

WHAT'S INSIDE

Capital gains changes to impact farm transfers
Page 3

After the protest – What's next?
Page 5

Farmers fast approaching breaking point
Page 6

Economists share views on carbon tax
Page 7

Home decor inspired by Holstein heritage
Pages 12-13

'I've always believed that the most important people on the planet are the ones who plant the seeds and care for the soil where they grow.'

— Willie Nelson, singer

QFA VIDEOCONFERENCES

Wednesday, June 12
at 7:30 p.m.

Challenges faced by youth in Quebec agriculture

See page 24 for details.

AFTER THE DEMO



THE ADVOCATE

Tractors lined up on the roads in and around Gatineau recently as farmers from the west end of the province participated in one of several demonstrations aimed at sending the various levels of government a clear message: Farmers need help. See story on Page 5.

Quebec's sustainable development watchdog critical of MAPAQ, CPTAQ

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

In an exhaustive and highly critical report unveiled last month, Quebec's commissioner for sustainable development offered a scathing review of both the province's Agriculture Ministry and Quebec's farmland protection agency, taking aim at how both are failing to efficiently promote soil health and effectively protect Quebec's food-producing land.

"MAPAQ's interventions are insufficient to ensure the protection and development of Quebec's agricultural territory, while issues, including the loss of cultivated areas, threaten its sustainability," wrote sustainable development commissioner Janique Lambert in her 188-page report submitted to the National Assembly on April 25.

Lambert said the mechanisms put in place by Quebec's Agriculture Ministry "are not sufficient and lack efficiency," explaining that it is banking on its sustainable agriculture plan, the so-called Plan d'agriculture durable 2020-2030, to accelerate the adoption of sustainable practices, "but the implementation of the plan relies particularly on the commitments of numerous partners to support and train producers."

This approach, the commissioner says, "will take time to see results."

She then goes further, saying: "The ministry does not have the necessary data concerning the state of soil health, its evolution as well as current agricultural practices to better establish priorities."

See WATCHDOG, Page 4.

Canadian farming sector won't meet emission targets: commissioner

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

Canada's commissioner for the environment and sustainable development has accused Agriculture Canada of falling behind in meeting its goals for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

In an official report issued April 30, Jerry DeMarco, the commissioner appointed by the federal government to provide an independent analysis on its environmental and sustainable development issues, heavily criticized Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's climate policies and monitoring efforts.

In his Agriculture and Climate Change Mitigation Report, DeMarco put emphasis on the Agriculture Ministry's lagging efforts in developing a plan to reduce emissions from nitrogen fertilizers and suggested the industry needed to shape up fast.

"Given the current climate crisis and limited results thus far, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will need to ensure that all its expected reductions in greenhouse gas emissions for 2030 take place in the six growing seasons that remain," said DeMarco in a statement that accompanied the report.

"The department has so far achieved less than 2 per cent of its 2030 overall greenhouse gas reduction target," the commissioner stated.

Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay thanked DeMarco for the report and outlined what steps his ministry would take to meet climate goals in the future.

"There is no doubt we need to do more to help the agriculture sector reduce emissions, and quickly," MacAulay said.

See GREENHOUSE GASES, Page 4.



Just the facts

\$1.3 million \$66 million

That is the expected average debt per farm in 2024 in Canada, according to a recent survey of farm operators conducted by Statistics Canada.

The average farm debt increased by more than half a million dollars, \$562,543, between the 10-year period of 2011 to 2021, when it reached \$1.1 million.

Sources: Statistics Canada and Union des producteurs agricoles

That is the total amount of net farm revenue expected in 2024, according to forecasts by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, representing a historic low. In 2022, the figure stood at \$959 million.

Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

34

The number of dairy herds in the U.S. that have reported infections of the bird flu virus since the middle of March. The rise in incidents has sparked the U.S. Department of Agriculture to agree to a request from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to test lactating cows for the virus before they cross into Canada. The testing requirement went into effect April 29.

The virus has not been identified in any Canadian dairy or beef herds to date.

Source: Glacier Farm Media

200,000

The number of Quebec companies with 25 to 49 employees that must now comply with francization rules as outlined in Bill 101, following the adoption of Bill 96 in June 2022. As of June 1, 2024, all these companies must register with l'Office afin d'entreprendre une démarche de francisation and conduct all of their business in French.

Source: Office québécois de la langue française

BACK OUT ON THE TRAILS



MADELINE LANGLOIS, THE ADVOCATE

Riders were taking advantage of the arrival of spring to get back out on the trails in the St. Lazare area. Ah, there is nothing like an afternoon ride on horseback through the wooded areas to really feel like you are getting away from it all.



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

555 boul. Roland Therrien, office 255
Longueuil, Quebec J4H 4E7

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Editor-in-Chief Brenda O'Farrell / qfa@upa.qc.ca Graphic Design and Production Zoé Lindsay Sales Director Charles Couture / ccouture@laterre.ca / 450-679-8483 ext. 7290
Sales Representatives Sylvain Joubert, Marc Mancini

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Send cheques to: The Quebec Farmers' Association / 555 Roland-Therrien, Suite 255, Longueuil, QC J4H 4E7 / Phone: 450-679-0540, ext. 8536 / Fax: 450-463-5291
E-mail: qfa@upa.qc.ca / quebecfarmers.org



Capital gains changes in federal budget to impact farm transfers

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

When Ottawa announced the federal budget last month, few agricultural groups were impressed. Citing a lack of investment in a key sector of the economy, both the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture spoke of their disappointment in the lack of support the budget offered to agriculture.

Now, many observers are also saying that while the government's plan to increase the Lifetime Capital Gains Exemption (LCGE) will benefit many producers, it could also introduce a heavier tax burden onto the younger generation of Canadian farmers.

The latest federal budget unveiled in April introduced the government's intention to increase the LCGE to apply to up to \$1.25 million of eligible capital gains, an increase from the

current level of \$1.016 million, which is indexed to inflation.

"This in and of itself is a positive development," said the CFA in an official statement, noting that the government's decision was consistent with the CFA's budget recommendation "to increase the capital gains exemption threshold above \$1 million to be more in line with current market farmland values."

But the good news stops there, say industry observers. Because those same changes could make it even harder for families to transfer their farms to the next generation.

"This may make it a little bit harder on the incoming generation to generate the cash flow to have funds available to pay out mom and dad," said Ryan Kehrig, national leader for agricultural tax with accounting firm MNP.

In a podcast hosted by RealAg Radio, Kehrig explained that the increased exemption for capital gains could put

younger agricultural producers in a position where they feel obliged to pay more taxes to ensure their farming parents have a comfortable retirement fund.

"Let's say mom and dad want to have X amount of dollars to fund their retirement, and they plan on selling the farm to the farming kid – to the successor. They're going to gift anything over and above that number that they want to have here," Kehrig explained.

"If they want to have, say, \$3 million after tax, they're probably going to have to sell more share equity to their kids at capital gain rates to trigger that \$3 million after tax."

But with a larger equity share being purchased by the successor at capital gain rates, the incoming generation of farmers will feel the pinch.

"So for the farming kid, there's probably going to be more 'skimmage' – taxes being paid to the government – to leave mom and dad in that position."

Kehrig's concerns over how Budget 2024 will impact young producers is the same as CFA's. The national farmers' federation predicted the increase in the Lifetime Capital Gains Exemption "could play at odds with CFA's policy objective of creating a more favourable tax environment for young generations of farmers seeking to enter the sector."

The federation says that a more detailed analysis of the potential implications for Canadian farms and farm succession planning is required.

But for analysts like Kehrig, the new budget certainly isn't a cause for celebration for producers who are looking for a break when taking over the family farm.

"There's a short, immediate impact in terms of succession planning here," Kehrig said. "And I do see it being a tightening for the younger generation in that regard."

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- Must complete the application form and return it to the UPA **by October 31, 2024**;
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- on the UPA website at www.upa.qc.ca/en/programme-credit-de-cotisation/
- from your regional federation,
- by calling 450-679-0540, ext. 8213.

News

GREENHOUSE GASES: Minister defends record

From Page 1

In his response to DeMarco's criticisms, MacAulay outlined the steps his ministry has taken to ensure Canada's agriculture industry contributes to the nation's overall goals in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, citing the funding of 14 research labs across the country and the creation of two programs to help farmers adopt more sustainable farming practices.

"Since 2020, the government of Canada has announced over \$1.5 billion in funding to advance climate change mitigation in the sector," MacAulay said, "including the Agricultural Clean Technology Program, the Agricultural Climate Solutions – Living Labs Program and the On-Farm Climate Action Fund."

The federal agriculture minister also pointed out both its "Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership" (Sustainable CAP), a series of programs and activities cost-shared between Ottawa and the provinces, and its "Sustainable Agriculture Strategy," a long-term plan that it hopes will help bring together action on climate issues in agriculture.

Programs included in both are voluntary for producers. DeMarco noted that such funding programs were flooded with applicants and were delayed by a year in disbursing payments.

"The department's delays in funding approvals resulted in recipients missing a growing season," the commissioner wrote, "which limited the greenhouse gas reduction results achieved...."

In his report, DeMarco notes that agriculture accounts for 10 per cent of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions,



Environment and Sustainable Development Commissioner Jerry DeMarco tabled his report April 30. It highlighted Agriculture Canada's efforts to develop a plan to reduce emissions from nitrogen fertilizers is lagging and suggested the sector needs to shape up fast.

which have been increasing since 1990. Agriculture remains a major source of methane and nitrous oxide, which are potent greenhouse gases. Between 1991 and 2021, the sector's emissions have risen by nearly 40 per cent, driven by increased crop production and fertilizer use.

Those figures are still below the greenhouse gases emitted by Canada's oil and gas industry (28 per cent), transportation sector (22 per cent), buildings (13 per cent) and heavy industry (12 per cent), prompting MacAulay to defend the efforts the country's farmers are already making in the fight against climate change.

"Being on the front lines of climate change, they have felt the devastating effects first-hand, from droughts to wildfires to floods," MacAulay said in a statement, referring to producers. "Canadian farmers work hard every day to produce the best products in the world and are already making significant efforts to be more sustainable."

WATCHDOG: CPTAQ's shortcomings known for years

From Page 1

The commissioner also highlighted that the Financière Agricole du Québec's programs are "insufficient to accelerate the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices to promote soil health and conservation."

Lambert did not hold back either when she set her sights on the provincial farmland protection agency, the Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec.

"The surveillance activities carried out by the CPTAQ do not make it possible to effectively protect the agricultural zone," she wrote. "Surveillance is insufficient to detect the offences committed and long delays are observed in the processing of the offenses identified."

Lambert said MAPAQ has been aware of the CPTAQ's shortcomings to adequately protect farmland in certain

instances for several years. She added, the goals outlined in its bio-food policy, La Politique bioalimentaire 2018-2025, fails to address these failures "and it rarely uses its aid programs to encourage enhancing the value of this land."

