

# Quebec Farmers' Advocate



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**"We're looking at a lot  
of financial hurt on  
farms. We just want  
to see the same type  
of consideration other  
industries are getting."**

— Saskatchewan farmer  
Bill Prybylski, reacting  
to the federal government  
announcement Sept. 5 to help  
canola sector after China hit  
Canadian canola with  
75.8-per-cent tariff in August

## QFA VIDEOCONFERENCES

**Wednesday, October 1  
at 7:30 p.m.**

**Zero-Zero Calf Care**

See page 4 for details.



PIXINOO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Last month, the Quebec government unveiled an ambitious 10-year plan to support the province's agricultural sector by improving its competitiveness and sustainability, while helping it adapt to climate change and face economic challenges and global trade uncertainty. It received cautious endorsement from the UPA.

## UPA gives Quebec's \$25-billion bio-food plan cautious endorsement

**Frederic Serre**  
*The Advocate*

The Union des producteurs agricoles is reacting cautiously to the province's ambitious 10-year, \$25-billion bio-food policy program that aims to strengthen food autonomy and support a sector the government says is essential to the economic future of Quebec.

And while UPA president Martin Caron says his organization, which represents Quebec's 42,000 farmers and forestry producers, will work with the government on the program, "it should be noted that the previous version (of the program) also targeted several billion dollars in private investment, which contributed to a record agricultural debt of \$32 billion in 2024. The means chosen to reach \$25 billion must avoid exacerbating this problem."

Announced on Aug. 22 by André Lamontagne before the former

Agriculture minister left cabinet, the program charts the course for the next decade to improve what government officials say is the sector's competitiveness and sustainability, while facilitating adaptation to climate change, economic challenges, and global uncertainties. This year alone, the government has pledged \$1.5 billion.

According to Lamontagne, the program has three goals: increase Quebec's food self-sufficiency, develop a prosperous and sustainable sector, and accelerate innovation in the bio-food sector.

"These (goals) will translate into concrete targets, including generating \$25 billion in investments from agricultural, aquaculture, fisheries and food processing companies; diversifying markets and reaching \$15 billion in bio-food exports; and aiming for zero net loss of high-potential agricultural land," Lamontagne said.

See BIO-FOOD, Page 11.

## Legault names new ag minister

Lamontagne shuffled  
out of CAQ cabinet

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

The long-promised provincial cabinet shuffle that political pundits have suggested served merely to rearrange the deck chairs on Premier François Legault's Titanic-fated CAQ government has produced a new agriculture minister.

Donald Martel, a back-bench MNA since 2012 representing the riding of Nicolet-Bécancour on the south shore of the St. Lawrence across from Trois-Rivières, took over the post Sept. 10, replacing André Lamontagne, who was informed the day before that he would be dropped from the cabinet ranks as part of a shake-up of a government plagued by scandal and plummeting in the polls.

"I will always be the biggest fan of those who feed Quebec," Lamontagne said in a post on X Sept. 9 after being told he would be shuffled out of the minister's job.

First elected in 2014 as the MNA for the riding of Johnson in the Centre-de-Québec region, Lamontagne was named to the agriculture portfolio in 2018, when the CAQ first formed government. He has held the post for almost seven years over two mandates.

Earlier this year Lamontagne, 65, said he would not run for re-election in next year's province-wide vote.

Martel, 61, is a former secretary-treasurer of the MRC of Nicolet-Yamaska and served as an administrator with the local economic development centre. Previous to that he held the post of president of the Association des directeurs généraux des MRC.

Prior to being elected as a member of the CAQ government, Martel ran unsuccessfully in the 2007 provincial election as a candidate for the Parti Québécois.





## Just the facts

### 3/5ths

That is the amount of all the soybeans traded on international markets imported by China. And with China forecasted to need to import 100 million to 105 million tons this year, and its trade war with the U.S., this could leave American farmers facing losses.

Before U.S. President Donald Trump's trade war, China bought a quarter to a third of the U.S. soybean crop, which represented the largest export from the U.S. to China.

Source: *The New York Times*

### 15-20%

That is how much John Deere said it expects 2025 sales of large agricultural machinery to fall. And it expects those drops to continue in 2026. Large

agricultural machinery is the company's source of most of its revenue.

The figures were released in early September after the Illinois-based company, one of the largest manufacturers in the U.S., laid off 238 employees in factories in Illinois and Iowa, in the wake of rising steel and aluminum costs as a result of U.S. tariffs on imports.

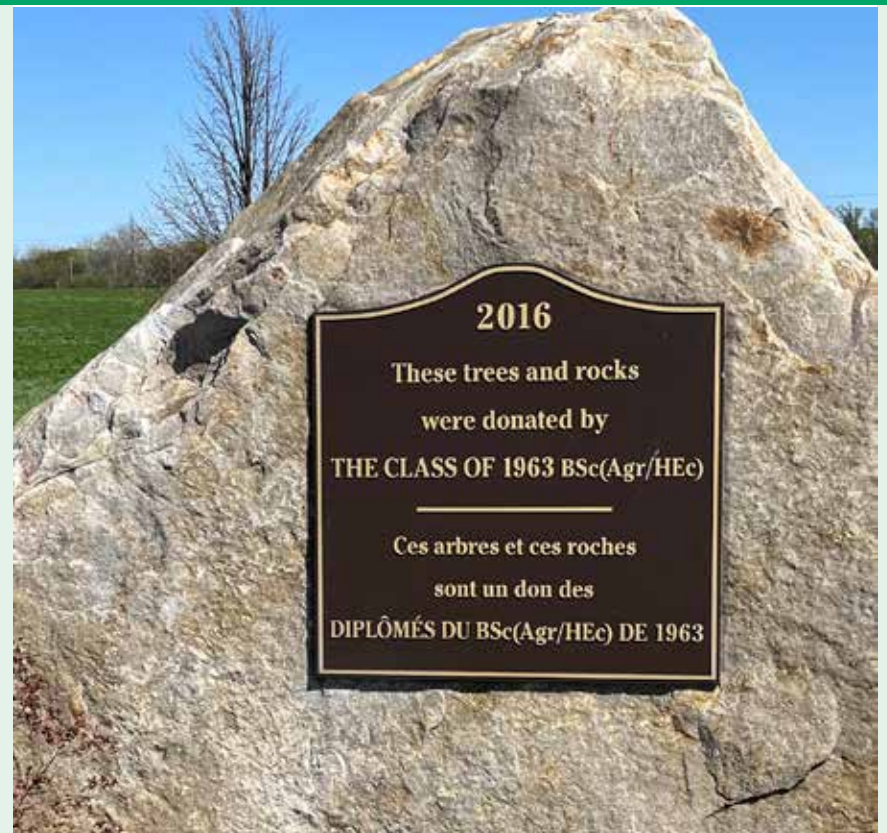
Source: *The New York Times*

### 60%

That is amount the price of new tractors rose in the U.S. over the last eight years, with some models more than doubling in price, jumping US\$250,000 or more than they used to.

Source: *University of Illinois Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics*

## SOLID THANKS



THE ADVOCATE

More than a half-century after graduation, the students from Macdonald College's class of 1963 gave a little back to the institution that help them build a life. This rock sits by the road that cuts through the fields on Macdonald Farm in Ste. Anne de Bellevue, just south of Highway 40.



## Mission

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

## Vision

The QFA's actions contribute to a sustainable future for both agriculture and the environment while providing a decent quality of life and financial return for the individuals and their families who have made agriculture and food production their chosen professions.

## Shared Values

### Members of the QFA believe in:

Maintaining family-owned and operated farms / Food sovereignty and self-determination by individuals and nations / Intergenerational involvement / Lifelong learning / Protection of the physical environment / Preserving land for agricultural production / Minimum government interference / Working alone and in partnership with others

## Board Members

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## Quebec Farmers' Association Membership Application

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### Price

Agricultural or forestry producer, rural resident or retired farmer:

- ☐ 1 year \$68.99 (\$60 + \$3 GST (5%) + \$5.99 TVQ (9.975%))  
☐ 2 years \$137.97 (\$120 + \$6 GST (5%) + \$11.97 TVQ (9.975%))

☐ My cheque is enclosed, payable to "Quebec Farmers' Association"

GST No. 107 867 814 RT 001 QST No. 100 611 322 9 TQ 001

Signature .....

### Membership includes

- a one year subscription to the Quebec Farmers' Advocate
- discounts on QFA sponsored events and services
- free advertising in the Advocate's classified ads
- voting privileges at the QFA Annual General Meeting

### Quebec Farmers' Association

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Longueuil, Quebec J4H 4E7

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



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# President of Agricultrices du Québec killed in plane crash

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

The funeral for Valerie Fortier, president of Les Agricultrices du Québec, has been set for Sept. 21 in Victoriaville following her sudden death last month in a plane crash in the Haute Mauricie region in the north central sector of the province.

Fortier, 42, the mother of three who operated a dairy farm with her father in St. Valère, just west of Victoriaville, was killed Aug. 31, when the small plane she was travelling in crashed in a remote area near La Tuque after taking off from a former military airport in Casey, a small village halfway between Saguenay and Rouyn-Noranda.

The crash happened just after 5 p.m. on Aug. 31. According to the Sûreté du Québec, the plane issued a distress call before it fell from the sky and caught fire. Both Fortier and the pilot, Jean-Pier

Godin, 41, of St. Eulalie, were declared dead at the scene.

"Ms. Fortier was one of the pillars of our organization, passionately championing the cause of Quebec women farmers for several years now," said a statement issued by Les Agricultrices. "Her sudden passing leaves an immense void that we still struggle to measure and understand."

"She was a mother, an entrepreneur, a farmer and, above all, an exceptional woman with a contagious and inspiring passion," the statement continued. "The board of directors of Les Agricultrices du Québec and all members extend their sincere condolences to her family and loved ones."

