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**"The reality is that Canada needs both supply-managed and export-oriented producers to succeed. We have seen for decades that both systems can successfully co-exist while continuing to negotiate ambitious and forward-looking trade agreements."**

— Keith Currie, president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, commenting on the need for the Senate to approve Bill C-282, which aims to protect supply-managed farm sectors

## QFA VIDEOCONFERENCES

**Wednesday, December 11**  
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See page 14 for details.



THE ADVOCATE

Canadian farmers receive the highest trust score of 3.69, indicating that Canadians have strong confidence in farmers to act in their best interests regarding food.

## Despite rising food prices, farmers most trusted by consumers

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

As concern over rising food prices continues to be an issue for consumers, Canadian farmers are viewed as the most trusted among the supply-chain stakeholders involved with putting food on their plates, with major grocery store chains ranked the least trusted.

This is one of the key findings of the first Canadian Food Sentiment Index, a comprehensive report issued in October by the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University in Halifax. The study quantifies and ranks Canadians' perceptions and attitudes towards food-related issues,

including affordability, food security and consumer trust.

The report, based on input from more than 3,000 respondents across the country, "provides a critical look at how Canadians feel about the rising costs of food and their evolving behaviors in response to economic pressures," Dalhousie officials explained.

According to the study, Canadian farmers receive the highest trust score of 3.69, on a scale of 5, a score the study's authors said indicates "that Canadians have strong confidence in farmers to act in their best interests regarding food."

See TRUSTED, Page 4.

## Feds creates agency to protect freshwater

**Andrew McClelland**  
*The Advocate*

Environment Canada has launched a new federal agency that will protect Canada's water from pollution and the damaging effects of industrial and agricultural activities, said Steven Guilbeault, federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

"Droughts, floods (and) pollution from farming and industrial activities have significant impacts on water quality – impacts that are very serious and costly," said Guilbeault at a press conference in Winnipeg on Oct. 16.

The Canada Water Agency (CWA) will implement Canada's Freshwater Action Plan, which was announced as part of the 2017 federal budget. The plan is aimed at improving freshwater management through efforts to improve the water quality of the Great Lakes, Lake Winnipeg, the Fraser River and other waterways of "national significance" throughout Canada.

"The agency will help the Government of Canada better address current water challenges and those of the future," Guilbeault told a crowd of reporters and the public in downtown Winnipeg, where the agency will be based.

"We need to be prepared for what comes in the future, we need to recognize that water is becoming more scarce and more precious. We have a responsibility to protect the waters we have."

See WATER, Page 15.





# Just the facts

## 24%

The proportion of the Quebec population who will be 65 or older by 2051. The percentage of seniors on the island of Montreal is expected to be below that level, at 21 per cent.

Source: *L'Institut de la statistique du Québec's study: Perspectives démographiques du Québec et de ses régions, 2021-2071* released Oct. 7

## 21.8

The number of megatonnes of wheat Canada shipped to a total of 65 countries in 2023-2024, with the top destinations being China, Indonesia, Japan, Bangladesh and the United States.

Source: *Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada*

## 513

The number of turkey producers in Canada in 2024.

Source: *Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada*

## 50%

That is the percentage drop in the number of dairy cows in Quebec in the last 40 years, with the provincial total hitting 353,000 head in 2022 compared with 710,000 in 1981.

Source: *Ministère d'Agriculture, Pêcheries et Alimentation Québec*

## OH, CHRISTMAS TREE



THE ADVOCATE

These trees in a field in Coteau du Lac are among rows and rows of holiday evergreens at various stages of growth that furnish the demand for the popular natural trees. Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition back in the 16th century. But it is in Sorel, Que., where the tradition is said to have made its first appearance in North America. It was on Christmas Eve in 1781 that the baroness of Riedesel hosted a party of British and German officers that featured a decorated tree. Wife of Baron Frederick-Adolphus Riedesel, commander of a group of German soldiers sent by the Duke of Brunswick to help defend Canada, the Riedesel family were taken prisoners during the British offensive in northern New York in 1777 during the American Revolutionary War. They were not released until 1780, when they returned to Sorel, where they lived for many years.



### 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 seeks to get agro-park ready for summer 2025

**Frederic Serre**  
*The Advocate*

The Quebec government has announced two ambitious initiatives to bring its 250-acre agro-park in the Quebec City area to life in a move to create one of the largest public green spaces in the provincial capital region.

In making the announcement Nov. 4, Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne said the government is looking for community horticultural projects and for an organization to manage the agro-park and have it ready by summer 2025.

The Legault government bought the land, located in the Quebec City suburb of Beauport, from a religious order known as les Soeurs de la Charité in 2021. The amount of the bid was not made public, but reports pegged the offer at about \$30 million, approximately the municipal valuation of the land.

Included on the land is a large seven-storey convent built in 1952. According to a spokesman for the management firm handling the order's interests in the land deal, as the nuns

who live there age and the number of its residents diminishes, much of the vast building is empty. A use for the grey-stone building will need to be found, the spokesman said.

Earlier this month, Lamontagne was joined by other prominent politicians, including Bruno Marchand, mayor of Quebec City. Lamontagne said bids for community horticultural projects will be received until Jan. 10, 2025. Projects submitted must enable the development of a 10-hectare agricultural parcel through its full use, for the benefit of the population and the surrounding community. In addition, they must make agricultural products accessible with a view to food autonomy and security.

"From the moment we acquired the land, we wanted this project to be as inclusive as possible," Lamontagne said. "Since then, we have acted accordingly through consultations and partnerships with citizens, the farming community and researchers. Whoever is chosen will take charge of a project that will enhance the value of these high-quality lands, for the benefit of Quebec City and Quebec as a whole."



WIKIPEDIA

The provincial government bought this 250-hectare tract of farmland in the Quebec City district of Beauport in 2021. Now known as an agro-park, it is one of the largest public green spaces in the provincial capital region.

## Bill aimed at protecting supply-managed farm sectors likely headed back to House

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

The controversial piece of federal legislation that had been touted to protect Canada's supply-managed agricultural sectors from being further eroded by trade-deal negotiations looks like it could be returning to the House of Commons after it was amended by the Senate earlier this month.

Senators on the foreign affairs committee amended Bill C-282, by removing its effective ability to shelter the country's supply-managed agricultural productions like dairy, poultry and eggs from being part of trade-deal talks.

In essence, the amendment removes the prohibitions on new concessions as they would apply to existing trade deals, like the new NAFTA agreement; upcoming expected reviews of current

deals, like the planned renegotiation of the Canada-U.S.-Mexico deal in 2026; or any future deal that is already being negotiated, which would include ongoing talks with the United Kingdom, where greater access to Canada's cheese market is being sought.

Now, if the full Senate accepts the foreign affairs committee's changes and formally amends the bill, the legislation would be returned to the House of Commons to be reconsidered. This would happen without any firm timeline.

The legislation was first introduced as a private member's bill by the Bloc Québécois last year, gaining approval by the House of Commons in June 2023.

Last month, it was the focus of broad national attention when Bloc leader François Blanchet added its passage in the Senate to his list of conditions

to support the Trudeau Liberals in a future confidence vote. Giving the Liberals an ultimatum, Blanchet accused what he called the "illegitimate" upper chamber of "leading the prime minister around by the nose."

But all of that has been pushed aside, with the focus now being pulled by the recent re-election of Donald Trump as president in the U.S. Fears of standing up for Canadian farmers during scheduled reviews of trade deals with the U.S. under a Trump administration is being viewed as holding greater risk of triggering an acrimonious trade conflict that could harm other sectors.

"It is not a bill about supply management, but rather about trade policy," Senator Peter Harder told the committee as he put the amendment forward.

In response, Blanchet criticized the Senate committee, but expressed

optimism that the wider Senate would reject the amendment.

"I'm quite confident that the amendment will be beaten and the original version of the bill will be adopted by the Senate and that will be the end of it – not for the sake of any political issue, but for the sake of people who need this feeling of safety for the businesses they manage on a daily basis," Blanchet told reporters in Ottawa.

In addition to the amendment, the Senate committee added what is termed an observation to the bill, explaining that the change should not be viewed as a lack of support for farmers. Rather, it stated, it "has taken no view on supply management in Canada and has focused its decision on this legislation's impact on Canada's crucial trade relationships as an export-oriented nation reliant on trade."

## News



THE ADVOCATE

# Grocery costs leading consumers to change habits

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

The rising price of groceries is still a burning issue for consumers, with many of them changing their habits to manage costs, according to the first Canadian Food Sentiment Index, a report issued in October by the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University in Halifax.

Since 2019, food prices in Canada have increased by 27 per cent, the report states. This sharp hike has resulted in 84 per cent of consumers surveyed pointing to groceries as being the category of spending that has affected them the most, and almost half – 48.2 per cent – admitting that they now actively seek out sales and discount offers like coupons to manage their grocery bills.

According to the report, food spending has reached an average of \$316.03 per Canadian per month, based on Statistics Canada data. For a family of four, this amounts to about \$1,265 per month, or just over \$15,000 a year.

The survey shows that 84 per cent

of respondents say food expenses was the one spending category that increased the most for them in the last 12 months, more than household items and supplies, cited by 43 per cent of respondents; transportation, highlighted by 36.6 per cent of those surveyed; and utilities, flagged by 35.8 per cent.

Faced with food price inflation, consumers have made changes to the way and where they shop, with almost half of respondents, 48.2 per cent, saying they actively shop sales and seek bargains. Almost a third, 30.5 per cent, said they use more coupons, while almost a quarter, 24.9 per cent, shop at cheaper stores and 22 per cent purchased non-essential foods like ice cream less frequently.