The CPTAQ was also criticized for failing "to use all the means at its disposal" to ensure the laws surrounding protecting farmland are respected.

Farmland is a limited and non-renewable resource, Lambert stated, that is essential for ensure Quebecers' food autonomy.

The mandate of the Sustainable Development Commissioner is to audit the performance of all agencies that are subject to the *Sustainable Development Act*. Her report is part the Auditor General of Quebec's report to the National Assembly for 2023-2024.

Quebec provides \$35-million loan to wood producer

Frederic Serre
The Advocate

Arbec, one of the largest wood manufacturers in Quebec, which was seriously affected by last summer's devastating forest fires, has been awarded a whopping \$35-million loan by the provincial government to help it deal with the fire aftermath.

The announcement, made April 23, is part of Quebec's assistance package to support the province's forestry industry, as well as provide aid to workers and communities affected

by the forest fires.

The financial boost means Arbec will be able to preserve 477 full-time and 525 part-time jobs, along with about 1,000 seasonal jobs.

In business since 2014, Arbec is a leading wood manufacturer, with seven factories located in three regions of Quebec, including the Mauricie, Saguenay-Lac St. Jean and the North Shore. Four of these are sawmills, while the other three specialize in drying, planing and finger-jointing lumber.

Fail-safes on stone-picker attachment blamed in farm worker's death

Frederic Serre
The Advocate

The manufacturer of a rock-picking machine is being blamed for the tragic death of a 21-year-old farm worker in the Lanaudière community of St. Jacques last year, and the provincial commission examining the accident at the Ferme Sébastien Lépine is urging better training by the manufacturer as part of its 25-page report released April 18.

Jacob Tousignant was killed May 22,

2023, while using an ELHO destoner attached to a tractor to remove rocks and other debris from a field at the farm, located about 90 kilometres northeast of Montreal.

The Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST) spent 11 months studying the fatality. The accident happened when Tousignant was working alone, using a stone picker, when the machine jammed, prompting the young worker to step off the tractor

to manually unblock the stone picker. In doing so, Tousignant restarted the machine, which struck him. Tousignant was declared dead at the scene.

In its report, the CNESST points the finger at the machine's manufacturer, saying the stop function on the machine's control panel did not control its power source. Stopping the machine interrupted its movements, but did not stop it being powered up, thus exposing Tousignant to great danger, especially since the machine did not have a lock

or hydraulic stop switch.

The CNESST will present the results of its investigation to the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) and to various associations. The report will also be distributed to all agricultural trade training establishments in the province.

Adding to the tragedy is that Tousignant had undergone a life-saving heart operation back in 2016, after being diagnosed with a serious cardiac illness as a child. He was set to celebrate his 22nd birthday less than a week after the accident.



THE ADVOCATE

An estimated 4,500 people took part in 17 farmer protests staged across the province in April and early May.

After the protests – what's next?

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

Seventeen demonstrations over two months in all regions of the province involving an estimated 4,500 participants.

That is how Quebec's farmers' union quantifies the public protests that saw convoys of tractors take to the streets in urban centres throughout April and the beginning of May to draw attention to the growing list of issues that threaten the financial viability of agricultural producers.

The question now is: What's next?

So far, the Union des producteurs agricoles is far from impressed with

the provincial government's reaction to the calls it has made at the demonstrations for immediate and sustained help to manage and mitigate the financial pressures farmers are facing.

From high interest rates, to increasing fuel and fertilizer costs, severe weather events triggered by climate change that range from periods of drought to heavy rains and windstorms to the increasing bureaucratic burden being imposed on agricultural producers by expanding environmental regulations and reporting requirements, farmers are being hampered and hurt.

And the economic reality is making it increasingly difficult for the next generation of agricultural producers to

take over operations.

"The government's response and will to consider the proposals put forward to date are clearly insufficient," said UPA president Martin Caron in a letter sent to Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne on May 9.

In the National Assembly, Liberal agriculture critic André Fortin took up the farmers' cause, pushing the CAQ government to act.

In a statement, Fortin said: "This is a real crisis. Imagine the farmers who lost 100 per cent of their 2023 harvest and are only offered 15-per-cent compensation. It becomes impossible for them to launch the new season while continuing to make the investments

necessary for their production.

"It's simple," Fortin continued, "under current conditions, La Financière agricole is not fulfilling its mandate. Despite this, the minister does not seem interested in reviewing the programs.

"Is this willful blindness or bad faith?"

The UPA is hosting a provincial meeting with all its affiliate federations and groups May 23 in Quebec City to provide an updated overview of the financial situation farmers in the province currently face and to discuss next steps in its ongoing campaign to pressure the government to help alleviate the financial strain in the sector.

Speculation, 'green grabs' forcing farmland prices up, squeezing farmers out: report

Mitchell Beer
The Advocate

An unprecedented 15-year trend of land grabbing has doubled the global price of farmland and is squeezing farmers on all sides, the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems concludes in a new report released this month.

Around the world, "farmers and rural communities are losing land access as economic and tenure security deteriorate – making small-holder agriculture increasingly untenable," the organization stated in a summary of the 87-page report.

While powerful investors and big

agri-business tighten their control over land, the international panel's report adds, some parts of the response to the climate and biodiversity crises are adding to the pressure. "Green grabs" for carbon offsets, large-scale nature conservation, "clean" fuel production, and critical mineral extraction are all opening up new opportunities to commoditize farmland.

The research focuses mostly on developing countries, but Saskatchewan organic farmer and panel member Nettie Wiebe was one of the contributing authors.

"Imagine trying to start a farm when 70-per-cent of farmland is already controlled by just 1 per cent of the largest

farms – and when land prices have risen for 20 years in a row, like in North America," Wiebe said. "That's the stark reality young farmers face. Farmland is increasingly owned not by farmers, but by speculators, pension funds and big agri-businesses looking to cash in."

"Instead of opening the floodgates to speculative capital, governments need to halt bogus 'green grabs' and invest in rural development, sustainable farming and community-led conservation," added panel member Sofia Monsalve Suárez, secretary general of FIAN International, an international human rights organization working for the right to food and nutrition. "We've

got to make serious changes to democratize land if we want to ensure a sustainable future for nature, food and rural communities."

The summary materials accompanying the report list four "leverage points" to shift the dire picture the panel paints:

- Halting green grabs and taking speculative investment out of land markets;
- Setting up integrated governance systems for land, environment and food systems;
- Supporting collective ownership and innovative financing for farmers;
- Developing a "new social contract" and ringing in a "new generation of land and agrarian reforms."



BUDIMIR JEVTIC/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Gone are the days when farmers only had to worry about the weather.



John McCart
QFA President

During the last 10 years I have seen a steady increase in the challenges to agriculture. Every aspect of growing food in this province has come under some kind of pressure that threatens the profitability or the longevity of the family farm.

We have seen the loss of significant supply-managed commodities (milk, poultry and eggs) despite assurances that they would be protected from trade negotiations on the federal level.

A payout does not compensate enough for what is taken. And it is paid using taxpayers' money.

And that is just the beginning.

The federal government has consistently failed to keep its budgetary spending by its Agriculture Ministry on par with other sectors at a time when more is asked from farmers to tackle the challenges in the battle against climate change.

Although Quebec farmers do not have an official carbon tax, there are

Quebec farmers are fast approaching breaking point

payments already built into the fuel and gas bills as well as the province's so-called SPEDE tax, which refers to the *Système de plafonnement et d'échange des droits d'émission*, which was first imposed in 2013 and expanded in 2015. It applies to propane that grain producers use to dry grain, and poultry producers and greenhouse operators to heat their buildings.

There has been some movement on the advance payment program and the issue with foreign temporary workers but these are baby steps.

At the provincial level, the battles with the Environment Ministry concerning the REAs (*Règlement exploitations agricole*) that have been around for more than two decades seem to be going nowhere fast. These rules, put in place with the best of intentions, threaten farmers with fines or court action. There seems to be no leniency after all this time has passed.

And for all the producers who wish to grow their business, the bureaucratic wait is now unbearable.

Overall, all of this has combined to put Quebec farmers at a disadvantage,

making it harder for them to compete with other regions of the country.

Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne seems to not hold much sway with the CAQ government. Even though farm leaders from across the province have tried on numerous occasions to show the minister how vital agriculture is to the economy and well being of Quebec citizens, very little progress has been made. Meanwhile, the minister thinks he is the farmers' best friend.

The provincial Ministry of Agriculture today is a shell of what it used to be. At one time, farmers across the province had a true partner that help them with their farm business. Today, they have little help. Whether a farmer wishes to grow his or her business, or whether the person, young or old, is new to agriculture, it doesn't matter.

The municipal level is no better. The simple bureaucracy involved when it comes to things like removing a beaver dam or digging a ditch is forcing landowners to take matters into their own hands. The prospect of paying a fine often just seems easier.

Meanwhile, the increase in taxes to support municipalities is almost at the point of no return. Outsiders coming from the city with big chequebooks are putting pressure on farmland values that is making farmers compete against non-farmers. The sky is the limit as municipalities struggle to generate enough revenue to meet all their demands.

Farmers everywhere are struggling to better themselves.

What are the solutions?

More slaughterhouses, better access to local markets, a well-educated consumer, reduced regulations and faster turnaround times for projects are a start.

Knowing that there is a future for this generation and the next in farming would certainly help. Access to English documents to access services is a must.

It seems that the weather used to be the greatest determining factor on the success of a farm. Now, there is so much more. We are approaching a breaking point that could very well chase so many from this honoured profession.

An open letter from economists on Canadian carbon pricing

As economists from across Canada, we are concerned about the significant threats from climate change. We encourage governments to use economically sensible policies to reduce emissions at a low cost, address Canadians' affordability concerns, maintain business competitiveness and support Canada's transition to a low-carbon economy. Canada's carbon-pricing policies do all those things.

There is plenty of discussion about carbon pricing in Canada today. Healthy public debate is good, but it should be based on sound evidence and facts. Let's examine some of the claims made by critics of carbon pricing and compare them with what the evidence shows.

Critics' Claim #1: Carbon pricing won't reduce GHG emissions.

What the evidence shows: Not only does carbon pricing reduce emissions, but it does so at a lower cost than other approaches.

Since federal carbon pricing took effect in 2019, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions have fallen by almost 8 per cent, although other policies were also at work. A new report from the Canadian Climate Institute shows that federal and provincial carbon pricing, for industries and consumers, is expected to account for almost half of Canada's emissions reductions by 2030.

The reason carbon pricing works is simple: when something costs more (in this case, fossil fuels), people use less of it. That is basic economics, and common sense.

