

Quebec Farmers' Advocate

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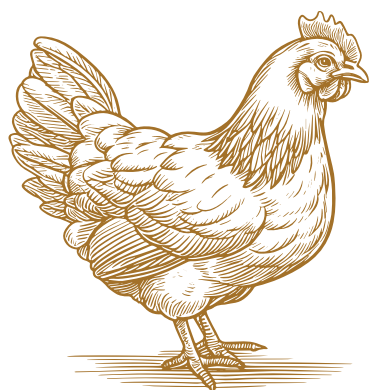
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"We will never have discussions with respect to supply management. It's off the table."

—Mark Carney during the election campaign



COURTESY SUCRERIEBONAVENTURE'S FACEBOOK PAGE

La Sucrerie Bonaventure in Mirabel is part of the group of agri-businesses that have received an order to cease operations due to repeated infractions about what can take place in the agricultural zone. Owner Alexandre Ladouceur maintains what he is doing is "agri-tourism."

When does agri-tourism become more 'business' than agriculture?

CPTAQ orders Mirabel cabane à sucre to stop operations after years of infractions

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

When is a farm not just a farm? That's the question the Quebec government is asking itself about an agricultural business in Mirabel that has – at least according to its owners – become a huge success.

Last month, the Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec issued an order to popular *cabane à sucre* La Sucrerie Bonaventure in the Laurentian town north of Montreal to cease using a portion of its land "for purposes other than agriculture despite several refusals by the Commission to

grant applications for authorizations."

At issue are a 9-hole golf course, seating for 1,000 customers in the cabane's dining room, a microbrewery that seats 300, and a rodeo that drew about 18,000 attendees last summer – all on agricultural land the CPTAQ says should be reserved for agriculture.

Alexandre Ladouceur, the current owner of La Sucrerie Bonaventure, says his businesses are agri-tourism. But the CPTAQ says simply it is not just agriculture. And the local UPA worries that when land-use rules aren't respected by everyone, rampant abuse can occur.

See story on Page 3.

Quebec pork sector faces double tariff threat

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

History shows that shifts in the world economy – traditionally triggered by advancements in technology, automation, wars, population growth – cause massive disruptions, resulting in losses for some sectors, but winners in others.

But experts say U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff war, which is reordering the global economy, could produce only losers. And in that context, the agricultural sector needs to brace itself.

That is not the only challenge facing Canada's agricultural sector, however. At the same time, some subsectors are also being hit with punishing tariffs from China, putting some grain and pork producers – at increased jeopardy.

In March, China slapped 25-per-cent tariffs on Canadian pork and seafood, and a 100-per-cent surcharge on canola. These measures were in response to Canada's move to impose 100-per-cent levies on Chinese-made electric vehicles and a 25-per-cent tariff on aluminum and steel products that had been announced in late 2024.

And with Quebec being Canada's largest pork-producing province, with 1,482 producers, according to Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec, the impact in this sector cannot be ignored.

"The recent imposition of a 25-per-cent retaliatory tariff on Canadian pork by China has dealt a severe blow to one of the country's most vital export sectors," said the Canadian Meat Council in a statement issued April 14.

See TARIFFS, Page 7.



Just the facts

48%

The amount of Canada's fresh produce exports that are grown in greenhouse facilities.

Source: *Statistical Overview of the Canadian Greenhouse Vegetable and Mushroom Industry 2023 report by Statistics Canada*

24-ounce bag

That is the size of 'O Canada Blend' potatoes launched earlier this month by RPE Canada, which is actually a U.S.-based company that partners with Canadian farmers. 'O Canada Blend' potatoes are a mix of Honey Gold and Ruby Sensation spuds "designed to celebrate the traditions and flavours of Canada." The package features the Canadian flag, and images of bears,

beavers and moose, with the tagline: "It's a tasteful tradition, eh!" The potatoes are grown by Canadians, for Canadians, the company claims. RPE is aiming to expand its presence in the Canadian market.

Source: RPE news release

27

The number of megatonnes of CO2 emissions produced by cows in Canada. The output is produced from enteric fermentation, driven in large part by cattle's natural digestive process. This figure represents 39 per cent of the country's agricultural sector's total carbon footprint.

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

A POWERFUL VIEW



MADELEINE LANGLOIS, THE ADVOCATE

The Quebec power grid criss-crosses the landscape of all communities in the province, like these high-tension lines in farm fields in the western tip of the province, near the Ontario border.



Mission

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

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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.

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Members of the QFA believe in:

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After years of infractions, CPTAQ orders sucrerie to cease operations

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

In March, the Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec ordered the owner of a popular cabane à sucre in Mirabel to cease using a portion of its land “for purposes other than agriculture despite several refusals by the commission to grant applications for authorizations.”

At issue are what the CPTAQ claims are the owners’ non-agricultural operations: a 9-hole golf course, seating for 1,000 customers in the cabane’s dining room, a microbrewery that seats 300, and a rodeo that drew about 18,000 attendees last summer – which all operate on agricultural land the agricultural land zoning authority says should be reserved for agriculture.

Alexandre Ladouceur, the current owner of La Sucrerie Bonaventure, says his businesses are agri-tourism.

A long history

The CPTAQ’s long list of grievances with La Sucrerie Bonaventure goes back to the late 1980s.

And it all revolves around the development on lot 1,690,382 of the Quebec cadastral map, where La Sucrerie Bonaventure’s main buildings are located, at 15400 rue Charles.

Back in the 1980s, the land was owned by a sod farm, Gazons Éthier, which argued that soil depletion on the land made its business unsustainable and proposed the development of an 18-hole golf course that would take up 35 hectares. Despite the support of the City of Mirabel, the CPTAQ was not convinced that the land’s soil was depleted and refused the application. The Quebec Court of Appeal upheld that decision.

Nonetheless, by 1993, a golf course and parking lot were operating on the land. The Club de golf Bonaventure greeted visitors with a reception area, even turning an agricultural building constructed in 1990 into a concession stand and golf equipment shop.

The next year, owners of the Club de golf Bonaventure made a second application to the CPTAQ, stating it would “regularize” its golf course by experimenting with different types of grass and lawn production. The CPTAQ, however, argued that the project would use 40 hectares of class 3 agricultural land and could be established on other

non-agricultural land within the municipality of Mirabel. Once again, the Court of Appeal upheld the CPTAQ’s refusal.

New owners, same infractions

The ownership of lot 1,690,382 changed a few times during the 2000s, with the Club de golf Bonaventure finally closing after repeated requests from the CPTAQ.

Current owner Alexandre Ladouceur started operating La Sucrerie Bonaventure in 2015, one of the many large *cabanes à sucres* north of Montreal offering horse rides and pea-soup-and-pork brunches around the sugaring season.

But in the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ladouceur made the decision to reopen golf facilities on the site.

“It’s not a ‘golf course’, in the sense that there is no member who comes here. There is no one who pays to come and play golf,” explained Ladouceur in an interview with Radio-Canada. “The people who come here pay to buy an agricultural product – which is beer or maple syrup – and then from there, they’re given access to the land.”

Ladouceur made his most recent proposal to the CPTAQ in 2020, hoping to gain authorization to produce beer made from his own barley for his company, “Microbrasserie L’Entêté,” which serves meals to up to 60 customers and offers guided mini-farm tours. The plan also included a parking lot that would accommodate 400 cars.

The project would only touch 1.19 hectares of Ladouceur’s land, but the CPTAQ similarly rejected his proposal, citing the protection of highly arable farmland.

Rodeo draws 18,000

Fast-forward to the summer of 2024: La Sucrerie Bonaventure now seats up to 1,000 and its sister company Microbrasserie L’Entêté can accommodate 300.

Under the justification that it is holding a “country party” (and that such events do not require the authorization of the CPTAQ), Ladouceur and his staff promote Rodéo L’Entêté, a two-day gathering featuring dance classes, live music and two evening rodeos. Advertising for the event invites attendees to “discover local agriculture by exploring our agricultural zone.”

The rodeo draws an estimated 18,000 people. The City of Mirabel itself, citing excessive traffic problems caused by the event, makes a complaint to the

CPTAQ, citing “excessiveness of activities in this agricultural area.”

In response, the CPTAQ informs Ladouceur in September 2024 that investigations into land-usage offences are being conducted on five of his lots. On March 21, 2025, the commission sends La Sucrerie Bonaventure its most recent cease-and-desist order.

In part, it states that Ladouceur cease all activities on lot 1,690,382 “for the purposes of catering, meal service, alcohol and microbrewery service, golf, smoking, sales of goods, articles and miscellaneous products, beer production, maple water processing, parking, storage of goods, various objects and materials not intended for agricultural purposes as well as for the purposes of storage and sale of goods, objects and materials not produced on that lot.”

Orders ‘speak for themselves’

As part of the agricultural law judicial process, the CPTAQ does not comment on current cases. In an email to

The Advocate sent on April 8, the commission says the cease-and-desist order “speaks for itself.”

For his part, Ladouceur has already re-applied to the CPTAQ for authorization to host a second edition of the Rodéo L’Entêté this summer.

“We are in there, with the lawyers, to set up a file, to prove that the rodeo (is) more than just a rodeo,” Ladouceur said. “You know, we have horses. We give (riding) lessons. We have a lot of activities that are related to the rodeo.”

As of mid-April, both La Sucrerie Bonaventure and Microbrasserie L’Entêté were still operating.

For Ladouceur, the issue lies in what is the definition of “agri-tourism” – and of agriculture itself.

“I will fight to the end to prove that what I do is agricultural,” he stated in a media interview. “Ninety-seven per cent of our sales are made on the farm. But if tomorrow morning, you take that away from me, I’ll stop cultivating. I’ll stop being a farmer.”

‘You have to have the right permit:’ UPA

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

The ongoing battle between the CPTAQ and the many businesses that have developed the land that is now occupied by La Sucrerie Bonaventure and Microbrasserie L’Entêté puts the Union des producteurs agricoles in a tough position.

While conceding that many producers, like Alexandre Ladouceur, who owns the operations, have to diversify income sources, the UPA acknowledges the authority of the CPTAQ to protect Quebec’s farmland and maintains that repeated offences are rare.

“Sometimes (infractions) can be due to a lack of knowledge of the law or the rules in place,” said Jessica Blackburn, press relations officer for the UPA. “In some cases, it may be an instance of bad faith.”

For Marcel Denis, president of UPA Sainte-Scholastique-Mirabel, the matter finally rests with the courts and making sure all agricultural producers follow the rules.

“The Ladouceur family are a family I’ve known for 30 years,” Denis told *The Advocate*. “They’re good producers. But, in the end, it doesn’t matter what I think. You have to have

the right permit to do something and develop your farmland. You can’t go above the law.”

As the local UPA representative for the territory that Ladouceur’s companies operate in, Denis says he has had plenty of producers approach him with plans to create similar agri-related businesses to draw customers.

