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COURTESY KATRIN DINKEL, FMT

FMT students at Macdonald Campus receive hands-on training.

"No other occupation is so vitally important to the human race, nor requires such a wide range of practical and technical knowledge, as farming."

– William H. Miner, the founder of the William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute, which conducts practical research on farming practices and environmental conservation. in Chazy, N.Y.

Mac enrolment struggles to adapt to Quebec's new rules

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

Staff at Macdonald Campus' Farm Management and Technology program say their fall enrolment numbers are down slightly from last year, but that it's still too early to determine if it's a direct impact of Bill 96.

"Have our numbers gone down? Yes. This year, only 31 (students) instead of around 40 showed up on Day 1," said Pascal Thériault, director of the FMT program. "How much of it is due to government policy? Hard to say."

When the Quebec government introduced Bill 96, its update to the *Charter of the French Language*, it stipulated that students attending English CEGEPs would have to take five courses in French.

While FMT is run by McGill University's Macdonald Campus, the program is considered a CEGEP-level offering. As such, explains Thériault, FMT is not affected by the controversial tuition hikes for out-of-province students in Quebec universities.

But the program is affected by Bill 96's introduction of more French-language courses in English CEGEPs.

"The new language regulations might have had an impact and scared away a few students, but it is hard to put a number on it because our student numbers tend to vary from year to year," Thériault said. "We had to turn away about six Ontario students whose French level would not have made it possible for them to meet the necessary French requirements."

See **STUDENTS**, Page 7

Call to dezone Laval farmland labelled 'ridiculous,' 'far-fetched'

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

A study advocating for the de zoning of all remaining agricultural land in Laval to make way for 70,000 residential housing units put forward by the Montreal Economic Institute last month is being panned as "ridiculous," "ill-considered" and "far-fetched," and fails to grasp the pressures bearing down on agricultural producers and the basic tenants of sustainable development.

"It lacks understanding," said Martin Caron, president of the Union des producteurs agricoles, in an interview during a conference in Trois-Rivières last month.

"Governments have 98 per cent of Quebec territory to resolve the housing crisis," Caron said. "Why attack the 2 per cent dedicated to feeding us?"

The MEI put forward a "simple view" that fails to accurately reflect the issues at play when it comes to land management, food production and sustainable development, Caron added.

The MEI looked at land use in Laval, where 30 per cent of the territory of the island north of Montreal is zoned for agricultural use. This represents 70.5 square kilometres of land, or just over 17,420 acres.

"Laval is a case in point: Here we have a large area, close to our metropolis, that could accommodate tens of thousands of additional households if it were allowed to reach its full potential," said study author Gabriel Giguère, a senior policy analyst at the MEI.

If the farmland in Laval is de zoned and the same population density is applied, the MEI says 70,000 new housing units could be built, "accommodating a total of 181,000 people," a statement from the MEI claims. "That's as much housing as exists in the entire city of Lévis, the seventh most populous municipality in Quebec," the statement continues.

See **LAVAL FARMLAND**, Page 4

QFA VIDEOCONFERENCES

Wed, Oct. 2 at 7:30 p.m.

Low-input grass-based ranching: Insight from a Prairie cattleman

See page 14 for details.



Just the facts

100%

The U.S. has taken full advantage of additional tariff-free access for eggs and egg products (e.g., shell eggs, egg powder, etc.) since the implementation of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA). In 2024, the negotiated limit of eggs and egg products has already been filled, meaning there will be no further tariff-free imports of egg and egg products from the U.S. and Mexico for the remainder of 2024.

Source: Farm Credit Canada

3

The number of grains – rice, corn, wheat – that make up about 60 per cent of the calories from plants consumed by humans across the globe.

Source: Équiterre

17,433

The number of acres of land with agricultural zoning in Laval, the province's third largest city. The farm zone represents 29 per cent of the land mass of the island city.

Source: Ville de Laval

43%

The rate of growth in agricultural production in Quebec between 2018 and today.

Source: Union des producteurs agricoles

WHERE OLD MEETS NEW



MADELEINE LANGLOIS, THE ADVOCATE

With ample rain this summer, the lush fields of green frame this old barn in Montérégie, providing a colourful backdrop under a bright-blue cloudy sky – the perfect old-and-new composition.



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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Membership includes

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- voting privileges at the QFA Annual General Meeting

Quebec Farmers' Association

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



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COURTESY ECOROBOTIX

Five of Quebec's horticulture sectors have been given the chance to test out new technologies that will help their production thanks to new funding. The Association des producteurs maraîchers du Québec will be testing out the Ecorobotix ARA precision sprayer, a semi-autonomous sprayer that can be run in remote locations with no Internet signal.

Quebec funds tech testing in horticulture sector

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

The Quebec government has announced it will provide \$1 million to fund technological innovation in horticulture in a move it hopes will help agricultural producers address issues of climate change, environmental practices and labour scarcity.

The Ministre de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation (MAPAQ) made the announcement late last month, stating that it hopes to offer producers in the market gardening, greenhouse, apple, potato, and strawberry and raspberry sectors "concrete technological solutions," like robotic machinery, automated tools or intelligent sensors.

"More than ever, research and development of technologies must be systematized in agriculture to increase the robotization and automation of fruit and vegetable production in Quebec," said Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne. "These are foundations on which prosperous and competitive

companies will develop, for a sustainable and modern agri-food sector and greater food autonomy."

The Association des producteurs maraîchers du Québec, the province's market gardeners group, welcomed the announcement, saying the funding will address key issues in Quebec horticulture and prepare the sector for a future where labour shortages are increasingly acute and automation is seen as the best solution.

Automation is key

"Mechanization, robotization and automation remain little integrated in horticultural farms," said Catherine Lefebvre, president of APMQ. "Companies still rely heavily on the workforce, which accounts for up to 50 per cent of their total costs."

The APMQ will receive a sum of \$760,000 to evaluate technologies aimed at increasing the automation of horticulture production and optimizing the use of pesticides and inputs.

Each horticulture sector – market gardening, greenhouse, apple, potato,

and strawberry and raspberry production – will select and test a new technology identified by producer associations as most likely meeting that sector's needs.

For Quebec market gardeners, that new technology is the Ecorobotix ARA precision sprayer, considered today to be the most precise in the industry.

Already in development and use for 20 years, the Ecorobotix ARA is a semi-autonomous sprayer that allows for a finely-targeted application of herbicides, fungicides, insecticides or fertilizers. The operation of the sprayer is based on algorithms specific to each crop, can be operated remotely, and is able to operate in strong wind conditions thanks to a protective curtain system.

Equipment will be loaned

The province's greenhouse, apple, potato, and strawberry and raspberry sectors are yet to identify the respective technologies that they will test out through the new program. The \$1 million in funding is intended to finance

the creation of an evaluation protocol and the implementation of the evaluations in the field. Equipment will be loaned out during the trial and evaluation periods, not purchased.

The project is being carried out between the horticulture producer associations along with the Réseau d'expertise en innovation horticole (a centre of expertise founded to democratize and speed up the adoption of horticulture technologies) and Quebec non-profit La Zone AgTech.

"In the past, there has been no overall vision to develop a strategy for adopting new technologies and to build bridges with technology transfer centres and developers," Lefebvre said, citing this as a reason the Quebec horticulture industry needs to foster greater use of new technologies to meet its challenges. "This is where the (Réseau d'expertise en innovation horticole) can act."

Quebec's market gardening and fruit sector includes more than 4,700 producers. In 2023, the sector generated revenues of nearly \$1.47 billion.

News



MIRCEA COSTINA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Critics of study issued by the Montreal Economic Institute agree that the housing crisis is a pressing reality, but the solution does not lie in destroying Quebec's agricultural land.

LAVAL FARMLAND: Using growing areas to build housing 'ridiculous'

From Page 1

"It's ridiculous," said Colleen Thorpe, executive director of Équiterre, a Canadian non-profit that operates in Quebec that advocates for transitions toward an ecological and just society, including many issues involving agricultural production and consumer needs.

Urbanization needs to prioritize areas that Thorpe calls "under used," where housing densification can be increased and stay away from vital agricultural land.

"The housing crisis is a pressing reality, but it's dangerous to believe that the solution lies in destroying our agricultural lands," said Audrey Lemaire, vice-president of the UPA's Outaouais-Laurentides federation and a dairy farmer in St. Jérôme, north of Laval.

The federation labelled the study as simply being "far-fetched."