Carbon pricing is the lowest-cost approach because it gives each person and business the flexibility to choose the best way to reduce their carbon footprint. Other methods, such as direct regulations, tend to be more intrusive and inflexible, and cost more.

That is not to say that carbon pricing should be Canada's only climate policy.

Other complementary policies are also needed. But the more we use the lowest-cost policies to achieve our climate goals, the more resources will be available for other important things – like health care, education and other social programs.

Critics' Claim #2: Carbon pricing drives up the cost of living and is a major cause of inflation.

What the evidence shows: Canadian carbon pricing has a negligible impact on overall inflation.

The sharp increase in inflation between 2021 and 2023 was caused by several factors, mainly related to the COVID-19 pandemic (disrupted supply chains, rapid growth in the money supply and pent-up demand), and the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on commodity prices. These forces are global, which is why most advanced countries – whether or not they have a carbon price – experienced very similar inflation.

According to the Bank of Canada, carbon pricing has caused less than 1/20th of Canada's inflation in the past two years.

In addition, a central feature of the federal carbon price is that approximately 90 per cent of the revenues generated are rebated back to households. Most families receive more money in rebates than they pay in carbon pricing, particularly those with low or medium incomes. Rural residents get an additional rebate.

In other words, the policy is designed to ensure it does not raise the cost of living for most Canadians.

Climate change, on the other hand, poses a real threat to Canadians' economic well-being. For example, it increases the risk and severity of natural disturbances, like fires, floods and severe storms. A conservative estimate is that the impacts of climate change

will cost our economy at least \$35 billion by 2030, and much more in future decades.

Critics' Claim #3: It makes little sense to have both a carbon price and rebates.

What the evidence shows: The price-and-rebate approach provides an incentive to reduce carbon emissions (due to the price), while maintaining most households' overall purchasing power (due to the rebate).

Carbon pricing works by raising the price of carbon-intensive products, so consumers and businesses are incentivized to adopt lower-carbon options, such as smart thermostats, heat pumps or hybrid/electric vehicles.

Giving back most of the carbon-pricing revenues in rebates doesn't undermine this goal; consumers still have the incentive to reduce emissions. The rebates just ensure that most households come out ahead, because they receive an amount back that is slightly above what the average household spends on carbon pricing. Those that reduce emissions the most will come out further ahead; they will pay less in carbon fees but still get the full rebate.

Critics' Claim #4: Carbon pricing harms Canadian business competitiveness.

What the evidence shows: Canada's carbon-pricing scheme is designed to help businesses reduce emissions at low cost, while competing in the emerging low-carbon global economy.

For large emitting sectors in most provinces – like oil, steel and cement – there is an "output-based" carbon-pricing system. In effect, it means most large industries pay the carbon price only on the last 10 to 20 per cent of their emissions. The lower-emitting firms pay less, while higher-emitting firms pay more – creating a strong incentive for all firms to reduce emissions.

The output-based system is designed to maintain industries' competitiveness: ensuring that the carbon price does not hamper their ability to stay profitable and generate jobs in Canada while competing internationally.

In addition, carbon pricing stimulates innovation by encouraging the development and adoption of low-carbon technologies. These incentives help Canadian businesses – in all sectors – stay competitive in the global transition to a low-carbon economy.

Critics' Claim #5: Carbon pricing isn't necessary.

What the evidence shows: Here the critics are right. Canada could abandon carbon pricing and still hit our climate targets by using other types of regulations and subsidies – but it would be much more costly to do so.

Unfortunately, the most vocal opponents of carbon pricing are not offering alternative policies to reduce emissions and meet our climate goals. And they certainly aren't offering any alternatives that would reduce emissions at the same low cost as carbon pricing.

Canada has many economic challenges to address. In a world of scarce resources, it seems imprudent to abandon carbon pricing, only to replace it with more costly methods of reducing emissions – or, worse still, take no measures to reduce emissions.

In short, carbon pricing is the least-cost way to reduce emissions, drive green innovation and support Canada's transition to a clean and prosperous economic future.

This letter was published by Canada's Ecofiscal Commission, an independent group of experienced, policy-minded economists from across Canada that seeks to broaden the discussion of policy reform beyond the academic sphere.

Richard Lipsey
Emeritus Professor
Simon Fraser University

Christopher Ragan
Director, Max Bell School
of Public Policy,
McGill University

Elizabeth Beale
Former President
and CEO, Atlantic
Economic Council

Bev Dahlby
Professor (retired)
School of Public Policy,
University of Calgary

Mel Cappe
Distinguished Fellow
Munk School of
Global Affairs
and Public Policy,
University of Toronto

Don Drummond
Stauffer-Dunning Fellow
Queen's University

**Stewart Elgie
Jarislowsky**
Chair in Clean Economy
University of Ottawa

Glen Hodgson, Chair
VeriStell Institute

Justin Leroux
Professor, Department
of Applied Economics,
HEC Montreal

Nancy Olewiler
Professor,
School of Public Policy,
Simon Fraser University

France St-Hilaire
Former Vice-President
of Research
Institute for Research
on Public Policy

Lindsay Tedds, Professor
Department of Economics,
University of Calgary

Kevin Milligan, Professor,
University of British
Columbia

Andrew Leach
Professor,
Economics and Law
University of Alberta

Joel Wood
Associate Professor
Thompson Rivers
University

Blake Shaffer
Associate Professor
University of Calgary

Jim Stanford,
Economist and Director
Centre for Future Work

Stephen Gordon
Professeur titulaire
Université Laval

**Christopher
Barrington-Leigh**
Associate Professor
McGill University

Guy Lacroix
Professeur titulaire
Université Laval

Arthur Silve
Professeur agrégé
Université Laval

Nicholas Rivers
Associate Professor
University of Ottawa

Vincent Boucher
Full Professor
Université Laval

and 285 others

Trends in agriculture



Chris Judd
The Advocate

How far ahead can you see?

About 20 years ago, friends who were planning a trip to Disneyland with their kids asked our daughter if she wanted to go with them to help with their kids.

It was a no-brainer for everyone. Over the following days, as they drove to Florida, everyone watched the big road signs that hung over the interstate highways. It soon became clear that our daughter couldn't read the big road signs until they were almost under them. This explained why she sometimes mentioned that she had trouble reading what was written on the blackboard at school. She was "short-sighted."

The week she returned from Disneyland, we took another trip – to the optometrist. She got glasses, and her grades at school improved greatly.

When our ancestors planned their move to Canada a couple hundred years ago, they had some "long-term plans" for themselves and their family's future for generations to come. They knew that a long dangerous sea voyage was ahead of them, followed by years of hard work and hardship before they would experience any degree of a comfortable life. They were not short-sighted. They had a long-term plan that could be changed as needed.

People need to work together

They also very soon realized that many jobs for pioneers required much more manpower than just the wife and a couple kids could accomplish. Neighbours became an indispensable part of their future survival and success. They had to work together.

While they depended on fish and wild game that were here long before they were, early medicine was provided by our First Nation people, who had survived for centuries.

The first meagre crops grew in that hard-made clearing that the neighbours helped clear. The spiritual leader was whoever arrived on horseback and understood the basics of how this world got this far. Pioneers shied away from religions that fought with one another. Meanwhile, the most patient and smart person was chosen to help teach their kids.

When it came to community

Short-sightedness is a condition that no one benefits from



BEARFOTOS/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Canadian dairy farmers are examples of how long-term thinking can benefit everyone, including generations to come.

leadership, people chose someone who had already proven themselves as being successful. These individuals had to have a lot of foresight to be a community leader. Today, some of our wannabe politicians promise "we can do better," but don't say how. Too many of them are more concerned about getting elected on promises for today than they are about what kind of a world our grandchildren will have tomorrow.

Long-term views fallen out of fashion

More than a half century ago, when I was lucky enough to attend college, the college economist emphasized the use of "long-term economics" and a "partial budget" before any investment was undertaken.

That same economist advised the federal government. Today, it seems like too many economists are what I would call "short-term economists." They emphasize today's purchases without any thought about how those ideas will affect tomorrow's prices.

If we bought only the cheapest foods available today, many of which were "dumped" on the market, there would be very little produced domestically.

This could cause the prices of those products to rise until local producers again filled the market. But that might take a decade.

Twenty years ago there was a famine in a part of Africa. In response, some countries sent loads of free grain to help feed the people. Their local farmers, who were struggling to make ends meet and who had very poor crops, needed a higher price for their limited produce to survive. But instead, they went broke because of all the "free grain" that had been made available.

If countries wanted to help, they should have sent some free grain and some money to help their local farmers stay in business. They could have also sent engineers to show farmers how to conserve water in small dams and use it to irrigate in dry times. All of that would have helped over the long term.

Short-term gain, long-term pain

About a decade ago we visited Ireland, where the government had just announced the end of a milk quota system. All the dairy farmers who I had visited were really happy. They thought their sons would be able to come home to farm, as they would be able to double

their dairy herd and make more money.

Well, all that happened, but the milk price dropped below the cost of production and half the dairy farmers went broke. The price of milk in the stores went down about 15 per cent for a few months, the suicide rate among farmers tripled, then the chain stores increased the price of milk above what it had been before milk quotas had been eliminated. The stores took control of the milk prices, and both the consumers and farmers lost.

Canada remains the only country in the world where the consumer associations, the retailers, the processors and the government all have a say on any change in the price of milk, which is based on all expenses at the farm.

And now, some Canadian dairy farmers have already engaged in a program to monitor their carbon emissions and captures on their farms, and they have promised to become carbon neutral by 2050. The farms that have signed up can compare their progress with other dairy farms in Canada. I wonder how the other Canadian industries are doing?

Let's not let our country become short-sighted.



Young Outaouais producer continues tradition of Simmental breeding

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

For anyone not involved in agriculture, the words “family farm” often bring up images of a simple life with a few hens and cows and picturesque buildings on the homestead.

But farm families, like the Egan family in the town of Low, north of Wakefield in the Gatineau hills, know that running a family farm is a tough business that constantly requires innovation.

“We try to run a very tight ship,” said 20-year-old Ory Egan. “We take genetics seriously and do our research on our bulls and stallions to ensure we get the best quality offspring.”

It’s a statement Egan – who represents the sixth generation to farm his family’s land in the Outaouais region – makes with pride.

Any visitor to “Egan Home Farms” will see a lot of Simmental cattle. The family calves 180 a year, keeping full blood Simmentals, commercial Simmentals as well as F1 females crossed between Simmental and Red Angus.

The family – including Ory’s father, Kelvin Egan; grandmother, Leith Egan; mother, Christina Thompson; and sister, Kendall Egan – takes genetics very seriously, working together on the cattle herd along with keeping 20 Percheron draft horses.

“Growing up on the farm was great. I’ve always enjoyed the horses and cattle,” Egan said.