The SQ is investigating the crash along with the Quebec Coroner's office. The Transportation Safety Board of Canada has also initiated a probe to determine the cause of the accident.

The SQ could not confirm if the flight

was related to the AéroVenture 2025 event that was held at the Casey airbase that weekend, but the organizer of air show that welcomes pilots of small aircraft, Noar Cohen, posted a video on social media Sept. 1, confirming the accident, and saying he was one of two people who were first on the scene of the crash.

On Sept. 3, Cohen took to social media again saying authorities were looking for anyone who participated in the event that had video recordings related to the accident, including footage of the plane's takeoff or of the craft as it stalled before the crash.

Fortier was named president of Les Agricultrices du Québec in 2023. In a statement Sept. 3, the group said several projects were carried out under her leadership, including a major awareness campaign about the mental load female farmers carry as they put in countless hours of what is commonly



Valérie Fortier was named president of Les Agricultrices du Québec in 2023.

referred to as "invisible work," which includes child care, meal preparation and maintaining the home, along with work to run the farm business.

Fortier – who was predeceased by her husband, Sebastien Nolet, who died in 2013 – leaves to mourn her three children – Marylune, Félix and Maya.

## 32 Quebec farms to see biodiversity enhancements as part of program

**Frederic Serre**  
*The Advocate*

An ambitious land development program led by a consortium from Ottawa, the Quebec government and a federation within the Union des producteurs has selected 32 agricultural businesses in 24 municipalities in the province as participants to promote biodiversity.

In making the announcement on Sept. 2, the UPA's Fédération de la Montérégie and ALUS Montérégie announced that more than 20 hectares of additional farmland will be developed this year to promote biodiversity and support the resilience of communities. The program is being spearheaded by ALUS and the Montérégie federation.

ALUS, which stands for Alternative Land Use Services, is a community-developed, farmer-delivered non-profit program that provides support to farmers and ranchers to enhance and maintain ecological goods and services, or what could also be called "nature's benefits," on their property.

The areas selected include Acton, Brome-Missisquoi, Haut-Saint-Laurent, Jardins-de-Napierville, Maskoutains,

Pierre-De Saurel, Rouville, Roussillon, Vallée-du-Richelieu, and Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

"This will have a real impact on the environment and the quality of life of citizens," said Julien Pagé, vice-president of the Fédération de l'UPA de la Montérégie and president of ALUS Montérégie.

The program includes creating wider riparian strips, multifunctional hedges, biodiversity islands, flower strips and meadows for pollinators, and setting aside plots for delayed hay mowing for farmland birds.

"By creating environments that are favourable to wildlife and flora, we are strengthening the resilience of our farms and communities in the face of climate change," Pagé said. "These actions today are sustainable investments for future generations."

Through ALUS, Pagé said, federal and provincial governments, committed businesses, and philanthropic foundations are investing in agricultural projects to generate positive environmental, economic and social benefits in their communities, one acre at a time.

## Quebec issues \$40K in fines for misuse of gov't forests

**Frederic Serre**  
*The Advocate*

The Quebec government has levied fines totalling nearly \$40,000 against 27 individuals and companies that have violated the province's regulations respecting sustainable forest development on government land.

The Ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts made the announcement last month, identifying the offenders who violated the *Sustainable Forest Development Act*, and the regions affected, between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025. In all, \$39,590 in fines were handed out.

In the Bas-Saint-Laurent region, three charges of illicitly measuring wood during June 2022 resulted in \$3,000 fines levied against Conseillers forestiers de la région du Québec Inc. Réginald Michaud was fined \$1,000 for failing to deliver his 2022 annual report, and 9126-7815 Quebec Inc. was given a \$300 fine for illegally cutting wood in 2022.

In the Capitale-Nationale region, Érablières des Frères Champagne Inc. was fined \$1,000 for failing to file their 2024 annual report on time, while Yves Lalonde was slapped with a \$3,000 fine for doing construction and renovation work and blocking a path on government land. Lalonde was also cited for cutting wood without a permit.

The fines were related to activities that occurred in 2022. Forex Langlois Inc. was given a fine of \$9,000 for illegally crossing a riverbed with forestry equipment, spilling earth in a waterway and failing to stabilize a waterbed after the completion of a project – all incidents in 2021.

In the Mauricie region, Gaston Buisson was fined \$600 for cutting wood without a permit in 2022, while 9418-2292 Quebec Inc. was slapped with a \$1,005 fine for cutting wood without a permit and illegally doing construction work on government land in 2021. Jean-Philippe Boulanger was also fined \$800 for illegally cutting wood in 2022.

### Maple producers find

In the Eastern Townships, Sucrerie 2000 Inc. was fined \$2,000 for violating terms of its permit in 2022, while Mario Dupuis was fined \$6,885 for illegally tapping maple trees in 2022 and 2023. Érablière Lapierre was slapped with a \$2,000 fine for illegally cutting wood in 2021.

In the Northern Quebec region, Matériaux Blanchet is facing \$9,000 in fines related to spilling earth in a waterway, illegally crossing a riverbed with forestry equipment, and moving equipment too close to a waterway – all of these fines were for incidents that occurred in 2020.





## QFA videoconferences

# Save the date! Zero-Zero Calf Care

**WEDNESDAY, OCT. 1, 7:30 P.M.**

**with Jodi Wallace (Cattle, beef and dairy  
veterinarian, Ormstown Veterinary Hospital)**

Is it really possible to raise calves with zero  
treatments and zero death loss?

Join us to hear how Canadian dairy veterinarian  
and producer Jodi Wallace of the Ormstown  
Veterinary Hospital achieved this remarkable  
goal on her own farm – four years in a row!

Don't miss this chance to learn firsthand from  
Wallace's experience and bring practical insights  
back to your own operation!

Zoom link: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88254597464?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88254597464?pwd=AlENr05rvrSjxYT54piJD3XF0UILOT.1)  
pwd=AlENr05rvrSjxYT54piJD3XF0UILOT.1

**Meeting ID: 882 5459 7464**

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SOURCE: FACEBOOK

Éric Jutras and his wife Caroline Robidoux died last October. They were both asphyxiated due to exposure to gases emanated from the manure pit on their farm near Acton Vale where they raised grain-fed calves.

# Coroner urges UPA to act in wake of farmers' deaths in manure pit

**Frederic Serre**  
*The Advocate*

A Quebec coroner examining the tragic 2024 deaths of a farming couple in Montérégie is calling on the Union des producteurs agricoles to alert its members about the importance of wearing protective equipment to prevent the inhalation of deadly gases when working near manure pits.

It was deadly gases that killed farmers Caroline Robidoux, 40, and Éric Jutras, 44, at their family farm, which raises grain-fed calves, in the village of Ste. Christine near Acton Vale on Oct. 4, 2024. At about 6 p.m. that day, Robidoux rushed to try to save her husband as he worked in a manure pit and had lost consciousness, but she, too, inhaled the deadly gases and died from poisoning 18 days later in hospital. Autopsies revealed that the couple died

from asphyxiation due to exposure to hydrogen sulphide inside the pit.

"(Éric Jutras) had always worked on a farm, so he had a lot of experience in this area and knew he shouldn't go down into the pit without equipment. However, according to his loved ones, he was a bit reckless and probably wanted to do something quickly," said coroner Nancy Bouchard in her report released Sept. 2.

When mixed with water, manure becomes slurry, a form of fertilizer. When stored in an enclosed space, this liquid releases toxic gases as it decomposes, Bouchard said.

"Every year, gases emanating from slurry storage structures claim victims, most of whom die before help arrives," Bouchard wrote in her report.

She urged the UPA, the province's professional farmers' association, to boost awareness concerning

procedures for entering such pits, which include training, adequate ventilation, and the wearing of respiratory protection equipment.

According to Bouchard, it is "likely" that Jutras was working on the pump inside the pit. When his wife, concerned about his absence, went to look for him, she found him lying face down, unconscious, with his face submerged in manure.

"Instinctively," she climbed down into the pit without taking the time to protect herself, the coroner said.

After seeing her parents in the pit, one of the couple's daughters ran to find her uncle, Francis Robidoux, warning him that her parents needed help. Paramedics and firefighters were called to the scene.

Jutras was pronounced dead the same day, while Robidoux was kept in an induced coma for several days before

doctors discovered irreversible brain damage. She died on Oct. 22, 2024.

A Gofundme campaign was launched by the family of the couple, raising more than \$19,500 to support their three children.

The tragedy was the second of its type to occur in the area. In 2016, a pig farmer and his 18-year-old employee died while trying to do some work in a manure pit at a farm in St. Valérien de Milton, located about 30 kilometres from Ste. Christine.

In the St. Valérien incident, investigators reported that the farmer, who was in his 50s, lost consciousness due to the toxic fumes in the pit, and his employee rushed to his aid but was also overcome by the fumes. Both men died at the scene. It was determined that their deaths were the result of inhaling high levels of hydrogen sulfide.



**John McCart**  
QFA President

These past few years, I have been searching for a way to incorporate cover crops into my crop management plan. I only grow corn and soya, so my choices are limited. Some dairy farmers and small grain producers in the area are able to seed a cover crop after their harvest, which occurs early, but I always ran out of time to get a green manure established after the soybean harvest.

Ideally, soya should be harvested in late September to early October, with Thanksgiving being the cutoff date, but Mother Nature needs to play her part. The fields can't be too wet to seed and there must be enough time for the crop to grow before a heavy frost or even snow sets in.

I have attended enough conferences over the past few years to know the value in keeping at least some of the fields green during the winter. As the world struggles with climate change, farmers need to change their practices to store more carbon, reduce erosion, and improve soil health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I have been practising minimum tillage on my farm for the past 12 years, leaving a lot of residue on the fields after corn and zero tillage after soybeans. This reduces the amount of time and fuel used substantially.