The report shows a growing number of Canadians who claim to have dipped into their savings or borrowed money to buy food, with younger Canadians most affected by this trend.

“This pattern reflects the substantial economic pressures younger generations face, possibly due to escalating food costs, higher living expenses or

unstable early-career employment,” the report states.

The statistics show 13 per cent of members of the so-called Great Generation, individuals born before 1946, have admitted to having to draw from their savings or borrow money to put food on the table, while 46 per cent of the Gen Z cohort, people born between 1997 and 2012, finding themselves in the same financial pinch.

The overall picture of what consumers value most when shopping also points to how price is a big factor, with 47.3 per cent of respondents admitting that affordability – more than nutrition, taste and environmental impact – is a determining factor in what they buy at the grocery store.

Perhaps another measure, albeit a less quantitative one, is the finding that more than half of consumers surveyed believe that the hike in food prices is actually higher than what official government statistics claim, with 54.5 per cent believing government agencies are underreporting food prices.

## TRUSTED: Food retailers do not have high trust rating with consumers

From Page 1

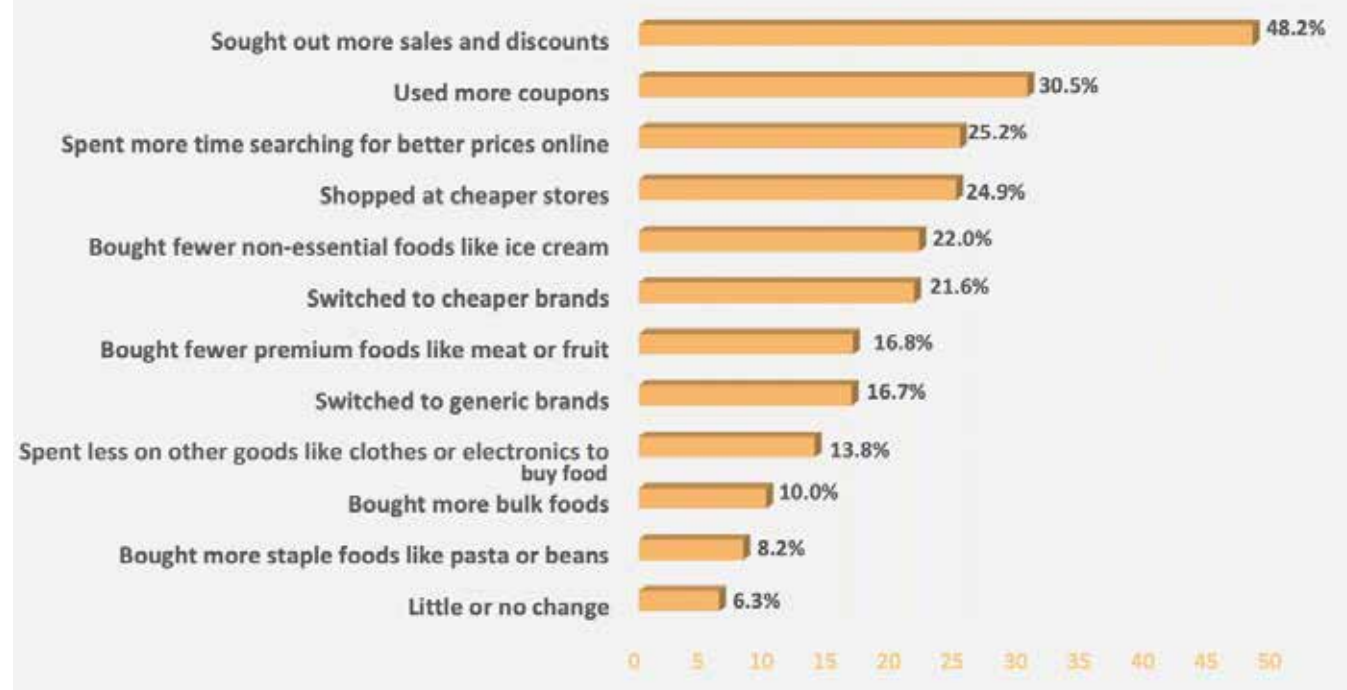
In contrast, independent grocers and major grocery chains received the lowest trust scores, 2.89 and 2.8, respectively. This suggests, the report claims, “that Canadians are less confident in retailers, particularly major grocery chains, to act in their best interest regarding food.

The authors attribute this poor perception to price increases, corporate practices or insufficient support for local food systems.

Other food-chain players ranked in the survey included two government agencies – Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. The authors said this suggests the public view these government bodies play a “crucial role in ensuring food safety and regulations.”

Food manufacturers ranked in the middle of the trust spectrum with a ranking of 3.26 on a scale of 5, indicating consumers view them with “skepticism, likely driven by concerns over food production practices or corporate motives.”

**Figure 2: In response to recent food price inflation, which of the following changes have you made to your grocery shopping habits? (Please select up to 3 options)**



CANADIAN FOOD SENTIMENT INDEX, DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Canadian consumers surveyed list a number of ways they now attempt to stretch their grocery dollar.

# Quebec dairy farmers producing more with less

**Andrew McClelland**  
*The Advocate*

A recent report from the Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec reveals that the number of dairy cows in the province has decreased drastically in the past 40 years.

But the same report also shows that Quebec dairy producers have more than made up for it with their efficiency – producing more milk with smaller herds.

Using figures from Statistics Canada, MAPAQ states that “in the province of Quebec, the total number of dairy cows has fallen by 50 per cent, from 710,000 head in 1981 to 353,000 head in 2022.”

However, figures show that the province's dairy industry is doing more with less.

“At the same time,” MAPAQ writes, “milk production increased by 21 per cent, from 29 million hectolitres (Mhl) in 1981 to 35 Mhl in 2022.”

Taken together, those numbers reveal

that the average Quebec dairy cow is producing 140 per cent more milk in 2022 compared with 1981.

MAPAQ's report also shows that Quebec is leading the country's dairy production in key areas. The province produces 50 per cent of Canada's cheese and accounts for 75 per cent of the quantity of yogurt produced in the country.

## Milk down, yogurt up

The report reveals some marked changes in consumer habits regarding dairy over the past 40 years.

Overall, consumption of dairy products has fallen by 14 per cent since 1981. That trend is largely driven by a decrease in actual milk consumption: whereas the average Quebecer consumed 55 litres of milk in 1981, and provincial per capita consumption peaked in 1987 at 63 litres annually, the figure now hovers at 30 litres per person. All in all, those numbers represent a decrease of 45 per cent.

Quebecers are also buying and eating

less butter.

“From 1981 to 2007, per capita consumption of butter decreased from 4.34 kg to 2.59 kg, the lowest level recorded during the period,” MAPAQ's report states. “A rise was observed from 2008 to peak at 3.71 kg in 2021.”

Such a drop in milk and butter consumption would have been catastrophic for Quebec's dairy industry where it not for the great gains made in marketing yogurt and specialty cheeses.

Driven by health food trends and the promotion of yogurt's probiotic benefits, MAPAQ notes that the consumption of yogurt has increased fivefold in 40 years. Annual yogurt consumption rose from 1.64 litres per person (retail weight) in 1981 to 8.89 litres in 2022. In 2015, annual consumption peaked at 10.99 litres, a level considered by Quebec manufacturers to be a plateau that is holding steady.

Interestingly, 2008 marked the year that yogurt consumption surpassed that of ice cream in the province. Quebecers are now eating far less ice cream than

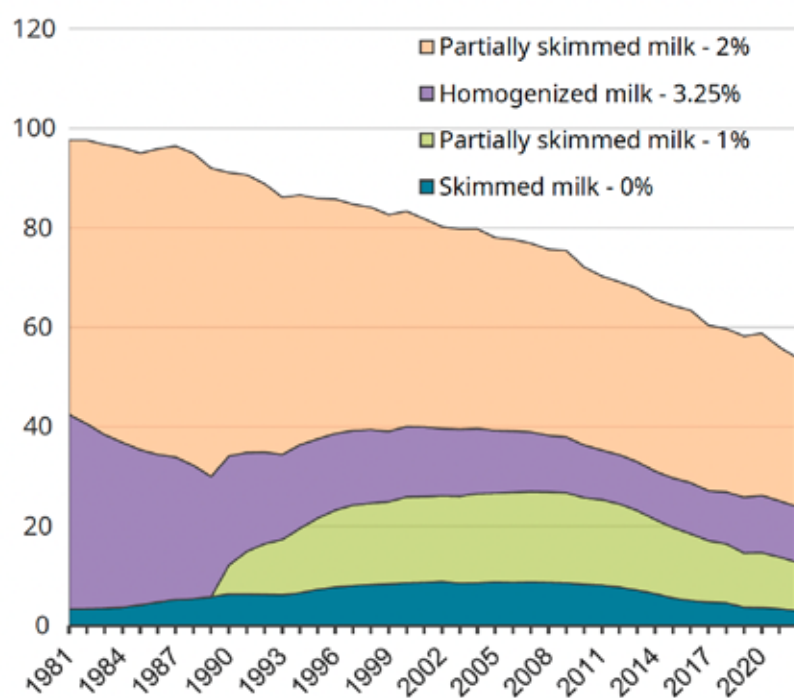
they used to: intake of the frozen dairy dessert has fallen by more than 60 per cent in 40 years, from 12.57 litres to 4.51 litres per year per person.

## Specialty cheese capital

Quebec's status as Canada's leading cheese producer has meant that it has benefitted greatly from the marketing of specialty cheeses (including mozzarella, but excluding cheddar and processed cheeses).