“I remember leading one of our draft horses across the yard with my dad beside me. The mare looked gigantic since I was so small, and I really thought it was crazy how I was able to walk with such a big animal who was so calm and nice.”

Life on the Egan farm was full of hard work and fun: going on sleigh rides, feeding horses and cows, calving cows, foaling mares and working on equipment in the winters. Summers were spent in the hay fields, or moving mares and cows to different pastures, and going to horse shows.

When high school graduation came about, it didn’t take long for Egan to decide that enrolling at Macdonald Campus of McGill University in Ste. Anne de Bellevue was the right thing to do.

“I thought it was important to continue schooling in agriculture, since

it would allow me to improve on my strengths and weaknesses,” Egan said. “As we’re focused on livestock at my family farm, cropping was one of the main things I wanted to learn about.”

And learn he did in Mac’s Farm Management and Technology program. Enrolling in the fall of 2021, Egan benefited from the program’s internship component by going to work on a whole different scale of family farm, the Anchor D Ranch, run by the Skeels family of Rimbey, Alberta.

“It was just a great experience,” he said. “They’re one of the best Simmental breeders.”

“My boss, Dan Skeels, took me in for the summer and treated me as if I was a part of their family,” he added.

Egan stayed out West for 13 weeks, liking it so much that he extended his trip to join the family for a cattle show and getting a chance to travel to British Columbia and see the Rocky Mountains.

Egan finished the FMT program just this semester. But already he has some great ideas for the family farm in Low.

“I’d like to begin selling some of our heifers privately – both our full-blood replacement heifers and commercial replacement heifers,” he said. “I believe that we have great quality in our cows and would like to give the opportunity to them to go to other farms and show what they have to offer.”

“I also think it would be a great idea to put some focus in cropping,” he continued. “As the saying goes, you can’t put all your eggs in one basket, and we do have both cows and horses. However, I believe it wouldn’t be a bad idea to diversify even more and add crops to our farm.”

But whatever the future holds, this enterprising young farmer is grateful to have come from a family farm.

“You have more reason to be hopeful when your family already has a farm and you are able to take it over,” he said. “I feel bad for young people trying to begin farming and who are starting from scratch. Everyone knows it is not at all easy to get into, nor to be able to afford.”

“I do believe that all young farmers can have a future. However, they really have to love what they’re doing. The ones with established farms will have a head start as they will have the knowledge and the capital to continue and or start out.”



PHOTOS COURTESY ORY EGAN

Ory Egan had the opportunity to work on a farm in Alberta, as part of an internship program with the FMT program at Macdonald Campus. Here he shows a heifer in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.



Summers are always spent making hay with the family at the Egan farm in Low in the Outaouais region. In this case, with sister, Kendall (LEFT).



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Quebec livestock farmers – in the pork, beef, poultry and dairy sectors – represent almost 60 per cent of the economic activity in the province's agricultural industry. They also face unique and varied challenges that deserve government attention.



Martin Caron
UPA President

Focus must be put on challenges faced by farmers in livestock sector

On May 6, during the traditional conference dinner held by the Association québécoise des industries de nutrition animale et céréalière (AQINAC), I had the opportunity to offer a few words on the challenges of the Quebec agricultural sector.

We have heard a lot about crop production since the fall, mainly because of the extreme weather events of the 2023 season. The fact remains that the livestock industry accounted for 59.5 per cent of farm cash receipts in Quebec last year. Its contribution to the province's bio-food industry, in all markets, is substantial.

The livestock industry's needs and expectations vary from one type of production to another. For example, pig farmers have been keeping the industry afloat since 2022, in particular by agreeing to significant price reductions to help abattoirs that were going through financial difficulties. In 2024, these same businesses continue to experience the repercussions.

Moreover, the *Éleveurs de porcs du Québec* has submitted a \$70-million plan to the provincial government to support and assist pork businesses. The purpose of this plan is to quickly inject liquidity into pork businesses, improve on-farm productivity, support investments in animal welfare and biosecurity, and provide assistance for farmer mental health.

The cattle industry, for its part, has, unfortunately, experienced a drop in production in recent years. However, the outlook is good, and it would be a shame if Quebec could not take advantage of it due to a lack of stimulus programs to get production back on track for growth.

In fact, Quebecers consume more beef per capita than Canadians as a whole (32 kg vs. 25.9 kg in 2020, according to MAPAQ and Statistics Canada). However, the majority of beef consumed in Quebec (between 69 and 73 per cent) comes from the rest of Canada, the United States and other countries. Gains are, therefore, quite

possible, which is why the *Producteurs de bovins du Québec* is undertaking multiple initiatives to achieve this objective, which involves the operation of auctions, the development of management monitoring tools, the revision of the *Règlement sur la mise en marché des bouvillons du Québec* and the development of cull cattle marketing. Investing in this industry also contributes to its sustainable development, including the maintenance of pastures.

Challenges in dairy

The dairy industry also faces its own challenges. For example, adapting to the new requirements of the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle will require investments estimated at approximately \$600 million over the next few years. The *Producteurs de lait du Québec* is asking the provincial government to set up a financial assistance program that will cover at least 50 per cent of the costs associated with these gigantic investments.

The dairy industry is also focused on Bill C-282, which would prevent the Canadian government from signing agreements that jeopardize the supply-management system. Canada has conceded significant market share in the last three free-trade agreements, resulting in several billion dollars of recurring and permanent losses for the industry. This must never happen again.

The poultry and egg industries have also incurred significant losses, which explains their support for the bill. These two industries also have their own specific challenges, as do other types of production (e.g., sheep, goats, rabbits).

Livestock production and animal-based products have a reality of their own. This is why government action is required in the very short term to ensure their sustainability. Quebec's next bio-food policy, planned for 2025, must also give priority to livestock and livestock products, given how economically important they are to our regions and the food ambitions of Quebecers.



Keeping 'easy-keeper' work horses healthy is no easy task

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

Horses used to be the backbone of a farm. Only a century ago, if a producer wanted to plough a field, remove trees or get into town, he'd have to hitch up a team.

In Canada, it was only in the 1940s that tractors started replacing horses as the engines of most heavy lifting in agriculture.

Yet, the love and fascination for equine companions remains. That means the work horses kept today are descendants of the past genetic selection of Belgians, Percherons, Clydesdales, and all breeds that worked on farms.

But with the more "leisurely" lifestyle that work horses now enjoy can come health concerns.

"All draft horses tend to become overweight very easily," said Angie Beaudet, an equine nutrition consultant who has worked in the field for 10 years. "Canadians, Halfingers, many of the Spanish breeds, mules, donkeys and miniature horses can also tend to obesity. And these are the 'easy-keeper' breeds that are popular for horse lovers to own."

The most common culprit regarding obesity is insulin resistance. Horses are able to produce more insulin on a higher level than many other species. Similar to a human with pre-diabetes, the insulin of a horse will kick in strongly when its blood glucose levels are rising. While its glucose levels are under control, its insulin is soaring.

Health issues to watch for

"That can lead to a lot of health problems for horses," Beaudet explained to participants at an April 24th videoconference organized by the Quebec Farmers' Association as part of its ongoing Farm Forum series. "It's what leads to laminitis or founder. It's often associated to Cushing's disease, and gut issues and even asthma can result from horse obesity."

Those are health issues no horse owner wants to deal with. Knowing if your horse is overweight is key, says Beaudet, who works at Moulée Vallée Feed in Richmond, QC.

And, much like keeping cattle, keeping track of a horse's body condition score is the best safeguard against equine obesity and the host of problems that arise from it.

"When I'm evaluating a horse's health, I'm going to use a body-score system to evaluate the fat distribution in key areas on a horse's body," Beaudet said. "That means checking fat distribution in the neck, withers, shoulder, ribs, loin and tailhead."

Equine body-condition scoring gives a rating between 1 and 9 for each of these six areas; divide the sum total by six and you'll have an indication of a horse's body score.

An ideal score in the "easy-keeper" breeds is 5, Beaudet explained. However, most tend to obesity and will stand at the 7- to 9-mark when the overall score is calculated.

Conditions are preventable

"All of these health concerns are pretty much 100-per-cent preventable and we can manage them if we do the proper things," Beaudet said. "We just have to adapt the horse's diet to stop health concerns from arising and managing them if they do."

The first step is getting an analysis of the hay you're feeding your equine friend. Working with a nutritionist is key, she said, along with getting the hay analyzed by a reputable lab.

"We want a hay with low sugar, starch and digestible energy so that your horse doesn't gain weight too easily. We also want a low iron level. There's still a lot of debate on the subject, but some studies have shown that high iron levels predispose horses to insulin resistance," she explained.

A common misconception among horse owners looking for feeding hay holds that a lower protein level will keep a horse's protein intake in check.

Keep sugar intake low

However, Beaudet said, hay with a protein level below 10 to 12 per cent will be detrimental to the animal's ability to gain muscle mass – and muscle mass is key to combating insulin resistance.

"We always want to keep sugars as low as possible," Beaudet specified. "That means no feed, no grains, no molasses. You want to avoid everything that's oats, corn, barley – all those kinds of ingredients."

As many agricultural producers know, keeping a horse is not for the faint of heart – or for the light of pocket-book. Horse-keeping is expensive due to feed, stabling costs and professional expertise required to keep them healthy.



PHOTO COURTESY ANGIE BEAUDET

Equine nutritionist Angie Beaudet conducted a special QFA videoconference on feeding horses on April 24. The Richmond-based horse enthusiast explained some of the common ailments found in horses and ways to adjust their diet to prevent health concerns.

Ideal body score = 5/9

- **Ideal score is 5** (Ribs should be easy to feel with very little pressure)
- **Most easy-keepers are in the 7-9 range** →

Just like in keeping cattle, body condition scoring is essential to monitoring your horses' health. Equine nutrition takes a close look at checking fat distribution in the neck, withers, shoulder, ribs, loin and tailhead.

For Beaudet, keeping a close eye on diet and nutrition is vital to making sure your horse is happy and healthy.

"One hundred years ago or even 50 years ago, horses could work 10-12 hours a day, several times a week. That's just not really realistic nowadays. But the right diet, with the right exercise and monitoring of health concerns can help them adapt to being kept as a hobby or for sheer enjoyment."

Inspired Trends

Mount Victoria Farms: The history and legacy

Brenda O'Farrell

The Advocate

The legacy of Thomas Bassett Macaulay has many chapters.

He was a pioneer in the insurance industry, securing his first job at the age of 17 with the Sun Life Assurance Company. He would go on to become president, credited with transforming Sun Life into one of Canada's largest firms with a reach that extended across continents. But it was his role that began as a gentleman farmer that would forever change the dairy industry in Canada and around the world.

And for that claim to fame, achieved in the last 18 years of his life in Hudson, Que., he was inducted into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame in 1961, 19 years after his death.