“Producers from the area see the business La Sucrerie is bringing in, and they get ideas,” Denis said. “I had a producer tell me, ‘I got my permit from the City of Mirabel for my own sucrerie.’ and I tell them: ‘A permit from the city is not the same thing as a permit from the CPTAQ.’”

“There’s no actual maple production being done there,” Denis said. “I was at the CPTAQ hearing and that’s what they said themselves.”

“And when it comes to hosting a rodeo that causes a traffic jam because it’s a huge success, you have to ask yourself: Where is the limit on what is agriculture?”

Ultimately, for Denis and the UPA, the matter comes down to the letter of the law.

“If you don’t have a driver’s licence, you can’t drive. If you don’t have a building permit, you can’t build. And this case is as simple as that.”



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In times of trade uncertainty, \$8.2M routed to support local food firms

Frederic Serre
The Advocate

Quebec is injecting \$8.2 million into three biofood organizations in an effort to support local companies during the current climate of trade uncertainty and tariff war with the United States.

Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne made the announcement April 3, saying the provincial government wants to strengthen initiatives that promote local purchasing and the development of new markets.

The three organizations selected to receive financing include Aliments Québec (\$3.2 million), Groupe Export agroalimentaire (\$3 million) and M361 (\$2 million).

"This support will help diversify our foreign markets and increase our food self-sufficiency," Lamontagne said. "More than ever, we need to promote local products to Quebec consumers at points of sale and within our public institutions. We are taking concrete action to protect our businesses, our workers and the economy of all our regions."

Aliments du Québec's mission is to encourage consumers to buy local

food, both in the retail network and in hotels, restaurants and institutions. The \$3.2-million subsidy will allow the organization to promote the supply of Quebec biofood products and their presence in the various distribution networks, as well as to promote Quebec foods and promotional activities at all points of sale in the province.

Trois-Rivières-based M361 is a non-profit organization that specializes in the design and implementation of large-scale social projects and the optimization of government programs. The company says the government's \$2 million in funding will help more schools to carry out structuring projects related to healthy, local and sustainable food in Quebec's public schools.

Groupe Export agroalimentaire brings together a large number of Quebec's biofood exporters, and aims to promote the development of their foreign markets. Groupe Export says the government's \$3-million aid will help exporters diversify their foreign markets.

Groupe Export president Martin Lavoie praised the government's support, saying it has come at the right time.

Montréal grower takes lead in baby carrot market with \$5-million investment from Quebec

Frederic Serre
The Advocate

FMS Fresh Produce, a growing family-owned vegetable producer in the Montréal region, is poised to become the first Quebec grower to offer 100-per cent locally-grown mini carrots in the province – a significant move in reducing dependence on imports from the United States and one that earlier this month received a significant boost from the Quebec government, courtesy of a \$5-million investment that will allow FMS to build a new carrot packaging plant.

Quebec Premier François Legault and Huntingdon MNA Carole Mallette made the announcement during a visit of the FMS site on April 10 in St. Patrice de Sherrington, north of Hemmingford, where the company's central facility has been located for three generations. FMS has since expanded to Ormstown and supplies all of Eastern Canada and the United States with fresh vegetables, specializing in carrots.

"With this (investment), FMS becomes the largest carrot producer and the first company to produce baby carrots right here in Quebec," said FMS spokesperson Marc-Olivier Daigneault.

According to Daigneault, the construction of a new plant will allow FMS to focus its full attention on Quebec.

Currently, 33 per cent of carrots consumed in Quebec are baby carrots, but they are imported entirely from the United States.

"Starting this summer, the first bags of Quebec baby carrots will be available in grocery stores, and 75 per cent of production will be destined for Quebec," Daigneault said.

In the context of the tariff war with the United States, Quebec must accelerate its investments to help its companies, such as FMS, to produce more, he said.

"It's more important than ever to invest here at home, to produce more here and depend less on the United States," the premier said.

COW-TOWING TO THE CAMERAS



PHOTO: UPA

After meeting with UPA officials on April 10 to discuss the challenges created by the trade tensions with the U.S., Premier François Legault visited a dairy farm in Ste. Martine in the Montérégie region southwest of Montreal, where he stressed Quebec's committed to the supply-management system. The issue is non-negotiable, the premier said, when referring to any future trade talks with the U.S.

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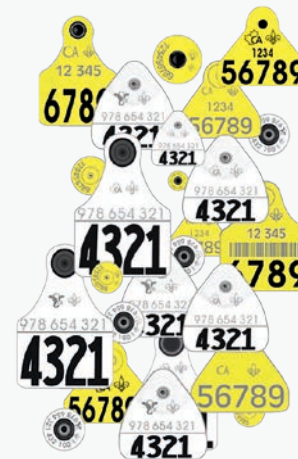
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The MRC is the authority that determines when a beaver dam can be removed.



John McCart
QFA President

Battling wildlife is one thing. Ensuring all rules are enforced is another struggle

Early in November last year during the corn harvest, I saw what no farmer wants to see in their field – standing water. After a dry fall that helped dry down all the crops, which was fantastic, I was very surprised to see water. But I knew the reason immediately. Beavers were building dams on the creek again. They do so almost every year or two.

But the problem for me is that the dams were downstream of my farm.

I can handle it when the dams are on my property. The beavers are trapped and the water begins to flow easily again.

But when the dams are on my neighbour's property, things become more difficult. The fact that I am the president of the Quebec Farmers' Association and, for more than 20 years, the former president of my local UPA syndicate, I am supposed to know and follow the rules.

Discussion required

So when a beaver dam is on my

neighbour's property, and it is causing an issue in my fields, I pay a visit to my neighbour to inform him that water was backing up on my land.

During this last instance, when I visited my neighbour, we agreed that after I had confirmed the exact location of the dam, he would have it removed.

The following week, when I went to see him again, however, the situation had changed. His partner came out of the house and a battle started.

His partner is a local municipal councillor. And she was very quick to inform me that, as a municipal councillor, she also knew the rules, and that no one had the authorization to remove the dam. I told her that any water backing up on my property was her responsibility and that I didn't care how the dams were removed. The drainage on my farm cannot be blocked. She then told me that it was out of her hands. Wow!

This is yet another case of a person relocating from the city, becoming a

municipal official and now becoming an expert on life in a rural municipality.

Proper authority consulted

In order to avoid any further escalation, because, quite frankly, I am getting too old for this, I suggested the MRC be contacted, as under the law of the Quebec Ministry of the Environment, the regional government has authority over watercourses.

The week before Christmas, I met with an MRC official. We visited three dams. The beavers were very busy. The official stated that no one has the right to remove a beaver dam without authorization from the MRC, and that removal with an excavator was prohibited.

Who was going to fix the problem that was affecting me? I asked. The official said it was up to the MRC, and that she would get back to me with a plan.

And still, process is slow

In February, the MRC had informed the

municipality that a trapper would be contacted to remove the beavers and then the dam. It was good news.

Not really. The process hit a few snags.

The environmental specialist for the municipality has been on maternity leave, so the situation had been left to be handled by someone not very familiar with the problem. Then, I found out the trapper does not work in the winter.

It is now April, and the dam is still there. Nothing has been done.

In May, I will be seeding. And the dam cannot be there. The burden of making sure that happens, though, will fall to me. I have to do all the followup.

I am in favour of farmers following the rules. But so does everyone else. All property owners have a responsibility to ensure that what happens on their land does not affect others.

In the meantime, don't get me started about my bear problems and rodents that chew through wires.

TARIFFS: China's levies imposed in March adding to pork sector's woes

From Page 1

In 2024, Canada exported \$468.6 million worth of pork products to China, according to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

"China's tariffs will have a significant impact on both employment and production, potentially leading to widespread layoffs or even closures of operations," said Chris White, CEO of the Canadian Meat Council. "This situation is devastating – not only for meat processors, but also for the thousands of people employed and the communities that depend on them."

The Canadian Meat Council called on the federal government to take "meaningful action in support of the country's meat industry." And described the support measures such as those announced through the AgriStability fund in March have been wholly inadequate, as they do not provide relief for processors.

The Canadian Meat Council "is calling for direct, targeted financial support for meat processors to offset

the immediate and significant impact of these tariffs and to help maintain slaughter capacity. This support is critical not only for the viability of processing facilities – some of which are projecting losses of over \$100 million this year – but also for Canadian pork producers, who depend on these plants to continue selling their animals and sustaining farm operations."

Adding to the tariff woes for the Canadian pork industry is the worry that Mexico will impose a levy on U.S. pork.

Mexico is the largest importer of U.S. pork. This could see U.S. pork exports drop, pushing U.S. pork prices down. This would drag Canadian pork prices down with them, as Canadian hog prices are tied directly to U.S. pricing models as determined by the Chicago Mercantile Exchange.

And all of this is happening as the Quebec pork industry is attempting to recover from a major overhaul triggered by financial setbacks suffered by

Olymel, the Quebec-based company that is the largest pork processor in the province, that sent rippling affects across the sector.

In 2018, Canadian pork exports totalled about \$4 billion, with \$514 million attributed to the Chinese market, with projections of these figures would soon double.

But in June 2019, China banned pork imports in retaliation for the arrest and detention of an executive with Chinese tech firm Huawei Technologies.

Although the ban was lifted almost six months later, damage was done. And Olymel was scrambling after expanding its production facilities. The pivot saw the company cut the number of hogs it would process, and close its facility in Vallée Jonction in the Beauce region in 2023.

Now, industry observers say the sector needs to focus on influencing consumers to opt for pork more often at the grocery store. Growing the Canadian



DUSANPETKOVIC1/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

In 2024, Canada exported \$468.6 million worth of pork products to China.

market for pork, while exploring other export avenues is becoming the tariff-war opportunity.

OPINION

Canadian agri-food entrepreneurs deserve support, infrastructure, capital and coordinated policies

Arlene Dickinson

Food, glorious food. We all need it. We all enjoy it.

I get to spend my days immersed in the food and beverage sector. Investing, supporting and thinking about the agri-food space is my jam. I believe that leading from the front in this space starts at the shelf.

When you went to the store this week, did you look for something "made in Canada?" Maybe it was grown here. Maybe it was packaged, produced and branded here. Maybe you didn't think about it at all. Hopefully, though, you did.

Canada grows some of the best food ingredients in the world. But, too often, we ship our raw ingredients out and buy back finished products, to consume, that were made somewhere else. Meanwhile, our homegrown food companies are struggling mightily to scale.

Our purchasing is helping international brands dominate the shelves, making them rich, with our dollars.

Prices are rising and supply chains are stretching thinner. And we have seen this bad movie before. During COVID, when shelves emptied and borders slowed, we all suddenly realized just how fragile the food system really is. Price spikes, labour shortages and growing reliance on imports have only deepened that reality.