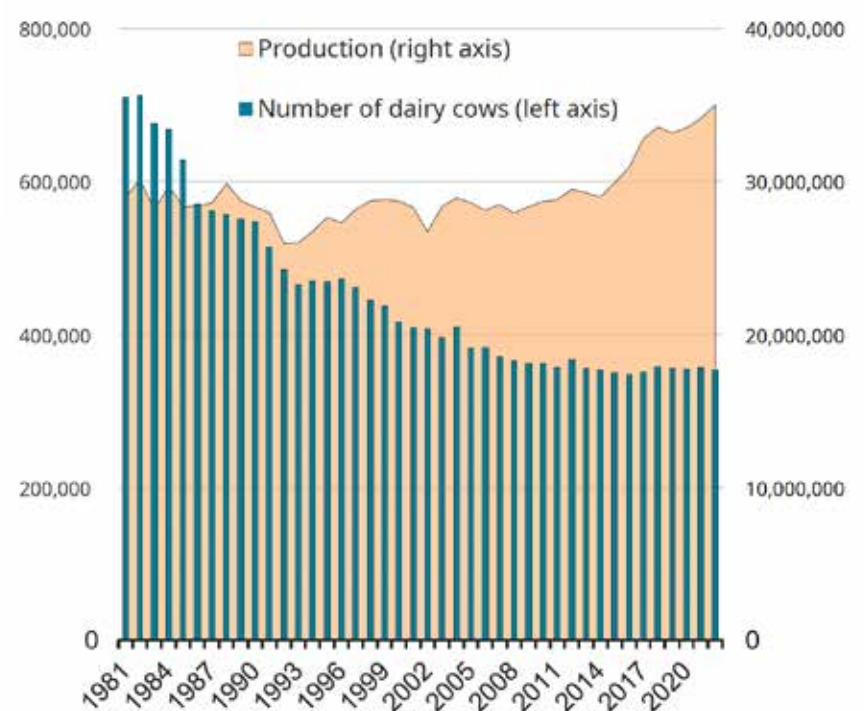
Per capita cheese consumption across all categories increased by nearly 53 per cent, but specialty or “fancy” and “luxury” cheeses enjoyed huge gains, with annual per-capita consumption rising from 3.03 kg in 1981 to 8.65 kg in 2022.

“These cheeses now represent more than half (58 per cent) of the total volume of cheese consumed per person, compared to less than a third (31 per cent) in 1981,” MAPAQ states.



COURTESY: MAPAQ

MAPAQ's chart showing the decline of milk consumption in Quebec from 1981 to 2022, with annual consumption in litres per capita on the left axis. The drinking of all types of milk is down, with 2% milk still being the most popular.



Source: Statistics Canada, tables 32-10-0113-0 and 32-10-0130-01; compilation by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPAQ).

COURTESY: MAPAQ

The evolution of dairy production (in hectolitres) versus the overall number of dairy cattle in the province of Quebec, from 1981 to 2022. The amount of milk produced in this time period increased as the number of dairy cows dropped.



**John McCart**  
QFA President

Every one now knows how much the cost of living has increased since the beginning of the pandemic. We see it in the news all the time – the cost of food, clothing and housing is becoming out of reach for so many Canadians.

Farmers, like almost all businesses, are being blamed for some of this inflation, but we are just a cog in big wheel.

I have mentioned before how inputs on the farm have dramatically increased and that in a free market, unfortunately, these costs cannot be transferred to the consumer.

The costs of buying and maintaining new and used equipment has almost become out of reach for many farmers. The cost of basic inputs for growing crops, like seed and fertilizer, puts tremendous pressure on making a profit on both supply-managed products and those that are marketed on the world stage.

The QFA has written about how the cost of farmland in Quebec is also becoming out of reach for many farmers wishing to expand. Farmland around Mirabel, Laval and in the Montérégie never goes down in price and forces farmers to really evaluate their needs and their ability to justify paying these prices.

I remember 25 years ago, when a farm in my area in the Lachute region sold for \$3,000 an acre. Everyone back then thought that price was ridiculous. Now, the same land is worth more than \$15,000 an acre, with prices climbing higher as you get closer to Laval.

Across the border in Ontario, the prices are even higher. And in the southern part of that province, an acre of farmland is closer to the \$40,000 range, while in the Fraser Valley in British Columbia, land values now top \$100,000 an acre.

Land for rent is also very expensive. In my area, rental rates for good land start at \$300 to \$350 per acre. In fact, some of the larger vegetable growers are paying \$600.

The amounts to buy or rent is not regulated, nor should it be. I agree that farmland should only be purchased here in Quebec by registered agricultural producers, and that buyers, like banks and investment firms, should not have the right to own it.

# Farming is a lifestyle, but it's a business too



ANDY/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

The rising cost of farmland in all regions is just one aspect contributing to the rising cost of producing food.

I believe that with so many of our products being sold based on both local and world markets, government interference on farmland prices will never happen. There are so many farm products that follow a cycle of low and high prices that it is impossible for any producer, both established and new, to gauge when it is the best time to buy.

With the super high grain prices recently, a lot of land that had previous been grassland has been transformed into row crop production. But now that the price of beef is so high, there may be a slowing down of this trend.

A comparison of the true value of farmland can be made to concert tickets. Most of us know that the really big artists list their concert prices at a certain level. If you are lucky enough to get those tickets at that price and are willing to pay that price, then that is the value of a ticket. However, if you see that the value from a reseller is double or triple the original price, and you are willing to pay that for it, then that now becomes the true value of that ticket. It is a shame but true.

The same goes for all inputs – land,

machinery, cars, trucks. We can all agree that these items cost too much but must be purchased. Farmers, both young and old, must realize that agriculture is more than a lifestyle. It is a business and must be managed accordingly. Nobody wants to lose the land that is available across the road or somewhere else close by, but if the purchaser can manage to pay these high prices, so be it.

On the other side of the coin, the property owner who has land to sell or rent should be able to get as much as possible for it. More often than not, it represents the owner's retirement fund. In this market, what cannot be transferred to the next generation will go to the highest bidder.

## Looking for mental health support?



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## Quebecer, McGill researcher among those named to hall of fame

**Frederic Serre**  
*The Advocate*

A Quebec research scientist and a researcher who has collaborated with McGill University are among the four 2024 inductees into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame, which held its ceremony in Toronto earlier this month to honour individuals who have dedicated their lives to advance Canadian agriculture.

"We are so proud to shine a bright spotlight on the achievements these individuals have made throughout their careers – advancing forage crops, canola, cattle genetics and entomology – for the benefit of Canadian agriculture," said Phil Boyd, chair of the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame.

The 2024 inductees honoured Nov. 2 are Dr. Charles Vincent, Dr. Bruce Coulman, Dr. Michael Eskin and Paul Larmer. The 2024 inductees will join the more than 250 individuals who are currently in the hall of fame.

Vincent, who lives in St. Lambert, Que., is an internationally respected leader in agricultural entomology. A research scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and accomplished science communicator, Vincent has spent 40 years studying the economic impact of insects on Canadian food production, guided by a vision for developing sustainable agricultural systems that are commercially viable with the lowest environmental impact possible. His work, including the development of the first viral insecticide registered for use in Canada, provides practical tools that have considerably reduced the quantity of insecticides used in commercial production, including apples, grapes and blueberries.

Coulman is an award-winning forage crop researcher who developed 24

novel forage crop varieties throughout his more than four decades of work. As a researcher at McGill, Coulman's forage breeding work shaped the future for the profitable production of forage seed and forage crops for cattle feed. Coulman worked as a professor and department head at the University of Saskatchewan, and then at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Saskatoon Research Centre. Many of his forage varieties were industry firsts, including bloat-reduced alfalfa, hybrid bromegrass and smooth-awned forage barley.

Eskin is a trailblazing canola researcher whose work made groundbreaking contributions to the early development and refinement of canola oil. A distinguished professor at the University of Manitoba, Eskin's work helped transform the quality and stability of canola oil, expanding the market for this quintessential Canadian crop on an international scale.

Larmer has dedicated his professional life to improving cattle genetics and establishing Canada as a global leader. From his early days as a dairy cattle sire analyst, to overseeing the formation of the Semex Alliance and 17 years at the helm as CEO, Larmer's lifetime leadership and vision have made a profound impact on the success of the Canadian farmer-owned companies in the global cattle breeding improvement industry.

Founded in 1960, the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame aims to celebrate individual Canadians for their contributions to the agriculture and food industry. A framed portrait of each new inductee, along with biographical information, is added to the hall of fame's gallery at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto. The aim is to honour and celebrate the men and women who have influenced all facets of agriculture across the country.



Dr. Charles Vincent (LEFT) of St. Lambert, Que., and Dr. Bruce Coulman who was at one time a researcher at McGill University are two of the four new members inducted into the Canadian Agriculture Hall of Fame this year.

## Quebec makes \$5 million available to young farmers

**Frederic Serre**  
*The Advocate*

Young farmers hoping to establish themselves in Quebec got some good news recently, as the province announced \$5 million in support to help them start new farms or take over existing ones.

"Supporting Quebec's young agricultural entrepreneurs is a priority for this government," said Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne. "I'm delighted with this financial support and the changes ... that will enable us to support a greater number of young farmers."

The Quebec government said the eligibility criteria for its Young Farmers and Entrepreneurship initiative have been broadened to allow for a greater number of projects,

between 200 and 250, and for the eligibility period to increase from five to 10 years.

The government is teaming up with the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec to carry out the initiative, a move that Fédération president David Beauvais says will better serve the growing needs of Quebec's young farmers.

