland**  
*The Advocate*

Sometimes the early childhood memory of being on the farm is enough to set your path in life. And for 20-year-old Travis Larwill, growing up on the family farm in Buckingham, Que., in the Outaouais region was full of such memories.

"I don't know what it is, but I've always wanted to farm. Just hearing my grandfather's stories and talking with him and my grandmother, seeing my dad farm, made me love it so much. It gave me a passion to want to grow the farm."

Larwill is the seventh generation of his family to work the land in Buckingham, which is now part of the municipality of Gatineau. His grandfather made the decision to wrap up the family's dairy operation and focus on cash-cropping when Travis was a toddler, keeping the young aspiring farmer busy with the annual wheat and grain crop.

Larwill is an only child, and that came with a lot of attention from his father and grandparents – and the knowledge that he had to take on his fair share of the workload.

"It was pretty good," Larwill said, before adding: "and then sometimes you wish you had a brother to spread the work around with!"

**Opted to enroll at Mac**

When it came time to decide what to do after high school, Larwill knew that he didn't want to stray too far from the family farm. He wanted to be able to get back on weekends to help his father, Randy Larwill. Macdonald Campus, a "short" 150 kilometres away, seemed like an ideal fit.

"My grandfather had done some agricultural classes, but I'm the first one from my family to go into a university program for farming," Larwill said. "I always wanted to have more education after high school in agriculture and I had friends who raved about how great Mac was."

In the fall of 2021, Larwill enrolled in the Farm Management and Technology program. While the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic required that



COURTESY OF TRAVIS LARWILL

Twenty-year-old Travis Larwill is the seventh generation to farm land in an area of the Outaouais region that was once part of the town of Buckingham. Although the operation focuses on cash crops, he has recently moved into sheep production since graduating from Macdonald Campus.

students remained masked at all times, he was able to attend in-person classes and meet members of Quebec's larger English-speaking farming community.

For many students at FMT, the highlight of the program are the required internships, where students stay for weeks at a time with another farm family across the country. For Larwill, that meant heading to Marquette, Man., about 50 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg, where he worked with Jeff and Chris McMillan. It was an eye-opening trip.

## Internship opened eyes to possibilities

"I drove out there," Larwill said. "At first you see a bit of bush in eastern Manitoba and then it just opens up till you see nothing but prairie farmland."

Larwill's family farm never had any livestock during his childhood, but seeing a Manitoba dairy, beef and cash-crop operation allowed him to have a hint of what animal tending is like.

"I saw a completely different way of farming," he said. "Helping with beef

and dairy, making feed – it was great to get experience on all those things I had been studying at Mac."

That experience gave Larwill an idea to diversify his family farm back home: if he started building a small herd of sheep now, it could be a great way to use the family's vacant dairy barn – and add a new revenue stream to its operations.

"At first, I thought getting into beef would be best," Larwill said. "But it was too expensive and sheep was an operation you could basically run by hand."

Larwill had his first lambing season this year. He describes it as a "pretty good start" with all the enthusiasm of a young producer excited to apply the theory he had learned at school on the farm.

"It was definitely a steep learning curve. But any time I was stuck, I could go back to my books and get most of the answers for what I needed to do."

For Larwill, the family farm, which also includes 650 acres of cash crops, is the obvious place to stay. His father



is still working and ready to share his experience.

"With the prices these days, just getting land is so hard if you want to start in agriculture. I made great farm connections with people at Mac, and we have the land here. After that, knowing people is often the best tool we have."



COURTESY OF THE UPA

Premier François Legault was at the Maison de l'UPA earlier in June to discuss the help farmers need in both the short and long term. And progress has been made in that regard, as six specific ways the government will help were announced.



**Martin Caron**  
UPA President

## Advocacy making gains, but there is still much work to do

At the end of a working meeting on June 3 at the Maison de l'UPA, Premier François Legault and Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne announced that a series of measures were being considered to help producers facing difficulties related to the difficult economic situation in the context of the ongoing mobilization and demands from the UPA.

On June 13, following approval from cabinet and due diligence with the Canadian government (for the AgriRecovery program), Lamontagne confirmed that six measures totalling \$233.6 million were set to be adopted in short order.

In brief, the measures include a new ministerial initiative to limit the

consequences of the drought in Abitibi-Témiscamingue in 2023 (\$1.6 million), an increase in the emergency initiative (\$30 million in working capital loan guarantees), the adaptation of the Secure Rate for Aspiring Farmers in the Protection against Interest Rate Hikes program (\$37.1 million), the triggering of the AgriRecovery initiative in the wake of the extreme weather events of 2023 (\$22 million for excess rain), a series of regulatory and administrative relief measures (\$36.9 million), and additional support for climate change adaptation (\$106 million).

As I said earlier, after months of demonstrations, advocacy and offering quantified proof of how farmers are being affected, this outcome marks a step forward given the unfavourable economic context in which our businesses operate, the climate challenges they must deal with, and the heavy

administrative and regulatory burden that is harming their competitiveness.

That said, there is still a lot of work to be done, with only one year left before the renewal of Quebec's Bio-Food Policy. In the medium to long term, much remains to be done, and we will continue to advocate for budgets, policies and measures that reflect the critical importance of agriculture and agri-food holds for society.

The expectations of the industry, of each production sector and of the remote areas in this regard are high. In recent years, the government has been investing massively in various so-called "priority" areas. This can be seen in the energy, transport and battery industries in particular. Obviously, where there is a will, there is a way.

Current and future farmers rightly believe their mission is just as worthy – and that much stronger support is not

only required but crucial to reaching the economic, strategic, territorial and food-related ambitions of Quebecers. The next Bio-Food Policy must, therefore, prepare the way for a major upgrade in all these respects.

