Quebec Farmers'
Advocate

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WHAT'S INSIDE

"The Canadian agricultural sector is a symbol of the country's ingenuity, resilience, and ability to move up the value chain. Together with the fish and seafood sectors, it plays a vital role in supporting jobs and growth across the country and in rural communities."

— Excerpt from the federal 2025 budget

QFA VIDEOCONFERENCES

Wednesday, Dec. 3
at 7:30 p.m.

The Nuts and Bolts of Farm Transfers

See page 4 for details.

PALSAND/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne unveiled the federal budget on Nov. 4, announcing investments in agricultural programs while imposing 15-per-cent spending cuts across government departments, including Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

New budget both 'good' and 'not enough,' say UPA and CFA

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

"A step forward" and a "missed opportunity." That about sums up what Canadian agricultural producers' groups are reacting when looking at the new federal budget.

Canada's agricultural industry is offering cautious optimism to Ottawa's 2025-2026 budget, released Nov. 4, praising new investments in food inspection and trade access, while expressing concern over departmental spending cuts and problems that were outright ignored.

"We appreciate the government's recognition of agriculture in Budget 2025 and welcome the inclusion of several measures that support farmers," said Keith Currie, president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

The CFA characterized the budget as "a step forward" that nonetheless represents "a missed opportunity" to fully capitalize on agriculture's economic potential.

In Quebec, the Union des producteurs agricoles acknowledged the government's commitment to protecting strategic sectors, but warned mandated savings could undermine the industry.

"Agriculture and food processing are important economic drivers and essential components of food security for Canadians," said UPA president Martin Caron. "In a global context marked by instability, it is imperative to be able to count on a government ready to protect and support the sectors directly affected by all these upheavals."

See NEW BUDGET, Page 11.

No easy task: Trying to map the future of agriculture

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

In a report released last month, the Royal Bank of Canada said Canadian agriculture is not fully equipped to take on the challenges of climate change, trade volatility and rising costs. And the reason: The sector lacks fresh talent, capital and innovation.

Earlier this year, RBC had issued another report that outlined a plan to expand Canada's global share of agri-food exports to hit $44 billion in the next decade, a boost that would represent a 30-per-cent increase in the country's market share.

And back in 2018, another report sponsored by RBC touted the expanding potential of the country's agricultural sector. Given an investment in technology and fostering a data-driven skills set, it could add $11 billion to Canada's GDP, making the sector more productive than the auto manufacturing and aerospace combined.

All these reports point to a need for a shift is what is called "agricultural policy" – the government's regulations and interventions that affect the agricultural sector. But how is that done exactly?

There is no silver-bullet solution. And Canada is not the only country attempting to tackle the challenge.

See FUTURE, Page 16.

Just the facts

67%

The percentage of respondents in a poll released Oct. 16 who agree that a robust trade agreement with the United States is essential for Canadian economic growth, with only 10 per cent disagreeing.

Source: Montreal Economic Institute-Ipsos poll

19 million

The number of tonnes of canola Canadian farmers are estimated to have in storage at the end of October as they await prices to go higher.

Sources: Canadian Grain Commission and The Globe and Mail

5%

The amount of Canadian exports that go to China, making it among the country's top foreign markets, but still substantially smaller than the 75 per cent of exports that are shipped to the United States.

Source: The Globe and Mail

#1

Canada is the largest global producer and exporter of lentils. The country grows about a third of all the lentils worldwide, which accounts for about 80 per cent of global exports. And about 90 per cent of Canadian lentils are grown in Saskatchewan.

Sources: Saskatchewan Pulse Growers and Small Farm Canada

85%

The percentage of maple syrup produced in Quebec that is exported to about 70 countries around the world.

Source: Producteurs et productrices acéricoles du Québec

JUST BEFORE THE SNOW

MADELEINE LANGLOIS, THE ADVOCATE

This was the colourful site that has come to characterize autumn in rural Quebec. This scene along a farming road in Rigaud, just east of the Ontario border, is picture perfect.

Mission

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

Vision

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

Shared Values

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

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- 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

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News

U.S. farming groups call for renewal of CUSMA

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

A long list of U.S.-based farming groups and American food processors have issued a public plea to renew the Canada-U.S.-Mexico trade agreement.

In a letter to the Office of the U.S. trade representative, 116 groups and organizations representing U.S. farmers, ranchers, grain handlers, exporters and state departments of agriculture urge American officials to push for a full 16-year extension of the CUSMA deal.

"The United States is the world's largest agricultural exporter, and a majority of signers consider Canada and Mexico among their top five export markets," states the letter sent Oct. 30. "Trade integration between all three countries, enhanced by former trade agreements and accelerated by (CUSMA), allowed agricultural exports from the United States to soar. This led to the tripling of the value of agri-food trade with the three countries between 2005 and 2023, totaling $285 billion."

The groups – which include organizations that represent a cross-section of farming associations throughout the U.S., like the Corn Growers Association of North Carolina, the Idaho Barley Commission, the Kansas Pork Association, the National Pork Producers Council, the North American Blueberry Council and the Pennsylvania Corn Growers Association, along with marketing associations, like the Idaho Barley Commission, the Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Association, the National Pasta Association and the Virginia Agribusiness Council – say CUSMA, called USMCA in the U.S., has helped American farmers, and facilitated a flow of commerce between all three countries.

And they highlight the importance of the Canadian market to food growers: "Canada is the largest or second-largest market for a large variety of U.S. agricultural products, such as grain and feed, dairy products, seeds, fruits and vegetables, meat and meat products, seafood and fish products, processed foods, distilled spirits and biofuels," the letter states.

"For both Canada and Mexico, the United States is each country's largest trading partner. Trade cooperation between the United States, Mexico and Canada affords multifold benefits, underscoring the need to uphold and maintain the agreement text of USMCA as written without major adjustment.

"Our organizations are deeply reliant on trade, and our closest neighbors are the strongest trading partners for U.S. agriculture and its continued success," the letter states. "We stand ready to provide the expertise needed to maintain U.S. leadership within USMCA and advocate for the continued trade certainty that it provides."

CUSMA, which was originally negotiated in 2018, is set to expire in 2036 if a joint review scheduled for 2026 does not result in an extension. If a deal is struck next year, the agreement would be extended for 16 years, pushing the expiry date to 2042. If there is no deal struck in 2026 to extend the agreement, its scheduled termination date remains 2036.

Canada to up exports to Mexico, starting with beef, apples

Frederic Serre
The Advocate

Trade between Quebec and Mexico will continue to thrive in the wake of last month's meetings in Mexico City and Guardalajara between Canadian and Mexican government officials and industry leaders, says Keith Currie, President of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA).

The three-day gathering, held between Oct. 13 and 17, was described by Canadian trade officials as a "renewed momentum in bilateral relations" following Prime Minister Mark Carney's visit to Mexico and President Claudia Sheinbaum's visit to Alberta during the G7 Summit, which "presented new opportunities to deepen cooperation in sustainable agribusiness, and inclusive trade, while benefiting economies in both nations."

For Currie, the meetings presented renewed opportunities to boost Quebec's trade relationship with Mexico.

"Most of the corn that they bring into Mexico, for example, comes from the U.S., but given where the dollar is at and given where the trade tensions are, Mexico is certainly looking to Canada," said Currie, who added that Quebec's exports and imports with Mexico are looking very promising.

According to Mexicom Logistics, a Montreal-based freight forwarder that gathers trading statistics, Quebec continues to be Mexico's second largest provincial partner in Canada, with top exports and imports that include meat and food products, aluminum, steel, aircraft and aerospace vehicles and auto parts, as well as IT equipment.

Quebec second-largest in Canada

Last June, meat and food products exported to Mexico from la belle province reached $14.7 million, and included hams, pork cuts and pork fats, while imported agricultural and food products represented more than $6 million to include coffee, frozen orange juice and organic products.

Total Quebec exports in 2024 reached $121.4 billion, which represents 17 per cent of Canada's exports, with $91.1 billion going to the U.S. Meanwhile, Quebec imports the same year totalled $106.9 billion, which represents 14 per cent of Canada's imports, with $34.7 billion coming from the U.S.

"Quebec's robust trade relationship with Mexico – strengthened under the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) – generates opportunities across diverse sectors, including agri-food products," Mexicom said in a statement.

The trade meeting also resulted in news that Canadian beef will be sold at 42 Mexican Costco locations, following the trip attended by federal Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Heath MacDonald. The trip also brought new opportunities for Canadian products, like pork and canola to be introduced to the Mexican market.

Canadian beef at Mexican Costco stores

According to an Oct. 17 news release from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, pork is one of Canada's top exports to Mexico, along with canola, wheat and beef.

Currie also pointed to the significant milling industry in Mexico, which is already showing interest in more Canadian imports. MacDonald's trip saw Mexican milling company Groupo Trimex preparing to expand into processing Canadian exports of oats and canola.

With Canada and Mexico advancing bilateral trade over the next three years as U.S. President Donald Trump continues to take a hard line on tariffs, questions are being raised about the future of food trade across North America, and about the future of the international trade deal that unites the region.

Mexico is one of the five largest export destinations for Canadian agri-food shipments, after the U.S. (which accounts for around 60 per cent of exports), China, Japan and the European Union. Top Canadian food exports to Mexico include oil seeds, meat and cereals.