### Decided to test a new way

Just as luck would have it, I got a call from my soil club's agronomer. He asked if I would participate in a trial for seeding cover crops using a drone. This idea appealed to me and, a few phone calls later, the experiment was under way.

On Aug. 20, William Overbeek of Les Drones Overbeek, and a son of the past president of Les Producteurs de Grains du Québec, arrived with his trailer loaded with a drone, generators, GPS and seed, which included a mixture of oats and radish.

He arrived at 3 p.m., mapped a two-hectare field, then spread the seed. He was done and gone by 4 p.m. I could not believe how quickly the seeding was done.

### Ideal time

The ideal time to do this on a soybean field is a few weeks before the leaves

# New technology: Once you try it, you might like it

Seeding cover crops with a drone service could be the answer



PHOTOS BY JOHN MCCART, THE ADVOCATE

This is the drone as it hovered over my field on Sept. 2, seeding a mixture of oats and radish in a soybean field.

turn colour and fall. It is impossible to achieve an effective seeding if there is a layer of leaves on the ground. Ideally, there should also be some rain in the forecast to help with the germination.

Overbeek did a second pass Sept. 2, basically, seeding the area a second time. This session took even less time, as the mapping had already been done and saved. Inspection of the first pass he had made two weeks prior showed that germination had started.

The drone can carry 50 kilograms of

seed. And Overbeek has plans to purchase a larger model, which can handle a 100-kilogram load.

### Several advantages

The advantages of seeding with a drone are zero compaction and the ability to seed in wet conditions. Drones also can seed areas where many different crops are already growing. They also have the ability to inter-seed between corn rows.

Overbeek offers a list of possibilities – seeding fall wheat and rye, spreading

liquid and solid fertilizing, and GPS mapping. There are no plans yet for herbicide spraying, as it has not been approved by the federal government.

Producers can contact Les Drones Overbeek for pricing. And the services qualify for rebates from the Quebec government.

In my case, the next few weeks will determine if this trial is successful. If so, I have found a high-tech solution that turns out to be an easy way to help me manage my fields better.



## Climate of change



TRICKY\_SHARK/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

As an example of the rising cost of climate risk, hay producers in Abitibi received \$6.8 million from La Financière Agricole last year due to intense drought conditions. That is up dramatically from the previous annual average of \$1.7 million.

# Farms will need to address climate-change risks

The law now requires company directors to prepare for emerging threats

**Christopher Bonasia**  
*The Advocate*

Last year, a report warned incorporated farms had to prepare for climate reporting. The report noted that farms that incorporate are subject to the same legislation regulating other corporate businesses, and so are required to establish a board of officers and directors who are required to exercise care and due diligence for overseeing the farm's operations and ensuring its long-term viability. They can be held accountable by shareholders if they don't.

The issue came up again late last month, when the Commonwealth Climate & Law Initiative published its own legal opinion clarifying the legal nuts and bolts of how directors of Canadian corporations might face legal action for failing to address risks from natural disasters and climate change risks (termed nature-related risks, or NRRs). Though the opinion was directed at corporate directors across the nation's economy, it identified agriculture among the sectors where businesses are most dependent on nature and climate for their profitability. That places directors of

incorporated farms as particularly likely to deal with nature-related risks in the future.

## Opinion is clear

The gist of the opinion is fairly clear cut – now that the risks of climate change are well established, a director who fails to acknowledge and prepare for climate threats to a farm business would fail their duties under Canadian law.

The laws requiring company directors to prepare their company for emerging threats are primarily found in the *Canada Business Corporations Act* (CBCA). The CBCA charges all Canadian corporation directors with a fiduciary duty to “act honestly and in good faith with a view to the best interests of the corporation,” and also with a duty of care to “exercise the care, diligence and skill that a reasonably prudent person would exercise in comparable circumstances.”

## A duty of care

That duty of care includes a legal obligation to identify and manage foreseeable material risks. Risks of future climate impacts are now well-documented and very much foreseeable, and so they can

now be considered to pose material financial risks to companies – either directly through physical risks like natural disasters, or indirectly through new climate regulations or from legal challenges arising from a company's impacts on nature.

Any single farm corporation's obligation to address a specific NRR depends on the specific facts of the case.

But farms are more threatened by climate change and natural disasters – which are becoming more frequent and intense due to the changing climate – than many other businesses.

## Cost of risks mounting

In Quebec, where about 25 per cent of farms were listed as either family or non-family corporations in 2021, severe weather, like floods and droughts, was a major factor that led to La Financière Agricole disbursing more than \$1 billion to compensate farmers (the average payment over the 10 years prior was \$439 million). Hay producers in Abitibi alone received \$6.8 million – up from an annual average of \$1.7 million – because of an intense drought.

The legal opinion says all directors are required to, at a minimum, identify

and assess how nature and climate risks could affect a company's operations, value chains, strategy and stakeholder relationships.

Additional steps to avoid legal action include making an effort to understand nature-related risks that could affect their farms, and erring on the side of caution when considering whether such a risk needs to be disclosed. Directors and officers of a farm corporation should be trained to address nature risks and emerging legal expectations.

Farms that intend to take these steps and implement policies for nature-related risk governance, management, and disclosure policies can look to existing frameworks – like the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures, for example.

“Directors don't need to be expert scientists or activists, but they are required to consider nature-related risks like any other foreseeable risk to their business,” said Lisa DeMarco, senior partner and CEO of Resilient LLP and the opinion's lead author.

“Ignoring nature risks is no longer legally defensible as proper corporate governance.”



## Trends in agriculture



ELEONIMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

We need to watch what we eat. After I started keeping note of what I was eating, I noticed that foods made from GMO crops that were probably sprayed with glyphosate made my tummy upset.



**Chris Judd**  
*The Advocate*

# It's true: We are what we eat

We have all had a great meal somewhere – at a fancy restaurant, at the neighbours' house or at home. And maybe a few hours later, or perhaps the next day, we find ourselves asking: "What did I eat?"

Some people can't eat seafood, while others can't drink milk or eat anything with wheat flour. Some are sensitive to gluten. I had a friend who suffered from celiac disease. It's an autoimmune disorder that primarily affects the small intestine. She would become deathly sick if she ate anything with gluten. Sometimes she had to get to the hospital emergency ward and have her stomach pumped.

Once, my wife had a bloated and upset tummy for more than a day after eating great-tasting french fries from a famous chip wagon. She later found out the fries had been dipped in flour before they were fried to make them "crunchier." There was enough gluten

from the flour dip that her tummy was upset for two days.

Thirty-some years ago, while combining grain corn in a test plot for a neighbour, I noticed four varieties of corn that had no damage from wild animals even though the field was beside the woods. The rest of the 20 varieties were damaged by raccoons, deer, squirrels, bears, and birds. Ever since, I have wondered: What do wild animals know that humans don't?

### Comparison showed difference

A later check showed that those four "untouched" corn varieties were new genetically modified varieties, or GMOs. A test done on our farm a few years later showed that both GMO and non-GMO corn varieties took the same amount of time to be digested in a cow's stomach as long as the GMO variety was not sprayed with glyphosate.

Several years before that I had started to keep a mental note of foods that caused my stomach to be upset. That is when I began to note that it was the foods made from those GMO crops that were probably sprayed with glyphosate that made my tummy upset.

Only a couple years ago, after eating

at a Mexican restaurant, I had a very upset tummy. I asked myself, "What did I eat?" After ticking off everything that I had for supper at that restaurant, the only thing that could have been derived from a GMO crop sprayed with glyphosate was the rice – if it came from the U.S. All rice in the U.S. is GMO rice.

### Pay attention to sources

Now, we only buy and eat rice grown in India because there are no GMO consumable crops in India.

The very sad thing is that very few of the foods that can cause sickness or even death are marked on the label. Some non-GMO crops are sprayed before harvest with a desiccant, a substance that induces a state of dryness. These products kill the crop and any weed in the field and let the entire crop to dry down evenly, eliminating the need for swathing before combining.

Is there any reason why some people are still not sure if they are gluten intolerant or sensitive to residual glyphosate on the grain?

Today, many of our so-called foods are a mix of many different things and residue from crop spray. All our foods are supposed to be safe, according to

the FDA, Health Canada, the EPA, and other government agencies. I have several former employees in colleges and universities and government agencies that have since disclosed different information.

### Planning meals makes difference

Our animals are fed like our best athletes. Their rations are blended with computer accuracy and sometimes foods in their rations are selected using "atomic weights" of the different "mineral elements" in each foodstuff. There isn't a nutritionist on Earth who could take the items in your grocery cart and balance a ration for you, because of the giant mix of ingredients and processes.

Some pets today eat a pet food that costs more than \$100 a bag, prescribed by their veterinarian because of allergies to some grains or spray residue on the grain. Those special pet foods usually come from outside North America.

Our economy has changed. Forestry used to be the number one sector of the economy, then agriculture. Now, care is the number one industry in our county.

Many years ago a doctor said: "You are what you eat!" Let's be more particular to what we eat.





# From rugby fields to pig pens: Young farmer brings drive, efficiency to family operation

**Andrew McClelland**  
*The Advocate*

Agrologists and governments have been telling farmers for years that being efficient is the key to running a successful farm.

And young Ontario producer Olivia Mudde is so busy that she had to learn how to be efficient in every part of her life.

"My time at Macdonald Campus (in Ste. Anne de Bellevue) helped prepare me for life and business because I was on the varsity women's rugby team. I had to be very good at time management because all practices and games were downtown!" beams the 21-year-old Farm Management and Technology (FMT) graduate. "By being on the team and having a full schedule with the FMT program, my spare time was limited."