Our farm businesses are true ecosystems, and their contributions to the larger community goes far beyond the food itself. For example, the production of healthy and sustainable food does more than merely keep people fed, it has a beneficial impact on the health of our fellow citizens.

Moreover, carbon sequestration in agricultural soil has a positive effect on the protection of the environment as a whole. Clearly, departments other than the Agriculture Ministry should recognize the substantial contribution of the agricultural sector to their respective missions and lend their support.



# The next generation of farmers: Starting out was never easy, but it has gotten harder

**Andrew McClelland**  
*The Advocate*

Agricultural production has never been for the faint of heart. And maybe it's never been easy being a young farmer in Canada.

But today's young producers face challenges that previous generations never had, from the pressures of keeping up with technological change, to the fears of climate change and extreme weather.

No one in Quebec knows that more than the Fédération de la relève agricole. Established in 1982, the FRAQ is the voice of the next generation of Quebec farmers, fighting for the improvement of working conditions for the 8,000 professional and aspiring farmers in the province between the ages of 16 and 39.

"Our membership isn't limited to people actively working in agriculture, because we recognize that it can be so hard to break into the industry," said Meghan Jarry, a former dairy producer from Abitibi-Témiscamingue who works as an administrator for the federation.

"Especially with land prices being so high right now, and start-up capital being hard to acquire, we welcome anyone between 16 and 39 who wants to get into agriculture."

## First-hand experience

Jarry knows how hard it can be to get started in farming first-hand. Raised in the Montreal suburb of Boucherville, she bravely enrolled in farm management at Université Laval. Several years later, she married a dairy producer and moved to the little town of Palmarolle, 65 kilometres north of Rouyn-Noranda.

"I was able to see, very up close and personal, how succession planning can be difficult and emotional," she said, relating her husband's struggles in navigating his own farm transfer. "And now, I'm still very much committed to seeing that it goes well because that farm will maybe one day be our son's farm."

Succession planning is just one of the challenges that FRAQ addresses as it advocates for young farmers within the



Meghan Jarry bravely enrolled in farm management at Université Laval after growing up near Montreal. Now, she advocates for young farmers with the Fédération de la relève agricole.

Union des producteurs agricoles and at the provincial level. And its recommendations on the topic are concrete, well-researched and sometimes radical, as Jarry explained in a June 12 video-conference with the Quebec Farmers' Association.

## Relève advocates for farm splitting

For instance, FRAQ recommends Quebec allow for the splitting or dividing of farmland so that succession can be made easier, a change that would overturn the Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec's long-held ban on splitting farmland.

But, says FRAQ, "splitting farmland can be beneficial for certain agricultural projects, particularly those involving the next generation. By encouraging the diversity of models, it can be a beneficial element in starting new businesses."

The FRAQ also has solid proposals for changing the way farm financing works in the province.

"We want to help young producers by abolishing the 'part-time' category in La Financière agricole's programs," Jarry said, echoing a long-held grievance of many producers who are trying to establish themselves. "So many more producers could be helped if all farm start-ups could qualify for the full-time subsidy."

## No shame in being a part-timer

In fact, the distinction between part-time producers and full-time producers is one that the FRAQ is challenging in its advocacy work. For generations now, many producers in central and Atlantic Canada have found it necessary to find off-farm work to maintain a stable income. And that shouldn't be a point of shame among farmers, young or old.

"There's this perception that, if you are a part-time farmer, you are not a 'real' farmer," Jarry said. "And changing the perception of the industry from within, and changing how the public perceives it, is part of what FRAQ does."

For Jarry, creating an atmosphere of hope for young farmers in the agriculture industry is a constant battle, waged on a personal level. When asked if the dominant mood among young producers is one of optimism, she reflects pensively and responds:

"Well, when I got into dairy, I was so eager," she said. "And my friends said to me: 'Just wait till you've been farming five years!' I do find that I'm more jaded now than I was at the beginning. But we have to support one another and power through. And the community at FRAQ is one that powers through and endures."



## QFA videoconferences

# Save the date! Heated Greenhouses for Market Gardening

*with Nicolas Audet of La ferme la Cigale et la Fourmi*

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 24, 7:30 P.M.**

Nicolas Audet knows all about how essential heated greenhouses can be to fruit and vegetable production. At La ferme la Cigale et la Fourmi in Carleton-sur-Mer in Gaspé, he and his family market supply more than 100 families with baskets of produce. He will discuss the ups and downs of heated greenhouse construction and integration.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83049787931?pwd=oaKXBz1M6r3lpHRnNnSb4ZlFqgbz6n.1>

**Meeting ID: 830 4978 7931**

**Passcode: 084123**

The best place to find news, links and passcodes regarding QFA's Zoom meetings is at our Facebook Group: [facebook.com/groups/306871089363565](https://www.facebook.com/groups/306871089363565)

To be added to our email list so you never miss a videoconference, write to [qfa\\_advocate@yahoo.ca](mailto:qfa_advocate@yahoo.ca)



# Helping your neighbour – international style

## UPA-DI initiative in Indonesia proves value of sharing farming know-how

**Gib Drury**

*The Advocate*

Nestled in the shadow of Gunung Lawu, an inactive volcano in central Java, Indonesia, the women in four small villages got together 13 years ago to form Kokama, a cassava growing cooperative.

Cassava is a perennial woody shrub with a starchy edible root tuber that is a major source of carbohydrates. It is extensively cultivated in tropical and sub-tropical regions.