According to Beauvais, the average age of all farm operators has risen from 52.9 in 2016 to 54 in 2021, and the proportion of young farmers under 40 has dropped from 18 per cent in 2016 to 16 per cent in 2021.

The project submission period began on Nov. 4, and applicants will have until Jan. 31 to submit a project, or until the budget envelope is exhausted.

## Gatineau pulp mill gets \$5-million grant to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

**Frederic Serre**  
*The Advocate*

A Gatineau mill specializing in pulp and paper products has received a grant from the Quebec government worth \$5 million to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. The announcement was made last month by Mathieu Lévesque, MNA for Châteauguay and Deputy House Leader, on behalf of Benoit Charette, Minister of the Environment, Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks and Minister responsible for the Laurentians region.

The financing, announced Sept. 20, will enable Resolute Forest Products to switch the movable grate on its biomass-fired boiler, thus replacing totally or partially, fossil fuels.

The renovation project will reduce natural gas consumption by more than 7.3 million square metres per year. This will result in an annual reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of just more than 13,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, or approximately the same amount of greenhouse gas emissions of 3,800 cars, said Resolute spokesman Richard Tremblay.

"Thanks to better-adapted equipment, we will reduce our use of natural gas and eliminate 13,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. This project is part of our commitment to analyze and reduce our GHG emissions on a group-wide scale," Tremblay said.

Charette said his government "has equipped itself with the necessary means to support local businesses so that they can contribute fully to Quebec's climate and energy transition."

"It's with projects like the Gatineau plant that we are transforming our economy in a sustainable way and getting closer to our climate objectives more quickly," he added.

## Trends in agriculture



**Chris Judd**  
*The Advocate*

A few years ago – about 35 or so – I was sitting at a farmers' meeting listening to an "Ag-Canada" specialist tell a room full of Quebec farm representatives how much more income Canadian farmers had made that year compared with the previous year.

After about an hour of "being informed" by this economist, one of my colleagues asked: "Do those numbers include off-farm income?"

The economist seemed a bit taken back, but after a brief hesitation, he said: "Yes. A little."

When we asked him: "How much?" He didn't know. Or, maybe he just didn't want to say.

Every farmer in the room thought: If I can't make enough money to put food on our family's table, I would get a part-time job so our family could eat. Some farmers, or their spouses, could take a little time to drive a school bus or do a mail run to supplement the income.

Most dairy farmers couldn't take the time to drive a school bus because morning milking starts at about 5 a.m. and again around 5 p.m.

### Expenses are increasing

After the meeting, the farmers asked one of our farm union employees if he could find out how much true "on-farm income" had changed during the previous year. At the next meeting, he answered that the income had changed very little, but farm expenses had increased, so the actual farm profit had gone down.

That was not what the ag economist had told us the month before. We instructed our farmers' union to tell our fed agriculture department to quit blending true on-farm income with off-farm income just to make it look like farm profits had risen.

About 15 years after that, I was late going to an annual meeting of our local UPA and sat at the back of the hall. As I looked at every farmer in attendance, I made a mental note: Of the 50 farmers who were there, only three didn't have a part-time job. Yes, a few farm wives were teachers or nurses, and one wife worked at a bank, but many non-farmers had more than one wage earner at their house, too.

# Farming is often more than a full-time job



ANTONIODIAZ/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

For many farmers, holding an off-farm job is part of the formula of keeping their operation running.

Times had changed. But where things getting better?

### Small jobs were always part of mix

Seventy-five years ago, grandpa and grandma processed the farm milk and delivered it in town with the horse-drawn milk wagon, and dad plowed the snow from the sidewalks in town with a horse-drawn snowplow. That was just between milkings, feeding the animals, cleaning out the barns by hand, and bedding the animals with fresh clean straw. A lot of farms have changed hands during the past 75 years.

So, who is buying farms today?

Many of the farmers who remained on the land expanded by buying the neighbour's farm when he retired. Many remained because the next generation wanted to farm, and with

better machinery and technology, the family farms expanded. A few years ago, foreign investors were investing in farmland because land prices were increasing faster than stocks were.

In Quebec, one bank was investing heavily in farmland because it was a better investment than lending money.

Today in Pontiac County, there are more small farms than large farms. People who lived in cities are looking for a way to escape the "rat race" and have moved out to a more relaxed life. Those "new farmers" are even more concerned about maintaining our environment and soil quality than some farmers who have lived in the country their entire lives. These new farmers also want to become active in their community and enjoy producing clean produce with as few chemicals and hormones as possible. Often, one of the

family members has a full-time off-farm job or maybe works with a computer from home.

### Small farms play important role

Although the number of large farmers has diminished, these new farmers have greatly helped keep our schools and hospital alive and added to our community to keep stores and some gas stations open.

Although 10 per cent of Canada's farms produce more than two-thirds of our food, our small farms contribute most to our farmers' markets with locally produced farm fresh goods. Many farmers enjoy producing their own food, milk, meat, veggies and fruits.

Grandma always canned and froze any abundance not needed today, so next winter we could still eat "like kings!"





# Returning home to dairy, crop and Wagyu beef

Mac grad aims to continue and grow the family farm

**Andrew McClelland**  
*The Advocate*

For Connor Velthuis, growing up on the family farm in small-town Ontario was all about tractor rides and tagging along with dad.

"My very first memory on the farm is sitting in the tractor with dad, pulling the forage harvester," the 21-year-old recalled. "I held my hands over my ears the entire time because I was afraid of the very loud metal-detector alarm coming on at any time. That would be the highlight of my week!"

The Velthuis farm in Osgoode, now part of the rural south end of the city of Ottawa, started long before Connor came on the scene. His grandparents founded it in 1959, shortly after their emigration from The Netherlands. They started a dairy and crop operation and raised nine children of which two remained on the farm – Connor's father, Paul, and his uncle, Steven.

Connor joined his local 4-H Club at age 9 and never looked back. Over the years, he has been active in the crop club and dairy clubs and become a senior member.

"I've evolved from being the youngest to the oldest member in the club," he said. "Having been on both sides over the years has led me to have a greater understanding of the teaching and learning processes – and that can be applied to anything in life."

## Diversified operation

Velthuis Farms Limited operates on an expanse of 2,000 acres these days, cropping corn, wheat, soybeans and alfalfa for feed and sale, and milking a herd of 230. But it was a recent venture into speciality beef that has brought Steven and Paul Velthuis's farm more attention and profit: Wagyu beef, known for its marbling, fine texture and high price.

"The first time I heard of 'Wagyu' was when I came home from school one day and saw this big black cow in a pen, and I had no idea what it was," Connor said. "From there we built our herd and started selling to customers. And it's only grown ever since."

Connor's uncle Steven purchased a cow-calf pair of Wagyu animals in



COURTESY CONNOR VELTHUIS

Connor Velthuis showed a heifer from the family farm in the Spring Yearling class at the Royal Winter Fair in 2023.

Vermont before the COVID-19 pandemic, when Connor was just enrolled in Macdonald Campus's Farm Management and Technology program. The family did some flush work with their Wagyu heifer and put embryos into recipients to get their herd on the ground quickly. Now, they have a 50-head Wagyu herd that are DNA-registered with Wagyu associations in Australia and the U.S. to prove their authenticity.

"It was something different to try," Connor explained. "With the popularity of beef-on-dairy breeding in the industry, we figured we might as well try this with purebred Wagyu and see the process to the end."

## Direct to consumers

Now, Velthuis Farms sells Wagyu beef directly to the consumer and to

high-end restaurants and sports bars.

"The first years were essentially word of mouth," Connor said. "We started going to the Ottawa Farmers' Market in the spring to get our name out there directly to consumers and that bolstered sales greatly. Now, we have several repeat customers from as far away as Toronto."

It's a niche market that has done well for the Velthuis family. Paul, Steven, Connor and Connor's cousin, Brendan, tend to the herd and are in touch with other Wagyu producers in the province. They estimate that the number of Wagyu beef operations in Ontario is in the low double digits.

And it's likely to remain a niche product. In 1997, Japan declared Wagyu cattle a national treasure and no longer permits live cattle or their DNA to be

exported, making Velthuis Farms a sizeable player in a somewhat protected market.

For Connor, knowing that there's a stable and diverse farm operation at home means his future is secure. Since graduating from Mac in the spring of 2024, he has returned to Osgoode full time, taking on tasks related to dairy, the family's cash cropping – and Wagyu beef.

"Having a say in what's next is a great feeling to have," he said. "And knowing that I have a great relationship with the prior generations and with my own third generation – that's a truly great feeling."

To learn more about the Velthuis family's farm, visit <https://vflwagyu.ca/>



**Martin Caron**  
UPA President

# Private forestry and maple producers demand action!



PETER KNIEZ/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Sprawled across 6.8 million hectares, productive private forest land is the mainstay of a major local economic activity on which the development of our rural regions depends. Just look at the 30,000 Quebec forestry producers who harvest wood material valued at over \$533 million annually. In the process, they fuel more than 24,000 jobs and generate \$4.7 billion in sales from wood processing.

These producers account for 21 per cent of the supply at wood processing plants, a percentage that has grown in the last decade but obscures certain disparities among regions.

Yet, this exceptional source of vitality for our villages and communities is under a double-barrelled threat: for years, producers have been grappling with unfair competition from public forests and a lumber dispute that illegitimately affects those who work in the private lands of this sector.

Multiple plants have suspended activities because of a harsher business environment, which is driving demand down. Meanwhile, the Quebec government continues to allocate significant volume in public forests, requires paltry stumpage fees, and financially backs the harvesting of this timber. The result? The market is saturated, prices are plummeting, the plants that are still in operation are opting for lower-cost timber from public forests, and our producers are suffering significant losses in deliveries and revenue.