Looking at Mudde's résumé would leave one wondering how she has had time to earn all the accolades that have been awarded her in recent years. A two-time FMT scholarship recipient at Mac, Mudde also completed an internship with Bayer Crop Science Canada in her second year of university, and, along with playing on McGill's women's rugby team, dove headfirst into planning the FMT graduation supper and started a fundraiser for the event with Farmers Feed Cities.

Her efforts were acknowledged following that when she was awarded Mac's Gold Key Award for her outstanding and commitment to enriching student life on campus.

"Since graduation, I find myself having more and more contacts from people at Mac," said Mudde, who completed her final semester last spring. "And that has helped me the most with learning about new ideas and techniques to implement on my farm."

## Responsible for the herd

The farm in question is no small operation. Together with her father, Ian, Olivia is now the youngest generation to run Mudde Farms Inc., a cash cropping and swine farm in Iroquois, Ont., 60 kilometres up the St. Lawrence River from Cornwall.

With 1,930 acres on a corn/soybean/winter wheat rotation and a swine herd

of 230 sows, there's lots of work for an eager producer to do around the farm.

"I'm in charge of managing the swine barns – still with some guidance from my dad," Mudde explained. "I'm also the certified site manager and CQA (Canadian Quality Assurance) manager, meaning I'm responsible for the animal welfare aspects and deciding if a pig is fit to ship, as well as the treatments it will receive and record keeping."

## Started young

Growing up, Mudde had plenty of opportunities for gaining experience in agriculture: her grandfather – who emigrated from the Netherlands in 1966 – ran the cash crop and swine herd, and her mother's family ran a dairy farm. Mudde got the chance to work on both farms, learning the ropes and making memories.

"My first memory of the farm was helping my Opa move pigs out of the hot rooms to the grower barn. He was always so patient with my brother and I, since we were just small, and often the pigs were almost the same size as us."

Mudde was very enthusiastic about moving to the island of Montreal to attend Macdonald Campus at just 16 years old. And then COVID happened.

"I couldn't go to school, couldn't play the sports I loved. Everything just stopped," she said. "I'm a very athletic person, so there was no way doing nothing was going to work for me. I began going to the barns and working in the fields when I was supposed to be doing 'online school'. I think every farm kid was doing this."

But the experience of quarantine was a blessing in disguise, helping Mudde to see what a career made on the family farm would be like.

"Truly, being on the farm during COVID helped me to find my love for farming," she explained. "And seeing my entire family work together during this weird time was amazing. I loved it."

Mudde feels that her degree at Mac help her see the business side of the family farm she grew up on. And now, it's her (and her family's) intention to manage that business so that it can



PHOTO COURTESY OF OLIVIA MUDDÉ

Olivia Mudde, 21, manages the swine barn at her family's 1,930-acre farm in Iroquois, Ont., bringing the same drive and discipline she honed on McGill's varsity rugby team to running a busy cash crop and hog operation.

support her family and allow her father to retire. And she has lots of ideas.

"Since being back on the farm, I've seen a need for better record keeping," said Mudde, who has introduced the online platform PigKnows to the farm, allowing Olivia and her father to keep better records of all sows and inventory of pigs.

"It's a key program for us to get good at using before next summer. That's

when we'll be converting our dry sow barn to a free-access stall barn."

Until then, Mudde is enjoying life on the farm and the challenges it gives her to apply her learning, work with her father, and being productive and efficient in her craft.

"Being back on the farm has been great," she said. "The summer has absolutely flown by."





KRISTA MARIE T/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Quebec could follow Ontario's example, where measures helped substantially increase the size of the beef herd.



**Martin Caron**  
UPA President

# Quebec's new bio-food policy: Ambition not enough

## Province's farmers need more support in specific sectors

Quebec's former Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne unveil the 2025–2035 Bio-Food Policy on Aug. 22. This iteration of the policy is entitled *Nourrir nos ambitions*, or Feeding our ambitions.

Some of the recommendations from the agricultural community are reflected in it, including widespread concerns about our businesses: their competitiveness, their potential, and their ability to adapt to new realities in the economy and climate.

The policy is underpinned by three major ambitions: increasing Quebec's food autonomy, developing a prosperous and sustainable bio-food sector and accelerating innovation within it. The ambitions are organized into various targets, like generating \$25 billion in investment from businesses in the

sector, reaching \$15 billion in bio-food exports, and achieving zero net loss of agricultural land with strong potential.

We will, of course, be working with the government on all targets. Note, however, that the existing bio-food policy had also set several billion dollars in private investment as a target, and this contributed to a record \$32 billion in agricultural sector debt in 2024. The means used to reach \$25 billion in the new policy must not make this problem worse.

### Tariffs taking a toll

Diversifying markets and increasing exports are indeed laudable and timely objectives. But they would be that much easier to achieve if the government had addressed the calls of the united front formed back in February in support of agri-food. We are still waiting to hear back about supports specifically for businesses being disadvantaged

by the ongoing tariff dispute with the United States.

Note that throughout the Quebec-wide consultation on farmland and agricultural activities, and also during parliamentary consultations on Bill 86, we defended the principle of zero net loss. All land, without exception, is suitable for agriculture, including some of Quebec's most iconic products, from maple syrup to blueberries to cranberries.

Having said this, the significant disparity between the sector's needs and the funding announced (\$1 billion over five years) is a major sticking point. In June 2024, as the mobilization led by established and young farmers was winding down, voices in the agriculture industry stated in no uncertain terms that the next policy needed to pave the way for significantly higher budgets and greater support. As things stand, this is decidedly not the case.

For example, Quebec currently produces 15 per cent of meat consumed locally. Consequently, the meat sector has great potential, but it would require support from the Quebec government that is much stronger and more sustained. In Ontario, the beef herd nearly quintupled in 10 years thanks to engagement from the provincial government.

### Support is needed

Clearly, the ambitions expressed in the new policy would be much better served with adequate support in place. This is true for sectors like cattle production, which is doing better all the time when it comes to climate change adaptation, but also for remote regions, local farms and the organic sector.

Ambition is essential to increasing food security and autonomy. But we need to make sure we have the means to achieve them, too.



# BIO-FOOD: Policy to guide strengthening ag sector

From Page 1

Quebec Premier François Legault praised his government's initiative, saying "the food and agriculture sector is the heart of our economy. Every day, thousands of producers, processors, and workers feed Quebecers and bring life to our regions. It is a sector that generates billions in economic spinoffs, creates jobs throughout Quebec, and sets us apart in international markets. But beyond the numbers, it is also our autonomy and our food security. Focusing on our agriculture and food means investing in our future and in the quality of life of all Quebec families."

According to Lamontagne, the program puts forward three main orientations that will serve as a guide for navigating a changing business environment: strengthen the sector's competitiveness in domestic and foreign markets; promote the potential of the territory and bio-food stakeholders;

intensify sustainable practices and the response to climate change.

Caron praised the government for adopting several of the recommendations from the UPA and the agricultural community, including a primary concern for the competitiveness of businesses, their potential, and their adaptation to new economic and climatic realities.

But while market diversification and increased exports are laudable and relevant objectives, Caron said, these objectives would be easier to achieve "if the government had responded to the demands of the agri-food common front formed last February. Specific support for businesses penalized by the tariff dispute with the United States is still pending."

"The significant gap between the sector's needs and the announced funding (\$1 billion over five years) is

a major fly in the ointment," Caron said. "The agricultural community made it very clear, following the mobilization of producers and the next generation of farmers in June 2024, that the policy should pave the way for a major increase in budgets and support. As things stand, this is certainly not the case."

"Clearly, the ambitions set out in the new policy would be much better served if more support were available," he said.

"This applies to production sectors, such as cattle farming, which is achieving increasing success in adapting to climate change, but also to peripheral regions, local farms, and the organic sector. Ambition is essential to increasing food security and self-sufficiency. But we must also give ourselves the means to achieve it."

## Central Quebec gets \$2.1M funding injection to promote local food products

Frederic Serre  
The Advocate

The province's bio-food industry is set to receive a \$2.1-million boost from the Quebec government over the next two years as part of a campaign to attract more workers and support innovative projects throughout the province.

"This investment is excellent news for the Centre-du-Québec region," Quebec Agriculture Minister André Lamontagne said during a press conference Aug. 25 to announce the new funding. "We are giving regional stakeholders the means to build a strong, innovative and sustainable bio-food sector for greater food autonomy."

The funding, made possible by the renewal of the Centre-du-Québec Bio-Food Development Sectoral Agreement, will be used to provide financial support for innovative projects and flagship initiatives for the future of the region, through collaboration among local stakeholders, Lamontagne said.

Part of the funding is reserved for a call for projects that meet the priorities identified by the community. Bio-food organizations in the region

are invited to submit their initiatives by October 15. Selected projects will be eligible for up to \$250,000 in financial support.

Among the initiatives already supported by the Agreement are *Goûtez-y!*, which promotes the marketing of agri-food products from the Centre-du-Québec region, and *L'ARTERRE*, which facilitates the matching of agricultural business with aspiring farmers.

Andrée Laforest, who was at the time Minister of Municipal Affairs and Minister responsible for the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region, welcomed the news, saying the funds will go directly towards supporting organizations that are already making a difference in their communities.

"This support for the bio-food sector in Centre-du-Québec demonstrates the importance we place on the vitality of the regions and the strength of their stakeholders," Laforest said. "With this funding, we are supporting initiatives that contribute directly to the economic and social vitality of our communities, while strengthening a sense of pride and belonging to the region."

### Credit for UPA Dues Program 2025

Revenue of \$25,000 or less

#### Eligibility criteria for this UPA Program:

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

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

- on the UPA website at **[www.upa.qc.ca/credit-upa-dues-program](http://www.upa.qc.ca/credit-upa-dues-program)**
- from your regional federation
- by calling 450-679-0540, ext. 8213

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

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

As soon as we receive your cheque, we will send you:

- ▶ A **10% card** to use on all purchases at **L'Equipeur (Mark's Work Warehouse)** throughout the year
- ▶ A letter explaining the benefits of being a member
- ▶ Updates on QFA's online Farm Forums

## Membership Application

Last name.....