When we lose the ability to produce our own food, from growing it to processing it to putting it on our shelves and on our tables, we give up control. And in a crisis, that dependence becomes a very serious national risk.

That is why commercialization matters.

We have incredible Canadian entrepreneurs creating high-quality, sustainable, export-ready products. Their innovation is strong. They are busy

building brands and their ambition is there. What is missing though is the last mile of support they need to cook with fire.

The winning recipe? Infrastructure, capital and coordinated policies that take these products from concept to shelf, from startup to scale.

We need to build more manufacturing and processing capacity. We need to invest meaningfully in the companies that are ready to grow. And we need retailers to lean in more than ever before as part of a truly coordinated effort to support Canadian brands.

As consumers, we can choose to support Canadian food businesses.

As investors, we can back the founders building them.

As citizens, we can ensure the governments we vote for, from municipal to provincial to federal, understand the urgent need to invest in and build a world-class food industry here at home.

And to market "made in Canada" around the globe.

We are already in the crisis that is showing us what is at stake. But it is not too late. We have the talent and the innovation. We have the best raw resources in the world. Now, we need to build the systems that let us own our food supply from start to finish. And that has to start now.

Buying Canadian means supporting Canadian food entrepreneurs. It makes our country stronger and more independent, our buying decisions easier, our food better.

Elbows up.

Arlene Dickinson is a Canadian businesswoman, investor, author, member of the cast on CBC's Dragons' Den and member of Canada's Council on Canada-U.S. Relations.

Trends in agriculture



JUICE VERVE/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Learning how to coax an animal to do something is always easier than yelling and waving a big stick.



Chris Judd
The Advocate

Anyone watching the trade fiasco on TV lately involving the so-called leader of our southern neighbour would wonder if he had any knowledge of working with animals.

Our farm has dealt with dozens of cattle buyers and truckers over the years, and their knowledge of working with animals varied greatly. Some truckers could talk and move quietly around the animals and coax them up a ramp and into a trailer or truck with a flake of hay or a handful of grain. Meanwhile, others would shout, wave their arms or a heavy wooden cane, and chase the animals to the other end of a pen (or field) and ruin your entire day as they tried to get the desired animal persuaded to come anywhere near the trailer or truck.

We had a very close neighbour who was a truck driver. He would come alone without a certain buyer to load cattle because he knew that as soon the buyer would begin to shout or wave his

It takes a certain approach to convince anyone to do anything

Some politicians should take a few lessons from those who deal with animals

cane, the entire morning was lost.

When I was a kid, I loved going with my dad and grandpa to visit the cattle on pasture. Grandpa always took a little pail of grain and a little salt with him when we went to check the condition of the herd. As soon as the animals would see or hear the old truck, they would all run towards the vehicle. The cows knew dad and grandpa would have salt and grain. The cows would hang around to let dad and grandpa look them all over, keeping a keen eye out for a sore foot or how close some were to calving. The cows loved having their head scratched, too.

They know

If the cows spotted anyone else enter the field without a pail, they usually didn't approach. Animals are smart. They can figure out who they like – or not.

Pigs are the same. Pigs love to get their backs scratched by your hand and always come with you for a little snack. Usually, they will follow you and the grain right onto the trailer.

We always had a large group of cats in our barn that kept the mice population under control. If you wanted to pet or even get close to those barn cats, you spoke softly and always fed enough milk to fill them all up. If someone wanted a new pet, dad always told the perspective owner that not only were they free, but they came with a lifetime guarantee. If one died or ran away, a new replacement would be provided, free too.

Another example

An old friend of mine used to have the most favoured garage in town to fix your car. Like most local garages, it had a bench where the "old-timers" would congregate to watch my friend perform his magic on a vehicle while talking over "important stuff."

My friend always kept a little dog with him for company. As the dog got older, my friend trained him to fetch different tools, so he didn't have to keep running back and forth from the vehicle to the wrench drawer.

One hot Friday evening in summer,

an old-timer was sitting on the bench watching my friend perform his magic as he changed a very rusty, stubborn exhaust system on a car. While under the car he asked the dog to bring him a hammer. The little dog went to the work bench and returned with a hammer. Then, my friend asked for a cold chisel. The dog went to the bench and brought back a chisel. Then, he required a half-inch combination wrench for the muffler clamp. The dog went to the wrench drawer and came with a half-inch wrench.

The old fellow watching from the bench said: "Is that ever a smart dog. How do you ever teach a dog to be that smart?"

After banging his finger a few times and eventually throwing the old muffler out on the floor, my friend replied: "Well, first, you have to have more brains than the dog."

Grandpa had a saying: "You catch more flies with sugar than salt." I wonder if the U.S. president ever tried to herd cats or load hogs?



Radical approach to helping others break into small-scale farming

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

It's common to say that someone "thinks outside the box" when they do things a little differently from everyone else.

But in the case of Sheena Ben-David, a Macdonald Campus student and community organizer, thinking outside the box is just the first step in how she hopes to build a better society through farming.

"My background is in illustration, design and special-effects makeup, and I've worked as an art teacher and integration aid," said the 38-year-old. "So farming wasn't the obvious path."

Ben-David is the daughter of immigrants to Canada. Her father is from Israel, her mother from Sicily. While she mostly grew up in Montreal, the family moved to the town of Charlemagne to live with her Italian-Canadian grandparents.

Although Charlemagne is only 30 kilometres away from Montreal, the move introduced Ben-David to a whole new way of life – and a whole new way of thinking about food.

"We had a sizeable backyard garden – pretty typical for Italian immigrants," she said with a laugh. "I think living there really planted the seed for my love of the outdoors, my obsession with trees and my need for stillness."

Walking in the garden with her grandfather is Ben-David's first memory of farming. She would often help him pick fresh ingredients for dinner, marvelling at how he would turn the tomatoes into fresh pasta sauce.

"I grew up hearing stories about food and farming from both sides of my family," Ben-David explained. "My mom would talk about her grandmother breaking a chicken's neck in a drawer, then watching it run around headless. My dad remembers raising chickens as a kid and struggling to eat them at dinner because they felt like pets. My paternal grandfather was also a butcher, so food production was always part of our family history in one way or another."

The COVID-19 pandemic was pivotal for Ben-David. As food prices surged and quality declined, she became aware of vulnerabilities within the supply chain and felt a need to move away from reliance on grocery chains and unsustainable practices.

"What began as an interest in growing my own food for salads and homemade

preserves evolved into a deeper drive for food sovereignty, both for myself and my community," she explained.

But where could an aspiring young producer look for much-needed farm experience?

Ben-David had done one semester at the horticulture program at Centre de Horticulture de Laval, but through a conversation with friends and Farm Management and Technology recruitment officer Katrin Dinkel, she learned about the ag education available at Mac Campus.

Older than average student

Within a few months of learning about FMT, she was starting her first day of class, eager to learn, but aware that her background differed from those students who had grown up on the family farm.

"It's been challenging for sure," Ben-David admitted. "I'm learning everything from scratch and often feel lost next to younger students who grew up farming. The world that shaped them is one I'm just beginning to understand. Farming runs through their veins, and here I am, just trying to figure out the difference between a disc harrow and a cultivator."

Nonetheless, Ben-David has found success in the FMT program. She was one of five students to be awarded a Warren Grapes scholarship from the Quebec Farmers' Association. She also completed an internship at the Mac Campus farm and spent a summer working at Pitt Street Garden, a permaculture and horticulture project in Cornwall, Ont.

Her time at Mac has also helped Ben-David learn more business skills for an innovative business idea that's become her passion – a non-profit organization she founded called Roots Farm and Retreat.

"After COVID, I felt a pressing urge to become self-sufficient, yet I wanted my efforts to benefit others too," she said, explaining why she founded the non-profit.

"But breaking into the farming industry is tough, especially without a generational farm to step into. The startup costs alone are massive, and accessing land, equipment and resources as a new farmer can feel like an uphill battle. It's not just about learning how to grow food; it's about navigating business, marketing and supply chains, while trying to make it all financially sustainable."

Inspired to find a pathway to farming for herself and others, Ben-David and a close friend established Roots Farm & Retreat in 2022 by purchasing a 75-acre plot of land near Newington, Ont., north of Cornwall.

Overcoming financial barriers

The operation is an incubator for new farmers, prioritizing BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour), queer and female farmers. The non-profit helps non-traditional aspiring farmers overcome financial barriers by offering 5- to 10-year land rentals so they can gain experience before purchasing their own land.

That's definitely thinking outside the box, and a radical approach to helping up-and-coming ag producers enter the industry. The reaction from traditional farmers in the community has been equally supportive and, well, a bit baffled.

"The local community has been mostly supportive – though we've gotten a few 'You must be crazy' looks from some farmers," Ben-David said. "Overall, they welcome the idea of creating opportunities for small-scale farmers and bringing more diversity to the area. The county has been especially supportive."

In the winter of 2023, Roots Farm & Retreat acquired a hemp licence, adding another layer to its project of encouraging culturally significant specialty crops that are in demand, but often hard to find. Ben-David hopes to explore the potential of growing hemp for seed, oil and, ideally, CBD production. Alongside hemp, they intend to incorporate gluten-free grains into our crop rotation, enhancing both biodiversity and community offerings.

"We also focus on mental well-being, offering meditation, yoga and breathwork to help combat isolation," Ben-David explained. "Our workshops will cover canning, preserving and cooking with fresh ingredients, creating a supportive community where experienced farmers mentor newcomers."

The biggest challenge Ben-David and her team face at Roots Farm & Retreat is the same that all producers face: money and capital for investment.

Growth is slow

The farm desperately needs a tractor, as well as infrastructure support for its renters. While Roots Farm & Retreat



COURTESY SHEENA BEN-DAVID

Sheena Ben-David and a friend bought 75 acres in 2022 and opened Roots Farm & Retreat, a non-profit operation that aims to help new farmers find their footing in the agricultural sector.