## Part of dispute with U.S.

In addition to this unfair competition, our forest producers suffer at the hands of a lumber dispute that has nothing to do with them. In the eyes of the United States, the way in which public Canadian forests are managed is a problem. Our private producers are in a situation that is quite similar to that of American forest landowners. Lumber produced from their roundwood should, therefore, be exempted from taxes and quotas when shipped to the United States, as these fees unfairly hinder their profitability and competitiveness.

As I stated at a press event Nov. 7 with the Fédération des producteurs forestiers du Québec (FPFQ), this double

Harvesting wood from publicly owned land puts private land producers at a double-barrelled disadvantage.

whammy requires not just immediate action but compensation to offset the losses incurred in recent years.

In addition to providing compensation, we called on Maïté Blanchette Vézina, Quebec's minister of Natural Resources and Forests, to better protect forest producers' markets by building on the principle of residual forests. Under this principle, which is entrenched in the Sustainable Forest Development Act, wood from public forests is considered residual in relation to other supply sources. Clearly, then, before being issued timber volume for public forests, industrial companies need to source their timber from private forests first.

## Talks with syrup producers stalled

The minister must use the upcoming review of the forest regime to refine the residuality principle and equip herself with the tools needed to adjust the volume harvested from public forests. She must also address the legitimate concerns of the Quebec Maple Syrup Producers, which recently stated that "after four years of negotiations, reasonable demands from the maple sector to continue developing in public forests are still being ignored."

For years, the maple syrup producers have been calling for better

protection of maple trees on public lands, but to no avail. Although the departmental plan for developing maple production in public forests was tabled in April 2023, the minister refuses to allocate even modest amounts of land to protect the future of maple syrup production and is indeed authorizing unacceptable

logging of maple stands in public forests.

The demands of the FPFQ and the maple syrup producers expose the government's short-sighted approach to public forest management that badly needs to be addressed. Producers in both private forestry and maple syrup production want to see some action.



### To all agricultural and forestry producers, partners in the agri-food sector, and government stakeholders

We cordially invite you to attend the 100<sup>th</sup> General Congress of the Union des producteurs agricoles, which will be held on December 3 and 4, 2024 at the Quebec City Convention Centre, located at 900 René-Lévesque Boulevard East. Visit the Congress website for full details at [www.congres.upa.qc.ca](http://www.congres.upa.qc.ca).

Participant registration (delegates and guests) will take place on December 3, 2024, starting at 8:00 a.m., followed by the official opening at 10:00 a.m. on the same day.

Please note that delegates will be called upon to vote on amendments to the *Règlement sur les catégories de producteurs, leur représentation et leur cotisation annuelle à l'Union des producteurs agricoles* and the *Règlement sur les contributions des fédérations et des syndicats spécialisés à l'Union des producteurs agricoles*, to decide on the adoption of the Union's new financing plan, and to discuss the major issues and matters concerning the Union.

You must be duly registered to attend the Congress.

**Charles-Félix Ross, Director General**





**Paul J. Hetzler**  
ISA Certified Arborist

Spiders can be dangerous in weird ways. In 2014, Mazda had to recall more than 40,000 vehicles because yellow-sac spiders liked to plug fuel-vent lines with silk and nest inside them, causing gas tanks to pressurize, leak and cause fires. In that same year, a guy in Seattle burned his house down trying to kill spiders with a blowtorch in the basement. And at a Michigan gas station in 2015, a man tried to kill one with a lighter and torched a whole pump island.

But fire isn't typically why we fear spiders.

Some experts think our aversion to spiders may be an evolutionary response, woven into the very strands of our DNA. Even though fewer than 1 per cent of the world's 50,000 species of spiders pose a risk to us, early humans who kept their distance from things like spiders, scorpions and snakes probably lived longer.

These days, fake spiders star in horror films and come out of the woodwork at Halloween time because a lot of folks – perhaps 75 per cent of the population – still find them creepy. Arachnophobia, an intense fear of spiders, affects 3 to 6 per cent of us worldwide, and is the most common phobia among humans.

I want to point out that spiders are essential to the web of life, eating millions of tons of insects each year. They reduce fly populations in barns tremendously, and a 2023 University of Guelph study found that spiders are key predators of agricultural pests like aphids. Even though they're beneficial on the whole, it's good to know how to identify and avoid the few poisonous spiders that live in our climate.

Canada is home to roughly 1,400 kinds of spiders, of which at least 70 are invasive. At the moment, we only have one species that is truly dangerous, and another two that are mildly toxic. The northern black widow is the main species of concern. In spite of its name, there's a limit to its cold-hardiness. This native spider occurs in the southern portions of five provinces, including Quebec, where it has been found as far north as Montreal. However, based on a survey done in 2018, researchers from McGill University believe it is slowly moving northward due to climate change.

## The lives of some spiders: What tangled webs they weave



ULD ALTMEDIA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Canada is home to roughly 1,400 kinds of spiders, eating millions of tons of insects each year. They reduce fly populations in barns, and a 2023 University of Guelph study found that spiders are key predators of agricultural pests like aphids.

### Here's one to watch out for

A red-and-black colour scheme on a car is sporty. On a spider, it's scary. Lucky for us, to identify the northern black widow we don't have to flip it over to look for the characteristic red hourglass shape on her belly. Females, whose bodies are only nine to 11 millimetres long, can measure 25 to 38 mm when you include the legs. Males are half this size. Females have red geometric shapes (often like a "broken hourglass") on their dorsal sides, and a red hourglass on their bellies. Males are harder to identify, as they can have stripes or spots in either red or white.

An interesting sidebar about black widows, so called because they're known to eat the males after mating, is that such behaviour is not the norm. This "sexual cannibalism" was first seen in the lab where males couldn't get away. It seems that in the wild, males have a "best defense is a running head start" policy, and most survive.

Fortunately, black widows live outside. But they sometimes come in on firewood or other items on which the shy, nocturnal bug-hunters hang out during the day. Northern black widows can also wander in through gaps in foundations or broken weather-seals around doors if there are cool, damp places next to the house to hide in. Move brush and leaves away from foundations, and keep door

gaskets in good shape.

Their bites initially cause redness and swelling, followed by severe muscle and stomach cramps, nausea and sweating within an hour. If you've been bitten by a black widow, call a poison control centre or dial 911 immediately. Apply ice to the bite while you wait for help. Do not use a tourniquet.

### And one more to beware

Although black widows have the most toxic venom, the brown recluse spider has caused more deaths. Bites from the brown recluse, while rare, may require medical intervention because they can result in extensive tissue death (necrosis), with possible infection and scarring. In about one per cent of cases, their bites are fatal when the venom becomes systemic.

Brown recluse spiders are shiny, hairless, tan to brown, and up to a half-inch long. An important feature to look for is a dark brown, violin-shaped mark on its back, with the neck of the violin pointing backwards. True recluses, these guys like sheltered places, which is a problem when they hide in clothing or bath towels. Primarily an outdoor species, brown recluse spiders will adapt to living inside. The thing is that they sometimes stow away in luggage or gear of returning snowbirds – brown recluses are common in the southern U.S.

Most brown recluse bites result in tissue death around the bite, forming a wound that can take months to heal. The main concern is infection at the site. Bites that lead to fever, nausea or dizziness may suggest a systemic response, and you should seek medical care right away.

We do have two species of house-dwelling, slightly toxic spiders that can bite, the yellow-sac spiders. They can reportedly survive almost up to the Arctic Circle, so it's a sure thing they're in your region. Ghostly pale, almost translucent, yellow sac spiders actually range in colour from yellow to greenish, or occasionally pink or tan. They're tiny; just eight to 10 mm long, which makes them easy to overlook.

Yellow sac spiders cache their silken sac-homes in nooks and crannies behind pictures, in the corners of rooms and, apparently, in auto fuel vent lines as well. Though not dangerous, this species has a mildly toxic venom that causes a rash, and sometimes a limited necrotic area.

About 30 years ago, one bit the side of my neck (it was in my shirt collar), and a nickel-size wound developed. The lesion turned grey, and took nearly a month to heal. I have to count my blessings, though. There was no fire.

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

# The QFA has a new website!

Quebec farming news

Events you might be interested in

Details about upcoming online Farm Forums

Information about the Quebec Farmers' Association

**IT'S ALL THERE.**

<https://quebecfarmers.org/>

**Check it out.**

Let us know what you would like to see there.