First name.....

Address .....

Phone.....

Fax .....

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**PRICE**

Agricultural or forestry producer, rural resident or retired farmer:  
☐ 1 year \$68.99 [\$60 + \$3 GST (5%) + \$5.99 TVQ (9.975%)]  
☐ 2 years \$137.97 [\$120 + \$6 GST (5%) + \$11.97 TVQ (9.975%)]  
☐ My cheque is enclosed, payable to "Quebec Farmers' Association"  
GST No. 107 867 814 RT 001      QST No. 100 611 322 9 TQ 001

**MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES**

- a one year subscription to the Quebec Farmers' Advocate
- discounts on QFA sponsored events and services
- free advertising in the Advocate's classified ads
- voting privileges at the QFA Annual General Meeting

**Quebec Farmers' Association**  
555 boul. Roland Therrien, office 255  
Longueuil, Quebec J4H 4E7  
Receipts are issued upon request. Memberships are valid for 12 months from month of purchase.

Signature.....

Date.....



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

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

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

**Jordan Evans, Waltham**

**Serge Pageau, St. Jerome**

**Andrew Lawlor, Shawville**







## QFA videoconferences

# Don't wait to talk about your farm's future

Putting a transition plan on paper is difficult but worth it: FCM

**Andrew McClelland**  
*The Advocate*

Heather Watson has heard every excuse in the book for why farm families put off talking about who is going to take over the operation.

"I don't want to start a family conflict!" – we hear that all the time," said Watson, executive director of Farm Management Canada. "We call this the 'Pandora's Box' scenario, and it's the most common reason people admit to when asked why they're scared of starting a farm transition plan."

Watson and her staff at FMC are intimately familiar with the many reasons Canadian agricultural producers cite for leaving things up in the air when deciding on the future of their farm business. They regularly conduct workshops to help farm families navigate the big emotions, technical details and best ways to go about intergenerational farm transfers.

"Some people will claim that farming is like any other business," Watson explained. "But it's not: it's tied to the land – a specific place and way of life – and values like family legacy, passion, care for the community, and care for the environment and animals. Sometimes, those qualities and factors can get us into a little bit of trouble, especially when it comes to looking at the farm like a business."

### Different kind of business

But a business it is. In fact, big business: farm transfers regularly represent the greatest wealth transfer in Canadian business in any sector of the economy. Which makes it even more surprising that only 12 per cent of the nation's farm businesses have a formal succession plan in place. That's a lot of wealth being transferred by default or a verbal agreement.

While the reasons for not starting a transition plan are many – unwillingness to hurt a family member's feelings, not wanting to burden the children with the huge workload of farming life, or fear of failing at running the family business – there's a lot of data that shows having a written farm transition plan is good for business.

"Farmers who prepare and follow a written plan are up to 525-per-cent more profitable, according to our research," Watson said. "That's pretty good!"

Few farmers would scoff at anything



PEOPLEIMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Farming is not like other businesses. It is tied to the land – a specific place and way of life – and values like family legacy, passion, care for the community, and care for the environment and animals.

that could improve their profitability by that staggering amount. And the studies also reveal other beneficial effects. Eighty-eight per cent of farmers who follow a written plan report having greater peace of mind about their farm business' future; 46 per cent are more likely to openly communicate about the future of the farm and everyone's role within it once they have a plan written down.

### Dealing with family dynamics

Watson talked about the family dynamics and tools for managing them around farm transitions in a recent videoconference hosted by the Quebec Farmers' Association entitled "Understanding Farm Transition – Navigating the Path Forward." As she pointed out, the benefits of having a written plan far outnumber the benefits of having a verbal agreement on the subject.

"You'll hear me say the words 'written plan' around 200 times when I talk about farm transitions," Watson said with a laugh. "In family farming, we often rely on the owner-operator – often dad – and think they've got it all sorted out in their head."

But such an arrangement leads to uncertainty – especially should that family member get ill, have an accident or pass on.

"In a lot of cases, something can happen where maybe there's an incident

and we no longer have that person to rely on in the way that we thought we could. Having it written down provides assurance."

### But where to begin?

Watson points to the surprising number of resources available to family farm businesses to help with the farm transition process – resources that the 88 per cent of Canadian farm businesses who don't have a plan in place could benefit from.

Farm Management Canada itself leads the way with a workshop called "Bridging the Gap," which is designed to give farm families the tools they need for a successful farm transition.

Within Quebec, the Union des producteurs agricoles and the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec regularly offer business-oriented workshops for farm transition, and Quebec-based L'Arterre has introduced a new approach to the matter by creating a "match-making service" for established farm businesses with no successor, matching them up with young producers who want to take over a farm business but don't have one in their family.

Having sat with many farm families, Watson knows how fraught it can be to get the conversation on farm transitions started. But she has also seen the huge advantages of starting a farm transition workshop.



Heather Watson, executive director of Farm Management Canada, urges farm families to put their succession plans in writing to secure the future of their operations.

"Most of us aren't taught how to start a difficult, but necessary, conversation. There's no embarrassment in admitting that. What these workshops do is give you the words to start that conversation, so that everyone can move ahead with more clarity, more confidence, and decide what's best for the family and the farm."

For more information on Farm Management Canada's workshops, visit: [Visitfmc-gac.com](http://Visitfmc-gac.com)

Farm Management Canada will be hosting its "Bridging the Gap" workshop in Vaudreuil in early 2026. Those interested in participating should check [www.fmc-gac.com/programs-services/btg/](http://www.fmc-gac.com/programs-services/btg/) for upcoming dates.



# Farmers must see themselves as business operators: Alberta grazier

**Andrew McClelland**  
*The Advocate*

Like a lot of new farmers, Steve Kenyon started raising beef thinking if he did all the production right, the rest would surely follow.

"I was focused on production. Everything I did was about grazing, feeding hay, swath grazing. I was doing a whole bunch of things," Kenyon said. "The problem was, I was losing money. And I didn't even know it."

Kenyon started producing in an area north of Edmonton in 1999. After growing up in Saskatchewan on a mixed grain and beef farm, he struck out on his own, leasing a 640-acre farm.

"Nobody taught me how to run a business. I was just out there farming, focusing just on production," Kenyon said.

Realizing he needed to learn how to run a business – and fast – Kenyon enrolled in The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers (TEPAP), a week-long course in Texas designed to give farmers who already know about production the essentials in agribusiness management. It was a eureka moment in his life.

## Different point of view

"All of a sudden, I got into all these business schools. It completely turned my business around and changed the way I look at things."

Kenyon told his story during a videoconference hosted by the Quebec Farmers' Association on July 23 titled, "From Infancy to Adulthood: Growing a Business."

"When your business is in its infancy, you've got to be all over it. I mean, it'll die if you're not there every step of the way," Kenyon explained.

"When it becomes a teenager, you let it develop responsibility. You might hire a manager. You back off and let them make some decisions, instead of you hovering over them all the time."

The long-term goal of a farm business is much like the long-term goal of raising a child, Kenyon said. To get your farm to the point where you can step away and allow the business to effectively run itself, with minimal effort or intervention.

## Like raising a child

Kenyon admits that his ranching operation bounces back and forth between



COURTESY: STEVE KENYON

Edmonton-area rancher Steve Kenyon has made a career combining custom grazing with speaking engagements all over North America. He recently partnered with Joel Salatin and The Stockman Grass Farmer to teach "The Grazier's Business School."

the teenage stage and adulthood. His Greener Pastures Ranching, based out of Busby, Alta., is a big one with many variables: 1,400 cattle on 3,500 acres of land. While a lot of ranchers out West work with similar numbers, Kenyon is unusual. Not only does he not own cattle and focuses on custom grazing, he also leases all of that acreage from 17 different landowners.

"People say, 'That's risky – not owning your land. You could lose it,'" Kenyon explained. "But to me the bigger risk would be leasing from only two or three landlords. If one of them decided to give the farm to their kids, I'd lose a third or half of my pasture. With 17 different landowners, I'm hedging my bets."

Kenyon has experimented with other revenue streams. Pasturing pigs and goats was profitable for a while, and he's recently begun seeding his land with a drone while doing custom drone seeding on the side. But, as he explained during the QFA videoconference, any

new business venture has to fit well with human resources and his seasonal schedule.

"Human resources has veto power over economics and finances," Kenyon said. "If you can't find the people to do a job properly, it doesn't matter if it looks like the most profitable revenue stream on paper."

## All facets need consideration

Kenyon remembers a golden opportunity that slipped through his fingers for just that reason. Twenty years ago, the B.C. government was looking to keep growth and foliage below its northern hydro lines down without using pesticides. Its solution? Find goat producers and pay them to graze their herds below the lines.

"The economics were great. The finances were great," Kenyon explained. "We would get \$1.25 per goat per day on free land and then the kids would be ours to sell at the end."

The problem with this arrangement

was human resources: Kenyon and his business partner couldn't find anyone to tend those goat herds.

"It was the big boom of the oil fields," he explained. "At that time, you couldn't find anyone that would work for less than \$65 an hour. Fast-food franchises were closed due to lack of employees!"

For Kenyon, coming to terms with a career in farming has been all about changing his way of thinking. While he started out thinking of himself as a "farmer," the years have taught him to think of himself as a business manager first. And while he started out thinking only of production, he now thinks just as much about finances, cash flow and business philosophy.

"We can change our way of thinking," Kenyon said. "We don't have to buy into the production type that Big Ag is selling. We can drastically reduce inputs and change the way we manage. I mean, I haven't bought fertilizer in 25 years. And I don't even own a tractor."