In Java, the primary agricultural products grown are rice, interspersed with corn, cassava, papaya and chilis. The landscape is gorgeous, with ancient verdant rice paddies in the valleys and terraced up every hillside. The farmers live in lovely houses, surrounded by their small farms that encircle the villages.

Cassava is a secondary crop, planted primarily by the women who harvest the roots, process them and take it to market. The women members of the Kokama growing cooperative are committed to what is called natural farming – a system of farming first practised in India, which emphasizes a closed natural system of growing crops, while simultaneously building a strong community.

Imagine, you are an Indonesian farmer, a member of Kokama, growing cassava on your two acres of land. And, out of the blue, you are invited to a meeting with a so-called “foreign expert” on collective marketing. The expert is an old white guy, a cattle farmer from Quebec with a long association with the Union des producteurs agricoles – International Development (UPA-DI). How can he possibly help with marketing cassava?

Yet, out of sheer curiosity and the promise of a free lunch, you show up at the meeting. Much to your surprise, 30 neighbouring farm women also attend, only to discover the expert knows nothing about growing cassava. He has never even seen a cassava plant before.

But being Indonesian and ever so polite, you graciously listen to what he has to say and are surprisingly encouraged.

He tells you that Quebec farmers have extensive experience in collective marketing and he begins to share his knowledge and experiences with you.

First, he explains what determines the price of agricultural products, including cassava. He points out that selling



PHOTO: GIB DRURY, THE ADVOCATE

Gib Drury and Chantal Tie met with members of the Kokama growing cooperative in Java, Indonesia, in May.

it to the few itinerant buyers on an individual basis is perhaps not the best way to maximize your income. He proposes two collective marketing alternatives.

The first is to bring cassava to a central selling point and auction it off.

The second is to have the Kokama growing collective buy the cassava from the members and resell it.

You and the other members of Kokama are interested in the second option, but the cooperative does not have the capital to buy the initial harvest or build a storage facility to store the cassava until it can be sold. However, you learn that international development agencies, such as UPA-DI, have market development funds to provide the capital for collective marketing projects in countries like Indonesia.

He outlines the major policy objectives of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and those of Canada, Indonesia and the major international donor agencies, like UPA-DI.

As it turns out, these match perfectly with Kokama's mission and could align with its new business plan, making them eligible for development funds.

Suddenly, things started to look up. There is a buzz in the air and an excited discussion, new ideas begin to emerge.

If they had a new storage facility, why would they not combine it with a processing facility to add value to their cassava? They could expand their processing of cassava into mocaf flour, a gluten-free substitute for imported wheat flour. With 280 million consumers in Indonesia, there is a ready market for healthy products made from cassava and mocaf.

All they need to do is agree to market collectively, not individually, and with a small investment and a little effort in processing and marketing, revenues could triple. Maybe this guy is worth listening to after all.

This is what happened when my wife, Chantal Tie, and I, cattle farmers from the Outaouais and members of the Quebec Farmers' Association, recently went to central Java in Indonesia for a month on a UPA-DI mandate supported by Global Affairs Canada.

Chantal, a retired human rights lawyer, simultaneously hosted workshops on gender equality and leadership, exploring with the Kokama members the role of women in Indonesian agriculture. These coaching sessions were well received by the women, who found them empowering. It gave them the confidence to demand equal opportunities with men and to take up leadership

roles in their farm organizations.

What happened during the three weeks of meetings was a lesson in international cooperation. Farmers related to farmers. They discovered the many common challenges they faced, despite being worlds apart.

It did not really matter that Indonesia is on the equator and Quebec is frozen a third of the year. It didn't really matter that Quebec farms are vastly larger than the two-acre Indonesian farms. As farmers, we face many of the same problems. The day-to-day challenges of farming – weather, pollution, global warming, soil degradation, urban sprawl and marketing produce – are the same everywhere. By cooperating and sharing our knowledge and experiences, we can all benefit.

Helping our neighbours is a long-standing tradition in Quebec. UPA-DI, through its programs, is extending that tradition to our farming neighbours around the globe.

*If you would like to help UPA-DI in its development work, you can volunteer for an overseas mandate or, easier still, donate directly to UPA-DI and receive a charitable tax receipt: [upadi.ca/manger-local-fait-grandir-le-monde](http://upadi.ca/manger-local-fait-grandir-le-monde).*



## Climate of change



**Mitchell Beer**  
President, Smarter Shift

It shouldn't be so complicated to seize the opportunity for a second "cash crop" on a farm that needs the income, in a rural community that is looking for an economic boost.

As renewable energy developers look to rural areas to site new solar and wind projects, many jurisdictions are moving to protect prime farmland – as they should. But along the way, those necessary restrictions run the risk of freezing out agrivoltaics, a method of siting solar-electric panels (photovoltaics) on farms in a way that doesn't impede cultivation, and in some cases can even improve growing conditions.

### Seizing the moment

Most of Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and the U.S. Northeast and Midwest in mid-June experienced a heat dome that generated a humidex of 45°C. So it's hard not to mix the sense of possibility with the amped-up urgency of not being able to spend very many minutes outdoors without feeling the effects. That's all the more reason to pay attention to the news coverage on agrivoltaics that has been streaming in from multiple directions

# What if your farm could have a so-called 'second cash crop?'

Consider agrivoltaics – and grow a renewable energy product

– from Albert, Ohio and India. One story about four years ago talked about hiring sheep to clear the brush around the solar panels. (In fact, the headline about pairing grazing sheep with solar arrays showed a little humour: "for mutual baaa-nefit," it read.)

More recently, when the U.S. announced \$2 billion in loans and loan guarantees for rural renewables earlier this year, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack took direct aim at concerns about the best land being overrun with solar and wind farms.