"With the challenges we face in feeding future generations, it's essential to

recognize that our agricultural lands play a crucial role in preserving biodiversity," said dairy farmer Stéphane Alary, president of the Outaouais-Laurentides federation.

The regional UPA federation said that in 2023, 60 applications to dezone farmland in Laval were filed with the Commission de protection du territoire agricole. The requests illustrate the "relentless pressure exerted by urban development in agricultural zones," the federation claims. In the past decades Laval has seen tremendous population growth.

The federation calls on the MEI to rethink its proposals and focus on solutions that promote the densification of existing urban areas, while respecting and protecting what it refers to as "our precious agricultural heritage."

"Building new housing at the expense of agricultural lands is a simplistic and short-sighted approach," the federation stated. "Such a solution risks creating more problems than it solves,

exacerbating our dependence on food imports and reducing our resilience in the face of future crises."

Even a spokesperson for Vivre en ville, a Quebec-wide organization advocating for sustainable community development panned the MEI study.

"It makes no sense," said Jeanne Robin, a spokesperson for the group, explaining that the general population needs to understand that agricultural land in Quebec is not limitless.

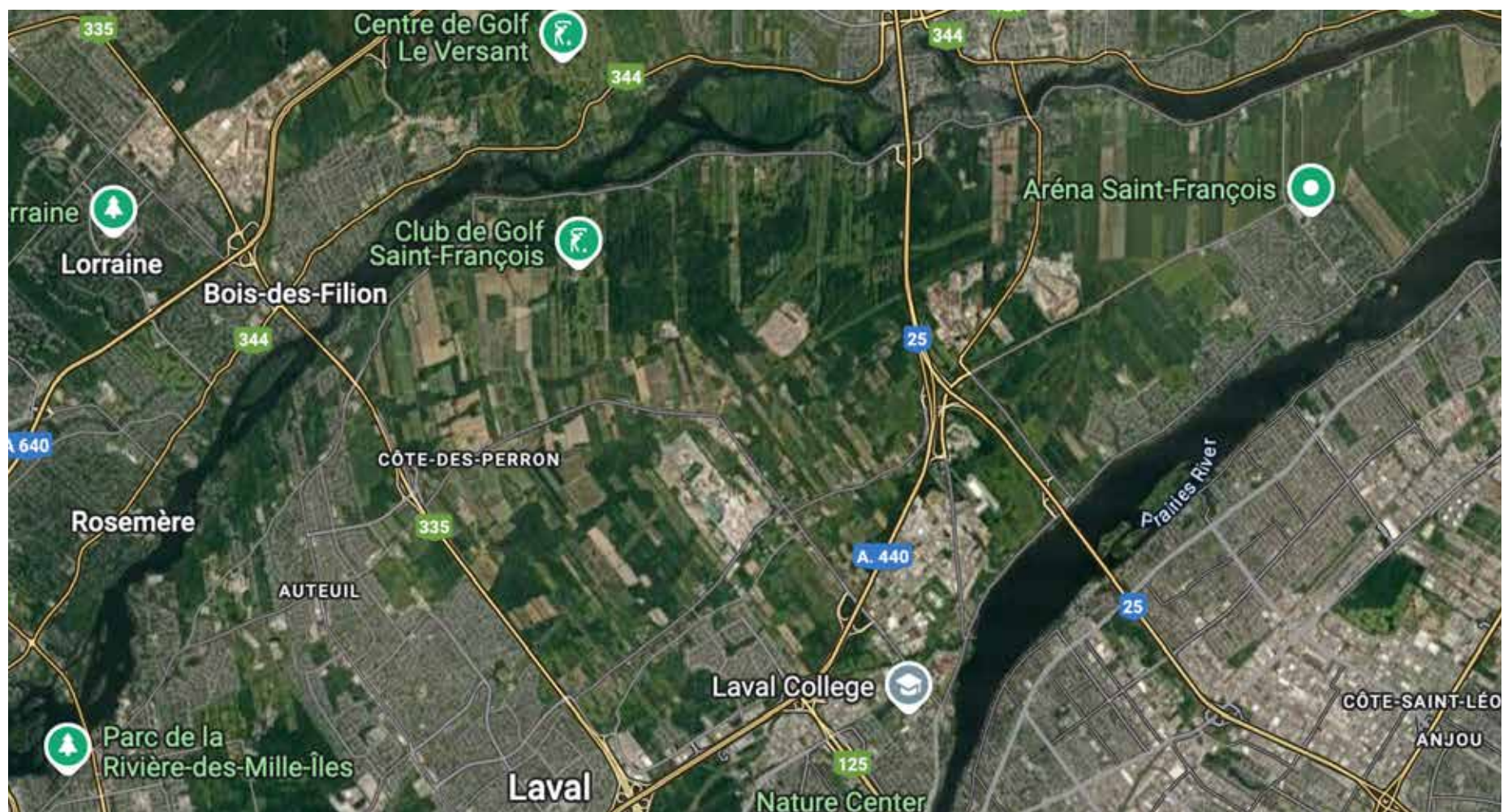
"The affordable housing crisis is a complex challenge that demands creative and sustainable solutions," the Outaouais-Laurentides federation stated.

"The region's agricultural land is among the most fertile in Quebec, offering optimal conditions for quality agriculture," the federation's statement continued. "Citizens benefit from peri-urban agriculture, which gives them access to fresh, top-quality produce sold directly by producers. Protecting these lands from urban

expansion is crucial to our collective ability to feed future generations."

The MEI study comes as the provincial Agriculture Ministry prepares to unveil the results of its year-long consultation in a lead up to its awaited overhaul of the laws that govern the protection of farmland in the province. In May, the ministry issued orientations for land management and development, which have been widely seen as being more flexible when it comes to agricultural zoning, while leaning toward giving MRCs more power when it comes to framing agricultural activities.

Meanwhile, at the federal level, a Senate report was published in June that many in the agricultural sector believe could have a long-lasting impact on the future of growing food in this country. It included a key landmark recommendation calling on government to designate soil as a "strategic national asset."



GOOGLE MAPS

Much of the farmland in Laval – which accounts for almost a third of the island's territory – is in the east end of the island.

Laval introduces plan to charge farmland owners who do not farm

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

In what may very well be a first in Quebec, the city of Laval is poised to impose a surtax – or royalty – beginning next year on farmland that is not used for agricultural purposes.

The message to land speculators is clear, according to Laval Mayor Stéphane Boyer: If you are holding on to farmland with the hope it will be rezoned and you will make a profit, it's not going to happen.

"Land in an agricultural zone will remain in an agricultural zone," Boyer told *LaPresse* last month. "So there's no point in hanging on to your piece of land hoping to make money one day."

According to the move approved by Laval council in August, a fee will be charged to non-farmers who own farmland that is not in agricultural production. The fee will not be imposed on farmers who farm their land.

This means that, for example, the owner of plot of farmland that is about

1.2 acres in area – or 5,000 square metres – will have to pay an annual royalty of \$1,250 in addition to the existing property tax and the current \$200 annual farmland surtax. The royalty rate being applied is 10 cents per square metre.

Rate increases for smaller lots

Smaller lots will be subject to an even higher royalty fee rate, however, according to the city's plan. Lots that are a quarter of an acre or smaller – 1,000 square metres or less – will be slapped with a 50-cent-per-square-metre charge. So, for a lot that is 1,000 square metres – or a quarter of an acre – will be subject to a \$500 royalty.

Laval estimates the move will raise \$1.1 million in additional revenue in 2025. These revenues will be funnelled into a new fund the city will create that will be used to acquire farmland that is not in production with the aim to restore it into agricultural use.

"There is no point in protecting agricultural land if we are not able to cultivate it," Boyer reportedly said. "So

what can we do today with the powers we have in the law?"

"Once we become the owner again, the idea is to put it back into a large lot and resell this large lot to a farmer," the mayor added. "It could be large farmers already present or small plots of land that we could rent to an up-and-coming farmer. We are going to be really flexible."

About a third of island is farmland

Laval, which is the third largest city in Quebec, has 29 per cent of its territory – or about 17,420 acres – zoned agricultural, but only about half of that land is actively farmed today.

Much of the agriculturally zoned land that is not farmed is owned by non-farmers, Laval officials say.

The city claims that throughout the 1970s and '80s much of this land was divided into what officials say are thousands of lots. The Commission de protection du territoire agricole only came into existence in 1978.

The result is that there are now thousands of small plots of land zoned for agricultural use that are lying fallow, with owners who are waiting for the day to develop these lots.