## You lookin' at me?

# Outstanding cows in their field

The sight of cows in pasture is pleasing. But it is not as common as it used to be. Remember when the old-timers used to predict the weather by them? If the cows were lying down, that was a sure sign of rain.

This stems from a theory that claimed cows could sense increasing air moisture and would lie down to preserve a dry patch of grass, while another theory was that a cow's stomach is sensitive to changes in atmospheric pressure brought on by rainfalls, and would lie down to ease their discomfort due to this.

Of course, this was all long before anyone used terms like "rotational grazing."

Ah, times change.

*Photos by Madeleine Langlois, The Advocate*





## The Resourceful Naturalist



**Paul J. Hetzler**  
ISA Certified Arborist

As Dean Martin crooned in the iconic 1987 film *Moonstruck*, "When the moon hits your eye like a bigga pizza pie, that's insomnia."

Wait, no! "...that's amore," not insomnia. But it turns out that how long you sleep drops way off around the time of the full moon, whether or not it hits your eye. And to some extent, the moon can even influence how we feel as well.

Studies on how the lunar cycle impacts our sleep used to rely on test participants' reports upon getting up each morning reporting how well and how much they had slept the night before. This was a major flaw. I mean, it's tough to rate your sleep quality when you are unconscious the whole time. It's no surprise that results were all over the map.

However, the advent of "smart watches" solved that problem.

In 2021, scientists from the National University of Quilmes in Argentina, the University of Washington and Yale University joined forces on the largest, most in-depth study on lunar cycles and sleep ever done. Thanks to wrist devices that recorded heart rate, brain activity and other factors, it was the most accurate, too. The verdict? Earth's only natural satellite appears to have a big effect on sleep.

### Studies took deep dive

To reach this conclusion, researchers monitored the sleep of 98 people for several months in three Argentine villages. One village had a modern electric grid, while another had limited access to power, with each house having just one or two electric lights. A third settlement was very remote and had no electricity at all. In every case, participants' sleep changed with each lunar cycle.

Although the effect was greatest in the village with no power, it was significant in modern, well-lighted homes, too.

On average, participants fell asleep 30 minutes later and woke about 15 minutes earlier during the three nights prior to a full moon. In the village with no power at all, participants slept a whole hour less on each of the three nights leading up to a full moon.

The scientists said the changes in sleep patterns they saw might be an ancient

# Lunar pull: Studies show moon can affect your sleep



MIKE PELLINNI/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The length and quality of your sleep drops way off around the time of the full moon, studies have shown.

adaptation for making use of additional hours of light during each full moon. Regardless, they say that this phenomenon must be taken into account in all sleep studies going forward.

### Gravitational pull plays role

But moonlight isn't the only thing that varies with each lunar cycle. The moon's gravitational pull is enough to slosh our planet's oceans around, creating the tides. Given that we are about 60 per cent water, it seems logical to conclude the moon must tug at us in some way. Exactly how and to what degree, though, remains an open question.

The idea that the moon can tweak our emotions goes back a long way. Indeed the term "lunacy" was coined in the 16th century to describe this very effect. These days this word is offensive, though until being banned in 2012, it was on the books in a number of federal laws in the United States.

It might not be called lunacy today, but some emergency room workers and law enforcement personnel have reported a rise in "crazy behaviours"

leading to hospital admissions and arrests around the full moon.

Although science has yet to find a clear link between moon and mood across the board, there is evidence that the moon's position does affect people with bipolar disorder.

### Some affected more than others

In 2018, Dr. Thomas A. Wehr, a scientist at the National Institute for Mental Health in the U.S., released the results of a two-year study on potential lunar effects on bipolar illness involving 17 patients who suffered from the illness.

Wehr found a distinct pattern of these patients rapidly switching between the manic and depressive stages of bipolar illness at certain lunar phases. The most significant changes precisely corresponded to the "supermoon," when a full moon happens within 24 hours of the time it comes closest to Earth in its monthly orbit. Although Wehr doesn't claim the moon caused the mood oscillations he saw, he did say the data suggest a possible biological pathway through which lunar gravitational pull might affect moods.

A lesser-known lunar effect happens through tidal movements creating electricity. It's not enough to harness and plug into the grid, but when salt water passes back and forth across the face of our planet, it induces tiny yet measurable electric currents. Indirectly, this could have an impact, because electrical fields are proven to alter human brain function.

In 2019, a research team from the University of Tokyo and the California Institute of Technology showed that humans can detect natural geomagnetic currents. They found that even minute electrical fields can reduce human alpha-wave brain activity. Alpha waves are associated with relaxed or meditative states.

Knowing that we all lose sleep as the full moon approaches, we should try to exercise a great deal more patience in the ways we conduct our relationships, motor vehicles and other things that have a high hazard potential should something go awry.

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





# Breaking down compost-bedded packs – What you need to know

**Angie Wilson**

*Dairy Specialist,  
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture  
and*

**Jessica St John**  
*Lactanet*

When properly designed and managed, compost bedded packs promote cow comfort and natural behaviours, while helping reduce injuries and lameness. Like traditional deep-bedded packs, compost bedded packs are large, open areas without stalls, where cows can rest, exercise and interact socially.

These housing systems allow cows to stand up and lie down with ease and express estrus behaviour. The thick layer of bedding provides a soft, cushioned and non-abrasive surface, leading to fewer hoof and leg injuries. However, effective pack management is required to maintain cow cleanliness and reduce the risk of udder health issues.

## How do they differ?

Traditional deep-bedded packs are anaerobic packs with fresh bedding (often straw) added daily, whereas compost bedded packs are aerobic systems that require oxygen to function properly. They use fine bedding and are stirred twice daily to support the composting process.

## How they work

Compost bedded packs rely on composting to manage moisture, provide a comfortable resting area for cows and produce a material that can be land-applied as solid fertilizer. Composting requires managing an environment for micro-organisms requiring oxygen, moisture and a balanced carbon-to-nitrogen (C:N) ratio. In compost bedded packs, manure contributes nitrogen and moisture, while bedding provides carbon. Stirring the pack adds oxygen and mixes in fresh manure. Microbial activity generates heat, helping dry the pack. If the pack becomes too wet or compacted, oxygen levels decrease, which slows or stops the composting process.

## Managing a compost bedded pack

Compost bedded packs are dynamic systems that require proactive, adaptable management:

**Aeration:** Working or stirring the pack mixes in manure, adds oxygen, breaks up clumps and releases

**Table 1. Pros and cons of compost bedded packs compared with other stall systems**

PROS	CONS
Improved cow comfort and expression of natural behaviour, such as lying and standing, estrus and social behaviours	Increased space requirement per animal, and sensitive to overcrowding
Reduced leg and hoof injuries, and lameness	Increased bedding costs
Less time and labour adding bedding and cleaning bedded area compared with traditional bedded packs	Must be stirred twice daily and carefully managed to control moisture. Improperly managed packs negatively affect cow cleanliness and udder health, increasing the risk of mastitis and milk quality issues
Flexible housing option for varying cow sizes and breeds	Including a scraper system requires management of both liquid and solid manure

moisture. The compost bedded pack should be worked twice a day, every day and typically takes between 10 and 30 minutes each time, depending on pack size and equipment.

**Equipment:** A variety of different equipment can be used if it breaks up clumps, leaves no visible manure, and works the pack at least 8 inches (20.3 cm), ideally 12 inches (30.5 cm) deep. Options include rototillers, field cultivators, rippers and rototillers with shanks.

**Bedding addition:** Bedding feeds the composting pack and helps control moisture. Add bedding before the pack becomes wet. The frequency and amount added depend on factors including weather and seasonal conditions, ventilation, animal density, bedding type and available equipment.

**Bedding material:** Dry, fine, high-carbon materials like kiln-dried hardwood sawdust work well in compost bedded packs. Other organic materials can be used depending on characteristics, including carbon content and particle size. Smaller particles decompose faster, whereas larger particles can reduce excessive compaction.

**Clean outs:** Some compost bedded packs are cleaned out once or twice per year, whereas others are never cleaned out. The frequency of cleaning out depends on the rate and effectiveness of composting, and the producer's preference for field application. Leaving the driest 25 per cent of the pack helps inoculate the new material. Starting or restarting a pack works best between spring and early fall, allowing time for heat generation.

**Stocking density:** The optimal cow

density depends on many factors, including climate, bedding, pack management, ventilation and barn design. The minimum stocking density required for packs in Canada is 9.3 square metres (100 square feet) per cow, but at least 13.9 square metres (150 square feet) per cow is advised for new compost-bedded-pack builds and future herd growth. Compost bedded packs are sensitive to overcrowding, leading to wetter packs, increased bedding usage (and cost), dirty cows and an increased risk of environmental mastitis.

## How to know pack is working?

Ongoing daily assessment is required. Signs of a compost bedded pack working properly include a fluffy, even surface, minimal odour and clean cows that walk easily across the pack. Indicators of a struggling compost bedded pack include clumpy material, dirty cows, shiny tractor wheels (indicating excessive moisture) and cows struggling to walk. Ideal moisture content is 40 to 60 per cent and compost temperatures should exceed 43 degrees Celsius. Lower temperatures are common, but if pack temperature matches ambient temps, composting is likely inactive. Pack samples can be submitted to a laboratory for assessment, including C:N ratio.

## Other considerations

**Milking hygiene:** Teat preparation should be excellent to reduce the risk of udder health or milk quality issues. Consult with your veterinarian for guidance on mastitis prevention strategies and vaccination programs.

**Ventilation:** Compost bedded packs

release a large amount of moisture, requiring effective ventilation to remove it from the barn. Automatic systems are recommended. Choose a builder with a thorough understanding of the ventilation requirements specific to compost bedded packs.

**Seasonal management:** Compost bedded packs are challenging to manage in the cooler months due to reduced composting activity and restricted airflow.

