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"To the Great Farmers of the United States: Get ready to start making a lot of agricultural product to be sold INSIDE of the United States. Tariffs will go on external product on April 2nd. Have fun!"

– Truth Social post by U.S. President Donald Trump on March 3, hours before he triggered 25-per-cent tariffs on all products from Canada and Mexico, which he then paused and then sort of unpaused, but not really.



ROKAS TENYS/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Despite tariff chaos, Canadian ag can be export leader: RBC report

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

With the U.S.-Canada trade war ramping up and switching gears on an almost daily basis in what feels like a whirlwind of cross-border chaos and growing concern over how it will impact the economy, a report by the Royal Bank of Canada suggests the country's agricultural sector could be a trade diversification leader and generate \$44 billion in new agri-food exports in the next 10 years.

"We have an opportunity to turn agriculture into a driving force for trade diversification," said John Stackhouse, RBC senior vice-president who heads the bank's Economics and Thought Leadership group, which published the report *Food First: How agriculture can lead a new era of Canadian exports*, at the end of February.

"If we act now, we can ensure Canadian farmers, processors and exporters are well positioned to lead the global food economy rather than losing ground to

competitors," Stakehouse continued.

With the country's political leadership and provincial premiers now focused on finding new trade partners around the globe in an effort to reduce Canada's reliance on the U.S. as the country's key export destination, the RBC report outlines not only where the agricultural sector can diversify its markets abroad but delves into why it needs to do it now – and quickly.

"While Canada's agricultural exports have quadrupled in value since 2000, its global market share has shrunk by 12 per cent as competitors like Brazil and Australia expand into high-growth regions," said the report's author Lisa Ashton, who is also the agriculture policy lead with RBC's Thought Leadership. "With rising trade uncertainty and escalating tariffs in North America, Canada must accelerate efforts to diversify its trading partners, particularly in Southeast Asia, Africa and the Middle East."

See REPORT, Page 4.

HOW DAIRY?

Or should that be: 'How dare he?'



Trump targets supply management

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

Few things are clear in the expanding tariff war being waged by U.S. President Donald Trump, especially in Canada, where weeks of threats are being followed by a dizzying string of flip-flops and pauses, more threats of retaliatory counter-measures, annexation overtures and "colourful" phone calls between Ottawa and Washington, as Justin Trudeau described them.

But when it comes to the impacts on the agricultural sector, one result is crystal clear: Farmers on both sides of the border are experiencing a cocktail of emotions as the agricultural sector braces for impact.

As UPA president Martin Caron put it: "Our discussions with agricultural organizations in the United States show that there is discontent on both sides of the border."

Caron is a member of the Council on Canada-U.S. Relations appointed by Trudeau in January to help formulate and steer Canada's response to tariff threats.

But now, tariffs may not be the only issue.

Hidden in Trump's focus on dairy tariffs is the growing concern, especially in Quebec, that the real threat is that the U.S. government wants to dismantle Canada's supply-management system at the centre of Canada's dairy sector.

See DAIRY, Page 4.



Just the facts

4

The number of megatonnes of CO₂ emissions produced by dairy cows in Canada. The total carbon footprint of all types of cows in Canada is 27 MT. The output is produced from enteric fermentation, driven in large part by cattle's natural digestive process.

Source: RBC Climate Action Institute's report *Climate Action 2025: A year for rewiring*

18.3%

The percentage increase in net income for Canadian farmers in 2023 compared with 2022 to hit \$14.5 billion collectively. The increase in 2023 comes after the country's farmers saw a 4.1-per-cent drop in net income in 2022.

Source: Statistics Canada

757 million

The number of people in the world who experience hunger.

Source: Canadian Foodgrains Bank

40.3%

There are more older men in the farm population compared with the total population. In fact, 40.3 per cent – or just over 4 in 10 men – in the farm population were 55 years or older compared with 31.2 per cent in the total population.

Source: Statistics Canada

OUT STANDING IN ITS FIELD



MADELEINE LANGLOIS, THE ADVOCATE

This old barn in the Vaudreuil-Soulanges region – with its weathered boards, its slight bend in its roofline and its wood-framed window perfectly set under the peak of its outline – has seen another winter come and go. As the snow around it slowly recedes it stands witness to the fact that despite how quickly the world moves, some things don't change.



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

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Longueuil, Quebec J4H 4E7

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



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Act fast: \$35 million for sustainable farm projects announced

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

The Canadian and Quebec governments have announced \$35.3 million in funding to support agricultural producers who adopt more sustainable farming practices.

"By choosing to support our farm businesses with flexible assistance that is tailored to their reality, we are ensuring their long-term engagement," said Quebec Minister of Agriculture André Lamontagne at a press conference at Edriphaniel dairy farm in Lotbinière on Feb. 17. "This is a key action on your government's part to sustain our collective food supply."

Partly funded through the federal Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, the investment ushers in the fourth enrolment period of the Rétribution agroenvironnementale (Rewarding of Agri-Environmental Practices), an initiative set up to "recognize the efforts made by farm businesses to improve their practices and generate significant environmental gains," according to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Up to 1,200 new farm businesses will be eligible for support under the new funding instalment. The total direct aid to businesses, part of the flagship measure of the Sustainable Agriculture Plan 2020-2030, will reach \$122 million.

Producers are invited to submit projects that will increase the sustainability and environmental-friendliness of their farming practices. Plans most likely to improve off-season soil protection, reduce herbicide use, improve fertilizer management, crop diversification and the implementation of biodiversity-friendly landscaping will be favoured.

The initiative – and the entire Sustainable Agriculture Plan – is part of the federal, provincial and territorial governments' goal to reduce agriculture's effects on climate change, specifically within the next decade.

"Farmers are often the first to feel the effects of climate change, and despite this challenge, they work tirelessly to feed Canada and the world," said federal Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay.

"This funding is another example of our ongoing partnership with the



FACEBOOK

Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne made the announcement of \$35 million of new funding available to producers who adopt sustainable practices at Ferme Edriphaniel in Lotbinière in the Chaudière-Appalaches region on Feb. 17.

provinces and territories to help our hardworking farmers make their practices more sustainable, while improving the performance and resilience of their businesses."

Since the Rétribution agroenvironnementale started in Quebec in 2022, around 3,200 farm businesses have adopted more sustainable practices on almost 520,000 hectares of land. That represents 40 per cent of the province's annual crop area.

Businesses submitting projects will be asked to take their soil protection practices out of season further by using root crops and cutting back on

mineral nitrogen fertilizer use.

Projects must take place over the next two growing seasons (2025 and 2026). Each farm business could be eligible for \$50,000 in funding.

Once again with funding of this type, Quebec is asking farm business managers to act fast. The enrolment period began March 5 and lasts until March 31 or until funds are exhausted.

Visit fadq.qc.ca/initiative-ministerielle-ret-ribution-agroenvironnementale/description to read more about the initiative, and click on "ADMISSIBILITÉ" in the left-hand column to see if your farm is eligible.

Quebec translates almost 100 food preservation terms

The Advocate

The ever-industrious Office québécois de la langue française has published a new vocabulary guide to equip consumers and the Quebec food industry with French-language terms and words related to food preservation.

The guide – entitled "*Des denrées bien gardées: Vocabulaire de la conservation des aliments*," which awkwardly translates to "Well-Kept Food: Vocabulary of Food Conservation" – includes 90 key terms of new or recent French-language coinages often used in food processing, nutritional information labels and home food preservation and fermentation.

As the guide explains: "From external parameters to treatments carried out on the food itself, many strategies are put in place to ensure that foods retain their safety as well as their organoleptic and nutritional properties."

Of course, that explanation is a translation of what the guide says. And for those who speak plain English, "organoleptic" refers to "relating to qualities

of a substance that stimulate the sense organs, such as odour, colour, taste and texture of a food."

"Food preservation techniques are varied and have become more refined over time," reads the guide's brief introduction, without pausing to add that this process of refinement has presumably occurred in an English-only environment.

The guide attempts to insert a little francization.

The curious can consult the 40-page guide at the OQLF's website. While many of the translations are straightforward: "food additive" is rendered as "additif alimentaire" and "enzyme" is wisely translated as "enzyme."

Other terms show great consideration for the variations of the French and English language, while others are touchingly poetic.

For instance "smart packaging," used in English to describe packaging designed to collect and display data on the condition of its contents, becomes more noble in the OQLF's preferred

translation of "emballage intelligent."

And the English word "smoking" – in this case meant to describe preparing and curing meat by exposing it to wood smoke – gets no less than three expressions to help guide users avoid making any dreaded anglicism. It suggests "fumage," "fumaison" and the delightfully fanciful "boucanage."

Other terms will no doubt educate English-speaking users about their own language. The guide uses the term "espace de tête" to describe the empty part of a package not occupied by its chief contents – like the air in potato chip bags or the very top of the neck on a bottle of Coke – which it states is a translation of the English word "ullage."

In its statement accompanying the publication of the *Des denrées bien gardées* guide, the OQLF explains the reasoning behind producing its vocabulary guides.

"The (OQLF) produces new vocabularies each year to increase the availability of terminology in French linked to key and emerging economic sectors,

where the terminological offer is limited and where needs are growing. In this way, it contributes to making French the standard and usual language of work."

The food preservation vocabulary was produced in collaboration with specialists from Quebec's Ministry of Agriculture, the Institute on Nutrition and Functional Foods of Université Laval and the Sectoral Committee for Labour in Food Processing. In 2023-2024, the OQLF produced six such vocabularies – on quantum computing, trucking, the circular economy, water treatment, toxicology and physiotherapy.

According to the OQLF's annual report, the public institution now has 416 employees, a marked increase since its previous annual report, which cited 345 staffers. The language watchdog has a budget of nearly \$42 million, a \$7-million year-over-year increase. Last year, it spent \$2.6 million on communications and about \$1.6 million on research.