City officials predict this new taxing scheme will see about 2,700 acres of unused farmland put back into production.

In an interview with *The Advocate*, Martin Caron, president of the Union des producteurs agricoles, says he welcomes the new taxing plan put forward by Laval, explaining that it is not just about money.

Agricultural land left unused by speculators waiting to cash in with the hope of developing it for other purposes is a big problem, Caron said.

Quebec has the lowest ratio of cultivated land per resident in North America, Caron said, with only 0.24 hectares – or 0.59 acres – per resident.

"All tools are welcome," he added. "We must protect these lands and ensure that they are cultivated."



ZOE LINDSAY, THE ADVOCATE

A drive through the countryside will show you the real wealth of a nation.



John McCart
QFA President

On a recent trip to London, Ont., my wife and I took the liberty of driving north of the city to have a look at the farms in the region. This area of southern Ontario is a favourite area of mine to tour, and this drive did not disappoint.

When driving around my own area, I always seems to be checking on how my neighbours are doing. How my crops compare with theirs – whose is more advanced, how has the weather affected their crops, etc. I don't do it intentionally, but when I run errands, a sideways glance is part of the drive.

My farm along with those of my neighbours are compressed into a narrow strip between the Laurentian Mountains and the Ottawa River, so any chance to get out to other regions is always taken.

For example, in the last few weeks,

Reality revealed during a drive through countryside

I visited the Pontiac region, parts of the Montérégie, Lanaudière, Mauricie and Estrie areas, all the time enjoying the view of what can be grown in this great province.

Of course, my farm is nowhere close to London – which is almost 700 kilometres away, which translates into at least eight hours of driving with a couple of stops. This trek includes the nightmare drive through the city of Toronto and all its suburbs, which are themselves large cities. I can't believe how big Toronto is and how many cars and large trucks are on the road. The length of the Greater Toronto Area – the so-called GTA – is more than 120 kilometres long. In comparison, Montreal is like a small town.

London itself is not small either. With a population of more than 500,000, it never takes more than 20 minutes to see farms. The drive north, towards Exeter and Goderich along the highway

next to lake Huron, is an absolute feast. Farms extend in all directions, with corn, soya and wheat. But there are a lot of large dairy farms as well.

Unlike here in Quebec, where the Seigneurial system of land allotment resulted in long narrow farms with little to no land left beside the roadways, which resulted in very narrow shoulders, deep ditches and a challenge to moving farm equipment, this region of Ontario has broad municipal roads, with gradual ditches that are mowed more often than not. This provides a beautiful area to drive through.

I believe the wealth of a nation can be found by driving through the countryside. The work that is done by farmers everywhere and the pride they show in their homesteads defies what can be found in big cities.

Yes, all the manufacturing is done in or close to towns, but farmers produce the most important resource of

all – food.

When you hear slogans like "Farmers Feed Cities," it is the absolute truth. As much as I am amazed at how large the urban sectors of this nation are, I am equally awestruck by how much farmland it takes to nourish everyone. It is so important for consumers to know this. And that is why the protection of farmland is non-negotiable.

There should never be any pressure from any individual, corporation, municipality or government to remove farmland from agricultural production.

A drive through the countryside proves that farmers are stewards of the soil. And that even in difficult times, like the one we are experiencing now, with all the challenges of price, weather, market access and government inaction, farmers are very proud to do what they do. And consumer should appreciate that.



THE ADVOCATE

Macdonald Campus of McGill University in Ste. Anne de Bellevue is home to the FMT program, which has seen a drop in its enrolment this fall.

STUDENTS: Policies created uncertainty

From Page 1

Bill 96's new changes do not require that students have a certificate to attend an English institution. But they do impose a quota on the number of non-certificate holders. FMT is excluded from the quota as its students are considered McGill students.

"FMT is funded to train future Quebec farmers who are native English speakers," Thériault said. "Our recruitment efforts have always been geared toward that clientele, whereas francophones attending the program have been a minority that is always welcome since we do value diversity in all its forms."

Tuition hikes cause uncertainty

The other issue causing uncertainty at McGill's Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences is Quebec's announcement of tuition hikes for out-of-province students.

When the Quebec government initially announced the tuition hike, it proposed an increase from \$8,992 to approximately \$17,000, causing an outcry from both the province's English-speaking community and prospective students from the rest of Canada.

That increase has since been lowered to a minimum rate of \$12,000, but with a catch: out-of-province students will need to be able to demonstrate a level-five oral proficiency (an ability to carry on a basic conversation) by the time they graduate.

The decision sent shockwaves through McGill's recruiting department, says Valérie Orsat, acting dean for Macdonald Campus.

"The number of applications from

Ontario significantly dipped," Orsat said. "We had to reduce our recruiting activities in Ontario, as the feedback from their high schools was not positive: 'If Quebec does not want us, we shall not apply.'"

Nonetheless, McGill's Agricultural and Environmental Sciences is seeing a healthy enrolment. Admissions from Canadian high schools in the department are the same as last year's.

"Overall, our incoming numbers for this fall for our B.Sc. or B.Eng. programs are similar to last year's numbers," Orsat said. "Although our applications from the rest of Canada were significantly lower than last year's."

Everywhere in Canada, enrolment in agricultural programs at the post-secondary level is struggling. The fact that Mac has been able to maintain high enrolment numbers is exceptional.

"There is a general trend in ag colleges in Canada where numbers are not on the rise," Thériault said. "That's a concern, as I believe we must attract more people to the ag sector."

Decreasing enrolment in agriculture education is a worrying sign for a variety of reasons, Thériault said.

"Training future farmers is one thing, but the FMT program also trains agricultural technologists who help farmers to make our agricultural sector more resilient, better prepared for climate change and to help them meet social expectations on issues such as pollution, pesticide use and animal welfare. There will be more and more need to offer support for those farmers in the future."

A GOOD YEAR FOR CORN



MADELEINE LANGLOIS, THE ADVOCATE

How high is your corn? And how sweet is it? Now is the time when the comparisons are being made. One thing is for sure, though, in most areas of Quebec the sweet corn harvest is better this year than last year. You can thank the rain this summer for that.

DUES CREDIT FOR "MULTIPLE-OWNER FARMS" AND "UNDIVIDED CO-OWNERS" WITH GROSS FARM REVENUES OF

\$ 25 000 OR LESS

You might qualify for the dues credit. Get informed!

Eligibility criteria for this UPA Program:

- Must be an agricultural producer registered as a doubledues paying farm (\$ 812) for 2024 and expect to have a gross farm revenue of \$ 25 000 or less for 2024;
- Must be in compliance with the dues regulations and have paid dues along with any applicable interest to the UPA, including payment of single UPA dues fee for 2024, i.e., \$ 466.80 (\$406 plus tax);
- Must complete the application form and return it to the UPA **by October 31, 2024**;
- Must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the UPA that the gross farm revenue for 2024 was \$ 25 000 or less by sending us the required documents **by July 31, 2025**.

If you meet all eligibility criteria, you must fill an application form available:

- 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.



Trends in agriculture



Chris Judd
The Advocate

What you eat matters. It really, really matters

Most people today assume that if it's available in a store, it must be safe to eat. Or, safe to give to others.

Man has not survived for thousands of years by not being careful about the food that he ate.

Today, only about 1 per cent of our population produces the food for the rest of the 99 per cent. Whether you only eat vegetables and grains, are celiac or, like me, you enjoy a varied diet, we must all be vigilant that what we consume is as safe as it can be.

Like many of you, my ancestors were raised on a farm. We grew our own garden, picked our own fruit (either wild or cultivated), drank milk that our cattle produced. We ate eggs that our own flock produced. We killed our own beef, hogs and chickens.

We usually had the animal inspected by a veterinarian before slaughter, and always got a butcher experienced in looking for any abnormality in the carcass as we processed the meat.

Except for potato bugs, our garden was never sprayed with any chemical. Our family never kept sheep or goats, but grandma always bought wool from the "woolen mill" in town to knit socks and sweaters.

No plastic was used

There was no plastic contamination in our environment because there were no synthetic materials in clothing or any single-use plastic.

The largest purchase of plastic that we make today is probably our car! Have you ever seen a car after it was burnt?

Maybe old folks didn't have the life expectancy we have today, but the elaborate health system wasn't as sophisticated either.

Most – if not all – safety regulations have been introduced because of serious ill-health outbreaks (like tuberculosis, contamination caused by E-coli, salmonella, clostridium or even drug reactions).