Currie said Canada can meet Mexico's demand for staples. It is an area the Canadian agricultural industry specializes in, he said.

Non-tariff trade barriers also need to be addressed, said MacDonald. For example, Mexico had limited Canadian imports of beef.

Export of apples to increase

As part of this trade mission, Mexico has also agreed to ease import requirements for eligible apples from eastern Canadian provinces, starting in January 2026, and the two nations have agreed to a new certification that will provide access for Canadian pet food that contains bovine ingredients.

Smoother trade will require communication between Canada and Mexico's food safety and regulatory agencies, said MacDonald, in addition to the digitalization of certification for some imports, including plant products, like canola and wheat.

"Mexico is a great ally with Canada," said MacDonald. "After spending almost a week here, I can tell you that they're willing to do more."

Quebec funds nine innovative agri-tech project

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

The Quebec government announced it will provide $3 million in financial support to nine innovative agri-technology projects earlier this month.

The selected projects aim to addressing a major challenge in the farming sector while helping to increase productivity.

Logiag, a Montérégie-based firm focused on helping farmers increase carbon capture, received the largest grant – $974,000 – to support its $2.4-million plan to optimize the use of nitrogen fertilizers.

Équipements Frontmatec, in St. Anselme in the Chaudière-Appalaches region east of Quebec City, received $324,000 to offset the cost of its $1.7-million plan to develop automated meat processing equipment. The company, which has operations in Quebec, the U.S. and Denmark, is considered the world's leading manufacturer of automated processing systems for lamb, beef and pork.

"In addition to providing innovative solutions to various agricultural challenges, agri-technologies enable businesses to be more productive, more resilient, and more environmentally responsible," said Regional Economic Development Minister Éric Girard in a statement released Nov. 4. "Their competitiveness, and that of our agricultural sector, depends on the development of these cutting-edge technologies to thrive."

"I am proud to see the establishment, through these nine projects, of a dynamic agri-technology industrial ecosystem that fosters both the design and adoption of technologies that ensure the sustainability of our farms," said Agriculture Minister Donald Martel while announcing the funding.

Among the recipients is ESM Industries in Lévis, Que., which was granted about $297,000 to produce equipment designed to collect and cage live poultry.

Other recipients include Machinerie Dubois in Manseau, northeast of Victoriaville, which was granted $383,000 to design electric fertilizer spreaders for precision agriculture; and JYGA Concept in St. Lambert de Lauzon, south of Lévis in the Chaudière-Appalaches region, which received $265,000, to produce precision feeding systems for sows that employ machine-learning technology.

The agri-technology market, which is experiencing strong growth worldwide, was estimated to be worth over US$24 billion in 2024, according to Ministère de l'Économie, de l'Innovation et de l'Énergie.

News

Canadians trust farmers, survey says – and county's food system

But farmers need to stay visible, not just in a moment of crisis

Frederic Serre
The Advocate

Amid the ongoing trade tensions between Canada and Donald Trump's United States, Canadians say they trust farmers and scientists to lead them through the conflict, according to a new Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (CCFI) research report.

According to the CCFI's 2025 Public Trust Research report, 42 per cent of people surveyed rated Canadian farmers as the most trustworthy among food system stakeholders, while scientists received 44 per cent support.

This "highlights the growing importance of science and research in shaping public perceptions," the report states.

The CCFI is an independent non-profit charitable organization that works to build understanding and trust between Canadians and their food system and is supported through membership from across Canada's food system.

The report is a summary of a national online survey conducted between last Aug. 6 and 25, among 2,900 Canadians, who were asked a series of questions related to food safety and production.

Among the findings, 58 per cent of Canadians said they have a positive view of the food system, up from 45 per cent in 2024, and 45 per cent who said the system is headed in the right direction.

Trust in our products

The CCFI attributed this in large part to Canadians rallying around domestic goods in the face of trade tensions with the U.S.

Surveyed about their top concerns, such as health-care costs, inflation and the economy, 47 per cent of those surveyed said food costs were top of mind, followed by health-care availability (43 per cent), inflation (39 per cent), the changing political climate around the world (38 per cent) and affordability of healthy food (36 per cent).

Results also showed a confidence in farmers as the most trusted to protect the environment, as they garnered a rating of 23 per cent, compared with 19 per cent in 2024.

Canadians' trust in the country's food inspection system scored big, with 27 per cent saying they strongly agree that Canadian food is safe, compared with 14 per cent in 2024.

"Canadians are also expressing record levels of confidence in how the food system is regulated," said the CCFI report. "Two-thirds believe Canada has about the right number of food system regulations, up a significant nine points since 2020."

"When Canadians feel confident that food is both safe and well-regulated, it reinforces trust across the entire food system."

Trust in U.S. imports dropped

Trust in imported food, meanwhile, has flipped in just two years. In 2023, 22 per cent of Canadians polled were more likely to place greater trust in food imports from the U.S. than from other countries. Only 12 per cent said they trusted other sources more. By summer of this year, that relationship had reversed, as 23 per cent now say they trust food from other countries more than from the U.S., nearly double the share from 2023.

This reversal reflects shifting realities in cross-border perceptions and global food dynamics. Recent coverage of U.S. food safety and regulatory rollbacks, alongside growing confidence in Canada's food standards, may be contributing factors.

"The change underscores how public trust in imports is not static, it evolves with current events, trade relationships, and consumer awareness of where food comes from," said the CCFI report.

Tensions between the two countries appear to have also influenced Canadians' impressions of food beyond their borders.

The CCFI's findings compare Canada's ongoing trade conflict with the U.S. to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 as both times that saw the "food system thrust into the spotlight, both nationally and locally."

"Positive impressions are rising, but they remain fragile," the report said. "To sustain and strengthen this momentum, Canada's food system will need more than temporary visibility."

The CCFI says the 2025 results are optimistic, and both the country and the food production industry needs to cash in on this optimism.

"To hold onto this trust, the sector must turn temporary attention into lasting connection," the report said. "Canadians respond to what feels close, human, and relevant. Trusted messengers such as farmers, scientists, and food experts need to stay visible, not only in moments of crisis or national pride but in the everyday stories that remind people why Canada's food system matters."

QFA Editorial

PATRICKLAUZON PHOTOGRAPHE/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Agriculture is a crucial part of the wider Canadian economy, and farmers should put their elbows up.

It's tough sometimes to look on the bright side

John McCart
QFA President

There are not too many great things happening in agriculture right now. I know that many readers might be getting tired of all the doom and gloom surrounding a farm in 2025, but let's face it, farmers do not live and work in a land of unicorns and rainbows.

Public perception of farmers ranks us as one of the most trustworthy professionals, just behind firefighters. We all work hard to make a living, grow our business and take care of the land. But sometimes that isn't enough to avoid all the difficulties we now face.

Path forward is unclear

After many months of listening to the rhetoric coming from south of the border, farmers are trying to figure out how to navigate the future. What can possibly happen next? That is a greater mystery than anything I have ever experienced. Unfortunately for agriculture, as with so many other sectors across Canada, our path forward is very unclear.

The forestry sector across Canada is in great peril.

I sit on the Laurentian-Outaouais wood producers' syndicate. Recently, our meeting did not show much promise for 2026. With the trade agreements in limbo, Canadian lumber heading south is in trouble. The tariffs are also jeopardizing new construction in Canada, as there is no money to finance new homes.

As people's jobs are not secure and interest rates are still too high, the construction industry is not where it should be. The ripple effect will be huge. All sectors rely on each other.

Recognition a struggle

For as long as I have been involved with farm organizations, there has been constant pressure on all forms of government to recognize the value of farmers and farming, and food processing. It is a crucial part of the wider Canadian economy. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Union des producteurs agricoles, as well as all other provincial farm unions, and all local groups work together to bring agriculture and food to the forefront and to the attention of elected officials.

Not all work is done on the federal level.

At the regional level recently, resolutions were passed to control the wild turkey problem, and to allow long grain augers to be transported on public roads. These are just two examples of the work being done. Sometimes, the little things can make a big difference.

But the big things matter, too.

More needed, not less

Recently, the federal budget was tabled, and at a time when farmers expected more from the feds, the reverse happened. Many government departments, including Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, were hit with a 15-per-cent cut. That will be difficult. Programs need to be expanded to help with risk management and climate change.

And cuts at the federal level will mean cuts at the provincial level, as the corresponding departments of agriculture work with each other. How this will affect the average farmer remains to be seen.

I think it is time for farmers to embrace the "elbows up attitude." We cannot sit passively on the sidelines while waiting for the leaders to make the next move.

All sectors affected

The lobby effort to protect supply management must be doubled. Remember, dairy farmers are beef producers, too, and enjoy the high prices. Egg and poultry producers buy a lot of grain. We are all in this together.

As Canadians, we can hold our heads high knowing we produce the best quality of food there is. Despite the challenges of the weather, trade and politics, farmers can look on the bright side knowing that we produce something that everyone needs three times a day.

The fabulous sunrises and sunsets don't hurt either.

Climate of change

YUESTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Regenerative agriculture started out as a small grassroots movement. Its popularity grew exponentially until about 2016, but that growth slowed and then declined from 2021 to 2023.

Regenerative farming is shifting

Are small growers losing sway to large food-processing firms?

Christopher Bonasia
The Advocate

Regenerative agriculture's meaning is shifting now that processors and larger corporations are involved, raising questions about who is controlling the narrative as global leaders consider international policy, new research says.