REPORT: Warning comes with map of opportunities

From Page 1

To map out the path forward based on the data, RBC partnered with BCG Centre for Canada's Future, a division of the Boston Consulting Group, an agency that specializes in helping businesses build and sustain competitive advantages.

According to the findings, more than \$100 billion in agricultural and agri-food products cross the Canada-U.S. border annually, with the U.S. buying the majority share of that – almost 60 per cent. That represents a huge increase in the last quarter century.

The report states: "Canada is now the source of 20 per cent of U.S. agriculture and agri-food imports."

"No longer just a bulk commodity producer, we are now a dominant foreign supplier to America's grocery aisles and dining tables, as Canadian farmers and processors have become more advanced in developing new products

and marketing them to Americans," the report highlights.

But those gains are now the focus of the dilemma Canada faces as the tariff war takes hold.

"Thanks to decades of export growth – ahead of most of Canada's economic sectors – our agriculture and agri-food sector entered the 21st century as a productivity leader."

In addition, what the gains do not show is how Canada, while increasing its agricultural exports overall, its growth has lagged behind advances made by other countries. In fact, Canada overall is losing market share

on a worldwide scale.

"... we're not keeping pace with the rest of the world, which saw agriculture and agri-food exports grow five-fold over the same period," the report states.

In fact, in the last 25 years, Canada dropped from fifth place in the world in terms of agricultural exports, to seventh place, putting it now behind China and Brazil. If the current trend continues, the report states, Canada could drop to ninth place in the next 10 years.

That is the warning.

The challenges, however, are cast in a more optimistic light. The sector can regain market share and reverse that slide – even in the current tariff-threat climate – by taking vital strategic action, the report's authors argue.

"Our model estimates that Canada's share of the global export pie could grow by 30 per cent by 2035, adding \$44 billion to total exports, if we pursue three main trade objectives: grow where Canada has market access, expand in the world's best growth markets and maintain existing relationships through strengthened 'food diplomacy,'" the report outlines.

The opportunities:

1. Grow where Canada has market access:

"Canada has 18 free-trade agreements providing access to over two-thirds of the global economy. Through these agreements, there is room to make better use of Canada's market access in Europe, Asia," the report states.

2. Expand in the world's best growth markets:

That starts in Asia.

"Consumers in Southeast and South Asia are expected to have more to spend on higher value products over the next decade, thanks in part to expectations for economic growth that will be among the best in the world, with GDP per capita forecast to rise 3.9 per cent, annually between 2024 and 2033...."

Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, North Africa and Latin America are also expected to see large GDP expansions.

3. Maintain existing relationships through strengthened 'food diplomacy.'

"These markets include the U.S., Japan, China and Mexico – the first three of which are projected to have food trade deficits over the next decade that surplus producers like Canada will compete for. Our advantage is established business networks and consumer confidence in our products."

DAIRY: Supply-management becoming growing target

From Page 1

Canada conceded ground on supply management in the last round of negotiations that led to the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement signed by Trump during his first term. At that time, federal officials in Canada compensated dairy farmers for allowing the U.S. limited access to our dairy market. And they vowed that would be it.

But Trump appears to want more now.

Yes, as the tariff war ratcheted up in February and early March, federal officials, including Innovation, Science and Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne, pledged their support to protect the system.

Speculation over whether it is worth protecting persists, however.

During the CUSMA negotiations, the first Trump administration argued Canada's supply management system unfairly limited U.S. access to this country's dairy market. Yet, despite reaching a deal, the loosened access still annoys Trump. But his criticisms do not reflect the reality of what is actually happening.

His very public gripes and threats to impose a 250-per-cent reciprocal tariff on Canadian dairy entering the U.S. grabs headlines, but observers say all that bluster – even if he carries through with the threat – will have little impact.

So far, U.S. dairy producers have not come close to hitting the threshold that would trigger a tariff under the existing CUSMA deal.

Then there is the other fact that Trump opts to ignore: Canada exports less dairy products to the U.S. than it imports from the U.S., meaning Canada posts a trade deficit when it comes to dairy.

But that is not the only concern. The U.S. is not the only country that has raised issues with Canada's supply-management system. And as Canadian officials look to diversify their trading deals with other countries around the globe, the issue could again draw criticism.

Credit for UPA Dues Program 2025

Revenue of \$25,000 or less

Eligibility criteria for this UPA Program:

- Must be an agricultural producer registered as a doubledues paying farm (\$932) for 2025 and expect to have a gross farm **revenue of \$25,000 or less for 2025**;
- 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 2025, i.e., \$535.78 (\$466 plus tax);
- Must complete the application form and return it to the UPA by **October 31, 2025**;
- Must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the UPA that the gross farm revenue for 2025 was \$25,000 or less by sending us the required documents by **July 31, 2026**.

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

- on the UPA website at www.upa.qc.ca/credit-upa-dues-program
- from your regional federation
- by calling 450-679-0540, ext. 8213

You might qualify for the dues credit. Get informed!



RBC report's key takeaways

The following is an overview of the six key takeaways outlined in the RBC's latest report, *Food First: How agriculture can lead a new era of Canadian exports*.

U.S. trade tensions have cast a spotlight on Canadian food trade: American tariff threats pose a special challenge to Canadian agriculture and agri-food exports, as they now account for 20 per cent of U.S. agri-food imports.

Exports to the U.S. are growing: More than 60 per cent of Canada's agriculture and agri-food exports go to the U.S. – and the value of those exports has quadrupled since 2000.

Canada is falling behind competitors globally: Canada's position in

“In just 10 years, the world will need to feed close to 9 billion people, and many of them will have more income, and appetite, for higher quality foods like the kind Canada is known for. To meet this demand, the world will need to produce 14% more food, feed and biofuels than we're delivering today, and do it in a more disruptive trade environment.”

global agriculture and agri-food trade measures aren't taken.

has slipped to 7th from 5th place, and **Rivals are gaining ground in the world's top growth** could drop to 9th by 2035 if corrective

markets: Emerging competitors like Brazil have gained ground in Africa and the Middle-East, while traditional rivals like Australia are gaining market share in Southeast Asia.

Canada can increase its global share by 30%: With the right investments, Canada can increase its global share from 3.7 per cent to 4.8 per cent to regain 5th place in exports, according to new modelling, adding \$44 billion to agriculture and agri-food export value by 2035.

A clear plan is critical: To regain market share, Canada needs to focus on innovation, investment, export-oriented infrastructure, digital infrastructure and overseas agri-food promotion.

TRADE FACTS

- In just 10 years, by 2035, the world will need to feed close to 9 billion people.
- Canada is now the source of 20% of U.S. agriculture and agri-food imports.
- 96% of Canada's canola oil and 65% of canola meal export volumes went to the U.S. in 2024.
- Canada supplies 85% of the potash the U.S. needs.
- 3.7% is Canada's share of the \$2.686-trillion global food export market in 2023.
- India and Southeast Asia's global agriculture and food consumption is expected to grow to more than 31% of global consumption within the next decade.
- Canada has 18 free-trade agreements providing access to over two-thirds of the global economy.
- Canada's water use for agriculture remains low at 11% of total freshwater withdrawal, compared with 67% in Australia and 40% in the United States.
- Canada's agricultural land covers 6% of the country.
- Government spending on agri-food research and development has declined by 9% annually on average over the past decade.
- If all Canadian farmers had access to 5G, it could add between \$2.7 billion and \$3.5 billion to Canada's GDP by 2030, through input efficiencies and enhanced automation on farm, estimates show.
- The U.S. spends close to 20% of its agriculture support services budget on marketing and promotion, or triple Canada's share of 6%.



DC STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Canadian farmers have a role to play in ensuring that consumers trust – and are proud – to reach for Canadian food products.



John McCart
QFA President

I was in Ottawa in late February, in the days before the U.S. government initially imposed its sweeping 25-per-cent tariffs against all Canadian goods. You know, before President Donald Trump then scaled them back, changed his mind, saw how the financial markets reacted – take your pick.

I was in the Canadian capital to attend the annual meeting of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. The theme of the conference was “Laying the Foundation: Investing Today for the Future of Canadian Agriculture.” There were more than 100 farm sector stakeholders from across Canada representing all production subsectors, including 12 UPA delegates.

As usual, there were many sessions to participate in. The first of these was a workshop that talked about the public perception of agriculture. The speakers emphasized the importance of

As Canadians unite to face threat from U.S., so do farmers

re-assuring consumers that they must have trust in farmers and the food they produce. Unfortunately, these trust levels have decreased since hitting a high during the pandemic. Farmers are in a constant struggle against false influencers and need to constantly promote the positive aspects of Canadian agriculture and food. All levels of the public must be engaged, not only the consumer, but municipalities and the provincial and federal governments.

One very interesting panel was entitled “Canada’s Place in the World: What It Means for Canadian Agriculture.” Moderated by Tyler McCann, a farmer from the Pontiac region who also serves as managing director of The Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, the panelists represented a range of groups from trade, international affairs, the Centre for International Governance Innovation and a vice-president of the Royal Bank. The discussion soon turned to the effects of the tariffs and how large a global impact they would have.

Trade in agriculture has been worked

on diligently for decades, with deals between North America countries, the European Union and our partners in Asia. These agreements have benefitted most. But now, the efforts of the U.S. could destroy it all and send everyone’s economy back years if not decades.

Another session at the CFA conference, “Disaster: Response and Relief,” included the deputy minister from Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, the general manager of British Columbia’s Cattlemen’s Association, the vice-president of Co-operators Insurance and a dairy farmer from the Fraser Valley in B.C. The discussion covered the natural disasters in B.C. in the last few years that included forest fires and flooding. Both of these types of major climate disruptions are very relatable here in Quebec.