Drank and sold our own milk

Grampa used to bottle and deliver "raw milk" in town with the horse and milk wagon. He only delivered whole milk and cream. "Skim milk" was what we fed to the pigs.



MICROGENSHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Today, milk is tested for smell, taste, bacteria, sediment and antibiotic contamination before it is delivered to the milk plant for bottling.

In the 1930s, milk was not pasteurized but, because of a tuberculosis outbreak somewhere in the world, in about the late '40s, all dairy cattle of milking age were tested yearly for brucellosis. Any animal testing "positive" was killed. There was never an animal that tested positive on our farm. Some cows just after calving would test "questionable" because of high immunity levels after calving, but a "retest" would prove them "negative" and their milk deemed safe to use.

All female animals that might produce milk within a year were vaccinated against brucellosis. Once all Canadian cows became free of brucellosis, no more testing or vaccination was done.

Agriculture Canada also said: If any brucellosis shows up in the milk sample

that is taken, and each pickup was tested, the entire herd would have to be tested.

A lot has changed

Today, all milk is pasteurized to kill bacteria before it's sold in stores and restaurants.

Grampa said, "If you don't drink milk from your own herd, you shouldn't be allowed to sell milk!"

Raw milk should keep in the fridge for a week without souring.

Grandma said: "You should always use sour milk to make biscuits." She used a drop of vinegar.

Dad used to say: "Pasteurized milk doesn't sour; it just rots!"

Today, all milk is tested for smell, taste, bacteria, sediment and antibiotic contamination before it is

delivered to the milk plant for bottling or processing into butter, cheese or other "cowy" things.

Also today, there are more recalls of vegetables, like lettuce or broccoli, or "non-dairy drinks" than meat products. Some virulent strains of E-coli have become resistant to bactericides, while liquid manure in some U.S. states can be irrigated onto standing vegetable crops before harvest. Many beneficial bacteria that help break down soil particles and keep the "biome" in both your digestive system and the systems in animals healthy can be killed by very low levels of bactericide found in some feeds or foods.

If you use some form of antacid, like Tums or Rolaids, maybe you should check it out before you have a serious problem.



Young Townships producer diversifies family sheep production

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

Maple Star Farm in St. Felix de Kingsey is definitely what you'd call a family farm.

"My brother takes care of the equipment and machinery maintenance; my sister, Trinity, takes care of the social media and sale advertisement of the farm," explained 20-year-old Ruby Mastine.

"My father does a little bit of everything when it comes to the barns and fields, and my mother helps in the barns for the sheep as much as she can. Everyone has their own role in the business."

The Mastines come by their dedication to family farming naturally. Ruby is part of the fifth generation to farm the land in St. Felix de Kingsey, just 60 kilometres north of Sherbrooke. What started out long ago as a dairy operation and sugar bush expanded to sheep production with Ruby's grandparents in the 1960s. Today, parents David Mastine and Erika Brock own and manage the farm, selling lambs for meat all year long and winning multiple awards for their herd and livestock genetics.

For Ruby, sheep rearing has always been a part of growing up.

"One of the first farm memories I have is swinging in a swing that was hung in the barn for us kids while I watch my father feeding the sheep," Ruby said.

"Seeing all of the ewes running to get their grain while their babies were running and playing up and down the straw bedding. My grandmother, Blanche, always said that if the lambs were playing, that meant they're healthy. To this day I love seeing them run around, and that quote has always helped me spot when something was wrong."

Ruby was a member of the Richmond 4-H Club for years, showing sheep, beef, participating in exchanges and even doing some square dancing. After high school graduation, she was uncertain if she wanted to take over the home farm or get a job doing something else in the agricultural sector.

But she knew that enrolling in Macdonald Campus' Farm Management and Technology (FMT) program would give her a head start on either path.

"Either way, I knew that the program would help me in the future with either



COURTESY OF RUBY MASTINE

Ruby Mastine of St. Felix de Kingsey in the Eastern Townships has grown up in a successful sheep-producing family. In 2017, she and her brother decided to add Simmentals and Herefords to their family's fifth-generation farm.

choice," she said. "I had several family members attend FMT before me, and they showed me the knowledge, friendships and opportunities that they received through it."

Upon graduating in the spring of 2023, Ruby began working as a feed rep for Moulée Vallée Feeds in Richmond.

"So I ended up doing both," she said. "Working on the home farm and getting a job elsewhere!"

Maple Star Farm boasts impressive numbers and achievements by any measure: 350 ewes (300 crossbreds and 50 purebred Suffolks) and many of them award-winners. The family won champion Suffolk ewe with a junior ewe lamb at the All Canada Sheep Classic this summer, also racking up three first-place showings in the four categories they entered.

Maple Star also won top terminal breed flock in Canada on the national genetic evaluation program in 2021. In 2022, the family sold the highest-bid Suffolk ram in all of Canada.

Recently, at the new generation's initiative, the farm has expanded into beef production. In 2017, Ruby and brother Callum decided to purchase two Herefords from their cousins. Seven years later, they're up to seven cow/calf pairs of purebred Simmentals and Herefords, and the project has made the siblings hopeful about expanding.

"For now, they are an enjoyable hobby," Ruby said. "However, I would like to one day expand to a larger production of beef to diversify the farm more."

Through all the hard work and deserved accolades, Ruby Mastine is a confident and determined producer,

able to eloquently articulate the challenges of farming for the new generation.

"The weather has always been a farmer's worst enemy, and it gets worse every single year," she said.

"With the excessive amount of rain we received last year in Quebec, it made 2023 and 2024 very difficult," she said. "Expenses have increased immensely since the pandemic, and now they're doubling over the years due to weather."

"This is a part of farming that the world does not see: it takes a long time to recover after one bad spring/summer, one bad season costs you a lot for the next year. This pushes producers to have to sell sometimes. How are we going to feed the world by 2050 with these weather and economic issues that producers are facing?"



PARILOV/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Among the pieces of legislation that will be on the fall agenda is Bill C-282 to protect supply management, which passed second reading in the Senate last April. There is no guarantee, however, that it will be passed before an election.



Martin Caron
UPA President

Keeping an eye on Quebec and Ottawa this fall

Members of Quebec's National Assembly and federal members of Parliament returned to work earlier this month. And they will be dealing with a number of issues that affect the agricultural sector.

Throughout the fall, producers will have their eyes riveted on the importance given to the issues facing the agricultural sector and its growth potential at both levels of government.

According to a 2022 study commissioned by the Union des producteurs agricoles, this growth potential of the farming sector is estimated to reach 23 per cent by 2030, or 4-per-cent more than the Quebec economy as a whole. Remember that 66 per cent of our agricultural products are processed in the province (as compared with 25 per cent elsewhere in Canada), which promotes positive growth, as does the growing demand for food here and elsewhere in the world.

To achieve the 23-per-cent target,

the study identifies conditions that are very similar to our demands for the renewal of Quebec's Bio-Food Policy, starting next year. As we pointed out last spring, the measures and projects announced up to now show a certain openness, but do not meet expectations across the board, with next-generation farmers, outlying regions and production sectors facing difficulties that will be the most disappointment.

For example, the Quebec government has made significant investment in the development of the greenhouse industry in recent years, but for many of these businesses access to the three-phase power system is still difficult.

We also will be monitoring developments in the province's consultation on the protection of agricultural land and activities, especially if legislative amendments are proposed.

We will also have our eyes on several bills as they make their way through the provincial legislature, including Bill 63, which deals with mining; Bill 69, which deals with energy resources; and Bill 70, which focuses

on animal health protection.

Issues have also been identified at the federal level. I am thinking in particular of the Canada-Quebec agreement on the triggering of the AgriRecovery program in connection with the extreme weather events of 2023. An amount of \$22 million was announced last June, but the terms are still under discussion.

There is also the cap on the interest-free portion of the Advance Payments Program (APP), which is to be raised to \$350,000.

Then, there is also the advancement of Bill C-282 to protect supply management, which passed second reading in the Senate last April. Currently, there is no guarantee that it will be passed before a general election is held, especially if an early election is called.

This is also the case for Bill C-234 (Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing) and Bill C-280 (Deemed Trust – Perishable Fruits and Vegetables).

The anti-dumping investigation on Canadian canola announced by China in response to the tariffs imposed by Ottawa is also an issue to watch.

Federal Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland had said a few days earlier that Canada has to be ready for all kinds of reactions. And we are. Canola farmers will remember this commitment. This government, like its predecessors, is making exceptional efforts to protect Canada's auto sector, but it is still reluctant to apply reciprocal policies for food imports.