"We're obviously encouraging use of non-prime farmland for purposes of renewable energy," Vilsack said.

But that common-sense messaging is too often lost as legislators try to strike the right balance while responding to the needless but rising public opposition to renewable energy projects of all kinds.

In May, a new regulation in Ontario raised the prospect of restricting renewables on prime farmland – once again, without initially distinguishing between options that help farms or harm them, in a province that has been gleefully promoting urban sprawl into farmland and protected areas.

In June, regulators in Maine set out to protect "high-value agricultural soils" by slapping special restrictions on solar

projects, but not urban development.

Quebec has an opportunity to get this right as the National Assembly works its way through Bill 69, a new piece of legislation that's meant to speed up the development of new electricity projects and allow for more private production. Protecting farmland has to be a basic bottom line. But protecting farm economies can and should be on the agenda, as well.

### 'Second cash crop'

Whatever form of renewable energy system a farm installs – whether the "right" local answer is a solar array, one or a few wind turbines, a run-of-river hydro system, a biodigester or several of the above – there are dual interests at play.

- The urgent need for faster, deeper carbon cuts, to prevent future climate harm and eventually begin drawing down the carbon, methane and NO<sub>2</sub> pollution that is already bringing sustained drought, killer heatwaves, choking wildfire smoke and wacky weather to a farm operation near you;
  - The opportunity to reduce your power bills, increase your self-reliance in a grid emergency and, if provincial regulations allow it, sell your surplus power back to the utility.
- To look at it another way: Imagine

a small farming town that has lost its food processing plant sometime before the pandemic. No one under 30 plans to stay, because they see no job prospects. No one over 30 thinks that's a good idea.

In that setting, I can't fathom why anyone would want to descend on that community for a good, earnest talk about climate change and its impacts. But what if that conversation begins, and maybe ends, with a second cash crop that will bring income, jobs, and local resilience into the community, without damaging the land that people have been stewarding for decades and generations?

If that shift in thinking led to a surge in rural demand for practical renewable energy opportunities, rather than the misinformation and anxiety we've been seeing in recent years, would we start to see provincial legislation and programs that set out to solve multiple problems at once, rather than selling farm communities short?

And if that question makes even the slightest bit of sense...how do we begin to find out?

*Mitchell Beer is president of Smarter Shift in Ottawa and curator of The Energy Mix, a thrice-weekly e-digest on climate change, energy, and the low-carbon transition.*

## National farming group slams change in capital gains rates in last federal budget

**Brenda O'Farrell**  
The Advocate

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture is calling out the federal government for rushing forward with what some can describe as a 'one-step-forward, two-steps-back' approach to how its changes to the capital gains taxes will affect the country's farmers.

"By announcing the proposed tax changes in the federal budget on April 16th with an effective implementation date of June 25th, the Government of Canada is not providing Canadian farm businesses with enough runway to fully assess the potential implications of these changes for farm succession tax

planning purposes and adjust accordingly," the CFA said in a statement on June 11.

While the FCC is pleased the government increased the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$1.25 million, the simultaneous move to also increase the capital gains inclusion rate to two-thirds, up from half, serves to "neutralize" the progress farmers will get from the increase to the ceiling for the lifetime capital gains exemption, the CFA claims.

The capital gains inclusion rate as of June 25 rises to 66.7 per cent, meaning any capital gains realized after this date would be included in income for tax purposes. It rises from the previous 50-per-cent rate.

This jeopardizes "the success of genuine intergenerational farm transfers and the financial health of the next generation of farms across Canada," the CFA stated.

"By ramming these very significant tax changes through while farmers are in the field planting, we aren't giving producers enough time to fully assess the implications for their families and their businesses," said CFA president Keith Currie.

The national farming group, which represent more than 190,000 farm families across Canada, projects that 40 per cent of farm operators in Canada will retire in the coming decade. Given this high percentage of farm transfers set

to take place "we need to ensure that the proposed personal income tax measures announced in Budget 2024 do not jeopardize the transfer of assets from one generation of farmer to another, but rather encourage the next generation of farmers to take up the calling, drive much needed rural economic activity and help the agriculture sector reach its growth potential."

According to Ryan Kehrig, national leader for agricultural tax with accounting firm MNP, the increase in the capital gains inclusion rate will make it harder for the incoming generation of farmers looking to take over from their parents to generate the cash flow their parents will require to retire on.



OLGALUCKY/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Researchers from the University of British Columbia conducted focus groups at the U.S. Dairy Education and Training Consortium, where 45 animal science undergraduates were asked their views of the future of dairy farming, especially animal care and sustainability, and how they regarded the role of the public in influencing this future.

# Whose responsibility is it anyway?

Who needs to shoulder the costs of improving sustainability and animal welfare

**Bridget Craig**

*William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute*

The burden of responding to public pressure in the dairy industry is passed around like a hot potato. When those questions are asked, who ends up with the potato?

In 2019, researchers from the University of British Columbia conducted focus groups at the U.S. Dairy Education and Training Consortium in Clovis, New Mexico. Working with 45 animal science undergraduates, they discussed the students' views of the future of dairy farming, especially animal care and sustainability, and how they regarded the role of the public in influencing this future.

Focus groups give researchers the unique ability to compare participants' opinions and reactions to the topics on hand in real time. In contrast to surveys or interviews, the community aspect of focus groups can create a more realistic representation of how the world works.

In these focus groups, the facilitator asked students to explain what they saw as "must haves" on dairy farms in the future, how those requirements can be

achieved, and how they can be aligned with public expectations. They also discussed how the public can play a role in the achievement of these must haves.

Students' answers were expected. What they struggled with was more interesting.