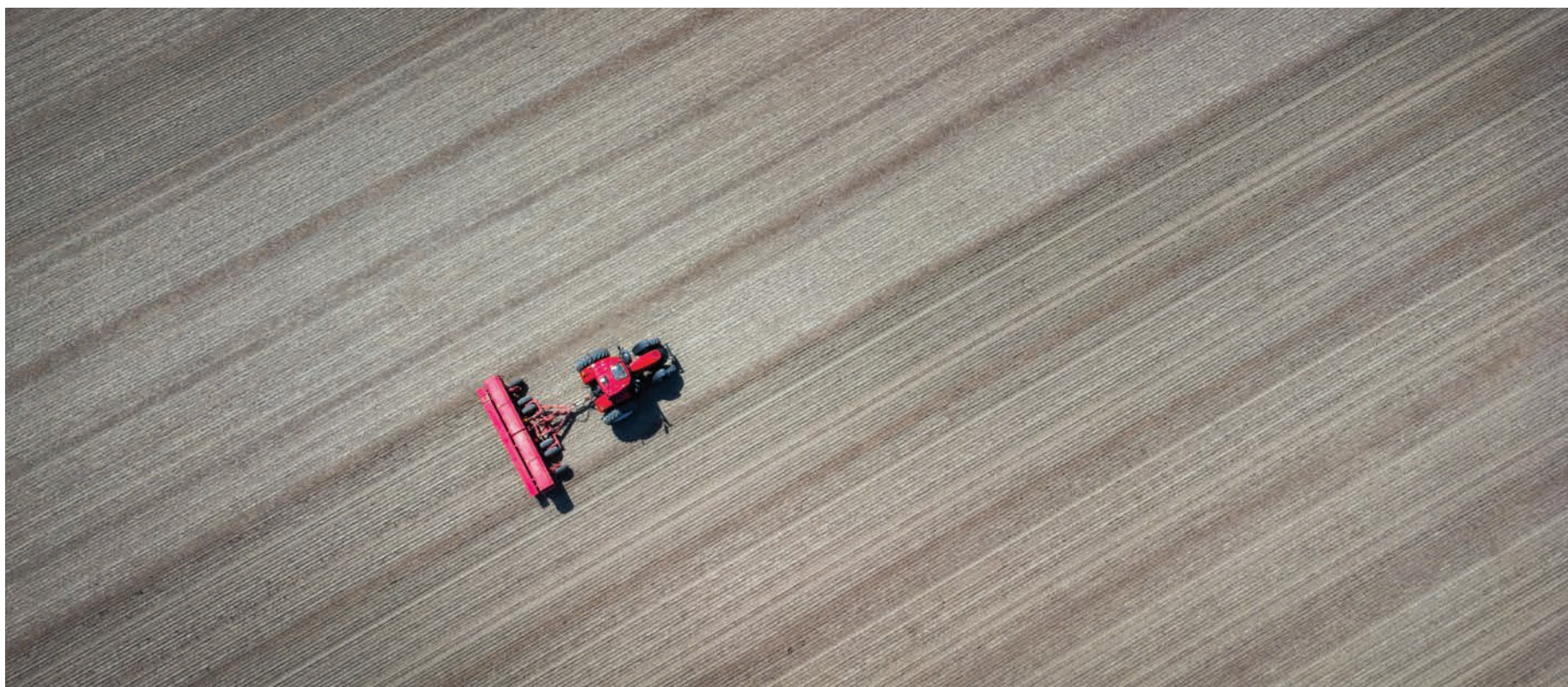
has support from Réseau Racines, La Cité College and the FMT program itself, it's outside-the-box approach often means it's not eligible for strict funding initiatives and grants.

But Ben-David is undaunted by the hurdles she has to overcome to make Roots Farm & Retreat her full-time job. For this aspiring producer, starting a conversation and building community is just as important as growing crops.

"I think the biggest thing the non-farming public needs to understand is just how much work goes into producing their food. Farming isn't just planting seeds and watching things grow. It's long hours, constant problem-solving and working within a system that often feels stacked against small-scale producers," she said.

"On the flip side, farmers also need to recognize that most people are disconnected from where their food comes from, not because they don't care, but because the modern food system has made it easy to be. Bridging that gap means more conversations, more education and a little more empathy on both sides."

To support Roots Farm & Retreat, you can donate to its GoFundMe fundraiser. Visit <https://www.rootsfarmretreat.org/en/donation>



POTIFOR/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Since 2015, it is estimated that Quebec farmers have paid \$480 million to the Electrification and Climate Change Fund through fuel taxes.



Martin Caron
UPA President

Tariff war offers moment to rethink expectations for ag sector

After months of threats, delays, shocking statements, reprieves and surprises, the Trump administration has finally imposed “reciprocal” tariffs ranging from 10 to 50 per cent on more than 180 countries. Canada is exempt from these tariffs, except those targeting the auto, steel and aluminum industries, which continue to face 25-per-cent tariffs.

Goods that “comply” with the Canada–U.S.–Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), which represent 38 per cent of all Canadian products exported south of the border, will remain exempt from the 25-per-cent tariffs implemented last month.

Many breathed a sigh of relief upon hearing the long-awaited announcement, but it would be a mistake to celebrate too quickly. President Trump’s trademark unpredictability leaves us with no real assurance.

Trump’s recent threats against Canada’s dairy sector serve as an unfortunate example. This hostility is ironic, given that, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation, around 40 per

cent of U.S. agricultural jobs are held by undocumented migrant workers, with figures of nearly 70 per cent of them working in the dairy industry, according to sources in Wisconsin. That saying about stones and glasses houses seems particularly fitting.

Trump supporters shunning Canadian products

In addition, CUSMA compliance does not guarantee exemption from tariffs. For instance, Canadian produce that meets all the requirements is still being tariffed, ostensibly due to inadequate packaging. U.S. buyers also have to navigate the political climate, including Trump supporters and their newfound disdain for Canadian products.

Another major factor is the impact of Canada’s counter-tariffs on U.S. goods, including many inputs used in Quebec’s agri-food sector.

Under these circumstances, the threat to Quebec’s agri-food sector remains very real. Beyond their role in providing food, the economic contribution of agriculture and food processing (Quebec’s

two leading primary and manufacturing sectors) is indisputable, in terms of the number of jobs created (more than 127,000), their annual contribution to GDP (\$13.4 billion in 2023), and their investments (\$3 billion in 2023).

Quebec ag products exported to U.S.

It is also important to remember that the majority of Quebec’s agri-food exports are destined for the U.S. In 2024, 72 per cent – or \$9 billion – of these products were exported to the U.S. The imposition of U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods would severely impact sectors that depend on exporting to the U.S. – as we have already seen with China’s tariffs on pork and canola, which have been in effect since March 20.

Governments must take this opportunity to reconsider the expectations for the agri-food sector.

Last February, the sector identified a series of short-term actions to be taken, including direct financial support tailored to the realities of businesses affected by the tariff dispute, while avoiding any increase in their debt

load. However, most of the initiatives and programs announced to date – particularly in Quebec – are poorly suited to businesses in the sector, whether due to size or revenue requirements, timelines or other criteria.

Cutting tax on fuel

Simple solutions are well within the reach of governments. Farmers in Quebec contribute enormous sums to the Electrification and Climate Change Fund every year – amounting to more than \$480 million since 2015 – without any meaningful return. Exempting farmers, in whole or in part, from all fuel taxes (gasoline, diesel, propane, natural gas) and from any fees stemming directly or indirectly from Quebec’s cap-and-trade system for carbon would go a long way toward easing their concerns.

Taking action would also promote greater fairness, as agricultural businesses in other provinces would directly benefit from the removal of the “consumer” component of the federal carbon pricing.

The Resourceful Naturalist



Paul J. Hetzler
ISA Certified Arborist

Non-native insects can devastate trees and crops

From the emerald ash borer to the Asian stink bug, they wreak havoc

Being a descendant of Irish and German immigrants, I think it's right to give new arrivals a warm welcome. With one exception: six-legged migrants coming ashore in North America should be viewed with a skeptical eye.

Sure, a few insects from overseas are beneficial, but that doesn't stop them from bugging us. Asian multicoloured lady beetles (*Harmonia axyridis*), first imported by the U.S. in 1916 to control aphids and other crop pests, now appear in droves each fall looking for rent-free winter digs. While they do eat bad bugs and don't actively cause harm, large numbers can find their way indoors and become a nuisance.

Some invasive species clearly harm the ecosystem, as well as the economy. The emerald ash borer (EAB, *Agrilus planipennis*), native to China and the Russian far east, is a case in point. Discovered in 2002 near Windsor, Ont., this forest pest is now decimating ash trees in parts of Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

One fairly recent arrival is both a nuisance and an economic and environmental threat, a foul character indeed. Native to eastern Asia, the brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB, *Halyomorpha halys*) was first detected in Ontario in 2010. In 2014, BMSB turned up in an orchard in the Franklin region, in southwest Quebec, and then in the Montreal region in 2016, and is expected to spread across southern Quebec. In addition to Ontario and Quebec, BMSB is now in British Columbia, Alberta and P.E.I.

Hard to control

This pest uses a straw-like beak to suck the life out of plants, especially fruits and vegetables, bringing heartbreak to gardeners and economic losses to orchardists. Not only is BMSB hard to control with pesticides, it has no real predators. As a result, populations can build rapidly.

According to The Invasive Species Centre: "BMSB is a serious agricultural pest because its adults and nymphs feed on over 35 fruiting crops, causing damage to the fruit flesh and skin, making them unsuitable for food markets, but feeding from BMSB is not limited to agricultural crops. BMSB has

over 170 confirmed non-crop hosts in North America and is a landscape-level pest that moves between non-crop and crop hosts during the growing season. Research on this pest is ongoing to determine the extent of its potential impacts as well the efficacy of monitoring, management and control options that are available."

The term "marmorated" refers to the bands of light and dark colours around the insect's abdomen.

Immature forms, or nymphs, change colour and shape as they moult, progressing through a series of life-stages called instars. Hatchlings (first instars) are roughly 2.4 millimetres long, with an orange abdomen and a black thorax. Second-instar BMSBs are mostly black, and instars three through five are mottled brown with one white band on each leg and antenna. Their eggs, typically found in clusters of 20-25 on the undersides of leaves, are roughly 1.6 mm long by 1.3 mm wide. Pale green at first, they later turn white, with red eyespots developing just before they hatch.

The shield-shaped adult BMSB is 14-17 mm long, with smooth, rounded "shoulders." It is best identified by its colour pattern, marbled brown and off-white on top with alternating bands of brown and off-white on its antennae and along the edges of the abdomen. One of the better ways to tell BMSB from similar native species is by the two light bands on each antenna. In the spring, BMSB adults emerge from mid-April to early June and feed for two weeks before mating. They damage crops in all life stages, injecting destructive enzymes as they suck plant juices.

Fruits to corn targeted

In the U.S., the "Punaise diabolique" has wreaked havoc in peach, apple and cherry orchards, especially in the mid-Atlantic region and along the west coast, with losses totalling in the tens of millions. The BMSB has also caused great harm to berry crops, as well as to corn, tomatoes and other veggies in 46 states.

But you can't put a price on tranquility if your house is overrun with BMSB. As they become more established in an area, they seek shelter as cool fall weather sets in. In their native range (where predators keep



SAI A.D.A./SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The brown marmorated stink bug is one of the latest pests to threaten native plants. Originally from Asia, it was first detected in Ontario in 2010. It is considered a serious agricultural pest because it feeds on more than 35 fruiting crops, causing damage in peach, apple and cherry orchards, and causing harm to berry crops, as well as to corn, tomatoes and other vegetables.

their numbers down), they often hide under loose tree bark. But in North America, Australia and New Zealand, where nothing munch on them, populations go through the roof, and they swarm into attics and walls in such great numbers that people have swept up buckets of the stinkers.