The recovery from weather disasters can take years, and both private industry and governments must have solutions in place to keep the agriculture sector strong. At a time when the future of farming is in doubt, the industry

must be able the push through devastating circumstances. Food still needs to be produced, but crippling losses that may or may not be covered by insurance and farm programs put farmers and their families at risk.

Another event of note at the CFA conference was the acclamation of Stéphanie Levasseur, the second vice-president of the UPA, as the second vice-president of the CFA. An apple grower from Frelighsburg in the Eastern Townships, Lavasseur is a good addition to the CFA board.

Unfortunately, most of the talk at this year’s CFA meeting focused on the U.S. tariffs. It seems that everyone except Trump knows that there are no winners in a trade war. However, as farmers, we must be vigilant in making sure that consumers buy Canadian. When the leader of our largest trading partner chooses to sacrifice the well being of his own country by acting like a child, maybe he will realize that America needs to keep all trade deals open.

Tech-driven strawberry farm in Vaudreuil for sale

Despite millions in government funding, operation failed to meet ambitious goals

Joshua Allan

Special to *The Advocate*

Negotiations to sell a multi-million-dollar vertical strawberry production plant in Vaudreuil-Dorion, just off the western tip of the island of Montreal, continue. The Ferme d'Hiver facility, which launched with fanfare in 2021, had come up short of its lofty goal to replace 10 per cent of Canada's total strawberry imports by this year, even after having received \$32 million in government funding in 2022.

Ferme d'Hiver founder and technological director Yves Daoust confirmed that negotiations for the sale of the operation are ongoing but declined to share details, nor offer the names of interested buyers.

The company had reportedly been in talks with GUSH, a vertical strawberry farm based in Montreal, for a potential sale of the facility back in January. However, in a media interview Daoust said the plant is drawing interest from several potential buyers.

A technological approach to agriculture

Founded in 2018, Ferme d'Hiver had sought to create an innovative approach to strawberry farming. Combining agricultural practices with climate engineering systems in a greenhouse environment and using artificial intelligence, the company aimed to produce pesticide-free strawberries year-round.

The production plant was designed to use indoor climate simulation systems to create an optimal environment for strawberry production. This system was meant to bypass the traditional reliance on Mother Nature for optimal weather for crop growth. The plant includes eight production rooms, with a maximum capacity of 60,000 strawberry plants.

In 2022, Ferme d'Hiver received \$32 million in combined funding from the Quebec government and Investissement Québec in order for the company to "position itself among the world leaders in the vertical farm industry," according to a statement released at the time.

The company aimed to produce about 13 million kilograms of strawberries by 2025, which would have replaced 10 per cent of Canada's total strawberry imports.

However, the business experienced significant difficulties in the years since. Daoust had explained to the media that the company had made a misguided attempt to start production before construction of the plant had been completed. This led to issues of outside exposure for the strawberry plants, which was compounded by the company's decision not to use pesticides. As a result, production at the facility never hit full capacity, creating an irreparable gap between expenses and revenue.

Construction had been completed by last spring, but the decision to sell was made in August following a meeting between the company and its creditors.



FILE PHOTO

In 2022, Ferme d'Hiver built a \$4-million 20,000-square-foot greenhouse in Vaudreuil-Dorion, just west of the island of Montreal, that mimics the ideal sun, rain and wind conditions needed to grow strawberries. It is the largest vertical strawberry farm in Canada and serves as a state-of-the-art controlled environment that perfectly regulates humidity and temperature.

In 2021, Ferme D'Hiver built its first strawberry-growing facility inside a \$4-million 20,000-square-foot greenhouse. This facility, equipped with lights and climate-control technology, regulates humidity and temperature, and simulate sunshine and rain, creating the perfect growing climate for the berries. This approach to vertical indoor growing was not new, but combining it within a larger greenhouse

facility was. Integrating the two facilities was touted as the game-changer.

All the light energy generated in the strawberry-growing space is transformed into heat and used to warm the surrounding greenhouse. The aim was to convert the energy for a secondary purpose to facilitate growing vegetables all year round.

Trends in agriculture



Chris Judd
The Advocate

Now what?

Our closest, most trusted neighbour who we have depended on for everything that neighbours have trusted each other with since the War of 1812 has suddenly turned into a very untrustworthy, unpredictable former friend.

The trade war is a time-consuming distraction created by the U.S. president and a "very untrustworthy partner of his" keeping us from focusing on what they really want to do with the world.

Democracy as we have known it since before the First World War is officially under attack. The true leaders of our free world have the hugest decisions of their lives to make quickly. Most people have seen this coming since the attack on the U.S. Capitol more than four years ago.

The last huge trade decision wasn't really as much about trade as it was about feeding our troops and civilians in countries under attack during Second World War. Our farmers and their families stepped up to the task, and even put the clock ahead an hour so they could work an extra hour or two every day to produce more of everything.

Farmers stepped up

After the Second World War the world, led by Europe, swore it would never starve again. That is when food reserves were built up to get us through tough times. When farmers produced more than their country needed, the country bought up this surplus food.

I am old enough to remember when a surplus of eggs, butter and powdered milk was dumped in the ocean when the reserves were overstocked. An opposition MP tried to embarrass our minister of agriculture for this miscalculation. In response, the government of Canada called in some of the best farmers in the country to work with the department of agriculture to come up with a solution. Those farmers knew that when working with animals, production cannot be turned on and off like a light switch.

System built on safe-guards

In part, that group of farm leaders and Agriculture Canada officials arrived with the the supply-management

Trade chaos simplified: Just look for 'made in Canada'



BODNAR.PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Read labels and look for food made in Canada. Canadian farmers respect the rules and produce the safest and healthiest food in the world.

system to market milk, eggs and chicken. The system is based on three pillars:

1: A steady daily supply for a steady price.

2: A cost-of-production system that calculates the average cost to produce a pound of milk. The most efficient farmers who can produce milk for less than the average price make a profit and those less efficient either learn how to become more efficient or find a different way to farm.

The cost of production takes every expense on a dairy farm into account – rent, interest, fertilizer, feed, repairs to fences, machinery, buildings, taxes, cost of fuel. Everything. Everybody who has anything to do with milk (farmers, bottlers, processors, retailers and consumer associations) have to agree to any changes in costs or savings before any change in the price of milk is made – at the farm, at the processor or at the store.

3: The government must protect the farmers from other countries "dumping" their surplus dairy products into the Canadian market at a price below

the Canadian cost of production.

U.S. farmers are subsidized

South of the border, where they have an open-market system to market milk, if a processor quits or goes bankrupt, the farmer who shipped there is suddenly wondering if he will get paid for last month's milk. Then he finds himself suddenly looking for a milk plant to buy his milk.

To deal with the unheaval in the market, and help farmers, the U.S. government introduced the US\$1.2 trillion *American Farm Bill*. Yet, the U.S. claims this is not a subsidy.

In Canada, both the milk plants and the government maintain a small refrigerated "bank" of butter to assure that in peak consumption times – like Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter – there will be no shortage of dairy supplies for Canadians.

Meeting high standards

In Canada, all milk producers adhere to the Canadian Quality Milk program, which requires farmers to monitor all milk temperatures electronically, restricts

the use of antibiotics and requires that all health events with cattle, including calving and cattle movement to different locations, be recorded. Every animal must be tagged and tracked from birth until it leaves the farm. The regulations in the U.S. are not the same.

Other farm products – like corn, soy, beef – are marketed on the open market and are very dependent upon the world market. Great prices mean great profits. But trade embargoes and low prices mean farmers are at the mercy of their governments.

The bird flu has left consumers in the U.S. paying exorbitant prices for eggs and created uncertainty over chicken prices. Trade embargoes, like China imposed on U.S. grain left American farmers wondering where or how much grain would be sold to whom and for how much. This means food security has suddenly become a huge concern worldwide.

So what can we do?

Look for that made-in-Canada branding. Your Canadian farmers are doing their best.



Farming today not like what farming was in years past

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

One of the great benefits of growing a family farm is that it can set the next generation up in business and in life. And for 19-year-old Sonia Auger, the farm life – and the business side of it – suits her to a tee.

“Something I really like about farming is the time I get to spend with my parents,” Auger said. “We might be in the barn looking at some aspect of the enterprise and then we can discuss it again at breakfast to find solutions.”

And help from the family is needed at the Augers' dairy operation, where Sonia grew up. Nestled in the small town of Ste. Françoise, about 50 kilometres north of Victoriaville, the Augers milk about 115 cows. Along with raising all their heifers and cash cropping on the side, the family mainly grows feed for the dairy herd on a total of 250 hectares of land.

It's a tall order. And Sonia has been helping since as long as she can remember.

“I've been doing a lot of little jobs since I was a kid,” Auger said. “I enjoyed going to work with my parents – and felt like I was really helpful at that time! And over the years, I've been assigned to more important responsibilities than just feeding the cats and scraping the stalls.”

These days, Auger is the family point-person for calf feeding and keeping health reports. She also takes on much of the field work during the spring and fall rush periods, along with managing the summer hay harvest.

Part of her long-term plan

Auger knows that she wants to spend her life on the farm. And she also knows that that means keeping up with technological and production changes in the world of farming. That's why she enrolled in Macdonald Campus' Farm Management and Technology program (FMT) after high school.

“Being on the farm helps me create a strong passion for farming and the idea of spending the rest of my life in the agricultural sector is what pushed me to apply for the FMT,” Auger explained.

Before applying to Mac, Auger spent a month in Victoria, B.C., at an intensive English-as-a-second-language school.



COURTESY OF SONIA AUGER

Sonia Auger uses what her family refers to as “taxi veau” to cart a calf through the dairy barn at her family's farm in Ste. Françoise, north of Victoriaville. The Macdonald Campus student was awarded a Warren Grapes scholarship at the QFA's 2024 annual general meeting.