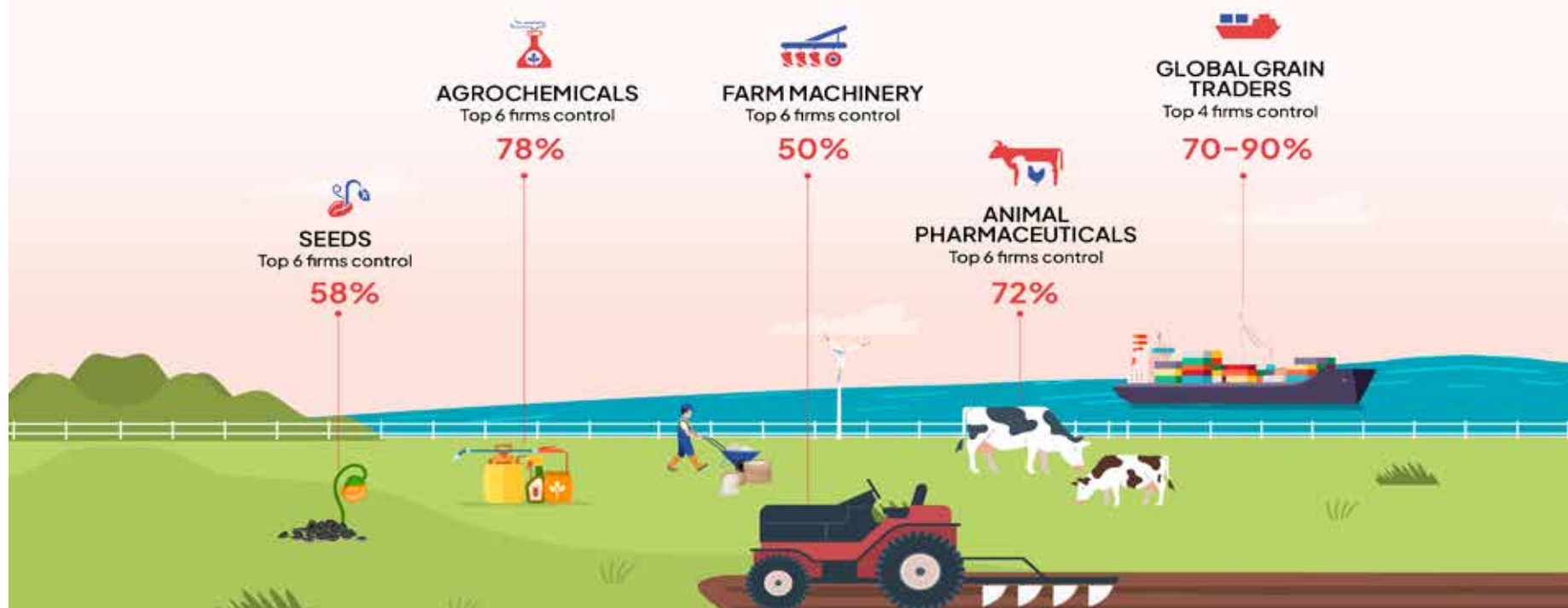
Contact us by email: [qfa@upa.qc.ca](mailto:qfa@upa.qc.ca)

Contact us by phone: 514-246-2981





## Concentration of the Global Food System\*



FROM PLOW TO PANTRY: MONOPOLY IN THE CANADIAN FOOD SYSTEM

As price-takers, Canadian farmers have few choices, especially as input suppliers merge and gain greater control of the market.

# Between grocery prices and agro-chemical firms:

## Canadian farmers find themselves stuck in the middle

**Christopher Bonasia**  
*The Advocate*

Increasing consolidation of agro-chemical companies and high grocery prices for consumers are straining the food system from both sides, while Canadian farmers are caught in the middle, a new report says.

The Canadian Anti-Monopoly Project's report – *From Plow to Pantry: Monopoly in the Canadian Food System* – describes a “U-shaped power asymmetry,” with companies that buy inputs or purchase products at the upper ends, while “Canadian farmers are price-takers trapped in the middle.”

Andrew Nixon, one of the report's authors, told a recent webinar that agricultural producers caught in this trend feel like they're between “a rock and a hard place.”

Nixon noted that the price commodity squeeze has pushed some smaller producers to switch to selling higher-value products, but larger operations may be locked in by greater committed

costs, like higher mortgages and more expensive equipment. He related one quote that summed up the dilemma, from a producer interviewed for the report who said their “vision in the last 25 years has been to basically take the path of least resistance on the easiest market.”

### Farmers feeling trapped

“I'm talking about all farm organizations, farmers as a whole,” the producer continued. “And by doing that, we've now trapped ourselves. We're basically following the map of the corporation.”

Cathy Holtslander, director of research and policy with the National Farmers Union, told the same webinar that similar consolidation a century ago gave rise to resistance by farmer organizations, which resulted in creation of the Canadian Wheat Board.

The report builds on one theme that is hammered on repeatedly in the national media – the rising price of groceries – while giving attention to the

incessant pressure that industry consolidation places on Canadian farmers. For the most part, Canadians' anger has been directed at the grocery sector, as Canada's three top grocery companies have increased profits by 50 per cent in the past four years, even while the number of Canadians accessing food banks rose 78.5 per cent. The high profits in recent years has been the focus of several parliamentary hearings.

But when it comes to consolidation on the other side of the food system, regulators have been less visibly proactive – with 31 significant mergers and acquisitions reviewed by Canada's Competition Bureau since 2000. None of those mergers have been blocked.

### Mergers continue

Meanwhile, a possible merger of agri-business giants Bunge and Viterra is currently pending.

The ongoing consolidation undermines farmer autonomy by removing options for purchasing inputs and by slowing research and development.

Ultimately, they constrict the options available to producers. At the same time, companies are profiting from farmers' personal data that is now also being resold by equipment manufacturers and seed and chemical companies to inform yield and weather data sets.

Opportunities for selling products is also limited as Canadian grain trading and port terminal capacity is largely concentrated among four companies: Richardson, G3, Cargill and Viterra. That consolidation will only become more acute if the pending Bunge-Viterra merger proceeds.

“All along the agricultural supply chain, Canadian consumers, producers and entrepreneurs face fewer choices and are forced to contend with domestic and global giants,” the Canadian Anti-Monopoly Project reports.

“While the sticker shock now familiar to Canadians is one consequence of this path, there are more subtle ways in which consolidation of the supply chain causes harm.”



## QFA videoconferences

# Save the date! MASTER YOUR FINANCES: Strategic financial planning for success



**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 7:30 P.M.**

What is financial planning? Why should a farmer do it? How do you do it properly – and where should you turn for help?

Managing finances is never easy. This free videoconference aims to explain to farmers the importance of financial planning for their businesses and themselves. It focuses on the importance of financial planning in a person's life, and for farm life in particular.

Karine Vasseur, a financial planner with IG Wealth Management for over a decade, will explain how agricultural producers can make tough financial decisions that will improve their business and quality of life.

*This QFA videoconference is put on with the help of Les Agricultrices du Québec and its "Dimension E" program, which offers financial planning adviser services throughout Quebec and Ontario.*

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89688259937?pwd=febTY9wVbYpZaliRqtR1BTPa17z43l.1>

**Meeting ID: 896 8825 9937**

**Passcode: 194574**

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

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



COURTESY: X (FORMERLY TWITTER)

Federal Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault (RIGHT) announced the creation of the Canada Water Agency in Winnipeg on Oct. 16 with Winnipeg South MP Terry Duguid.

## WATER: CFA has pushed for agency for years

From Page 1

Despite Guilbeault's comments that agricultural pollution has a significant impact on water quality, the creation of a stand-alone agency to manage Canada's freshwater has been a recommendation of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) for years.

CFA president Keith Currie said the federation felt a pan-Canadian regulatory agency was vital given the importance of water for food production and adverse weather conditions driven by climate change affecting farming.

"(We) knew it was imperative that the government coordinate water-related issues across provinces, industries and conservation authorities to best manage water to keep it safe, clean and available for future generations," said Currie, a sweet corn and hay producer from Collingwood, Ont.

"Water is one of the most essential inputs when it comes to food production, whether that be growing crops or keeping animals hydrated."

At the moment, Currie says he can't be sure how the creation of the CWA will impact the practices of agricultural producers in Canada. The federal government's official release on the agency does not mention agriculture, and Guilbeault did not mention collaboration with agricultural groups at his announcement in Winnipeg.

Nonetheless, Currie says the CFA is hopeful that Ottawa will see agriculture as an ally.

"We will be working with the water agency on behalf of Canadian farmers to ensure that our sector's needs are represented," Currie said. "We also hope to see agriculture as a priority sector for water resources when competing with other industries."

The CWA is funded with \$85.1 million set aside from the 2023 federal budget. Ottawa has also pledged \$650 million to enable the agency to offer grants supporting projects focused on restoring and protecting water resources.

## Aim of Canada Water Agency

The Canada Water Agency's current initiatives are:

- to restore and protect water quality and the health of aquatic ecosystems
- to advance science, monitoring (including community-based monitoring) and the application of Indigenous knowledge in cooperation with Indigenous peoples to support decision-making and effective action
- to improve collaboration with Indigenous partners, provinces and territories, and stakeholders
- to mobilize knowledge and reporting to measure progress towards results
- to improve climate change resiliency through on-the-ground action

The CWA will be headquartered in Winnipeg, including five regional offices throughout Canada and comprise 220 employees when fully staffed.

**Attestra** WE RAISE CONFIDENCE

### NOTICE TO ALL SHEEP PRODUCERS

#### 2024: Letter "M" Ovine Tags

You have until Friday, **December 6, 2024** to order the letter "M" tags which will be used to identify the lambs that will be born by the end of December 2024.



#### 2025: Letter "N" Ovine Tags

From Monday, **December 9, 2024**, you will be able to order the letter "N" tags to identify the lambs that will be born from January 1, 2025.

For more information:

**1 866 270-4319**

Monday to Friday (except holidays)

From 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 1 to 4:30 p.m.



# Building skills and improving food security

### Canadian Foodgrains Bank

In 2023-'24, funding was approved to support 523,127 people facing long-term hunger and malnutrition in 24 countries.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank development work focuses on supporting families' efforts to build resiliency to hunger and other crises for the long-term. This often involves working with communities to bolster their ability to rebound after crisis, and includes: helping families rebuild their livelihoods, facilitating training on conservation agriculture and improving nutrition for families

Bishow Raj Thapa lives in Dhading district of Nepal, where Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Nepal and RIMS Nepal are helping farmers like him improve their food security.

In this area, families struggle to access enough food year-round due to small land sizes, insufficient income and

limited options for earning a livelihood.