A recent study, Beyond the buzz: analyzing actors promoting regenerative agriculture in Europe, was published in the journal *Nature* earlier this month. Its analysis is limited to five European countries – Germany, Spain, France, Portugal and the Netherlands – but anecdotally, the conclusions ring true here in Canada as well.

Regenerative agriculture started out as a small grassroots movement between the 1980s and 2010, after which its popularity grew exponentially until about 2016, according to the study. But that growth slowed and then declined from 2021 to 2023 as the number of new farmers engaging in regenerative agriculture dropped.

Why the drop?

The researchers questioned whether this drop was caused by saturation among farmers, declining interest or a shift towards other, similar concepts like agroecology. But they also note that non-farming actors have played an increasingly prominent role in regenerative agriculture over time. These actors – 16 categories were identified – include processors, NGOs and financial institutions.

By analyzing 849 actors across the five countries, the researchers found that there was variation both within groups and between groups of actors regarding stated regenerative agriculture themes and practices. A total of 4,935 practices were identified. Environmental concerns predominated, especially within the theme of soil health and biodiversity, though there were regional variations as well – regenerative agriculture actors in Spain emphasized nutrient cycling as a third priority, while those in France and Portugal focused on climate regulation as a third priority. The results indicated that regenerative agriculture practices are overall regionally specific.

Socio-economic themes were a secondary consideration, and healthy diets was not mentioned by any actors.

The researchers say these results align with studies from other regions like in Africa, Asia and Australia, though no studies in North America were mentioned.

Similarities and differences

While the general themes of regenerative agriculture were shared among different actors, there were significant differences in how regenerative agriculture is talked about, defined and understood among farmers compared with supply-chain actors, like processors. Farmers were more likely to equate regenerative agriculture with specific practices, while supply-chain actors were more likely to refer to reducing certain practices, without clarified timelines or specific metrics.

This makes sense – farmers can make specific commitments about what will work on their farms, but actors further along the supply chain need to leave wiggle room for variations between farms. For example: no-till agriculture may be fine on a farm with well-drained soils, but those with clay soils can benefit more from light tillage.

Who are the influencers?

But the researchers say that the type of actors influencing regenerative agriculture is shifting away from farmers. This raises concerns about who exactly has the power to shape the narrative, especially considering that 86 per cent of the top 100 global food companies have made regenerative agriculture commitments.

Furthermore, regenerative agriculture has been a focus of policy commitments at past COP conferences, and may be so again at this year's COP30 summit in Brazil. With a handful of major agri-food actors committing billions of dollars at these events, the researchers warn that "small-scale farmers organizing into localized and territorial networks cannot compete with the agro-industry" – and especially given that most farmers who identify as regenerative operate primarily at a small scale. This power imbalance risks watering down regenerative agriculture standards in order to allow strategies to be scaled up for larger actors.

Trends in agriculture

NIYAZZ/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

From getting rid of the auto pact to dismantling the Canadian Wheat Board, politicians have contributed to the problems we now face.

Chris Judd
The Advocate

Mistakes are often difficult to fix

And political mistakes could take years to undo

We have just been through another municipal election season, and now provincial and federal politics will take up more space.

Most candidates preach that they "can do better," but there seems to be very few solutions to problems that, in some cases, were started 30 or more years ago.

Before we built our last dairy barn more than two decades ago, we spent many years visiting modern dairy facilities and attending dairy conferences. It was during a tour of a dairy farm at that time that an experienced dairy specialists with the Ontario department of agriculture said: "Watch closely for things that those dairy farmers did right, and also what they did wrong. Don't redo the mistakes that they did."

An engineer once said: "It's a lot less expensive to tear up plans and blueprints to make changes before the cement is poured than after."

Weighed our options

We also looked at many sites before deciding on where we would build the barn. We owned three of the possible sites. Four other possible sites we did not own. And one site was in another province. I also hired different dairy facility engineers to look at the sites before making a final decision.

Our family also took many looks at the project before we began construction or seeking financing. Large projects can take generations to pay off, and I probably wouldn't live that long.

Let's get back to the mistakes made by different politicians as far back as 50 years.

The first Canada-U.S. free-trade agreement signed in the 1980s traded away our "auto-pact" that dated back to the 1960s in which Canada and the U.S. ensured that a very large percentage of the parts that made up cars and trucks had to be made in North America. Canada also later bargained away a portion of our Canadian dairy market to the U.S. in hopes of saving our auto industry. You have seen the outcome of that.

Softwood lumber market

The next big mistake was when Canada bargained away the "tariff-free" export of softwood lumber, cedar shakes and mulch to the U.S. Canada had already taken the U.S. to the world court when the Americans illegally charged a tariff on Canadian softwood lumber. Canada won the challenge and the appeal. But then the federal government changed. And Canada did not collect all the tariffs the U.S. had illegally collected from Canada.

The new Canadian government also gave the U.S. the right to collect tariffs on softwood lumber in the future (and still does). The impact of that was felt in Pontiac county, where I live. Within a year of tariffs being imposed on softwood lumber and cedar products, 14 sawmills of various sizes shut down in this region. And they have never reopened.

Wheat board made a difference

Canadian farmers used to be protected by the Canadian Wheat Board, which was operated by the federal government and guided by grain farmers. For decades, Canada was recognized for producing the best wheat in the world. The wheat board also had guided and maintained efficient movement of grain from farms to shipping ports at both the east and west coasts, with grain constantly in transport even before it was sold.

The huge "merchants of grain" did not like the wheat board because the grain merchants could not control the Canadian grain markets and exports. Even though the Canadian grain farmers had won a vote to maintain the Canadian Wheat Board, the federal government did away with the board, and the huge merchants of grain soon took over.

That is when they began to "blend" below-standard grain into some excellent quality grain so it could be sold at a higher price than it was worth. Soon, the world could not trust Canadian grain to be the world's best. Now, Italian wheat is recognized as the best bread wheat and unsurpassed as the best wheat for pasta.

Years of harm

Many of our "wanna-be" politicians were not in power or even born when some of those major problems were started. Some of those very large expensive mistakes may take many years and some expensive, unpopular decisions to begin to "undo" or repair.

In some cases, there are some very large financial investments working to maintain things as they are and possibly lots of lobbying dollars are being used to keep things as they are. The lesson here is we should always choose our political representatives carefully and do some deep research before blaming elected officials for mistakes that were made decades ago.

Often the political climate in a province can drastically affect long-term investment and local job markets for years.

Young Farmers

Mac grad brings farm heritage to Kahnawake

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

KAHSHENNOKTHA DEER

Deer participated in the 2025 McGill Pow Wow in September at the Mac Campus Farm.

Growing up in the Mohawk Territory of Kahnawake, Kahshennoktha Deer felt pretty lucky to be a kid with cows for "pets."

"I think my first memory of agriculture was staring in wonderment at our cattle," said the 27-year-old. "Being a little girl obsessed with animals, it was a wonderful experience to have cows compared to my peers, who had goldfish or dogs!"

Deer's father, Bryan, kept a sizeable beef hobby farm of 30-40 head on a 45-acre plot. While the herd grazed in the winter months, the workload was low. But summer brought a larger chore load and fond memories of family get-togethers.

"The most vivid memories I have of working on the farm was when it was time for culling," Deer said. "It was always an event where friends and family would come by to help, as we would cull and process by ourselves on the farm. Then we'd bring the quartered cows to an abattoir to be processed and prepared."

Bryan had worked in the agricultural industry as a young man, and graduated from Macdonald Campus's Farm Management and Technology (FMT) program in 1983. Having a Mac grad in the family, combined with her love of animals, made Kahshennoktha dream of being a farm animal veterinarian, a dream her father had also shared in his youth, but was unable to finish his schooling. She enrolled in the FMT program in 2015.

Lifetime friends

"After some time in the FMT program, you begin to feel like everyone becomes a part of your family, from your fellow classmates to your professors," Deer said. "That is the biggest highlight for me, I was able to make friendships that will last a lifetime and memories that I will always fondly look back on."

Deer's time at Mac would have a big impact on her life and career. In 2016, she began working at the Macdonald Campus Farm as part of her summer internship, working as a farm labourer at the Horticultural Research Centre and Mac Market. Little did she know that, nearly a decade later, she'd be working there in a whole different capacity.

In the meantime, Deer felt her career path leading elsewhere. After graduating from FMT in 2021, she felt the urge to pursue an education degree at McGill University with the ultimate goal of teaching agricultural sciences at the Kahnawake Survival School, whose mission is to produce proud and self-sufficient Kanien'kehá:ka youth through a curriculum based on Kanien'kehá:ka language, beliefs and traditions.

Interest growing at home

"It's important for Native communities to be self-sufficient," Deer said. "We should be able to support ourselves when times get tough. And I am glad that I am starting to see a growing interest in agriculture back in Kahnawake."

Despite the enormous start-up and investment costs for an aspiring farmer, Deer sees agriculture as a viable career path for youth, due to labour shortages that plague the industry.

"People need to eat. Food needs to be grown. A career in agriculture is recession-resistant," she said. "There are so many opportunities in agriculture for young farmers to expand and delve into, so long as you are willing to do a bit of hard work. I do, however, understand the hardships of trying to start up a farming operation, but there are so many jobs out there waiting to be filled."