The experience was so rewarding, it made her hungry for more.

“After that, I decided I wanted to pursue my studies after high school in English, learning something I am passionate about,” she said.

When Auger started at Mac in 2023, being a francophone student had its challenges. But she overcame the hurdles.

Overcame language barrier

“It was hard for the first three weeks to get used to learn in English,” Auger said. “Some challenges were about communication – how to interact well with people when you don't fully understand what's been said or not being able to find the right words. But after a couple of mistakes and a couple of tries, you get used to it and the language is not a problem any more.”

In fact, learning in an English-speaking academic environment was so much not a problem for Auger that she was awarded a Warren Grapes

scholarship at the QFA's 2024 annual general meeting – an accomplishment that surprised her and left her very thankful.

“I was mainly grateful to all the people – the teachers, family and neighbours – around me who support me every day. Not only in my studies, but also in my projects and ambitions,” Auger said.

Those projects and ambitions are considerable. After graduation, Auger hopes to continue her education at McGill by going into Agro-environmental Sciences so that she can help other agricultural producers in business and production management.

Looking to the future

“What I think about farming today is not what people were thinking about farming years ago,” she said.

“I think more about planning ahead and trying to understand the population trends and conflicts around the world, so that farmers can find opportunities to

base their production upon. One of the biggest challenges about global farming today is the changes in demand and crop needs or animal products needs because of the growing population in the cities. Farmers will have to adjust their rotations and their future plans to fulfill the needs of those people.”

And her ambition of one day returning to the family farm?

Auger's mother and father, Guillaume Auger and Monika Fitze, are fully in support of their daughter gathering experience off the farm so that she can one day operate the business the way she wants – and keep the family farm going strong.

“My family is really open-minded. We all know it's important to have experiences away from the home farm,” Auger said. “I think, and my family thinks, that this path I'm on will help me bring the farm to the next level of sustainability and profitability one day.”



ZOÉ LINDSAY, THE ADVOCATE

Made-in-Canada and made-in-Quebec labelling on food products help consumers to support our farmers, but the Quebec government needs to do more to support companies when it awards contracts.



Martin Caron
UPA President

Sourcing local products, services has to be a bigger priority

Amid ongoing trade tensions between Canada and the United States, the matter of buying local has vaulted onto the agenda. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Quebec Premier François Legault amplified messaging on the importance of local purchasing as soon as the American tariffs were announced. And calls to buy made-in-Quebec and made-in-Canada products – indeed, even to boycott American ones – have only gotten louder since then.

The push for local products extends beyond food. Just recently, the Quebec National Assembly debated vigorously the portion of public purchases (in all categories) coming from Quebec sources.

According to 2023-2024 data from the Conseil du Trésor, 52 per cent of contracts signed by the province were with Quebec suppliers, 23 per cent with Ontario suppliers and 20 per cent with American companies.

In terms of food, Québec Solidaire MNA Alejandra Zaga Mendez stated

that 45 per cent of contracts were awarded to Quebec suppliers. If that's the case, we can certainly do better – especially considering that Quebec has had an official strategy to purchase Quebec food since 2020. The aim of the strategy is to encourage public institutions to buy more local food, and 92 per cent of these institutions had set targets by November 2024. The strategy doesn't establish any mandatory threshold, however.

Consumers making choices

Turning now to the general public, in 2021, the Quebec Ministry of Agriculture reported that just over half (53.3 per cent) of the food we eat comes from Quebec suppliers. We can say that half of every plate (or one out of every two meals) is made from Quebec foods.

But, of course, Quebec suppliers don't source 100 per cent of their ingredients from their home province (think orange juice bottled in Quebec). So, adjusting that figure, we can state that about one-third of every plate (or one meal in three) comes from agricultural foodstuffs produced in the province.

Consumers seeking to choose home-grown food in reaction to today's trade

conditions may be in for more of a challenge than they expect, mainly because country-of-origin labelling is not mandatory for all food products.

This prompted Aliments du Québec, a non-profit organization focused on promoting food products from the province, to point out recently that its logo is a symbol consumers can trust to help them support our economy through their food choices. For nearly 30 years, the organization has pointed the way to products produced or processed here at home, based on a stringent verification guarantee.

Labelling helps

Aliments du Québec controls the Aliments du Québec and Aliments préparés au Québec certification marks, as well as their respective organic versions. Approximately 25,000 products come with these certification marks on the label. All of these have gone through a rigorous vetting process, guaranteeing that the food in the package is local in origin, meaning produced or processed within Québec's borders.

Meanwhile, various grocery chains are contributing to the effort by giving added visibility to Quebec and

Canadian foods. Some of them are even trying to source more of their inventory from home turf. These initiatives will prove hugely helpful to consumers.

Since 2020, the Union des producteurs agricoles's own *Mangeons local plus que jamais!* movement has helped both grow and satisfy the appetite for local food. Using geolocation, the *Mangeons local* app (accessible via the web, the App Store and Google Play) pinpoints about 1,500 sales locations across the province. Users can find everything from local farms to producer-processors, small local processors, farmers' markets, microbreweries that primarily use Quebec-grown grains, and restaurants participating in the *Aliments du Québec au menu* program. The app offers a quick and easy solution for anyone seeking to stock the pantry or tour the province's gourmet delights.

The scale of the trade war hanging over our heads is still a powerful argument in favour of government action to specifically address local purchasing, especially when it comes to food. We know this became a priority during the pandemic. It needs to become a priority again, and to become a permanent part of Quebecers' DNA.



Paul J. Hetzler
ISA Certified Arborist

Try a different tea next time you have the sniffles



KATI LENART/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

We all know that trees are good for us in a general sense. They take carbon dioxide from the air, thus helping to combat climate change. And while most of the oxygen we breathe comes from marine algae, trees still account for 28 per cent of the oxygen in the atmosphere.

Spending time around trees is also good for our health, with proven effects like reduced stress levels and stronger immune systems.

But during cold and flu season, the needles from many types of native conifers can be used to make tasty, nutritious teas loaded with vitamins and antioxidants. As with all natural remedies, it's important to first check with your health-care provider to make sure there's nothing in your health history that might conflict with drinking this kind of tea. Pregnant women should be especially cautious about any supplement not prescribed by a doctor.

That said, tea made from the needles of pine, spruce, cedar and fir trees has been safely consumed worldwide for centuries. The practice remains quite popular in Japan, Korea, China, and among Indigenous peoples in North America. One of the main things that evergreen needles are known for is their high Vitamin C content. In fact, by weight, pine needles have more Vitamin C than lemons.

Great source of Vitamin C

Although Vitamin C cannot prevent a cold or bout of influenza, research does show that it can help shorten the course of illness by increasing T-lymphocyte activity, and possible antibody and interferon production. Because our bodies cannot make Vitamin C the way they can synthesize B-vitamins, we have to get C from outside sources. In the old days, people who didn't get enough fruits and vegetables, in particular sailors, used to get scurvy, a disease that caused anemia, tooth loss and eventual death.

In 1535, French explorer Jacques Cartier and his crew were on the verge of death from scurvy near present-day Quebec City. Luckily for them, they were cured by First Nations healers who gave them tea made from the needles of the eastern white cedar. Cartier dubbed the cedar "l'arbre de vie," which is why

Evergreen needles, including from pine, spruce and cedar, are known for their high Vitamin C content. They also contain Vitamin A and amino acids like arginine that are used to make proteins.

today we find it labelled "arborvitae" at nurseries and garden centres.

In addition to Vitamin C, conifer needles contain Vitamin A and amino acids like arginine that are used to make proteins. Pine needle tea has also been shown to be anti-inflammatory, and to reduce blood pressure as well.

Hemlock tea is one of my favourite evergreen teas. This is not the recipe poor Socrates drank, which was made from the toxic perennial herb, poison-hemlock. The kind I like is an infusion of needles and young shoots from the stately eastern hemlock, sometimes called the Canadian hemlock. This hemlock tea is delicious, and the good part is that you can drink it more than one time. Plus, it's fun to see the reaction when I offer it to guests.

Tree teas available in bags

There are dozens of companies that sell bagged evergreen-needle tea ready to use. However, if you have access to evergreen trees, you can easily make your own. Be sure to harvest just a portion of the ends of twigs from large, healthy specimen trees. Rinse the needles well under cool water, and blot them dry. You can freeze extra for future use.

To make tea from fresh needles, cover the bottom of a teapot, saucepan, or metal or ceramic bowl with needles – it is not necessary to chop them. Fill the vessel three-quarters full with boiling water (don't boil the needles, which destroys Vitamin C). After steeping for 5-10 minutes, stir briefly and pour through a fine-mesh strainer before serving. Sweeten to taste.

For a sugar-free sweetener, you might want to try chopped twigs from either yellow birch or black birch trees, both of which are often referred to as sweet birch. Black birch is limited to parts of southern Ontario, but yellow birch is found throughout most of the eastern half of the country. The twigs have a naturally sweet wintergreen flavour, but for best results, they need to be steeped longer than pine needles do.

Other options

Another birch-related tea is made from *Inonotus obliquus*, a fungus that grows on birch trees of all types. Known as chaga, it has a long history in northern latitudes around the world as a medicine as well as a pick-me-up. Sometimes called cinder-conk because it looks as though it has been charred black, this

native fungus is available online and at most health-food stores as a tea. The health benefits of chaga tea include lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure and lower blood sugar. Of course, there is no reason that chaga tea cannot be drunk together with conifer-needle tea.

All of our native spruces, firs and cedars are safe to use, but two western species of pine, ponderosa pine, found in central and lower British Columbia; and lodgepole pine, found in the Rocky Mountains and foothills regions of Alberta; can be toxic. The only other evergreen to avoid is the yew (*Taxus spp.*), which is native to Quebec and grown as a landscape hedge. If you're new to tree identification, get someone who knows their stuff to help you.