And removing them is not fun. As their name suggests, they emit a pungent odour when disturbed or killed. They also leave enduring stains when crushed.

Unfortunately, BMSB will keep coming out of the literal woodwork over time, so the weapon of choice is a vacuum. Be advised this might make your Hoover smell for a while. A shop vac that lives in a garage or shed is ideal, but taping an old nylon to the hose end creates a mini-bag where bugs get trapped and can be tossed into soapy water where they'll drown in minutes.

Above all else, managing BMSB at home means excluding them. To that end, here are a few tips:

- Weather-strip entry doors and inspect door sweeps.
- Caulk windows inside and out.
- Rake debris and vegetation from your home's foundation. Inspect for

and seal foundation cracks.

- When insulating exposed plumbing pipes around foundation or crawl spaces, caulk small gaps and fill larger ones with steel wool.
- If you have a fireplace, screen the top of the chimney to keep out pests.

We may soon get help from the samurai wasp, a tiny non-stinging wasp native to parts of Asia. It's a parasitoid, laying its eggs on the BMSB eggs. As wasp eggs hatch, the larvae eat the BMSB eggs.

The wasp suddenly appeared in 2019 in British Columbia, where BMSB was already a major pest. By 2021, the samurai wasp was destroying about 80 per cent of BMSB eggs. Researchers in B.C. expect that samurai wasps will naturally spread to other regions where BMSB has become established, but it will take many years for wasp numbers to catch up with pest populations. Unfortunately, the stinkers are here to stay, but there is at least one natural control agent to help keep the Punaise diabolique in check.

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

Special Report



Quebec farmland values jump 7.7% in 2024: FCC

Rate of increase in province dips below national average

Brenda O’Farrell
The Advocate

The value of agricultural land in Canada continued its upward trend again last year, but that rate of increase is showing signs of slowing.

The value of farmland in Quebec jumped by an average of 7.7 per cent in 2024, less than the national average of 9.3 per cent and below the double-digit increases seen in the province in the three previous years, according to the latest figures compiled by Farm Credit Canada.

The rate of increase in Quebec was the fourth highest in the country, behind Saskatchewan, where prices increased by 13.1 per cent; British Columbia, which saw values jump 11.3 per cent; and New Brunswick, where the increase was 9 per cent.

Overall, the upward trend in farmland values across the country in 2024 continued to set new highs, but the national rate of increase seen in 2024 dipped below 2023 levels, when land values jumped by 11.5 per cent. In 2022, the across-Canada values increased by 12.8 per cent.

“The increase in Canadian farmland values in 2024 reflects an enduring strength in demand for farmland amid some pressures on commodity prices,” said J.P. Gervais, the FCC’s chief economist.

Lower borrowing costs also helped drive the increase, Gervais added.

In Quebec, farmland values have seen consistent year-over-year increases for the last 39 years, with the most pronounced hikes recorded from 2011 to 2015. Last year’s 7.7-per-cent hike comes following a 13.3-per-cent hike in 2023, an 11-per-cent jump in 2022, a 10-per-cent increase in 2021 and a 7.3-per-cent improvement in 2020.

Quebec outpaced Ontario

In Ontario, farmland prices only saw a 3.1-per-cent hike last year, but the overall average dollar figure per acre in Ontario remained higher compared with Quebec. The average price of an acre of farmland in Ontario ranged from a low of \$4,900 to a high of \$33,700, with an average price of \$20,087. In Quebec, the average price of an acre of farmland ranged from \$1,700 to a high of \$22,800, with the average pegged at \$17,720.

Looking across the province, the Laurentides-Lanaudière region, north of Montreal, reported the highest rate of increase in farmland values, with selling prices recorded last year seeing a 14.8-per-cent hike.

According to the FCC’s report, the highest increases in that part of the province were in the central and eastern sectors of the region.

“The area is known for its diverse buyers (dairy, poultry, grain, potato and field vegetable producers),” the report states. “Therefore, when a particular sector experiences difficulties, this region is less likely to feel the effects on its land values.”

The Bas-Saint-Laurent – Gaspésie region saw the second-largest spike in farmland prices last year, with values increasing by 14.1 per cent. It is important to note, however, that despite the percentage jump, this region has some of the least expensive land in the province.

The demand in this region was driven by demand from supply-managed producers, according to the report.

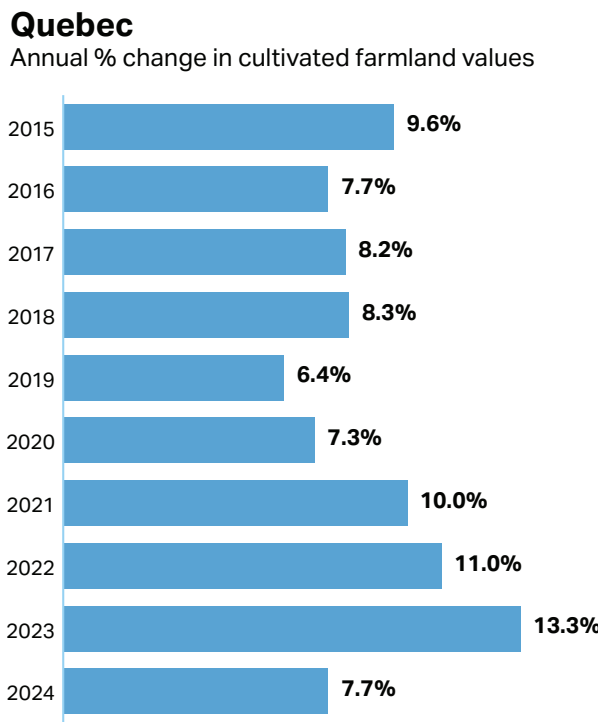
In the Montérégie region, where the highest prices for farmland in the province continue to be recorded, the value of land jumped 3.2 per cent last year, with the average price hitting \$22,800 per acre. The average

price is \$700 an acre more than in 2023, according to transaction data compiled by FCC. Sales prices last year ranged from \$14,400 to \$30,300 per acre in the region.

The tariff threat

“Overall, the increase in farmland values is a testament to the strong outlook for the demand of agricultural commodities and the high-quality food produced in Canada,” Gervais said.

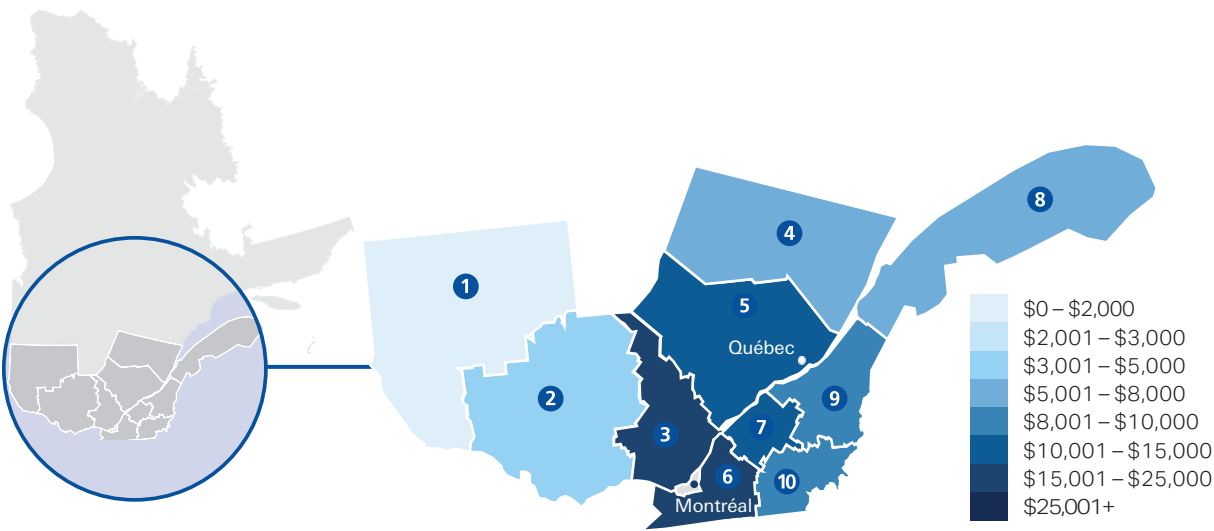
But U.S. tariffs could have an impact, he added in a briefing with reporters last month.



Special Report



SEBASTIEN/STOCK.ADOBE.COM



In the short term, he said, “we are staring at even lower commodity prices.” But in the long term, “the world needs more of what we grow.”

But Gervais cautioned, the longer the tariff disruptions last, the larger the impacts will be on farmers’ bottom lines.

“Uncertainty – that’s a big deal,” Gervais said. “It applies to ag as it applies to the overall economy.”

This, in turn, will create an impediment to the willingness to invest in land.

On the national level

Although all provinces saw jumps in the prices of farmland in 2024, only three reported a higher growth rate compared with 2023 – British Columbia, Alberta and New Brunswick. There were an insufficient number of reported sales in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the northern territories to assess the changes in farmland values in those parts of the country.

More favourable weather conditions in the prairies last year was one factor cited in bolstering demand for land out west, according to the FCC.

The FCC’s latest findings are based on prices of land sold between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2024.

But overall, the question of farmland affordability continues to hang over the sector. While the rate of increase for prices of farmland is showing signs of slowing, the affordability of land relative to farm incomes continues to deteriorate, the FCC claims.

“The affordability index is not trending in the right direction,” Gervais said, pointing out that Canadian farmers are facing the lowest level of affordability in the last 40 years.

This reality, he said, creates growing challenges for those producers looking to expand their land base, as well as being an impediment to young producers looking to establish an operation.

Cultivated Land
Quebec farmland regions

	% change	Value \$/acre*	Value range**
1 Abitibi-Témiscamingue	0.0%	\$1,700	\$800 – \$3,000
2 Outaouais	2.9%	\$4,600	\$2,100 – \$8,900
3 Laurentides-Lanaudière	14.8%	\$22,500	\$14,700 – \$35,500
4 Saguenay – Lac-Saint-Jean	0.0%	\$6,100	\$2,100 – \$7,600
5 Mauricie-Portneuf	7.8%	\$11,300	\$4,500 – \$19,000
6 Montérégie	3.2%	\$22,800	\$14,400 – \$30,300
7 Centre-du-Québec	8.2%	\$14,500	\$6,500 – \$20,700
8 Bas-Saint-Laurent – Gaspésie	14.1%	\$5,800	\$1,500 – \$9,800
9 Chaudière-Appalaches	14.0%	\$9,700	\$3,900 – \$16,400
10 Estrie	11.9%	\$8,200	\$4,800 – \$14,400

*FCC reference value \$/acre.