They gave common answers like an increased environmental sustainability in the face of climate change, preventative steps to combat negative perceptions of animal welfare, and a reinvestment in the industry's relationship with consumers.

Students across each focus group reached a point in the discussion where they questioned why they thought these must haves were necessary.

Was it because the research and education they had undertaken told them that they were necessary for a sustainable industry with healthy, productive cows?

Or, was it because they knew that there was public pressure for these must haves?

Did they really think these were best practices for the dairy industry?

Or, were they goals that they knew consumers wanted fulfilled?

When we try to address sustainability or welfare concerns in the dairy

industry, we're working toward multiple goals. We're trying to retain and increase our consumer base, continue producing nutritious products, support farmer livelihoods, and push the industry to improve across these categories.

To successfully fulfill these goals, it's important for our motivation to be factually based, incorporating consumer demand rather than valuing perception over best practices.

Researchers, students, nutritionists, extension agents and more have a responsibility as experts in this field to disseminate accurate information. This includes checking our own biases and asking ourselves if we are putting out information edited to make ourselves look better.

Animal welfare and the sustainability of dairy are contentious topics that people can get defensive about. It's easy to fall back on the mindset that dairying works well the way it does now. But it's important to consistently evaluate expectations for welfare and sustainability, and make sure that they line up with what is feasible for the farm, what is fair treatment for the animals, and what is a reasonable response to public pressure.

Individuals in the industry can be

open to animal welfare concerns and respond with peer reviewed data on what is best for the animal, within a respectful dialogue between industry and consumer.

Trust between the consumer and the producer is the most important part of that relationship. This can only be achieved through communication and reasonable compromise between both groups.

To conclude their analysis of the focus groups, the researchers pointed out that students recognized that their lists of must haves for farmers were lengthy and, in some cases, not doable. These groups vocalized that this responsibility of working towards sustainability and animal welfare is a burden that cannot be solely undertaken by farmers. They spoke about the importance of other experts in the dairy industry to undertake some of this burden.

*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.*



## Canadian Foodgrains Bank



FDCD/MOHAMMAD SAID

In Tartous, Syria, volunteers with Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue assist program participants during a distribution of food parcels provided by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank in late September.

# Resilience in the face of adversity

## Canadian Foodgrains Bank

In February 2023, two significant earthquakes and thousands of aftershocks killed more than 50,000 people in Turkey and Syria, compounding one of the most significant global humanitarian crises – the ongoing crisis in Syria.

Less than a day after the first major quake, the Humanitarian Coalition launched an appeal. The Canadian government contributed \$10 million to match donations given by generous Canadians to the coalition or any of its 12 members, including the Foodgrains Bank.

As a result, Canadian Foodgrains Bank members Mennonite Central Committee Canada and ADRA Canada were able to support the women, men and children who were faced with the devastating effects of the earthquakes,

on top of living in the midst of ongoing conflict.

The earthquakes complicated an already challenging food security situation in Syria, where families in the war-torn city of Aleppo struggled to adequately provide food for themselves.

For three months after the earthquake hit, 39-year-old Basima and her family had nowhere to call home.

“The first days were between parks and church shelters,” Basima said through the help of an interpreter. “We wanted to go home but we couldn’t. Three months filled with fear ... there was not the slightest feeling of security that would enable us to return.”

When they eventually found the courage to return, they found their house cracked and crumbling.

Basima was unable to work after suffering a stroke, and her husband

did his best to provide by working as a labourer in a clothing printing workshop. Every day the family struggled to meet their basic needs, including food, water and school supplies.

“The situation was difficult,” Basima said. “We didn’t even feel full several times. We were offered some sandwiches and cooked meals, but they were few and not enough. I often had to hide my share for my children.”

Shortly afterwards, stress and anxiety took its toll on Basima’s mother, who passed away from complications related to her diabetes, exacerbated by her heightened fear of continuous aftershocks. Now, the family was not only dealing with trauma from the memories of the earthquakes, but the grief of losing Basima’s mother as well.

Through the support of Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue

(FDCD), local partner of MCC Canada, 7,075 people in Aleppo, Latakia and Tartous, were provided with a monthly food basket to help them get through the hardship after the earthquake.

Basima and her family received the monthly food basket, which included rice, pasta, lentils, oil, sugar, tea, tomato paste, halva and canned meat.

While the family still needs comprehensive support, including psychological care and health care, this provided a small glimpse of hope and strength to persevere through their challenges.

“We hope that you will continue to help us,” Basima said, “because this is a great support in our situation and gives us hope in this darkness that surrounds us.”

*This story was originally published in the 2024 Spring edition of Breaking Bread.*





**Paul J. Hetzler**  
ISA Certified Arborist

# Animal self-defence is not always pretty



COLLINS UNLIMITED/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Found throughout southern Quebec and Ontario, the Virginia opossum, also known as the American opossum, does not play dead when threatened. Instead, contrary to popular belief, it displays an involuntary response called tonic immobility when facing an attack. Its muscles go rigid and its heart rate and respiration drop sharply.

To help explain how evolutionary change occurs over time, Charles Darwin used the phrase “survival of the fittest,” meaning that organisms with traits best-suited to their surroundings are more likely to reproduce and pass on those attributes to their offspring. For most animals, it’s a slow process that takes countless generations, but we see it in real time with microbes.

When an antibiotic is used for a bacterial infection, on occasion there may be a very few that live due to a gene variation that lets them break down the drug. The survivors then multiply to form a new strain of resistant bacteria, eventually giving rise to “superbugs,” like Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. While this is not exactly natural selection, the same principal holds true: the fittest microbes (in this case, those that can withstand a toxin) survive.