**Bedding storage and supply:** Keep bedding dry and accessible. Secure a consistent bedding supply and adequate storage. Sawdust availability can be a limitation for these packs.

**Barn design:** Allow for ease of equipment access and bedding deliveries. Maximize cross ventilation.

**Moisture sources:** Prevent any unnecessary water from entering the pack via unshielded water troughs, condensation from the roof and leaks from hoses.

## Can they be used for dry cows?

Compost bedded packs can be used for dry cows. However, there is currently no published research evaluating their use as dry-cow housing. The cow comfort benefits of compost bedded packs still apply to dry cows, and anecdotal evidence from Ontario suggests that they can be a successful housing option for dry cows. Producers report positive experiences, including requiring less frequent aeration (once per day or once every two days) and less bedding material, due to drier manure. Some producers note not needing to clean out the pack. Although dry cow compost bedded packs are not challenged by moisture to the same extent as packs for lactating cow, space per cow should not be compromised. Instead, even greater space allowances in dry cow compost bedded packs can help reduce stress and improve comfort and health.

## Final thoughts

Compost bedded packs can offer many benefits to cow comfort, and require an adaptable, proactive management style. Proper pack aeration, managing stocking density, adding sufficient bedding and good ventilation are essential to support composting. These systems can fail quickly if not managed properly, especially regarding excess moisture. A pack that becomes too wet will slow down and stop composting.



## Grains

**Portes ouvertes Mangeons Local event**

The *Portes Ouvertes Mangeons Local* event organized by the Union des producteurs agricoles was held on Sunday, Sept. 7. This year, the Producteurs de grains du Québec welcomed visitors at two locations.

First, the *Caravan des grains* went to Ferme Valsy in St. Édouard-de-Fabre. Grain producers in this region of Abitibi-Témiscamingue were happy to share their passion for their work.

The caravan project was launched by the PGQ as part of the organization's 50th anniversary to celebrate its pride and collective achievements.

Next, the PGQ communications team was at the Ferme-école MASKITA of the Institut de technologie agroalimentaire du Québec (ITAQ) in St. Hyacinthe.

At both locations, there was a draw for a gift basket containing a range of products made from Quebec grains, and food lovers were able to take home a free booklet of grain-based recipes.



PGQ.CA

**Bio-food policy: worthy ambitions but insufficient funds**

Following the unveiling of the 2025-2035 bio-food policy, the PGQ issued a press release to welcome the government's vision for food autonomy, prosperity and sustainability. However, the organization pointed out that success in these areas of focus will depend on tangible measures adapted to the realities of grain producers.

The policy highlights three main goals: improving food self-sufficiency, developing a prosperous and sustainable sector and accelerating innovation.

These objectives cannot be achieved without greater support for the grain sector, a strategic pillar of Quebec's bio-food economy. With annual revenues of \$2.2 billion and nearly 20,000 jobs, grain production sits at the heart of essential sectors, fuelling bio-energy and providing food for people and animals.

"The government wants to focus on innovation and sustainability. We are ready to contribute fully to these goals, but the tools must be there, too," said PGQ president Sylvain Pion. "Producers face weakened profitability, particularly in remote regions, and major challenges related to costs, climate and the regulatory burden they face. The drought that hit Quebec in 2025 concretely illustrates the magnitude of the climate challenge and the very real risk of a significant drop in grain production."

Proposals in the policy summary include reducing the regulatory burden, supporting climate change adaptation, and promoting fairness among the regions of Quebec. The PGQ leadership sees encouraging intentions, but insists on the urgency of moving from vision to action.

It points out that despite the fact that in 2024 and 2025 nearly \$187 million was announced to support adaptation to climate change, grain producers have not yet seen any concrete benefits.

In addition to these challenges, there is a growing need for investments to modernize farming practices and boost resilience to climate hazards. This priority means high debt, which accentuates the financial vulnerability of producers. For this reason, the PGQ is calling for programs and their funding to reflect these issues and allow farms to continue investing and innovating.

The PGQ also insists that a substantive policy of compensation for agri-environmental practices, on the order of at least \$50 million per year, be quickly put in place.

In addition, the revenues from carbon pricing, which already exceed \$125 million, must be returned to producers to help them perform better in terms of both agronomy and climate, particularly when it comes to their global competition.

"If the government wants to achieve its food sovereignty and climate resilience targets, it must recognize the unique role of the grain sector and support producers in an equitable way across Quebec," Pion said. "The policy sets out some interesting guidelines, but we now need to see firm and predictable commitments."

**Quebec grain growers disadvantaged by carbon pricing**

The publication of the results of the 44th Quebec-California carbon markets auction indicates a 10.5-per-cent increase in the price of a greenhouse gas emission unit compared with the previous auction in May 2025. This year, Quebec grain producers will once again pay millions of dollars in gas emission allowances for the use of energy inputs, which mainly consist of farm diesel.

Over the 2013-2024 period, Quebec grain producers contributed approximately \$125 million to the Electrification and Climate Change Fund (ECCF), or 26 per cent of the total contribution of Quebec agriculture as a whole. However, according to an analysis by the UPA, the sector receives only 1.5 per cent of the amounts paid under the ECCF.

In this context, it is clear that the programs currently in place disadvantage the grain sector, which is a significant contributor to the ECCF. Moreover, grain producers have few means to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and very few alternatives.

"There is clearly an inequity created by the carbon-pricing system. Our grain farmers contribute significantly to a fund and receive a fraction of the support in return," Pion said. "In addition, while producers in other provinces benefit from exemptions or refunds, Quebec farmers are left alone to shoulder the costs. They, therefore, find themselves at a disadvantage compared with their Canadian and American counterparts, which weakens their profitability and competitiveness."

The programs supported by this fund are generally collective, are poorly adapted to the diversity of situations on the ground, and represent only a small portion of the amounts actually paid by producers. Even though the government recently increased the assistance promised to producers for climate change adaptation, a portion of it still needs to be specifically targeted at the grain sector.

In this context, the PGQ is asking that carbon pricing not apply to fossil fuels used in agriculture and that farmers be entitled to a refund of the cost of this pricing so they can invest it in projects to improve their agronomic and economic performance.

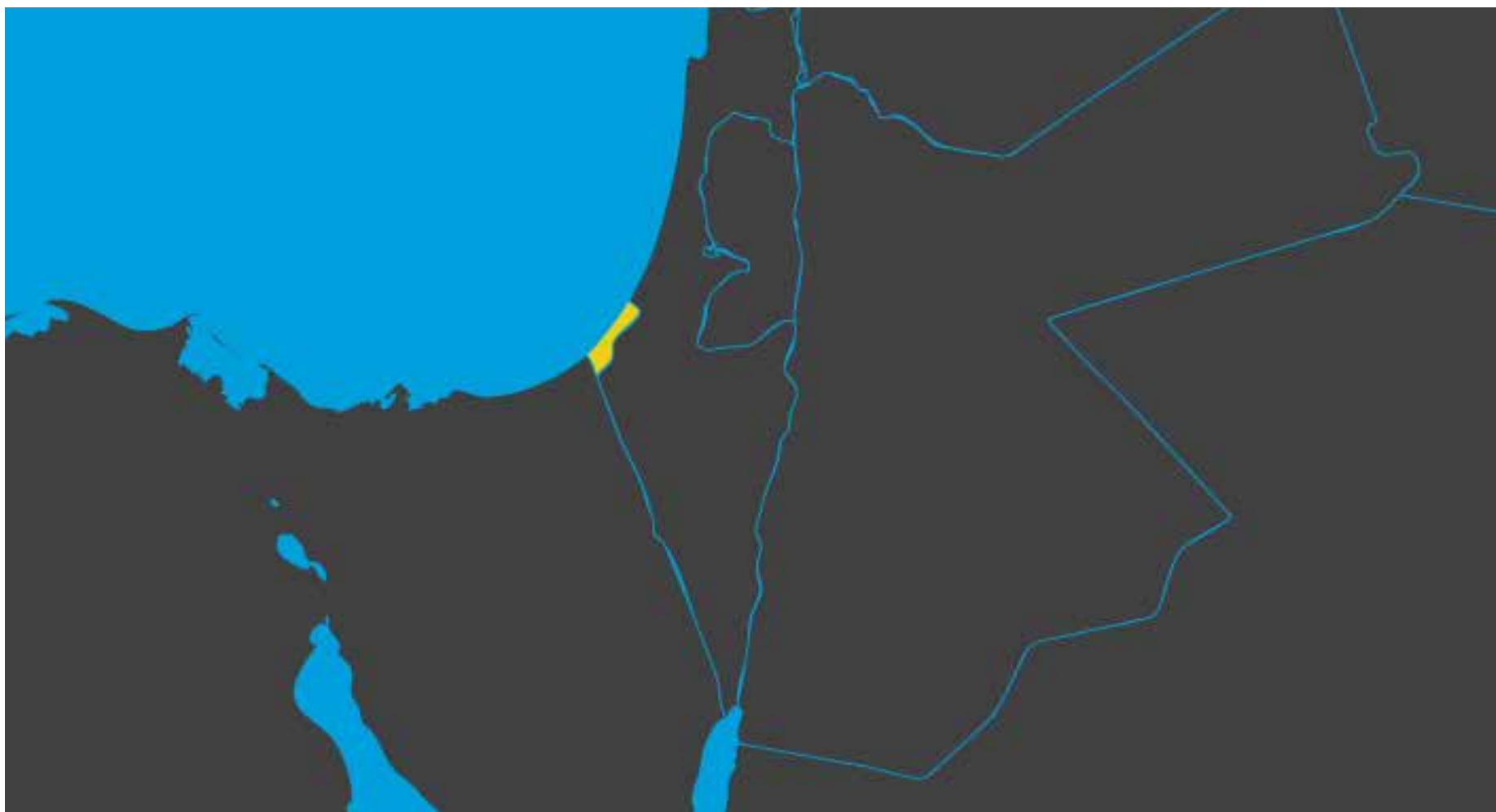
"To restore fairness, there is a growing need to reimburse grain producers for the costs of carbon pricing so they can compete in the international marketplace and invest this money in climate change adaptation," Pion said.