**The value range represents 90% of the sales in each area and excludes the top and bottom 5%.

Quebec farmland regions 2023

	% change	Value \$/acre*	Value range**
1 Abitibi-Témiscamingue	10.9%	\$1,700	\$700 – \$3,100
2 Outaouais	0.0%	\$4,500	\$1,600 – \$7,300
3 Laurentides-Lanaudière	6.9%	\$19,600	\$7,100 – \$31,900
4 Saguenay – Lac-Saint-Jean	24.0%	\$6,100	\$2,900 – \$7,400
5 Mauricie-Portneuf	7.2%	\$10,500	\$5,400 – \$16,700
6 Montérégie	12.0%	\$22,100	\$12,900 – \$29,300
7 Centre-du-Québec	13.5%	\$13,400	\$6,700 – \$19,200
8 Bas-Saint-Laurent – Gaspésie	15.0%	\$5,100	\$1,000 – \$9,400
9 Chaudière-Appalaches	22.7%	\$8,500	\$2,600 – \$14,800
10 Estrie	10.6%	\$7,300	\$2,700 – \$10,000

*FCC reference value \$/acre.

**The value range represents 90% of the sales in each area and excludes the top and bottom 5%.

Cultivated Land – Quebec farmland regions 2022

	% change	Value \$/acre*	Value range**
1 Abitibi-Témiscamingue	0.0%	\$1,500	\$700 – \$3,300
2 Outaouais	15.7%	\$4,500	\$1,300 – \$8,400
3 Laurentides-Lanaudière	7.2%	\$18,300	\$7,300 – \$27,800
4 Saguenay – Lac-Saint-Jean	14.0%	\$4,900	\$700 – \$7,600
5 Mauricie-Portneuf	19.2%	\$9,800	\$4,400 – \$17,500
6 Montérégie	4.6%	\$19,700	\$9,300 – \$27,700
7 Centre-du-Québec	14.1%	\$11,800	\$4,000 – \$16,300
8 Bas-Saint-Laurent-Gaspésie	18.3%	\$4,400	\$900 – \$6,900
9 Chaudière-Appalaches	13.5%	\$6,900	\$2,000 – \$12,000
10 Estrie	17.8%	\$6,600	\$3,000 – \$11,400

* FCC reference value \$/acre.

**The value range represents 90% of the sales in each area and excludes the top and bottom 5%.



QFA videoconferences

Selling direct to buyers is not about quantity, but finding right customers

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

Stan Christensen isn't really interested in the old business model of selling at the lowest possible price to the largest number of customers.

Instead, this beef producer would much rather sell his product at a fair price to a dedicated group of people who value great beef.

"If someone sends me an email saying, 'I'm interested in your products. Can you send me your prices?' we're likely not on the same page," explained Christensen, who runs a farm in Lac Ste. Marie, north of Gatineau. "If price is your main concern, you can get cheaper beef at the supermarket."

It's a business philosophy that wasn't apparent for the 73-year-old veteran of Quebec's beef sector when he first started in 1980. At that time, Christensen and his wife Cheryl Sage had 36 cattle. Throughout the '80s, the family grew their commercial cow operation, expanding to a full purebred Red Angus herd.

And then something unexpected happened.

Mad cow crisis changed everything

"As anyone in the beef industry knows, our 9/11 was May 20, 2003, with BSE," Christensen recalled, referring to the discovery of a single reported case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or mad cow disease, on an Albertan farm on that date.

With the regular supply chain in Canadian beef turned upside down overnight, Christensen and Sage began looking at how they could sell beef directly to the consumer.

"We started with a lot of ideas of how that was done," Christensen explained during a videoconference hosted by the Quebec Farmers' Association on March 12. "It was a steep learning curve, because we discovered that most of those ways don't work."

It was a time of reflection. And Ferme Sage emerged from it with a way to reinvent its business and become a pillar of its community.

Key decisions made

"We decided the best way to find out how to sell beef direct is to figure out who we are and what we want to do," Christensen said. "And then can we



COURTESY STAN CHRISTENSEN

Beef producer Stan Christensen of Lac Ste. Marie in the Gatineau hills says direct sales are all about creating a strong identity: "We decided the best way to find out how to sell beef direct is to figure out who we are and what we want to do. And then can we translate that into creating a product that people will buy into so that they are willing to support us?"

translate that into creating a product that people will buy into so that they are willing to support us."

Christensen started with simple math: how much beef could they have ready for sale on a consistent schedule and how many customers could they reliably sell to? He also looked into market research done in the U.S., which revealed that the most appealing marketing term in American grocery-store advertising was "local."

That gave him an idea.

"I had been a ski instructor for decades at that point and had a lot of connections with the community around Mont Ste. Marie," Christensen explained. "Cheryl had a lot of connections through the health industry from working at the CLSC. We looked at all these things and said, 'Who could we sell to?' And that's when we discovered that everybody was looking to help us out."

Connected with customers

Ferme Sage's livestock and land

management turned out to be just what forward-thinking customers wanted. Christensen grazes his cattle throughout summer and winter, uses no hormones and introduces antibiotics only when treating a sick or injured cow. The farm hasn't used herbicides or pesticides in more than 30 years, and a member of the family has always sat on the watershed committee that is responsible for the Gatineau River and for conservation around lakes in the region. In 2023, Ferme Sage was the Quebec nominee for the Environmental Stewardship Award.

Those qualities helped Ferme Sage develop a loyal customer base. To promote their direct sales, Stan and Cheryl (and, by this time, sons Eric and Ian) supported local tournaments and charity events.

"After that, it was just word-of-mouth," Christensen said. "Since around 2014, we've been screening clients and the rest is friends, long-time customers – and even some other farmers."

These days, Ferme Sage also sells breeding stock throughout Quebec and Ontario, takes its own cattle to the Thurso abattoir, and sells vacuum-packed, frozen meat from a small retail shop on the farm. It also supplies the Mont Ste. Marie ski resort, golf course and Restaurant Lachapelle in nearby Kazabazua.

Size isn't everything

For Christensen, the key to success hasn't been "bigger means better." It's been adjusting his sales to what Ferme Sage can reliably produce and then finding the right customers.

And it turned out they were his friends and neighbours.

"Selling locally, is just a great experience for somebody that wants to connect with their community," he said. "If every local farm product is sold on the commodity market, nobody gets to know that what they see along the road is something they can actually buy and consume and share the benefits of with their friends."

Climate of change



KRISTINA BLOKHIN/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

In 2023, the agricultural sector produced about 8 per cent of Canada's carbon emissions. The sector's ability to lower emissions has lagged other sectors.

Carbon emission statistics shows how ag sector is slipping

Christopher Bonasia
The Advocate

Canada released its 2025 National Inventory Report in March detailing the country's emissions across all economic sectors, including agriculture.

The report is released annually as part of Canada's obligations under the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change. It reflects the state of efforts to reduce emissions shown in analyzed data. The information in this most recent report covers emissions in 2023. While the country's emissions overall were lower than any year since 1995 – except 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic – emissions from the agriculture sector have remained mostly steady since 2005.

Focusing singularly on emissions is the wrong way to address agriculture's role in climate change. Measuring the amount of carbon released from farming obscures the environmental trade-offs of growing food, not to mention the pressures of selling that food at a price affordable to consumers and still maintaining yields to ensure sufficient food

supply. But the emissions data revealed in the inventory report is a driving force of national policy, and so is important to examine.

Overall, emissions have dropped Canada produced 694 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MT CO₂eq) across all sectors in 2023. That number is 0.9-per-cent lower than the year before and shows an 8.5-per-cent decrease since 2005, excluding emissions from the Land-Use and Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector. Agriculture contributed 55 MT CO₂eq, or 7.9 per cent of the total amount.

Canada's agriculture emissions are 30-per-cent higher today than they were in 1990, though they have remained remarkably constant since reaching a peak in 2005, dropping only 2 per cent since then. Livestock populations – and their associated emissions – have stayed about the same during that time. And while emissions from fertilizer use has gone up, the area of perennial cropland has gone down. The sector's share of national emissions stayed at about 7 per cent from 1990 to 2020, but has since increased to almost 8 per

cent due to reductions across the rest of the economy.

Beef largest emitter in ag sector

Almost half of the agriculture sector's total emissions came from enteric methane (26 MT CO₂eq), almost all of which was produced by beef cattle (21 MT CO₂eq, which include dairy heifers). Manure management, which is counted in a separate category, produced 7.7 MT CO₂eq.

The second-largest source of agriculture emissions was 18 MT CO₂eq from nitrogen dioxide released from soils, which has increased 76 per cent since 1990. These emissions are released from inorganic and organic fertilizers and from decomposing crop residues. In 2023, 9.3 MT CO₂eq of soil emissions was from inorganic fertilizers, while 2.2 MT CO₂eq of soil emissions were moved by conservation tillage practices.

Croplands typically show an overall net removal except during some extreme drought scenarios, like in 2002, 2003 and 2022. Those net removals have on average increased because of "improved soil management practices,

including conservation tillage and an overall gradual increase in crop productivity resulting from improved and more intensive practices, like the reduced use of summer fallow."

However, net removals have declined since 2005 because of decreasing perennial land cover that "has largely offset removals resulting from increasing yields."

Canada's government has committed to reducing the country's emissions by 40 to 45 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030. Current policies include agriculture among the sectors that will provide some of these reductions, but so far farm emissions have shown little change in the last couple decades.

Meanwhile, electricity generation has led the country's downward trend in emissions because of the phase-out of coal and the expansion of renewable energy capacity. Most sectors have cut emissions by some amount; the main exceptions are emissions increases in the oil and gas sector, which are "attributed mainly to continued production growth in Canada's oil sands operations," the report states, and from light-duty gasoline trucks.



CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK

Women and children wait in line for a water truck to arrive in the North Kordofan region of Sudan.

Canada announces \$4M for Foodgrains to address Sudan hunger crisis

Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Humanitarian organizations around the world are sounding the alarm on the rapidly worsening hunger situation in Sudan, as millions of Sudanese people face the bleak realities of starvation and acute malnutrition, and the complete loss of livelihoods.

More than half the population of Sudan (24.6 million people) are facing acute hunger since the outbreak of civil war in April 2023, and up to 640,000 people are already experiencing famine-like conditions in five identified areas.

According to the United Nations' Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Famine Review Committee, famine is projected in an additional five areas of Sudan, and a further 17 regions are at risk of famine.

In response to the escalating needs, the

Canadian government has provided \$4 million to Canadian Foodgrains Bank and its member agencies to provide emergency food assistance to thousands of families most affected by the hunger crisis in Sudan.

"As the crisis in Sudan continues, Canada's support to those in dire need is unwavering," said International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen. "We will continue working with our humanitarian partners to support their life-saving efforts while working alongside global partners to find lasting solutions."

Foodgrains Bank has five active projects in Sudan, including three that will be funded through this grant. The new funding is helping to provide emergency relief for more than 28,000 people living in Sudan, such as supplying food assistance via food baskets, cash payments or vouchers for markets in South

Darfur, North Kordofan, Al Jazeera and White Nile states.