Offers to work

While pursuing her education degree, Deer's old bosses at Mac remembered her and decided to tap the former student for a new job as a field operations lead.

"First, I specialized in greenhouse maintenance," Deer said. "And now I am taking care of seeding and transplanting for our fields and for sale, our social media, market organizing, and customer service."

Working at the Mac Campus farm and dealing with customers regularly has led Deer to become aware of unsettling trends in consumers' perception of agriculture.

"Farmers are trying to keep you fed, not harm you," Deer said. "I see a growing trend of consumers becoming wary of farmers and the agricultural sector as a whole. Instead of speaking to and learning from farmers about what goes into the daily operation, they go on the internet and latch onto any negative thing about agriculture they can find."

FMT grad Kahshennoktha Deer is now a employee who works in the orchard at the Mac campus in Ste. Anne de Bellevue.

Deer says that while her dream of teaching agriculture in Kahnawake is not out of the picture, she is happy where she is with her job at Mac and within the Mac community.

"Since I am working in the horticultural sector, I do feel an odd sense of connection to my ancestral roots," she said. "My family had always had backyard gardens, and sometimes my traditional knowledge blends with my modern agricultural knowledge."

Editorial

RADIO-CANADA.CA

In 2025, Quebec's farmers donated nearly $1.5 million to food banks.

Latest report on hunger in Quebec is startling

Martin Caron
UPA President

The Banques alimentaires du Québec (BAQ), a non-profit organization that coordinates a provincial network of food banks and community organizations to fight food insecurity in Quebec, recently released its Bilan-Faim 2025 report, confirming that food insecurity continues to rise across Quebec.

The number of requests BAQ receives each month has now exceeded 3 million – a 7-per-cent increase over last year and a 37-per-cent jump since 2022. The BAQ network is supporting 600,000 people every month, up 7.6 per cent from last year.

These statistics are deeply alarming.

According to BAQ, food banks are managing to distribute more food, but they're struggling to meet the growing demand. Funding from the Quebec government, indexed to the cost of living, is not keeping pace with the real increase in need.

As president of the Union des producteurs agricoles, and also as a farmer and a citizen, I am deeply affected by this issue.

Did you know that 35 per cent of those receiving assistance are children?

Children most vulnerable

In fact, more than 47,000 additional children have received food support so far in 2025 compared with 2022. And 20.6 per cent of households that receive support do so despite the fact that household members have jobs that provide their main source of income. These numbers are both staggering and deeply concerning.

The UPA's specialized groups continue to watch these developments carefully. They also contribute money and farm-grown products to the community every year.

In 2025, these donations totalled nearly $1.5 million, a testament to the commitment and collective action of Quebec's farmers.

UPA groups doing their part

Community support from the agricultural sector also happens through local and regional initiatives. One example is the Viande Solidaire project, led by the UPA Coaticook syndicate and the UPA Estrie Federation, which recovers meat from vulnerable animals (i.e., those that are injured or aging) and distributes it at low cost to food banks.

We can also highlight the UPA's partnership with *La Tablée des Chefs*, whose dual mission is to feed people in need and to help young people develop food autonomy through cooking workshops.

Help is expanding

The food voucher program, implemented in the MRC of Portneuf and in the Bas-Saint-Laurent region, aims to fight food insecurity and social isolation by helping people source fresh products from farmers' markets and local supply chains. Work is under way to secure ongoing funding and to expand the program across Quebec.

Meanwhile, the situation isn't any brighter south of the border. About 20 Democratic-led states have taken legal action against the Trump administration to force it to maintain the food stamps program (officially known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP). Even though more than 42 million Americans rely on this program, the administration has announced that payments will be suspended due to the ongoing government shutdown.

The Quebec government will eventually have to take a hard look at these statistics, which, year after year, show a troubling rise in need. If the government decides to launch a formal initiative to address this growing crisis, Quebec's agricultural sector would welcome the opportunity to take part. As studies in recent years have shown, our agricultural producers can do even more to help feed our world.

UPA calls for consultation on expanding wind farms

Frederic Serre
The Advocate

Quebec farmers are calling on the province to hold public meetings on the environmental impact of wind power development on agricultural, forest and inhabited land.

The Union des producteurs agricoles says it has growing concerns about harmful economic, social, and environmental consequences of wind power development on land owned by farmers.

Quebec currently has 44 wind farms operating in the province, with a capacity of about 4,000 megawatts (MW), and with increased development of wind power technology, the province predicts that by 2035, more than 10,000 MW of wind power will be added – enough electricity to supply more than 2 million households throughout the province.

"Despite the many projects currently under study or in the process of being implemented, no comprehensive analysis has yet been conducted to assess the cumulative effect of this industry on agricultural and forest land and on the social acceptability of this energy development," said UPA president Martin Caron, who is calling on the province to hold public consultations immediately.

His announcement came in the wake of plans announced by the province to continue to develop wind farms in various locations across the province.

The first wind farm was established in 2022 in St. Rémi and St. Michel, through a partnership between Kruger Energy and Kahnawà:ke Sustainable Energies (KSE), which received the green light from Hydro-Québec to start operations.

Under the plan, the province's wind farms were set to power the equivalent of more than 2,500 homes and sell renewable electricity – generated by six wind turbines – to Hydro-Québec for at least 20 years. Hosting municipalities and numerous landowners will benefit greatly from this initiative whose economic benefits are estimated at $15 M, Kruger officials announced. This project has since expanded.

However, Caron says the news is not all that good for farmers who are dealing with the wind farm fallback.

"This situation is all the more concerning given that Quebec's arable land represents only 2 per cent of the province's total area, or 0.28 hectares per capita," he said. "Any loss of agricultural land directly compromises the food security and self-sufficiency of Quebecers."

Caron said the "UPA believes that a national public debate is likely to have a significant impact on the environment and the territory."

NEW BUDGET: Risk, marketing, inspection boosted

From Page 1

The budget confirms several previously announced agricultural measures totaling hundreds of millions in new spending. Key enhancements include a $109.2-million boost to the AgriStability program for 2025-2026, increasing the compensation rate to 90 per cent from 80 and raising the payment ceiling to $6 million, up from $3 million

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) received significant attention, with $76 million over five years allocated for digital transformation to modernize trade tools and phase out paper-based systems. An additional $33 million will support the fight against African swine fever and avian influenza, while $32.8 million over four years will expand market access for Canadian agricultural exports.

The budget also increases funding for the AgriMarketing program by $75 million starting in 2026-2027 to strengthen export diversification to new markets. The Advance Payments Program will receive $97.5 million over two years to temporarily increase the interest-free amount to $500,000 for canola producers in 2025 and 2026.

Starting in 2026, the AgriStability program will be enhanced to include feed costs for livestock associated with leased pastures, at an estimated cost of $8 million annually. The budget also reinstate the Accelerated Investment Incentive, providing enhanced first-year deductions for most capital assets.

How the budget views ag

The budget projects a deficit of $36.3 billion for the current fiscal year, lower than the $48.3 billion anticipated in the Fall 2024 Economic Statement. However, the deficit for 2025-2026 is projected to climb to $78.3 billion before declining to $56.6 billion by 2029-2030.

To eliminate operating deficits by 2028-2029, Ottawa aims to reduce annual spending growth from 8.1 to just 0.5 per cent, generating $60 billion in savings over five years. Most departments have been asked to achieve 15 per cent savings over the next three years.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) will generate annual savings totaling $154.7 million starting in fiscal year 2028-2029. The department will gradually phase out certain programs outside its core mandate, including the Agricultural Solutions for Climate – Living Labs program, which currently funds 14 projects across Canada.

The UPA noted that the 15-per-cent departmental cuts will "significantly exacerbate the current underfunding of the sector," pointing out that while governments worldwide allocate an average of 2 per cent of spending to agriculture, Canadian support remains below 1 per cent.

The sector supports more than 541,000 jobs across Canada and contributed $67 billion to GDP in 2024 – five times more than the automotive sector. However, trade tensions with the United States are jeopardizing this contribution, making market diversification efforts particularly important.

Ignored issues

"We also see this as a missed opportunity to address some of our sector's most pressing challenges," Currie said.

He noted that issues such as "a permanently increased interest-free threshold for the Advance Payments Program, labour disruptions in the food supply chain, protecting farmland through Agricultural Impact Assessments and modernizing the *Canadian Grain Act*" did not receive adequate attention.

The sector still lacks enhancements to business risk management programs, stronger support for domestic food production, and a national strategy to address chronic labour shortages, according to the CFA.

Ag infrastructure

The budget confirms a previous commitment to invest $5 billion in major infrastructure projects and establishes a new Major Projects Office to serve as a single point of contact for expediting projects of national interest. The CFA has indicated it will monitor whether agriculture receives appropriate prioritization in infrastructure spending decisions.

The organization also plans to track the government's promised red tape reduction efforts to ensure regulatory efficiency improvements materialize for the agricultural sector without compromising essential programs.

"With the budget's acknowledgement of agriculture as a key strategic sector, we will be focused on continuing to work with the government to ensure agriculture is appropriately prioritized in infrastructure spending and red tape reduction, while working to see those remaining issues addressed in future policy decisions," Currie said.