But in popular culture, the concept of “survival of the fittest” is often conflated with physical fitness. Extreme sport competitions have adopted the phrase as their motto, and it was even the title of a 2018 reality TV show. In nature, however, the fittest is rarely the strongest.

Though survival is about finding enough food and water, it’s also about not becoming an entrée on someone else’s menu. For most animals fitness is dodging fangs and claws to live another day.

For a lot of species, fitness is blending in with the background. While I’m impressed by photos of seamless camouflage, a full-length film on it would be like watching paint dry.

On the other hand, I’d buy tickets to watch an animal immobilize attackers with glue-like projectile vomit, spew jets of hot acid at predators, or use its internal organs as projectiles.

## Faking death works

Even faking death to avoid actual death is a theatrical affair.

If I were faced with something that wanted me for supper, like a zombie or a bear, my inclination would be to run. Dropping to the ground inert wouldn’t be top of mind. Yet, for a few critters, it seems to work. A well-known example is the Virginia opossum, also known as the American opossum, whose dramatic

death re-enactments gave rise to the phrase “playing possum,” meaning to play dead, or to be a faker in general.

Found throughout southern Quebec and Ontario, as well as parts of British Columbia, this native marsupial has been expanding its range northward for decades. If you haven’t seen opossums in your area yet, you very well might in the future. Contrary to popular belief, it does not “play” dead. When threatened, an involuntary response called tonic immobility kicks in. Its muscles go rigid and its heart rate and respiration drop sharply.

Deeply unconscious in this state, it might be a tempting morsel to a carnivore, except that it also salivates profusely, urinates, defecates and releases a foul-smelling fluid from its anal glands. Apparently, no self-respecting predator wants to deal with that mess.

Other animals that exhibit this behaviour include reptiles, like the eastern hognose snake, which is native to Quebec, and at least one type of snake bleeds from its mouth as part of its act.

Feigned death is known in a number of rodent and bird species, as well as insects. Tonic immobility can even occur in humans during acute traumatic events.

## Some resort to goo

Chemical defense is an ancient survival tool used by microbes, fungi, plants and, of course, animals. The perfect example of this may be the striped skunk, abundant in southern Canada and found as far north as Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. Its weapon of choice is N-butyl mercaptan, related to the nasty stuff put in natural gas so that we can detect a gas leak. It’s very effective, and skunk encounters are memorable and unpleasant.

It’s a good thing the bombardier beetle is not the size of a skunk, or we’d all be in trouble. Distributed throughout North America, this 2.5-cm-long beetle shoots a boiling-hot corrosive cocktail to nail predators as far as 20 centimetres away. Without exaggeration, its concoction is literally 100 degrees F. They have

two special abdominal chambers, one for hydrogen peroxide, and the other for hydroquinone. When needed, these are combined, along with a catalyst, and a violent reaction ensues, jetting a defensive liquid at about 40 kilometres an hour.

The northern fulmar, a gull-like sea bird native to the eastern Canadian Arctic, launches a different sort of cocktail. When confronted by a bird of prey like an Arctic skua, it vomits a stream of putrid, oily goo that it keeps on hand in a stomach compartment for just such occasions. This orange substance often clogs the would-be assassin’s flight feathers so it can’t effectively fly for a time. More importantly, the oil strips the natural waterproofing from the predator’s feathers, which means it can’t float and could easily drown.

When your profession is “prey,” you do whatever it takes to be fit enough to survive.

*Paul Hetzler is an ISA Certified Arborist, and a former Cornell Extension educator.*



# 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:

- ▶ 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
- ▶ Updates on QFA's online Farm Forums

## Membership Application

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Signature.....  
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# 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.**

**Matthew Morin**, Denholm, Que.

**Vernon Gauthier**, Lochaber

**Neil MacLaren**, Kazabazua

**John Thompson**, Hemmingford

**Leslie Armstrong**, Richmond





# What does the Code of Practice bring to calves?



Rodrigo Molano  
and Jessica St-John  
For Lactanet

The updated Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle has set requirements and proposed recommendations in different areas related to calf rearing that took effect on April 1 or in the upcoming years.

To facilitate tracking and understanding these new regulations, and how they can benefit calves, we integrated these elements graphically at right. A brief description of the requirements and recommendations is provided as well as the respective section in the code to serve as reference for further details.

Information on the new Code extracted from the National Farm Animal Care Council's Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle: [www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/dairy-cattle/code2023](http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/dairy-cattle/code2023)

It is also available as a PDF: [www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/dairy/DairyCattle\\_23\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/dairy/DairyCattle_23_FINAL.pdf)

Information and tips on calf management can be found in the following articles:

- **Expert Tips for Raising Successful Calves – Pre-partum and Calving Care – Lactanet**  
[lactanet.ca/en/raising-successful-calves/](http://lactanet.ca/en/raising-successful-calves/)
- **Expert Tips for Raising Successful Calves – Post-Calving Care – Lactanet**  
[lactanet.ca/en/calves-post-calving-care/](http://lactanet.ca/en/calves-post-calving-care/)
- **Colostrum Management is Key – Lactanet**  
[lactanet.ca/en/colostrum-management/](http://lactanet.ca/en/colostrum-management/)
- **Quick Reference Card for Calves – Lactanet**  
[lactanet.ca/en/](http://lactanet.ca/en/)