In addition, with respect to forestry, producers have been calling for the creation of a Personal Silvicultural Savings and Investment Plan for a number of years. This tax tool would allow woodlot owners to place a portion of their forestry revenues in a tax shelter for the purpose of future investments in silviculture, forest management or to protect sensitive parts of the environment.

All legislators, in both Quebec City and Ottawa, must nurture and sustain this social project that is key to our collective future. Nothing is more important than the self-sufficiency and food security of our fellow citizens.

RELAX IN A FIELD OF FLOWERS



MADELEINE LANGLOIS, THE ADVOCATE

Putting a couch in the middle of a field of sunflowers might not seem like a practical thing to do, but at a small agri-tourist farm in Coteau du Lac in Montérégie it attracts a certain amount of takers. The farm, which specializes in a variety of small fruits and vegetables, also hosts what it calls Festi-fleurs. It gives visitors the chance to walk through fields filled with flowers. Visitors can picnic on the grounds that are filled with colour and fragrance. They can also pick flowers for themselves, make their way through a corn maze and be amazed by their giant sunflower fields. And they can always buy whatever the farm has on offer that particular week.

Move to protect caribou in Quebec sparks debate

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

A plan put forward earlier this year by the federal government to protect caribou herds in Quebec is going to come at a cost, according to the Montreal Economic Institute.

And that costs varies from region to region, but the overall price tag is \$177.6 million and 1,990 jobs, according to the think tank's estimates, which were included in a report issued Sept. 17.

"If the federal government goes ahead with this decree, it will cause the loss of a minimum of 1,990 jobs and with no guarantee that the caribou will be saved," said Gabriel Giguère, a senior public policy analyst with the MEI.

In June, the federal minister of Environment and Climate Change issued an emergency order to take steps to address what it deemed are the "imminent threats" faced by three

dwindling herds of boreal caribou in the province. These herds are considered at risk, with one herd including as few as nine animals.

These herds are located in Val d'Or, Charlevoix and Pipmuacan, which is located in the Saguenay-Lac St. Jean region.

Ottawa estimates that with nine members, the caribou herd in Val d'Or is at a level that "has already crossed the threshold of quasi-extinction," officials claim. "The one in Charlevoix is very close to reaching it." The Charlevoix herd has about 30 animals.

The herd in Pipmuacan is estimated at having fewer than 300 members, with federal officials believing it could become quasi-extinct in about 10 years.

The federal order to protect the animals has been put to public consultation in the regions involved, but has yet to be finalized. When approved, the measure would protect targeted areas

of what is considered "best available habitat" on provincially owned lands.

According to the federal government, there are multiple threats to the herds' recovery, including the increased scope of logging activities and industrial expansion. The order would stop those activities in defined areas.

And it is this possible restriction on logging activities that the MEI focuses on in its report.

More than half of the \$177.6 million economic impact – or \$93.3 million in annual economic activity – will be felt in the Pipmuacan region, where the MEI estimates the protection of 225 animals would result in the loss of at 1,041 jobs.

In the Charlevoix region, protecting the herd of fewer than 30 could cause the loss of at least 609 jobs and reduce economic activity by \$54.3 million.

In Val d'Or, the measure would result in the loss of 38 jobs and \$3.43 million in

economic activity, the MEI claims.

"Preserving the woodland caribou is laudable," said Giguère, "but the method adopted should not result in putting so many Quebecers out of work."

In April the Quebec government announced a \$59.5-million plan to safeguard boreal caribou in Charlevoix and mountain caribou in Gaspé, but critics say the protections included for the animals' habitat are not enough.

This lack of habitat protection is, in part, what sparked Ottawa's emergency measure. But federal officials say if Quebec implements concrete protection measures, the federal Environment minister would withdraw the emergency order.

Quebec is home to about 15 per cent of Canada's boreal caribou population. In 2023, the Quebec government estimated the boreal caribou population to be between 6,162 and 7,445.

The QFA has a new website!

Quebec farming news

Events you might be interested in

Details about upcoming online Farm Forums

Information about the Quebec Farmers' Association

IT'S ALL THERE.

<https://quebecfarmers.org/>

Check it out.

Let us know what you would like to see there.

Contact us by email: qfa@upa.qc.ca

Contact us by phone: 514-246-2981





PATRICKLAUZON PHOTOGRAPHE/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

In 2021, 37 per cent of farms in Quebec were incorporated companies.

New guide aims to help incorporated farms prepare for climate reporting

Christopher Bonasia
The Advocate

Small, incorporated farms will feel the impacts that “trickle down” from climate reporting requirements for larger corporations, and a new guide says farmers should start preparing themselves now.

The guide, published by the Canadian Climate Law Initiative (CCLI), is directed toward the growing number of incorporated farms that share the fiscal obligations imposed on larger corporations. They carry these obligations “regardless of personal opinions on climate change,” and directors that fail to do so “may be exposing themselves to personal liability,” the guide warns.

New requirements are already being imposed on larger and publicly-traded agri-food businesses, oil and gas companies, and banks – all entities that Margot Hurlbert, a University of Regina professor and author of the guide, noted are “closely tied to the agriculture ecosystem in Canada,” and through which smaller farm corporations will experience trickle-down effects of reporting requirements.

And even though those larger

corporations are likely “governed by more sophisticated boards of directors, the duties with respect to climate also apply to smaller farms and agri-food corporations,” Hurlbert said.

The guide focuses on incorporated farming business. It is a corporate structure that is becoming increasingly common for farms in Canada. Farms may choose to incorporate for a number of reasons, including for access to benefits, like liability protection, access to lower tax rates and opportunities to split incomes or pay out dividends to family members.

More farms in Quebec are incorporated

Most Canadian farms are still sole proprietorships. But of the 189,874 farms Statistics Canada reported operating in 2021, 47,824 – or about 25 per cent – were either family or non-family corporations, up from 13 per cent in 2001. The percentage is even higher in Quebec, where 37 per cent of farms operated as corporations in 2021.

Farms that incorporate become subject to the same legislation regulating other corporate businesses, and so are required to establish a board of officers

and directors. People who act in those roles are legally obligated to exercise care and due diligence for overseeing the farm’s operations and ensuring its long-term viability and can be held accountable by shareholders if they don’t.

An officer or director of a small farm corporation is, therefore, responsible for staying informed about, and planning responses to, threats to the business. In a time of rising global temperatures, such threats include both physical impacts from changing weather patterns and from legal and policy changes that will affect farm management.

These changes are happening now. Farmers are likely already aware of new regulations or policies linked to climate change that have either been implemented or are on the regulatory horizon for producers, like taxation on fossil-fuel use and targets for reducing emissions. Changes in institutions that farmers rely on – for insurance or mortgages – or to international trade regulations may also be forthcoming and could disrupt how businesses operate.

Farmers will also need to adapt to new technologies as the rest of the economy electrifies and transitions

to low- and zero-emissions energy sources.

In other cases, a farm corporation might find itself in hot water if it doesn’t respond to new policy requirements properly. The guide, therefore, recommends that farm corporations stay aware of carbon-offset schemes and the potential legal risks of over-relying on them to reach decarbonization goals. Furthermore, directors of agricultural operations should be careful about making claims of farm sustainability to avoid potential accusations of greenwashing.

Hurlbert added that the guide’s information is also important for sole-proprietorship farms, who will face many of the same risks even when not shouldering the governance accountability of a corporation.

Christopher Bonasia lives in Ottawa but was raised in the U.S. He raised sheep in Vermont and completed a master’s degree in Food and Agriculture Law and Policy at Vermont Law School. He is now a staff writer for The Energy Mix and also shears sheep in the Ottawa Valley and Gatineau area.



QFA videoconferences

Low-input grass-based ranching: Insight from a Prairie cattleman



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 7:30 P.M.

Saskatchewan rancher Ross Macdonald didn't have to adjust his grazing practices to find clients. Instead, he and his wife, Christine Peters, who own and operate 98 Ranch in Lake Alma, made a commitment to raising top-quality beef without antibiotics or added hormones and let buyers come to them. And that's when companies, like A&W began knocking on their door.

98 Ranch is a cow-calf-yearling operation built on a foundation of grassland health and low-input cattle selection, converting forages into beef while facilitating grassland ecological function, including soil health, increasing effective precipitation, wildlife habitat and biodiversity. A professional agrologist, Madonald puts his training and knowledge into raising his Hereford-Angus herd while committing to his belief that livestock agriculture can work hand-in-hand with land stewardship.