"The crisis in Sudan is among the worst in the world," said Andy Harrington, Foodgrains Bank executive

'Urgent humanitarian access and provision of food supplies is essential if we hope to prevent this crisis from worsening further.'

Andy Harrington

Executive Director,
Canadian Foodgrains Bank

director. "Urgent humanitarian access and provision of food supplies is essential if we hope to prevent this crisis from worsening further. We're grateful for this funding investment from the Government of Canada, and for the support of Canadian donors who care about their international neighbours in need."

The hunger crisis in Sudan is at a critical stage for millions of people, and humanitarian relief must be provided as soon as possible.

Nearly two years into the conflict, Sudan has become the world's largest humanitarian crisis and has triggered the mass displacement of millions of people.

In neighbouring South Sudan, Foodgrains Bank members and their locally based partners are also serving thousands of women, men and children who have been forced to flee amidst the ongoing crisis.

The Miner Report



VLADYSLAV/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Proper diet for cows can help to reduce the emission of methane and improve the efficiency of the animals.

Farming: tool to improve planet's health

Gift Omoruyi

William H. Miner

Agricultural Research Institute

The subject of environmental sustainability and planetary health has become unavoidable in recent years, and a lot of resources have been dedicated to addressing it. Agriculture as a sector is very pivotal to guaranteeing environmental sustainability, and a major way this can be achieved is through nutrient use efficiency.

Several inputs go into agricultural production systems to create the desired outputs. The optimal amount of these inputs, however, must be used to minimize waste and enhance efficiency, thereby reducing environmental pollution.

A practical example of this is nitrogen and phosphorus pollution from crop and livestock production.

When the protein intake of livestock is not optimized, an excess can lead to nitrogen excretion in the waste. This additional nitrogen in waste can contribute to environmental pollution by

releasing volatilized ammonia into the atmosphere, leaching nitrate into groundwater, and emitting nitrous oxide, which is a greenhouse gas.

Reducing phosphorus use

The use of excess phosphorus as fertilizers in crop systems can lead to a depletion in soil quality. Its runoff into water bodies can lead to eutrophication, which can negatively impact the biodiversity of aquatic ecosystems.

Hence, the target of including inputs in agricultural production systems should be at a level that can boost production without polluting the environment.

Recycling within agricultural systems is also a viable way to manage resources, through the utilization of waste from one agricultural system as an input in another.

Waste from one system used in another

The use of manure from livestock systems as organic fertilizers in crop production systems, and the use of

harvest wastes like corn stalks as livestock feed are good examples of this. By-products from food processing, like soy hulls, can also be fed to livestock.

Some regenerative agricultural practices like integrating livestock production into cropping systems, agroforestry, silvopasture and cover cropping can help maximize resources, reduce waste and revitalize the soil.

Horticultural production can also be maximized to preserve economically important insects, like honeybees, which are, in turn, beneficial as pollinators in crop production systems.

Let trees sequester carbon

Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming and climate change, and one effective way of removing this gas from the atmosphere is through the process of photosynthesis by plants. Therefore, afforestation should be given more priority to provide additional trees that will sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Methane is also a greenhouse gas of

concern and enteric fermentation from ruminant animals is a major source of methane emissions from the agricultural sector. Proper diet modification can help to reduce the emission of this gas and improve the efficiency of the animals.

Genetic tools can also be used to attain environmental sustainability, through selective breeding of more efficient livestock that require less input to produce more products like milk, and breeding more resilient and high-yielding crop varieties that can generate more biomass per land area and adapt to changing weather conditions.

The adoption of these practices will improve the environmental footprint of the agricultural sector, enhance biodiversity, increase output and profit for producers and conserve the environment, which is a win-win for everyone.

The Miner Institute, based in Chazy, N.Y., conducts practical research on the dairy-crop interface, equine reproduction and management, and environmental conservation. Its research activities combine a global perspective with a regional application.



The Quebec Farmers' Association is only as strong as its **membership**

It's time to renew your membership. Reminder cards will not be mailed out. So we are asking that you clip out the form below. Fill it out and send your cheque in the amount indicated and mail it in. **We are counting on your support.** Show your pride in being part of Quebec's English-speaking community. **It only cost \$68.99.**

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

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

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

Donnie and Barry Tannahill, Ormstown

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Lise Bates, St. Ambroise

Alvia and Suzelle Barrington, Howick

William McMahon, Arundel

Garry Jack, Quebec City

Andrew Simms, Shawville

Bob McClelland, Cantley

Bob Dalton, Gatineau

Timothy Hancock, Flelighsburg

Peter Ednie, Franklin

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SPONSORED CONTENT

Advancing transition management: New Lactanet Transition Management Index

Bruna Mion

*Dairy production expert
Lactanet*

The transition period is considered the most challenging period in the life of dairy cows.

Traditionally defined as the three weeks before calving to the three weeks after calving, the transition period requires several metabolic, hormonal and physiological adaptations. To understand the challenge, imagine a person who doesn't exercise regularly suddenly deciding to run three full marathons back-to-back. Their body struggles to eat enough to keep up with the energy demands, their immune system works harder, and they might even feel a bit unwell. Yet, they do it again the next day, and the day after that. It's a big adjustment, right?

Similarly, dairy cows experience a significant metabolic shift during the transition period.

When lactation starts, energy demands increase far beyond maintenance needs – comparable to running three marathons in a day. During this critical period, cows often have a low feed intake, face mineral imbalances and experience immune challenges, increasing the risk of diseases. Although the transition period lasts only a few weeks, its effects can persist throughout lactation, influencing milk production, health, fertility and the risk of being culled.

Recognizing the transition period challenges and quantifying their impact helps dairy producers and their farm advisers (vets, nutritionists, etc) refine management practices to improve herd

performance and profitability. For this reason, having an objective way to evaluate the management of the transition period of your cows is essential to maximize performance.

Transition index

In May 2025, Lactanet will launch a new version of the Transition Index. Since 2010, Lactanet has offered the Transition Cow Index™, a tool designed to objectively assess the transition management of dairy farms. The original tool was developed in 2006 for researchers from the University of Wisconsin using data from 500,000 cows from 4,000 herds enrolled in the DHIA service in Wisconsin. While this tool has been valuable in assessing transition management, the transition practices, nutrition management, genetics and average milk yield have evolved significantly since the tool was created. Therefore, we decided to update the index.

Furthermore, the former version was based on data from American cows, while the updated version now focuses on data from Canadian herds, making it more tailored to our industry.

The new Transition Management Index

The new Transition Management Index (TMI), launching in 2025, was developed using data from approximately 1 million cow records from herds across Canada. The index works similarly to the old version: we use animal information and previous lactation information to estimate the expected milk production from one cow, which is then compared with the 305-day milk projection calculated in the first test.

If the milk projection is higher than expected, the result is positive, indicating a good transition. If the projection is lower than what we expected that cow to produce, the result is negative, signaling a poor transition.

This new version incorporates additional variables, making the calculation more comprehensive and reflective of the factors affecting transition success.

One of the most significant updates in this new version is the inclusion of first lactation cows. These cows were not previously included in the index, as there was no prior lactation data available. With the incorporation of additional variables, now we are able to assess first lactation cows, providing a more comprehensive view of your entire herd. This is a huge advantage for producers, as it allows for better decision-making and more accurate management.

New index = new results

Although the basic concept behind the old and the new index remains the same, the equation used for the new index is completely updated. As a result, the new index values would be different from the old ones.

If you are currently using the Lactanet Transition Index, you will notice that the new values are lower. However, if your herd was in a good category with the old index, it will still be in a good category with the new one. Similarly, herds previously in a poor category will still fall into the same category with the new one.

Easier interpretation

With the new Transition Management Index, we've adjusted the average score to zero, making it easier to interpret. A positive value indicates a smooth and successful transition, while a negative value suggests challenges that may need attention and improvement.

New reports

INTERACTIVE DASHBOARD

The new Transition Management Index is complemented by an interactive dashboard on MySite. Our goal was to create a page where all transition management information is easily accessible. This tool enables producers and their advisers to explore the Transition Index in detail and identify

opportunities for improvement.

The dashboard allows users to explore their herd's Transition Management Index data, including annual and current averages, and the percentage of cows with negative indices. Users can hover over individual cow data, filter by parity or breed and access detailed insights to identify opportunities for improvement.

In addition, the dashboard provides performance indicators for early lactation, like energy status, udder health and dry period duration. Each indicator is presented on a dedicated tab, providing detailed information to identify areas of improvement and potential solutions.

New PDF report

We also updated the PDF report to include the new Transition Management Index values, offering a clearer picture of transition success. First-lactation cows are now incorporated, providing a more comprehensive view of herd performance.

MOBILE APP ACCESS

Later this year, key transition management data, including the herd's average Transition Index and the percentage of cows with negative scores, will be available through our mobile app – putting essential insights at your fingertips.

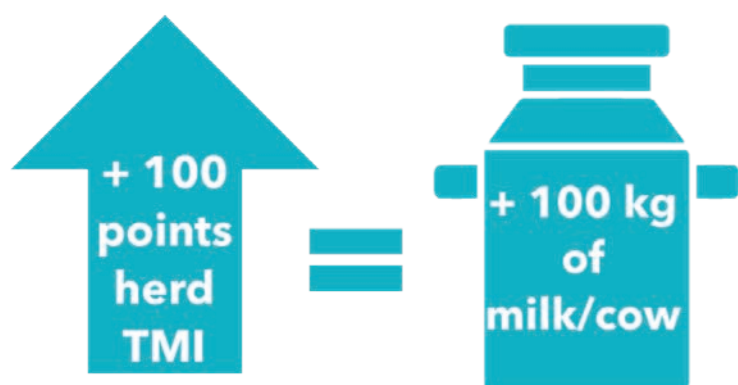
Transition Management

The updated Transition Management Index provides a more effective way to assess and manage the transition period. A successful transition is an investment in long-term herd productivity and profitability. With the inclusion of new variables, the ability to calculate the index for first-lactation cows, and the interactive dashboard, this updated tool empowers dairy producers to make informed, data-driven decisions.

For more information about the new Transition Management Index, find more information on the Lactanet social media, or reach out to your Lactanet representative if you have any questions.

This project is funded through the Innov'Action Agri-Food Program under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, as part of an agreement between the governments of Canada and Quebec.

A 100-point increase in the herd average is equivalent to an increase in 100 kg of milk/cow/lactation



Grains

As Canadian wheat exports go up, U.S. corn exports and soybean imports rise

Ramzy Yelda

Senior Market Analyst

Producteurs de Grains du Québec

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

As expected, U.S. corn exports are up by 100 million bushels (MBU). Corn demand for animal feed is down by 25 MBU. Stocks for 2025 are also down by 75 MBU, at 1,465 MBU versus 1,763 MBU in 2024.