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Gary Bowers, Coaticook
Frank Liebrecht, Sutton
Gladys McCaig, Ormstown
John Hortop, Ormstown

The Forum Report

Canada's trade balancing Act: Navigating shifting sands in global negotiations

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

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If trade negotiations between Canada and the U.S. resume, they will include the much-debated issue of supply management, according to the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute.

Trying to figure out what is happening with international trade negotiations is a bit like walking on shifting sands these days.

The dizzying number of trade agreements – referred to by their equally dizzying acronyms of CUSMA, CETA or the CPTPP – that govern how agricultural products move across borders means understanding the markets, and that can be daunting. And, if you've been paying attention to pretty much anything in Canada-U.S. relations in the past seven months, you probably know it's getting worse.

"The world is changing, and it's changing fast," said Tyler McCann, managing director of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, an Ottawa-based think tank that tries to lead and influence agricultural policy development in Canada.

"We need the United States because trade diversification is hard. The rule book's been thrown out, but that doesn't mean that we live in a rule-less world. It just means that a new one is being written."

Balancing act

McCann spent nearly a decade as a political staffer in the Harper government, working on trade issues within the Ministry of Agriculture. Getting an up-close look at the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) talks, he came to appreciate the delicate balance that occurs at international negotiating tables.

"Canada doesn't get to decide what's on the table or not," McCann said. "Ultimately, Canada needs to act domestically to make itself more resilient globally."

And "globally" often means being resilient regarding our largest trading partner – the United States – particularly when a new president changes the rulebook.

Something not realized by many, McCann said, is that Canada is often the chief beneficiary in the U.S.-Canada trade relationship. Canada exports more animal and agricultural products to the U.S. than vice versa, giving us a trade surplus position.

U.S. is critical to Canada

"When we hear the rhetoric, when you hear people talk about that relationship, I think it's often lost just how critical that market access has been for Canada," McCann said.

What's surprising in all this is that, despite all of President Trump's tariff wars and talk of the "51st state," Canadian exports to the U.S. haven't slowed down since January – they've actually increased.

"What we're seeing is that we've been able to navigate this trade war, and it reflects that the worst of the trade war hasn't been felt yet."

Of course, the Canada-U.S. trade war became cartoonish on Oct. 24th, when Trump posted a statement that all trade negotiations with Canada were being immediately terminated. Trump's decision was in response to a U.S. television ad paid for by the Government of Ontario that included a speech by former U.S. president Ronald Reagan about the harmful effects of tariffs.

This is indicative of how Trump is, as McCann said, changing the rulebook on international trade.

Movement behind Trump

"It isn't just the president and his tweets, but a movement of people that have come behind him who are taking advantage of his popularity, and they're using that to rewrite how international trade works and to disrupt it."

McCann characterizes this movement as one that believes in protectionism and changing trade for the strength of U.S. domestic markets. In other words, something very different from the neo-liberal trade policies that held that more trade is good for all, the reigning philosophy of the Reagan era.

"And that's not something that will change when a new president comes along," McCann said. "It will continue as long as the Republicans keep getting elected."

The rubber really hits the road on this issue when it comes to things like supply management. Canada's protected egg, poultry and dairy industries have been a major irritant in trade talks for the U.S., which has viewed supply management as contrary to NAFTA and now its successor, CUSMA (the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement).

Prime Minister Mark Carney, like Justin Trudeau before him, has explicitly stated his government would not sacrifice supply management for trade gains in other areas of the economy. But many industry analysts have speculated that just isn't a promise the Canadian government can keep.

"For years, we've had this big debate in Canadian ag policy about whether or not supply management should be on or off the table," McCann said.

Supply management on the table

"And I don't think that's a relevant debate. If the U.S. says, 'We want to talk about dairy,' Canada is going to talk about dairy."

"The world is changing, and it's changing fast," said Tyler McCann, managing director of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute.

For McCann – and the governments whose trade tactics he follows closely – negotiations are all about give and take. Often, agriculture is not the biggest factor in a country's economy.

"I don't know any government that goes into a negotiation and willingly gives things up. But if they have to make concessions, governments are going to make concessions in order to get a deal. And it all comes down to the question: 'What's really in the national interest?'"

Farm debt mediation helps producers in need

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

Canadian farmers facing financial pressure now have access to free professional support through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Farm Debt Mediation Service (FDMS), a program designed to help ag producers manage debt – and avoid losing their operations.

The little-known service, which was launched in 1998, provides qualified financial consultants and professional mediators at no cost to producers experiencing difficulty with debt. The program is completely voluntary, private and confidential. Even better, FDMS offers a neutral environment where farmers and creditors can work together to find solutions that suit them both.

"After over 200 mediation meetings, I can still be surprised at how effective our mediators are at providing alternative solutions that work," said Art Bailey, a CPA from Ontario who works with FDMS. "The informal environment encourages participants to talk to one another openly."

Sharon Wilson has worked with Ag Canada's Farm Debt Mediation Service since the program was launched in 1998.

Fast, easy service

The process begins when farmers apply to the service, either after receiving a Notice of Intent from creditors or when they anticipate difficulty meeting upcoming debt obligations. Within one business day, applicants receive confirmation and additional information. Within a week, an independent financial consultant meets with the farmer to review their situation and develop a clear picture of their finances.

"Farmers appreciate having someone to talk to, help deal with the stress, who understands their situation, their business and can help them deal with the paperwork and the creditors," explained Yvonne Thyssen-Post, a Nova Scotia-based agrologist.

The financial consultant helps farmers explore options they may not have considered and provides an informed, independent appraisal of all the possible solutions. A professional mediator then facilitates a meeting between the farmer, consultant and creditors to present a recovery plan and negotiate an arrangement.

Success stories from the program demonstrate its effectiveness. Bailey recalls working with a farmer who had operated for more than 50 years but was about to lose his property due to unmanageable debt. By arranging a family meeting and developing a collaborative recovery plan, the mediation succeeded.

"He is still in business today," Bailey said. "I still pass by occasionally, and the place looks better than it has in years."

Sharon Wilson, a chartered mediator from Alberta who has worked with FDMS since its inception, shared another success story involving a food production farmer facing operational constraints and machinery breakdowns. Through mediation, creditors provided refinancing options with longer terms, allowing the farmer to hire help and continue expanding.

"Today I see those food products and trucks all over the place," Wilson said.

Experts emphasize the importance of seeking help early.

Act sooner rather that later

"If you see a problem coming, like a missed payment or non-revolving line of credit, that is when to apply to FDMS," Thyssen-Post said. "Sooner rather than later. There are more options when you apply early than when you wait until you lose control of the decision."

The entire mediation process lasts between 50 and 120 days from application to signed agreement. The majority of farmers who use the service successfully reach arrangements with their creditors, providing them with hope and a path forward.

To learn more about Ag Canada's Farm Debt Mediation Service, visit agriculture.canada.ca/fdms, write to aafc.fdms-smmea.aac@agr.gc.ca or call 1-866-452-5556

An issue of centimetres

Exchange of land between two farmers in Laval proving to be a big, drawn out and expensive deal

Frederic Serre
The Advocate

Tensions are mounting between a Laval farmer and the city over the expansion of the farmer's warehouse that the municipality says is illegally encroaching on his neighbour's property by 30 centimetres.

Normand Richard, a career engineer who started farming with his wife two years ago as a retirement project, expanded one of the buildings on his property in Laval in 2024 – except he did not realize that the expansion spilled onto neighbour Denis Brisebois's property.

Although the Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec (CPTAQ) twice authorized the greenhouse vegetable grower to exchange land with Brisebois to bring his building into compliance, the City of Laval cited an error in the interpretation of its own regulations as grounds for not granting the permit.

The city sent an inspector to Richard's property in the fall of 2024 to take a closer look at the building, which was being transformed into a facility to wash and package fruits and vegetables. Richard and Brisebois, also a farmer, agreed at the time to exchange land that would bring Richard's building into compliance.

Last May, the CPTAQ ruled in favour of the project. However, when it came time for Laval to issue its subdivision permit to Richard, city officials changed their minds, saying Laval had misunderstood its own regulations and miscalculated the measurements to be exchanged between the two farmers. The city sent the correction back to the CPTAQ, which turned down the request on Sept. 30.

Late last month Laval said the case was progressing "smoothly" and that it was expecting a ruling "shortly."

A frustrated Richard says that while the city is dragging its feet, he is suffering financial losses of nearly $2 million due to having to halt his expansion project.

"We've been waiting for a year and racking our brains to get the subdivision permit as quickly as possible," Richard said. "We haven't hammered a single nail since then. And now they're telling me I'll get my permit in May, maybe, or in March or April."

Richard says he sent a formal notice to Laval last month urging the city to issue the subdivision permit in accordance with the CPTAQ's decision.

News

FUTURE: Forum offers big-picture perspective

From Page 1

In fact, last month, the Canadian Agricultural Policy Institute addressed this issue of how to shift policy during a two-day forum in Ottawa. And it was done in collaboration with three other independent agricultural institutes from around the world – the Australian Farm Institute; the U.S.-based Farm Foundation; and the European think-tank, Forum for the Future of Agriculture. Together they form what is called the Global Forum on Farm Policy and Innovation (GFFPI). Its self-stated aim is to "help the sector find its footing in this shifting landscape."

The exercise looked at Canadian agriculture with a big-picture perspective, attempting to take what policy wonks would call the "30,000-foot view," the term used to describe a strategic, objective assessment that considers the overall plan and context rather than focusing on the details.