In this videoconference, Macdonald will explain his philosophy of grass-based ranching from soil to slaughter, working with full traceability and sustainable production practices while also attaining high marbling and grading scores.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89213998500?pwd=vZkQYYJqca9jCMYpqGsCKqN2Xvg5lp.1>

Meeting ID: 892 1399 8500

Passcode: 490605

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

To be added to our email list so you never miss a videoconference, write to qfa_advocate@yahoo.ca





Paul J. Hetzler
ISA Certified Arborist

To ask if trees are bad for the environment seems absurd. One may as well ask if water is unhealthy for us.

And yet, drinking too much water in a short period can cause “water intoxication,” leading to brain swelling, coma and, on occasion, death. Although water can be harmful in exceptional cases, we should keep drinking it, clearly.

On the other hand, the question of whether trees hurt the planet is a knotty one. When former U.S. President Ronald Reagan said in 1981 that “trees cause more air pollution than automobiles do,” he was widely mocked. However, he had a point. On hot sunny days, trees give off volatile chemicals that indirectly cause serious air-quality issues.

When skies are blue and the sun is high, isoprene and other compounds trees emit can react with nitrogen oxides from auto and truck exhaust to form ground-level ozone. It's a major lung irritant, and contributes to smog as well. In the stratosphere, ozone protects us from getting fried by ultraviolet radiation; down low, it can fry our lungs.

Trees worsen ground-level ozone only if car exhaust and sunshine are plentiful. Though it's not good news, it doesn't inspire me to run out and paint all trees with the same critical brush. For one thing, I've got other stuff to do, plus I'm sure the bristles would wear out pretty quick.

But wait – it turns out that many trees liberate methane from the soil, where it normally remains locked up. The mechanism by which trees do this isn't clear, but it's a measurable effect. Methane is a greenhouse gas at least 28 times more potent than carbon dioxide in its ability to warm the Earth.

And the news gets worse for trees: some species, notably cottonwoods, actually make methane, thanks to microbes that colonize their live tissues. We've long known that dead trees – and vegetation of all sorts – create this planet-warming gas. Scientists must now consider living forests as methane sources in their climate-change models.

Maybe we've been thinking too highly of trees.

Are trees shady characters? They both cause and prevent pollution



HATICE SEVER/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

On hot sunny days, trees give off volatile chemicals that react with nitrogen oxides from vehicle exhaust to form ground-level ozone – a major lung irritant that contributes to smog as well.

New finding: bark absorbs methane

This is where it feels like Mother Nature is pulling our leg. First, we learn that trees might be environmental criminals, and then she rubs our noses in a finding that came to light in 2024: The corky outer layers of tree bark absorb around 50 million tons of methane per year. No other process on Earth removes more of this gas from the atmosphere. Although trees can release soil-based methane, and sometimes create a bit of their own, they are still net methane sinks.

So, score a point for the trees. But they're not out of the woods yet.

In terms of proving that trees aren't shady characters, we'll have to beat the bushes for more evidence in their favour.

Fortunately, we don't have to look far. According to the U.S. Forest Service, trees reduce overall sulfur dioxide pollution by 14 per cent. They also take a lot of nitrogen oxides out of the air. To give these things real-life context, breathing sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides can aggravate asthma, and even cause irreversible lung damage.

Trees absorb particulate matter

According to one study, trees vacuum out more than 50 per cent of airborne

particulate matter. Particulates matter because every year, about 6.4 million deaths worldwide are caused by this kind of pollution. Breathing airborne particles raises our chances of asthma attacks. The smaller the particles, the worst they are, because they lodge deep in our lungs, often entering the bloodstream. This is especially bad for developing fetuses, and puts adults at a greater risk of heart disease and stroke.

There's a charge for trees to clean the air: a weak electromagnetic charge on leaf surfaces draws in airborne particles and holds them until rain washes them off. This is much like how a commercial air filter called an electrostatic precipitator cleans pollution in heavy industry.

And pines perform well

In addition, a group of sweet-smelling compounds given off by conifer trees are more than a piney air freshener. Known as terpenes, these molecules drift up to about 3,000 feet, where they make clouds over forested areas that are twice as dense as clouds above other terrain. It's like corn starch for clouds. Denser clouds reflect about five-per-cent more sunlight, which doesn't sound like much, but apparently it makes a real difference in helping to

moderate the climate. I'd say that's a cool trick.

Perhaps the best-known “ecosystem service” trees provide is that they take carbon dioxide from the air and store it as wood, which is roughly 50-per-cent carbon. Worldwide, more than 17 million tons of carbon dioxide are taken out of circulation annually and sequestered by trees. Data from south of the border show that their forests sequester about 14 per cent of yearly U.S. carbon dioxide emissions. (Given that per-capita fossil fuel consumption in the U.S. is the highest in the world, they need all the help they can get storing carbon.)

Current studies verify that more diverse forest communities stash a lot more carbon than plantation forests do. Just one more reason to do what we can to preserve species diversity.

We've long known that trees do wonders for our mental and physical well-being, and it's obvious we can put to rest any claim that they sully our planet. I encourage everyone to drink water daily, and to get out and enjoy the shade of a tree whenever possible.

A short version of this article was first published in The Saturday Evening Post.

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



COURTESY CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK

South Sudan has been considered the most dangerous place for aid workers to work in the past several years. Often this results in the delay in distributing help to local communities.

Humanitarian aid workers are living in dangerous times

Canadian Foodgrains Bank

The world is an increasingly dangerous place to be an aid worker – and yet we have heroes around the world who continue to choose this profession.

According to the United Nation's Humanitarian Data Exchange, 676 aid workers have been reported killed since 2020, while 897 have been injured and 641 have been kidnapped.

As of the end of June 2024, 118 workers had been killed, already more than the entirety of 2022.

On World Humanitarian Day, which was marked on Aug. 19, the sacrifices and hard work of the individuals who choose to stay and serve in the midst of humanitarian crisis we honoured.

For many humanitarian workers overseas, facing active conflict risks while delivering life-saving food

supplies is their daily reality – because much of the world's need is now concentrated in conflict zones.

In South Sudan, which for several years now has been the most dangerous place for aid workers, a local partner had to delay distributions to local communities this year after another organization's supplies were ambushed and a driver killed.

In Haiti, partners had to adjust their community visits with mobile malnutrition clinics due to the danger posed by armed gangs.

For the aid workers who choose to stay and continue working in the midst of these challenges, "the threat to their lives remains, especially for those who are not originally from the areas in which they work and have to travel," said Dr. Alain Casseus, staff at Zanmi Lasante, a

local partner of Presbyterian World Service & Development in Haiti.

Beyond their professional roles, many humanitarian workers are locals themselves and, therefore, also living through the crisis they are responding to.

In Syria, for example, many humanitarian workers who lost homes or loved ones in the February 2023 earthquake still chose to respond to the crisis and serve the affected communities.

For aid workers living in crisis zones, it is impossible to distance themselves completely from what is happening around them. Because of this, it is not surprising that humanitarian workers are deeply impacted by these experiences. A growing body of evidence shows high levels of trauma, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder among humanitarian aid workers.

Knowing the difficult decisions local staff make about who will receive assistance and who will not, and the stressful environments they work in, makes us even more grateful for the generosity of Canadians who respond to meet urgent needs around the world.

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

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.

Are farm kids healthier?

Emily Bourdeau

William H. Miner

Agricultural Research Institute

Does exposure to a variety of germs that are naturally present on farms play a role in strengthening of the human immune system?

Various studies have shown that children raised on farms have lower risk of developing certain health conditions and allergies, compared with those who were raised in a non-farm setting.

A European study published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* found that children living on a farm have significantly reduced risk of asthma, hay fever, atopic dermatitis (also known as eczema) and atopic sensitization compared with children who had only visited a farm or had no farm exposure.

A more recent study published in the same journal surveyed children ages 5 to 17 in rural Wisconsin. Of the completed surveys, 268 children lived on a farm from birth to at least 5 years old, and 247 children lived in a similar rural area but never lived on a farm.

The researchers used parental questions through the survey as well as electronic medical records to determine exposure to a farm environment and any illnesses.

Fewer incidents of hay fever, eczema

In this study, the frequency of asthma was similar for both groups based on interview and medical record results. On the other hand, medical records showed that only 5.2 per cent of the farm kids had allergic rhinitis, also known as hay fever, compared with 12.4 per cent of the non-farm kids.