How it started

But, according to reported accounts, Macaulay turned his attention to livestock only after discovering that the fields he had purchased in Hudson in the early 1900s were too sandy to be productive cropland.

It is that decision that set him on a course that would influence the dairy industry throughout Canada, the U.S. and the world – and all from the picturesque patch of ground that offered a stunning elevated view of the Lake of Two Mountains.

It was in 1924, when Macaulay at the age of 66, purchased his first cow, a Holstein, for a reported \$900. During the next 18 years he set to the task of refining the pedigree of the breed.

An actuary by profession, he applied the same principles that went into compiling and analyzing statistics to calculate the risks and probabilities relied on by insurance companies to breeding a herd of dairy cows that would produce the most and best quality milk.

Edward Morwick, a criminal lawyer and philanthropist turned cattleman and self-published author who wrote several books on cattle breeding, assessed Macaulay's research:

"It is essentially a mathematical process and a discipline in which an actuary's training would stand him in good stead," he wrote, referring to Macaulay. "Through the lessons learned as an actuary, which were cross-applied to the study of genetics, Macaulay became convinced of his ability to develop a strain of Holstein cattle pure for sound type, good udders and four per cent test."



Street names in Hudson honour Macaulay's legacy. His name is lent to a street in the area of the former Mount Victoria Farms, while the name of the famed sire that anchored his herd that went on to redefine the breed worldwide, Johanna Rag Apple Pabst, that launched Macaulay's Rag Apple bloodline, is reflected in a street in the Alstonvale development.

Macaulay identified the traits he wanted and researched how to obtain what he needed. This led him to purchase six cows, which became known as the "Big Six," and what became known as his main sire, Johanna Rag Apple Pabst. This bull, dubbed "The One" and often referred to as "Old Joe," was purchased for \$15,000 and became the foundation of his breeding line. Together, these Holsteins became known as Macaulay's Rag Apple bloodline, which produced the highest calibre dairy cows in both quality and quantity of milk. The genetics that sprang from this herd at Mount Victoria Farms can still be traced through to just about every Holstein cow in the world today.

According to records, "Old Joe" was born on Jan. 24, 1921, in Hartford, Wisconsin, and arrived in Hudson by train. By the time of his death in 1933, he had produced 51 daughters and 44 sons, who, in turn, produced most of the existing pure-bred Holstein herds in the world today.

In addition to being inducted into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame in 1961, in a testament to the enduring significance of his legacy in the sector, Macaulay was inducted into the Temple de la renommée de l'agriculture du Québec, the provincial agricultural hall of fame, in 1992 – 50 years after his death.



An actuary by profession who went on to be president of the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada, Macaulay's contribution to one of Canada's better-known companies is commemorated in the etched cornerstone of the vaunted Sun Life Building in downtown Montreal.

Macaulay was also honoured as a Pioneer in the Dairy Shrine Club, a U.S.-based association that recognizes those who have contributed to the dairy industry in North America.

Shortly after Macaulay's death in April 1942, his herd was auctioned off. The 84-page catalogue for the auction held on Monday, June 29, 1942, has become a collector's item.

The Macaulay farm itself would be bought by John Norris, who continued to raise cattle on the land for a time under a new name, Norfolk Farm.

The farmland has since been sold off, redeveloped into residential

housing. Part of the farm today is a golf course, while another section is an upscale neighbourhood known for its large homes with grand entrances and paved driveways.

In 2013, despite efforts by members of the Hudson Historical Society, the barns of the original Mount Victoria Farm, which by this time had deteriorated, were torn down.

But his legacy and contributions to the world of dairy cattle genetics still faintly echo in the community where they were made, acknowledged with a few street names, like Mount Victoria, Macaulay and Rag Apple.

Unique home decor borrows from Canadian Holstein legacy

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

In the world of home decor and design, fashions come and go. In many ways, they evolve.

The origins of some modern home style elements can be linked to early whispered trends in colour and texture, while others emerge from the latest innovations in technology and function.

Rarely, though, can a distinctive decor motif trace its origin back to one man's legacy that is described as global in scope and unmatched in science by a source as unlikely as the Canadian Agriculture Hall of Fame.

That's right.

Call it the shades of Holstein heredity, the machinations of Macaulay ingenuity or simply vintage Mount Victoria Farm. But the art that adorns a recently completed house in Hudson, a little town off the western tip of Montreal, offers an inspired and unique nod to the historical and distinctively local legacy of a farming heritage that has spread throughout the world.

"I really wanted to make sure that when they see the house, you know the history of that land," said designer Samantha Vince, who took on the challenge of giving this new house its unique flare.

That house is a two-storey structure described as "a modern farmhouse" that was completed earlier this year by a couple who had up until recently lived in neighbouring St. Lazare. It is built on land that was once part of the farm owned by Thomas B. Macaulay.

A site with farming history

Back in early 1900s, Macaulay bought the 200-acre property that had a magnificent view of Mount Victoria. He christened it Mount Victoria Farm. It is from this location that Macaulay, who had made a name for himself as an actuary and then president of the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada, made his mark in the agricultural world.

More specifically, it was on this modest farm that featured iconic red wooden barns with grey metals roofs and twin silos built in the 1920s, that Macaulay applied his training as an actuary to the science of genetics, creating a prize-winning herd of Holstein dairy cattle that was so unparalleled that it has been recognized as "the

origin of all Holsteins on the planet" today, according to dairy experts.

"With his actuary training, (Macaulay) applied his mathematical theories to genetic selection, in order to develop a purebred Holstein line with a much sought-after morphology, excellent mammary systems and fat ratings of 4 per cent," Macaulay's biography in the Canadian Agriculture Hall of Fame states.

The house, which has a traditional rural-setting rear wrap-around porch, has many stunning features, including impressive 18-foot ceilings, a large fireplace and many modern touches. But it is the art that adorns the walls throughout the home that reflects the history of the site on which it stands.

Cow art

Among the most eye-catching is the commissioned original painting of a single Holstein cow by Coteau du Lac artist Carole Lessard that hangs at the top of the stairs.

Affectionately referred to as Delores, this black-and-white Holstein has a slightly whimsical flare that commands attention as she looks out from a stretched canvas that measures four feet wide. Adding a touch of the personal, the date of the homeowners' wedding anniversary provides the number featured in the cow's ear tag.

In the dining room, another original painting features the image of the iconic Mount Victoria Farm barns, which were torn down in 2013. The large work by St. Lazare-based artist Allison Robin Smith draws the eye, allowing the space to open an artful window onto the past.

The painting of the barns, with their crimson walls and white trimmed windows, that more than a decade earlier were the focus of heated public discussion in Hudson, where some residents attempted in vain to preserve the by-then neglected farm buildings from being torn down, casts the viewer back to a much earlier time, when the buildings stood proud, yet understated within a field of green.

And throughout the house, in a variety of locations, are framed vintage photographs of Hudson, which Vince selected from the archives kept by a local photographer. The prints, selected from among hundreds of images, showcase views of the original Macaulay farm in all seasons before the barns



IMAGES COURTESY OF SAMANTHA VINCE

As a nod to the heritage of Mount Victoria Farms being the place where all Holstein cattle can trace their lineage back to, this painting by Coteau du Lac artist Carole Lessard has a slightly whimsical flare that commands attention. Adding a touch of the personal, the date of the homeowners' wedding anniversary provides the number featured in the cow's ear tag.



Artist Allison Robin Smith's painting of the iconic barns that once stood on the Macaulay property in Hudson hangs in the dining room. It casts the viewer back in time, when the buildings stood proud, yet understated within a field of green.

were demolished and the land subdivided. Included in the collection are photographs of the town's principle thoroughfare, Main Road, the local train station and kids in canoes on the Lake of Two Mountains.

The effect gives this new home a

warmth and charm that is not only elegant in look, but respectful of the place it looks out onto – a little patch of land that lays claim to a fabled piece of Canadian agricultural history that continues to stand unparalleled to this day.



Climate of change



Mitchell Beer
President, Smarter Shift

Farmers' protests are decent demonstrations, unlike 2022 trucker spectacles

It was a proud and grateful moment when I saw the front page of the Quebec Farmers' *Advocate* last month, with the gripping news account of the farm protests that swept through much of the province in April.

Partly because, after nearly a decade of learning from and about Quebec farmers while patching together this column each month, I was excited to see hundreds of fed-up producers bring their farm vehicles out to the nearest cities to shine a light on the perfect storm of economic pressures they face.

But also because the protesters were doing more than defending their farms and their livelihoods, important as that was. They were taking back a legitimate protest tactic that was misused, manipulated and discredited when the so-called truckers' convoy laid siege to downtown Ottawa for three long weeks in 2022.

This was us

While the illegal insurrection in the nation's capital was in full swing, the wall-to-wall news coverage picked up the complexity of an urban invasion that produced three starkly different storylines:

- The extremist Nazi, Confederate and Three Percenter flags paraded through downtown Ottawa in the early days of the occupation, combined with the paramilitary tone and efficiency of the occupiers' supply and logistics camp, set up in a baseball stadium parking lot six kilometres from Parliament Hill;
- The continuing siege that drove many people out of their homes until an interim court injunction shut down the air horns for 10 days;
- The feeling of giddy celebration surrounding the more than 400 trucks still gathered in the immediate vicinity of Parliament Hill in the third week of the occupation – about one-quarter of them occupied by families that had brought their children along.

Within a week of the convoy's arrival, Ottawa's EnviroCentre had begun adding up the carbon dioxide and particulate emissions assaulting residents of the city's Centretown, Lowertown and



THE ADVOCATE

The protests staged by Quebec farmers made their point, drew attention to their plight and reminded us that demonstrating on the streets can be a legitimate means to get government's attention and build bridges with people who live in urban centres, a stark contrast to the disaster that was the so-called trucker convoys that laid siege to Ottawa in 2022.

ByWard Market neighbourhoods, with irate occupiers idling their vehicles for 16 or more hours per day. Health professionals pointed out that the price of convoy participants' "freedom" would soon be measured in respiratory and heart disease, hearing loss and potentially long-lasting emotional trauma for the citizens in their path, not to mention the children in their midst.

Some of the participants digging in for a long-term occupation, fed up with two years of pandemic restrictions, described the occupation as the most important moment they had ever been a part of. Equally fed-up, local residents said the estimated 100 children in the crowd amounted to a human shield, impeding efforts to shut down a radical right leadership pursuing a delusional bid to get Governor General Mary Simon to dissolve Parliament and put them in charge.

That was then. This is now

The Ottawa convoy wasn't for or about truckers. It wasn't about "freedom," either. By the main instigators' own account, courtesy of the ridiculous manifesto they posted online until they realized what a bad look it was, its

purpose wasn't to empower truckers or give voice to people who opposed vaccine mandates: Their intended endgame amounted to a coup d'état, falling somewhere between sedition and treason.