AREA	DESCRIPTION	CODE'S SECTION
<b>Colostrum feeding</b>	Four litres of <b>good quality</b> colostrum must be provided to both male and female calves within 12 hours of birth, first meal within 6 hours after birth.  <i>Recommendations:</i> Evaluate and monitor colostrum and transfer of passive immunity; provide <b>supplemental high-quality</b> colostrum even when calves are allowed to suckle from a cow; follow practices that preserve the cleanliness of colostrum; feed transition milk (2nd to 6th milking) to calves for at least three days; consult a veterinarian or qualified adviser if transfer of passive immunity is suboptimal.	5.5.1
<b>Liquid feed allowance</b>	Calves must be offered a <b>minimum total daily intake of 15% birth weight</b> during the first six days of life and a minimum of 20% birthweight from 7 to 28 days. These quantities should be increased if calves are at risk of cold stress.	3.3
<b>Drinking water</b>	Calves must have access to <b>clean and palatable water</b> . Providing enough water to maintain normal health and hydration, accounting for factors such as environmental temperature and diet.	3.5
<b>Mortality monitoring</b>	Mortality rates <b>exceeding 10%</b> in female calves from two days of age <b>requires corrective action</b> to be implemented in consultation with a veterinarian or other qualified adviser.	5.5
<b>Weaning protocol</b>	Calves must be <b>≥ 8 weeks of age before weaning is complete</b> and be weaned gradually over at least five days.  <i>Recommendations:</i> Weaning period over ten days or more; start weaning calves when they are older than 8 weeks or when individual calves consume at least 1.4 kg of starter per day for at least 3 consecutive days.	3.3.1
<b>Dehorning and castration</b>	Except in exceptional circumstances, horn bud removal must be done <b>by two months of age</b> . <b>Local anesthesia and systemic analgesia</b> must be provided as part of the procedure. Banding is not an acceptable dehorning method.  If castrating calves, <b>local anesthesia and systemic analgesia</b> must be used, and it must be done as early as possible.	4.2.2 / 4.2.3
<b>Ventilation</b>	Facilities, including hutches, must provide calves with <b>fresh air</b> , prevent the accumulation of harmful dust, gases and moisture, and minimize the risk of heat and cold stress.	2.4
<b>Transportation</b>	Only ship calves if they are free from signs of disease and have a healed, uninfected navel. <b>Calves ≤8 days old must transported directly</b> to their final destination with special provisions, not through an auction or assembly yard.	6.1.2
<b>Tethering</b>	Calves <b>must not be tethered indoors</b> .  Calves may be tethered only if housed outdoors in hutches with access to an area outside the hutch. In this case, the <b>tether must include a collar</b> .	2.2.1
<b>Housing and bedding areas</b>	Calves must have <b>visual contact with other cattle</b> and be able to adopt <b>normal postures</b> (easily stand up, lie down, turn completely around, stand fully upright (not touching top of enclosure), sternal and lateral resting postures, and groom themselves).  Group-housed calves must have a bedded area large enough for <b>all calves to simultaneously rest comfortably</b> .	2.2.1
<b>Physical contact when outdoors</b>	Calves <b>housed outdoors, including in hutches</b> , must have <b>physical contact with another calf</b> unless separated for health reasons or protection from adverse weather.	2.2.1
<b>Loose calving area</b>	Calving areas for both cows and calves must be <b>clean, safe and separated</b> from the lactating herd providing enough space for the cow to be assisted.  Effective <b>April 1, 2029</b> , all farms must provide cattle with loose housed maternity pens, yards or pastures that permit them to turn around. <b>In the meantime</b> , only newly built barns must comply with this requirement.  <i>Recommendations:</i> provide soft, high traction flooring; provide 15 m <sup>2</sup> (160 ft <sup>2</sup> ) of resting area in individual cow maternity, or 14 m <sup>2</sup> (150 ft <sup>2</sup> ) per cow of resting area in group calving pens; ensure cows are familiar with their calving facilities prior to calving; avoid moving or regrouping cows after they have been moved to calving areas; monitor and manage cows in group calving pens; clean and disinfect maternity pens as often as conditions warrant.	2.3.1
<b>Social housing when indoors</b>	Develop a plan to transition to pair/group housing methods, in consultation with a veterinarian or other qualified adviser, if raising calves individually indoors.  Effective <b>April 1, 2031</b> , by <b>four weeks of age</b> calves raised indoors must be housed in <b>pairs or groups</b> if they are healthy, thriving and compatible.  <i>Recommendations:</i> Group calves of similar age and size together; keep groups as stable as possible; if possible, use all-in/all-out method to manage groups; to evaluate the success of calf housing systems observe calf appearance, growth, behaviour, disease and mortality	2.2.1



# USDA shows little change in June supply-demand report

**Ramzy Yelda, Senior Market Analyst**  
*Producteurs de grains du Québec*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's June supply-and-demand report is neutral, as there are few changes compared with the previous month.

U.S. corn supply and demand are unchanged. As for soybeans, the only change is a 10-million-bushel (MBU) increase in stocks.

The wheat yield is up to 49.4 bushel/acre, from 48.9 bushels, hence a 17-million-bushel increase in production. Exports are up by 25 MBU. The 2025

stocks are down by 8 MBU, at 758 MBU versus 688 MBU in 2024. The farmgate price is up by \$0.50/bu, at \$6.50/bu compared with \$7/bu in 2023/24 (all wheats included).

Overseas, wheat production is down by 5 million tonnes (MT) in Russia and 1.5 MT in both Europe and Ukraine. Wheat output is up by 0.5 MT in Argentina. Wheat exports are down by 4 MT in Russia, 1 MT in Ukraine and by 0.5 MT in Australia. Wheat exports from Europe are up 1 MT.

The estimate of Brazil's last soybean crop is down to 153 MT from 154 MT.

## Agreement in principle between UPA and Quebec government

On June 3, the Producteurs de grains du Québec attended a press conference held by Quebec Premier François Legault and Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne after their meeting with UPA president Martin Caron. Legault referred to an agreement in principle between the UPA and the government.