Doctors are already prescribing time spent in the woods, or "forest bathing," for stress, anxiety and high blood pressure. Perhaps in the near future they may be telling us to drink evergreen-needle tea when we present with the sniffles.

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



"It's like a Joni Mitchell song,
you really don't know what
you've lost until it's gone."

Local news makes a difference *for English-speaking communities*

The importance of local media is a topic that has been the subject of many discussions in the last decade as news outlets across North America struggle to stay alive.

But nowhere is the topic more important than within the English-speaking community of Quebec.

As the provincial government has moved to systematically reduce the amount of information in English available, the need for English media becomes more vital.

"We are the only ones explaining basic services and issues," said Nikki Mantell, publisher of *The Low Down to Hull and Back News*, which covers the Gatineau hills region in western Quebec.

As elements of Bill 96 approved in 2023, which has reinforced the Charter

of the French Language, are implemented and enforced, the amount of information in English in all sectors of Quebec is diminishing.

Quebec-based companies must now ensure that all information on their websites are in French.

The provincial government itself has reduced information available in English.

And at the municipal level, only towns with bilingual status retain the right to provide some services and information in both French and English. Although, this includes offering English on their websites, many reports and some documentation

are often available in French only.

For English-speaking residents who live in municipalities that do not have bilingual status, the information available to anglophones in English is disappearing.

"Now more than ever we need a place where the community comes together," Mantell said.

"It's like a Joni Mitchell song," Mantell continued. "You really don't know what you've lost until it's gone."

In this climate, ensuring that English-language media survives in these communities, she said, is that much more important now.

But it is not just information in Eng-

"We are the only ones explaining basic services and issues."

– Nikki Mantell, publisher of *The Low Down to Hull and Back News*

lish that is important, said Brenda O'Farrell, president of the Quebec Community Newspaper Association. It is also having journalists on the ground, doing the research, asking the questions and providing the context of what is happening at the municipal level that is crucial.

"Journalism puts issues in context," said O'Farrell, who is also the editor at three community newspapers.

"We can't lose sight of what is happening with public administration," she added. "If local media is not doing it, it simply doesn't get done, and the majority of residents will never learn about what is going on at town halls, where public money is being managed."

"It takes work," said Mantell, referring to covering town councils.

Owners and publishers of local independent newspapers don't take anything for granted. But neither should readers, said Ilka de Laat, manager of the QCNA. Especially, she explained, when we see so much of the media disappearing.

"Journalism puts issues in context."

– Brenda O'Farrell, QCNA president

Canada only G7 country where media is banned on Facebook

The cat videos are still there. The questions from new homeowners looking for recommendations for a reliable contractor pop up every so often. And posts that highlight a new chicken-and-orzo recipe continue to appear, complete with a list of ingredients in the comments. But the link to the story about the hike in your municipal tax bill is not. Neither is the link to the article about the impact on the economy of the little town of Les Cèdres, west of Montreal, in the days after Amazon announced it planned to shutter its Quebec operations.

It has been a year and a half since Meta, the owner of Facebook and Instagram, has banned news from its social media platforms, making Canada the only G7 country where news from legitimate me-

dia sources cannot be seen.

The ban is a result of federal legislation, Bill C-18, the Online News Act, which came into force in June 2023. The aim of the legislation was to force large tech giants like Meta and Google to pay media outlets for news content shared on their platforms. But Meta opted to deny news outlets access to its social media sites, making it exempt from the new law. The move created another hurdle for community newspapers to get over. Meanwhile, a deal struck with Google to provide \$100 million in funding to Canadian media, will see most of the money go to large media companies.

The result is the struggle for the smallest media outlets has become more difficult, as it no longer has the ability to engage

with their readers on the biggest social media platforms.

"As a society that cares about the truth and cares about having a population that's informed to ensure better democratic outcomes and to hold politicians to account, this is extremely bad news," said Aengus Bridgman, director of Media Ecosystem Observatory, which published a study last June, marking the one-year anniversary of the Meta news ban.

"Less news is being consumed by Canadians," the report stated, which highlighted the increasing risk of Canadians being informed on politics and current affairs through a "more biased and factual lens than before."



"News no longer flows down from the big media outlets."

Shifting the directional flow of news

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS AT EPICENTRE OF A REVOLUTION

In the first 11 months of 2024, 36 local news outlets closed in Canada. Twenty-nine were community newspapers, while seven were privately owned radio stations, according to the Local News Research Project at Toronto Metropolitan University's School of Journalism.

That is in addition to the more than 500 news outlets that have ceased operations in Canada since 2008.

For those that remain, surviving does not mean striving – not by any means. Just about every other news operation in the country that remains – from Bell Media to the CBC, Postmedia to the Torstar group of papers – have slashed jobs and pulled back on coverage.

Canadians across the country are losing their news media, bit by bit, reporter by reporter, newspaper by newspaper – except for you, at least for now.

What makes you so different from a growing number of Canadians?

The mere fact that you are reading this, means you are served by a community newspaper that is still in operation. In fact, in a few very rare instances, you are reading a newspaper that just started publishing in the last few years.

If these areas were to be located on a map, they would be identified as "the starting point." It's where news begins.

And this is where the one bright light in the story

of the Canadian media shines. It is where a little revolution has started to rumble. It's the epicentre that is shifting the directional flow of news in Canada.

"News no longer flows down from the big media outlets," said Brenda O'Farrell, the president of the Quebec Community Newspaper Association. "It flows up, from the small, independent community news operations that still have reporters in communities outside the big city areas."

O'Farrell calls it the "Trickle Up Theory of News."

"No longer are major news outlets covering all areas. They are only focusing on major metropolitan centres," she explained. "But so many people live outside of those regions."

The stories that reflect these communities – stories that are important to these Canadians – are being covered by community newspapers.

"And these stories are trickling up to the major news operations – the CBC, the nearby daily, the Bell Media or Global News television stations. They pick up on our stories," O'Farrell explained.

If it wasn't for community news outlets, Canada's major media outlets would only cover the big cities and nothing else. They no longer have the resources to do it.

That is why community newspapers are so important and need support, says Ilka de Laat, manager of the QCNA.

They also deserve your support, De Laat said, adding, "Your local newspaper reflects your issues,

because the journalists live in the same community. They are your neighbours. This is how accountability and trust works. A big-city reporter being sent to your small community from a corporate media outlet, they won't appreciate your situation."

Which brings us to context. Local reporters understand the local context – what is important to residents and why.

But for this "trickle up" to succeed, readers in all these communities that still have a community newspaper have to buy in. They cannot take their newspaper for granted. The stories from their towns are important. Readers have to become stakeholders in the process. And the way to do that is to subscribe.

"Look at what is happening in the U.S.," O'Farrell said. "We can't rely on social media platforms that are ready to drop fact-checking, ban news like Meta has done in Canada, and change the name of the Gulf of Mexico as they pander to a president who will allow them to avoid regulations that could affect their bottom lines."

And on this side of the border, in Quebec, where municipalities that do not have bilingual status will soon have to eliminate information in English from their websites as aspects of Bill 96 are enforced, access to information in English is going to become more crucial.

Having reporters cover municipal councils will be crucial for the English-speaking community. And only your local community newspaper does that.





QFA videoconferences

Do you have a vision for your farm business?

From farm transitions to changing management operations – give voice to your goals

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

Sometimes all the good things in life can happen at once. And Matt and Angela Kumlin will be the first to tell you how overwhelming so many blessings can be.

"After university, Matt had started a veterinary practice that saw him checking over 30,000 head a year, and I was working for BASF doing agricultural chem sales," Angela said, speaking over Zoom from her home in Cochrane, Alberta, 40 kilometres northwest of Calgary.

"I had a great team to learn from, and Matt's clients were really happy that their vet was a farm boy who knew how to rope. But we started to become a bit disenchanted with our high-speed lifestyle and we had some clues that we didn't want to continue in that capacity in the ag industry long term."

Around this time, the couple's first child, Wade, was born. Soon, that little bundle of joy was followed by brother Bennett and sister Rachel. A lot of good things were happening in the Kumlins' careers, but could they fit well with their lives?

"At work, I started to question the way that we were recommending products as Band-Aid fixes rather than long-term solutions to agricultural problems," the 35-year-old said. "Matt would come home with these ideas buzzing in his head about all of the things that he wanted to try in farming. We both really wanted to be back in primary agriculture."

Started transition conversation

There was a means of escape that the Kumlins hadn't yet explored. Matt's family's ranch – the Lazy J Cattle Co. – in Cochrane had been in the family since 1885. Matt's father was in his late 60s, and the couple began wondering if moving and taking up farming full time could be a way to pursue their dream and spend more time with their kids.

"We started the conversation with Matt's parents to see if there was a place for us on the home ranch," Angela explained. "And it turned out that Matt's dad was at a good time and place in his life, and he was graciously ready to have someone else take the reins."

That was a promising start, but Matt and Angela wanted to do something different with the family ranch.

They'd been to a "Ranching for Profit"

course together and were inspired by the idea of working with nature and testing out theories of regenerative agriculture on their own land. Angela had heard about the "visioning" process for developing strategic plans used by non-profit organizations affiliated with the Institute of Cultural Affairs International, an international umbrella group for non-profit organizations.

Sharing your ideas, hopes

"The way that the first step of visioning works is that anyone who is a stakeholder in the business gets to write their ideas and hopes on sticky notes," Angela explained at a QFA videoconference held Feb. 12. "You're supposed to be really selfish at this point, just asking yourself: 'What do I want this business or my life to look like in five years, in an ideal world without constraints?'"

In a visioning process, participants begin grouping their sticky notes according to similarities. Eventually, common ground emerges and group members start formulating shared goals.