After living through the Ottawa convoy, the contrast between the two protests couldn't have been sharper or more welcome.

Judging by the *Advocate's* reporting, crowds were large in places like Vaudreuil-Soulanges, St. Jean sur Richelieu, Ste. Marie de Beauce, and Gatineau, and quite understandably so.

But the facts and arguments farmers presented were actually grounded in fact and made sense. Locals weren't harassed and intimidated in the streets, and no property was vandalized. No one was blasting noxious diesel fumes 24/7 or blaring air horns in the wee hours of the morning, night after night, deliberately driving downtowners out of their homes and neighbourhoods if they wanted to sleep.

By bringing basic decency to their call for economic and political sanity, Quebec farmers proved that it's still possible in such deeply polarized times to make an urgent, fact-based argument

without losing your humanity or falling down a rabbit hole of unhinged conspiracy theories. And to do it in a way that builds bridges to the surrounding community, rather than driving division and scaring people out of their wits.

It shouldn't have to be said, but in 2024, nourishing our hearts, our spirits and our democracy is as fundamental to our survival as putting nourishment on the table. With last month's convoys, Quebec producers have brought new meaning to the old reminder that Farmers Feed Cities.

So this month's column is just a long-winded way of saying thanks to everyone who stepped up. The thought that crossed my mind when I read the news story was: They're making convoys real again.

It isn't a snappy, MAGA-style acronym or a meaningless, three-line rhyme, so I guess Donald Trump or his wannabe mini-me Pierre Poilievre won't be appropriating it anytime soon – which suits me just fine.

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.



MICHAEL/ADOBESTOCK.COM

One study found that cows milked earlier in the group produced on average 18-per-cent more milk than those milked at the end.

Studies show milking order matters

Emily Bourdeau

William H. Miner

Agricultural Research Institute

It's not uncommon for cows to have preferences for which stalls they like to lay in, or which spot of the feed bunk they chose to eat at. What's interesting is that some cows even have a preference for when they are milked within their group.

Many studies have demonstrated the consistency of milking order across farms.

For example, Australian researchers examined the consistency of milking order of five Australian dairy herds that were milking more than 500 cows as a single group in a rotary. The researchers found that 70 per cent of the cows were milked within the same 30- to 40-minute period from the morning to evening milkings.

There are many factors that can affect milking order within a group, including social hierarchies, health and fitness of cows, estrus and even milk production. Interestingly, studies have observed that cows in large groups that are milked first produce more milk than those milked last.

The impact of milking order and diet composition in a pasture-based system on milk yield and milk

composition was investigated by researchers in a study that was published in the *Animals* journal.

Early milkers produce more

One experiment in this study found that cows milked earlier in the group produced on average 18-per-cent more milk than those milked at the end.

Another experiment sampled the first 50 and last 50 cows milked on three farms for three consecutive days.

Results varied by farm, with the first 50 cows on Farm 1 having higher milk, protein and solid non-fat (SNF) yields, and less lactose content than the last.

The cows milked first on Farm 2 had higher milk, SNF, lactose and fat yield, but lower protein and SNF content.

Cows milked first on Farm 3 had higher milk fat and protein content than those milked last.

Observational studies on the order of cows entering the parlour were conducted on commercial dairy farms in New South Wales, Australia, with farm sizes ranging from 42 to 718 cows. The one trial in this study consisted of six commercial dairy farms.

Researcher observed that all six farms had a significant linear relationship between the milking order and

milk yield, with the cows being milked earlier in the group tending to have higher yields than those milked later.

To explain these findings, some researchers have suggested that the high-yielding cows enter the parlour first because the relief of udder pressure from milking is a reward.

Nutrition matters

A study in 2019 found that in a pasture-based system crude protein decreased by 21 per cent and acid detergent fibre increased by 15 per cent from the time the first cow had access to pasture after milking to when the last cow was back from the parlour after a 1.7h milking. This difference in nutritive value could explain why researchers saw differences in milk yield and composition between cows milked first and last.

We also know that lying time and recumbent rumination is essential for milk production, and the cows that are milked later in the group spend more time standing in the parlour and, thus, have less time available to lay down.

While the order at which cows enter the parlour is out of our control, there are strategies farms can use to help mitigate any yield difference that may appear between cows milked

first and last within groups.

Managing the conditions

Reducing pen size would limit cows' time in the holder area and result in them having more time to eat and lay down. While smaller pen sizes are not feasible for all farms because of parlour efficiency or pen layout, we can keep up with everyday feed management to improve access to the diet.

For example, delivering – or pushing up – feed when all cows have returned from the parlour will improve access for all cows. A study in 2008 found that herds that routinely pushed up feed produced on average eight pounds more milk than herds that did not push up feed. Having a well-formulated diet that is not easily sortable will ensure that the cows returning from the parlour last are eating the same diet as the cows that got back from the parlour first.

In a pasture-based system, waiting to open a new paddock until after milking is complete will ensure that all cows have access to the same nutritive value.

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.



Sometimes cash helps alleviate hunger

Canadian Foodgrains Bank

When Foodgrains Bank was founded 40 years ago, food assistance involved shipping Canadian grain around the globe.

If you had visited the Foodgrains Bank offices during those early years, you would have found people with expertise in international logistics and shipping, enabling food to make the complicated journey from Canada to project locations around the world. The old maritime atlases and shipping directories in our office library are an artifact of this way of working.

A lot has changed since then. Foodgrains Bank is a leading advocate for purchasing food locally in the countries being helped. Providing locally purchased in-kind food transfers contributes to the local economies of countries where we support programming, reduces logistical complexity, and ensures that the food provided meets local dietary preferences.

Foodgrains Bank continues to procure a significant amount of food annually. Last year, we supported nearly \$30 million of in-kind food assistance projects. While the foods provided by these projects vary widely, many provide a basic transfer of a staple grain (such as maize, wheat flour or sorghum), a pulse, oil and salt. This is what many people think of when they think of Foodgrains Bank's food assistance work.

But in-kind assistance still involves the delivery of actual food items. Much of our programming has seen an even bigger shift: the adoption of cash and voucher assistance.

Since we funded our first cash-assistance project a decade ago (a project in Afghanistan in 2013), our portfolio of cash programming has grown to approximately a third of our annual food assistance. Last year alone, the Foodgrains Bank planned to reach 170,320 people with \$20.9 million in cash programming.

Why cash?

The shift to cash programming represents a broader shift within the humanitarian sector over the past 20 years.

The Grand Bargain – an agreement between many of the world's largest donor countries and aid providers that was launched in 2016 – includes a commitment to increase the use of cash-based programming. Many UN agencies and non-governmental organizations provide cash assistance for

much of their programming. As a result, according to a report from the Cash Learning Partnership, approximately 21 per cent of humanitarian assistance globally is provided through cash or vouchers.

There are many potential benefits to cash programming. In the right circumstances, cash can offer dignity and flexibility to people receiving assistance, enabling them to make decisions about what they want to purchase. Cash programming also ensures that money is spent and circulates in local markets in the communities where participants live, extending the positive impact of a project within a community.

There are also logistical benefits to cash. In the right circumstances, it is possible to reach people more efficiently than in-kind assistance, which needs to be transported, stored and distributed.

What is a good context for cash programming?

Foodgrains Bank does not push partners to use cash or in-kind assistance. We want responses to best meet local realities and, most importantly, the preferences of the people receiving assistance.

When partners begin planning a project, they start by analyzing the local markets and the preferences of women and men (which are sometimes different) to understand which type of assistance is best suited for the context. They also coordinate with other organizations responding in a particular context to ensure that our response is similar to what others are already doing in an area.

Based on this assessment, a decision is made about whether to use cash, vouchers or in-kind assistance.

Cash or vouchers may be appropriate when markets are functioning and accessible to the people receiving assistance, when food is available at reasonable prices in the market, and when cash can be delivered safely to participants.

In areas that are further from markets, where there is rapid inflation, or where markets are no longer functioning due to a crisis, in-kind assistance is likely more appropriate.

Cultural factors, particularly around the role of women and men in the household, also contribute to these decisions. Women are often responsible for food preparation, but men may be culturally responsible for cash. The ability to access markets may also be different for women and men.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ZOA

In Turkana, Kenya, Namoti Buo Longoi receives funds through mobile money app as part of her participation in an ADRA program.

The difference can be quite localized. For example, last year two projects were being planned at a similar time in Marsabit County in northern Kenya. One of these projects was close to town. The participants there had relatively easy access to a larger market centre where food was available at a reasonable price, and because of this, cash was chosen as the assistance for that project.

Not too far away, we supported an in-kind assistance project. The participants supported by that project lived further from any markets, and because they would need to travel a long way to use cash, receiving actual food items was the preferred form of assistance.

What do people use the cash for?

For example, in Yei, South Sudan, a project participant named Esther Nyoka shared that after returning to South Sudan from Uganda, where she had spent years as a refugee, she had "nowhere to start and nothing to eat." When she was selected as a participant in a project implemented by Finn Church Aid, Esther said: "It was a big relief... the cash greatly helped the health of my children and my family. We were able to buy food items from the local market to save the family from hunger."

How is cash delivered?

There are a few ways that Foodgrains Bank partners deliver cash to project participants, the most common being the distribution of physical cash, bank transfers and mobile money transfers.

The distribution of physical cash works well where people have limited

access to technology or formal financial institutions. Currently, we are distributing physical cash in countries like Malawi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. In most cases, the partner will work with a reputable financial service provider to do the distribution – particularly given the security issues of transporting and distributing large volumes of cash.

Bank transfers are less common, as in many contexts where we support programming, people do not have access to banks or have bank accounts. One country where bank transfers were possible this past year was in Ukraine. After participants were selected, they received the assistance directly transferred into their bank accounts and could then access the money through ATMs or bank branches.

One of the most common forms of cash transfer that we undertake is through mobile phones. In many countries, people can receive money and pay for goods and services using their phones. Right now, we are using mobile transfers in places like Kenya, Somalia and Pakistan.

Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a partnership of 15 churches and church agencies working together to end global hunger. It provides millions of dollars of assistance for people in 36 countries. Canadian Foodgrains Bank programs are undertaken with support from the federal government provided through Global Affairs Canada. Assistance from the Foodgrains Bank is provided through its member agencies, which work with local partners in the developing world.



Paul J. Hetzler
ISA Certified Arborist

In addition to being a reliable source of honey, not to mention personal satisfaction, backyard beekeeping can be a rich learning experience for the whole family. And yet, at the same time, honeybees are causing grave and, in some cases, irreversible harm to the environment.

It's imperative that beekeepers learn about the threats to native pollinators posed by honeybees, and actively work to mitigate the damage as much as possible.