One of the major takeaways from the conference: "Agriculture has the capacity to unite rather than divide," the CAPI report concluded. "The sector can channel volatility into opportunity when stakeholders choose to collaborate rather than retreat behind borders or vested interests."

Global agriculture "faces escalating pressure," the report states.

Where climate change once dominated the focus of policy discussions, the concern has expanded to include the need for technological change and innovation. And now trade policy has captured the latest headlines and further shifted the public conversations involving agriculture in countries around the globe.

"At first glance, the current state of agricultural trade reflects division," the report states. "OECD projections suggest the Americas and Central Europe will remain net food exporters while much of the rest of the world will depend on imports. It's expected that Australia and New Zealand would also hold their current position as (non-subsidized) net agricultural exporters. The share of global production that is traded has held steady at around 23 per cent for the past five years – up from 16 per cent in 2000 – but behind that stability lie shifting flows. Sub-Saharan Africa's net imports of basic food commodities, for example, are expected to rise by 55 per cent between 2025 and 2034."

"The global food and agriculture system is navigating a period of profound disruption," the report states. "Climate pressures, geopolitical tensions, economic volatility, shifting consumer expectations, and questions about the role of evidence in policymaking are converging in ways that challenge long-held assumptions. In this environment, agriculture sits at the centre of debates about sustainability, security and prosperity."

Specific policy suggestions were not put forward in the report. But consensus was found. As the report concluded: "The old adage says: 'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.' That wisdom is more relevant today than ever. In a world that grows more interconnected each year, the notion that any nation can act in isolation and remain untouched by the consequences of its choices is increasingly untenable.

"The path to resilient, sustainable, and fair food systems lies not in going faster alone, but in going further together. By cultivating trust and focusing on outcomes that matter for people, the planet, and prosperity, the sector can sow enduring common ground for the decades ahead."

The Resourceful Naturalist

Nature offers several examples of superior dental plans

Paul J. Hetzler
ISA Certified Arborist

KHLUNGCENTER/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Unlike farmers, who could use a good dental plan, some animal species don't need one.

The majority of farmers and self-employed folks had no dental coverage until the Canadian Dental Care Plan came along. I applaud it, but there are limits to what it pays for, and depending on one's income range, various co-payments may apply. I once had a plan that only covered participating providers, and the nearest one was on an island out in Lake Superior. Not really, but it was a long drive. Taking care of our teeth can be challenging.

And yet, the natural world is rife with examples of tough, durable choppers, some of which are essentially decay-proof. Maybe it's time we looked at some of these cases for ideas on how to improve human teeth.

One option is to get self-replacing teeth like sharks. This is not fiction – there is solid research under way on how we could imitate the way sharks generate new teeth as a means for us to re-grow any tooth that we lose from breakage or decay. It turns out that shark teeth grow as needed from stem cells. Right now, human stem cells are only used in bone-marrow transplants for cancer patients, but other uses, like multiple sclerosis treatments, are being studied.

A shark has multiple rows of teeth in its mouth at all times, a feature we might not want to acquire. We're more interested in the part where a shiny new tooth automatically moves forward, in what's described as a "natural conveyor belt" system, to take the place of a lost tooth. In addition, sharks never run out of teeth, another aspect that intrigues us.

Growing actual shark teeth is another matter, and might require a gene-editing tool like "Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats," or CRISPR. The acronym is fitting: one of its first miracles was an apple that stays crisper even if sliced and left out for ages. Nature's answer to the Twinkie, I suppose.

Dating might suffer with shark teeth, since you couldn't smile on profile pictures. Also, it would be awkward if you're out to dinner and an old tooth stays behind in your pizza slice after a bite.

Metal is another option. After all, the villain "Jaws" in the film *The Spy Who Loved Me* had steel teeth, and when thrown to his presumed death into a shark tank by James Bond, "Jaws" bit the shark, killing it. Sort of a riff on the rock-paper-scissors theme, where endless sharp teeth are deadly, but metal is more so.

Other options

Nature has endowed a number of invertebrate species with teeth made of zinc, iron or copper. With a little gene editing we would have a choice of materials in addition to a self-sharpening, virtually indestructible mouth.

Metal-heads first came to my attention in leaf-cutter ants, who pass their time snipping leaves into lace doilies or other inspired shapes. The ants then hike their leaf scissor-art to their underground nests and inoculate it with a fungus upon which the whole colony feeds.

Researchers long knew that leaf-cutter ants could shred foliage as well as human flesh with apparent ease, and that ant jaws stayed razor-sharp throughout their lives. How they kept their chops tip-top was a mystery for a long time because the working edge of an ant's jaw is too fine to see with an electron microscope.

Dr. Robert Schofield, a biophysicist at the University of Oregon, was able to crack the case using cutting-edge technology, you might say. In 2021 he enlisted Pacific Northwest National Laboratory's atom-probe tomography to reveal that ant teeth are made of protein fused to individual zinc atoms to form a nanoscale blade. Mechanical loads are evenly and perfectly distributed along the jaw.

Bristle worms, found throughout the world's oceans, have a different take on dentistry. There are about 10,000 species of these annelids, which originated some 500 million years ago and are mostly in the 10-centimetre-size range. Like all segmented worms, their primary distinguishing feature is "creepiness." But last year, professor Christian Hellmich and others at the Vienna University of Technology found that bristle worms' jaws, typically infused with iron, though sometimes with magnesium or zinc, are unbreakable.

But Hellmich says the fact there are metal atoms in the bristle worm jaw does not explain its freakish strength. Turns out the baby worms ooze a protein-metal flux young. This goo hardens into a bullet-proof probably amalgam that will deform under pressure, but flex back to its original shape. Hellmich expects that studying bristle worm teeth will lead to high-strength materials being made "more efficiently and environmentally friendly than we manage today."

An article in the April 2022 edition of the journal *Matter* describes another oral overachiever: the bloodworm. Reaching 36 centimetres long, these residents of intertidal zones are both blood-coloured and bloodthirsty, using their fangs of copper to impale prey. As article co-author Herbert Waite, a biochemist at University of California-Santa Barbara, put it, "These are very disagreeable worms … ill-tempered and easily provoked."

A grumpy predator is bad enough, but this one keeps its head tucked inside its body until it's ready to pounce, whereupon its jaws shoot out like the creature from the film Alien to bite its victim. Oh, and it's venomous as well. Its gross-factor may be off the charts, but it gets high marks for mechanical engineering, too. Given their five-year lifespan and their inability to grow new teeth, bloodworms need durable dentures.

This is the first instance where melanin, which we know as a human skin pigment, has been documented as a structural material. Early in life, bloodworms make a slurry of proteins and melanin, which they infuse with copper scavenged from marine sediments. The result is a scimitar-shaped tusk that would have made any Bronze Age metal worker jealous. According to Waite, bloodworms could be a blueprint for "how to make and engineer better consumer materials."

Beaver have a bite

Closer to home, beavers have iron in their tooth enamel, which is what gives their incisors an orangey colour. The iron strengthens their teeth, and also helps them resist erosion from acids in their environment.

Personally, I'd go for the bloodworm-teeth gene edits, as long as it doesn't make my head retract in between meals. One thing about CRISPR editing is that changes to your genome are heritable. If you sign up for shark teeth, your kids will get them, too. But maybe that's better than having them go without dental coverage their whole lives.

Paul Hetzler is a former Cornell Extension educator. He takes excellent care of his tooth.

Lactanet – Canadian Network for Dairy Excellence

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From data to decisions: Producers talk tech at 2025 Dairy Cattle Industry Forum

Hannah Sweett
Genetics Extension Expert, Lactanet

Lactanet's 2025 Dairy Cattle Industry Forum, co-hosted with STgenetics, took place in Montreal in September. It brought together more than 90 leaders from across the dairy industry to explore the themes of leadership and where the industry is headed. Among the highlights was a producer panel that offered a firsthand look at how technology is reshaping herd management on Canadian farms.

The panel featured Viviane Mathieu of Ferme Caribou in Terrebonne, which has 150 cows; Regula Estermann of Estermann Farm Inc. in Ste. Agnès de Dundee, which has 250 cows; and Joel Stam of Eagle Lee Farm in Norwich, Ont., which has 100. Each producer has adopted different technologies tailored to their farm's needs, ranging from wearable sensors and boluses to cameras and feeding systems. While the tools and herd sizes vary, the motivation behind the use of technology is consistent: improving efficiency, animal health and decision making.

Data driven decisions

With a desire to continuously improve and reach higher levels of herd management, these producers leverage data and technology to make more informed decisions. Real-time monitoring of cow health, activity and rumination, for example, helps improve conception rates, detect mastitis earlier or respond proactively to other health alerts.

Genomic testing is another key tool in their data toolbox. All three producers use it to identify their top animals to breed with sexed semen, and which to breed with beef semen to maximize value. This targeted approach helps optimize genetic progress while improving overall herd profitability.

Viviane Mathieu keeps animal welfare front and centre, investing in cameras that analyze a cow's gait. This allows her to detect issues earlier than with visual observation alone, enabling early prevention and improved performance.

As she explained, "If we can improve cow well being, the better they perform for us. And if we can save two cows a year, we're already paying for the technology."