Chronic skin rashes, like eczema, were less common in children who grew up on farms compared with those with no farm exposure based on results from the interviews (6.8 per cent versus 19.5 per cent, respectively).

Medical records of skin rashes were similar in both groups.

Children who grew up on a farm also had significantly less instances of early-life severe respiratory illness compared with non-farm children based on interviews (15.7 per cent versus 31.4 per cent, respectively) and medical record results (6.8 per cent versus 17.6 per cent, respectively). When researchers did multi-variable analyses that controlled for age, sex, family size, household smoking, family



ZOTEVA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The term known as the “farm effect” refers to the protective effect of being exposed to a farm environment has on children, offering a lower rates of suffering from asthma, hay fever and atopic dermatitis.

history, breastfeeding and daycare, early exposure to farm environment continued to be a significant protective factor for eczema, hay fever and early-life severe respiratory illnesses.

This protective effect of being exposed to a farm environment has been summarized as the “farm effect.” The farm effect is a phenomenon where exposure to a farming environment in early life protects children against asthma, hay fever and atopic dermatitis.

Other studies have explored the importance of the timing and duration of exposure to farm environments, and how that can play a crucial role in the protective factor of the farm effect.

The Wisconsin Infant Study Cohort studied pregnant mothers and their babies from farm and rural non-farm areas, from prenatal through 24 months of age, to determine how farm exposure influences allergic diseases, specifically atopic dermatitis.

Researchers found that farm kids overall had reduced incidences of atopic dermatitis. Within the farm group, the

researchers grouped the mothers and children into three categories based on frequency of exposure to farms.

Lower incidents of dermatitis

The children from mothers who had regular contact with multiple farm animals' species and indoor and outdoor facilities had the lowest incidences of atopic dermatitis.

The children who had limited exposure to farms, both prenatal and postnatal, had similar results to children who had no exposure to farms.

Children who had exposure to only one farm species, for example cows and cattle, did have reduced risk of atopic dermatitis; however, it was not less than the children who had exposure to multiple farm species.

Another study called the Protection Against Allergy-Study in Rural Environments, examined the relationship of farm exposure and duration of farm exposure on the development of hay fever. These researchers found that farm children had only half the risk of

developing hay fever compared with those with no exposure.

This study also looked at the relationship between farm milk consumption and development of hay fever. The study showed that continuous consumption of cow's milk, through 10.5 years of age, had protective effects on the development of hay fever, likely because the repeated exposure to unprocessed cow's milk may increase the richness of the gut microbiome.

So, maybe a little dirt doesn't hurt anybody. Exposing children at an early age to a variety of microbiomes and animals, as you have on a farm, will serve to benefit their immunity in the long run.

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.



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

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PRICE

Agricultural or forestry producer, rural resident or retired farmer:
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Quebec Farmers' Association

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

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

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

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

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

Eugenie Officer, Hemmingford

Stewart Abbey, Ste. Anne de Bellevue

Shelley McGarry, Val des Monts

Doreen Tryon, Magog

Sidney Jones, Howick

Phil Lavoie, Vaudreuil-Dorion

Doug Anderson, Ste. Martine





Feed composition: How much variation is OK?

Bruna Mion

*Dairy Production Expert,
Nutrition and Management, Lactanet*

Diet balancing is essential for achieving production goals, whether it's maximizing milk production or improving component yield. Feed sampling and analysis are critical steps in this process, particularly during periods of new haylage cuts and corn silage harvest.

However, an important question arises: How can we be sure that these analyses truly represent the diet's composition? Given that silos contain tonnes of feed, how does a sample of just a couple of grams accurately reflect the total?

Understanding result variation and how feed composition varies can help both you and your feed adviser to maintain the diet more consistently, reducing nutrient intake fluctuations that could affect milk yield and composition.

Can same feed yield different test results?

The process is simple: take a sample, send it to the lab, get the results and update the diet according to the new composition, if needed. However, if we take a sample from the silo 10 times and send those 10 samples to the lab, we will probably obtain 10 similar results, but likely we won't get 10 identical results. Several reasons could explain the variation: we are testing a new cut of forage, the sample is from a different portion of the field with different maturity, variation over time, sampling variation, or it could be caused by random errors at the lab.

Researchers tested silage and haylage daily for 14 days to estimate how much variation is expected due to daily, sampling and analytical variation. The following table shows their results:

Laboratories normally follow standard protocols, therefore, the variation

in the results due to laboratory procedures is small and less worrying when formulating diets. However, avoiding sending samples to different laboratories is recommended. Find a lab you trust and stick with it.

In contrast, variation due to sampling is critical and could mislead diet formulation. A test is only as good as the sample you take. Sampling variation could be caused by the expertise of the sampler, sampling technique and ingredients being sampled.

Corn silage, for instance, can show higher sampling variation due to its mix of particles varying in shape, size, density and nutrient composition. A sample with more grains might skew results towards a higher starch content, misrepresenting the overall silo composition.

How much nutrient variation can cows handle?

While variation is inevitable, it's crucial to understand how much cows can tolerate without negatively affecting their performance. Cows thrive on consistency: receiving the same diet every day, at the same time. Researchers shows that even with the same average nutrient levels, inconsistent diets can reduce intake and milk production.

For example, feeding a diet with 4.8-per-cent fat for four days, and then switching to a diet with 7-per-cent fat for four days, and then switching back to 4.8-per-cent fat and repeating this cycle for three weeks resulted in reduced dry matter intake and reduced milk production by 1 kg/day in comparison with a steady fat concentration of 5.8 per cent for the same period.

Even though both groups had the same fat concentration on average over this period, the variation in the concentration negatively affected the animals.

Dry matter variation, often influenced

by weather conditions like rain and snow, can also impact cows.

Researchers added water to corn silage for a couple of days over a period of 21 days. The wetter silage had 1.5 percentage units less NDF, 2 percentage units more starch and 0.1 percentage units more crude protein. Initially, cows reduced their intake when fed the wetter diet, taking a few days to recover their production. When switched back to the normal diet (without water), the cows' intake increased, leading to a rise in milk production. The increased intake could result in faster emptying of the feedbunk, leaving them without feed if intakes aren't carefully monitored.

Consequently, feedbunk management becomes critical to ensure cows have consistent access to feed, and to prevent fluctuations in production due to weather-related changes in feed composition.

Strategies for Reducing Feed Variability

Sampling procedures should avoid segregation of different particles, which could increase sampling variation if the different particles have different nutrient compositions.

For example, taking the sample with your palm facing down allows for smaller particles to be lost through your fingers, which could reduce the measured starch concentration and enrich NDF concentration in the analysis. It does not, however, represent what is actually in the silo. Remember that because of size and density, larger particles tend to rise to the top of a pile and smaller particles fall to the bottom.

Effective sampling involves mixing the feed before taking the sample. Collecting samples from different parts of the silo, and mixing those samples, allows for a better representation of the overall silo content. If we only grab samples from the face of the silo, the sample will only represent that specific spot.

The best sampling procedures depend on the type of silo.

For vertical silos, the recommendation is to take handfuls of silage on the exit conveyor or the cart of the silo, or to drop the silage into a container, mix it and take the sample.

For horizontal silos, the recommendation is to use the tractor to clean the silo face, and then take five to eight handfuls from the silage pile on the ground, place it in a clean container, mix well and take the sample from there.

In contrast, for bale silage, using a probe with a 30-millimetre diameter, and measuring 30-60 centimetres, is

recommended. After cutting the plastic cover, insert the probe at a 90-degree angle and take the sample. Repeat the process five to 10 times, mix and take the sample. If you use TMR, a good recommendation is to take samples from the loader bucket when the TMR is being prepared, which, in general, better represents the silage composition.

Increasing sampling frequency

One of the most effective ways to reduce feed variability is to increase the frequency of sampling. The ideal sampling frequency depends on the herd size: for herds of 50 cows, the recommendation is to sample once a month; 100 cow herds should sample every 2 weeks, while 200 cow herds should sample every week. By increasing the frequency of samples, producers can reduce the "noise" in the data, making it easier to identify the true nutritional value of the feed. This approach also helps to minimize the impact of variation, which can lead to inaccurate conclusions about feed quality.

Managing variation in feed particle size

Feeds with larger particle size variation are more prone to sampling errors, which can further exacerbate feed variability. For such feeds, more frequent sampling is necessary to obtain a representative sample that accurately reflects the overall feed quality.