During his speech, Legault addressed several topics, including interest rates, the allocation of special assistance for market gardeners and producers in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region due to poor weather conditions in 2023, as well as the revision of cultivable areas and relief from too much bureaucracy in the short-term through 14 measures.

The premier did not say it, but Caron stated that the outlying regions need special support because they are the most exposed to the farm crisis (e.g., high interest rates and inflation).

## Planting progressing as expected

On May 29, the Producteurs de grains du Québec said the current planting season was almost complete. Grain production incurs about \$2 billion in expenses. After planting, there is a long waiting period before producers find out what their actual revenues will be.

"Although the measures put in place by the government are a step in the right direction, they are insufficient," said Producteurs de grains du Québec president Christian Overbeek. "We need to replace small steps with giant ones. Time is running out and the worst trap would be to take it for granted that everything will be fine without making all the necessary efforts to develop a sustainable and profitable bio-food sector for the next generation."

## Carbon market unfair to Quebec grain producers

Further to the release of the results of the carbon credit auctions and offsets, the PGQ would like to reiterate that the auctions have repeated negative impacts on production costs in the grains sector. Once again, the carbon pricing rules put forward by the Quebec government are widening the gap between Quebec producers and competitors in the rest of Canada and the American midwest.

Although the figures were lower in May – only in the grains sector – Quebec farmers still pay approximately \$27 million annually for greenhouse gas emission allowances for the use of energy inputs. Of this amount, more than \$17 million is paid specifically for the use of agricultural diesel.

## Grain producer reps at UPA provincial meeting

On May 23, several grain producers attended a provincial meeting organized by the Union des producteurs agricoles to take stock of the demonstrations that had been held by farmers and the crisis in agriculture. The event, which brought together members of the UPA general council, members of the executive council and senior UPA staff and its affiliated unions, took place in Quebec City. The participants included a few members of the PGQ board of directors: Johanne Pagé (Lanaudière), Pierre Murray (Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean) and Francis Caouette (Eastern Quebec).

## 2024-25 Advance Payments Program: Registration deadline

The new Advance Payments Program season began on April 2, with more than 1,200 grain farmers having already registered through the AppGrains app. The 90-per-cent uptake for this new digital solution is considered excellent.

Grain producers interested in registering for the Advance Payments Program for 2024-2025 have until June 30 to apply for an advance.



The Producteurs de grains du Québec (PGQ) represent the interests of about 11,000 Quebec grain farmers. In addition to liaising with farmers, the PGQ engages in monitoring, analysis, collaboration and communication with industry and government. The PGQ is responsible for acting on various economic and political levels, specifically in the following domains: market information, commerce and market development, research, technology transfer and consulting, financial protection, and risk management.





## Genoise Sponge Cake



CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

The fun part of a sponge cake is in the filling. Many fillings can be used and then enhanced by fresh berries. Feel free to experiment.

### INGREDIENTS

**6 eggs**  
**6 ounces white sugar**  
**6 ounces flour, sifted**

### PREPARATION

Put eggs and sugar in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water and whisk with an electric hand-held beater for several minutes. The mixture should be thick and leave a ribbon trail when the beaters are lifted. This will take a few minutes.

Remove from the pan and continue whisking a few more minutes, until it has cooled. Gradually fold in the flour.

Line three 9-inch pans with non-stick paper and divide batter evenly among them.

Bake in a preheated oven at 350°F (175°C) for 10-13 minutes, or until firm to the touch. Cool.

These can then be filled however you choose. You may also wrap them and freeze for up to two months.

Source: Le Cordon Bleu Classic French Cookbook, *The Centenary Collection*, 1994, p. 115.

# Put a spring in your summer with a Genoise Sponge Cake

**Cynthia Gunn**  
 QFA's Food Writer

The earliest recorded mention of sponge cake was from Italy in the Renaissance age, which spanned from 1450-1650. Hence, the name Genoise, even though it has been widely adapted by the French and, in modern times – the last 200 years or so – can be considered classic French cooking.

It was not until 1615 that the first sponge cake recipe was recorded by the English poet and author Gervase Markham. The cake at this time still resembled a thin crispy cookie. These baked “biscuits” spread through Italy, England and France.

It took another 100 years, about until the mid-18th century, before bakers figured out that beaten eggs made a great leavening agent. To achieve its characteristic light texture, sponge cake always uses whipped eggs. Similar to angel food cake, which only uses the whites of the egg, sponge cake relies on the leavening action of air-whipped eggs. The increase in volume is achieved by trapped air and water vapour that expand during baking. Hence, don't cut corners when it comes to beating the eggs and sugar or you will be faced with a deflated circle resembling a Frisbee.

Importantly, a true sponge cake does not contain butter. This is essential because the fillings are rich and the whole dessert would become too much if made with a butter cake.

The fun part is in the filling. Sponge cake is like the chicken breast of the dessert world. This cake is particularly adaptable in summer, as any of the many fillings you can use are enhanced by fresh berries. This is where a little experimentation is called for. You could opt for plain whipped cream or get more fancy and try making any number of pastry creams, like Bavarian cream, mouselline, mousse or a not strictly pastry filling but one of my favourites – whipped cream folded together with mascarpone.

In this instance, I was hankering for raspberry mousse. Sometimes when you cobble a couple of recipes together, it doesn't work perfectly the first time. Such was the case here. The flavour of the mousse was divine, but the texture resembled tapioca, which was a tad off-putting. Next time, I'll squeeze the frozen thawed berries through a cheese cloth so that the mousse is as smooth as cream.

Enjoy your summer eating.

*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.*



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