Just to be clear, honeybees are a non-native species whose population is burgeoning. They certainly don't need our help to survive. Statistics Canada reports there were 783,575 honeybee colonies in Canada in 2021, up sharply from 561,297 in 2011 – a 40-per-cent jump in 10 years.

It's true honeybees are vital to industrial-scale agriculture, like on California's almond farms, which are the largest in the world, and in Florida's citrus groves. Although they are relatively poor pollinators, they're the only ones that can be transported in great numbers.

Outside of vast tree-crop plantations that are inhospitable to native bees, honeybees don't measurably boost pollination rates, according to a multi-year study by Cornell University. Led by Dr. Scott McArt, a bee specialist at Cornell's Dyce Laboratory for Bee Research, the team concluded honeybees had an insignificant effect on pollination in all but the largest apple orchards in the study. The 110 species of wild bees the researchers cataloged on apple blossoms did the real work.

Honeybees displace other bees

The problem with honeybees is that they displace, and sometimes extirpate, native bees.

A long-running study by Concordia University noted that honeybee hives on the island of Montreal skyrocketed from less than 250 in 2013 to nearly 3,000 by 2020. During that time, the overall number of wild native bees across 15 sites dropped by an average of 1,200 per sample. Far more concerning was the loss of diversity. In 2013, 163 species of wild bees were documented. In 2020, that number was 120.

With risk of being a buzz-kill: Back off on beekeeping



ALIAKSEI MAROZAU/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The public's unfettered embrace of honeybees is having dire consequences, pushing out several species of wild bees.

Forty-three species of native bees disappeared from the record in seven years due to honeybees. That's huge.

For years, professional beekeepers in the U.K. have been asking the public to moderate the recent "outbreak" of hives, which is putting native bees at risk. The London Beekeepers' Association is concerned that "the prevailing 'save the bees' narrative is often based on poor, misleading or absent information about bees and their needs. It can imply that keeping honeybees will help bees."

Push to limit honeybee populations

In fact, there is now a global push, led by current and former beekeepers, to limit honeybee populations in order to save wild bees, which do practically all the pollinating in the world.

One could dismiss such pleas from professional beekeepers as self-serving, but Andrew Whitehouse of the insect-conservation group Buglife agrees that the public's unfettered embrace of honeybees is having dire consequences.

"We know the main reason native pollinators are in decline is a lack of wildflowers in our countryside and urban areas," Whitehouse said. "To increase competition for limited resources puts a

huge pressure on the wild pollinators." Too many honeybees also bring diseases to native pollinators.

As Dr. Jane Memmott of Bristol University in England has stated, honeybee hives are sometimes "little ecosystems of plagues and contagion."

Invasion of the bees

Even the loudest critics of backyard beekeeping don't want to see it banned. But anyone who likes the thought of a hive on their rooftop or back lot needs to remember the wildflowers in any locale are already spoken for by native pollinators. A meadow in bloom is not virgin territory that honeybees are free to exploit without impact. When a non-native species arrives in large numbers, there will always be repercussions.

It is a moral imperative that beekeepers – big and small – compensate for the nectar and pollen their honeybees consume in a season. Wild bees were there first, and relied on the existing forage to survive. If you keep bees, provide about one acre of flowering plants per hive. This is essential to keep native pollinators healthy.

Flowers that bloom at different times, grow to various heights, and have a multitude of floral structures and

colours will serve the greatest diversity of native pollinators. Very often, this can be achieved by simply letting things go wild. Maybe cut back (so to speak) on mowing. Choose some areas to mow once a year in late fall, and others to cut every second or third year.

Bumblebees, which are four times more effective at pollinating than honeybees, often nest in rock piles and old foundations, things that tend to get "tidied up" as rural areas get more populated. Mason bees make use of all types of unkemptness for their nests. Since both kinds of bees are super-pollinators, a small decrease in their population is worrisome. A change in mindset regarding aesthetics will go a long way toward saving bees of all stripes.

And finally, if you don't have land on which to grow wildflowers, please curb your enthusiasm. Seriously. Divesting is best, but cutting back is good, too. Perhaps one hive can suit your needs, rather than two or three.

For more information on attracting native pollinators, visit the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation at xerces.org

Paul Hetzler was a longtime Horticulture and Natural Resources Educator for Cornell Extension.



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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Agricultural or forestry producer, rural resident or retired farmer:
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 Date.....

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Quebec Farmers' Association

555 boul. Roland Therrien, office 255
 Longueuil, Quebec J4H 4E7

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

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.**

John and Gail Tracy, Shawville

Josef and Susanne Studhalter, Quyon

Vernon Gauthier, Lochaber

Wilhelm Brand, Hatley

Alvin and Suzelle Barrington, Howick

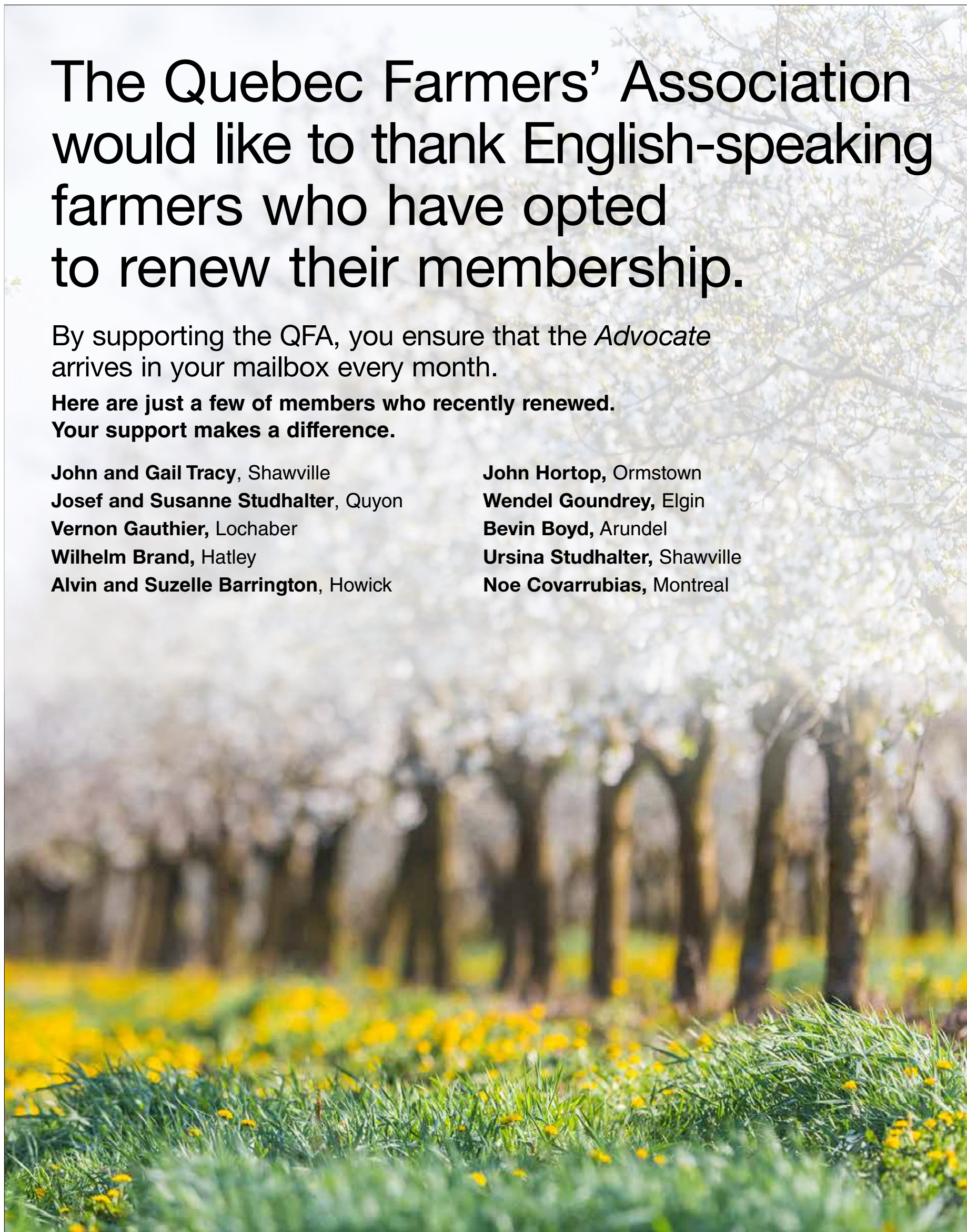
John Hortop, Ormstown

Wendel Goundrey, Elgin

Bevin Boyd, Arundel

Ursina Studhalter, Shawville

Noe Covarrubias, Montreal



A practical guide for organic milk producers

François Labelle
Lactanet

A new guide dedicated to organic dairy production has just been published. This guide is available in French under the title *Produire du lait au pâturage : guide pratique pour l'éleveur biologique* [Producing Milk on Pasture: A Practical Guide for Organic Milk Producers].

The document provides an update on pasture management in light of both scientific evidence and practices used by organic milk producers in Eastern Canada.

The scientific references included generally come from literature reviews or meta-analyses on the various aspects of pasture management. In addition, the practices illustrated in the guide are based on world-renowned technical references, as well as on the best examples of pasture management I've encountered over more than 30 years of advising people on this subject.

This guide, adapted to practices used in Quebec, is aimed at organic milk producers, those making the transition

to organic production and anyone interested in pasture management in general. It presents strip grazing, which consists of using a pasture part time, in the context of organic dairy production in Quebec.

With this system, cows have access to preserved forage and concentrates in the barn and to a good portion of grasses in their ration.

Overview of guide's content

The first chapter of the guide highlights the pros and cons of grazing from health, animal welfare and environmental perspectives.

Pasture management, the main theme of this guide, is often represented as three systems in one, and each system is clearly explained in the document.

The forage production system outlines that the yield and quality goal must be continuously top of mind to achieve the lowest possible forage production cost.

The second system – raising animals outside – notes that it is important for facilities to allow efficient animal



movement and a comfortable environment for the cows.

Finally, the animal feeding system illustrates that this system must promote good grass intake while maintaining good milk production levels and components.

The guide also includes the specific adaptations required when using a milking robot to achieve a high number of robot visits while having an optimum grass intake.

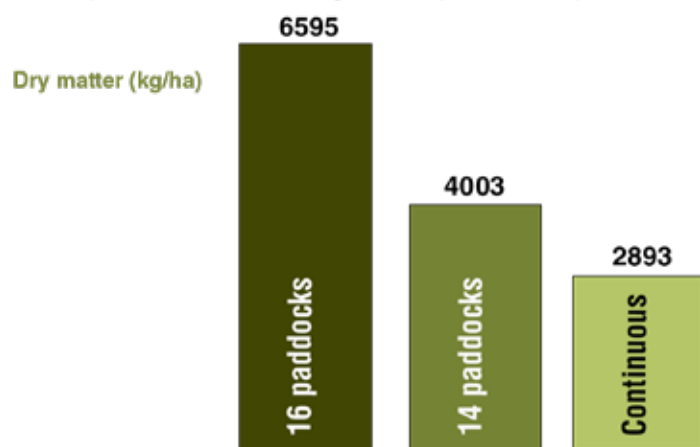
Another chapter of the guide presents

the decision-support tools available for effective pasture management.