Through the FOSTER-II program, Thapa was trained as a village animal health worker to provide animal health services to his community and nearby areas.

"I am not only working within my community, but also extending my services to other nearby areas, as a paid animal health worker for the livestock division of the municipality," Thapa said.

He used his skills to construct a goat shed for himself, increasing his sales as he was able to accommodate more goats on his property. Now, he keeps 16 goats that help him earn around NPR 200,000 every year to put food on the table for his parents, wife and three-year-old son. He is grateful for the opportunity to serve his community with his knowledge.

"Being a village animal health worker in the community has not only increased my confidence, but also strengthened my leadership skills," he said.



PHOTO COURTESY ADRA, NEPAL

With support, 1,761 farmers like Bishow Raj Thapa and their households gained new skills through their participation in the FOSTER-II program, such as vegetable production, goat rearing and livestock management.



COURTESY CHURCHES ACTION IN RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

"From the first cash assistance, I bought a bag of maize and a female goat," said Rose Chimsewu. "I was looking at the future (and knew) this goat is going to assist me when the project ends."

## Recovering from recurrent crises in Malawi

### Canadian Foodgrains Bank

When Tropical Cyclone Freddy struck Malawi in early 2023, Rose Chimsewu and her family lost their home, all their personal belongings and their maize crops.

Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD) implemented a three-month cash assistance program for 2,500 households affected by the cyclone, supported by Presbyterian World Service & Development. As part of the program, Chimsewu also received seeds and other agricultural inputs.

"As a family, we didn't hesitate, but planted them with the first rains," Chimsewu said.

They were eating two good meals

a day, her children started to do better in school, and they had hoped for a bumper harvest. However, the dry spell induced by El Nino caused the crops to dry up.

"By the time we started recovering from the effects of Cyclone Freddy with assistance from CARD, that's when we (were) hit by the devastating dry spell. This will take us back to where we were before..." Chimsewu said.

For families enduring the impacts of recurrent climate crises such as cyclone and drought, reliance on humanitarian assistance can go on for much longer than they anticipated.

The progress they make in improving their livelihoods is continuously challenged by the next crisis.



# Ontario dairy study examines importance of cow's consistent diet

Taylor Turney

William H. Miner

Agricultural Research Institute

The phrase "consistency is key" rings true for every aspect of the dairy industry. When managing cows, keeping consistent protocols, environment, management practices and diets contribute to a more comfortable and productive herd. Being human, however, we also know that things don't always go according to plan A, plan B or even plan C.

There are three diets for cows: The formulated diet, the diet fed to the cow and the diet the cow actually eats. The inconsistency of a diet becomes part of a bigger issue when there's potential for over or underfeeding nutrients, the cost of wasting limited ingredients like forages, and the impact it may have on production. This is usually emphasized for lactating cow diets. But are we also limiting the future production and health for our dry cows?

A recent study published in the *Journal of Dairy Science* investigated the true consistency and variability in close-up diets, and their association with early lactation performance on Ontario dairy farms.

Forty free-stall dairy farms were enrolled in an observational study consisting of 20 automated milking systems and 20 parlour milking systems. Farms were visited once a month for six months to take samples of the close-up diet, blood samples from fresh cows that were 0-14 days in milk and to monitor milk yield through peak lactation.

Following the study, nutritionists were asked to send the formulated diets to compare them with the lab analysis of the sampled diets. These comparisons were calculated by subtracting the formulated values by the lab analysis values. Individual nutrients had a calculated coefficient of variation.

In total, 1,404 cows were evaluated with 228 close-up feed samples. These diets were characterized by forage and concentrate type, with corn silage the primary major forage source for 67.6 per cent of farms, while 80 per cent of farms used straw as either a primary or secondary source. Soybean meal was the main concentrate, with 37.8 per cent, and 24.3 per cent of farms utilizing it as a primary and secondary source, respectively.



PATYOM/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

A study followed 40 free-stall dairy farms – 20 with automated milking systems and 20 parlour milking systems. In all, 1,404 cows were evaluated. One key finding: high diet variability day-to-day can decrease the opportunity for optimum post-partum health.

While the diets were lower in dry matter, crude protein and copper, they had higher concentrations of acid detergent fiber, non-fibrous carbohydrates, potassium, iron and net energy for lactation.

Interestingly, the most overfed nutrient was iron, which contributed to the high concentrations in feeds and forages in particular. Crude protein was formulated at 14.4 per cent on average, while the diets actually offered averaged 12.9-per-cent crude protein.

In the fresh cows, for each percent increase of non-fibrous carbohydrates variability in close-up diets there was a 0.064 decrease in the liver health index (LHI).

Research at Cornell University has shown that cows that have more successful post-partum performance in terms of less disease, higher milk yield and increased pregnancy within

150 days in milk are associated with a higher liver health index. Therefore, in this study lower variability between non-fibrous carbohydrates formulated and fed was contributed to higher liver health index score and potential post-partum performance.

Alternatively, visit-to-visit variability provided results potentially closer to the formulated values than the lab analysis revealed. This was true for both variability in non-fibrous carbohydrates fed associated with decreased BHB concentration and higher blood glucose, as well as CP variability and decreased NEFA concentration.

Overall, the saying "consistency is key" was proved correct for at least two diets in this study, where the sampled close-up diet did not accurately mimic the formulated diet.

Underfeeding nutrients can short

our cows on future energy, dry matter intake potential and health status once freshened, whereas high diet variability day-to-day can decrease the opportunity for optimum post-partum health. It's important to keep in mind that the order ingredients are loaded in, equipment and cow preferences can all influence the accuracy of your final product diet. Consistency is important and, it turns out, can hold the key to a close-up cow's future production and health.

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

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**Here are just a few of members who recently renewed.  
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**Graham Larocque**, Hinchinbrooke  
**William and Marilyn Jones**, Ogden  
**Ruth Cleary**, St. Andre d'Argenteuil  
**Wesley Larocque**, Sutton





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Reproductive success in dairy cows depends on several factors, including heat detection, breeding, and embryo development and survival. However, these processes are heavily influenced by events that occur during the transition period.

# Reproductive success starts long before breeding

## Bruna Mion

*Dairy Production Expert  
Nutrition and Management  
Lactanet*

Regardless of the voluntary waiting period you set for your farm, a cow's reproductive success is shaped by events that occur long before breeding. Reproductive success depends on identifying the cow in heat, breeding and then successfully fertilizing of the egg to generate an embryo, as well as embryo survival. However, all of these processes are influenced by what happens weeks earlier, during the transition period.

The transition period corresponds to the weeks around calving – both before and after. This is a critical time because it marks the end of the pregnancy and the start of lactation, which requires several metabolic adaptations. These adaptations often lead to common challenges for dairy cows, like insufficient feed intake to supply energy needs, body weight loss, weakened immunity and higher risks of disease. While these issues primarily occur in early lactation, their consequences can last throughout

the whole lactation period and affect the reproductive performance of the herd.

### Return to heat after calving

The voluntary waiting period is based on giving some time to the cow before restarting breeding, to allow the uterus to recover and the ovaries to return to normal cycles after calving. Normally, it takes a few weeks for the ovaries to restart cyclicity after calving. However, cows experiencing a severe negative energy balance – where their energy intake doesn't meet the high energy demands of early lactation – often delay ovarian activity. This is also observed in cows that calve twins, have difficult births (dystocia), have elevated beta-hydroxybutyrate (BHB) levels in milk in early lactation (ketosis) or other post-calving diseases. The delay in returning to normal ovarian activity compromises future reproductive performance.

### Heat expression and detection

If you are not using hormonal protocols to breed cows, your reproductive program relies heavily on successfully identifying cows in heat.

However, the challenges of the transition period can reduce the heat expression, making it more difficult to detect cycling cows, and lowering the insemination rates.

Heat duration and intensity (how strong the heat signs are presented) are affected by many factors. Researchers showed that cows with subclinical ketosis, endometritis, lameness or significant loss of body condition score after calving have shorter, less intense heats, complicating detection and reduced breeding success, since stronger heats are associated with better fertility.

### Pregnancy establishment and maintenance

Once bred, the goal is for the embryo to successfully develop and survive through gestation. Cows with diseases in the first few weeks after calving have lower chances of successful embryo development. In fact, their embryos tend to be smaller and less likely to survive. These cows are 19-per-cent less likely to become pregnant compared with healthy cows.

Other than being more difficult for them to get pregnant, they also have

more chances to lose a pregnancy. These are the cows where a vet may detect a pregnancy during an initial check, but find the cow is no longer pregnant at a later recheck. Cows that have diseases early in lactation are twice as likely to lose a pregnancy compared with other cows.

### Troubleshoot your transition program

The transition period is challenging for most cows, but with effective management, its impact can be significantly reduced. If your herd's reproductive performance – whether measured by pregnancy rate, conception rate or pregnancy per artificial insemination – could be stronger.

Take a closer look at your transition cow management. Are there issues with feed intake, excessive body weight loss or a high incidence of diseases?

Optimizing the transition period pays off in the long run, as healthier cows are more fertile and productive. Investing in your transition program today means setting your herd up for reproductive success tomorrow.

# U.S. corn, soybean yields adjusted downward, but still setting records

**Ramzy Yelda**

Senior Market Analyst

Producteurs de grains du Québec

In its November report, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reduced the yield of U.S. corn by 0.7 bu/acre to 183.1 bu/acre, which remains a record high. Corn production is down 60 million bushels (MBU) at 15.14 billion bushels (BBU) versus 15.34 BBU last year. Stocks are down by 61 MBU at 1.94 BBU in 2025 versus 1.76 BBU in 2024.