"No one's allowed to be critical at that point," Angela said. "You go and sleep on it. The next morning when you show up you can put your critical-thinking cap on."

What happens in a visioning process when participants disagree?

Well, group members have a conversation about it. In the Kumlins' case, that happened early on when the goals and concerns of Angela and her in-laws seemed to be total opposites.

Issues are discussed

"One of the members of our group wrote down that they were worried how all the changes we were making on the ranch would be viewed by the community," Angela said, laughing as she remembered the instance.

"Matt and I had written on one of our early sticky notes: 'We don't care what the neighbours think!' That led us to some really interesting conversations where we asked, 'Is this a company decision, or a family decision, or a decision about what's best for our land itself?'"

Since their first farm transfer visioning, the Kumlins' have gone through several visioning sessions – about their family life, the way they use and care for their land, and what the Lazy J Cattle Co. is all about. The language they use in describing their shared vision for



COURTESY ANGELA KUMLIN

Matt and Angela Kumlin changed their lives – and their farm – by developing a shared vision about what they wanted their ranch in Cochrane, Alberta, to be. Here, the beef producers are pictured with their children (left to right) Bennett, Rachel and Wade.

their cattle company is a far cry from the mission statements of corporations:

"Lazy J Cattle Company Ltd is wildly profitable," it reads. "The business is well-run and it is fun to work here. We have ample quality family time, we follow our mission, and we learn and try new things. We maximize our forage resources, yet we utilize more than grass."

For Angela and Matt, the exercise of visioning has been revolutionary – for both their farm and their lives. While Angela admits that many can be skeptical when hearing the word "visioning," she also points out that the results of having a vision are something we see and admire in our communities every day.

"Vision is something you can't actually see. It's a figment of our imagination. But it guides us. It's like an iceberg: as soon as you start talking about it, people can see the tip. And then when you start accomplishing things, people say: 'Wow! Looks at all you're accomplishing!' But you know it's just the tip of the iceberg. There's lots more under the water. And, gradually, the more you talk and share your vision, more of it rises above the surface."

To read about the Institute of Cultural Affairs International's guidelines for visioning and strategic planning visit: <https://www.ica-international.org/top-facilitation/>



STEFAN SCHUG/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Preventing nutrient or chemical runoff into waterways has a benefit to the larger population, therefore, this value should be returned to the farmer.

Paying producers for eco-benefits can increase farm revenues

Christopher Bonasia
The Advocate

Payment for Ecosystem Services programs can be a good tool to support farmers adopting sustainable practices, but the programs must be carefully crafted to make sure they also help keep farmers in business.

PES programs work by determining a value for the services ecosystems offer for humans, such as clean water, erosion control or carbon storage. This value is used to pay people like farmers, who are actively engaged in an ecosystem's function by managing land, for cultivating those services.

For farms, a PES program offers farmers another stream of income through 'growing' ecosystem services, and at the same time offsets the emphasis of production yields as the main metric of profitability. Many farmers already recognize that such practices contribute to a farm's resilience and productivity, to be sure. But a PES program still offers a nice income boost.

New York offers great example

PES programs offer benefits on both sides of the equation, like when soil

ecosystems are valuable to a town by preventing nutrient or chemical runoff into waterways. This was recognized by New York City in the 1990s, when updated water quality regulations required that the city invest in building a \$6-billion facility to treat waters in its reservoirs upstate. The city instead paid farmers to adjust their management to emphasize watershed protection. Water quality improved enough to avoid building the treatment plant.

The NYC water quality program is a classic example cited by PES advocates, but others abound. A carbon-offset program that pays landowners for 'credits' of carbon stored in soil or trees is another instance of PES, though it may not be called the same thing.

Farmers need to benefit

But a couple years ago, a farmer-led working group in Vermont found that catering a PES program to effectively meet farmers' needs can be tricky to do. (In full disclosure, I was contracted by two organizations to conduct research to inform the Vermont Payment for Ecosystem Services and Soil Health Working Group working group.)

For one thing, PES programs are

broadly categorized as paying for either practices or performance. Practice-based programs pay farmers to adopt a new practice and assume it will provide an ecosystem benefit. These programs are easier to administer and provide more certainty to the farmer, but there is also less opportunity to refine a practice to produce even better results. And often, programs end up needing some kind of measurement to justify their continuation, anyway.

Different approaches

Performance-based programs instead measure and quantify benefits, and farmers are paid per unit. There is greater opportunity for farmers to maximize the value of their work, but practice-based programs are also difficult to administer, require expensive tools and analysis to measure outcomes, and do not provide certainty of payment to the farmer.

Though the VT Working Group initially pursued a performance-based approach, over time the members changed to favour paying for practices. The change was caused by preferences for the lower costs of running the program and to overcome challenges

of settling on what exactly would be measured. Some farmers also became uncomfortable with the idea of monetizing nature.

Furthermore, developing PES programs need to take care to ensure that farmers remain the prioritized funding recipients. While the aim is to pay for improving ecosystems, costs for administration, field work and testing are likely to take up a substantial part of a program's resources.

The NYC water program is a good example of this; only a minority of funding for the NYC water program went to farmers, with the rest spent on lawyers, land purchases and other administrative tasks. There is also no analysis of how much that program actually benefited farmers, despite the clear benefits for the city.

There are some program designs that can channel more funding to farmers, like by hiring farmers to conduct testing and fieldwork themselves, or by paying farming groups for administration. However, as farmers are unlikely to have laboratories and other expensive measuring devices, this approach can limit the scope a program can hope to achieve.



CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK

Canadian aid, like this of supply beans and vegetable oil in Kenya, must continue, officials with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank say.

Trump cuts to USAID puts world's most vulnerable at greater risk

Canadian Foodgrains Bank

In a time of growing global crises and overwhelming cuts to international development funding by the United States, Canadian values of compassion, equality and social justice are needed on the global stage now more than ever, according to officials with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

The recent funding cuts at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and an extraordinary 90-day halt on its activities has put people living in the world's most vulnerable communities at even more risk, by taking away the security of life-saving food, water, medical care and shelter during humanitarian crises.

They are the ones who will suffer the most from this political choice, says Canadian Foodgrains Bank executive director Andy Harrington.

The helpers and the local organizations carrying out the efforts are also at risk, Harrington said.

Heartbreaking impacts

"It's heartbreaking to hear about the devastating impacts of this decision, not just for our partners and colleagues in the sector, but for the people we serve who are living through crisis and depend on humanitarian support for their lives," Harrington said.

"Now is the time for Canada to continue our commitment to global cooperation and stability, and increase our

efforts to help in emergencies – not back down from our responsibility to our global neighbours."

Prior to these cuts by the world's largest donor of humanitarian aid, overseas partners working in areas with high levels of hunger were already having to make decisions to stop supporting people living with considerable hunger, to instead provide support to people who are starving.

People will go hungry

"Without the massive financial commitment of USAID to provide access to food for millions of people, it's inevitable that many more people around the world will go hungry, and many more will starve," Harrington said.

Canada must continue

As a nation that prides itself on helping those in need, it is imperative Canada continues to prioritize international aid – because it isn't just a charitable gesture. Aid is a strategic investment into Canada's future, according to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

"Maintaining or even increasing our investment into international aid reinforces Canada's reputation as a country that stands up for the values that make the world a better place," Harrington said. "Canada has an opportunity to demonstrate humane and compassionate leadership on the global stage by helping to contribute to good health and stability that lead to peace. And in this global village – that benefits us all."

From barn to bulk tank: Training impacts dairy farm outcomes

Emily Bourdeau

William H. Miner

Agricultural Research Institute

Milk is the core of dairy farms. It is the primary product, and the reason why dairy farms exist. The harvesting of milk is one of the most critical jobs on a farm that happens two to three times a day, on average. The consistency of a milking routine affects cows' health and productivity, and is essential to optimizing production and reducing mastitis. The success of this milking routine and resulting milk quality relies heavily on the dairy employees.

Training employees on a dairy is vital for the safety and well-being of both the animals and employees, as well as animal productivity and milk quality. Unfortunately, training and re-training processes on farms can sometimes be overlooked or ineffective.

Ineffectiveness of a training program may be due to a language barrier, high employee turnover rate or a range of learning styles and educational backgrounds.

A study published in the *Journal of Dairy Science Communications* in 2022 surveyed 95 milkers from 15 commercial dairy farms in Northern New York. Of the milkers surveyed, 83 per cent said they received training when they first started the position, but had not received any training in more than six months.

Training updates helpful

Initial training is important for obvious reasons, but regular retraining helps employees stay up to date and gives them an opportunity to learn more, which, in turn, can help with employee retention.

In this same survey, 67 per cent of the milkers said they were initially provided milking equipment training, but 59 per cent of the milkers received this training from another milker. While it isn't realistic for farm owners and managers to always be available to provide training, it's important that trainers are aware of the procedures and expectations. Having current employees train new employees can often lead to protocol drift, which, unfortunately, happens frequently on dairies.

On-farm training may not always be practical or efficient, and for this reason the researchers in this study designed and tested an e-learning training course



LEITENBERGER PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Results show that increasing training contributes to animal health and milk quality.

for dairy farm milkers and received feedback. The training was an interactive course that covered the basics of milking equipment.

The course consisted of five modules in total, with the whole course taking users about 30-40 minutes to complete.

Online training effective

All 95 milkers in the study completed the training. However only 57 milkers completed the post-course survey. Of those that did complete the post-course survey, 95 per cent said they felt able to check milking equipment for problems, while 86 per cent said they were confident in reporting a problem to their manager.

While more research is needed to determine the effectiveness of online training courses for farms, this could supplement or be an alternative way the dairy industry trains employees.