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.







CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK

The territory of Gaza is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. At the end of 2024, the estimated population of the strip was 2.1 million. The territory covers only 365 square kilometres, or roughly the size of the City of Sherbrooke, which has a population of 184,000.

# Famine in Gaza demands global accountability

## Delivery of life-saving assistance has been prevented

*Canadian Foodgrains Bank*

Canadian Foodgrains Bank is devastated by the famine in the sector of Gaza known as Gaza Governorate, which was officially declared on Aug. 22, and the projection of famine in two other areas of the territory – Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis.

Famine is declared when hunger reaches catastrophic levels. More than half a million people in Gaza are already experiencing the horrific reality of starvation and destitution, with another 1.07 million facing emergency levels of hunger. At least 132,000 children under the age of five are experiencing acute malnutrition and more than 100 children to date have lost their lives due to starvation.

How many more families must bury their children before the silence breaks?

This humanitarian emergency is not due to any natural disaster. It is a human-made catastrophe that has been allowed to happen. It was preventable and predictable.

"To reach the point of famine means every warning has been ignored and every humanitarian red flag has been passed," said Andy Harrington, Foodgrains Bank executive director.

"The suffering of 2 million Gazans is both unconscionable and avoidable," Harrington said. "It is the result of deliberate obstruction, a failure of global responsibility, and a collapse of compassion for our fellow human beings."

Foodgrains Bank is supporting two local partners in Gaza through its member agencies – Development and Peace-Caritas Canada and Mennonite Central Committee Canada. These partners are ready and willing to respond.

But since March, they have been unable to deliver life-saving assistance due to systematic restrictions and denial of access by Israeli authorities.

'To reach the point of famine means every warning has been ignored and every humanitarian red flag has been passed.'

"In any crisis zone, international humanitarian principles demand that aid be allowed to reach those in need," Harrington said. "People are dying of

hunger while food assistance has sat – for months – mere kilometres away. Israel's systematic denial of access for humanitarian actors to provide lifesaving support is causing untold suffering."

While partners are exploring the possibility of local food procurement within Gaza, the only way to meet the scale of the need in Gaza is to open the borders to allow the entry of food and other critical humanitarian supplies.

This famine can end. There is enough food waiting to feed the entire population for three months, ready to be delivered, yet deliberately obstructed time and time again.

Foodgrains Bank officials have called on all decision-makers to uphold international humanitarian law, lift all restrictions to aid delivery, and secure an immediate and permanent ceasefire, including the release of all hostages.



## The Miner Report



IBRAGIMOVA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Studies have shown that farmers are particularly vulnerable to burnout due to the unique demands and stressors associated with the profession.

# Overcoming burnout: Strategies for farmers

**Sommer Thompson**

*William H. Miner*

*Agricultural Research Institute*

There are 365 sunrises and sunsets each year and the average farmer sees every one of them. Whether they are up before first light to milk the herd or till the fields, the work never stops. The profession not only wears on a farmer's body, sometimes leading to chronic injury, but also mental fatigue comes from social isolation and constant fluctuations in weather patterns, market prices and government policy. These factors have a risk of leading to burnout.

Those experiencing burnout may feel drained and disconnected, which can lead to issues including decreased productivity, strained relationships and increased risk of mental health disorders.

Studies have shown that farmers are particularly vulnerable to burnout due to the unique demands and stressors

associated with the profession. The modern world view farmers as entrepreneurs in the ag business rather than food producers. The pressure of this global perspective, combined with the stigma surrounding mental health in rural communities, can worsen the issue, making it harder for farmers to seek support.

Burnout can have devastating consequences, making it essential to recognize the signs and take action. Whether for yourself or a loved one who may be struggling, understanding how to support and recover from burnout can make all the difference.

### Take precautions

Several precautions can be taken to combat the symptoms of burnout.

Prioritizing immediate health, whether through physical fitness or mental well-being, is crucial in strengthening overall resilience.

Maintaining proper nutrition and engaging in hobbies or interests

outside of work can provide a necessary outlet and promote a healthier mindset.

Taking control of habits, like maintaining a healthy sleep schedule and staying hydrated, is essential.

Identifying and reducing sources of stress is a critical step in recovering from burnout. This requires carefully examining daily operations and pinpointing the areas that contribute most to stress.

In some cases, difficult decisions may be necessary to alleviate these pressures, like downsizing, diversifying crop production, or opting to borrow or rent equipment rather than maintaining personal assets.

For those struggling to find ways to manage stress independently, surrounding oneself with supportive individuals who prioritize mental health can be beneficial. Seeking advice from trusted individuals can provide valuable insights into additional strategies for stress reduction,

strengthening communication and connection.

### Seek out others

Avoiding isolation is key, too, as withdrawing from those who offer support can further intensify burnout.

Ultimately, maintaining a network of people who are encouraging and invested in personal and professional success helps minimize unnecessary stress and promotes overall well-being.

Seeking professional help is one of the most effective ways to combat burnout. Whether through counsellors, faith leaders or trusted friends, having someone willing to listen and offer a new perspective can be invaluable in navigating challenges. Remind each other that no one faces burnout alone.

By prioritizing health, managing stress, seeking support and embracing professional guidance, individuals can effectively navigate burnout and cultivate resilience for a healthier and more sustainable future.





## Cookin' with the Advocate

### Grilled Bananas with Honey, Yoghurt and Cream



CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

These pieces of banana and peach have been mixed with a little lemon juice, cinnamon, sugar and a little honey before they were popped in the oven.

Serves two. Ready in 20 minutes.

Heat an overhead (*oven*) grill. Peel three large, unblemished bananas and slice them into coins, about half a centimetre thick.

Squeeze the juice from a small lemon and toss the bananas in it.

Line a small baking tray or grill pan with foil – it will make washing up easier. Scatter the bananas over the foil, keeping them in a single layer.

Crack open four cardamom pods (*optional*) and crush the little black-brown seeds that lie within to a powder with a couple of large pinches of ground cinnamon. Mix the spices with 40g of golden caster sugar (*about 3 tablespoons of sugar*).

Dust the sugar over the bananas, trickle with 2 tablespoons of liquid honey (*or melt solid honey a bit in the microwave*), then place them under the grill. Depending on how close they are to the heat, they should take about 7-8 minutes to caramelize.

Whip 125 ml of double cream (*whipping cream*) until thick enough to sit in soft mounds, but not firm enough to stand in peaks. Gently fold 125 ml of thick yoghurt into the cream, taking care not to overmix.

Divide the yoghurt mixture between two shallow serving bowls, then spoon the sizzling bananas and honey over and a little grated orange zest (*optional*). Eat as the warm honey melts into the yoghurt and cream.

Source: Nigel Slater, April, 2025, The Observer.

## Turn to your best honey source and let's go bananas

Cynthia Gunn  
QFA's Food Writer

Adulterated food has a history as old as any spurious occupation. The medieval spice trade, for example, was an easy target for out-and-out fraud, when all manner of things were passed off as, or mixed with, expensive and exotic spices.

The ante was upped during the Industrial Revolution, when even relatively cheap daily foodstuffs, like flour and milk, were debased.

"The moment a society moves from being a largely agricultural society to an industrial one we have entrusted someone else with what goes into our stomachs," wrote Dr. Claudia Kreklau of St. Andrews School of History in Scotland.

The 1820s book by chemist Friedrich Accum, *A Treatise on Adulterations of Food and Culinary Poisons*, exposed many a horrifying practice, and eventually helped spur laws related to food and its safety across Europe.

Sometimes it's accidental – as when at least 21 people died in the 1858 Bedford Sweets Poisoning, caused by arsenic mistakenly being added instead of gypsum. Only five pounds of poisoned candy was ever sold, but the toll was steep.

Usually, however, adulteration is purposeful and is meant in one way or another to increase financial gain.

Olive oil may be one of the oldest targets of adulteration and misrepresentation, with origin and content being a target for fraud since at least 2500 BC. The practice continues to this day. A particularly nasty modern case occurred in Spain in what became known as the 1981 Toxic Oil Syndrome, affecting 20,000 and killing hundreds. The general conclusion after intensive investigation was that rapeseed oil that was intended to be used as industrial lubricant was reprocessed in a plant in Spain and sold as food-grade olive oil.

It seems nature's sweet treat found all over the world is under particular adulteration pressure at the moment. Honey mixed with sugar sold from China to the world market has caused downward pressure on prices putting bona fide producers at a serious disadvantage.

Bernhard Heuvel, president of the European Professional Beekeepers Association, said there was overwhelming evidence of fraud in the supply chain.

And while scientists have developed new methods to authenticate honey, which could help "protect consumers and verify supply chains," Jeff Pettis, president of the International Federation of Beekeepers' Associations, states: "We are continuing to fight for improvements to the testing. We want the public to know that local honey is much less likely to be adulterated. The beekeepers get their name on it and can stand behind it."

My pantry has one jar from down the road, one from Peace River, Alberta, and (oops) a big jar that I used to use when I did lots of baking that, given this information, is definitely suspect. Lesson learned.

Get out that good honey and try this simple recipe for bananas.

"They are particularly splendid when grilled with honey and eaten with cream and yoghurt," said food writer Nigel Slater.

As you can see, I tried it with peaches, too, which I liked equally as well. I took these out two minutes too early – watch closely, but don't fear getting them slightly browner and crispier than in this photo. I didn't have any cardamom. I've put a few notes in italics.

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





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

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