U.S. soybean imports are up by 5 MBU. Stocks for 2025 are down, however, dropping 5 MBU to 375 MBU versus 342 MBU in 2024.

As for wheat, imports are up by 10 MBU, while exports are down by 15 MBU. The 2025 stocks are up by 27 MBU, hitting 846 MBU versus 696 MBU in 2024.

Worldwide, wheat exports are up by 0.5 MT in both Canada and Ukraine, while in both Australia and the European Union they are down by 0.5 MT, and down 1 MT in Russia.

The most interesting aspect of this report is the reduction in Chinese wheat imports. These imports are down by 3 MT, hitting 3.5 MT, a very low level.

Next month, the USDA will issue its first 2025-26 forecasts.

Producteurs de grains elect new president

The Producteurs de grains du Québec elected a new president at their annual general meeting held in St. Hyacinthe last month.

Sylvain Pion, a grain producer from the southeast area of the Montérégie region, was elected to lead the organization. A member of the PGQ executive committee since 2011, Pion was the first vice-president of the organization until recently. He is also a member of the board of directors of the Centre de recherche sur le grain, or CÉROM, and serves on a number of working groups.

Outgoing president Christian Overbeek chose not to seek re-election after 19 years as president.

On behalf of the 9,500 member producers, the entire team would like to thank Overbeek for his involvement, dedication and rigour.

The annual gathering was an opportunity to welcome Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne, as well as the first vice-president of the Union des producteurs agricoles, Paul Doyon.

Participants also had the opportunity to hear journalist and economic analyst Pierre-Olivier Zappa's presentation: "Cultivating Growth: Understanding and Overcoming Economic Challenges."

Catherine Brodeur, the vice-president of economic studies for Groupe AGÉCO, agri-food consultants, offered a presentation on pooling field crop data.

A few PGQ staff members also gave participants short presentations on more specific topics, including Salah Zoghalmi, director of agronomic affairs, offered a presentation entitled "Highlights of Sustainable Production and Agri-environment," while market information officer Étienne Lafrance delivered a presentation on the evolution of the grain market in Quebec over the past 50 years.



COURTESY PRODUCTEURS DE GRAINS DU QUÉBEC

UPA vice-president Paul Doyon (left) stands with the Producteurs de grains' new president Sylvain Pion (centre) and the organization's outgoing Christian Overbeek.

Advance Payments Program

The PGQ is pleased with the increase in the interest-free limit for advances under the Advance Payments Program (APP), which hit \$250,000 for 2025. Registration has begun for the seeding component of the 2025-2026 APP season.

Since the 2024-2025 season, the AppGrains app has been the preferred way to process applications quickly and efficiently. Participants can use the app to monitor their file online by interacting with PGQ staff. The email notification system will inform participants of any changes made to their file during the season.

Recognizing involvement and commitment

At the gala dinner marking the 50th anniversary of the PGQ, which took place on the sidelines of organization's AGM in St. Hyacinthe, a new award was unveiled and presented for the first time to Firmin Paquet, a grain producer from eastern Quebec.

This year, the Réal Fredette Award, named in honour of the organization's founding president, recognized Paquet for his involvement and commitment to the union movement. Paquet has distinguished himself through his participation in numerous projects, including submitting a brief to the Commission sur l'avenir de l'agroalimentaire québécois. Paquet has also held the title of president of the Producteurs de grains de l'Est du Québec, director of the UPA Bas-Saint-Laurent federation and director of the Matapédia local syndicate, in addition to being active on numerous committees.

The Réal Fredette Award will be awarded annually. Next year, the theme for nominations for the award is: The Next Generation.

The gala dinner was also an opportunity to pay tribute to Germain Chabot, in recognition of his immense contribution to developing grain production and advancing producers' interests.

Chabot, who has been heavily involved in the syndicate since 1974, was inducted into the Temple de la renommée de l'agriculture du Québec in 2022.

Training for new directors

Training for new directors and officials of syndicates affiliated with the Producteurs de grains du Québec was offered by the PGQ's team of professionals earlier this month. This annual training allows members who have recently joined the organization to become familiar with the main issues and challenges in the sector.

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

Potatoes Dauphinoise



CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

Cheese tops this version of Potatoes Dauphinoise, which uses grated spuds to add a nice touch.

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds potatoes (not too waxy)
1 small garlic clove
2 cups whole milk, scalded
½ cup whipping cream
1-2 eggs, beaten
½ - ¾ tsp salt and pepper
2 bay leaves
3 tbsp grated Parmesan or Gruyere cheese (optional)
Pinch of nutmeg

PREPARATION

Peel and grate the potatoes.

Cut the garlic in half and rub over sides and bottom of a baking dish.

Put in the potatoes, mix the other ingredients, and pour over the potatoes.

Bake uncovered at 350 degrees until set, but moist and slightly browned at edges.

Ten minutes before it is done, top with cheese.

Source: Very slightly adapted from, *Cook Book, Stella Standard, 1965, p. 312.*

It's not just the Irish

Scots and French know how to serve potatoes

Cynthia Gunn

QFA's Food Writer

Years ago, when I was living for a little while near Dundee, Scotland, I decided to pass another rainy afternoon at an agriculture show of some sort. In one of the big tents there were potatoes everywhere, very ceremoniously and precisely displayed. They were about 260 varieties, if I remember correctly, the most perfect and clean versions of themselves possible.

Amazingly, it turns out my memory is pretty good when it comes to potatoes. In 2021, there were 276 varieties grown and registered in Scotland, with the Maris Piper, an all-purpose floury potato ranked as the Number 1 variety by far. When you buy potatoes in the U.K., they actually label them by variety.

I was impressed by the display in the tent, and thought Scotland grew a staggering variety of potatoes. Little did I know that Peru, birthplace of the potato, has well over 4,000.

Potato News Today, a website hosted in Canada by Lukie Pieterse, a life-long advocate of the potato and the potato industry at all levels, exudes a love and respect for this exceptionally important plant. Reading his site puts to shame our choices at the grocery store in Canada: white, yellow and red, the holy trinity, the name of the potato rarely provided. That's it, you just get the colour of the flesh, which doesn't tell you whether it's waxy or floury, or much of anything. Could we assume in Canada that the yellow may be Yukon Gold at least?

On my return to Canada from Scotland I smuggled some Pink Fir Apple seed potatoes in my luggage, intent on getting beyond the holy trinity. My guilt got the better of me, though, as I envisioned bringing in some horrible virus that would decimate the potatoes in all of Canada. I admitted to having these little gems in my luggage. I blinked innocently as I handed them over, claiming I was unaware I wasn't able to bring them in, officer. This was 20 years ago. He smiled and sent me on my way to garden with approved tatties. Oh, for the days of yore.

Potatoes, while endlessly versatile, end up being cooked one of two or three ways 90 per cent of the time in this household. When it's time to step out of the rut, I occasionally make Potatoes Dauphinoise, a simple, classic French dish. There are many versions of it that resemble the North American scalloped potatoes.

This version comes from one of my old American cookbooks. It appears without pictures among many recipes of well-known French and Italian chefs the author visited in her European travels. It requires the potatoes to be grated rather than thinly sliced, which is more common. Also, there is egg in the recipe, which is not usual. It calls for two eggs, but do remember that when this book was written, the standard egg in North America was small. I, therefore, use one duck egg, which is about equivalent. Cheese is optional, and is not generally put on this dish. I have added the bay leaves and nutmeg to the recipe.

One recipe writer noted: "There's a knack to getting this old classic right." The acid in the potatoes tends to make the sauce curdle, so it is important not to bake at too high a temperature.

Another writer suggests letting the dish rest for 10 minutes or so to allow the sauce to thicken.

Some say to rinse the potatoes in cold water, while others say not to because the starch helps set the dish. It should also help it not curdle. I err on the side of not swishing potatoes in water. But I do parboil the potatoes whole so that I can slip the skin off rather than peel them. It's your choice.

This makes great leftovers, so make as big a pan as suits your household.

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.



The Classifieds

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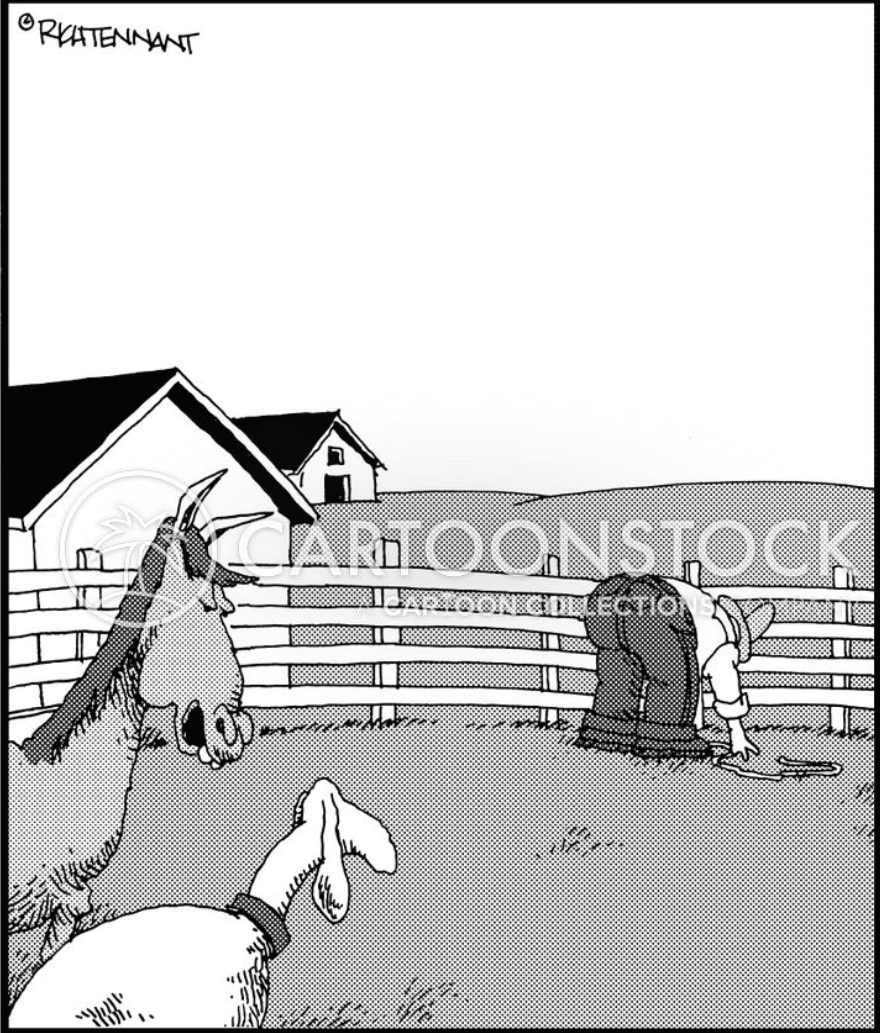
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