Regardless of how training is done it has an impact. A study recently released in the "Articles in the Press" section of the *Journal of Dairy Science* in 2024 measured the impact of a training session on the milking routine and its impact

on udder health and milk quality.

The study was conducted on nine farms in Michigan and seven farms in Ohio, with a total of 112 employees participating in the training.

On the first visit, all farms were observed during milking for about two hours to identify areas of improvement. During the second visit, milkers received training. On the final visit 21 days later, the milkers were again evaluated at the same time of day and for the same duration as the first visit.

Measurable results

Pre- and post-training evaluations were conducted to determine the change in knowledge and behaviour. Data on clinical mastitis cases and bulk-tank somatic cells were also obtained as a measure of milk quality.

Following the training, observers saw improvements in knowledge (68 per cent of questions answered correctly after trained versus 49 per cent before), an increase in pre-milking disinfectant contact time, an increase in adequate lag time and a reduction of milking time by 25 seconds.

Immediately after the training, there was a significant increase in clinical mastitis cases, suggesting an improvement in mastitis identification.

Additionally, the previously upward trend of bulk-tank somatic cell count was found to have shifted to a downward trend after training.

Effective training of dairy farm employees is crucial for optimal milking routines, animal health and milk quality. Whether through in-person training or innovative methods like e-learning courses, regular and well-structured training will help to improve employees' skills and confidence, which, in turn, leads to better overall farm performance.

Ensuring that training programs are consistent, accessible and tailored to the needs of all employees will contribute to the long-term success of a dairy farm.

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.



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Romeo Lagarde, Calamut Island

Patrick Sherrer, Roxton Falls

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Lifetime Performance Index identifies dairy traits

Hannah Sweett
and
Brian Van Doormaal
Lactanet

The Lifetime Performance Index (LPI) was first introduced as a metric in the dairy industry as a national selection index in 1991, combining six traits to reflect the performance that could be expected during the lifetime of a cow's future daughters. Over time, as the industry evolved, so did the LPI formula to combine traits into three components – production, durability, and health and fertility.

To keep up with today's genetic selection and breeding objectives, Lactanet will be releasing a newly designed LPI formula on April 1, 2025. This modernized LPI was designed in consultation with breed associations, industry partners and breeders to identify the ideal formula for each breed.

The new formula includes five subindexes for all breeds – the production index (PI), the longevity and type index (LTI), the health and welfare index (HWI), the reproduction index (RI), the milkability index (MI), and, for the Holstein breed, the environmental impact index (EI).

Each of these subindexes are published on their own and combined into Lifetime Performance Index while maintaining the previous LPI scale in each breed. Table 1 outlines the weightings for each subindex depending on the breed.

Canadian dairy farmers also have the option to customize the weight on each subindex when they login to LactanetGen.ca. This allows you to create your own personalized LPI for your breed(s) of interest and make individual breeding decisions that align with your goals.

LPI Subindexes

The six subindexes were developed by identifying the traits to be directly included, as well as traits that will have

a favorable genetic improvement due to their correlation with the subindex, even if not directly included. Each subindex is defined in more detail below along with the traits included for the Holstein breed.

Expression

To aid in user understanding, changes to the mathematical nature of the previous LPI were also implemented. Each subindex is expressed on a standardized scale, so the average proven sire is set to 500, with favourable values reaching 900 or more. The standardized subindex values have a standard deviation of 100, which means that two-thirds of proven sires fall between 400 and 600.

The standardized scale in combination with percentile ranks help farmers and A.I. organizations compare values for each subindex and identify the elite sires. The expected genetic gain in a five-year period is also published, so users can easily see how each trait will be impacted.

For example, a 60:40 ratio on Fat Yield and Protein Yield in the Holstein Production Index means more than 500 kilograms of expected progress for Milk Yield in the next five years.

Pro\$

This newly designed LPI has a 95-percent correlation with Pro\$, Canada's profit-based selection index. As such, a divergence of top bulls will continue to exist depending on selection goals.

The Pro\$ formula will be updated in April of each year with new economic weights to calculate profit for cows up to six years of age or disposal. Dairy farmers can align themselves with either selection index to create different blood lines and sires to meet their breeding program goals.



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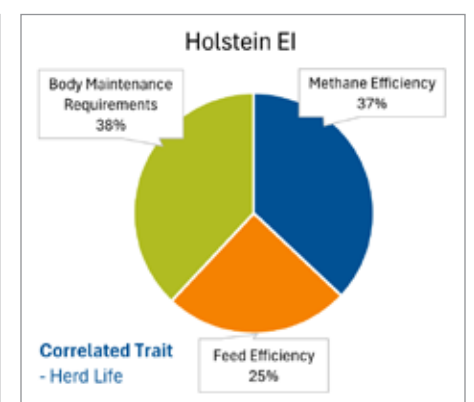
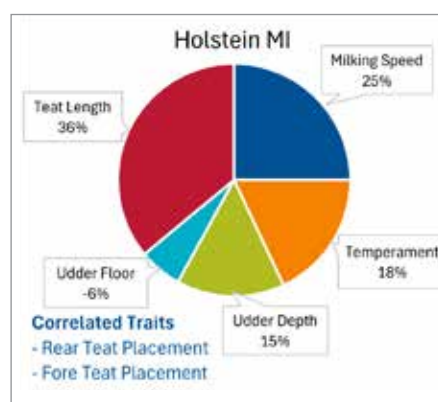
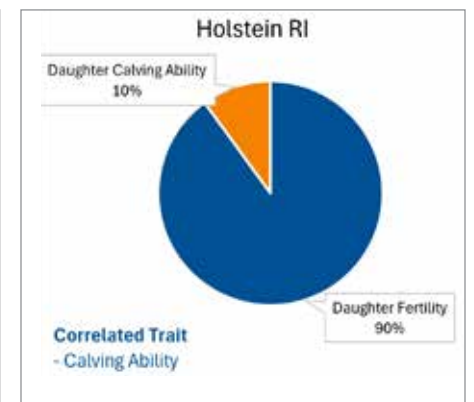
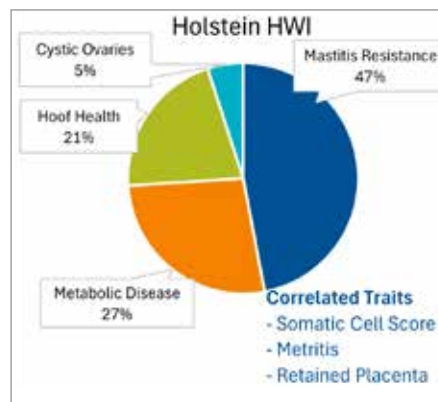
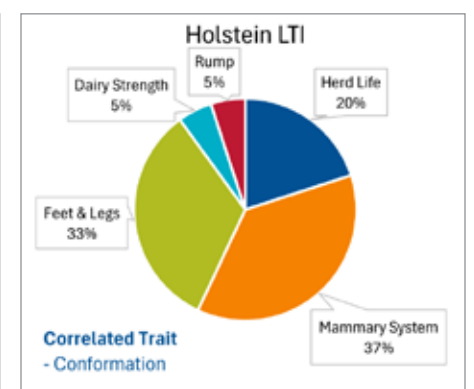
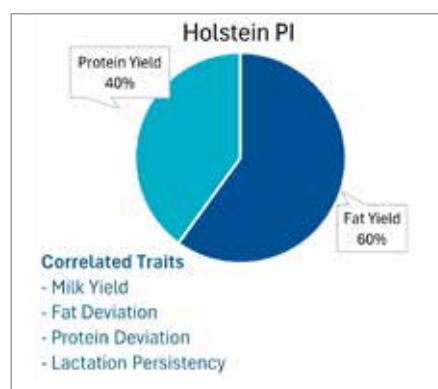


Table 1. Relative Weights of Subindexes in Modernized Lifetime Performance Index by Breed

	HO	JE	AY	BS	GU	MS	CN
Production	40	48	46	55	50	52	55
Longevity and type	32	30	30	27	35	30	30
Health and welfare	8	10	4	6	3	8	5
Reproduction	10	10	9	7	10	5	6
Milkability	5	2	11	5	2	5	4
Environmental impact	5	-	-	-	-	-	-

Supply of corn, soybean sees little change worldwide: report

Ramzy Yelda

Senior Market Analyst

Producteurs de grains du Québec

For the second month in a row, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's supply-and-demand report is rather neutral, with very few changes.

Both U.S. supply and demand are

unchanged for corn and soybeans. The price of soybeans, however, is down by \$0.15 per bushel at \$9.95/bu.

Worldwide, wheat production is up, with Australia rising by 2.1 million tonnes (MT), Argentina up by 800,000 tonnes and production hiked by 500,000 tonnes in Ukraine.

World wheat stocks are up by 2.5 MT.

Exports are up by 1 MT in Australia, and down by 1 MT in the European Union and down 500,000 tonnes in Russia.

Brazil's corn exports are down by 2 MT even though the production forecast is unchanged.

The most interesting aspect of this report is, once again, the reduction

in Chinese wheat and corn imports. Wheat imports in China are down by 1.5 MT at 6.5 MT, while corn imports are down by 2 MT at 8 MT. These are the lowest levels of imports since 2019, a reflection of good local crops and stagnating demand.

New award recognizes involvement and commitment

On the eve of its 50th anniversary, the Producteurs de grains du Québec (PGQ) is celebrating excellence in production among its members with a new award highlighting the special efforts of a grain producer.

The Réal Fredette Award, named in honour of the organization's founding president, will be presented this year at the association's 50th anniversary gala dinner, which will be held on the sidelines of the PGQ's annual general meeting on March 27 at the St. Hyacinthe Convention Centre.

It recognizes a producer's involvement and commitment in union affairs. This award will then be presented annually by the PGQ.