Regula Estermann also relies on early detection tools, allowing her to identify health events prior to the animal showing any visual signs. This enables her to pinpoint which cows need closer attention, determine which ones to treat, and adjust her management strategies. Her current strategy includes investing in multiple technologies to evaluate their strength and limitations, ultimately selecting those that best suit her herd. Technology is especially important to her given the rising opportunity cost of females.

"The cost of technology relative to animal value has gone down," she said. "Heifers are worth more now, especially with the increased use of beef semen."

Joel Stam takes a collaborative approach, working closely with industry representatives and encouraging shared decision-making across five key departments: genetics, crops, health, nutrition and finance. He meets with each department annually to set goals and develop plans, fostering communication and promoting data-driven decisions across the entire operation.

Tool for training, efficiency and the next generation

Beyond herd management, technology is also helping producers address labour challenges, improve operational efficiency and support employee development.

Estermann uses a hands-on training method, starting with data review on the computer and then heading to the barn to observe the cow. This helps employees recognize early signs of health issues and respond effectively.

Mathieu uses technology to guide her team's decision-making while also easing her own administrative tasks. As a sixth generation farmer, she has seen how each generation brings new tools that make farming more attractive to the next.

Stam echoes this sentiment, emphasizing the importance of engaging younger generations by involving them in decisions and embracing tech-driven solutions. For him, the ultimate return on investment in technology is reduced labour. He prides himself on operating a 100-cow dairy with just one person and three hours of daily chores, all made possible through technology.

Industry gaps, opportunities

Looking ahead, each producer identified what they need from the industry to continue progressing. A common theme emerged: the need for increased collaboration and better data integration. They want to be actively involved in the development of new technologies and encourage providers to run trials on the farm.

This is something Stam particularly enjoys, testing new tools and offering feedback, often challenging providers to think differently. Mathieu believes that with stronger collaboration, technologies could be merged and made more accessible to farms of all sizes, while Estermann sees value in accessing data from other farms, allowing her to learn from peers and refine her management strategies.

Summary

The panel showcased how producers are not only embracing technology but actively shaping its future. From data-driven decision-making and improved animal welfare to labour efficiency and employee training, the panelists demonstrated the impact of innovation on dairy farming.

Yet, their insights also highlighted areas where the industry must evolve, particularly in fostering collaboration, integrating data systems and ensuring more producers are part of the development process.

As the dairy industry continues to advance, it's clear that meaningful progress will depend on partnerships between producers, technology providers and industry leaders, working together to build a more efficient future.

Viviane Mathieu and her crew at Ferme Caribou in Terrebonne.

Regula Estermann and her team at Estermann Farm Inc. in Ste. Agnès de Dundee, Que.

Joel Stam and his team at Eagle Lee Farm in Norwich, Ont.

Grains

Soybean futures rebounding in wake of U.S.-China talks

Ramzy Yelda
Senior Market Analyst
Producteurs de grains du Québec

Since the meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese president Xi Jinping on Oct. 30, relations between the U.S. and China have improved. Still, one cannot say that the trade war is over. Rather, we should refer to the outcome of the talks as a "ceasefire."

Regarding agriculture, China has reduced, but not cancelled, its import tariff on U.S. soybeans. And some Western companies, which had been banned from trading soybeans, were also reinstated. The market has reacted positively to these developments, and soybean futures have rebounded, leading the way for a general grain upswing.

But due to the U.S. government shutdown, which prohibited the publication of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's monthly data, it is not clear how much U.S. soybeans are being purchased by China.

That will only be known by mid-November, when the USDA will publish the monthly World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE). This report will contain the latest estimates of the U.S. crops, as well as world supply and demand data for all the all the major grains, exporters and importers.

Day-long event dedicated to future of grain sector

The next generation of farmers is critical to the future of our farms and communities. With that in mind, the Producteurs de grains du Québec has organized a special day for these farmers, the *Journée de la pérennité du secteur*, next month to address the issues, opportunities and realities affecting the grain industry of tomorrow. It will be a free event open to young people who are passionate about agriculture, as well as for farmers who have transferred or are planning to transfer their business.

The agenda includes inspiring presentations, a good opportunity to exchange ideas, and a special recording of the *Fond'rang* podcast with guests who will share their own stories about transfers or acquisitions.

Mark the date on your calendar: Dec. 16, at Hotel Le Dauphin in Drummondville. And don't forget to register: fr.surveymonkey.com/r/T8GX5PL

PGQ affiliated syndicates to gather for provincial day

The 2025 Journée provinciale, which brings together all directors and secretaries responsible for the Producteurs de grains du Québec's 14 affiliated syndicates, will be held on Dec. 17, at Le Dauphin Hotel in Drummondville. Around 100 participants are expected to attend the annual event.

The networking day will include presentations on various topics. A talk entitled "Comprendre les turbulences sur la scène politique, entre menaces et opportunités" (Understanding the turbulence on the political scene: between threats and opportunities) will be given by Yasmine Abdelfadel, moderator, political analyst and entrepreneur.

Agrinome Sylvie Thibaudeau, who is also an adviser with the Bassin la Guerre agri-environmental club and *Terre à Terre agronomes conseils*, will give a talk entitled "Les cultures de couverture sans fausses notes" (Flawless cover crops). The event will also include a presentation by Francis Goulet, vice-president of the insurance and income protection division at the Financière agricole du Québec. Francis Girard, the executive director of the CÉROM grain research centre, will also make a presentation. Marlène Thiboutot, the coordinator of Concertation Grains Québec, will also take a few minutes to introduce her organization.

Finally, an overview of current hot topics is planned, as well as a presentation by the Producteurs de grains du Québec communications team, which will provide an overview of the organization's 50th anniversary year.

New code now in force

The *Fertilizing Residual Materials Management Code* and the Regulation respecting the regulatory scheme applying to activities on the basis of their environmental impact came into force Nov. 1. The Producteurs de grains du Québec would like to remind producers that they must now use the new forms, both for authorization applications and for activities eligible for a declaration of compliance. For more information (in French), see: www.environnement.gouv.qc.ca/autorisations/autorisations-ministerielles.htm

PRODUCTEURS DE GRAINS DU QUÉBEC

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

Responding to crisis in Haiti

Canadian Foodgrains Bank

The following stories are just two examples of how the Canadian Foodgrains Bank is helping in areas around the globe.

Canadian Lutheran World Relief and the Lutheran World Federation Haiti are cooperating on a food assistance project in the communes of Roseaux and Jeremie in the Grand Anse region of Haiti.

The Caribbean nation has been plagued by recurrent natural disasters, political instability and gang violence deepening food insecurity. It is estimated that more than 5.5 million people require urgent food assistance from March to June 2025.

FOODGRAINSBANK.CA

It is estimated that 25 per cent of the population in the Grand Anse region of Haiti are starving, according to international food security ratings.

The Grand Anse region in southwestern Haiti was devastated by Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and was then struck by an earthquake of 2021. Then, in November 2024, torrential rains, floods and landslides struck the region damaging agriculture, livestock and livelihoods.

In addition, years of conflict and gang violence have isolated the region from the capital. As a result, households are not able to meet their basic food needs as prices have increased significantly.

According to the latest report by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), which measures food insecurity issued in September 2024, 25 per cent of the relevant population of Grand Anse is acutely food insecure. In fact, according to the IPC, the region is in an emergency situation, what it terms as phase 4, whereby people are not just hungry, but are starving. And 30 per cent are in crisis phase 3, which is characterized by a critical shortage of food leaving people to eat less and sell assets to help pay for food.

The national survey reported that the malnutrition rate of children under 5 years old in the region is at 13.8 per cent, which is well above the 10-per-cent threshold set by the World Health Organization. The situation has been further exacerbated by the arrival of thousands of internally displaced people.

The project will provide electronic cash transfers of CAD$172 per month for three months to 577 households comprised of 2,885 individuals.

Strengthening farm production in Democratic Republic of Congo

Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Tearfund Canada, Canadian Baptist Ministries CBM and Communauté Baptiste au Centre de l'Afrique CBCA are partnering on an agriculture and livelihoods project in Eastern North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo.

The community faces several challenges, including low agriculture production for both household consumption and income generation, as well as limited economic and farming skills to support a transition from subsistence to market-oriented farming. Land scarcity and instability in remote areas force farmers to use smaller plots near their villages.

In addition, there are issues with low-quality seeds, market disorganization, lack of entrepreneurial skills, gender inequality in decision-making, an influx of internally displaced persons and climate disruption.

Projects in the past saw some increase in food production, however, the results were not as expected due to insufficient adoption of new technologies and the effects of climate change.

This follow-up project aims to improve food security, food sovereignty and gender-equitable livelihoods for farming households across 16 villages.

The project will focus on four pillars: increasing climate-smart and market-driven agricultural and livestock productivity; enhancing sustainable nutrition; promoting gender equity and positive gender relationships; and increasing sustained household incomes through improved agricultural and business value chains. This project builds on lessons learned from the previous project phase and aims to work with 12,397 participants in 10,956 households with a total of 71,214 members.

LIJAH MUWEZA SEHENE/FOODGRAINSBANK.CA

In North Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, armed conflict has forced Musekula Nyiranzabimana, her husband and their four children out of their home.

The Miner Report

Water quality makes a big difference in the dairy barn

Gift Omoruyi
William H. Miner
Agricultural Research Institute

Water, known as the "universal solvent" is a crucial nutrient for life. It makes up about 60 per cent of the human body.