Utilizing reliable feed references

When dealing with feeds that have lower variability, such as dry corn, soybean meal, and soyhulls, it is often more cost-effective and reliable to use established reference values rather than conducting extensive testing. These reference values, found in nutrition books and databases, provide a consistent basis for feed formulation without the need for frequent sampling.

However, for more variable feeds like forages, frequent sampling is crucial. This approach helps to account for the inherent variability in these feeds and ensures that the diet formulated for the cows is as consistent as possible.

Conclusion

Managing dietary variation is essential for ensuring the health, productivity and profitability of dairy herds. By understanding the sources of feed variability and implementing strategies to reduce it, dairy producers can achieve more consistent diets, improving performance and overall herd management.

Variation in nutrient composition of corn silage and haylage sample daily due to daily, sampling, and laboratory variation.

	Daily variation	Sampling variation	Lab variation
Corn silage			
Dry matter	47 %	29 %	24 %
Neutral detergent fibre	34 %	51 %	15 %
Starch	25 %	65 %	10 %
Ash	18 %	81 %	2 %
Haylage			
Dry matter	64 %	31 %	5 %
Neutral detergent fibre	47 %	44 %	9 %
Crude protein	26 %	59 %	14 %
Ash	23 %	75 %	2 %



Expect China-Canada trade war to impact grain prices

Ramzy Yelda
Senior Market Analyst
Producteurs de grains du Québec

At the end of August, Ottawa followed Washington's lead and imposed a 100-per-cent tariff on imports of China-made electric vehicles and a 25-per-cent duty on Chinese steel and aluminum. One week later, China retaliated, announcing an anti-dumping investigation into Canadian canola imports. The market anticipates a high import duty on canola that will make shipments to China uneconomical.

Canola futures tanked immediately, as China is the world's largest importer of grains. This scenario is bad enough for Quebec's canola producers. However, it could get worse. One should remember

that when Beijing embargoed canola in 2019 due to the Huawei issue, Canadian soybean exports to China dropped sharply as well, even though soybeans were never officially targeted. Are we going to see a repeat of this scenario?

Sure, Canada has a wide variety of export markets for its grains. However, when the world's largest importer closes its borders, Canadian grains will have to go to other markets that may be less profitable, or riskier. And buyers, aware of this situation, will be in a better position to drive a hard bargain on price.

In other words, 2024-25 starts on the wrong foot for Quebec grain growers. With Bécancour's crushing plant on strike since May 26, selling our canola may be rather difficult this year.

PGQ 50th anniversary festivities officially launched

The festivities surrounding the 50th anniversary of the Producteurs de grains du Québec officially kicked off Sept. 11 at a cocktail dinner attended by many members, employees and partners of the organization. A handful of media outlets were also on the ground covering the event.

The evening celebration was an opportunity to showcase and taste Jean de passion beer. Developed exclusively to mark this milestone, the brew is a traditional blond made from 100-per-cent Quebec-grown barley and hops. An ambitious food trailer project, which will begin touring various Quebec regions in summer 2025, was unveiled, along with the PGQ's new website.

Doors open across Quebec

This year's Journée Portes ouvertes sur les fermes du Québec event, organized by the Union des producteurs agricoles, took place on Sunday, Sept. 8. The Producteurs de grains du Québec team manned a booth at Entreprises Julien Cousineau, a farm in the Montérégie region. The lively day included free popcorn, a gift basket draw featuring local products made with Quebec grains, promotional give-aways and grain-themed programming. The family-friendly event was as entertaining as it was educational.

Quebec field crop tour another success

Once again this year, the PGQ helped organize the Tournée des Grandes Cultures du Québec (TGCQ), which was held in four regions in August. The presentation of results took place Aug. 26 at the picturesque Domaine Saint-Simon.

For more than 10 years, the TGCQ has been an opportunity to collect field samples from Quebec's main corn- and soybean-producing regions. Each year, about 400 samples are used to assess upcoming fall harvests.

The results are now available for viewing at www.matourneeqc.com.

Auction continues to have negative effects on Quebec grain production costs

In the wake of the most recent publication of the results of the carbon offset credit auction, the PGQ pointed out the recurring negative effects these auctions are having on production costs in the grain sector.

Once again, the Quebec government's carbon pricing rules are causing a competitive imbalance between Quebec producers and their counterparts in other Canadian provinces and midwestern American states.

While the auction figures were lower in May, producers in the grain sector alone are still shelling out more than \$25 million per year for the right to emit GHGs for energy inputs, with more than \$15 million of this amount for farm diesel.

Forum on research needs in grain production

The PGQ's second forum on research in grain production in January 2024 was a chance for producers to voice their research needs. A report compiling the proceedings of the various workshops held during the event has been prepared and is now available for viewing.

To see the report, visit www.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.





Cookin' with the Advocate

Sautéed Pork Medallions with Basil and Balsamic Vinegar

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 tbsp rice wine vinegar
- 2 tsp cornstarch
- 1 tbsp minced fresh ginger
- 1 tbsp minced garlic
- 2 tsp Thai fish sauce
- 2-3 tbsp brown sugar
- ½ cup cold water
- 2 tbsp oil
- 2 pork tenderloins (about 12 ounces each) each cut into 8 pieces
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil leaves
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced

PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

In a bowl, whisk together the balsamic vinegar, rice wine vinegar, cornstarch, ginger, garlic, fish sauce, brown sugar and cold water.

In a non-reactive large sauté pan set over high heat, heat the oil until it ripples.

Meanwhile, lightly season both sides of the pork medallions with salt and pepper.

Working in batches, cook the pork until golden, about 1 minute on each side. Transfer the pork medallions to a rimmed cookie sheet pan.

Place the pork in the oven and roast until just cooked through, 4 to 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, add the reserved vinegar mixture to the sauté pan and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Simmer for 1 minute.

Stir in the basil and scallions.

Remove the pork from the oven and pour any accumulated juices into the sauce. Bring to a simmer and remove from the heat.

When ready to serve, pour the warm sauce over the pork medallions.

Source: *The White Dog Cafe Cookbook*, 1998, p. 147.



CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

Fresh basil is just one of the main features that will create the perfect sauce to go with pork medallions.



Lean into the fall harvest and use basil with abandon

Cynthia Gunn
QFA's Food Writer

Summer in September. It should be the name of a song. Blessed are we, and our gardens, when a hot soggy summer ends with a few weeks of sun and warmth with no frost.

The Saturday market stalls are literally overflowing. Even if you have your own sizable garden, there always seems to be something that doesn't do well, and the trusty market gardeners are there to fill the gap.

In a year like this, when the sun stays shining and we escape an early frost, it feels like a bonus three weeks for the most delicate plants like zinnia, which keel over at a whisper of a frost. They're at their peak now, after five months of care that begins with finicky germination back in April. It seems such a shame to have them killed off by early frost when in their prime. I guess that's what you get for growing a Zone 8 plant in Zone 4. Zinnias are native to scrub and dry grassland in an area stretching from the southwestern United States to South America, with a "centre of diversity" in Mexico. They didn't seem to mind our endless rainfalls this summer, though, thanks to a windy well-drained spot.

Basil, too, is terribly shy of frost, as you know. This year, large beautiful bushy plants are still bursting forth from the garden. But what if your family doesn't like pesto? What do you do with the bounty before the morning arises when it has turned to blackened mush? Eat it. Lots of it. Looking beyond salads helps this endeavour.

My old friend, *The White Dog Café Cookbook*, came to the rescue yet again with a pork tenderloin recipe. It suggests serving it with sesame-roasted asparagus and stir-fried wild rice.

Wild rice doesn't go over with anyone but the head cook, so I have to give that a miss. (I've been known to cook some on the side for myself, stashed in the freezer, ready for a quick zap in the microwave to accompany trout or pork tenderloin. I love the nutty grain.)

Asparagus is a problem because it's not in season with basil. Enter broccoli, and together with steamed basmati rice, a fine meal will be on your stovetop.

A quick note: I mentioned Thai basil in the curry recipe in May. Thai basil is strong and bold, with a spicy, licorice-like flavour. I've started to freeze it in ice cube trays, ready to pop in the next Thai curry just before serving. It, too, is at its prettiest peak right now. The leaves are pointier, darker and more shiny than sweet basil, and the plant produces beautiful purple flowers. I have to remember to save some seed for next year. This plant grew from very old seed, given to me at least eight years ago, so I'm thinking it has good genetics.

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

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