In 2025, five nominations were submitted:

- Gabriel Beauregard, nominated by the Producteurs de semences du Québec
- Germain Chabot, nominated by the three PGQ syndicates in the Montérégie region
- Damien Lemire, nominated by the Producteurs et productrices de grains du Centre-du-Québec
- Dany Mayrand, nominated by the Producteurs de grains de l'Estrie
- Firmin Paquet, nominated by the Producteurs de grains de l'Est du Québec



The nominees for the Réal Fredette Award: Gabriel Beauregard, Germain Chabot, Damien Lemire, Dany Mayrand and Firmin Paquet.

Annual general meetings

The annual general meetings of the members of the Quebec grain producers' joint plan (PCPGQ) and the Producteurs de grains du Québec (PGQ) will be held at the St. Hyacinthe Convention Centre on March 27-28. The theme will be "Cultivating Passion and Pride."

Again this year, nearly 300 grain producers are expected to attend this major provincial event.

Information: pgq.ca/producteurs/aga-des-pgq/aga-2025

Financial commitment to technology exchange program

A press release on February 25 unveiled the financial commitment of the Producteurs de grains du Québec (PGQ) to the Gate Program's capital fundraising campaign. Together with Alberta Grains, the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission, the Manitoba Crop Alliance and the Grain Farmers of Ontario, PGQ is the fifth organization to fund the project. With a preliminary cost estimated at approximately \$100 million, Gate will provide the tools necessary to allow Cereals Canada to maintain its globally recognized, best-in-class expertise, which is needed to support today's global markets and ensure end-user success, while exploring new opportunities to diversify markets for Canadian wheat, barley and oats.

Carbon credit auctions, tariff threats put pressure on producers

The Producteurs de grains du Québec once again denounced the repercussions of the Quebec-California carbon offset credit auctions on production cost in the grain sector. The publication of the results of these auctions held Feb. 19 is an opportunity to highlight that the carbon-pricing rules advocated by the provincial government are widening the competitive imbalance between Quebec producers and those in the rest of Canada and the U.S. Midwest.

Quebec producers are concerned about the negative and repeated impacts of these auctions in the context of tariff measures with the United States. Even though a 7-per-cent decrease was recorded since the last auction in November, it should be noted that in the grain sector alone, Quebec producers are expected to pay approximately \$24 million in 2025 in greenhouse gas emission allowances for the use of energy inputs, including more than \$15 million specifically for the use of farm diesel.

"We are undeniably at a disadvantage compared with our Canadian competitors, who are not required to pay a tax on the use of farm diesel," said PGQ president Christian Overbeek. "This is why we are asking the Quebec government to implement a compensation policy to preserve the competitiveness of Quebec farms. This is the only measure that would restore the competitive balance in our sector. Otherwise, Quebec's food autonomy and economy will suffer."



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.





Pork Tenderloin with Cassis and Currants



CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

This dish may seem an unlikely comfort food, but it has been tried and tested, and fits the bill perfectly. Let it bring comfort to you in these destabilizing times.

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup dried currants (or raisins, chopped)
- 1½ cup each low-salt chicken and beef broth
- 4 tbsp (unsalted) butter
- 2 10-ounce pork tenderloins
- ⅓ cup Cassis liqueur
- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- ¼ cup whipping cream (35%)

PREPARATION

Put currants in a small dish and pour warm water over them, just enough to cover. Drain after 30 minutes.

Reduce the broth in a fry pan until it measures about 1.5 cups. Pour into a measuring cup.

Cut pork into medallions, about ¾-inch thick. Lightly season with salt (omit if broth is salty).

Melt 2 tablespoons of the butter in the fry pan, then cook half the medallions on med-high heat for a few minutes per side. Remove and set aside on a plate.

Melt the other 2 tablespoons of butter, dust the remaining medallions with flour, and fry. Remove to the plate.

Add the vinegar to the fry pan, scraping up any brown bits, simmer for about 2 minutes. Add Cassis and cook another 2 minutes.

Add the reduced broth and currants, cooking about 10 more minutes.

Stir in the whipping cream, and add the pork medallions back to the pan, keeping on a low simmer until pork is heated through.

Arrange medallions on warm plates, pouring sauce over top.

Serves 4.

Adapted from: *The Pine Crest Inn, Tyron, North Carolina*

A little comfort food is called for in these unsettling times

Cynthia Gunn
QFA's Food Writer

Sometimes the ground shifts seismically. The resulting chaos may be personal, the swirling forces felt intensely, but largely alone. There is unemployment, and business loss. There are sudden and serious accidents and illnesses of loved ones, or oneself. There are losses that have been looming in the rear-view mirror, some for a very long time, but they still leave us blind-sided. The grown child moves away from home, the elderly parent passes away, the long marriage ends. At the other end of the spectrum are the communal or even national and international crises that demand the attention of all: the floods, the wildfires, Trump.

Many people will right now be going through a deep personal loss, significant enough that it feels like a hand reached down inside you, gave a savage tug and twist for maximum pain, then shoved you to the ground. The internal chaos is now mirrored in the outside world, causing added anxiety and uncertainty. In the agricultural landscape there is no knowing when a sense of equilibrium will return. Everyone, at some level, is facing a sense of destabilization.

There is a reason it's called comfort food. Familiar, steadfast, reliable. It's like a dear old friend, always there for you, always the same. This recipe may seem an unlikely comfort food, but it has become so over long association. It's so familiar that, all I have to do is ask my daughter: "Do you want the pork with the apples or the little raisins?" And she knows exactly what I mean.

Over the three decades since this recipe was mailed to me by a client on a biking trip, currants have become hard to find. Hence, raisins have been substituted for "the little raisins" in the last decade or so. The same bottle of Cassis, however, remains in the same spot in the same cupboard since we moved to this house 17 years ago.

Just as an aside, the recipe arrived as a photocopied bit of article glued onto a pink cue card. The effort people used to make to pass on a recipe!

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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Antique horse-drawn farm equipment, including a McCormick Deering hay sickle, a one-blade plow, two discs, a potato cultivator, rake and a couple other objects. In overall very good condition, just need to replace the wooden tongues on almost all that have them. Pictures can be sent. Please contact Janice at 514-944-9280.

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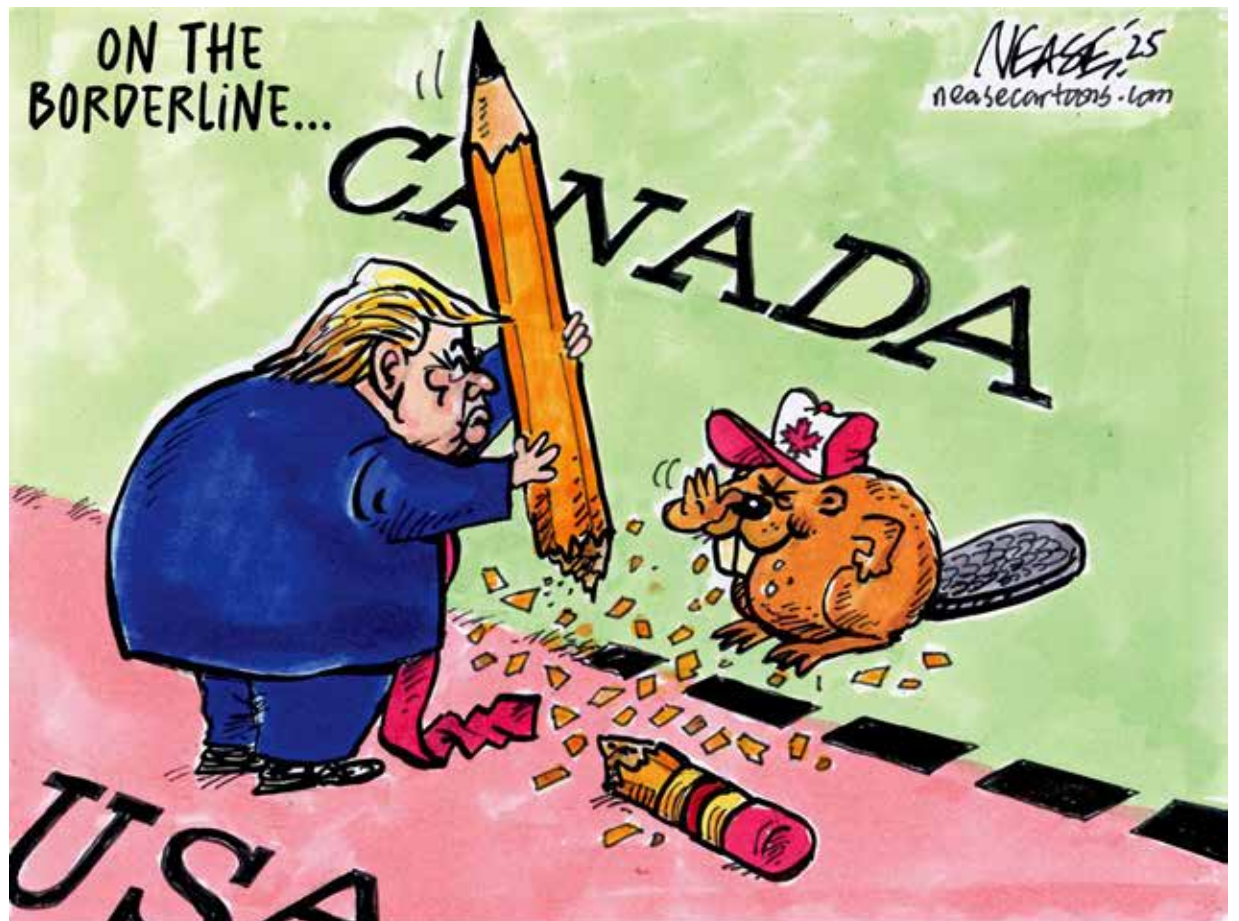
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