In dairy cattle, water is the most consumed nutrient, and it makes up about 65 per cent of a mature cow's body composition and accounts for about 80 per cent of an unborn calf. Water serves very essential purposes in the metabolism of dairy cows, including digestion, transport of nutrients, regulation of body temperature, waste removal and, importantly, milk production.

In fact, 85 per cent of milk is made up of water.

The importance of constant water availability to dairy cattle for drinking cannot be overemphasized, especially because they cannot store large amounts of water in their system for long periods, and they keep losing water through respiration, sweat, milk production, evaporation and excretion (urine and feces).

Quantity matters

In a research study where cows were only allowed to get 50 per cent of their normal water intake for four days, the authors saw a 74-per-cent drop in milk yield and negative impacts on their blood profile. However, when water availability was increased to 90 per cent of expected water intake, researchers observed only a 3-per-cent drop in milk.

However, quantity was not the only factor that played a role in how a cow performed. The quality of water is important, too.

Water contains dissolved minerals, organic compounds and microbes that come from the leaching of rocks and soils, and conduits like pipes. These elements can negatively affect lactation performance and animal health if they are beyond tolerable levels. Hence, the proportion of these contaminants/elements goes a long way to determine the safety of water for drinking.

The total dissolved solids, also known as salinity, is an estimate of the concentration of organic and inorganic substances in water. It is an important indicator of water quality. And one of the major determinants of water quality is the source.

Approximately 60 per cent of the freshwater used for livestock production in the U.S. comes from groundwater, and in some parts of the U.S. and Canada are susceptible to the mineralization of groundwater (i.e., the addition of minerals to water as it flows). Therefore, more attention should be paid to the water being offered to animals, especially pregnant and lactating cows, as the tolerable level of total dissolved solids is higher for heifers and dry cows.

Minerals have impact

A total dissolved solids level of less than 1,000 mg/litre is generally considered safe for cattle to drink, but levels over 7,000 mg/L pose a health risk and reduced production, and should not be offered to cattle.

A recent study was done at South Dakota State University to determine the effect of water quality and source on rumen fermentation and nutrient digestion in an in-vitro (laboratory) setting. They used a Dacron bag to incubate a high-producing lactating dairy cow TMR (with the following as a percentage of dry matter: 25 per cent alfalfa hay, 25 per cent corn silage, and 50 per cent concentrate supplements), along with rumen fluid and buffers prepared with water from four sources for 30 hours.

In in-vitro fermentation experiments, buffers are used as artificial saliva to mimic feed ingestion in live animals. The water sources used in this study were laboratory distilled municipal water, untreated ground water from a local South Dakota dairy farm, treated ground water from the same source as untreated ground water, and treated rural municipal water. The striking results from the water quality assessment conducted for each water source showed that untreated ground water and treated ground water were above the normal ranges for total dissolved solids, sulfates, calcium, magnesium, manganese, iron, and water hardness.

Calves more sensitive

The researchers noted that untreated ground water and treated ground water also tended to have lower dry matter digestibility compared with the other sources, but fiber (NDF) digestibility was similar for all water sources. It would be interesting to see what the ruminal and total tract digestibility results would be in an animal study, and maybe a palatability trial to see if the water intake of animals will vary based on the water source. Although there is a dearth of research studies investigating the impact of water quality on the productivity of dairy cows, animals still rely on us to always provide them safe drinking water. And while adult cows can tolerate some level of dissolved elements in water, calves are more affected by poor quality water, especially hard water.

STOCK IMAGE/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Studies show while adult cows can tolerate some level of dissolved elements in water, calves are more affected by poor quality water, especially hard water.

Samples should be tested

The tolerable limits of elements in water for dairy cows are usually based off the recommended levels for humans due to limited research, hence, periodic water sampling is strongly encouraged.

The guideline is to sample from the water trough and along the water channel to identify potential contamination points. It is also important to understand the laboratory results from such tests because the quantity of a mineral in water is not as important as the form in which that mineral is present, which determines the biological availability of that mineral, and the toxicity of that water.

So, it is advisable to confirm that from the labs in order to make informed decisions based on those results.

Another question may be how often to sample water on the farm.

The recommendation is to sample when the water source is changed, and during different seasons of the year. Consistent sampling over time provides you with records of the typical figures obtainable on your farm, so irregularities can be easily picked up when they arise.

If you notice something is off about the water, it's time to take a sample. Remember the first test is that if it is not odourless, colourless, tasteless, and free of visible particles, then it is not clean water, take a sample.

Maintaining a regular cleaning routine for water toughs is also very fundamental to minimize the risks of contamination.

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

Cookin' with the Advocate

Cacio e Pepe

CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

Cacio e pepe is a basic pasta dish that contains grated Pecarino Romano mixed with pasta water, spaghetti and black pepper.

Ingredients

240g dry pasta (e.g., spaghetti, bucatini)
100g water (about ½ cup, and more if needed)
4g cornstarch (2 tsp)
160g Pecorino Romano (up to a third Parmesan if you like)

Preparation

Cook pasta to al dente. Do not overcook. And save a bit of the water.

Heat the cornstarch and water until it thickens and goes from cloudy to clear.

I tried this in a water bath for 10 minutes and it didn't work. Frustrated, I popped it into the microwave for 10 seconds, then another 12 seconds. Perfect. Done. Looks just like lemon curd except clear.

The cheese must be uniform and small, so I used my fine grater.

Blend the cheese with the cornstarch mixture. They suggested using a handheld immersion blender. I didn't bother. I just whisked it together. (A note on Romano, it keeps for well over a year. Another staple for your fridge.)

Once pasta has drained, let it cool 1 minute.

Toss pasta with the cheese mixture, over low heat if desired, adding pasta water as needed.

Serve with fresh grated pepper.

This recipe serves two to three people.

Source: Adapted from Julie Van Rosendaal, The Globe and Mail, *April 5, 2025, which is based on a recipe by Italian chef Luciano Monosilio*

Here's a basic pasta dish – and no clumpy sauce

Cynthia Gunn
QFA's Food Writer

It always seems like magic when cooking is done in a group. The amounts of fiddly food that can be created when more than two hands are on task never ceases to surprise. Of course, it helps when one of the parties has done a bunch of prep work. Yet, it's still impressive what can be achieved.

The other afternoon I found myself in a kitchen with a few friends that shared Slavic backgrounds. It was suggested that they were honouring their mothers by cooking a large batch of perogies from scratch, together. They remembered seeing and hearing stories about large cooking gatherings.

My background, I laughed, contained no such fun and camaraderie in the kitchen: cooking was a necessary, well, evil might be a bit of a strong word. Let's just say it was part of the job of being a mom. My mother did it well, but largely alone, and I know it did not bring joy or a sense of creativity.

Mom would have liked the simplicity and quality of classic Italian cooking, such as *cacio e pepe*. It's a basic pasta dish that contains grated Pecarino Romano mixed with pasta water, spaghetti and black pepper.

According to Wikipedia, a common story is that shepherds from the pastoral communities of Lazio, Abruzzo, Tuscany, and Umbria created *cacio e pepe* in the 18th or 19th century. It is likely that black pepper was added to the dish much later, as it was expensive and not readily available to shepherds at the time. Whether or not they cared that it was prone to clumping, we will never know.

The proclivity for this dish to clumping clearly causes a fair degree of consternation the world over. Italian correspondent Rachel Roddy, responding to a reader's query about how to keep *cacio e pepe* sauce from clumping, wrote in *The Guardian* that she plays it "really safe" by mixing cold water with the cheese and pepper in a cool bowl to a toothpaste-like consistency.

The combination of the cold cheese mix and hot spaghetti gives a "pretty reliable, creamy *cacio e pepe*, because it never gets too hot."

"You can go from lovely and melty to blobby in a second," Roddy warned.

And if disaster does strike, you can try adding more cheese, a bit of cold water and "really beating it," Roddy added.

But if that doesn't do the trick, she would be inclined simply to embrace failure, and learn from it.

Here, here.

Mom would have been thrown into a state of anxiety by such clumping proclivity. She would have greatly appreciated that a group of scientists, in fact, eight physicists from Spain, Germany, Italy and Austria, dove into the physical properties of *cacio e pepe* in order to solve the mystery of how to make a foolproof sauce.

To figure out exactly when and why clumping occurs, physicist Ivan Di Terlizzi told CBC that he and his colleagues combined various amounts of cheese to water with a fixed level of starch at a constant temperature, extracted samples in petri dishes, took hundreds of photographs, then mapped the photos based on the sauce's consistency.

They determined that the concentration of starch plays a crucial role in keeping the sauce creamy and smooth, and that the starch from the pasta water alone is inconsistent and may not meet the crucial level of 1 per cent of the weight of the cheese. The controversial solution was to make their own starch mixture using cornstarch. Not only does it work, it also means too much heat is less of an issue. They presented what they call "a scientifically optimized recipe that enables a consistently flawless execution" of the classic dish. Anxiety be gone.

I took experimenting one step further. If this was going to be "fast food," as one recipe writer wrote, then I thought, let's really make it that. Let's see if we make up the cornstarch cheese mixture and put it in the fridge for a couple of days and then pull it out to make a 12-minute meal or snack, if it works.

Move aside Kraft dinner. *Cacio e pepe* is here.

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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