The USDA also reduced the yield of U.S. soybeans by 1.4 bu/acre, hitting 51.7 bu/acre, which remains a record high. Production is down by 121 MBU at 4.46 BBU versus 4.16 BBU last year. Demand for crushing is down by 15 MBU and exports are reduced by 25 MBU. Stocks are down by 80 MBU

at 470 MBU in 2025 versus 342 MBU in 2024.

The U.S. wheat supply and demand are slightly changed. Imports are up by 5 MBU, while demand for human-consumption grade is up 2 MBU. Stocks in 2025 are up by 3 MBU, hitting 815 MBU versus 696 MBU in 2024. The average price of wheat is down \$0.10 at \$5.60/bu.

World corn production is up by 2.2 million tonnes (MT). China's corn imports are down by 3 MT at 16 MT in 2024/25. China drops in the world ranking. It is now the fourth largest importer. World stocks are down by 2.4 MT in 2025.

Kazakh wheat production is up by 2 MT, while crops are down by 0.5 MT in Argentina, Russia and Brazil, and by 400,000 tonnes in Europe.



## Grain groups raise issues of concern

Members of Parliament, senators and senior federal public servants were among those who attended the board of directors' meeting of Soy Canada in late October in Ottawa.

The exchanges with the government officials provided members of the national association an inside look at government's concerns with respect to the sector. Soy Canada includes all the groups in the soybean industry.

The Producteurs de grains du Québec's senior market analyst, Ramzy Yelda, was one of the representatives for the provincial grain growers' association at the meeting.

Soy Canada representatives emphasized its concerns over market access for soybean producers throughout the two-day event.

A few days later, one of the topics of discussion at the board meeting for Cereals Canada – the national group representing stakeholders across the cereal grains value chain, including farmers, exporters and processors – was the proposed construction of a building to house technical facilities, including a flour mill, baker and labs, at the group's facility in Winnipeg.

## PGQ website gets makeover!

The PGQ launched its new website this summer. It now includes a space dedicated to teaching the general public about the work grain producers do across Quebec. Check it out today: <https://pgq.ca/>

## Market webinar – Dec. 12 at 7:30 pm

The market information service invites you to a webinar that deals with the markets, specifically the latest reports on harvests in Canada and the United States. The speakers for the evening event will be Ramzy Yelda, senior market analyst, and Étienne Lafrance, market information officer, both with the PGQ.

<https://pgq.ca/producteurs/calendrier-des-evenements/webinaire-sur-les-marches>



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





## Cookin' with the Advocate

# Thai Coconut Curry Noodle Soup



CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

This Thai coconut curry noodle soup will give this fall's soup season a new twist, but with all the warmth required.

### INGREDIENTS

4-6 ounces dry rice noodles  
 1 tablespoon coconut, peanut or olive oil  
 1 large shallot finely diced (or half an onion)  
 2 tablespoons chopped lemongrass  
 4 garlic cloves, chopped roughly  
 2 tablespoons Thai red curry paste  
 ½ teaspoon ground turmeric  
 ½ teaspoon yellow curry powder  
 ½ teaspoon ground cardamom

14-ounce can coconut milk, full-fat  
 1 cup chicken broth (or veggie broth, or use water and one low-salt chicken bouillon cube)  
 4-6 kaffir lime leaves (optional, but delicious!)  
 1 thinly sliced red bell pepper (or other veggies)  
 2 tablespoons fish sauce  
 2 tablespoons soy sauce (or to taste)  
 2 tablespoons brown sugar, palm sugar or an alternative substitute  
 1 tablespoon chili garlic sauce (Sambal Olek)  
 8-12 ounces protein: raw, peeled prawns, crispy tofu or raw, thinly sliced chicken breast (or leftover baked chicken)  
 salt and pepper to taste  
 1 lime for garnish

### PREPARATION

Place the noodles in a large baking dish, pour boiling water over them. Let them sit, stirring occasionally until they are al dente. Drain. Toss with a little oil to coat to prevent sticking.

While the water is boiling, prep the protein, shallot, garlic, lemongrass and red bell pepper. Then, get all other ingredients ready by the stove.

In a large pot, heat oil over medium heat. Add shallot, garlic and lemongrass. Sauté until fragrant and golden, about 3-4 minutes.

Add red curry paste, turmeric, yellow curry powder and cardamom. Sauté for 1 minute.

Add the coconut milk, broth and (optional) kaffir lime leaves and bring to a simmer, stirring.

Once gently simmering, add the bell pepper, fish sauce, sugar, soy sauce and chili garlic paste.

Add the prawns, chicken or crispy tofu and gently simmer until cooked. Add more curry paste if desired.

Divide noodles into the bowls and ladle the soup over top.

Garnish with fresh basil (Thai basil is best!), pickled mustard greens (traditional), cilantro, green onions, lime wedge.

Source: Sylvia Fontaine, Feasting at Home, March 6, 2024.

# At this time of year, thoughts turn to warming – via soup and solar panels

**Cynthia Gunn**  
 QFA's Food Writer

There is no denying soup season is upon us. One of the best things about November is soup. It is hands down the best snack or meal when you come in the door so hungry you can't think straight about what you could possibly make to eat. Already on the stove or heated in mere minutes, what could be better?

Saying that, this soup is a slight deviation because it has to be put together in a two-step process. Still quick, but perhaps better considered as a planned meal.

A reader requested that I provide another coconut-milk-based recipe after I shared my Thai coconut curry chicken recipe in May. This soup is based on red curry and coconut milk as well, so it will have a similar flavour. This is a different take on a Thai soup I wrote about seven years ago. That one leaned on ginger, which is sometimes substituted for what's called galangal. But, according to those who really understand Thai cooking, ginger will not provide the true Thai taste, as it is really quite different. Thus, this recipe sticks to just the curry paste, which has some galangal in it. If you can't get your hands on lemongrass, opt for a few strips of lemon peel. (Don't include any pith, the white tissue that lines the rind of the lemon.) This week my general store did not have any lemongrass, so that is what I used in this soup.

Our general store serves us very well, thank goodness, which means I rarely find myself in a huge parking lot. But on the few occasions where that happens, particularly on a hot sunny day that turns the interior of the car into a sauna, I've wondered at the waste of all that solar energy. It turns out, so have others. And they are starting to put it to use.

Last week's blog, *What on Earth*, CBC Nov. 7, 2024, delved into this idea. Atul Sharma, a renewable energy consultant for Algoma Energy Solutions in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., said that because there's a loss of electricity when power is transferred from one place to another, it is more efficient to have solar panels closer to buildings, as opposed to out on Crown land, which has been discussed as one alternative. Parking lots are an ideal option.

"There's a lot of space and no shade around," Sharma said. "We can also tilt the panels southwards with no obstacles."

Panels on carports in parking lots also help provide shade for cars during heat waves and are sufficiently tilted to avoid snow accumulation.

He said one of the reasons this isn't a widespread practice is the initial cost of building a carport over a parking lot to install the panels.

"But it is worth it because it would produce enough power to supply the shopping malls and the Walmarts."

José Etcheverry is an associate professor at York University and the director of the International Renewable Energy Academy. He was part of the team building one of Canada's first solar photovoltaic parking lots using local materials and labour. He says these local solar models would provide the power needed to electrify buses, cars, bicycles, scooters and wheelchairs.

"These could all charge locally in these parking lots," Etcheverry said.

He says solar is a cheap source of energy, and argues Ontario's turn to nuclear energy and natural gas is a political decision, not a scientific one.

The Ontario Clean Air Alliance recently called on Doug Ford's government to put solar panels on Toronto's parking lots.

"This would be a voluntary program," said Jack Gibbons, chair of the Ontario Clean Air Alliance. "We're advocating for (Ontario) to pay parking lot owners who are willing to provide solar electricity to the grid."

He added this would be "good for everyone in Ontario except for gas companies.... There's a lot of untapped potential in parking lots."

In France, a new law requires all outdoor car parks with more than 80 spaces to install solar panels over at least half the area of the lot in the next five years. The French government estimates the measure could generate 11 gigawatts of power, or enough to supply up to 8 million homes. Failing to install solar panels would lead to fines between €20,000 and €40,000, or up to about \$60,000 Cdn, depending on the size of the parking lot in question.

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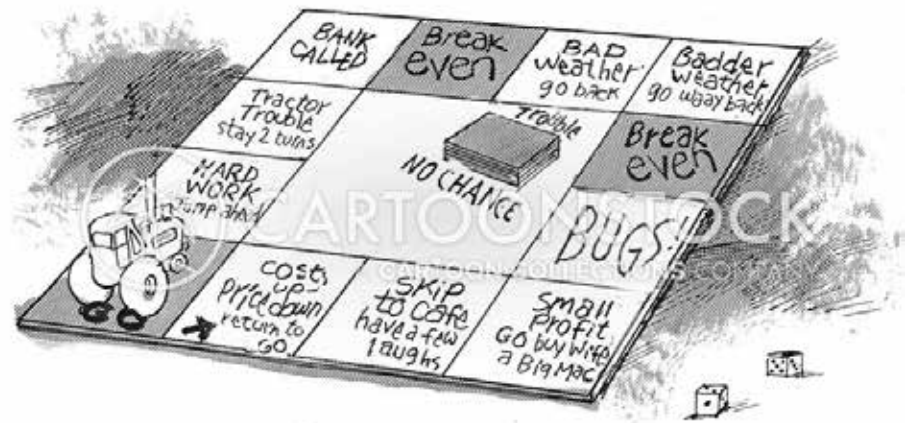
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