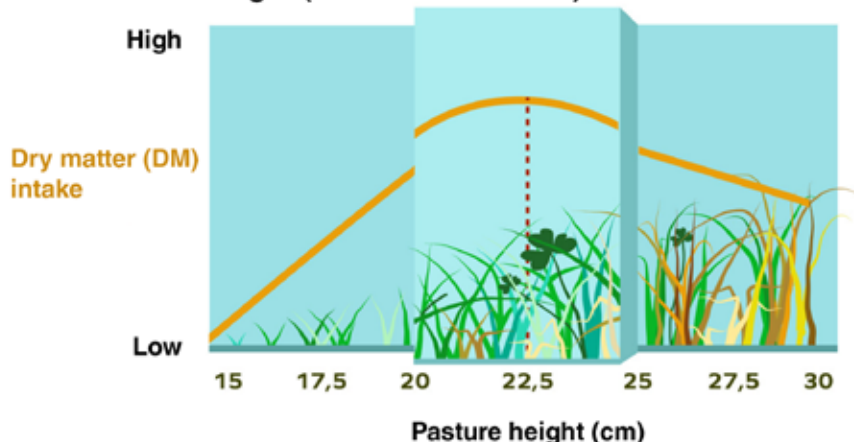
Lastly, a section describes the main measures producers need to take to send their dairy herds to pasture.

The guide – available in French only – can be downloaded free of charge from Lactanet's website, Production laitière biologique page of under the "Guides et outils" section: <https://lactanet.ca/gestion-troupeau/lait-biologique/>.

Pasture yield based on management system – strip, rotational or continuous



Grass height (visual assessment) to maximize intake



Details associated with managing an A-B-C grazing system

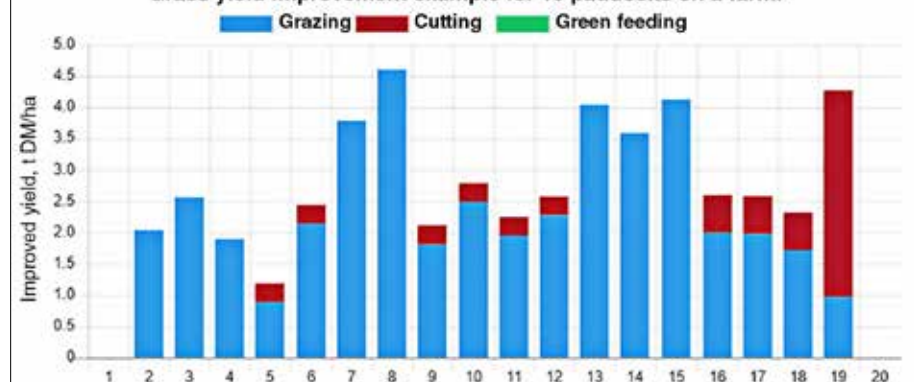
System A-B-C

Grazing routine

- 9 a.m.: New paddock
- 2 p.m.: New paddock
- 7 p.m.: New paddock
- Sorting gate



Grass yield improvement example for 18 paddocks on a farm.





Corn, soybean, wheat prices expected to dip next year

Ramzy Yelda

Senior Market Analyst

Producteurs de grains du Québec

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's grains supply-and-demand report for the month of May offers the first estimates for the 2024-25 season. The report is rather bearish as prices of the three major grains are forecast to drop next year compared with this year.

The U.S. corn seeding intentions are reported at 90 million acres (MAC), with a trend yield of 181 bu/ac, which results in a 14,860-million-bushel (MBU) crop compared with 15,342 MBU in 2023.

Demand for animal usage corn and exports both increase by 50 MBU over the current year. Stocks are forecast at 2,012 MBU in 2025 compared with 2,022 MBU in 2024. The average farm price is \$4.40/bu, which represents a drop compared with

\$4.65/bu in 2023/24.

The U.S. soybean area seeding intentions are reported at 86.5 MAC, with a trend yield of 52 bu/ac, which will result in a production of 4,450 MBU, up from 4,165 MBU in 2023. Crushings and exports both increase by 125 MBU over the current year. Stocks are forecast at 445 MBU in 2025, up from 340 MBU in 2024. The average farm price is \$11.20/bu, down from \$12.55/bu in 2023/24.

Wheat production is forecast to drop by 3.5 million tonnes (MT) in Russia and drop by 2 MT in Ukraine. Wheat crops are projected to rise in Argentina (+1 MT), Canada (+2 MT) and Australia (+3 MT).

Corn production is projected to drop by 2 MT in Argentina and to rise by 5 MT in Brazil.

Finally, soybean production is up by 1 MT in Argentina and up by 15 MT in Brazil.

Registration now open for Agrisolutions climat!

Registration for the Nitrogen Management in Grain Corn component of the Agrisolutions climat project will soon open. It will be available until Sept. 30.

Do you use nitrogen fertilizer on your crops? Did you buy any between March 2 and June 30? If so, this project can help you reduce greenhouse gas emissions on your farm.

Registration for the Cover Crop component is open until June 30. Any farm business that produces grain via any production type (conventional, organic or other) is eligible to participate. Note that participating producers receive financial assistance for the plots they plant through this component.

New for 2024: registration for Agrisolutions climat is fully online.

The Agrisolutions climat project is a partnership between the Producteurs de grains du Québec (PGQ) and the Union des producteurs agricoles, in collaboration with the Conseil pour le développement de l'agriculture du Québec (CDAQ). The project supports farmers to adopt and implement beneficial management practices (BMPs) on their farms.

The program is funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the On-Farm Climate Action Fund.

Study of 2024-2025 budget credits: Two major themes

When it comes to the 2024-2025 provincial budget credits, the Producteurs de grains du Québec applauds the interest shown by the opposition parties, with which it holds regular discussions, in parallel to those with the Quebec government.

On April 18, a study of budget credits impacting the agriculture sector was conducted. Two issues of major importance to grain producers were addressed.

The official opposition critic for agriculture, André Fortin, started by addressing the issue of remote regions in an exchange with Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne lasting over seven minutes.

Next, the second opposition group critic for agriculture, Alejandra Zaga Mendez, raised the issue of compensation for agri-environmental practices.

Advance Payments Program 2024-2025: Apply quickly and easily with AppGrains!

The new season of the Advance Payments Program is here, and the AppGrains app is the best way to ensure your application is processed quickly and efficiently.

Hundreds of grain producers have already applied, demonstrating that the Advance Payments Program is an indispensable tool, especially with interest rates as high as they are. The popularity of the app also shows that it meets a real need, and that users are ready to join us in embracing the digital shift!

To find out more, check out the 2024-2025 Advance Payments Program, referred to in French as the Programme de paiements anticipés, section of the PGQ website at pgq.ca.



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.





Thai Coconut Chicken Curry



CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

Thai coconut chicken curry can be a life-long favourite meal. Adding a few cubes of squash or pumpkin makes it even better.

INGREDIENTS

100 grams red curry paste
2 tins coconut milk
3 large chicken breasts, cubed (about 500 grams)
1 tsp fish sauce
About 1 to 1½ cups diced pumpkin or orange squash (optional)
A good handful of Thai basil leaves (optional)

PREPARATION

In a large saucepan, heat the curry paste and a big spoonful of the coconut fat. Add the cubed chicken and cook until partially done. Add the rest of the two tins of coconut milk and the pumpkin or squash, if using, and let simmer gently at least 15 minutes, ensuring chicken is cooked through and squash is very soft and may even have incorporated into the sauce.

Add basil.

Serve over steamed basmati rice.

About 2 cups uncooked rice is good for this amount of curry.

This meal is excellent as leftovers. It can also be frozen.

You can never go wrong when using coconut milk

Cynthia Gunn
QFA's Food Writer

International shipping has its benefits. Chief among them, in my books, is coconut milk. It is a perfect fit for shipping: non-perishable, easily handled and unavailable here.

It may not be local, but it can be added to so many locally grown foods to make the most delectable and often simple meals.

Last spring, I almost shared my penchant for Thai coconut chicken curry during a power outage because it is so simple to make. I couldn't, however, as I had failed to keep my inventory up to date and keep one of the most important items in my kitchen stocked.

If you keep these three items in your fridge and pantry, items that last a very long time, you have the makings of a great meal with little effort at your fingertips, at all times: coconut milk, basmati rice and Thai curry paste. I would almost include fish sauce, as it adds that extra special something, and lasts forever. If you can find some, buy it.

Add just about anything to coconut milk and it's good. Tomato, for example, is fantastic with coconut milk. Recently, I was out for lunch and the server began with the soup of the day, tomato, coconut milk and salmon (probably a thrifty use of leftovers). "No need to go further!" I exclaimed. "You had me sold the minute you said 'coconut milk.'"

Back in my 20s, cooking at home, which was usually a crowded apartment, was rare. Surrounded by other 20-somethings all living an outdoor and travelling life, financed by restaurant work, we thought an apartment kitchen that contained a pot and a pan and four or six plates, and cutlery was well-stocked. And that's all we needed for those times we cooked at home. Most of us had travelled to Thailand some time in the preceding year or two, where, bar none, all became obsessed with Thai curry, so that's all we ever cooked.

Thirty years later, Thai coconut chicken curry is still one of my favourite meals. The curry paste container is still exactly the same as it always was, and I usually still cook it the same way, though after tasting an extremely tasty red Thai curry in a tiny and very busy hole-in-the-wall place in downtown Vancouver several years ago that had chunks of pumpkin in it, I now sometimes add little cubes of orange squash or pumpkin. Thai basil, if you can get your hands on it or grow it yourself, adds a nice bit of almost licorice flavour when you get a leaf on your fork. It's really good, but not essential.

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.



Coconut milk and Thai curry paste are two basic items that you should keep stocked in your kitchen. Add to that basmati rice, and you have a trifecta of ingredients that will produce a great meal with little effort.

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QFA videoconferences

Challenges faced by youth in Quebec agriculture



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 7:30 P.M.

Join us for a discussion with Mireille Beaudoin of the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec (FRAQ) to discuss the issues young farmers are dealing with.

Join Zoom Meeting:

[https://us02web.zoom.](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82892679159?pwd=MDM0d3EyV3RiVjVha2RVQk9Ta1k1UT09)

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Meeting ID: 828 9267 9159

Passcode: 261028

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)

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